

NEIL ASTLE, FAIA, PRINCIPAL
ASTLE / ERICSON & ASSOCIATES

AIA Nebraska
P.O. Box 80045
Lincoln, NE 68501-0045

Dear Selection Committee:

I would like to nominate Neil Astle, FAIA of Astle / Ericson & Associates for the Harry F. Cunningham Gold Medal.

Neil Astle was actively involved in his profession as a practicing architect at the very highest level, a participant in community design activities, and a professor of architecture, planning, and design. As a visiting lecturer at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the Rhode Island School of Design and the University of Utah Graduate School of Architecture, Neil began to articulate the concepts of design as a process and programming as an essential element in that process.

He served as the director of the University of Nebraska's Urban Programs in Omaha, as director and member of the board of the Omaha Community Design Center as well as the University of Nebraska coordinator of University Affairs related to the urban environment.

From 1968-1981, Neil received the following design awards: six AIA Nebraska, five AIA Central States, one AIA Omaha and two Architectural Record "Awards of Excellence." His work has been published both nationally and internationally in over 24 publications, from Berlin to Tokyo. Of the seven competitions Neil entered, he won three first place, one second place and two honorable mentions.

I firmly believe through Neil Astle's many lifetime achievements in design, he is a strong nominee for the Harry F. Cunningham Gold Medal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald P. Polsky". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "P".

Donald P. Polsky, FAIA

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Neil Astle, FAIA, Principal

Date of Birth: June 14, 1933

Date of Application: October 6, 1965

Date of Registration: November 19, 1965

Deceased: March 13, 2000

Education

Bachelor of Fine Arts, University of Utah, 1955

Bachelor of Architecture, University of Utah, 1958

Master of Architecture and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1959

Professional Status

Fellow, American Institute of Architects, 1983

Registered Professional Architect: Nebraska, Utah, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, South Dakota, Wyoming

N.C.A.R.B. Certificate, 1964

Academic Experience

1985, Visiting Speaker, Arizona State University(Urban Planning)

1984, Visiting Speaker, Hyde Lecture, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

1982-1984, Visiting Lecturer and Adjunct Professor, University of Utah

1973-1976, Originator and Director, Urban Programs Omaha, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

1964-1973, Visiting Professor, Lecturer and Critic, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

1963-1964, Assistant Professor, Urban Design and Architecture, Rhode Island School of Design

Director, Urban Programs Omaha (Combining University of Nebraska-Lincoln; University of Nebraska-Omaha; Design Professionals; and Students)

Director, Community Design Center, Omaha

Partial List of Publications/Awards 1964-1987

1983

AIA Utah Honor Award, Desoto Wildlife Refuge and Visitors' Center/ Bertrand Museum

Underground Building Design, Commercial & Industrial Structures: Underground Space Center, University of Minnesota

1982

AIA Western Mountain Region Honor Award, Student Services Building, University of Utah

Mid May, AIA Journal: Benedictine Monastery, Schuyler, NE

May, Architectural Record: Desoto Wildlife Refuge and Visitors' Center, IA-NE

Spring, Faith & Form: National Architectural Design Awards, Chicago, Benedictine Mission House, Schuyler, NE

AIA Western Mountain Region Honor Award, Desoto Wildlife Refuge and Visitors' Center/ Bertrand Museum

1981

March, Progressive Architecture, Benedictine Mission House, Schuyler, NE

1981 cntd.'

AIA Nebraska Honor Award, Desoto Wildlife Refuge and Visitors' Center/ Bertrand Museum

AIA Central States Honor Award, Desoto Wildlife Refuge and Visitors' Center/ Bertrand Museum

AIA Central States Honor Award, Benedictine Monastery, Schuyler, NE

IFRAA National Conference on Religion, Art and Architecture, Benedictine Monastery

AIA Nebraska Honor Award, Benedictine Monastery

1979

AIA Nebraska Honor Award, Urban Renewal/Midlands Mall, City of Council Bluffs, IA

1978

December, Progressive Architecture, Midlands Mall, Council Bluffs, IA

July-August, Architectural Digest, Morehead Residence, Falls City, NE

June, Toshi-Jutaku, Urban Housing, Ball Residence, Omaha, NE

Spring, House Beautiful, Building Manual, Ball Residence, Omaha, NE

Concrete, Reinforcing Steel Institute, Midlands Mall, Council Bluffs, IA

February, Heft, Berliner Bauwirtschaft, Myott Park Apartments, Omaha, NE

1977

Summer, The Iowan, Midlands Mall, Council Bluffs, IA

Summer, The Iowan, Desoto Wildlife Refuge and Visitors' Center/ Bertrand Museum

1977 cntd.'

