

August 5, 2020

2020 Jury
AIA Nebraska Associates Award
American Institute of Architects Nebraska
335 N 8th Street, Suite-A
Lincoln, NE 68508

Regarding: Nomination of Ross Miller, Assoc. AIA for the 2020 AIA Nebraska Associates Award

Dear 2020 Associates Award Jury Chairperson and Jury Members,

As the current President of the Architects Foundation, I am honored to be the nominating sponsor for Ross Miller, Assoc. AIA, towards receiving the 2020 AIA Nebraska Associates Award.

I have known Ross both professionally and personally for the past ten years and have had first-hand experiences working with him, both in various regional and national AIA leadership roles and while he was at HDR as a project designer. Many individuals have contributed to advancing the mission and initiatives of the Institute; very few have such accomplished leadership achievements as Associate Members - Ross Miller, Assoc. AIA is one of those rare leaders.

His tireless advocacy for emerging professionals and young architects both within the Institute and externally to the profession is expansive and worthy of acknowledgement since completing his Master's Degree in Architecture from UNL in 2010. His actionable leadership at local, state, regional and national levels in the Institute has clearly raised the level of support for emerging professionals and Associate Members.

I was an Inaugural "Representative-at-Large" to the Strategic Council from 2016-2017 and appreciate the effort required to engage and contribute meaningfully to leadership goals at the highest levels of the Institute. Witnessing Ross' two separate appointments to the Council are a testament to his commitment and courage towards continually finding opportunities for advancing the career of the Associate Member. Importantly, Ross' tenure on the National Board is commendable. This is one of the highest privileges of leadership in the Institute requiring extraordinary fiduciary responsibility; Ross represented the entire body of AIA Associate members honorably. Ross's service in ArchiPAC should also be noted, rarely are Associate AIA members supporting this vital component of the Institute from both a financial and fundraising effort.

In addition to his many achievements in governance leadership for the Institute, Ross's design leadership has been significant. His six years of commitment to the growth of the AIA Nebraska Lecture Series have brought design thought-leaders from all over the world to Nebraska. This series has provided consistent exposure to design excellence for all AIA Nebraska members while simultaneously elevating the awareness of Nebraska architecture to the speakers.

Finally, Ross' design abilities have been consistently recognized through his many design awards and publications. His design ethos is always evolving and inclusive of inspiration, knowledge and input from many design influences.

I could not be more confident in my nomination of Ross Miller, Assoc. AIA, for the AIA Nebraska Associates Award. His substantial contributions to the Institute and the profession deserve recognition, thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James A. Walbridge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

James A. Walbridge, AIA
President, Architects Foundation



BIOGRAPHY

THOUGHTS FROM OTHERS

"In 2018, I served on the AIA National Board of Directors with Ross Miller, who was the Associate Director. Of course, Ross brought the 'voice' of young architects into the Board's discourse. That was his role. However, Ross contributed much more. Ross is a true entrepreneur and innovator. I always sought out and valued his expansive perspective on evolving opportunities for the architectural profession. Ross confronts our era of accelerating disruption with conviction that it will lead to a better profession."

Carl Elefante, FAIA, FAPT
2018 AIA President

"Ross is, to understate his work, energetic. His engagement within AIA leadership has affected members at all levels of the organization. Through his efforts as a member of the Board and Strategic Council, he has impacted both AIA's present and future. As a member of the Secretary's Advisory Committee, he helped provide guidance on important issues and concerns. As a member of the NAC and through his participation and leadership within ArchiPAC, Ross substantially helped change the impact of emerging professionals within the industry. I have had the opportunity to work with Ross and observe his growth within the AIA. His work, influence and contributions have clearly helped establish a new course for the organization, while also strengthening its foundation."

Bruce Sekanick, FAIA
2017 - 2018 AIA Secretary
2015 - 2016 ArchiPAC Chair

ROSS MILLER, ASSOC. AIA is passionate about community engagement, advocacy, design excellence, and elevating design discourse in his community. These pursued passions have afforded Ross many opportunities to engage in leadership roles early in his career; having served on boards, councils, and committees at every level of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), and founding and leading his a local nonprofit organization. A selfless advocate for design excellence and emerging professionals, Ross has been influential in establishing programs, events, and committees that seek to elevate design discourse and to get other emerging professionals and AIA members involved in the Institute, their communities, and the profession. Ross is also an accomplished designer, with many of his projects receiving recognition through juried design award programs, exhibitions, and publications.

Ross attended the University of Nebraska - Lincoln and received a Bachelor of Science in Design - Architectural Studies in 2008 and a dual Master of Architecture and Master of Business Administration in 2010. Ross is a Principal of FormGrey Studio, a multi-city (Reno, NV + Omaha, NE) collaborative design and fabrication firm focused on elevating all aspects of the built environment. Currently, he is the Associate Director of AIA Omaha, an At-Large Representative on the AIA Strategic Council, a member of AIA Nebraska's Committee on Design (CoD), and the Past President of the University of Nebraska, College of Architecture Friends Association (CAFA). In 2018, Ross served as the Associate Director on the AIA National Board of Directors, which included appointments to AIA National's Public Outreach Committee and the Secretary's Advisory Committee. Additionally, Ross is a Co-Founder and the President of Maple St. Construct, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that is a creative-run collaborative organization and workspace that functions as an art gallery/residency in Omaha, NE and the Project Manager of large-scale projects for Mike Nesbit Studio, an artist's studio established in Los Angeles, CA.

