

NCARB

Principles of the NCARB

FOR CREATIVE INTEGRATION OF

PRACTICE AND EDUCATION IN THE ACADEMY



2010 NCARB PRIZE WINNER
SPIRIT OF PLACE—SPIRIT OF DESIGN

THE CATHOLIC

SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING

UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

INSTITUTION

The Catholic University of America
School of Architecture and Planning

PROJECT NAME

Spirit of Place—Spirit of Design

PROJECT DIRECTOR

Travis L. Price III, FAIA, Principal Director

NON-FACULTY ARCHITECT PRACTITIONER

Markku Robert Allison, AIA



photo by: Arno de la Chapelle

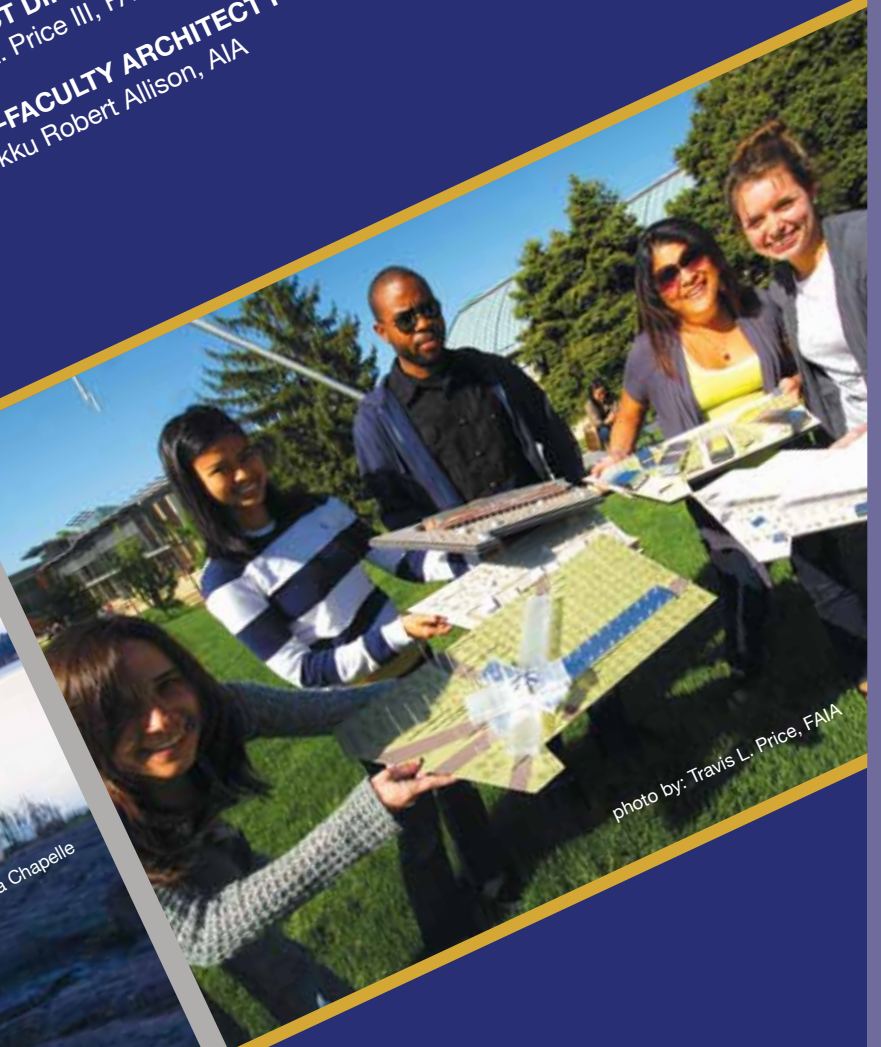


photo by: Travis L. Price, FAIA

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

New dimensions of learning occurred when architecture students, instructors, and practitioners engaged in research, design, and construction outside their comfort zones by focusing on an artistic project in Helsinki, Finland.

First researching the history, culture, and contemporary language about Finland and its folklore, the 23 undergraduate and graduate students picked from their many interpretations to create one sculpture. The project took place over a spring semester and summer construction expedition, and first involved students participating in a nine-day charrette for schematic design. Throughout the spring semester, students worked with non-faculty architect practitioners, materials suppliers, and fabricators to develop construction documents. Three students from Aalto University, Helsinki, also participated. Non-faculty practitioners served on design juries and assisted with informal crits. Then, the project was reviewed and approved by the Finnish authorities.

Students next traveled to Helsinki and constructed their design in nine days. They worked with other Finnish students, local architects, contractors, community members, Finnish design industry representatives, materials manufacturers, and the Finnish decision makers.

Titled “Shaman’s Haven of the Kalevala,” the wood, glass, and stainless steel architectural installation with a footprint of 15 by 40 feet debuted in August 2010. It includes a 300-square-foot interior space for small meetings of reflection and dialogue. Eligible submissions for the NCARB Prize just have to focus on architectural topics, but this one was a built project.

Students learned about marketing, communications, project financing, permitting, contract negotiations, and construction conflict resolution, which are cited as some of the priorities for a quality architectural education in the *2008 NCARB Position Paper for the NAAB Accreditation Review Conference*.

The wide-reaching project is part of an ongoing relationship between The Catholic University of America and Spirit of Place-Spirit of Design Inc., a program giving architectural students the chance to design and build culturally significant structures around the globe.



