

2008 STEEDMAN TRAVELING FELLOWSHIP

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis announces the 2008 Steedman Traveling Fellowship, open to citizens of all countries with not more than 8 years of experience following receipt of a professional degree in architecture.

The competition offers an opportunity to develop a proposal for an architecture of enduring cultural and aesthetic relevance set in an historically significant urban setting slated for redevelopment and within view of a National Historic Landmark.

While the scope of the project will be limited to a single site and adaptive re-use of an existing 100,000 square foot early 1900's multi-story storage facility, the future development of the area will be considered. Entries will include a proposal for programming pointedly specific to the present moment and immediate future, while addressing the eventual re-use of the building. A comprehensive sustainable approach to the design will be required.

A formal proposal for research and travel supporting that effort will form the second part of the submission. The successful entrant will conduct independent research abroad during a period of nine months. The winning project will be published online with jury comments and exhibited publicly. A single prize of US\$30,000 will be awarded.

THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

The Near North Riverfront Industrial District is a highly industrialized area that extends for seven miles along the Mississippi River immediately north of the Central Business District. This industrial sector has, since the 1840's, been the mainstay of this portion of the St. Louis Riverfront. This is, in part, due to the fact that the Near North Riverfront is also one of the oldest industrial areas in St. Louis. In a section of the city nearly wiped clean by the tornado of 1896 but rich with connections to rail lines and the Mississippi River, this small area has a significant concentration of historic industrial buildings surviving in the midst of what was once a much larger linear industrial and commercial district.

The St. Louis' riverfront was the focus of industrial and commercial activity as long as the Mississippi remained the primary transportation route in and out of the region. The arrival of the railroad caused dramatic shifts in the geography of St. Louis. As a result, about half of this area's structures were abandoned and are underutilized, thereby possessing strong potential for redevelopment. Nevertheless, this area is home to many business that do not require more sophisticated space or, because of the type of product they manufacture, are better located away from residential areas and closer to

river/highway transportation. The proximity to the Mississippi river, central business district and highway are key elements in marketing this important area.

The area has a history of public investment in capital improvements for industry. In 1918, the Municipal Docks at the foot of North Market were built for over \$500,000. By 1955, the city would issue bonds to double the docks' size. Also in the 1950s, the relocation of the Commission Row market followed its displacement from I-70. Two major components contributed to the booming industry of the area: the Merchants' Bridge and the Municipal Docks. More recently the area has become the home of the entry point to the St. Louis Riverfront Trail, a paved 12-mile path along the Mississippi River that includes many historic sites such as Saarinen's Gateway Arch, the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, Mary Meachum Freedom Crossing, dramatic views across the Mississippi River to Illinois and several miles of open natural vistas.

Although there are several areas in the City of St. Louis, which retain concentrations of buildings representing the city's industrial heritage, only this one retains ties to the critical industries of power generation and cold storage. The district is united by exterior use of brick in revival styles on every building; most buildings are of red brick, although two use brown brick as their primary exterior material. The area surrounding the district largely consists of vacant land and some new construction.

Directly adjacent to the area and within walking distance are several interesting areas and structures. Just west of the site is the Edward Jones Dome (www.slfp.com/ACTWD.htm), which is home to the St. Louis Rams football team. Directly to the south are several Gaming Casinos including the newly completed \$400 million Pinnacle Casino and hotel. The Pinnacle is located in the historic Laclede's Landing (www.lacledeslanding.org) neighborhood, a nine-block industrial area that once housed companies producing coffee, leather goods, mattresses, tobacco, whiskey, candy and machinery for the barges, features some of the most unique restaurants and sidewalk cafes in Saint Louis. The Landing, as the locals call it, is a colorful snapshot of old St. Louis with cobblestone streets and historic 19th-century riverfront warehouses converted into nightclubs, restaurants and offices.

Directly across the street to the north of the site is the newly renovated LEED Certified William A. Kerr Foundation (www.wakfoundation.org), a non-profit group with a \$15 million endowment to improve education and enrich the built environment. Directly to the east is a single historic brick building separating the site from the fifteen-foot high levee wall along the Mississippi River. Directly to the south and part of the building site is a vacant lot. East of the site is a large vacant brick building similar in size and scale to the building on the competition site. Views to the south/southeast are toward downtown and the Gateway Arch, to the east is the Mississippi River and from the rooftop of the existing building there are extraordinary 360 degree views.

