The Studio Culture Summit

Organized by the
American Institute of
Architecture Students

Held October 8-10, 2004
at the University of Minnesota

An Overview Report By Clark Kellogg

"Architects must function at the level that can fix the world."

– *Richard Farson, Ph.D.*
President, Western Behavioral Science Institute
Addressing the Studio Culture Summit
October 10, 2004

The Studio Culture Summit

A story has been told of an architecture student who lost his life in an automobile accident caused by sleep deprivation. A dozen stories have been told of similar instances. Thousands of stories have been told of cut fingers, damaged cars, life-changing critiques, friends lost and lives changed. All for an education in the art and science of architecture.

There is honor in providing shelter for the world. It is easy to justify rigorous training for those who would be responsible for such a solemn duty. Yet the education of an architect, as it has evolved, has too many stories of good people driven away or deeply wounded in the formal process of learning.

In time, there were those who saw a pattern, a culture, in these experiences and anecdotes. A product of the intense model developed to train great architects, this culture often took on characteristics of a punishing gamut serving the establishment itself and not its students.
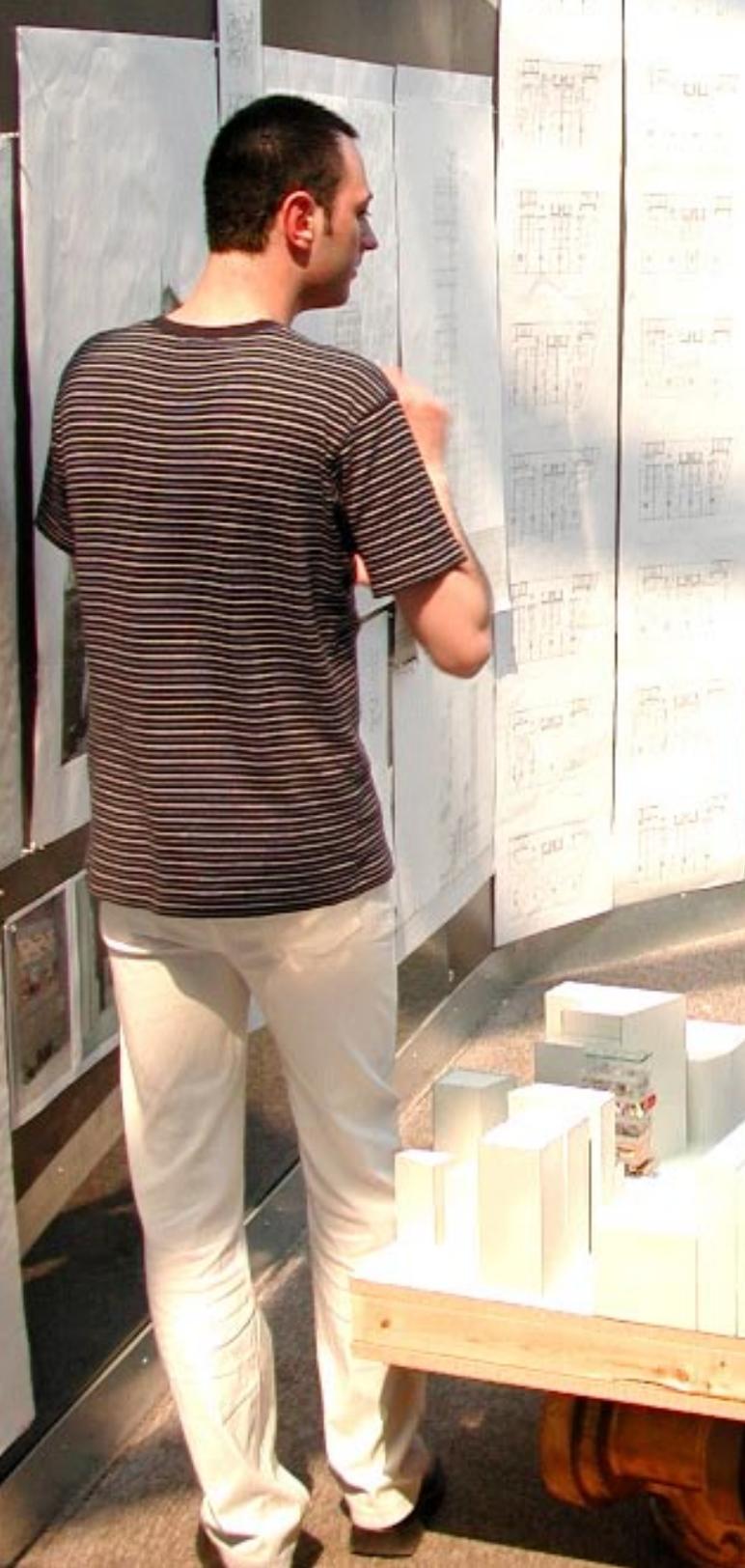
A few people began writing about these cultural issues. One notable effort was the publication of the AIAS Studio Culture Task Force's *The Redesign of Studio Culture*. These people told of a better way; of a culture that is respectful, optimistic, innovative, engaging and inclusive.

