

Minutes

**Toronto Society of Architects
June Meeting**
5 June, 2007 – 6:30pm to 8:30 pm
Arts and Letters Club, 14 Elm Street

Present:

Andre Le Roux
Antonio Gómez-Palacio
Arlene Gould
Bindya Lad
Brad Collard
Bruce Semple
Carlo Milessa

Heather Dubbledam
Leslie Jen
Lloyd Alter
Lyn Northey
Mar Mar Cho
Marie-Josée Therrien
Matthew Searle

Phil Goodfellow
Rafid Kustou
Robert Ouellette
Scott Christie
Scott Sorli

1. Introduction

- Antonio started the meeting by acknowledging the handouts (meeting agenda, the minutes from last month's meeting, and the TSA initiative list) that had been prepared and encouraged all to obtain copies.
- 'Around the room' introductions followed.

2. Approval of May 2007 Meeting Minutes

- Antonio requested that the meeting move forward by approving the minutes from the last meeting.
- Phil motioned to approve the minutes, Lyn seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved.

3. TSA Initiatives

- Antonio noted that the TSA runs a series of initiatives. Highlights of the following initiatives were provided:
 - **fAd / TSA Film Series:**
 - Antonio advised that the TSA was involved in fAd through the film series, which Scott took leadership of. Scott noted that the films were very much appreciated by the audiences. He also advised that architect's involved in Expo '67 such as Rod Robbie, were in

attendance on some of the nights and shared their memories after the screenings. Antonio suggested that the TSA collect the films that were shown and donate them to the City of Toronto Archives as they could serve as valuable research material. Marie-Josée informed that an exhibition on the Expo '67 had been planned at Glendon Gallery.

- ***fAd | 'design matters' competition:***

- Antonio provided a summary of the competition noting that the intent was to design tangible symbols to celebrate design. He advised that individuals from various disciplines were invited to participate. A total of 40 submissions were received, from which 16 entries were chosen for the exhibit at the Toronto the Good Party. Winning posters were on display during the meeting. Antonio advised that other venues to exhibit the submissions are being sought, and ideas to celebrate the winning design (i.e., post cards, t-shirts, etc.) are being discussed.

- ***fAd | 'Twenty+Change' exhibit:***

- Antonio noted the upcoming opening of the 'Twenty+Change' exhibit at the Gladstone Hotel. The exhibition, organized by Margaret Graham of Superkul Architect, is sponsored by the TSA and showcases the work of emerging architects in Toronto. Matthew advised that the selected works will be on display at IIDEX, and that a spin-off seminar program is being devised so that each of the selected architects are able to talk about the projects.

- ***Archiving***

- Susan shared that she and others were assembling the history of the TSA. The TSA is 120 years old. Past chairs have been contacted, and material has been donated to the City of Toronto Archives, so that the public can access it.
- Lloyd advised that a book was published for the 100th anniversary of the TSA, and that a celebration was held at Palais Royale.

- ***Awards:***

- Antonio noted that the TSA is coordinating award efforts with the City of Toronto. The Urban Design awards are first, details to follow at next meeting.

- ***CANstruction – Society of Design Administration (SDA)***

- Antonio advised that Antone Frisina (Ryerson Student Representative) is putting together a team for the upcoming

CANstruction competition. The competition involves collecting food cans and constructing sculptures, which will then be exhibited at the TD Centre.

- ***Design Industry Advisory Committee (DIAC)***
 - Antonio asked Arlene Gould to provide some background information on DIAC. Arlene noted that DIAC is comprised of all the design disciplines and encouraged all to visit the website (www.diac.on.ca) for more information as she would be talking more about DIAC during the discussion portion of the meeting.
- ***TSA Summer Bash***
 - Antonio noted that a summer bash is being organized and to look for more details in the months to come.
- ***Un-built Project – Poster Competition***
 - Phil shared that the poster competition idea was originally launched by the Boston Society of Architects. The competition involves running an open call for unbuilt projects in the city. Though the initiative is allotted for 2008, anyone interested should contact Phil.
 - Marie-Josée suggested that it would be interesting to go back in history and document unbuilt projects of the past.
 - Matthew suggested that it may also be something that could part of IIDEX 2008.
- ***Website***
 - Antonio advised that the website is nearing completion, and a launch date should be set soon.
 - Rafid questioned whether meeting minutes could be found on the website.
 - Antonio noted that this was something for further discussion.

