

# ACSA Distinguished Professor

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2014-2015 Winner: Submission Materials

JAMES MCLEOD STEELE  
University of Southern California

## JAMES M. STEELE, PhD

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Professor of Architecture  
University of Southern California  
Director of History Theory  
Director of Foreign Studies in Brazil



- James Steele has had an enduring impact on generations of students who have since gone on to significantly influence the profession of architecture.
- His substantial body of scholarship and research has greatly advanced their understanding of the role that cultural values, social interactions and differences, economic dynamics and environmental factors have on the totality of the built environment.
- He has consistently applied the knowledge gained in his research to his teaching, enhancing the educational experience for a multitude of students over his long career.
- He has also been an effective advocate of the unparalleled advantage of the foreign studies experience in student's lives, instituting cross-cultural relationships in critically important regions of the world.



## BIOGRAPHY

James Steele, PhD. is a teacher, author, researcher and architect who has spent the majority of his professional career investigating and writing about the key issues that effect architecture and urban planning. He is a full professor at the University of Southern California School of Architecture, where he has taught since 1991. He received both his Bachelors and Masters degrees in Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania, and after graduation taught there for several years. He then apprenticed with several firms, such as Murphy, Levy, Wurman, Louis I. Kahn and Vincent Kling. After being licensed in Pennsylvania, he practiced architecture in Philadelphia, relocating to Saudi Arabia to teach at King Faisal University in Dammam. He remained there for eight years, then accepted a position at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, where he received a Fulbright-Hayes Fellowship and established a Foreign Program at University College, London. This led to both a position as Senior Editor at Academy Editions and a teaching post at the Prince of Wales Institute of Architecture, in London, before being recruited as a Visiting Lecturer by the University of Southern California School of Architecture in 1991, He has remained at USC, receiving his Doctorate in Urban Policy, Planning and Development there, and achieving the position of full Professor with tenure in 2005. He is now the Director of the History-Theory Department at the USC School of Architecture.

## SCHOLARSHIP

The broad international exposure that his background has provided has allowed him to become a part of a rapidly expanding global network, and to explore a wide variety of important issues. The challenge has been to find correlations between them, and explain them clearly to others. In the process, he has written 36 books and edited 9 more, as well as many articles that have run parallel to the gamut of his own experience.

## RECOGNITION

James's published work has garnered many awards, both from his home institution, as well as nationally and internationally. Among these are The International Architecture Book Award for the *Eames House*, Phaidon Press, London, the USC Phi Kappa Phi Faculty Recognition Award for Publications for *Los Angeles Architecture: The Contemporary Condition*, an AIA Publication Award for *Queen Mary*, Phaidon Press, London, Winner in the Related Arts category, American Institute of Architects International Book Awards, 1997, and an INTERARCH Book Award, for *Rasem Badran: A Narrative on People and Place*, Thames and Hudson, London, presented at the INTERARCH XII, World Triennial of Architecture, in Sofia, Bulgaria in 2009.

On the Academic side, he has received a Fulbright-Hays Group Study Grant for Research in Jordan and Egypt, while at Texas Tech University, a Lusk Research Grant for "Sustainable Economics," at the World Bank, Washington, D.C. and two Zumberge Research Grants, for examining "Cross Cultural Influences on Architecture between Tokyo and Los Angeles for the Creation of a Contemporary Visual Digital Archive for USC," carried out in Tokyo, and another to study



Queen Mary Book Review





## Best Sellers



**The Author**  
James Steele received his Master of Architecture degree from the University of Pennsylvania. After teaching architecture and engaging in private architectural practice in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he served as Assistant Professor at the College of Architecture, King Faisal University, Dammam, Saudi Arabia. He is currently Associate Professor at the College of Architecture, Texas Tech University.

**The Photographer**  
Ersin Alok was born in Istanbul, and after an early career as a painter moved on to specialise in photography, in which field he has gained an international reputation as Turkey's leading architectural and landscape photographer. He has written extensively on Turkish art, architecture, and archaeology – subjects he has also treated in a series of documentary films. His photographic work has been exhibited worldwide.

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the “Architectural Mitigation of the Disastrous Effects of the 2005 Tsunami,” in Malaysia. This subsequently led to an annual grant from the Center For International Business Education and Research (CIBEAR) at the University of Southern California Marshall School of Business, which is administered by the United States Department of Education to foster international understanding and economic enterprise.

## RESEARCH

As an academic, James has become known as an authority in several of the subject areas he has written about, primarily in trends in contemporary architecture, especially in the Middle East and Asia. His groundbreaking work on the Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy and followers such as Rasem Badran, which has expanded into many articles, lectures and conference presentations, is now widely cited, and has helped to change international perceptions of this region. Most recently he was selected to be a member of a UNESCO Scientific Committee “Safeguarding of New Gourna Village,” and presented a history of the architect at a Conference held in Luxor, Egypt, on October 2, 2010.

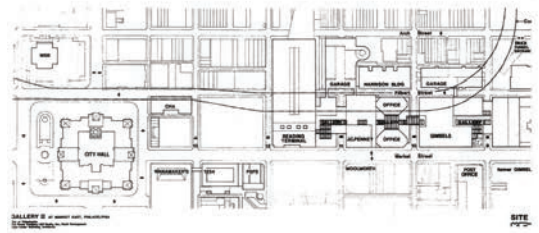
## TEACHING

James has also been recognized for his teaching and commitment to using his research experience to enrich his teaching, by passing on what he has learned to students. These awards include the Tau Sigma Delta Honor Society Outstanding Faculty Award given at Texas Tech University and the Gamma Sigma Alpha Honor Society, Professor of the Year Award and Outstanding Teaching Award; Latter-Day Saints Association at the University of Southern California. Over the 21 year period that he has taught at USC, his teaching evaluations have been consistently high in all his courses. During that time he has taught all levels of Undergraduate Design as well as History courses, which he has reorganized to be more diversified and global in scope, and has introduced four new electives. In 1998, he also founded and continues to direct the USC School of Architecture Summer Semester in Asia, with an emphasis on Southeast Asia and Development. The summer program in Asia provides a full, 15 credit Semester of study for 3rd, 4th and 5th year for Architecture undergraduates, as well as 3rd and 4th year Building Science majors. provides a well-rounded overview of the totality of Asian culture, by visiting key cities and sites in a majority of the countries in the region, en-route to its home base at the Universiti Malaya, in Kuala Lumpur. Our faculty and students are then teamed up with their counterparts from the Universiti Malaya in designing and planning the construction of a real building in the underdeveloped parts of the region in conjunction with our Foundation, Students Designing for Students, which Steele established to finance the construction of these projects. These have included Schools in Cambodia and Thailand, an Ecological Education Center in Borneo and an Outreach Program for Abused Women and Homeless Children in Chow Kit, Kuala Lumpur. Recent graduate Merissa Periana says the Asia trip was the highlight of her USC experience: “It was the best thing I have done in college.”



UM-USC Student Group





## PRACTICE

In spite of a deliberate career concentration on writing, research and teaching, Steele has still managed to remain active as a designer. He is a registered architect, having worked for offices, such as Louis I. Kahn and Vincent Kling, and in his own firm in and around Philadelphia for more than a decade, before accepting a teaching position in Saudi Arabia that contractually forbade practice. He has subsequently consulted with many firms around the world, and has designed several residential projects while at USC.

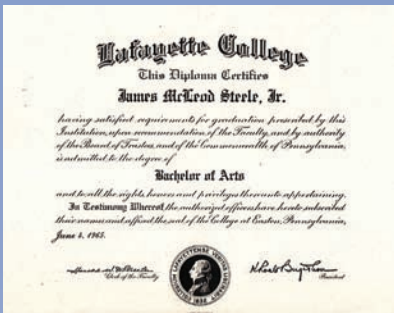
## NARRATIVE

James Steele has been involved in investigating and documenting the radical social changes that are taking place around the world, involving cultural modification, anti-globalization, a post-industrial power shift, and an electronic revolution that overlaps its industrial counterpart in the developed world a century and a half ago, and is compounded by all other factors. Architectural practice and education, especially in the United States, has slowly but inexorably been trying to adapt to these changes, but the profession, like the society it serves, has done so in an almost begrudging way. At the beginning of the 21st century, the enormous potential inherent in the tectonic transformations that are taking place is generally perceived as being threatening to an existing order, rather than offering exiting opportunities that will allow that order to change, as it must.

