Letters

Elephant in the garage

For the latest Record Houses, as usual, there is much stimulation, thank you for some attention paid to environmental sustainability. I must confess, however, that a serious dissonant about the elephant in the room, either shown or implied in all of the plans, and which is essential to make this house type viable. Offering solutions to the option of climate change while ignoring the elephant is at odds with the thinking that it can be solved by electric, solar, hydrogen, diesel, or some other fuel source. Insiders a future issue with houses are elephants are not required. 

Bob Grant

Suzanne Stephens replies:

The writer appears to be unaware that both of the German buildings then cited were executed before the Nazis came to power. Indeed, one was designed in 1926 by Mies van der Rohe as a memorial to Rosa Luxembourg and Karl Liebknecht, who were both Communist anti-Nazi revolutionaries. Luxembourg was Jewish. The other Mies work, from the 1931 Berlin Building Exposition, appeared in the twilight of the Weimar Republic, before the Nazis claimed power in 1933. Let's not forget Mies's Modernist vocabulary was not as appealing to Hitler and his architect, Albert Speer, who preferred the stripped-down Classicism that was also favored by the U.S. government for its civic buildings of the 1930s. As for the bunker reference in the article, the writers were trying to avoid creating a distracting intervention, and therefore looked at the ruins, walls, and hedgerows on the Normandy property.

Heavy cargo

Around 1910, Albert Ballin built the three great ocean liners for the Kaiser. These three sisters, the Vaterland, the Emperor, and the Bismarck, were the largest ships in the world, even exceeding the size of the Titanic. On the bow of the Emperor was a sculpture of the world in the talons of an eagle, with the inscription, "My field is the world" written in German. 

BMW Welt [March 2008, page 86] reminds me of these efforts. It is pretentious, top-heavy, and may portend doom. As an avid reader of auto magazines for over a half-century, I can assure you that there is precious little to invent as far as cars are concerned. This building, like the great ships, is indicative of the end of an evolutionary cycle. How will future generations view it?

Joseph M. La Rocca

Diversification now

Robert Ivy's recent editorial [May 2008, page 39] identifies the need to create greater opportunity for diversity in our profession. However, in order to encourage the engagement necessary for producing a more diverse profession, I offer an agenda our firm has undertaken and include other tips worth considering:

1. Be visible. Architecture must be seen as a means of affecting the environment, and architects need to be observed and engaged in community action.
2. Be involved with local schools through teaching, mentoring, career days, and architecture week projects.
3. Be proactive in developing a student-enrichment program in the office to enable students to have externships for observing how architects work.
4. Be a benefactor by developing and creating different scholarship opportunities.
5. Be a counselor to parents. Create a community open house to invite students' parents to see what architects do and educate them on career opportunities.
6. Be a tour guide offering to assist schools with local architecture tours.
7. Be a champion and engage the community in a charrette looking at a local situation and ways it can be addressed.
8. Be a connector. Bring a wealth of resources and opportunities to the local university.
9. Be a promoter. Create a student design competition where participants can see success and gain identity through the media.

—Judson A. Kline, AIA
Cleveland

After 150 years of protecting the profession of architecture from people of color, why in the world would Robert Ivy be surprises that only 1.5 percent of registered architects are black? Not to mention other disadvantaged minorities. The numbers are the naked reality regardless of smoke and mirrors, excuses, or misguided editorials.

The practice of architecture is perceived as an elite club for white men that keeps the door shut and locked because—regrettably and by design—it is. The ethnic makeup of licensed architects in our great country unquestionably bears this out. Minorities are still very far out in the cold looking in and will remain there unless radical changes are made.

I would recommend that ARCHITECTURAL RECORD, utilizing the tools of investigative journalism, publish a series of articles that can serve as a catalyst to begin to change this inequity. You have the power to give voice to future minority architects that have so much to offer. It is past time to share this particular American dream.

—John T. Kellia, Assoc. AIA
Casa Blanca, N.Mex.

Corrections


Send letters to rivy@mcgraw-hill.com.