From 2010 - 2017, Ross was an integral member of the design studio at HDR in Omaha, NE. He was involved in designing a wide range of building types and significant projects across the world at HDR, which garnered several industry and design awards, and publications. Ross has received numerous honors and recognition for his work in the architectural and design community and within the community of Omaha, NE, including the 2014 Midlands Business Journal's 40 Under 40 Award, the 2016 University of Nebraska, College of Architecture Friends Association Young Alumni Award and the Associates Award by AIA National. In 2017, Ross was conferred the Louise Blanchard Bethune Fellowship for his contributions to the architecture profession through service on the AIA Strategic Council and in 2018, the Richard Upjohn Fellowship for his contributions to the architecture profession through service on the AIA National Board of Directors.

Ross is currently working towards his licensure to become a registered architect in the state of Nebraska. He possesses vast knowledge of the architecture, construction, custom fabrication, and art industries through his experiences and involvement as a proprietor, practitioner, academic, and volunteer professional.



STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS

"Ross has demonstrated a unique leadership ability that has advanced the profession through a multifaceted, entrepreneurial lens. His outreach and advocacy efforts have resonated at all levels - locally, regionally, nationally, and abroad. In particular, his stewardship of the AIA Nebraska Lecture Series has nurtured an on-going dialogue of diverse design voices and perspectives within the State. Ross truly has expanded the model for practicing architecture."

Roberto de Leon, FAIA
de leon & primmer architecture workshop

"Ross was a crucial member of the National Associates Committee for many years. After his elected roles ended, he was asked to stay on the committee as a liaison, as his voice was deeply valued within the group. He has an abiding passion for the profession, the organization, and its members. Ross is incredibly dedicated to his leadership roles and other commitments, while taking time to bring others up with him. I could not have asked for a better leader to work with during my time as the chair and co-chair of the NAC. The NAC will continue to thrive as a result of Ross's diligent leadership and hard work and input. He's a great connector, listener, and an extremely valuable, capable, and important member of our profession."

Kristina Kotlier, Assoc. AIA
2019 Chair, AIA National Associates Committee (NAC)

LOCAL

Ross has served as the Associate Director of AIA Omaha since being elected into the position in 2014. Since that time, Ross has been leading and chairing AIA Omaha's signature event, the AIA Nebraska Lecture Series (formerly the AIA Omaha Lecture Series). Ross has rigorously coordinated, expanded, and elevated the lecture series program, hosting nationally and globally recognized architects and designers to speak to not only AIA members, but the general public, about design and architecture. In addition, Ross has been integral in leading efforts throughout the years to establish and offer scholarships for other AIA Omaha and AIA Nebraska emerging professionals to attend AIA National's Conference on Architecture and AIA National's Grassroots Leadership Conference.

STATE

Prior to his involvement in AIA Omaha, Ross was elected as the Associate Director of AIA Nebraska in 2012 and served two terms. During his service, Ross led efforts to establish the AIA NE Emerging Professionals Committee, hosting several events bringing emerging professionals and established architects together. He helped revitalize the AIA NE/AIAS Mentorship Program at UNL, developed a professional mentorship program at the AIA Nebraska Conference, coordinated with other emerging professionals on annual portfolio, resume, and interview workshops at UNL, and led efforts to develop the AIA NE Emerging Architects Excellence in Design awards program. Ross has served on various AIA NE committees throughout the years, including the Committee on Design (CoD), Political Action Committee, NCARB Committee, Emerging Professionals Committee, and the Annual Conference Committee.

REGIONAL

Ross was elected to serve as the Regional Associate Director (RAD) of the Central States Region (CSR) for the National Associates Committee (NAC) in 2014. In addition, Ross served on the AIA CSR Emerging Professionals Committee where he led the effort to get AIA CSR leadership and emerging professionals engaged and contributing to ArchiPAC. Ross was also influential in establishing annual scholarships for AIA CSR emerging professionals to attend AIA National's Conference on Architecture and the AIA CSR Annual Conference – making the region the first to do so. Ross, with the help of the AIA CSR Emerging Professionals Committee, re-established the AIA CSR Emerging Professional Friendly Firm Award program – a program that has now been adopted by several other AIA regions.

NATIONAL

As the Regional Associate Director (RAD) of the Central States Region (CSR) for the National Associates Committee (NAC), Ross joined the Advocacy/Licensure Task Force – where he worked on important advocacy issues and legislation, such as, the National Design Services Act (NDSA), ArchiPAC engagement, and intern titling issues. In 2015, Ross was elected by his peers of the NAC to serve on the NAC Advisory Committee as a Director-at-Large where he was tasked to lead the Advocacy Task Force. For two years, Ross led national advocacy efforts on behalf of Associate AIA members working with AIA National staff, lobbyists, AIA and Associate AIA members, and legislators. In 2015,



STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS

"I am privileged to have known Ross for nearly a decade. Ross is a confident, fearless and effective leader, volunteer and entrepreneur. He has served in nearly every possible capacity within the local, state, regional and national AIA, in addition to his contributions to his university and community. In every role he shows up, he contributes and he makes a real difference. It is no small thing to have amassed so many awards and recognitions in such a short amount of time. I can't wait to see what is next."

Lanny McIntosh, FAIA
2015 Moderator, AIA Strategic Council
2013 - 2014 CSR Regional Director, AIA
National Board of Directors

"Ross Miller elevates architecture and design through interdisciplinary community engagement. His trailblazing approach expands the architect's influence and offers a glimpse of future practice that is broad in scope, engaging, and impactful. Through his work in private practice and with the Maple St. Construct, Ross reveals the beauty of overlooked spaces and invites design dialogue by curating installations that combine art, design, and fabrication with exhibition. Project by project, he demonstrates the potential to reinterpret the fabric of America's heartland, and then through his influential national AIA leadership, Ross shares the transformative power of interdisciplinary design to the greater architectural community."