James Steele's career, in practice, writing and teaching is almost exactly bracketed by the beginning and apogee of these changes, and by both circumstance and intention he has been fortunate to have worked with many of the people who have been instrumental in breaking new ground within the profession, as teachers, mentors, colleagues, friends and research interests. They have all played a critical role in the direction of his career.

## AN INSPIRED BEGINNING

Steele earned his terminal Degree in Architecture in the Louis I. Kahn Master's class at the University of Pennsylvania in the same year that Earth Day was launched as a counter-offensive against the dawning realization of the insidious extent of environmental degradation. Ian McHarg and Barry Commoner, both prophets of the sustainable ethic, played a significant part in formulating that event, at Penn. McHarg's landmark book, *Design with Nature*, had just been published, and we had seen it evolve, chapter by chapter, as required reading in his courses. This was an exhilarating time and place to begin a life in architecture. Dean G. Holmes Perkins had the extraordinary ability to recognize extraordinary talent, just as each began to reach their stride. The "Philadelphia School" emerged here, which in addition to McHarg, centered around such legendary figures as Louis Kahn, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown,





Louis Kahn Master's Class at Penn



Article on Hassan Fathy for AD magazine



With Saudi Students

Edmund Bacon, Aldo Guirgola , Richard Saul Wurman, Robert LeRicolos, Robert Engman, John Bower, Carlos Enrique Vallhonrat, among many others, is now recognized as a watershed moment in the history of architecture, having a common denominator through far different approaches. Through Perkin's enlightened leadership, they effectively challenged the increasingly sterile homogeneity and a-historicism of Modernism at that time, from within what Tom Wolfe has referred to as "the compound," making it far more profound.

## ESTABLISHING A PATTERN

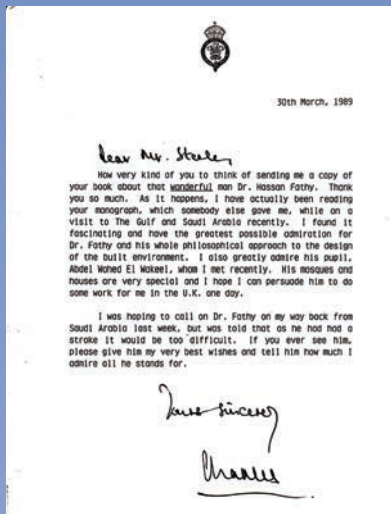
After making the transition from student to faculty member at Penn, teaching Studio and co-teaching "Theories in Architecture" with mentor Mario Romach, who was remarkably inspirational, Steele also served his apprenticeship with Louis Kahn, on the Palazzo Congressi in Venice, Vincent Kling, on the Philadelphia Airport and International Monetary Fund, and Ballinger, on Gimbel's Department store and the Rouse development Company in Columbia Maryland, among many other projects. After gaining Pennsylvania registration he opened his own office, focusing on the design and construction of large single-family residences in the Bucks and Montgomery County area. This combination of teaching both design and history is a pattern that Steele has followed ever since, in a deep belief that a knowledge of social, cultural and economic aspects of our world play a crucial formative role in the making of the built environment and good design. Beyond superficial considerations of periods and styles, history provides us with a prism through which to see what is really important to us. Over the course of a long career, and after extensive study, it has become clear that in spite of the glitter of technological innovation or momentary fads and fashion, many basic human values have remained the same, and we ignore history at our peril. Informed, meaningful architecture requires an awareness of these perpetual relationships to nature and each other, over and above the important practical and functional considerations that an architect must account for.

## A LIFE CHANGING DECISION

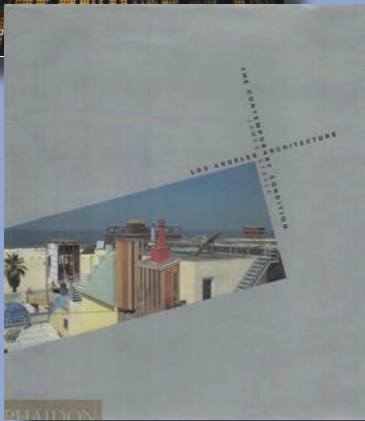
Accepting a teaching position in Saudi Arabia, due to a recession in America, Steele was assigned both Design Studios and theoretical courses such as "Contemporary Issues" at King Faisal, now Dammam University that reinforced his previous design and history profile. Due to a contractual restriction against outside practice, which the Saudi administration felt to be a distraction from teaching, Steele put his Undergraduate major in English to use in writing his first book. He was inspired to seek out Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy as a subject after reading his incredible book Architecture for the Poor. After great difficulty, due to deliberate official misinformation intended to make this controversial figure unavailable to foreign journalists, Steele was finally able to find and interview him. After taking every opportunity to travel from Saudi Arabia to Cairo, these discussions, or really his monologues, continued for more than two years. In the process, Steele had to retrace the actual and







Letter from the Prince of Wales



Los Angeles Architecture

*Yudell*, since Charles Moore was also involved with the Aga Khan Award, and a monograph on *Eric Owen Moss*, who attended the Forums. The prior connection with the Aga Khan Organization also provided the opportunity to edit three books for them while at Academy Editions, which each include sizeable personal contributions. These are: *Architecture for Islamic Societies Today* which includes selections for the fourth cycle of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1989. These are described in detail in terms of design development, construction methods and technology as well as the historical background of the site and *Architecture For a Changing World* for the fifth cycle in 1992, which does the same. *The Architecture of the Contemporary Mosque*, written in collaboration with Ismail Serageldin, who is now the Director of the Library in Alexandria, in 1997 was technically not done for the Aga Khan, but was made possible by association with him.

The Fathy book also served as an introduction to the Prince of Wales and his inner circle, who were launching an Institute of Architecture at Magdalen College, Oxford at that time, and a teaching position followed. Fathy apprentice Abdel Wahed El Wakil, who then had a practice in London, was teaching with me, leading to a friendship that provided deeper insights into the persistence of the search for regional identity, which is increasing today.

## LOS ANGELES

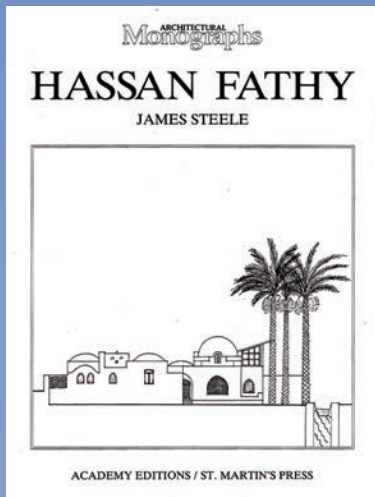
The first Hassan Fathy book also prompted a call from the University of Southern California School of Architecture to fill a temporary History-Theory position there, on a one year appointment. One of the historians in the department had read it, and thought Steele would add a much-needed dimension of cultural diversity to the School.

The teaching assignment conformed to the Design and History pattern that had been well established elsewhere by then, but was not the norm at USC.

Los Angeles was and still remains, a compelling mixture of developing and developed world impressions combined a combination of life experience in each and Steele approached this new context as an urban phenomenon that begged for exploration. Using research in a familiar way to do so, in order to understand as well as then explicate he then produced several studies on various aspects of this unusual city, which is the civic embodiment of the American yearning for a frontier. These are, in part: *Los Angeles Architecture: The Contemporary Condition*, *The Queen Mary*, at a permanent dock at Long Beach, Barnsdall House, Schnabel House, California Aerospace Museum, Salk Institute, Eames House, Lawson Western House, The Faculty Club, University of California at Berkeley and the Howe House, as well as the work of Pierre Koenig and Rudolf Schindler.