These words and these ideals touched institutions, students and educators throughout academia. In conventions, classrooms, and coffee shops architecture students began talking about the culture of architecture studio. Educators began researching and writing about studio in a very different way.

At the Studio Culture Summit, it was time to shift the focus of academy-wide efforts to shape studio culture. This shift was clear. It went from a well-worn dialogue to research, innovation and proactive action. The Summit attendees left Minneapolis with nine directives that define the next steps in the cultural shift surrounding architectural education.

All cultures depend on stories passed on from one generation to the next. Because of the work of many good people, including those who came to the Studio Culture Summit, the stories that we tell of studio in the years ahead of us will, I trust, hardly resemble those we once told.

– Jacob Day
2004-2005 AIAS President

Contents

The Context of the Summit

Over fifty students, educators, architects, leaders of the architectural collateral organizations (Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, The American Institute of Architects, American Institute of Architecture Students, National Architectural Accrediting Board and the National Council of Architectural Registration

of Architecture Students (AIAS), hosted by the University of Minnesota College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (CALA), and facilitated by Clark Kellogg of Kellogg Consulting/Communication by Design© and teacher in the College of Environmental Design at UC Berkeley. The Summit featured special presentations on key aspects of studio-based edu-

Four provocateurs provided themes for the Summit groups to discuss. Thomas Fisher, Assoc. AIA, Dean of the CALA, provided an overview of the history of architectural education and the role of the design studio, highlighting the fact that the architecture studio model has gone relatively unchallenged and unchanged

Boards), and expert speakers gathered at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis on October 8-10, 2004 to discuss the role, impact, and future of design studio-based education in architecture schools. The Studio Culture Summit built on the findings of the AIAS Studio Culture Task Force report (*The Redesign of Studio Culture,* 2002). The Summit was organized by the American Institute

cation by recognized experts, followed by group discussion and break-out sessions charged with documenting observations and exploring opportunities for quality improvement in architecture studio experience and education.

since its inception in 1850 at the French Ecoles des Beaux Arts. Kathryn Anthony, Ph.D., Professor of Architecture at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and author of *Design Juries on Trial*, presented the problems of studio-based architectural education, the evaluation and jury process, and the importance of students designing out of their comfort zones.