Tim Hawk, FAIA
2019 - 2021 At-Large Director, AIA National
Board of Directors

NATIONAL (CONT'D.)

Ross led an emerging professional team in an ArchiPAC challenge at the AIA's Conference on Architecture. The emerging professional team finished with the most donors and the third most amount raised. From 2016 - 2019, the emerging professional team, led by Ross, ended up annually raising the most amount of ArchiPAC donations and the greatest number of donors for four consecutive years. Ross also worked with ArchiPAC and Advocacy staff to establish emerging professional donor levels for ArchiPAC, is a founding member of the NDSA Coalition and the Emerging Professional ArchiPAC Committee.

In 2017, Ross was elected by his peers of the NAC to serve as the Associate Representative on the AIA Strategic Council. The Strategic Council is a part of AIA National's leadership structure and serves to advance the architectural profession by informing AIA National's Board of Directors and other Institute bodies about important professional issues and opportunities. Ross served as a Co-Convener of the Lifecycle of an Architect Work Group and a member of the Strategic Planning Committee, while representing the Associate AIA membership's voice on the Strategic Council.

In 2018, Ross became the Associate Director on AIA National's Board of Directors, serving and representing the Associate AIA membership's voice on the Institute's foremost governing body. Ross was appointed to serve on the Secretary's Advisory Committee, serving as an advisor to the AIA Secretary and related Institute issues. In addition, Ross was also appointed to the Public Outreach Committee, which advises on all of AIA National's media outreach efforts, AIA's Conference on Architecture, AIA's Film Challenge program, and AIA National's membership messaging.








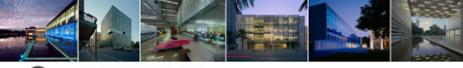








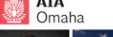
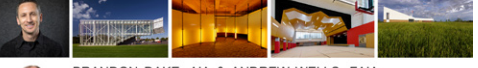




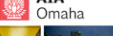

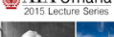



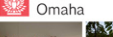
















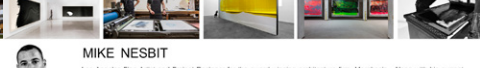








In 2019, Ross was elected by the AIA Strategic Council to serve a two-year term as an At-Large Representative on the Strategic Council. His first year back on the Strategic Council he served on the Transforming Architectural Education Work Group, and this year is serving on the Rural Issues Work Group. In addition, he was appointed to serve on AIA National's Finance and Audit Committee, serving as an advisor to the AIA Treasurer and related financial issues.

MAPLE ST. CONSTRUCT

Maple St. Construct is a creative-run collaborative organization and workspace that functions as an art gallery/residency in Omaha, NE that was founded, curated, and organized by Ross along with his partners and co-founders, Thomas Prinz and Mike Nesbit. Maple St. Construct is an organization which bridges the discourse between artists from the West Coast and the Midwest with the understanding that real creation depends on getting outside of our familiar cultural conventions and making stuff. In 2019, Maple St. Construct became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and Ross currently serves as the President. His goal has always been to elevate the design discourse in the Omaha community through the introduction of artists, architects, and designers into the fabric of the community. Under Ross's leadership, Maple St. Construct has held 38 exhibitions in various locations in Omaha, Ames, IA, and Los Angeles; and published two monographs, with a third on the way, in just three years.

AIA NEBRASKA LECTURE SERIES

Ross has chaired the AIA Nebraska Lecture Series since 2014. Expanding the program over the years to become one of the largest architectural and design lecture series programs in the country. Annually hosting some of the most sought-after architects and designers from across the globe.