May, Architectural Record, Ball Residence, Omaha, NE

Schluntz Publication, Architecture Nebraska, Ball Residence, Omaha, NE

August, Nikkei Architecture, Ball Residence, Omaha, NE

AIA Nebraska, New Architecture in Nebraska:

Tollefson Residence, Wausa, NE

Morehead Residence, Falls City, NE

Milltown Village Multi-Family Housing, Omaha, NE

Astle Residence, Omaha, NE

Flansberg Residence, Omaha, NE

Ball Residence, Omaha, NE

Myott Park Apartments, Omaha, NE

1976

The New Downtowns, Midlands Mall, Council Bluffs, IA

AIA Nebraska Honor Award, Midlands Mall

AIA Nebraska Merit Award, Morehead Residence

AIA Central States First Honor Award, Midlands Mall-Urban Renewal

AIA Central States Honor Award, Myott Park Housing

1975

AIA Nebraska First Honor Award, Ball Residence

1975 cntd.'

October, Progressive Architecture, Myott Park Apartments, Omaha, NE

May, Journal of Housing, Midlands Mall, Council Bluffs, IA

AIA Central States Honorable Mention, Collignon Residence

AIA Central States Honorable Mention, Stafford Residence

1974

AIA Nebraska Honor Award, Milltown Village

1972

May, Progressive Architecture, Collignon Residence, Council Bluffs, IA

Architectural Record: Record Houses of 1972, Tollefson Residence, Wausa, NE

1971

AIA Nebraska Honor Award, Tollefson Residence

1970

19th & 20th Century Art, Astle Residence, Omaha, NE

1970, Architectural Record: Book of Vacation Homes, Tollefson Residence, Wausa, NE

1969

AIA Nebraska Merit Award, Flansburg Residence, Omaha, NE

1968

AIA Omaha Honor Award, Astle Residence

AIA Nebraska Honor Award, Astle Residence

May, Progressive Architecture, Astle Residence, Omaha, NE

April, American Home, Astle Residence, Omaha, NE

1964

November, Regional Shopping Center Design Competition, Rhode Island School of Design

1963

February, Elementary School Design Competition, Omaha, NE



**TOLLEFSON RESIDENCE
WAUSA, NEBRASKA**

CONTRIBUTIONS TO NEBRASKA ARCHITECTURE

The following are a collection of selected quotes by a handful of people that recognized Neil Astle's work, from former clients to well-known architects of his time.

"Neil Astle expressed a lifelong teaching and passion for making architecture."

- *Donald P. Polsky, 2002 Harry F. Cunningham Gold Medal Winner*

"A goal in designing the Benedictine Mission House was to create an energy-efficient facility employing passive systems without compromising natural light and exterior views."

- *Underground Building Design, University of Minnesota, 1983*

"This (Benedictine Mission House) is a large, new monastic complex, bringing together work, worship, and all the other elements of living. It is imbedded in the rolling prairie- energy conscious and snug."

- *National Architectural Design Awards juror*

"Neil Astle has always had a way with wood. The integration of wood and concrete at the Mission House carries on that tradition...vaguely reminiscent of Louis Kahn's Salk Institute."

- *Progressive Architecture, March 1981*

"Earthwork also marches up to meet the chapel in stepped terraces with some visual recall of Aztec or Mayan forms."

- *Progressive Architecture, March 1981, Benedictine Mission House*

"Viewing the Mission House across a Nebraska landscape, it would be difficult to imagine a more hauntingly right solution. It belongs, and enhances."

- *Progressive Architecture, March 1981*

"Its classical lines softened by the color of natural wood, the Morehead House, by Omaha architect Neil Astle, maintains its separateness from the landscape while still respecting the grand scale of the rolling Nebraska prairie."

- *Frank Israel, Architectural Digest, July-August 1978*



**BENEDICTINE MONASTERY
SCHUYLER, NEBRASKA**

July 29, 2008

AIA Nebraska
P.O. Box 80045
Lincoln, NE 68501-0045

Dear Selection Committee:

I enthusiastically support the nomination of Neil Astle for the Harry F. Cunningham Gold Medal. Working as a young architect in the State of Nebraska, I have been inspired by Astle's work. His understanding of sustainable methods, use of materials, craftsmanship, and most importantly, his attention to detail, made Neil Astle one of the most forward-thinking architects in the State of Nebraska during his practice from 1968 and 2000.

Neil's innovative work with sustainability has been an important aspect of the development of modern design in this state. For example, the Benedictine Monastery near Schuyler, Nebraska utilized green building methods far ahead of their time. The building is set into the rolling countryside and responds to the aesthetic and climactic forces of the site. The earth-covered roof allows for the building to blend with the Nebraskan landscape and the earth-bermed walls on the periphery protect the building from strong winter winds. This important project was recognized with a 1981 AIA Nebraska Honor Award and a 1981 AIA Central States Honor Award, in addition to garnering many other awards and attention in publications.

