

PREMIUM DESIGNER VALUES FOR ARCHITECTS

by Ray Heinrich, AIA

Eric Rawlings' observation (AIA Architect 17 Oct 08) of the increased value of Designer Products as in clothing, furniture, cars, etc. is a keen point to embrace in architectural practice. Yet it depends on the perception of the public and their status consciousness. This perception in turn, has been formed by educators in advertising. For examples, see Vance Packard's book, "Hidden Persuaders".

Our promotional vehicle for this ideal of clear value is the AIA. But it seems that we are preoccupied with defending and advancing our positions among legislators. Of course it is necessary to protect our interests and that of the public. But consider this: The legislators themselves need to be educated, and they allegedly represent the perceptions of a public that is equally uneducated. The thinly masked "play-for-pay" system also gets in the way of effective lobbying among the few, who then deal in compromise with their fellows. This is a cumbersome and uncertain field in which we are one of the many. No awards are granted for that.

On the other hand, educating the voting public about our designer value changes those perceptions where they count: The design jury. This comes down to sufficient advertising. Whether advertising delivers people to voting booths or to cash registers, direct persuasion

of the public has been far more effective. It is the vehicle of education that drives the engine of this republic's economy. Although we are the chief designers in a \$1.2 trillion industry, the dearth of our hidden value is astounding. Our highly touted economists and regulators have yet to fathom the prime origin of the loan pyramid and its collapse: The law of supply and demand for housing and other industry components.

At the grass roots, Architects are now educating at the elementary school level, expanding upon both the value of architecture in curricula and on the value of architects in the built environment. The right place to be in the long run. But there are presently, millions of liberal arts students in hundreds of colleges, studying only one or two of Vitruvius's 11 liberal arts without a clue as to the composition of the whole. Liberal arts colleges lack acquaintance with the Mother of the Arts. Yet, their graduates including, lawyers and economists, command public opinion and investment.

To offer a more complete education, liberal arts institutions need at least one Architect to profess and elicit, and offer at least one introductory course in the full range of architecture. After all, architecture is a human's tertiary skin. It separates the universe of quantum mechanics from the cosmos. It is a

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Throughout practice and as New Jersey's Director of Housing and Urban Renewal, DCA he has initiated numerous original strategies and research products in architectural, spatial, social, psychological and natural systems. They include auto accident prevention via cognitive guidance, real-life experiential learning at the university level, legislation combining 567 building codes into one statewide code, urban homesteading, CHEN initiatives that brought forth the NJSOA, crime prevention through design, instant renewal, community, green and innovative construction systems.

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