Van B. Weigel, Ph.D., author of *The Theory of Global Development*, remarked on positive aspects of the design studio education model. He shared how the architectural design studio can be viewed as a constructivist playground and how technological communications can be used to enhance collaboration. Richard Farson, Ph.D., President of the

The Summit utilized the breakout groups to critically analyze the issues presented by the provocateurs to formulate a framework for the studio model, and to define its highest purpose. The participants focused on topics ranging from criteria to evaluate a design studio, the implementation of hybrid studios, the role of the studio within the larger

Western Behavioral Science Institute, spoke about the difference between education and training; and the importance of failure in achieving success in education, as well as the importance of architects taking up leadership roles in society.

architecture education curriculum, to the value of the jury system and how it can be better implemented. The participants developed a list of strategies for change designed to assist the spectrum of institutions, organizations and professions that are called on to implement or support changes over the next five years.

The People Who Reached the Summit

Ava Abramowitz, Esq., Hon. AIA
Representative
ArchVoices

Arnold Aho, AIA
Chair, Education Committee
National Council of
Architectural Registration Boards

Matthew Alderman
Student
Notre Dame University

Kathryn Anthony, Ph.D. (Speaker)
Educator
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Leonard Bachman
Educator
University of Houston

Michiel Bourdrez, AIA
Director, Professional Services
National Council of
Architectural Registration Boards

Brian Comer
Student
Judson College

Ken Crabiel, Assoc. AIA
2003-2005 Board Member
National Architectural Accrediting Board

Phoebe Crisman
Educator
University of Virginia

Jacob Day
2004-2005 President
American Institute of Architecture Students

Raymond Dehn, Assoc. AIA
President
ArchVoices

Scott Dietz
Educator
Savannah College of Art & Design

David Orrick
Student
University of Nebraska

Helene Dreiling, FAIA, Hon. SDA
Team Vice President
The American Institute of Architects

Richard Farson, Ph.D. (Speaker)
President
Western Behavioral Sciences Institute

Thomas Fisher, Assoc. AIA (Speaker)
Dean
College of Architecture & Landscape Architecture
University of Minnesota

Matthew Fochs
Student
University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

Thomas Fowler
2004-2005 Secretary
Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo

Michael Geary, CAE
Executive Director
American Institute of Architecture Students

Ana Guerra, Assoc. AIA
2004-2005 Board Member
The American Institute of Architect

Frank Guillot, AIA
2004-2005 President
National Council of
Architectural Registration Boards

Gabriella Gutierrez
Representative
Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture
University of New Mexico

Mary Guzowski
Educator/ACSA Representative
University of Minnesota

Gene Hopkins, FAIA
2004 National President
The American Institute of Architects

Benedict Ilozor
Educator
Hampton University

Matthew Innes
Educator
Arizona State University

Sabir Kahn
Representative
Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture
Georgia Institute of Technology

"We learned that architectural education was not a problem to be fixed, but a predicament to be massaged to health."

–*Kate Schwennsen, FAIA*
2005 1st Vice President
The American Institute of Architects

Studio **Culture**

3

Summit Proceedings

A Critical Look at Studio Culture

The people at the summit came from all over the US. We ranged in age from under 20 to over 70. They were students, architects, intern architects, teachers, administrators, regulators and more. What did we have in common? All but two had been through design studio. Many were still in studio as students or teachers.

Everyone had powerful stories of their studio experience. No one was indifferent. "Studio" has an enormous life-shaping influence on architecture students during one's school years and throughout one's life. This is true for the roughly half of architecture students who go on to work in the profession as well as for the other half who choose careers beyond architecture.

One of the first thing we did as a group was work through our experience and knowledge of studio to create some grounded assessments about the value and character of the design studios in American schools of architecture. This evolved into four areas:

1. Highest and Best Purpose of Studio Model:

- Instill a lifelong method and passion for learning
- A model for a habit of synthesis, so studio is linked to other courses and topics
- Foster Community-based design
- Allow students to discover their own "calling"
- Instill and nurture creative discontent
- Promote and support self-discovery
- Support the development of personal identity
- Instill respect and responsibility for living systems
- To become a managed studio design process that can be assessed and evolved