Not only was his work very personal, but he developed long-lasting relationships with his clients. Dale Ball of the Midlands Corporation, for whom Astle produced many projects, stated "...the single, most important decision I made in the whole process was selecting Neil Astle as architect..."

Astle won numerous design awards including two Architectural Record "Record Houses" awards. In addition, his buildings were featured in national and international publications. Astle buildings were featured in Progressive Architecture magazine three times and in the Architectural Record magazine four times.

I am honored to show my support for Neil Astle for this important award. I strongly believe that his legacy in the State of Nebraska much deserves this recognition.

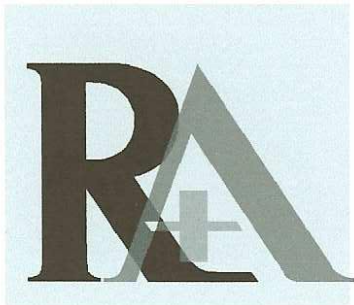
Sincerely,



Randy Brown, FAIA, LEED-AP



DANISH IMMIGRANT MUSEUM
HAND RENDERING



REINHARDT
&
ASSOCIATES
ARCHITECTS

23 July 2008

Re: Harry F. Cunningham Gold Medal - Neil Astle Nomination

Dear Members of the Selection Committee:

We are writing this letter in support of the nomination of Neil Astle for the Harry F. Cunningham Gold Medal for Architectural Excellence in the State of Nebraska. It was our good fortune to have worked alongside of Neil Astle- Brent for 18 years, and Dan for almost 10 years. From our experience with him, we learned a special appreciation for materials, systems, and an overall approach to design.

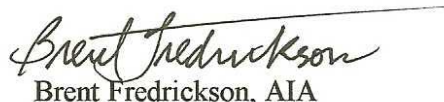
Neil was focused on producing good architecture- architecture that was meant to fulfill the needs for which it was being built. His work was always organized, straight-forward, and immediately understandable. He also had an unbending insistence on integrity in both the use of materials and a clear expression of the structural and functional organization. With his use of natural materials, he was ahead of his time in developing "green" architectural solutions. His work was not trendy or geared toward splashy special effects, but was always so well organized that it's inherent beauty, as well as the spatial experience that came from entering and using it, was an integral feature. It was timeless architecture that was inspiring and often even quietly breathtaking.

Neil was always sensitive to site topography and setting, and his work was always a part of the natural landscape. He could adapt to the scale of any project and budget to accomplish the appropriate response, as his ability to create innovative and memorable architecture did not require unusual budgets. He also had an extraordinary ability to see the larger picture of a project, yet was concerned with the smallest of details.

We feel that Neil Astle demonstrated a profound effect upon architecture in this State. Through his innovative ability, he designed several projects worthy of note. Many of those projects are included in this application. We welcome this opportunity to affirm our appreciation for Neil Astle, for his tremendous contribution to architecture, and for his impact on our own professional development. We highly recommend Neil for this prestigious honor.

Sincerely,


J. Daniel Reinhardt, AIA


Brent Fredrickson, AIA



**MILLTOWN VILLAGE
OMAHA, NEBRASKA**

Dale Ball

1331 Park Avenue SW Unit 1408
Albuquerque, NM 87102
(505) 242-4650

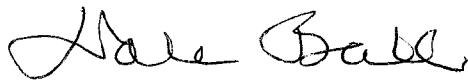
To Whom It May Concern:

During several years in the 1970's I worked closely with Neil Astle as he designed several projects for my company, Midlands Corporation, as well as a home for me and my family. I never ceased to be impressed with his creativity and superb conceptual ability. The result of my years of affiliation with him can be shown in the honors he received and the publications that featured his work during those years.

The projects he designed for Midlands Corporation included Myott Park Apartments and Milltown Village Townhouses, both in Omaha, Nebraska, and Midlands Mall in Council Bluffs. He also designed our personal residence in Omaha during this period, which was featured as an Architectural Record House of the Year in 1977. Each of these showcased his exceptional talent, and each resulted in a design award.

I enthusiastically endorse Neil Astle as a candidate for the Harry F. Cunningham Gold Medal for Architectural Excellence. He proved himself not only as an outstanding Nebraska architect, but as an outstanding national architect. It seems entirely fitting that he be recognized for his superb body of work by receiving the Harry F. Cunningham award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dale Ball".

Dale Ball



**DESOTO WILDLIFE REFUGE
NEBRASKA BORDER**

July 17, 2008

COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE
Architecture, Landscape & Interior Design Programs

Dear Selection Committee:

I would like to support the nomination of Neil Astle, FAIA of Astle / Ericson & Associates for the Harry F. Cunningham Gold Medal.