THE EXISTING BUILDING

Located at 1257-63 Lewis Street, St. Louis, MO, this six-story building was constructed for the St. Louis Cold Storage Company in 1901. The buildings exterior shear walls that have minimal fenestration reflect the original use. Mechanical ice-making technology was introduced in the 1860s, giving rise to new options in home and commercial refrigeration. One of the most famous examples of early ice-powered refrigeration technology was the refrigerated railcars of Anheuser-Busch, which allowed the distribution of lager beer throughout a wide territory. The use of ice for refrigeration was successful for home and small-scale applications, but really large-scale commercial refrigeration became far more viable after the widespread introduction of mechanical cooling towards the end of the century.

Elements common to the north, east and west elevations of the building include chamfered corners, crenellated projections at the four corners, a corbelled brick cornice, and an additional corbelled course between the fifth and sixth stories. The north wall is blind above the first two stories, which have metal-filled horizontal openings, five at the lower floor and three above. Both east and west elevations have awnings over the first floor sheltering loading docks where the red brick exterior has been painted white. Center bays both east and west have a pair of blind arches, which run from sills at the second floor to just below the lower corbelled course. At the top story, two arched windows are filled in. A single bay one-story projection at the top of the building stretches across the middle of the building, and is elaborated at both the east and west elevations with a cornice and corner projection similar to the main body of the building. At the east elevation, both the northern and southernmost bays have segmental arched windows at each of the six stories (doors at the first story).

The south elevation is brick up to the top of the second story and concrete block above this, indicating an earlier building attached here. Returns on the brick cornices at the east and west elevation indicate that the removed building or portion of building was not more than four stories high. A portion of the removed building's west wall still runs along the lot to the south.

The building exterior walls are self-supporting load bearing masonry, independent of the concrete slab and beam structure on the interior of the building. The building is very robust and can withstand the addition of several floors on top of the existing structure as well as new penetrations in the load bearing masonry walls. The east and north building elevations of the existing building have some historic value. The preservation of these facades and the general character of the building would surely make significant historic tax credits available for the project. Its value lies not only in its embodied energy, but its cultural value as well.

COMPETITION GOALS

A significant goal of the competition will be to focus on the relationship of architecture to urbanization and community needs. In working to address future urbanization and promote healthy communities, making communities “Intelligent” is critical. Buildings last a long time and have an astounding impact on the environment accounting for more than one third of total energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, and waste. Therefore, instead of building a new waste-generating product, one goal of the competition is to re-imagine the existing bland box structure with new programmatic ideas and materials that can be continually reused or returned to the earth without wasting energy or raw materials while at the same time contributing to a community’s vitality.

Bland box structures can be found in every major and minor urban area in America. Simple damnation is therefore insufficient. On the brighter side, many of these buildings in question remain structurally sound, most exceed present-day height limitations, are exempt from both parking requirements and also “non-conforming use” clauses; they are eminently re-usable. None of this information is lost on developers nor has it been on architects.

The surge of speculative and practical research on the re-development and re-use of buildings in recent years evidences both an interest in *ornament* as projected through digital aesthetics and also a focus on the “*essential*” tectonic and sensuous qualities of building materials. Both might be seen as visceral responses to the palling face of cold-war era curtain walled buildings. A third and more frequently common response stands in explicit opposition. “The building as a responsive skin, as one component of a sustainable low energy concept...seems to offer the best of both worlds: contemporary design without the risk of superficial ornamentation.”¹ As Farshid Moussavi states in his essay, *The Function of Ornament*; “It is these new affects that allow us to constantly engage with the city in new ways.”

Of particular interest is the idea of transcending traditional craft and elevating humble materials without trying to make them into something other than what they really are. This exploration should forge a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the fundamental, yet delicate relationships that exist between the built environment, the natural world, its vital resources, and our collective cultures.