What was initially intended to be an interim, one year appointment as a Visiting Lecturer, was then extended into a five year commitment by USC at an assistant professor level, and finally to a full Professor with tenure position. A Doctor of Philosophy in Urban Planning at the University followed. USC has provided an extraordinary opportunity to conduct the diverse strands of

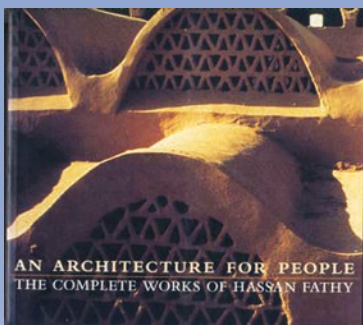




Fathy, St. Martin's Press  
First Edition



Fathy, Aga Khan Archive



Fathy, Thames and Hudson

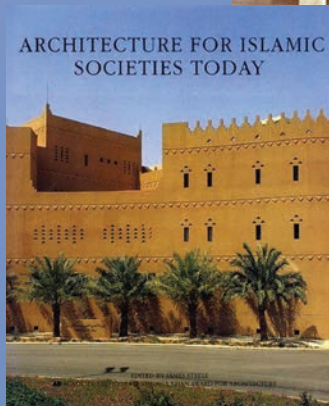
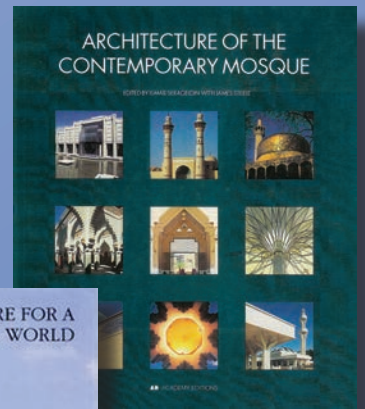
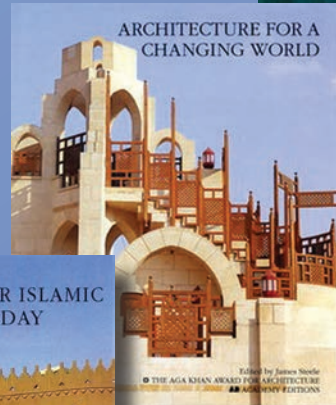
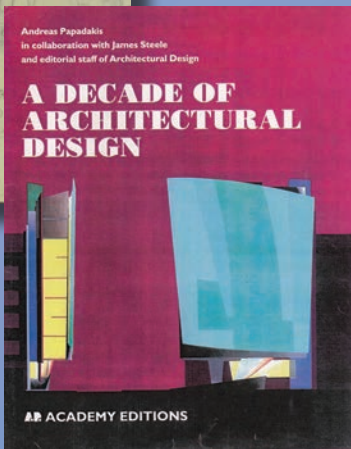
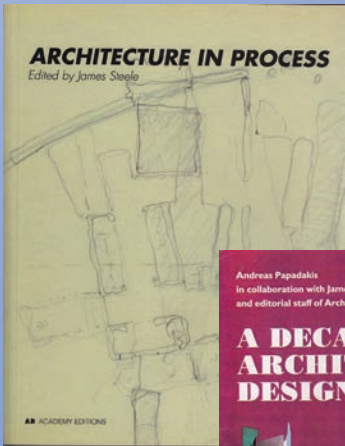
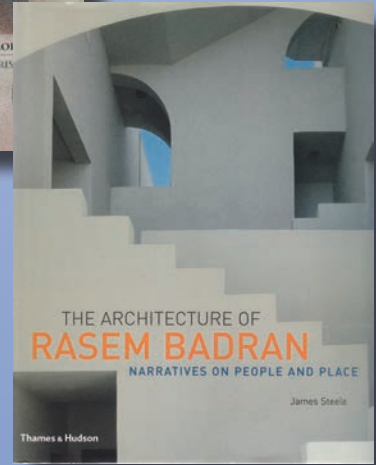
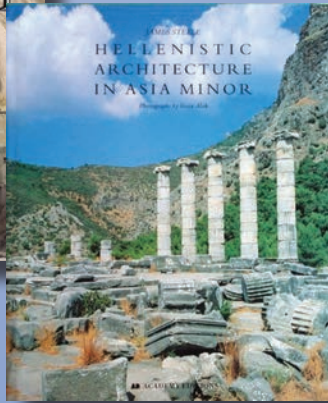
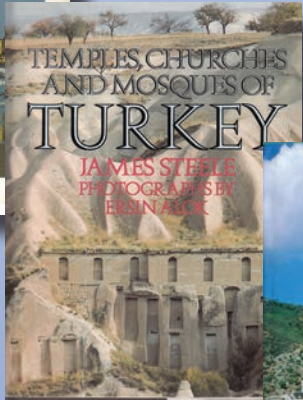
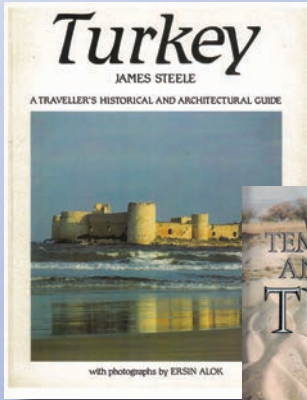
research that continue to branch out from their original base, and to share new discoveries with energetic and increasingly sophisticated students. Teaching today requires more than knowledge transfer, since the Internet now provides more knowledge than we can ever absorb. This knowledge base is also constantly expanding, requiring professionals to be constantly aware of it, and up to date. But in spite of the fact that we have more knowledge available to us,, we seem to have less wisdom, and less time to absorb it and we must be careful not to become the slaves of the technology that provides it. This is the part that a good teacher, writer and architect can play.

## RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

An academic has the opportunity and the responsibility to contribute to the body of knowledge within a chosen specialty, a well as synthesizing what has been discovered and configuring it in such a way that it can be shared with colleagues, students and the public. To be most effective, this knowledge must be focused, and if interests are broad, clarifying the connections between them is even more imperative. Subject area selection in research is often a deliberate choice, but in the case of this nominee, it was a result of a tree-like path, that in this case led to the publication of 40 authored books and 9 edited volumes, in addition to numerous articles related to the same topics. There was a first clearly identifiable gateway, after which others opened in rapid succession, and the main strategic decisions were then related to which one to go through. The first of these gates was discovered by default, or necessity, as a result of being prevented by academic contract at a Saudi institution from practicing. The choice of an alternative concentration, as a topic of research, was driven by pure survival instinct and the need to be more interesting to Saudi students than socializing during class. The result was the book *Hassan Fathy*, Monograph #13, published jointly by Academy Editions, London and St. Martin's Press, New York in 1988. As the preceding Narrative describes, the opportunities that opened up after that eventually led Steele to a Professorship at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, where each of the previous pathways chosen came to further fruition in published work that directly related to and expanded upon what had gone before. This work is seemingly diverse, but can be organized in clearly discernable categories once the pathway is understood.

## SUBJECT AREAS

The first of these subject areas from the start and an ongoing central concentration is Hassan Fathy, these include: *Hassan Fathy*, Academy Editions, Monograph #13, 1988, now considered a classic and seminal resource on this famous Egyptian architect, *The Hassan Fathy Collection: A Collection of Visual Documents At The Aga Khan Award For Architecture* Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 1989, commissioned by the Aga Khan to assist in establishing a Fathy Archive and *An Architecture for People: The Complete Works of Hassan Fathy* Thames & Hudson, London 1997, which extends and updates Steele's first monograph of 1988. The Thames and Hudson re-issue of the Fathy Monograph was part of an initiative by them, in tandem with the





Whitney Library, to have Steele serve as a commissioning for a series of ten books on architects of the developing world, writing some and editing others. In addition to the revised Fathy book, this resulted in *Balkrishna Doshi*, in 1998 and *The Architecture of Rasem Badran: A Narrative on People and Place* in 2005, which were the only three books realized in the series. The *Rasem Badran* Monograph was recognized with an INTERARCH Book Award, presented at the XII, World Triennial of Architecture, in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 2009.