2. Characteristics to Value and to Retain:

- Sense of community
- Place specificity
- Sense of mission
- Mentoring (one-to-one)
- Peer support
- Romance and the "calling"
- Critical thinking
- Intense personal experience
- Perseverance
- 1-on-1 student/faculty integration
- Multiple paths to teaching goals
- Learn by doing
- Holistic nature/synthesis
- Presentation and explanation of why
- Flexibility of instructors
- Peer-to-peer learning
- Group experience
- Vertically integrated studios

3. Characteristics to Discard:

- Adversarial relationships
- Lack of specific objectives
- "All-nighter" myth and reality
- Object-only focus of critiques
- Distinction between talent and intelligence
- Prizing final presentations too much
- Studio overriding all other classes
- Arbitrary (ungrounded) instructor criticism as valid part of studio design process
- Competitive insularity of individual projects
- Competition vs. collaboration
- Equating project value with personal value
- Studio-based "star" culture
- The "ordeal" of studio
- Redundant studio projects
- Dysfunctional traditions

4. Strategies for Change in Studio Culture:

- Acknowledge change already occurring
- Acknowledge change must continue
- Share best practices
- Awards for effective pedagogy
- Discussion with studio faculty about changes they've enacted/need to enact as part of accreditation team visits
- Have faculty present their culture to students
- Faculty work together to establish strategies and outcomes for studios
- ACSA teaching award program awardees as resource for peers and programs
  - assist in developing self assessment rubric for evaluation of studio at multiple levels
  - develop a teaching program for new faculty
  - provide narrative of their learning strategies

Provocative Perspectives

The strongest conviction that emerged from the Summit was a universal endorsement of the design studio as a model for experience-based learning and skill development. The problems are not inherently built into the studio model but are part of an insular legacy culture that is changing and needs to change more.

The four provocateurs were brilliant. Each brought insight, wisdom and hope. Together, they wove a compelling story of how we got here, what isn't working, why design studios are so powerful and what we are called upon to do going forward.

Thomas Fisher
Professor and Dean
College of Architecture & Landscape Architecture
University of Minnesota

"Why We Are Where We Are"

"There is nothing like focusing on the larger problems of the world to put our problems in perspective, and I suspect that once we truly engage with the world, many of the silly or self-destructive traditions of studio life–the all-nighters, the obsession with grades, the ridiculous competition to see who can be the most original–would disappear or seem irrelevant in light of these larger purposes."

Kathryn Anthony
Educator
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

"Open Critique of the Studio Model"

"Some parts of the studio model have changed over the last decade. The individual abusive behavior is no longer common. What remains are underlying structural issues that still threaten the health of the studio model. It is still too insulated from the rest of the world. It is still too subjective. We are just beginning to institute changes systematically. The job is not done."

Van Weigel
Educator
Eastern University

"Technology and Innovation in Education"

"The design studio is pedagogically solid. Thinking is an art. Studio focuses students on becoming knowledge creators and knowledge integrators. The environment of studios allow this to happen in the presence of more skilled persons as well as fostering learning from peers. The problems with studios mostly stem from the historically insular nature of most architecture schools."

Richard Farson
President
Western Behavioral Science Institute

"Leadership in Education"

"There is a big difference between training and education. Training makes people alike. Education is threatening; it demands you be the best you can. Architects are really working in the area of human affairs. We need to see things in a larger context. Design has the capacity to create a better world but the world is running out of time."

"Three days, fifty plus professionals and students, all talking about studio culture… not only did ideas get passed and possible solutions get proposed, but connections around the nation were made and changes were set into place. The work done that weekend ensured that the studio culture of our past will not be the future of our profession."

– *Matthew Fochs*
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Studio **Culture**

4

Summit Outcomes

Outcomes

The attendees of the Studio Culture Summit charged the stakeholders, particularly the AIAS, to focus their efforts on nine initiatives generated at the summit.