  <p>TODD WALKER, FAIA Founding Partner of archimania, a Memphis-based, award winning architecture firm and the recipient of the 2014 Francis Gassner Award from AIA Memphis. <i>Thursday, September 25th at KANEKO Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm Q&A: 8:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>STEPHEN VAN DYCK, AIA Design Partner at Seattle-based, LMN Architects. The firm is the 2016 AIA Architecture Firm Award recipient and recipient of more than 200 local, regional, national and international design awards, including 7 AIA National Honor Awards. <i>Thursday, November 5th at KANEKO Social Hour: 6:00 pm AIA Omaha Meeting: 6:30 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>NICK WINTON, AIA Founding Partner of AW Architects, a Boston-based multi-disciplinary practice committed to design innovation. The firm has been recognized with over 50 design awards, including 5 AIA National Design Awards and a Progressive Architecture Award. <i>Thursday, July 12th at Gallery 1516 Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>
  <p>MARK RIPPLE, AIA Partner and Director of Operations for the New Orleans-based architectural studio ESKEW+DUNNE+RIPPLE, the 2014 AIA Architecture Firm Award Recipient. <i>Thursday, May 22nd at KANEKO Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm Q&A: 8:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>TREY TRAHAN, FAIA Founder and CEO of New Orleans-headquartered, Trahan Architects. The firm has been awarded four AIA National Honor Awards and numerous state and regional design awards. The firm's work has been published in more than 40 countries. <i>Thursday, September 11th at KANEKO Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>BRIAN BELL, AIA & DAVID YOCUM, AIA Co-Founders and Principals of Atlanta-based, BLDGS, a 2017 Architectural League of New York Emerging Voices Award recipient and the 2016 AIA Atlanta Silver Medal award recipient. <i>Thursday, May 11th at Gallery 1516 Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>
  <p>PATRICK TIGHE, FAIA Principal and lead designer of Los Angeles-based, Patrick Tighe Architecture. The firm is committed to creating an authentic, contemporary architecture. <i>Thursday, November 6th at KANEKO Social Hour: 6:00 pm AIA Omaha Meeting: 6:30 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>WILL BRUDER, FAIA President and Lead Design Architect of Will Bruder Architects in Phoenix, Arizona. Will has led work for over 500 commissions, received prestigious national awards and has been published all over the world. <i>Thursday, April 23rd at KANEKO Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>BRANDON DAKE, AIA & ANDREW WELLS, FAIA Founding Partners of Springfield, Missouri-based Duke Wells Architecture. The firm is committed to raising the level of architectural design excellence in the Midwest, receiving numerous design awards and 3 AIA National Design Awards. <i>Thursday, September 12th at Gallery 1516 Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>
  <p>ROBERTO DE LEON, AIA Partner and co-founder of De Leon & Primmer Architecture Workshop in Louisville, Kentucky. The Workshop's working methodology draws inspiration from regional traditions of craft and fabrication. <i>Friday, November 20th at KANEKO Social Hour: 6:00 pm AIA Omaha Meeting: 6:30 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>JOHANNA HURME & SASA RADULOVIC Principals of Winnipeg-based, 5489796 architecture, will discuss the unique conditions and ambition required to challenge the status quo in the midwest through recent work. <i>Thursday, February 16th at Gallery 1516 Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>RAMI BEBawi, OAQ, MRAIC, RBQ Co-Founder of the Montreal-based multidisciplinary architectural firm, RBNVA. Recipients of the RAIC's Emerging Architectural Practice Award in 2015 & the 2017 Professional Prix de Rome in Architecture from the Canada Council for the Arts. <i>Thursday, June 14th at Gallery 1516 Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>
  <p>STEVEN EHRLICH, FAIA Founding Partner of Los Angeles-based, Ehrlich Architects, the 2015 AIA Architecture Firm Award recipient. Ehrlich is also a recipient of AIA California's Maybeck Award. <i>Wednesday, March 23rd at KANEKO Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm Q&A: 8:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>ADAM YARINSKY, FAIA Partner at NYC-based, Architecture Research Office (ARO). The firm has been recognized with over 75 design awards including the Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt 2011 National Design Award. <i>Thursday, April 20th at ELIZABETH Theatre Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>BRIGITTE SHIM, FRAIC, OC, RCA, OAA, HON. FAIA Founding Principal of Toronto-based design firm, Shim-Subtilis Architects. The firm has received 14 Governor General's Medals and Awards for Architecture from RAIC and 1 AIA National Honor Award, along with many other accolades. <i>Friday, November 8th at Holland Performing Arts AIA Omaha Membership Meeting/Social Hour: 5:00 pm Lecture: 6:30 pm</i></p>
  <p>RONNETTE RILEY, FAIA Principal of her eponymous firm with offices located in New York's Empire State Building, Ronnette Riley's firm has won over 66 design awards and has been published widely. <i>Thursday, October 8th at KANEKO Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm Q&A: 8:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>KAI-UWE BERGMANN Partner at New York and Copenhagen-based BIG - Bjarke Ingels Group. BIG has won over 100 design awards including the 2014 Architect Firm of the Year, six AIA National Honor Awards and ten Progressive Architecture Awards. <i>Thursday, June 1st at Gallery 1516 Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>JACK DEBARTOLO III, FAIA Principal & Design Leader of award-winning architects, a Phoenix-based architecture studio dedicated to "architectural excellence". The studio has been recognized with over 35 design awards and the 2012 AIA Arizona Firm of the Year Award. <i>Thursday, August 29th at Gallery 1516 Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>
  <p>JOSIAH STEVENSON, FAIA Principal and leader of community and civic projects at Boston-based, Leers Weinzapfel Associates. The firm has been recognized with over 90 national and regional awards including the 2007 AIA Architecture Firm Award. <i>Thursday, June 9th at KANEKO Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>MARSHA MAYTUM, FAIA, LEED AP Founding Principal at Leidy Maytum Stacy Architects in San Francisco, winner of the 2017 AIA Architecture Firm Award. The firm has received over 140 regional, national and international design awards, with 9 AIA COTE Top Ten Awards. <i>Thursday, November 9th at Gallery 1516 Social Hour: 6:00 pm Annual Business Meeting: 6:30 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>MARK SANDERSON, AIA Principal & Founding Partner of DIGSAU, a Philadelphia-based studio practicing contemporary architecture, urbanism and environmental design. The firm has been recognized with over 30 AIA design awards and an Emerging Voice award. <i>Thursday, July 11th at Gallery 1516 Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>
  <p>MATTHEW HUFFT, AIA Co-Founder and Creative Director of Hufft Projects in Kansas City, Missouri. Hufft Project's work has been featured in numerous publications and won multiple national and international awards. <i>Thursday, February 18th at KANEKO Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>MIKE NESBIT Los Angeles Fine Artist and Project Designer for the award winning architecture firm, Morphosis. Along with his current discipline, he is exploring areas between art and architecture, with an interest in technique and representation. <i>Thursday, August 17th at Gallery 1516 Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>CHRIS BARIBEAU, AIA Principal Architect & Co-Founder of modus studio, a Fayetteville, Arkansas-based progressive and award-winning design collective that bridges the design profession with architecture, graphic, prototyping, and fabrication work. <i>Thursday, April 25th at The Mastercraft Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>
  <p>MATTHEW KREILICH, AIA Design Principal & Partner of Minneapolis-based, Snow Krelich Architects. The firm has been recognized with numerous awards including multiple AIA Institute Honor Awards for Architecture & the Holcim North American Bronze Award. <i>Thursday, July 28th at KANEKO Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>CHANNING SWANSON, AIA, LEED AP Principal for the award winning and low-cost architecture firm, Neumann Neumann Architects. For nearly four decades Neumann Neumann Architects has merged talent, innovation and expertise to create enduring architectural solutions. <i>Thursday, October 19th at Gallery 1516 Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>	  <p>ROBIN DONALDSON, AIA Founding Partner of ShubertDonaldson, a Culver City-based architectural firm with offices in Santa Barbara & Irvine, CA. ShubertDonaldson has been extensively published and recognized with more than 40 local, state, and national AIA awards. <i>Friday, October 4th at Gallery 1516 Social Hour: 6:00 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm</i></p>