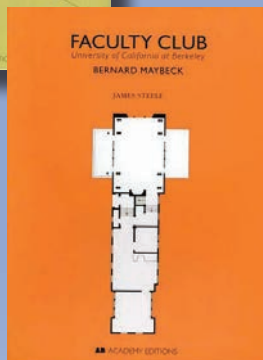
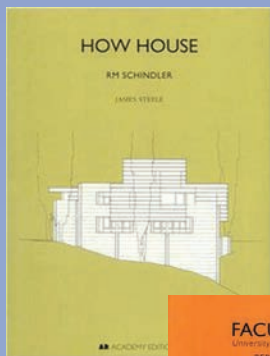
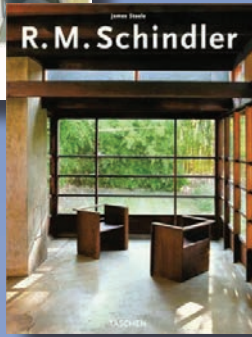
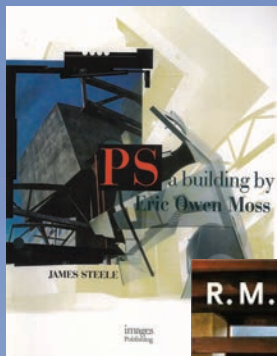
The second of these concentrations is Area Studies, including three books and various refereed articles on various aspects of Turkey, which are *Turkey: A Traveller's Historical and Architectural Guide* by Scorpion 1990, *Hellenistic Architecture of Asia Minor*, Academy Editions, 1991, and *Temples, Churches and Mosques of Turkey*, released by Kegan Paul International, London, 1993.

A third focus, based on a continuous critique that has been tested in teaching is Contemporary Issues. Publications here include *A Decade of Architectural Design* (with Andreas Papadakis) for Academy Editions which is an anthology of Architectural Design journal expanded to include coverage of all major contemporary styles *Architecture Today* published by Phaidon Press, London, and *Architecture of Today* with Andreas Papadakis, by Terrail, Paris, *Architecture In Process* Edited for Academy Editions, London, 1994, *Twentieth Century European Rationalism* Edited for Panos Koulermos with an extended Introduction by James Steele entitled "The Epistemology of Reason" Academy Editions, London, 1995 and *The Computer and Architecture* by Laurence King and Calmann and King, London and New York, 2001, an examination of the social ramifications of virtual design.

A fourth focus has been Los Angeles, in an effort to understand this complex city and its major architects better. These publications include: *Los Angeles Architecture: The Contemporary Condition*, by Phaidon, London, 1993 which has received a Phi Kappa Phi Faculty Recognition Award at the University of Southern California, five Architecture in Detail building studies for Phaidon Press, London, entitled the *Barnsdall House*, 1993, the *Schnabel House*, 1993, the *California Aerospace Museum*, 1994, the *Salk Institute*, 1994, the *Eames House*, Phaidon Press, London 1994, winner of an International Architecture Book Award, and the *Lawson Western House*, 1995, and *The Queen Mary*, Phaidon Press, London, 1995, which is permanently docked in Long Beach. This last may seem to be an complete anomaly, but is a key part of the Los Angeles mythos. It is a winner in the Related Arts category of American Institute of Architects International Book Awards in 1997. AIA Jury Citation quoted in a New York Times review of the book said: "Wonderfully detailed, scrupulous research. Anyone who has ever wondered if architecture floats will be convinced by this beautiful, fact-filled book about the last and grandest architecture ever to sail the bounding main. With Steele's intense research, we feel like we're there." The desire to better understand Los Angeles and its key architects, obvious in the studies of buildings by Frank Gehry in the AID Series, also extended to Eric Moss and the late Frank Israel. These publications



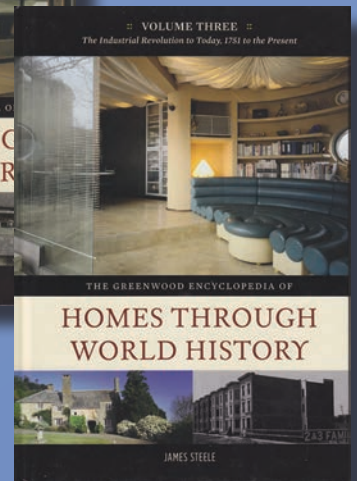
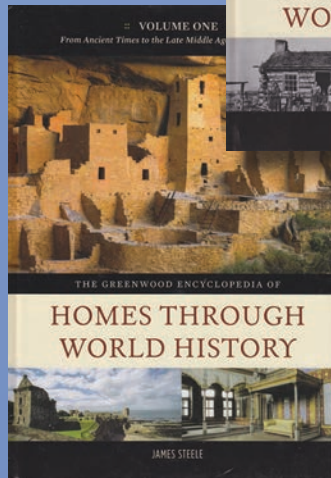
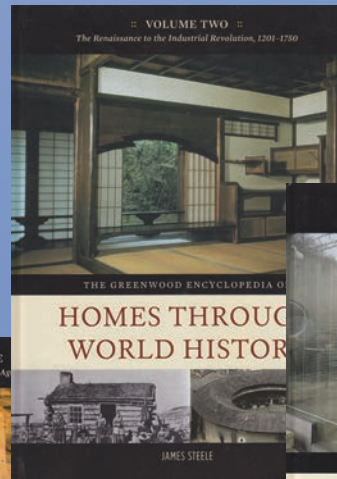
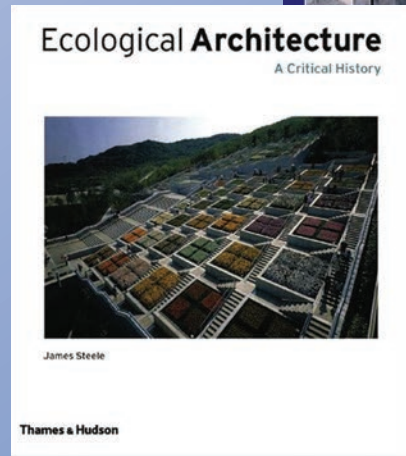
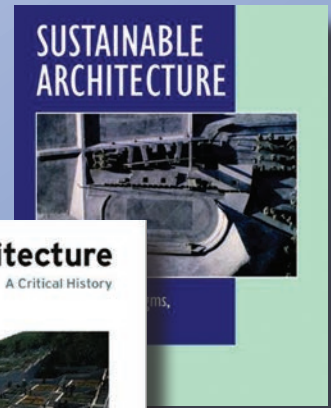
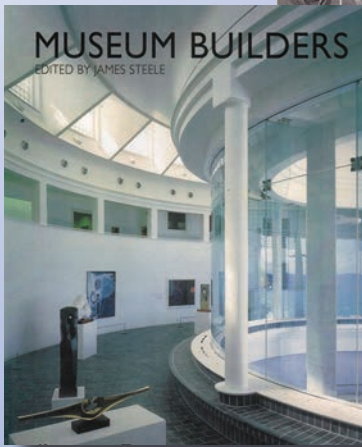
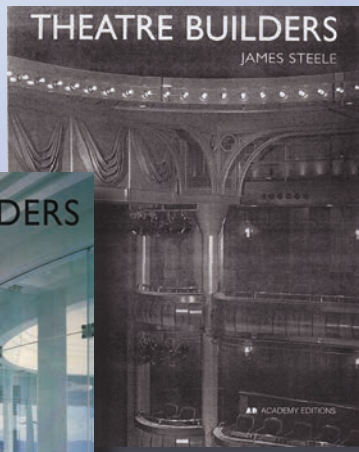