These nine initiatives encompass a range of issues and goals. They respond to the inherent complexity of this phenomenon we know as "studio culture." Drawing from the ideals presented in *The Redesign of Studio Culture* and from work at the summit, these initiatives approach studio culture with a call for direct communication, clear policy, rigorous research and a renewed belief in the value of the studio model itself.

The intention of the people at the summit and the subsequent design of the initiatives are clear. Both are advocates of changing studio culture and doing so using collaboration, research and innovation.

The AIAS is acting as "quarterback" for these initiatives. However, the AIAS recognizes it cannot succeed working alone. It is collaboration that will create positive, substantial results. The AIAS will partner with ACSA, NAAB, AIA, NCARB and others to achieve these goals. Working together, we can accomplish each of these initiatives and create sustainable change. Change that will indisputably benefit students, educators, the profession and the public we serve.

COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES

Communicate Outcomes

1 Disseminate outcomes and information regarding the proceedings of the Summit and provide resources related to studio culture

Share Studio Policy Resources

2 Research and share a data-bank of methodologies used in creating studio culture policies, as per NAAB Condition for Accreditation 3.5.

Award Successes

3 Honor the success and diversity of studio cultures among degree-granting programs nationwide.

• Fall 04: AIAS News Release

• Fall 04: ArchVoices Issue

• Spring 05: Studio Culture Summit Publication distributed. A summary of the Summit proceedings and a reference for the dialogue that took place there. Outlines current and future status of Studio Culture initiatives and advocacy efforts.

• Summer 05: *Design Intelligence* supplement, *Focus on the Future,* dedicated to The Studio Culture Summit and studio culture.

• Summer 04: NAAB Board of Directors create Condition 3.5 for Accreditation. Condition states schools are expected to demonstrate a positive and respectful learning environment through the encouragement of the fundamental values of optimism, respect, sharing, engagement and innovation between and among the members of its faculty, student body, administration and staff.

• Spring 06: AIAS will survey select schools on their methodologies for creating the studio culture policy.

• Fall 06: AIAS will compile those methodologies and provide them as a resource to schools preparing to write a policy.

• Summer 06: The AIAS will form a task group to create an award which will honor strong and positive studio culture in architectural program communities.

• Winter 07: Award launched.

• Summer 07: First award conferred.

Track Studio Trends

4 Survey architecture programs and collect studio culture policies to understand system-wide trends influencing studio culture.

Create Assessment Tools

5 Define a system of assessment that represents performance indicators for studio.

Study Studio Settings

6 Research and aid in developing models for "hybrid studios" which join physical and virtual studios.

• Summer 06: AIAS will begin work on a survey that will gather information on studio culture from students, faculty, and administrators from programs across the country.

• Fall 06: Initial test survey completed by an accredited university.

• Winter 07: Results analyzed with the help of ACSA and research professionals.

• Spring 07: AIAS will develop a survey to go out to all programs.

• Summer 06: AIAS will assemble a team of professionals, educators, administrators and students in a task group to discern the means of assessment in studio including both 'grading' and course assessment.

• Fall 06: Task group will research various assessment methods.

• Summer 07: AIAS will publish findings and facilitate further discussion and potential uses.

• Summer 05: AIAS will study examples of studio settings, including those that combine virtual space and digital communication while maintaining a physical studio center.

Promote Citizenship

7 Utilize the studio as the premier place to teach architecture students their ethical obligation to become active, engaged citizens.

• Summer 07: Task group of experts will be convened to debate and draft a criteria and process for employing the studio as the premier place to develop the ethics, responsibilities, skills and practices of design-based leadership. This effort will be informed by the submissions of architectural papers, journals, and other forms of research supporting the studio as the optimum environment for learning and practicing leadership skills.

Engage Communities

8 Encourage and promote examples of studios and studio educators who engage communities in projects.

• Summer 07: Task group of students and educators is convened to discuss and draft a paper highlighting examples of studios engaging their communities. This effort will be combined with submissions to local and national media, architectural papers, journals, and other publications supporting this type of engagement.