FLOOD

In 2017, Ross expanded the lecture series to include Mike Nesbit, an architectural designer/artist from Los Angeles, to not only give a lecture, but also to create a large-scale, community-involved art installation in a vacant and historic building in downtown Omaha. The installation, *FLOOD*, consisted of a week-long worth of nightly programming that brought together AIA members, affiliate members, collateral organizations/disciplines, and local manufacturers that engaged, educated, and inspired the Omaha community and general public. The overwhelming success of *FLOOD* led Ross to continue to work with Mike Nesbit on other large-scale art installations across the Midwest and to establish the nonprofit arts and design organization, Maple St. Construct.



HYPERALLERGIC

A Flood Along the Fringes of Art

With the site-specific installation *FLOOD*, artist and architect Mike Nesbit seeks to interact with the people and history of locations well outside of the typical exhibition space.

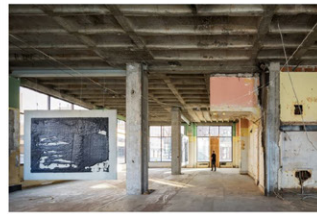
Yaren Eisenstein Hurst



Foundation view of *FLOOD* (photo © Dan Schmitt)



Foundation view of *FLOOD* (photo © Telen Wronski)



Foundation view of *FLOOD* (photo © Dan Robinson)



The Blue (photo © Mike Nesbit Studio)

OMAHA, Nebraska — The prevailing aesthetic of the Midwest is one of spaciousness; it is a good place to expand the parameters of art — to introduce it, so to speak, into a larger field of play. This is the premise of an impressive, provocative and somewhat warring exhibition entitled *FLOOD*. Billed as a collaboration between Los Angeles artist and architect, Mike Nesbit, the Omaha, Nebraska branch of the American Institute of Architecture, and local businesses, *FLOOD* was conceived to thwart conventional expectations in terms of content, expression, authorship and, to some degree, visual art's need for viewers.

FLOOD is one of two large-scale installations by Nesbit in which he functions more as catalyst than maestro, operating well along the fringes of institutional art. The second, *The Blue*, is scheduled to be installed on remote farmland in central Iowa this fall. Neither was easy to view. The Omaha installation occupies two floors of a gated office building and it is open by appointment only. Passesby can't even peek through a window due to old reflective film. Nevertheless, this setting was important for Nesbit, who seeks to interact with the people and history of locations well outside of the typical exhibition space. The building, constructed in the early 1920s as a regional headquarters for Standard Oil, is replete with history: The lack of electricity, and water was secondary for Nesbit.

Ross Miller, an architect and associate director of Omaha's AIA, became intrigued with Nesbit after seeing his artwork on Instagram, subsequently inviting him to address the AIA on his practice as an artist-architect. When Nesbit suggested a collaboration, Miller — with no venue, budget, or clear idea of what he was getting into, but single curiosity — agreed. Shortly thereafter, a large-scale installation was envisioned involving heavy equipment, almost fourteen tons of concrete and a fair amount of high octane machinery.

The installation would require the fabrication of concrete panels upon which, within an ultra-compressed space of one day, Nesbit and a group of volunteers would produce six large artworks. This was a self-assigned challenge, amounting to an endurance test but, importantly, one that necessitated collaboration at every step. "There was a goal from the beginning to produce work at a scale that required an interdependence with the Omaha community," he said. It would also call for spot-on planning, including a detailed architectural model and a comprehensive set of technical drawings. As each concrete panel would weigh in at 2,300 pounds, there was no room for error.

Nor would there be significant funding. \$7,000 was scraped together, but 90 percent of the budget came from in-kind donations, including the large concrete panels. "I had no idea where these would come from," said Miller, "but soon Tom Egan of Enterprise Concrete was onboard." Like Miller, Egan was keen to test some limits and, not incidentally, grab some limelight for a newly developed, ultra-thin precast product. Nesbit worked with building measurements and Egan's engineers on determining a final size of 9 by 12 feet, which would just barely — but thrillingly — fit through the space created by removing a large window.

As Miller and I entered the building, its interior was revealed as huge and desolate. It was extremely cold and eerily silent; not even the humming of fluorescent lightbulbs could be heard. Six panels, now transformed into six artworks, hung taut and unlabored, asserting their presence with a slow resonance completely at odds with the lectures of contemporary display. While alternative venues are often used for contemporary art exhibitions, there was something unexpected and a bit uncanny about the scene. The dim, stripped-down layers of banished décor had a cinematic glow, reminding me of a Tarkovsky film. Light refracted off particles of dust. Old paint, fiberoptic, and wall coverings were decaying before my eyes and little of the building's internal structure remained, other than the stairwell and the long, defunct elevator shaft. Nesbit's curled chip of paint detached from the craved wall and landed with soft splash onto a growing pile below.