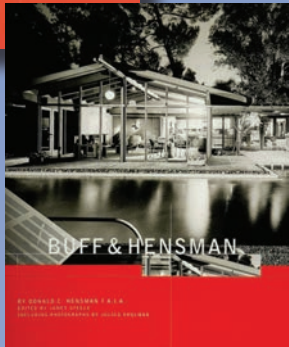
include: *Eric Owen Moss*, Editor, Academy Editions, Monograph #29, 1993 and *PS: A Building by Eric Owen Moss* by Images Publishing, Melbourne, Australia, 1998. *PS*, named after its original owner Pittard-Sullivan, is a key component of Eric Owen Moss's astounding remaking of obsolescent industrial buildings in Culver City, California. In three preceding conversions between 1991 and 1997 Moss redesigned this structure as offices (R1), a house (R2) and a theater (R3), then the corporate headquarters of a video and film computer graphics company. This book traces the different phases in the building's development, and the contribution Moss has made to transforming the Industrial Hayden Tract in the west of Los Angeles. Another edited Monograph on *Frank Israel*, for Academy Editions, London in 1994 also contains an extensive interview with the architect. This determination to study Los Angeles architects was not just confined to contemporary practitioners, but also includes crucial past exemplars such *Rudolf Schindler*, by Taschen Press, which was the first complete survey of this brilliant, heretofore overlooked architect when it first came out in a large hardback edition in 1999. It has subsequently been re-released as part of its smaller format, widely publicized Basic Art Series. Schindler was never part of the legendary Case Study House Program, but his Kings Road House certainly influenced it, and Pierre Koenig personifies that ethos. He taught at USC from 1964 to his death in 2004, and, as a colleague, provided singular insights into both his own work and its historical background. This naturally led to the book *Pierre Koenig*, by Phaidon Press, London, in 2000 with David Jenkins, which was another first.

Not to be outdone, Academy Editions then commissioned two books on California architecture of its own, for its Historical Monograph series initiated by Michael Spence, allowing further research on Rudolf Schindler and the bay Area as well. These are: *The How House*, by Schindler in 1996 and *Bernard Maybeck. The Faculty Club, University of California at Berkeley*.

After attending an **ACSA Conference** at the new School of Architecture in San Diego, and presenting a paper entitled, **"Interdependence and Appropriate Technology in Architecture,"** in 1992, it became obvious that Sustainability was an important new direction to be taken seriously. This conformed to Hassan Fathy's principles, since he was a prophet of environmental sensibility, and so was not an alien concept. That realization, and the desire to disseminate it, led to the book *Sustainable Architecture. Principles, Paradigms, and Case Studies* published by McGraw-Hill, New York, 1997, which charts the history of sustainability and explains it with case studies, and won a University of Southern California Associate's Creativity in Research Award Honorable Mention in 1997. It was followed by *Ecological Architecture: A Critical History*, published by Thames and Hudson, London, in 2005, in respectful recognition of the pedagogical power of Kenneth Frampton's book on Modernism with a similar name, in response to the need for a more comprehensive teaching text on the history of ecological architecture. These two books on Sustainability, among many others in this review, such as *Architecture Today* and *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: Synthesis In Form*, published by Academy Editions, London in 1994 are indicative of a desire to process knowledge gained through prevalent research interests in a way that it can be used in teaching.







USC Guild Press  
Publications



Perhaps the best example of that effort is the **Homes Throughout World History** series, written for Greenwood Press in Darien, Connecticut in 2005, as a response to the need for such a global anthology in the Arch 214 A and B. history–survey courses. This three volume set, completed in 2005, includes: **Volume I: Prehistory to the Late Middle Ages, Volume II: The Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution, and Volume III: Post-Industrial Revolution to the Present.** As described in part in the Publisher’s advertising, this series which investigates the typology of the house The house, throughout history, in every place in the world, concentrates on “the social norms that prevailed at the time and place in which they were built and the natural environment that they adapted to. Studying them now in a comprehensive way allows us to understand the social, political, economic and religious conditions that existed for their inhabitants. They are a three-dimensional record of culture.”

### Starting the Guild Press at the USC School of Architecture

In 1998, after Steele had been at USC for 7 years, it seemed timely to start a small press at the School of Architecture, putting prior expertise as both an author and editor to use in exploring the rich history of the department and the pioneering architects involved with it. Robert Timme, who became Dean at that time, was receptive to the idea. This led to a collaboration that started with a list of ten Monographs for the newly formed Guild Press, but because of his untimely death in 2005 only three have been produced. These are: **William Pereira**, and **Buff and Hensman** in 2004 and **Sidney Eisenshtat**, which was commissioned before Timme’s death but took until 2012 to finalize.

## TEACHING

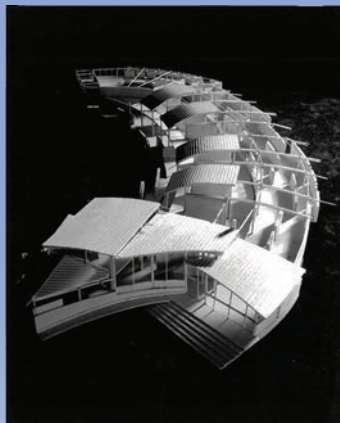
Teaching is a profoundly important responsibility, which shapes the ideas, values and commitment of students, who represent the national and international future of their profession. Teaching is a symbiotic process and is also a two-way street. A good teacher learns as well as teaches, and uses research as an opportunity to share discoveries with others to test its validity.

James Steele started teaching at the University of Pennsylvania immediately after receiving his Master’s degree there, but was primarily focused on practice at that time. At Penn, he established a profile of reciprocally balancing Design Studio with History courses that he followed from that point on, in this case with a “Theories of Architecture” course co-taught with Mario Romanach, who was such an inspiring influence on his life. After a major recession prompted Steele to accept a full time teaching position at King Faisal (now Dammam) University, including a contractual no–practice clause to ensure constant access by Saudi students, he continued to balance Design and theoretical courses These include teaching every Studio level from first year through Thesis, as well as a concentration on a “Contemporary Issues,” course that he launched and taught for each of the regular and Summer School semesters during the 8 years he was there. The class notes for this course later formed the basis for his book *Architecture Today*, published in 1997, 9 years after his departure from Saudi Arabia.





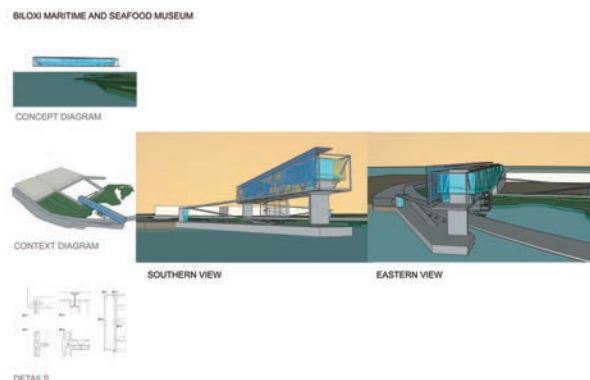
James Steele in Thesis Studio



After leaving the Middle East, James taught at Texas Tech University in Lubbock for several years, as a full-time Associate Professor, in the Graduate School, once again following the Design-History pattern established earlier. While there, he initiated a Foreign Program in Britain, based at the American Institute of Foreign Study at the University of London, “A History of London,” as well as “Contemporary Issues,” and Design. This opened up an opportunity to remain in London, as a Senior Editor at Academy Editions, also responsible for Architectural Design (AD) Magazine, as well as dealing with major books. Common interest in the Middle East, and Hassan Fathy inevitably also led to a part-time teaching post at the newly formed The Prince of Wales’s Institute of Architecture, now the Prince’s Foundation for the Built Environment, then based at Magdalen College in Oxford. After being recruited by the University of Southern California School of Architecture in Los Angeles as a Visiting Lecturer in 1991, Steele once again adopted the Design and theoretical course profile. Asked to remain after that first year, he was promoted to full professor in 2003, and eventually taught each Studio level in its five-year program, from First Year Design up through Thesis as well as in the Graduate School. Some examples that are indicative of principles of many offerings over the years are an Ecological Education Center, at Playa Vista, Ca. as a First Year Studio, offered in the belief that students need to be engaged in real world issues at a level they can assimilate, and the design of an Addition to the USC School of Architecture conjunction with then Dean Robert Scales of the USC School of Theatre, and Eric Moss at the Third Year, Topic Studio level and an Undergraduate Thesis Studio that offered assistance to Biloxi, Mississippi, in the devastating aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Most recently, Steele organized an Interdisciplinary Collaborative Studio at the Graduate level involving the USC School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture and the USC School of Policy, Planning and Development, in the poverty stricken Palermo District of Buenos Aires, Argentina, which ran during the Spring Semester, 2011.

