

ACADIA past 25 years

reflections in the mirror are closer than they appear

Kevin Klinger

Twenty-First President of ACADIA

ACADIA has 25 years of collective expertise. Our major strengths are our energetic conferences, our networks (including our sibling organizations), and our membership. ACADIA's presence in the international community of architecture will continue with careful and critical research examining influences of digital technology in architecture and related disciplines. As we reflect on our past, we should realize that many scholars have passed through the organization. Many of us have achieved great things, and some of us just hang out and enjoy the experience with our peer group. Quite a few have stayed for a while and moved their energies elsewhere. This is all OK. The vitality of any organization is its constant change. ACADIA is about NOW. What is going on now? The future will inevitably bring change. Tomorrow, ACADIA will be about what is going tomorrow. To understand what and where we need to go, we need only seriously reflect on our accomplishments: Tomorrow, we will continue to

gather energy around our world-class international conferences each year, and support the development of related events crafted by ACADIAns. Tomorrow, we will continue to encourage the intersection of ACADIA's incredible legacy and collective expertise with brand new energy and emerging voices. Tomorrow, we will continue to connect with the significant international volunteer network of scholars and sibling organizations.

(spectacle)

ACADIA hosts great events.

The conferences are the main vessel of ACADIA. We must get behind the efforts of the organizers of our events. We should augment these events with other related activities and support the activities of our members in their development of related events (for example, our sponsored design competitions that Branko Kolarevic and Peter Anders have developed). Our outreach activities have done the most to help cultivate our membership and

develop our identity as an organization. Enthusiasm is the key. If any volunteer no longer has the unbridled enthusiasm that they once had when they first arrived to ACADIA, they need to let others in to steer the ship. Relevant topics are critical to attract new voices. Not to privilege Canadian events, but two of the watershed events in ACADIA's more recent history occurred up north. The conference in Quebec was a significant event. It sent everyone rendering their own ideas about potential questions of representation brought on by digital technology (and healthy doses of Form Z). The Fabrication conference at Waterloo and Toronto was by far the most significant unfolding of scholarship in one venue about digital fabrication. This event continues to make a difference in architecture.

Certainly, our conferences must demonstrate the range and depth of our scholarship, but sometimes ideas emerge that should demand our full attention in order to make a difference in the discipline of architecture. Ideas shift; tomorrow will offer a range of brand new ones. Might we see an event devoted to pervasive computing? We must always remain open to new ideas and get behind them in significant ways. In this way, the contribution of ACADIA is not in chasing the topic of the day, but in the shaping of the topics of the day.

In the wake of constant change, ACADIA's real influence is its network. Just a few years prior ACADIA was at a crossroads. We all bemoaned the fact that computers were ubiquitous. Many called for the closing of the doors of ACADIA, citing that it's original purpose had been fulfilled. We decided, instead, to open more broadly the discourse by

supporting innovative emerging voices and new directions. Topics like digital fabrication emerged in ACADIA as a "topic node" in Indiana as a viable direction for the discourse. The following year, with the leadership and enormous investment of enthusiasm of Philip Beesley, Nancy Cheng, and Shane Williamson, digital fabrication became a central theme and a watershed event. The collective expertise of ACADIA rose to help shape the discipline. When we reflect on the 00s, I believe that we will realize that these were pivotal moments in the waters of architectural discourse, and that ACADIA with its great events, played a significant role in helping to shape these conversations.

(network)
ACADIA is a productive network.

The integrity of ACADIA is its strong network. One of our biggest amenities is an exchange with international sibling organizations. ACADIA is an exchange – of ideas, of talent, of jobs, of research, of friendships, of connections... As such, ACADIA needs to be on the agenda of every energetic digitally-driven research, practice, and university.

ACADIA is the infrastructure for making strong connections. It should maintain these linkages: web resources, conferences, sponsors, competitions, and exhibitions. Presently, we are a volunteer organization, which makes it difficult to get too much work from any one person. There are some strong benefits to remaining a volunteer organization. But, frankly, our biggest challenge is to get people to *do* the day-to-day work. If we remain entirely based on volunteer energy, then we must put our stock in those who

have the most enthusiasm. This means also supporting the topics inspiring the young critical thinkers/innovators armed with the latest digital acumen.