The concrete panels are smooth, grey, and at only one end a half-inch, impressively thin. Each one hung from its steel girders by barely noticeable cables, seeming to defy gravity. Within a neat 1/8-inch border, each slab was covered by a thick black substance apparently pulled across the surface. In some places, the rubbery material is as thick as the slab itself while in other areas it bubbles up, skips or fades out entirely. Its smelled faintly of motor oil.

The substance, Miller informed me, is Trimeo, a waterproofing material used in construction. Nesbit, a graduate of SCI-Arc and a project designer with the innovative Morphosis Studio, "fell in love" while watching it being poured along the foundation of a building site. A widely used petroleum-based product reeking with pungent off-gassing until it has completely dried, six gallons of the stuff was poured and pulled across the six slabs, yielding a surface unexpectedly rich in detail, tracing movement like an impasse and revealing an organic process of condition that continues to change. "It's so beautiful," said Nesbit during a later visit. "And of course, it fits in neatly with the history of the Standard Oil building. Looking back, there's an irony, though, creating paintings with a material designed never to be seen."

When the day came to execute the paintings, Nesbit worked with a handful of volunteers to flood each panel, then pull the viscous substance across the surfaces. Their simple but heroically scaled gestures channeled the grandiosity and high drama of midcentury action painting, but, rather than engaging emotion through gesture, Nesbit kept focus on the standard repetition of this purely functional movement. He described the process in terms of the rhythm, precision, and utter lack of meaning outside of a specific goal. While some might see such repetition as mind-numbing, he finds it inspirational, so much so that crucial movements like "wipes" and "flood" became key concepts as well as titles. Contextually, *FLOOD* refers to the shifting banks of the Missouri River, but the primary physical movement of spreading Trimeo, repeated over and over with varying degrees of success, provides the formal basis of the work. On the very first pull Nesbit realized he had underestimated the amount of waterproofing needed to cover the slab but decided to carry the movement through anyway, leaving a diminishing calligraphic trail of Trimeo over much of the slab. "I wasn't going to make romantic decisions," he stated.

By necessity, *FLOOD*'s spatial calculations went through numerous iterations played out online and through CAD drawings developed during the planning process. Separately these drawings have taken on what Nesbit refers to as an "abstract technical" life of their own. A series of points from his *Polymer* series (2014 to the present) are growing increasingly complex. Visually, they are Turner-esque frenzies of calculations, algorithms for approaching the sublime.

FLOOD will remain open through the end of the year. Meanwhile, the relationships fostered through the project have developed into a number of new projects. Nesbit and Miller are working with artist/architect Thomas Prinz, another SCI-Arc grad, on a Midwest-LA exchange that so far has produced several exhibitions and a short residency at Prinz's Maple Street Construct gallery. However, the most challenging project on the boards is one that will give Nesbit an opportunity to test his calculations on 39 acres of unincorporated farmland.

This installation, tentatively titled *The Blue*, involves three more enormous concrete panels, their size determined by the height and weight restrictions of bridges along the way. This time the panels will weigh over 10,000 pounds each. Working with an 86-year-old farmer and a host of farm equipment, the panels will be dragged, slowly, to their positions atop three greatly curving mounds. They'll leave deep drag marks — huge drawings across their open field. "That scale was terrifying at first," said Nesbit with a certain amount of pleasure.

Lifelong city dwellers, he, Prinz and Miller are enthusiastic about the opening being created with the 140-year-old family farm. Nesbit, however, will have to adjust his linear timetable to the dictates of rain and crop conditions. The *Blue* is scheduled to be installed sometime in October, as soon as the soybeans are harvested.

As for *FLOOD*, Nesbit refers to its concrete panels as paintings. They are, of course, but I've come to think of them more as monolithic glyphs, enigmatic symbols of process and visual expression. But while the panels are purposefully distanced via repetition and analysis, the overall effect of the installation is, paradoxically, quite moving. Like many site-specific installations, Nesbit's panels find meaning through the personal and metaphorical relationships of their making.

FLOOD is open through 2018, by appointment only. For further information contact studio@mikenesbit.com.

AIA VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP SERVICE

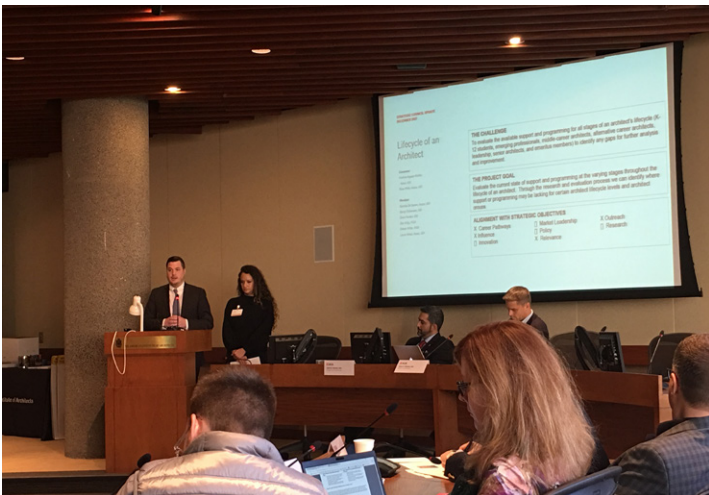
Every year since graduating, Ross has served his profession on a multitude of boards, committee, councils, coalitions, work groups, and task forces at every level of the AIA. A skilled and recognized architectural designer and professional, Ross also simultaneously makes a conscious effort to give back, volunteer, serve, support, and advocate for his fellow professionals in the architectural and design community/industry. He is routinely advocating and supporting emerging professionals and the next generation of architects.