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Q&A

By Travis Price III, FAIA

Describe the moment that you fully realized that this project was invaluable to students.

There is a moment when the project takes on a voice in the student's life. Suddenly, a student begins to stop speaking about function only, or about design pedagogy, and the muse takes over. The students start talking passionately about the project to themselves and to others as a story, not simply a building. They begin speaking in metaphor and poetry about stones, glass, steel, and light. That is a magical transition where meaning and modern architecture reunite in a magnificent landscape. That is the moment when they are forever hooked on the Mythic Modern and will always seek the "whys," not necessarily the "hows" to shape the future of architecture.

How do the aspects of this Finnish project contrast with typical architectural practice in the U.S. and how transferable are the skills learned?

In this project, students have been immersed in a Finnish-ethic of architectural design and practice, and inspired by the deepest mythological underpinnings of Finnish culture through study of the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*, which inspired The Lord of the Rings trilogy. Intrinsic to design practice in Finland is the notion of "embedded design" that is ever-present throughout all aspects of life at every scale. The translation of this approach into architectural design is a finely honed approach to site conditions, and building materials to fully exploit functional as well as expressive qualities. Also, this community-based element of embedded cultural design is a key element to working in Finland.

Why is it important to engage students, educators, and practitioners in international projects such as this?

Traditionally, buildings were designed in harmony with the existing natural environment and more importantly, the regional culture. In our current globalized economy, too often, the built environment reflects the homogenous economic realities rather than the spiritual and natural imperatives. But architecture that regenerates the spirit of place locally and globally can serve as a model of leadership to clients at many scales: Culturally and ecologically sustaining design sparks new conceptions of place and possibility, fosters cultural preservation, and leads to a new design- and culture-based value of place. New development, cultural tourism, education, and business models based upon distinctions of place are fomented by this approach.

What cultural differences had to be overcome in the context of project management?

We have had the privilege to work with a professional construction crew that is very collaborative and adept at problem-solving. It has been a great relationship for our project and an excellent one for the students to witness. We're also working with outstanding materials suppliers as sponsors on developing new systems for prefabricating components and assemblies. This has been a mutual learning experience.

What suggestions do you have for schools interested in emulating this project?

The program has proven to be viable over 16 years as a result of innovative collaboration among schools of architecture, practitioners, and professional design organizations in each host country. Partnerships have been fostered not only between academia and architectural practice, but as well with government agencies, nonprofit organizations, building suppliers, and design industries. The development of such multi-faceted partnerships and collaboration would be a key element for schools interested in emulating this project.

Spirit of Place-Spirit of Design, Inc. [a non-profit that partnered with Catholic University] is seeking universities and organizations interesting in emulating this model curriculum, and would be available to assist schools in starting such a program.

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PROJECT BOARDS

JURY COMMENTS

“This project exposes students to the potential breadth of practice, including issues such as global impact, cultural diversity, and emotional engagement.”

“The current practice of transferring local practices to foreign lands forces architects to reconsider how we think about design and construction—a valuable lesson for students in the current context of globalized practice.”

A DESIGN BUILD
EXPEDITION
COURSE
IMMERSED IN
GLOBAL
CULTURES &
DISTANT
LANDSCAPES



The course is conceived as an immersion into the **spirit** of other **cultures** and **distant landscapes** while working with real clients, budgets, schedules, and building materials. The syllabus starts with a culturally inspired sculptural design investigation of a remote site and distant culture. Students learn to design and build cooperatively as a team at remote exotic landscapes while working with a number of diverse clients. All projects are built within 9 days by 15-20 students. Design begins spring semester and intensive construction occurs during the summer.



The design build portion is also augmented with graduate studios using the same cultural and landscape investigations to design large scale architecture projects during the same spring semester. This program is committed to the preservation of cultures and the environment primarily through the education of architects. The program directly enhances the future of the built environment as essential to our spiritual, cultural, and environmental development. Further, it preserves the poetic diversity of other landscapes and cultures by embracing their spirit in a modern idiom. First we shape our environments and then they shape us. This program shapes the shapers.

THE PROCESS - Design in **One** Semester / Build in **Nine** Days

PROJECT EXAMPLE - TEMPLE OF THE TIGEL, BILASANY, IRLAND, 2007
Reference: "Temple of the Tigel" by James Fox, in the context of the book "The Culture of the Temple" by James Fox

- THE CONCEPT**
1. Research culture, site, client.
 2. Develop individual metaphorical sculptures based on design theme.
 3. Develop individual architectural models, drawings and writings.
- THE DESIGN**
1. Synthesize common cultural themes into design determinants.
 2. Synthesize individual designs into one architectural design for client.
 3. Present model and drawings to client for changes and approvals.
- CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS**
1. Develop a detailed set of working drawings for client review.
 2. Prepare cost estimates and review drawings to keep on budget.
 3. Present model and drawings to client for changes and approvals.
- CONSTRUCTION / CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT**
1. Assist in ordering all materials and arranging construction logistics.
 2. Prepare construction schedule, food menu, food preparation assignments, and arrange lodging.
 3. Arrive at site, build 12 - 12 hours per day with local residents and complete entire construction project within 9 days.
- WRAP-UP**
1. Return to University summarize experience, and prepare presentations.