Topics will come and go. Yet, relationships will always remain. Our fundamental function as an organization is to keep everyone connected with the resources they need to evolve, innovate, and share their ideas. This isn't as easy as it sounds, since we have to keep ACADIAns enthusiastic, engaged, and desiring a connection with one another, and we have to maintain seriously our global networks with our sibling organizations and ever-expanding network of affiliated organizations, symposia, programs, competitions, and exhibitions. Our infrastructure is critical, and requires an investment beyond which any one person is willing to volunteer their limited time or spend their youthful enthusiasm. As such, we need to cultivate our sponsors in a more reliable way to help us address our infrastructural needs. This is the Siggraph approach.

ACADIAns are leaders.

ACADIAns are emerging voices.

ACADIAns are productive.

They not only serve ACADIA well, but also develop parallel symposia, exhibitions, publications, journals, competitions, etc. which shape the future of architectural discourse. Past ACADIA president, Branko Kolarevic, hosted the seminal architectural event: "Architecture in the Digital Age: Design and Manufacturing." This was the first comprehensive collection of thinkers and innovators in architecture around the subject of digital production and making in architecture. There have been countless

other events inspired by discourse and friendships radiating out of the sphere of influence of ACADIA. ACADIA should stand behind these events in a more visible way, as they reflect the energies of our membership base.

ACADIAns are in leadership positions around the world (Deans, Chairs, Directors, Presidents, Principals). But the most important group are the emerging voices that will volunteer their time and energy to shape the organization. We must continually cultivate our membership. It is our new future.

ACADIA's next 25 years: projections as we race towards a new future

As ACADIA embarks on its next 25-year journey to develop solid scholarship and useful maps to navigate the digitally saturated research, practice, and teaching, I will steer away from the overtly nautical references and move towards a new motor-car driven metaphor (and, thus, complete the 2nd of a Corbusian referential trifecta)

speed + performance

I am a Hoosier, so naturally I must turn to my home to find intellectual reward. In this case, Indiana is the home of speed + performance innovation in the automotive industry. In 1852 in Kokomo, Elwood Haynes invented one of the first successful gasoline-powered automobiles. The "Brickyard" has been the international proving ground for innovations in automobile technology since the invention of the motor-car. I think of the Indianapolis 500 often when

speculating on the future of ACADIA, since ACADIA is also an “international proving grounds” which supports innovative thinking about digital technology as it applies to architecture. Also, I cannot help but return to the racing theme of our 2003 Indianapolis | Ball State University conference. Certainly, the Indy 500 and ACADIA are distinctly different venues, with distinctively different praxes, but for the sake of ACADIA’s future projections, I will race ahead with this comparison.

(innovation)

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway has led the automotive industry in safety innovations ever since it was first built as a test facility¹. The introduction of the rearview mirror and subsequent innovations are a result of the competitive (and collaborative) work of many distinct entities in the entire automobile industry aiming for the greatest spectacle in racing. It is the ultimate application for a year’s worth of recent research and development and has major spin-off implications for the automaking industry. All of the spin-off innovations resulting from Indy car racing are too many to list, here are just some highlights: **2002:** The SAFER (Steel and Foam Energy Reduction) Barrier in all four corners of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. **2001:** Race Control Camera System **2000:** Collapsible steering columns. **1993:** Crash data recorders for motorsports. **1935:** colored warning lights (green and yellow). **1925:** Front-wheel drive. **1921:** four-wheel hydraulic brakes. **1911:** first rear-view mirror.

In today’s racing world, they talk of competitive advantage beyond the mechanical innovations and venture into

the realm of digital technology applications serving the communications feed-back loop: “In 2003, Target Chip Ganassi Racing (TCGR) streamlined its communications between its two pit crews using Microsoft® Windows® Messenger running on Tablet PCs powered by Windows XP Tablet PC Edition, and a custom-built application using the new Microsoft Real-Time Communications Server 2003 (RTC Server 2003).” According to Ganassi, performance advantage was gained by deploying digital technology solutions. “Quickly sharing driver feedback and information on car adjustments between our two pit crews [was] essential to making that happen².”