2016 AIA NAC/YAF Annual Joint Meeting; serving as the NAC Director-at-Large for Advocacy



2018 AIA National Board of Directors; Serving as the Associate Director



2017 AIA Strategic Council Annual Meeting; Presenting the Lifecycle of an Architect Work Group



2018 AIA Conference on Architecture; ArchiPAC Challenge Winners - Most Dollars & Most Donors



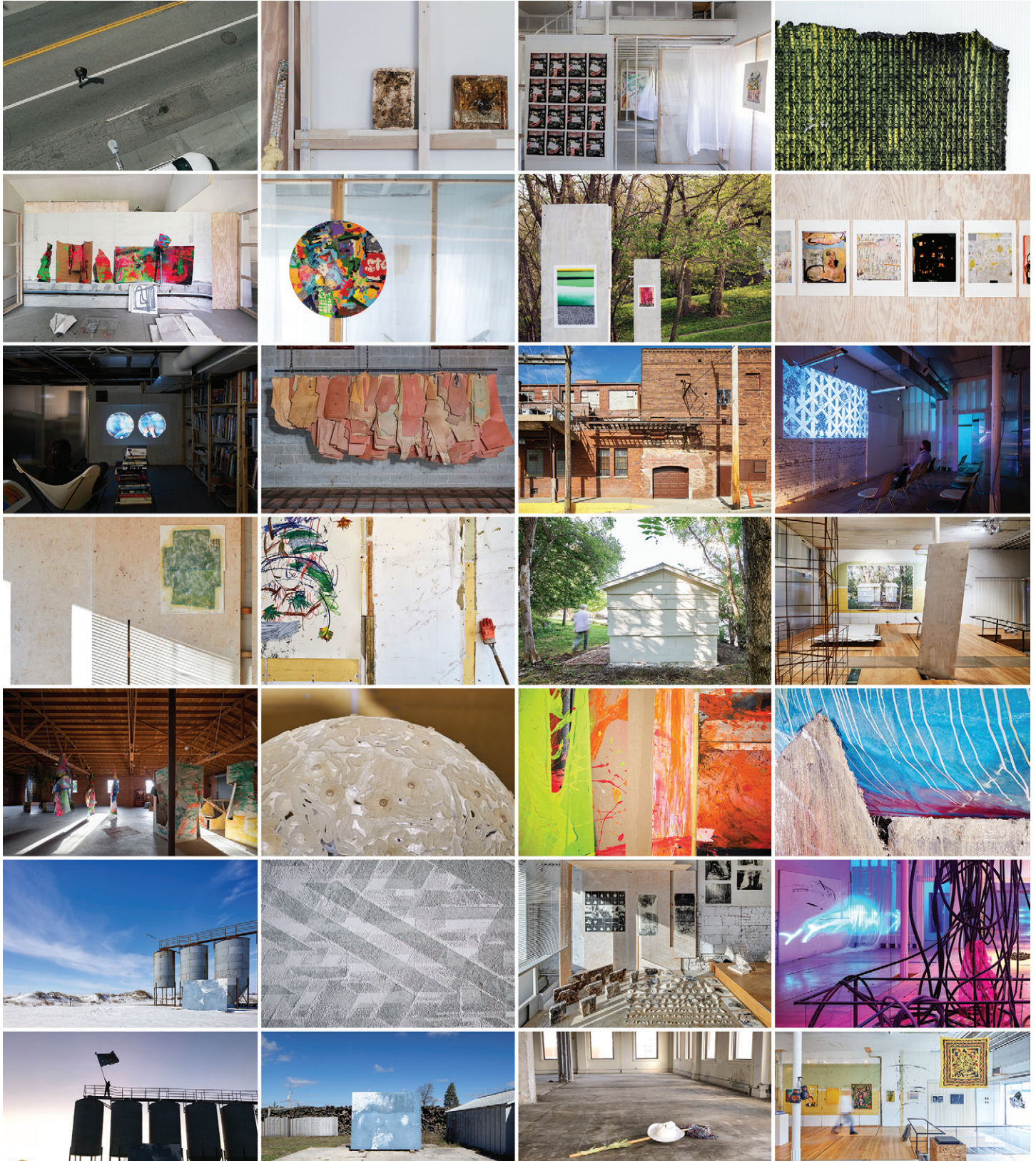
2017 AIA NAC/YAF Annual Leadership Meeting; Presenting on Advocacy Issues and ArchiPAC



2015 AIA Conference on Architecture; ArchiPAC Challenge Winners - Most Donors

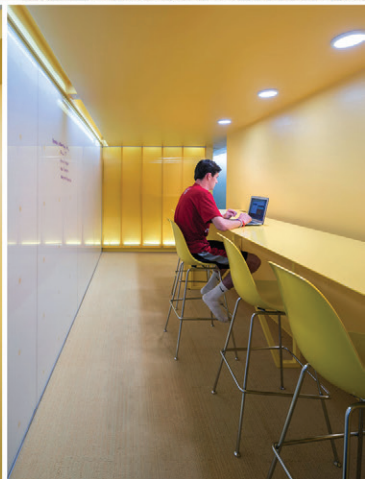
MAPLE ST. CONSTRUCT

Building upon the success of *FLOOD*, Ross along with Thomas Prinz and Mike Nesbit established Maple St. Construct in December 2017 as a creative-run workspace and organization. Maple St. Construct is now a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides free programming as a public service to elevate the design discourse in the Omaha community, serving a critical role in the promotion and presentation of art, design, and the built environment.