### An Emphasis on Humanitarian Issues: Starting in Malaysia

Both the Biloxi and Buenos Aires initiatives are part of a larger, earlier humanitarian based emphasis, which has its roots in a Program in Malaysia that Steele started and directs. After exploring several possibilities over a 3 year, preparatory search for a base throughout the region, in response to a groundswell of student interest and a lack of Foreign Studies options in Asia at the time, and he founded the first USC School of Architecture Program



**Summer in Malaysia**  
 Information Meeting: Tuesday, November 25, 1997 5:00-6:15 pm  
 VKC 260  
 RSVP to Kimberly Ellis, (213) 740-6842  
 kellis@usc.edu if you want pizza and water

**The Program - Summer 1998**  
 On the May 9 through August 4, 1998  
 Housing and studio space will be arranged at the University of Malaya. Students will conduct visits by Alan Suter and other sites in Malaysia and Singapore.

**ARCH 402 - "Introduction to Architecture" II credit**  
 The area of study will be City Planning District #16 in Alor Setar. The studio will include visits to an existing rural settlement primarily developed in the 1950s, including research into and usage of traditional Malayan architecture. The studio will include a site visit to be included in the planning phase, allowing students to engage in the design of a building type unique to the region, such as a house's response required for the new neighborhood envisioned in this district.

**ARCH 499 - Contemporary Asian Architecture II credit**  
 An examination of the many uses of "Asian" architecture and a comparison of these uses to domestic current trends. The site primary area to be studied are China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, India, and Taiwan. The growth in development in Asia and its interrelationship with architecture in modern. Conflicts will also be addressed.

Students who have already taken this course, must in full with Professor Suter about a substitute registration.

**Optional Class: "Politics, Society and Culture"**  
 A class taught by the Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Kebangsaan.

**Interested students should form available from Ingrid!**

Program Announcement Summer 1998

# Chronicle

June 1, 1998 *Published for the USC Faculty & Staff*

INTERNATIONAL / UNDERGRADUATE

## On the Road to Malaysia

New architecture studio class sends undergraduates overseas to study dilemmas of economic development.

by Carol Tucker

A dozen USC architecture and urban planning students have traveled halfway around the world this summer to study firsthand the problems posed by rapid development in Malaysia.

Like other emerging Southeast Asian nations, Malaysia is struggling with opposing forces. Modern economic considerations, especially the demand to beef up the tourist industry, threaten to destroy the country's native villages and scenic, tropical environment.

"The dilemma facing Malaysia presents students with a challenge that is typical in developing countries," said James Strack, associate professor of architecture who spearheaded the School of Architecture's new Malaysia studio.

"What do you do in a situation in which development is inexorable and an indigenous culture is being wiped out? You may not be able to stop the development, but you can work to find a middle ground," he said. "There are other answers besides bulldozing."

The undergraduates are taking part in a pilot program in Malaysia through the beginning of August. If things go well, Malaysia will be added to the School of Architecture's regular study-abroad programs.




USC architecture and urban planning students gather next to a mosque near the USC campus before heading to Malaysia. Front row from left: Tammy Tin-Ting Chen, Susan Chiu, Anna Ching. Back row: Chai Wei Ho, Matthew Higgins, Michelle Kurlitz, Bob Golewski, Terry Dickelhoff, Isaac

The first group to Malaysia in 1998. UM/USC



USC students with their Counterparts from the University of Malaya in their joint studio

## The Result



The centre gradually started feeling more comfortable in its own shoes and found that it got along well with the site. After much investigation and modification to our design, we resulted at a modern yet simple architecture that references and respects the thermodynamics of Iban culture and space. It is a place of welcoming new visitors, of experiencing new cultures and traditions, and of belonging. Thus, the [be] Longhouse was born.

**the [be] Longhouse**  
 a place\_of\_welcoming\_of\_experiencing\_of\_belonging

USC -UM students at their project site for an Environmental Education Center for the Iban Tribe, on the Lemanak River in Borneo

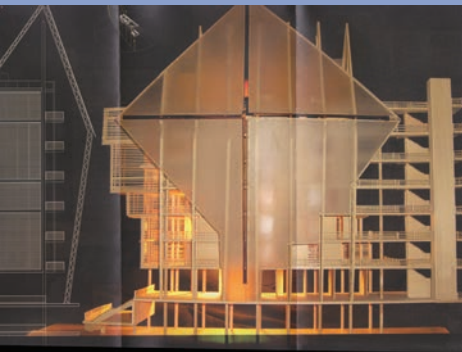
The winning design for the Borneo USC-UM Collaborative Studio



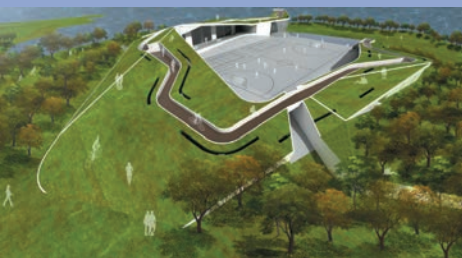




Summer Program in Malaysia students with Fumihiko Maki at his office in Tokyo



USC Malaysia Program housing to assist Tsunami victims in Kedai, Malasia, by Goli Sabet



Malasia Program USC student project Community Sport Stadium at Lake Kenyir, Malasia

in Asia in 1998, based at the Universiti Malaya, in Kuala Lumpur which has subsequently expanded to include Japan, China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Singapore. As a result of the Tsunami of 2005, the Program changed from following the conventional approach of using hypothetical scenarios to attempt a direct collaboration between students from University of Southern California and Universiti Malaya. This involved working together to assist in re-housing disaster victims in Kuala Kedah, in the north-western part of the peninsula. The enthusiastic response from the students and faculty members involved in this experience, which tapped into the idealistic spirit that all students have but are rarely able to give expression to these days, then lead to a concentration on Studio projects that directly assist impoverished communities in the Program region, through-out Southeast Asia. In order to finance the construction of these projects, a Non-Profit Organization called Students Designing for Students was established in 2005 and is currently run by USC graduates who have participated in this program. In 2009, the Ban Nam Yen School in Thailand, designed by this USC-Universiti Malaya consortium, was nominated for the INDEX: Design Improve Life award. INDEX is a Danish-based, non-profit organization that works globally to promote the use of design skills and processes to improve the lives of those in need around the world. A student on the 2009 Program was also awarded a USC grant for her project in Ban Nam Yen. The project for 2012 is a Center for Abused and Homeless Women and Children in the Chow Kit District of Kuala Lumpur. In addition to Design Studio, the 15 Credit Semester long Malaysia Program that Steele was instrumental in establishing and participates in also includes a full slate of theoretical courses. These are a trio of Field Studies offerings that cover Architecture, Urbanism and Tectonics, specifically designed to take advantage of the opportunities provided by being able to visit remarkable buildings throughout Asia, as well as a People, Places and Culture course intended to provide the sociological background students need, to fully appreciate and assimilate the varied contexts they are working in.

