



650+ Students and Professionals Attend FORUM 2008: Energy

Denver ended 2008 with an unprecedented amount of energy. 650-plus students and professionals from across North America and around the world converged upon the Mile High City to participate in FORUM 2008, the annual convention of the American Institute of Architecture Students. Collectively, AIAS serves as the voice of students to the profession of architecture and design. And from December 28-January 1 their voices were heard loud and clear.

With the help of host chapter at the University of Colorado Denver and the chair Andrew Atchley, AIAS members spent four days celebrating energy in architecture and considering the role of sustainable practices in the built environment. The city served as an urban laboratory of sorts for the duration, while the educational opportunities of workshops, design competitions and keynote speeches helped students further consider the theme of the conference.

Urban Laboratory

Denver provided countless opportunities for students to explore good design and consider the implications of energy therein. The light rail and other public transit options, combined with great urban planning, made accessing significant sites effortless. From the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and the Denver Art Museum to the dome of the state capitol and the slopes of Winter Park, even the Hyatt Regency offered a chance to see good design in practice.

Keynotes

Four evening presentations allowed students to experience a variety of perspectives. Paul Polak and Alfred von Bachmayr presented separately on their professional journeys through sustainable design and service focused practices. Will Bruder spoke of place and poetry and the energy source architects rarely tap to its fullest potential: creativity. Finally, Michel Rojkind brought energy to the audience on January 1 as he challenged students to experiment with technology and test the limits of the built world.

Workshops + Seminars

Energy was abundant in the rooms of the various workshops and seminars as students explored portfolio design, graphic rendering and architectural photography. Google SketchUp and Vectorworks offered training sessions to not only show off the features of their products, but also to help students develop marketable skills.

Design Charrette

Students ventured a few short blocks to the University of Colorado Denver design studio to participate in a day-long Design Charrette. This competition challenged student teams to design the studio of the future. Winners received cash prizes for their hard work, the fruits of which can be seen at aias.org.

Downtown Firm Crawl

Nearly a dozen local firms opened their doors to architecture students in an open house format. The experience allowed students the chance not only to see the work and design spaces of Denver architect, but to also gain a firsthand perspective on the architecture community in the Mile High City. Local offices of major international firms as well as smaller community firms helped to round out the exposure and gave the firms a chance to interact one on one with students.

College + Career Expo

Representatives from architecture firms and product manufacturers from around the country as well as faculty and students from several masters programs greeted students during the College + Career Expo. Conversations were shared over lunch about the opportunities students have from employment upon graduation as well as ways to further their architecture education.

Freedom by Design™

AIAS celebrated the 5th anniversary of Freedom by Design™ in Denver, its birthplace. Founder Brad Buchanan of BYG Group spoke about his inspiration to reach out to the community and meet needs that were not being met before. Now on more than 40 campuses

across North America, FBD empowers students to make life less difficult for those they serve, all through good design. For more information

Green Meeting Policy

In 2008 the Board of Directors of AIAS passed a green meeting policy. Only fitting for a conference focusing on energy, great lengths were taken to ensure the meeting used resources wisely. In addition to carbon offsets purchased for all travelers and water bottles provided to eliminate waste, the venue helped greatly in offering recycling opportunities as well as digital signage.

Beaux Arts Ball

No FORUM convention is complete without a Beaux Arts Ball on New Year's Eve. 2008 was no exception. Attendees and local supporters gathered at the Seawell Ballroom at the Denver Performing Arts Center for "The Recycled Ball." High fashion complimented creative costumes and second (or third) appearances as students celebrated the New Year the only way architects know how: in style. Fireworks over the 16th street mall helped to make the experience more memorable.

Looking Forward to Connections in 2009

As always, it was sad to see the FORUM come to a close. But preparations are already underway for FORUM 2009: Connections. The event was promoted by the host chapter University of Minnesota, whose members' exaggerated accents were outdone only their festive holiday sweaters. The event will be held December 28, 2008 through January 1, 2009 in Minneapolis.