4. Current Affairs – ‘design matters’

- Phil noted that it was a goal of the TSA to bring interesting speakers/contributors to a conversation with members. Past conversations have had different themes including shaping communities, green design, and landscape urbanism. Following the results of the ‘design matters’ competition organized by the TSA and DIAC, and the increasing interest across Toronto for design matters,

this month's discussion focused on the design professions, their role, function and importance.

- Phil advised that this was the last meeting before the summer break, and encouraged all to ask questions and to challenge the discussion.
- He noted that his role was to set-up the table to have a conversation and that this month's conversation was lead with the knowledge and experiences of invited guests, who included:
 - **Robert Ouellete**, editor and founder of Reading Toronto, and also a writer of a column on architecture, design, and politics for the National Post;
 - **Arlene Gould**, professor in the Department of Design at York University, and Strategic Director of the Design Industry Advisory Committee (DIAC); and,
 - **Scott Christie**, partner at the graphic design firm Pylon Design, also involved with the Advertising and Design Club of Canada, as well as an advertising and graphic design instructor at Humber College.
- The discussion that took place included the following:

(a) Does Design Matter?

- The group questioned how we measure our contribution as designers? And, how we take design from something that is superficial to something that is essential?
- It was pointed out that designers are often in a position of defending the need and role of design, among an audience that is often unaware of how designs influence their quality of life, from their home to the gadgets they use every day.
- Arlene noted that she was an individual respondent at the United Nations Conference on Sustainability held in the fall. She pointed out that the involvement of designers in the event, was an acknowledgment of their contribution in creating a more sustainable world.
- Scott argued that design does indeed matter. As a graphic designer, he felt design was now a part of his lifestyle. He observed that good design 'makes people do things'. Good design:
 - Makes people comfortable;

- Makes people buy things (web design);
 - Makes people give money (brochure); and
 - Gets people excited (movie titles – ‘Catch Me If You Can’).
- Participants suggested that good design can be distinguished by its ability to differentiate itself from others and by its ability to deliver change.

(b) Design Education:

- Arlene discussed her involvement with Design Industry Advisory Committee (DIAC), a cross disciplinary organization.
- She expressed the need for a holistic approach to design, and commented on the barriers that are apparent in the profession, especially as we educate designers in silos.
- Phil noted that he works for a firm that operates on the basis of integrated design. However, based on his education, collaboration was deemed the antithesis of design.
- A general dissatisfaction with the delivery of design-based education was expressed. It was suggested that co-ordination, collaboration, and integration need to be part of the learning process, as working teams can deliver better results than individuals working in isolation.

(c) The Design Profession:

- Arlene pointed out that DIAC has undertaken a study in conjunction with Human Resources and Development Canada (HRDC) regarding the skills and capabilities of designers, across Canada.
- A key conclusion was that Toronto (when compared with U.S. cities) has not yet realized the full economic benefits of having strong design professionals, by integrating them with all aspects of industry. This is unfortunate as Toronto has the third largest design employment base after Boston and New York.
- The problem relates to the barriers that are present in the education of a designer as well as fragmentation that is present in the field. Such fragmentation is evident:
 - Geographically;
 - Among the different design disciplines;
 - Between small versus large business; and,
 - At various levels of Government.

(d) Design Culture:

- It was noted that we are living in a culture that knows the price of everything but the value of nothing. We are a disposable culture that accepts 'walmartization.'
- The government's plan to promote growth in urban environments was brought to everyone's attention. This veered the discussion towards the importance of focusing on the creation of distinct, high-quality urban environments, as a focal point for design professionals.
- The public reactions aspect, of the unveiling of Libeskind's addition to the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) were also discussed. It was noted that the opening fostered a high level of interest in design which generated a positive response.
- Arlene noted that we need designers to take risks, as it is when they fail, that innovative ideas surface.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

The next TSA General Meeting will take place on Tuesday September 11th, 2007, at 6:30 pm, at the Arts and Letters Club.