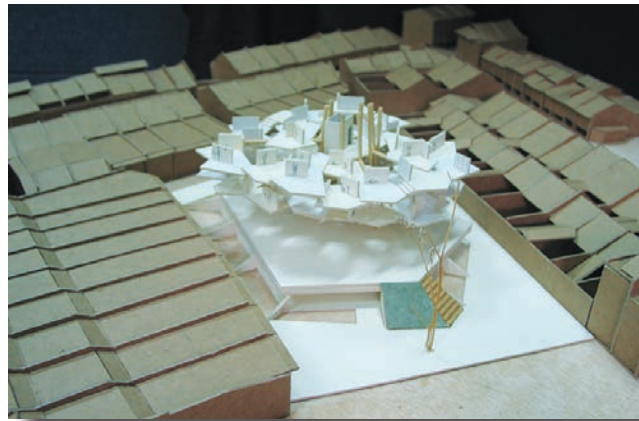
## NEW INITIATIVES

In addition to these new Design-based offerings, Steele has also been instrumental in both introducing new theoretical courses at USC and re-structuring existing ones. In addition to the Malaysia and Argentina design based Programs, theoretical courses introduced include support offerings for each of the Foreign Studies Programs, intended to prepare students for their experience abroad as well as several new Electives, such as Arch 326: Modern Movements in Architecture and ARCH 454: Contemporary Architecture in Asia, also created to address a lack of such Courses at the USC School of Architecture. In response to a commission in 2002 by then Dean Robert Timme, to head up a Committee to revise the Undergraduate history curriculum, Steele concentrated on the four required survey courses, where his teaching has also been concentrated over time, especially on the Arch 214 A and B set, which he has taught since 1991. He helped to order these four courses so that Arch 114, the first in the series, serves as an introduction to the profession, addressing first year students concerns about the possibilities available in their future. The second and third courses, Arch 214 A and B, were completely re-organized to reflect the rich diversity of the global experience, from the beginning of





Wong Site Plan

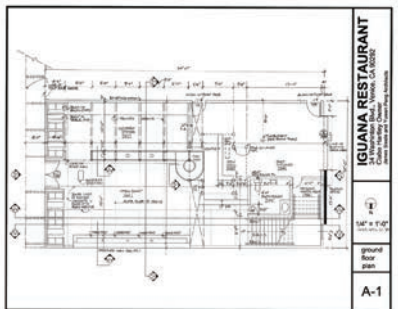


USC Program in Malaysia, Housing in Penang by student Victoria Wong

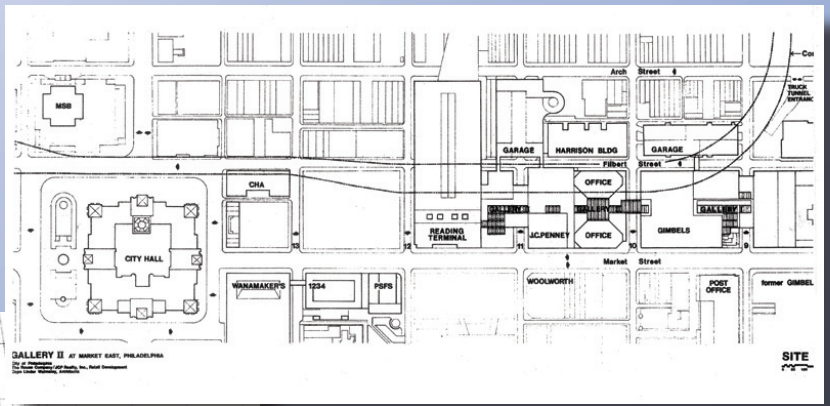
architecture until today. This transformed this contiguous set from a rather Eurocentric survey sequence into what is now entitled *A Global History of Architecture*, which was one of the first of its kind. Steele then worked on various publications, such as *Homes Throughout World History*, including **Volume I: Prehistory to the Late Middle Ages, Volume II: The Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution, and Volume III: Post-Industrial Revolution to the Present**, by Greenwood Press in 2005, to support this emphasis. The ongoing challenge, limited only by the availability of research materials in such a wide area, is to continue to diversify this sequence, including the chronological designations used. Arch 314, which was the last piece of this required, four-part group, was also changed to place even more emphasis on Theory, including both eastern and western philosophy. Since being named Director of History-Theory in for the Undergraduate Program in 2012, Steele has continued to upgrade offerings in this area, specifically focusing on Electives.

## CONSULTING AND DESIGN

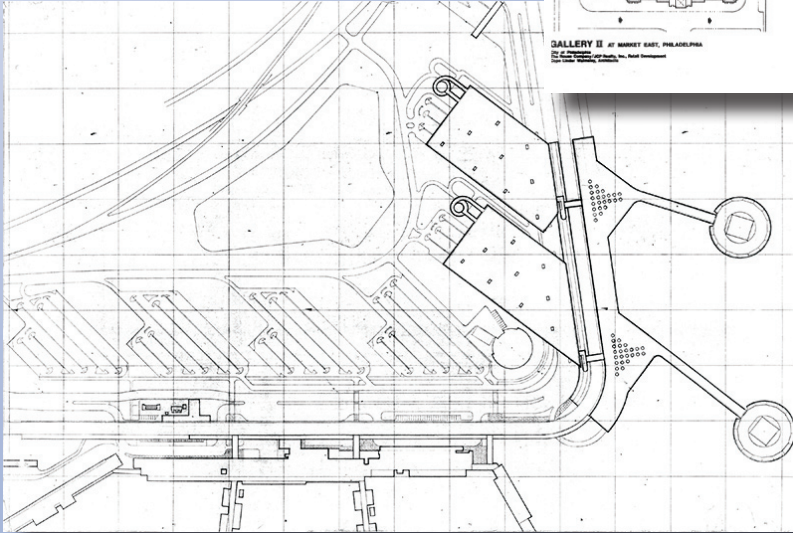
An obvious, deliberate concentration on writing, in conjunction with optimizing its connection with academic responsibilities, and a focus on directing the history program at USC, have left scant time for practice. However, design opportunities continue to appear. It is paradoxical that a career that started with a Bronze medal in Design Penn and work with several great architects before registration and the promise of a successful practice in Pennsylvania, would be guided by both circumstances and intention toward a life primarily directed toward research and teaching. Steele's early career, before starting a practice that focused on the design and construction of single family homes in the Bucks and Montgomery County region, included work with Louis I. Kahn, on the Palazzo dei Congressi, in the Giardini District of Venice, TED Conference founder Richard Saul Wurman at Murphy, Levy, Wurman Architects, Cope, Linder, Walmsley, in collaboration with Bower and Fradley, Architects as one of the designers of Gallery II, in downtown Philadelphia, the Rouse Company, in Columbia, Maryland and the Kling Partnership, working on the Philadelphia Airport and International Monetary Fund in Washington, DC, among many other projects. Once he re-located to Saudi Arabia, the only design he was allowed to do by contract were an Administration approved reconstruction of a Student Center at King Faisal (now Dammam) University, which was built but now demolished, and a residence for a Mohammed Muhenna, a friend of the Rector, also constructed.



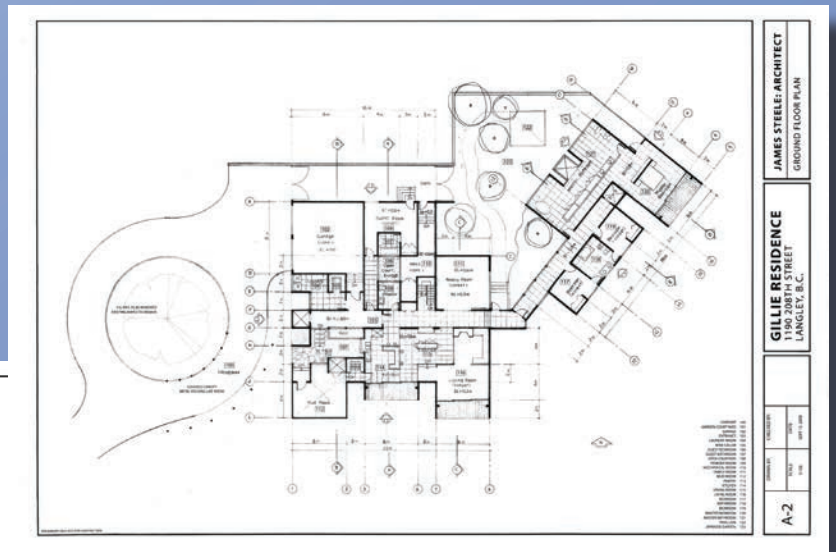
Iguana Restaurant, Venice, Ca.