The idea is that opportunities for material expression and sensual experience in a building increase with the functional and programmatic demands placed upon it as an environmental mediator. Exploration of materials, processes and their technologies can inspire architectural form. It is “experience” and the experience of making that touches one’s senses and leaves memories whether or not a place actually exists. The tension between materials, form and experience should deepen our sense of perception resulting in a place that transcends simple object making. Kiesler once wrote, “Our Western world has been overrun by masses of art objects. What we really need are not more and more objects, but an objective.”

¹ Christian Schittich, “Shell, Skin, Materials,” [Building Skins: Concepts Layers Materials](#). (Basel: Birkhauser,2001), 9

Within this context we hope to achieve:

- A stronger sense of community by developing choices accessible to many household types and lifestyles;
- Attractive public areas that encourage walking and socializing, and the integration of (open) space in the urban environment;
- Retail and/or public services within walking distance that meet routine shopping needs; and
- Improved air quality through reduced vehicle trips, programming and planning that promotes conservation and effective use of scarce resources.
- Innovative approach to material usage and building systems.
- Innovative links between historic preservation/adaptive re-use and new construction.

PROGRAM

Historically the architect has played many important roles in society, acting not only as the designer but also, the artist, builder, craftsman, engineer and master planner. However over the last five hundred years, the architects' role in society has continually diminished to a point where it could reasonably argued that their role has only a minor influence on shaping our built environment. Arguably less qualified "non- design" professionals such as land-use attorneys, REIT's and other investment groups now dominate this role. Even though architects are engaged by such "non-design" entities to do the work, the architect, in most cases is provided with a site, budget, program, schedule and often, a concept for a given project while control remains out of reach of the architect. As a result, our buildings and communities suffer.

Give this context; the program for this building is to be determined by the entrant. The entrant should analyze the site and surroundings to determine the best use for the building and site. There are no required maximum or minimum areas of building required, only that the existing structure is integrated as part of the overall program. There are a variety of plausible uses for the building such as mixed-use housing, hotel, casino, live/work, etc., however, programmatic decisions will require a plausible explanation of intent and concept. It is required that whatever program is developed for the project site that it will ultimately act as a catalyst for revitalization of the neighborhood. The entrant should view this site as a possible landmark for the neighborhood.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Submission shall be on no more than 2 – 30” x 40” sheets in a vertical orientation. It is preferable, but not required, that the submission be mounted on ¼” foam core or similar boards. In either case the submission should not be folded.

A maximum two page written description of your proposed travel and study. The proposal should include the time period and approximate dates of your proposed travel, the specific goals of your proposed travel and what, if anything you plan to produce as a result of your travel.

In addition, digital copies shall be submitted on a CD as follows.

JPG – low resolution not to exceed 2.5 mb for each board.

PDF – not to exceed 50mb for each board.

PDF – of your travel proposed not to exceed 2mb.

The CD must be clearly labeled with your name, address, telephone and e-mail address. The submittal boards shall not reveal the identity of the entrant. On the back of each board include your name, address, telephone and e-mail address in a sealed plain envelope with no identifying marks. Also include in the envelope your proposal for travel without any identifying marks on the document..

It is up to the designer to decide what material to submit that best describes their proposal, however no physical models or digital presentations will be accepted. Model photographs may be included within the context of the presentation boards.

Since this project has goals that affect the larger community and the surrounding context the entrant is encouraged to clearly demonstrate how and why their particular strategy and concept is relevant and important to the project and larger neighborhood. Diagrams are encouraged that explain the design approach and concept.

LINKS

<http://stlcin.missouri.org/citydata/newdesign/data.cfm>

<http://www.dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/03000320.pdf>

<http://stlouis.missouri.org/neighborhoods/64/index.html>

<http://stlouis.missouri.org/neighborhoods/history/north/index22.htm>

<http://stlcin.missouri.org/nbr/neighprofile.cfm?neighnum=64>

<http://stlouis.missouri.org/5yearstrategy/1999/neighborhoods/nearnorthriverfront.html>

<http://www.confluencegreenway.org/>

<http://www.explorestlouis.com/visitors/see.asp>