Expand Studio Model

9 Promote and provide resources about the studio learning model for other academic settings including K-12, interdisciplinary studies, and business.

• Summer 08: Resources will be published articulating the power of the studio model as an effective learning environment. These efforts will be a tool for understanding the power of the studio model, and architectural education as well as the abilities of graduates of the nation's architecture schools.

"Masterfully conceived, spectacularly delivered. A very engaging, provocative, forward-looking conference that will move the profession toward creating higher quality architects."

– Thomas Mathison, FAIA
2005 AIA Vice President

Studio Culture

5

Summit Endpoints

A Personal Viewpoint

Like most of us, I went through design studio in architecture school. It was a formative experience for me; I survived - even thrived. Some of my closest friendships were made there. The studio had been a home, probably too much of one. Many years have passed by since then, but I still have vivid memories of those years in studio.

Now, I teach in the same school in which I studied architecture. Returning there as a teacher restimulated old studio memories. I find myself telling my students stories about when I was in the same studios. In the intervening decades, some of the romance has worn off but the stinging comments from certain critics haven't. The ridiculous hours now seem insane.

While teaching one day, I was drawing a graph on the blackboard of the "Emotional Life of a Design Project." It plotted - in a pseudoscientific manner - the emotional roller-coaster ride of the student experience in design studio projects. I described the novice's almost certain confusion between the value of the design and the value of the designer. I became engrossed in the lesson and illustrated the main points with examples from my own time in studio. Telling these stories out loud made them very lucid and personal. I felt like I was a student back in studio. What happened next surprised me. When I finished the diagram and turned back to face the class, most of them were in tears and I was close to it.

It was astounding to realize so little had changed in the intervening 30 years. It was even more astounding when I thought about all the things that *had* changed: PC's, digital drawings, the Web, globalization, CAD and CAM, 3-D modeling, Earth Day, Watergate, Mya Lin, cloning, off-shore drawings, Zaha Hadid, mobile phones, the Euro, virtual everything, along with Frank Gehry, Rem Koolhaus and global warming. How could the world outside studio change so profoundly and studio change so little?

I was bewildered. So when the AIAS asked me to facilitate the Studio Culture Summit I said yes without hesitating.

That was almost a year ago. Since then I've probably had one hundred conversations about studio and its culture. I've talked with students, teachers, practitioners and administrators. I've reviewed all the "usual suspects" in the literature from the "Boyer Report", to Kathryn Anthony's *Design Juries on Trial*, to (Summit attendee) Leonard Bachman's and Christine Bachman's promising new soon-to-be-published research, *"Student Perceptions of Academic Workload in Architectural Education."*

Some things haven't changed in the debate about studio culture: people don't agree. What *has* changed is the tone and content of the conversation. Early in our discussions about the summit, Jacob Day said to me, "For four years the AIAS has been talking about Studio Culture. A question my predecessors often heard was, 'What are you complaining about? We went through studio and we turned out fine— what's the problem?' "

At the Summit, people were asking different questions: What is the value of studio as a teaching model? How can we better teach the teachers who lead studio courses? How can studios make a difference in real-world projects? How will improving studio culture improve the profession of architecture?

These are fundamentally different—and better—questions. These are not the questions of "the whining class" as one practitioner I spoke with described the Summit attendees. Instead, these are questions that go to the heart of how we teach, inspire and nurture succeeding generations who will apply designerly thinking and design skills to a wide array of complex challenges in—and as the data demonstrates—far beyond, the current practice of architecture.

The Studio Culture Summit produced nine initiatives that, over the next five years, can shape and inform these questions. They might even lead to answering some of them. But, no matter what, the Summit changed the conversation from complaining about the past to designing the future. As facilitator, I saw 50 people—none of them whining—look squarely at studio culture and conclude that the model has immense value as a teaching environment; one-to-one communication, rich peer-to-peer learning, Socratic discourse, iterative progression, learning by doing, visually literate, and creatively based.