DESIGN EXCELLENCE

Ross has built a reputation as a skilled architectural designer early in his career, having designed or led projects which have resulted in over 40 design awards and recognition; including (7) IIDA Great Plains Chapter Interior Design Excellence Awards, (8) AIA Nebraska Excellence in Design Awards, and (6) AIA Central States Region Excellence in Design Awards. Ross and his design work have also been extensively published, he has served on several design juries, and has also lectured on design at numerous architecture and design conferences across the country.





August 3, 2020

AIA Nebraska Associates Award
American Institute of Architects, Nebraska
335 N. 8th Street, Ste. A
Lincoln, NE 68508

Re: Letter of Recommendation for Ross Miller for the 2020 AIA Nebraska Associates Award

Dear members of the Jury,

It is truly my privilege to recommend Ross Miller for the 2020 AIA Nebraska Associates Award. His enthusiasm and dedication as a strong emerging professional leader is easily evidenced and his passion as an engaged early career architectural professional is truly exceptional. Ross brings a strong and valuable voice to all of his endeavors being one of the most outspoken and impactful emerging professionals in the Institute at large.

I first met Ross through mutual service on the AIA National Associates Committee (NAC). His influence on many young professionals as a Director of the NAC has been positive and inspiring. He has led multiple workgroups and carried forward many initiatives over his tenure on the NAC, gaining recognition as a recipient of the National Associates Award. With a clear purpose, strong direction, yet the capability to coalesce the ideas of many voices into a unified message, Ross encourages his contemporaries to become more engaged with their communities, to act with intent, passion, and vigor; and to lead the professional discourse of the 21st century.

My primary work with Ross ranges from the National Associates Committee to the Strategic Council co-working on multiple workgroups including the Life Cycle of an Architect in 2017, Transforming Architectural Education in 2019 and the Rural Agenda in 2020. As the Director of Advocacy for the NAC, he was instrumental in inspiring the emerging professional coalition in areas of governmental advocacy and was a catalyst leading to the recent successful years of the emerging professional's ArchiPAC fundraising efforts. During 2017, Ross was the Associate Representative for the Strategic Council where he co-convened the Life Cycle of an Architect workgroup and spent 2018 as the Associate Representative to our National Board of Directors uniquely positioning him with the ability to work with members from diverse collectives, finding alliances, common purpose, and building networks for future initiatives considered by the Strategic Council. He has put boundless energy to advocate and implement initiatives within these roles as well as many more.

Ross has been widely recognized for both his design and leadership abilities throughout his professional career. Beyond this, and even more importantly, he truly understands the service of mentorship and the irreplaceable footing it gives for our profession's youngest generation to transform voice into action. His notable achievements have inspired many younger emerging professionals to act upon their intentions thereby serving this profession in new ways and building the foundation of equitable resiliency for a rapidly changing professional landscape.

Respectfully,

Nathaniel Hudson, AIA, NCARB

National Strategic Councilor and Western Mountain Region Director | American Institute of Architects
President | American Institute of Architects, Northern Nevada
Principal | FormGrey Studio | www.formgrey.com



Architecture Engineering Planning Interiors

333 West Wacker Drive, Suite 850
Chicago, IL 60606

August 12, 2020

AIA Nebraska Associates Award Jury
AIA Nebraska
Lincoln, Nebraska

Re: AIA Nebraska Associates Award Jury on Behalf of Ross Miller, Assoc. AIA

Dear AIA Nebraska Associates Award Jury;

I am writing in support of Ross Miller for the 2020 AIA Nebraska Associates Award. Ross is a distinguished and recognized leader. His efforts on behalf of Emerging Professionals at all levels of the AIA – local, state, regional and national exudes the qualities of an exemplary AIA Nebraska Associate. While many have held positions of leadership, few have achieved the successes that Ross Miller has this early in his career as an associate member.

Ross' leadership through the AIA National Associates Committee has led to many of the successes the National Associates Committee, and even more broadly, AIA Associates, has had in the past seven years. He helped to create dedicated positions for Associates on numerous committees and boards. He advocated for a dedicated Associate Position and helped recruit the first-ever ArchiPAC Steering Committee EP Representative. Additionally, Ross has led the Emerging Professional team in the ArchiPAC Challenge, resulting in the EPs raising the most amount of ArchiPAC donations and the greatest number of unique donors for four consecutive years. Additionally, at the AIA Central State Regions-level he helped create and implement the EP Firm Friendly award, which set precedent for other regions to create EP Firm Friendly Awards.

Not only has Ross served on the AIA Strategic Council and the AIA National Board as the Associate voice, he elevated conversations around the Lifecycle of the Architect Work Group as a co-convener and elevated the voices of Associates as a member of the Strategic Planning Committee. This work is not just important for the National AIA, but trickles down into the state and local levels at AIA Nebraska and AIA Omaha.

It is not often that we see this dedication of volunteer leadership and dedication to the elevation of design in architecture. Ross has managed to play outsized roles in both. He has worked to develop Maple St. Construct and has been awarded for his design excellence at multiple scales.

Ross Miller is dedicated to advancing the profession through proven leadership, elevating the voices of Associate members and advancing design excellence through his own work. I can't think of someone more qualified to be awarded the first ever AIA Nebraska Associates Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Korey D. White".

Korey D. White, AIA, NCARB

Architect & Planner | Associate

2021-2022 AIA Strategic Council At-Large Representative
AIA Young Architect Award Recipient 2018

