

AIA Committee on Design conference, Columbus, Indiana
April 12-15, 2012: “Defining Architectural Design Excellence”



Last year Columbus, Indiana was rediscovered in the national media with the public opening of the **Miller House and Gardens**. An exquisite design collaboration of **Eero Saarinen, Alexander Girard and Dan Kiley**, completed in 1957, the landmark has been declared “America’s most significant modernist house”. While the house is now owned by the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA) and public tours are available through the Columbus Visitors Center, the tours are often sold out, limited in numbers and access. The IMA is providing the AIA-COD the opportunity to visit the house and gardens as an “open house”, with guides distributed throughout to provide information, and is allowing us personal photography.



If you have visited Columbus in the past, you are aware of its recognition for its many modern buildings designed by nationally and internationally recognized architects, including **Eliel Saarinen, Eero Saarinen, Harry Weese, Robert Venturi, I.M. Pei, Gunnar Birkerts, Kevin Roche, and Richard Meier**. Columbus has been called the “mecca of modern architecture” and “the Athens of the Prairie”. In 2000, in a highly unusual move, six modern architecture and landscape architecture sites were designated as National Historic Landmarks; including **First Christian Church (Eliel Saarinen), Irwin Union Bank (Eero Saarinen), Miller House and Gardens, North Christian Church (Eero Saarinen), Mabel McDowell Elementary School (John Carl Warnecke), and First Baptist Church (Harry Weese)**. The AIA COD conference will visit each of these locations.



The commitment to design excellence has continued in Columbus the last 10 years, in fact thriving to have had the most construction per capita through the Great Recession. The downtown has seen a complete redevelopment with a master plan by **Fred Koetter and Susie Kim**, including The *new* Commons (2011), an office building for Cummins (2009 and 2012), and a parking garage (2009). Other downtown projects include a major housing project and two other parking garages. 2001 also show the completion of Mill Race Center by **William Rawn** and Advanced Manufacturing Center by **Cesar Pelli**. Other projects completed in the last decade include: Cummins Child Development Center (2001) and an Irwin Union branch bank (2001) by **Carlos Jimenez**, Columbus Learning Center (2006) by **Kevin Kennon (KPF)**; Hope Library (1998) and an Irwin Union branch bank (2006) by **Deborah Berke**; and Central Middle School (2007) by **Ralph Johnson of Perkin+Will**.

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The focus of the conference is on “Defining Architectural Design Excellence”. The AIA COD has invited an extraordinary number of architects and speakers who have been involved with projects in Columbus, Indiana. **Gunnar Birkerts, Ben and Cynthia Weese** (representing Harry Weese), **Nancy Rogo Trainer and Daniel McCoubrey** (representing Robert Venturi), **Carlos Jimenez, Kevin Kennon, Fred Koetter and Susie Kim**, and **Jane Weinzapfel** will express their perceptions of design excellence through presentations, evening chats and panel discussions. They will be joined by local architects who will give their insight to working in Columbus, including their own works and collaborating with national architects. **Bradley Brooks**, the IMA design curator for the Miller House, will introduce the conference with a summary of “The Architectural Legacy of Columbus, Indiana”. **Will Miller**, a community leader and architectural patron, will provide further insight on “The Value and Strategy of Modern Architecture in Columbus, Indiana”.



The AIA COD conference will have an exclusive opportunity to meet community leaders and Cummins executives at a Reception and Dinner at **Cummins Corporate Office Building** on Friday evening. Designed by Kevin Roche (1984), the conference participants will get an tour of the building which is not open to the public and dine in the restored Cerealine Building (the corporate cafeteria) with the dinner prepared by Cummins executive chef. On Thursday afternoon, Cummins has also allowed the conference access to tour the **Cummins Midrange Engine Plant** in Walesboro, designed by Kevin Roche (1973), a forerunner of sustainable design.

We hope that you will join us and participate in the AIA Committee on Design conference in Columbus, Indiana from April 12-15, 2012. Tentatively you should be able to complete your annual AIA requirement of 18 CEU-LU by attending this conference. It will provide exclusive access to many buildings not open to the public and interaction with many of the renowned architects who have worked in Columbus, Indiana.

Steven Risting, AIA
Columbus Conference Co-Chair