Those same people recognized that the culture of studio, with its roots in 18th century France, has elements that do not serve the needs of 21st century life and 21st century architecture in America. To their credit, the Summit participants didn't issue manifestos, opinions or ungrounded assessments about studio culture. Instead, they called for things that have been noticeably lacking in the studio culture debate: doing better research, defining best practices, communicating about things that matter and calling for action-based cooperation among the five collateral organizations.

It's hard to know what will become of these initiatives. If the history of change in the profession is a guide, these ideas may just be left to quietly die from neglect.

But maybe this time it will be different. Maybe the confluence of students, teachers, practitioners, and wise outsiders that came to the Summit and produced a blueprint for insight and action signals a different direction. Maybe they saw anew the potential for design to improve the world. Maybe they believe that "surviving" studio is not the best outcome to be had from the core experience of an architectural education. Or perhaps they caught a whiff of the ether reserved only for the change-makers.

I *hope* the future is different. I hope it's different for students whose self-esteem has been crushed by abusive studio critics.

I hope it's different for teachers whose passion for bringing forth the best of our young people has been swept away by the inertia of institutional bureaucracy.

I hope it's different for the practicing architects whose conviction wilts in the face of choosing between making change and making a living.

Finally, I hope it's different for the public we serve. The accelerating complexity of life on earth requires the highest and best use of the remarkable knowledge and skills we learn. Maybe I'm crazy, but I still believe we can make the world a better place. During the three days of the Summit, I was sure of it.

– Clark Kellogg
Studio Culture Summit Facilitator

The Studio Culture Summit

Print and Web Resources

You can find more information and links to many of the works cited below on the AIAS Studio Culture Summit Web site at www.aias.org/studioculture

Brief History of AIAS work on Studio Culture issues:

November 2000 – AIAS establishes a Studio Culture Task Force to study effects of current architectural education practices on students and consider alternatives. Studio Culture is brought to the forefront of the AIAS Advocacy agenda

December 2002 – *The Redesign of Studio Culture* was published as the product of the AIAS Studio Culture Task Force's research. It is authored by then AIAS Vice President Aaron Koch, current AIA First Vice President Katherine Schwennsen, FAIA, then Studio Culture Task Force Chair, Deanna Smith and Thomas Dutton.

July 2004 – NAAB creates a 13th Condition for Accrediation (Condition 3.5) requiring schools to have a written policy regarding the culture in their studio environments.

October 2004 – The AIAS and the University of Minnesota host the Studio Culture Summit as a forum for a heightened level of dialogue among those with interests in the shape of studio life and architectural education.

Selected Additional Resources:

"The Past and Future of Studio Culture." By Thomas Fisher available at ArchVoices.org. 10.15.04 newsletter

American Institute of Architects (AIA). "The Client Experience," 2002. Washington: American Institute of Architects, 2002.

Boyer, Ernest, and Lee Mitgang. *Building Community: A New Future for Architecture Education and Practice.* Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1996.

Cramer, James P., and Scott Simpson. *How Firms Succeed: A Field Guide to Design Management*. Atlanta: Greenway Communications, 2002.

Fisher, Thomas. *In the Scheme of Things: Alternative Thinking on the Practice of Architecture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

"Patterns of Exploitation." Progressive Architecture. May 1991:9.

Monaghan, Patrick. "The 'Insane Little Bubble of Nonreality' That Is Life for Architecture Students." The Chronicle of Higher Education. June 2001.

Swett, Richard Nelson. "Leadership By Design." ArchVoices.org

Temkin, Jody. "For Would-Be Architects, Grad School Like Boot Camp." The Chicago Tribune. January 6, 2002.

The Studio Culture Summit

American Institute of Architecture Students
1735 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006-5292
202.626.7472
email: mailbox@aias.org
web: www.aias.org

AIAS