Few architects in Nebraska would fail to recognize an Astle building for its carefully worked out spaces and the warp and woof of its details. Nor will few forget his persona, a tall and amiable man refusing to go the architect's bow tie route and instead cutting off his long ties so that they didn't drag across his drawing board - clearly a signature image of a pioneering and independent thinker.

Neil Astle has easily met and even exceeded the criteria for this most important honor. He has had a profound influence on Nebraska architecture and has left a legacy of critical thought through award winning buildings in Omaha and across the state. These buildings have endured the test of time and can still be regarded as examples of architecture with a highly nuanced sense of materiality and spatial development.

Neil's architectural practice was both progressive and inventive, contributing to the advancement of the profession in Nebraska. He openly shared his thinking and ideas through involvement with a large cohort of students, community leaders and professional groups. His skill as a teacher was widely acknowledged and resulted in many visiting lectures at architectural schools across the country.

Neil excelled at developing rational building methods and owned an exquisite and rich sense of how details and materials contribute to architectural ideas. His many spatially expressive design solutions were at the leading edge of practice during his Nebraska years in the late 60's and early 70's, a legacy he continued in both Nebraska and Utah until 2000.

While Astle's work was widely known regionally, it has been widely cited and praised nationally. On a visiting faculty grant last year, Dan Naegel, an Iowa State architecture faculty member, began documenting Neil's work. This alone suggests Neil's enduring legacy as an architect and I believe merits his position among the distinguished Cunningham medal award winners.

Sincerely,



Thomas Laging, FAIA
Killinger Distinguished Professor of Architecture and Urban Design
University of Nebraska, Lincoln

To the Harry F. Cunningham Gold Medal Award Jury:

It is a great honor to have the opportunity to recommend Neil Astle, FAIA for the Harry F. Cunningham Gold Medal. As an undergraduate considering architecture as a career and then as a graduate student in architecture during the early 1970s, I was inspired from a distance by the superb design, sensitivity, and use of materials in Neil's residential architecture and impressed that one of the nation's best designers worked in my hometown. As an intern and later young staff member in Omaha's planning department, I was inspired up close by Neil's quiet humility, quest for excellence, and willingness to teach both his students at the University of Nebraska and those, like me, who had the opportunity to learn from him outside of the academic setting. Coming across one of his houses as it was being enveloped by its landscape had the power of discovering a rare gem. Having the chance to learn from this great architect and educator, so generous and patient with his time and expertise, how that house went together lent layers of meaning to that discovery. Neil's larger civic buildings, such as the visitors' center at DeSoto Bend, with its superb marriage of concrete and wood and its design that guided but never prodded the viewer, were shrines to young designers like me who were trying to learn about the art of building. Neil taught both by his work and his words.

Yet, despite his many great buildings in Nebraska and Utah, two of Neil Astle's projects continue to stand out in my mind for their sense of striving for something new in a social and urban context. Most people in 2008 regard these projects as programmatically unsuccessful, yet I found them as efforts by an architect trying to use his art in the service of social progress and economic innovation. These projects were North Omaha's Myott Park and Council Bluffs' Midlands Mall. Myott Park was built on the premise that superior design could produce what government programs and legislation could not – an economically and racially integrated community. I studied this project closely as an architecture student and considered it as a home when my wife and I moved back to Omaha in 1976. Regrettably, poor management, federal regulations that tended to prevent income integration, and the difficulties inherent in marketing a truly mixed income development doomed this idealistic effort. Ironically, I am now in the process of designing a reuse concept for the Myott Park site and I hope we can realize Neil's dream of community in a somewhat different way.

The Midlands Mall development was a downtown regional mall, developed as part of Council Bluffs' urban renewal program during the 1970s. The craftsmanship and color of this project, along with its urban square concept and play of indoor and outdoor spaces, was something truly different and unique in commercial development. It is easy to forget the activity and excitement that accompanied the opening of Midlands Mall, and the fact that it sustained major downtown retailing in Council Bluffs long after it had died in comparable cities. Neil's application of his talent and sensitivity to the nearly impossible problem of making an interior shopping mall work in a downtown setting produced a superior effort that continues to function, even with a different use program. To me, Myott Park and Midlands Mall demonstrated the power of an architect putting himself on the line to create something great and being unafraid of failure. This fundamental and quiet courage has always defined Neil and his work for me.



Of course, Neil spent most of the last two decades of his life working in Utah and designed many important buildings at the University of Utah and in other public settings there. Yet, his work in Nebraska made an enormous difference to those of us who learned from him. We owe him a great debt. Part of that debt may be repaid, if posthumously, by the award of the Harry F. Cunningham Gold Medal, adding his name to the roll of other distinguished recipients who have influenced the rest of us through their work, teaching, and friendship.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mart Shukert", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Martin H. Shukert, FAICP

