

2003 UNBUILT ARCHITECTURE DESIGN AWARDS

Jurors' Comments

This is the 12th year of this annual BSA program and we received 130 submissions from design practitioners, educators, and students throughout the U.S. and beyond.

We were pleased to note again this year that the work submitted continues to be an intriguing mix of theoretical design explorations, environmental polemic, and more practical projects that respond to the needs of real clients.

We spent a good deal of the long jury session discussing the qualities we were seeking as we attempted to identify exceptional work in this year's program. In general, we believed that the projects deserving recognition were projects characterized by design innovation, uncommon use of materials, high level of imagination, resolution of a significant problem, offering a new perspective on an old issue or articulating issues heretofore unexamined, superior graphic skills, clarity of the story being told, and a sense of humor as appropriate.

We have chosen enthusiastically to honor the six wonderful projects described on the following pages.

Serving as jurors in this program has been provocative and educational and we wish to express our gratitude to the BSA for this opportunity and to the scores of design professionals who shared their work with us this year.

The Jurors

Henry Moss AIA, *Jury Chair* (Principal, Bruner/Cott & Associates)

Alex Anmahian AIA (Principal, Anmahian Winton Architects)

Julian Bonder, Assoc. AIA (Principal, Julian Bonder + Associates)

Robert Hoye AIA (President, TRO/The Ritchie Organization)

Rachel Munn AIA (Visiting Scholar, Brandeis University/
Women's Study Research Center)

Chris Reed (Principal, StoSS)

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA (Lecturer, Smith College Department of Art)

Jeffrey Stein AIA (Architecture Critic, *Banker & Tradesman*)

HONOR AWARDS FOR DESIGN

“Vertical Power Center: Stacking Big Box Retail” designed by the University of Arkansas School of Architecture’s Big Box Studio: Prof. Stephen Luoni, Ryan Biles, Carrie Blevins, Jennifer Caperton, Candi Davis, Dusty Graham, Tran Le, Sam McGuire, Maury Mitchell, Trinity Simons, Justin Staley, Chris Sullivan and Shizu Takami (Fayetteville AR)

This is a gutsy and imaginative study of a building typology that architects shy away from and are certainly never encouraged to explore with this combination of focus and abandon. The imagery of this presentation is potent. Aiming for a dramatic reduction in land use but hanging on to the private automobile, this strategy piles Wal-Mart’s and Lowe’s on top of one another. The visual polemic is as telling as Superstudio’s naked people standing next to endless gridded facades but depicts an equally awful environment. Part Pompidou, part Blade Runner, and part Bed Bath & Beyond – the jury wondered if this would really be worse than what is out there today. This is an effective poster that grounded its authors’ energy and discontent in new thoughts about a taboo building type.

“Exhale” designed by Martina Decker and Peter Yeadon (Providence RI)

This is a design for a memorial and it is an immediately communicative visual array suggesting a dispersal of bubbles across Manhattan that enters the rush and texture of everyday life. The random placement of names in pavements is a welcome departure from static walls of alphabetical lists. The bubbles’ chemistry may allow them to reach uptown and beyond. A dry, dust-like residue left by burst bubbles is part of the design’s metaphor for evanescence. This is a fresh take on memorial structures incorporating time, space and materiality with an unexpectedly light hand and a very sure touch.

“African Cemetery #2” designed by Henri T. de Hahn, EPFL, SIA (Lexington KY)

This is a rich and subtle reworking of a disappearing African-American burial ground with a new center for interpretation set into the bordering landscape. This is a very muted presentation and there were doubts about the new architecture’s capacity to resonate with the nearby burial site. Still unresolved metaphors for excavation and interment lie side by side in the area of new building. The project was clearly an ethical response to this historic location and not a celebration of the designer’s ingenuity. The design makes this site a place of discourse for an underrepresented minority whose markers for memory have been partially erased. The project obliquely addresses the question of who can speak in public spaces. It is not an invented graveyard.

“Zipcar Dispenser” designed by Moskow Architects: Keith Moskow AIA, Rob Wear RA, Robert Linn, Timothy Nistler, Michael Moorehead, Rumiko Taira and Newell Gates (Boston MA)

Delightful and provocative, this is a great visual presentation about something we might expect to see someday soon. Placement in a narrow slot between existing 19th-century buildings and depiction of large-scale advertising inserts reveal an appealing candor about context and an unapologetic panache. There are transparent, multilevel display prototypes for cars in Europe that might be truer precedents than the Pez dispenser but the associations are engaging and suggestive of playthings rather than large machinery. The Zipcar is a fine idea whose time has come. Some version of this design could enhance Zipcar’s visibility and convenience, especially where land costs are high.

“The Heavy/Light House” designed by Dan Hisel Design (Cambridge MA)

This project – a home suspended from a railroad trestle – is a gem. It is a happy marriage of architecture and industrial archaeology and makes its point without needless elaboration. It is nice to see obsolete infrastructure reused and reinterpreted and this project has a real owner who intends to convert the trestle to a home. None of the other housing proposals we saw was as convincing as living spaces for people. There currently seems to be a tenuous quality in our collective psyche about inhabiting anything, anywhere, but this design is confident and convincing.

“Central Bank of Kuwait Headquarters” designed by Gary Haney AIA/Skidmore Owings & Merrill (New York City)

In spite of its puzzle-like geometry of solids and voids, this project sparked a quick unanimity as the jury responded to the simple image of this tall structure. The skin of the building is emphasized by a near-random pattern of overall window penetrations designed to reduce solar gain while scattering views and natural light sources across the exterior wall. Shaded areas in cut-out portions of the tower have walls of glass. The ground level is attractively organized with orthogonal masses of smaller blocks although their congruity with voids in the tower’s mass is unlikely to be perceived. This may not be a building for every urban context but it looked effortlessly composed and visually inexhaustible compared to other tall buildings we had the opportunity to examine in this program.