ACADIA’s Lisa Tilder co-developed with Beth Blostein an Ohio State hosted symposium entitled “Design Ecologies” in January of this year. During the event, Bruce Mau bemoaned the state of affairs in architecture research and development: “If the automobile industry evolved at the rate of the building industry,” Mau proclaimed, “we’d all be driving cars made of wood!” This comment set off a green flag in my head as it relates to ACADIA. Now is the time to consider/act on the role of ACADIA as it serves digitally saturated research, practice, and teaching. ACADIA is about NOW. It is the ultimate showcase of a year’s worth of innovative research and development. It is the greatest spectacle in digital architecture.

New forms of practice are emerging that adopt an inventor’s spirit, value experimentation and accept risk. ACADIA is best suited to facilitate communications, share resources, and disseminate information. Innovation is desirable. We need to find the mechanisms to encourage innovation and reward the risk for

experimentation (even if it means coming in 33rd place).

Since ACADIAns are shaping the discourse (both inside and outside of ACADIA and its sibling organization's venues), we need to provide the best infrastructure to develop our networks, resources, and dissemination techniques for our innovative research and development.

(sponsors)

Indianapolis 500 2006: Sam Hornish Jr. earned \$1,744,855 from a record purse of \$10,518,565 for his slingshot victory on May 28 in the 90th Indianapolis 500. If we examine more closely the results of the earnings of all participants, we end up with an equitable distribution of the purse across the field of 33 cars: 1. Sam Hornish Jr.: \$1,744,855, 2. Marco Andretti: \$698,505, 3. Michael Andretti \$480,105 and slowly tapers off to the last place finisher #33. P.J. Chesson who earned \$216,555 for his participation. The message here is clear: yes, it pays in many ways to win, but still everyone gets something; it really pays to play, and to play, one must qualify. The Indianapolis 500 awards the entire field. Everyone gets something and subsequently contributes to the innovative spirit by participating. In architecture, frequently the award goes to one firm and the rest of the field goes back to the drawing board. Can we encourage innovation even if it doesn't win? ACADIA could be the venue for reward. Where does ACADIA's purse come from?

Of course, the Indianapolis 500 has a direct connection to corporate sponsorship. The display of logos covers every square inch of the surface of the

motor-car and inspires odd behavior in victory lane with incessant and rapid switching of sponsor hats while trying to drink milk in front of the network cameras. The closest thing we have to that in ACADIA was when we received an unanticipated keynote type address from one of the FormZ student award recipients.

(spectacle)

The Indianapolis 500 is the greatest spectacle in racing. A series of events lead up to the final event: carb day, time trials, qualification day, and finally race day. The Indy 500 is also just one event of many sibling events for the IRL.

To be sure, ACADIA hosts great events. A series of related events should lead up to the final event—our conference: competition judging day, workshop day, exhibition day, sponsor showcase day, discussion day... Perhaps in this way we could learn from the spectacle of Siggraph. ACADIA needs to finely tune its ends and audience to be more than just a sharing of scholarly presentations with one another. The discipline of architecture looks to ACADIA to stage the discourse and innovate. ACADIA events and dissemination of information should attract members and non-members alike. Our publication(s) must serve the broader discipline of architecture. Our membership base ought to be energized and supported for their energies invested into the organization. We must always support emerging voices and new ideas.

To steer ACADIA's new future on the right track, we must elevate the infrastructure, maintain our strong networks, develop desirable alternative

activities, encourage innovation, and seek significant sponsorship. Let's focus on NOW.

Notes:

- 1) Indianapolis Motor Speedway
Safety Innovations, <http://www.motorsport.com/news/article.asp?ID=91143&FS=SAFETY>

- 2) Microsoft and Ganassi Team Up at Indianapolis 500: Taking Information Work to the Extreme, Target Chip Ganassi Racing Revs Up With Microsoft Collaboration Technologies:
<http://www.microsoft.com/presspass/press/2003/may03/05-14indy500rtctabletpr.msp>