



Photo by Webeatz Studios

Design/Build Symposium attendees at the UH Outdoor Performing Arts Stage, Roberts Elementary School.

RDA Design/Build Symposium and Tour: Practicum and Praxis

On Saturday, January 28, 20 participants and 45 attendees gathered at the University of Houston for the RDA Design/Build Symposium and Tour, co-sponsored by the AIA/Houston.

The morning started with presentations by faculty and students from both the Rice University School of Architecture and the University of Houston's Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture. Both schools offer upper level design/build classes, at Rice under the rubric of the Rice Building Workshop and at UH under that of the Graduate Design/Build Studio. The general intention of both programs is to offer architecture students broader exposure to the construction process and the construction industry. By focusing on smaller-scale projects or prototype assemblages, students and their faculty advisors are given the opportunity to work from schematic design through construction documents to cost estimating, and ultimately to fabrication and construction of a built structure.

Following the presentations by current faculty and students, former students Joe Meppelink, Onezieme Mouton, and Andrew Vrana presented work they had done while in school, as well as more recent work in digital pre-fabrication done with current students at the University of Houston.

Later that morning, young designers, architects, and developers presented how they integrate construction and design. Anne Eamon and Mark Schatz of m + a architecture studio showed their award-winning 700 square-foot house and garden. Rodney Collins of Collins Architects & Construction Co. presented his work,

including his bed and breakfast establishment as well as new developments. Chung Nguyen of MC2 Architects showed a multi-generational house and a medical office building designed and built by his firm. Camilo Parra of Parra Design Group presented his award-winning townhouse designs and reminded the audience that design/build has been a strategy for production of dwellings for a long time.

Whereas the typical design/build delivery involves a venture between an architect and a builder, the architects presented in RDA's symposium are architect-developers who also act as builders. In the same way the Rice and UH design/build students have constructed their projects, these architects have built theirs.

The attendees then departed on two buses for lunch and a tour of projects completed by the two schools of architecture. The tour included the UH Charter School Outdoor Science Classroom at Holman and Cullen, the UH Charter School Ecological Classroom at Wheeler and Cullen, the Rice Canopies and the UH Outdoor Performing Arts Stage at Roberts Elementary School, the Rice Canopies and the UH Mechanical Shade Tree at Poe Elementary School, the UH Structure for Storing and Scoring at Ervan Chew Park, and the Rice Six Square House, XS House, and Duplexes at Project Row Houses.

While the rain held off most of the day at a slight drizzle, towards the end attendees were ushered into the Project Row House Community Development Corporation, where a reception and exhibition of other design/build projects around Houston were awaiting them.



Photo by Linda Sylvan

RDA members enjoy the grounds of the Arizona Biltmore. From left to right: Lynn Kelly, Barbara Amelio, Ed and Carrie Shoemaker, Warren Martin, Ty Kelly, Sally Johnson, Karen Schenck, Catherine and Cornell DeWitt, Barbara and Louis Sklar, and Stephen Fox.

RDA Tour Members Explore Phoenix

In February, 18 RDA members visited the desert Southwest and America's sixth largest city, Phoenix. Over the last quarter century, Phoenix has experienced not just an explosion of population, sprawling its way across south central Arizona, but also an explosion of inventive architecture.

Over four days, from February 23 to February 26, RDA's tour group saw much of what the city has to offer. Will Bruder, Wendell Burnett, DeBartolo Architects, Jones Studio, and Marwan Al-Sayed are just a few of the architects whose work has brought national attention to Phoenix. Add to their work significant new public buildings by Tod Williams-Billie Tsien & Associates, Richard Meier & Partners, Antoine Predock, and Mac Scogin-Merrill Elam, and it's no surprise that Arizona's capital has emerged as one of America's most architecturally energetic communities.

Upon arrival, the RDA group met Will Bruder, godfather of the current Arizona School, at Bruder's Central Library, which transformed local understanding of how a public building could poetically interpret the natural landscape, even on a strict budget. (Bruder presented the library at a lecture that he gave to the Rice Design Alliance in 1997.) Later that afternoon, Bruder joined the group for a tour of another one of his projects, the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, and together they watched the light change at sunset in the museum's skyspace installation by James Turrell, *Knight Rider*. Following that experience, Louise and Will Bruder hosted the group in their award-winning townhouse, Loloma 5.

RDA members spent the following day viewing a number of private homes, including several designed by Bruder, as well as the Freeman-Silverman House by Tod Williams-Billie Tsien & Associates, the House of Earth + Light by Marwan Al-Sayed, and the house and studio of architect Wendell Jack Burnette. DeBartolo Jr., who worked with Caudill Rowlett Scott in Houston but now practices architecture with his son Jack 3, arranged a visit to the Mariposa Residence, a compound for the Jesuit Community. Jack and his wife Pat also hosted the group at a tour and reception in their home in Scottsdale, overlooking the mountains.

Led by architectural historian Stephen Fox, the group toured Taliesin West, Frank Lloyd Wright's winter home, a highlight of the tour. Wright's influence can be seen at the Arizona Biltmore, where the group toured and had brunch before seeing new buildings at Arizona State University in Tempe on the way back to the airport and home to Houston.

The Phoenix tour was the first of RDA's Hometown Tours for 2006. In June, RDA members will be heading east to Charleston, South Carolina. And then in October RDA will cross the Atlantic for the first time to explore the City of Light, Paris. (This tour is sold out.)

Anyone interested in information or signing up for the Charleston tour can go to rda.rice.edu, and click on the RDA Hometown Tours link. You can also contact RDA tour director Lynn Kelly at 713-256-3244 or lynn_kelly_tx@yahoo.com.