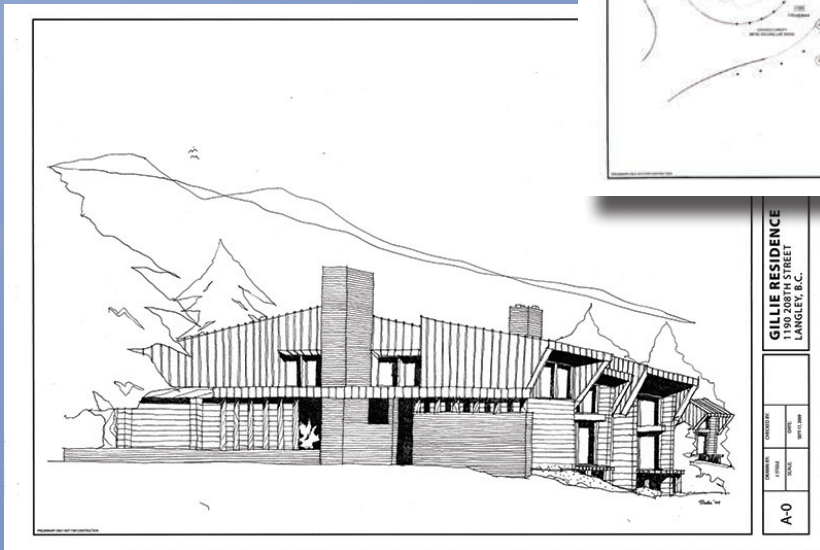
Plan of Gallery II  
Philadelphia, PA



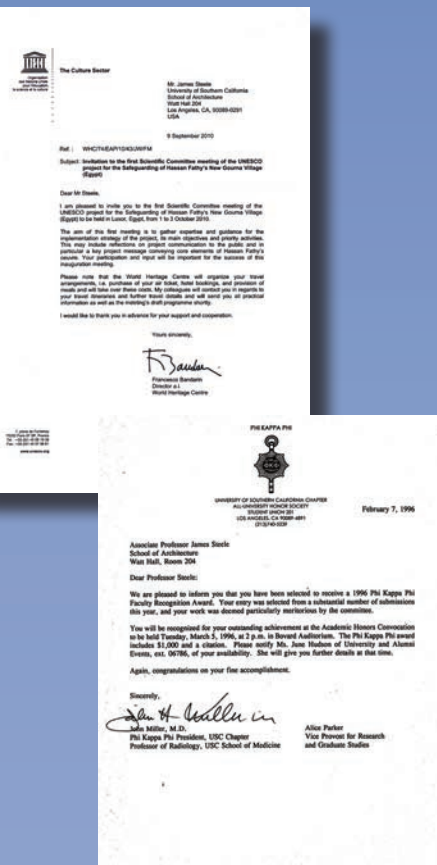
Philadelphia Airport Plan



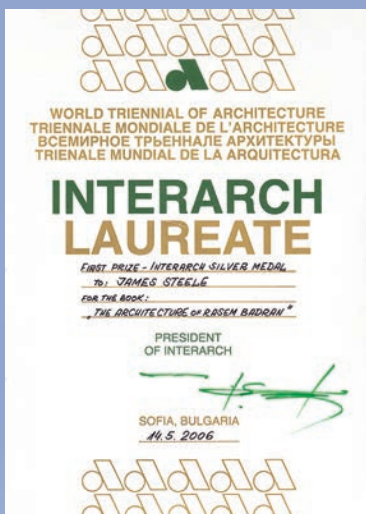
Plan of the Gillie Residence near  
Vancouver, B.C.



Gillie Perspective



Notification of Phi Kappa Phi Award for the Los Angeles Architecture Book from USC



The Interarch Laureate Award for the book: Rasem Badran: A Narrative on People and Place

Since coming to Los Angeles in 1991, his design energies have been channeled into Studio projects related to the Malaysia Program, with several of these leading to other opportunities, such as an Ecological Education Center, for an Iban tribe located on the edge of the Lemanak River in Borneo. Personal commissions, such as additions to the Cow's End Coffeehouse and a private residence in Venice, Ca., an extensive residential renovation in San Francisco and loft conversion in Oakland, Ca., as well as a residence in Langley, near Vancouver, B.C. have allowed his design skills to stay sharp. There have also been offers to join in Competitions, such as the Historic Cities Support Program, Planning for the Historic City of Samarkand, sponsored by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, the Reconstruction of Beirut Central District, led by the Prince of Wales Institute, the National Museum of Korea, in Seoul, with Yongwon Kim, the California Endowment Competition, with Ted Tanaka, a Housing Competition in Monterey Ca. with Behnish, Behnish and Partner and most recently, the planning of a new city at Hofuf, Saudi Arabia, with Calthorpe Associates, in Berkeley, in collaboration with Limitless Development in Dubai. These activities, as well as several other consultations, have allowed design involvement to continue apace.

## RECOGNITION

During the multi-faceted career trajectory just described, recognition has tracked a major concentration on writing, research and teaching. This has primarily taken the form of Publication and Teaching Awards, invitations to participate in Conferences and Symposia, and invited lectures.

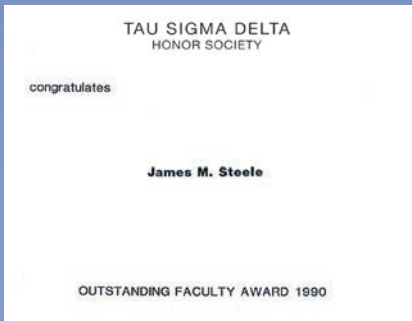
**Publication Awards:** include an International Architecture Book Award for the *Emmes House*, by Phaidon Press, London, one of the five Architecture in Detail books done for them, a University of Southern California Phi Kappa Phi Faculty Recognition Award for *Los Angeles Architecture: The Contemporary Condition*, an AIA Publication Award for the *Queen Mary*, by Phaidon Press. *Sustainable Architecture: Principles, Paradigms and Case Studies*, published by McGraw-Hill, has also been recognized with an Honorable Mention by USC Associates which is the University of Southern California's premier academic support group, dedicated to the advancement of knowledge. Most recently, *Rasem Badran; A Narrative on People and Place* received an INTERARCH Book Award, at the INTERARCH XII World Triennial of Architecture, in Sofia, Bulgaria.

**Teaching Awards** include a Tau Sigma Delta Honor Society Outstanding Faculty Award; given at Texas Tech University, a Gamma Sigma Alpha Honor Society, Professor of the Year Award at the University of Southern California, and an Outstanding Teaching Award; given by Latter-Day Saints Student Association at USC.

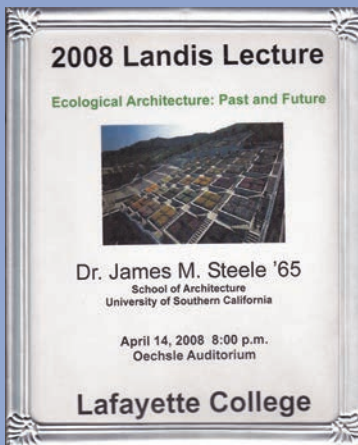
### Invited Participation:

As a Senior Editor at Academy Editions and afterward, Steele was invited to take part in all of the **Academy Forums, at the Academy of Art**. These included **"Green Apocalypse,"** where he spoke at discussion session following





Notification of the Tau Sigma Delta Award given at Texas Tech University



Advertisement for the Landis Lecture given at Lafayette College

paper presentations, **“Sustainability and the City,”** where he presented a paper entitled, “What is Sustainability?” that was subsequently published in Architectural Design, **“Recovering the Landscape,”** also about sustainability and the city, **“Learning from Tokyo,”** about the lessons urbanism in Japan has to teach us, and **“The New Moderns,”** which posits that Modernism isn’t dead, after all. Among other World Bank related activities, he also served as a speaker and Panelist invited by the the Institute for the Global South, at a Symposium entitled “Changing Patterns in World Cities.” at **Habitat II Conference**, in Istanbul. More recently he spoke at a Symposium organized by **The International Association of Intercultural Studies**, at **UNESCO**, in Paris, on the subject of “The Contemporary Architectural Contribution to World where he presented a paper entitled “The Architecture of Rasem Badran” and at the **Dubai Initiative Conference**, at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs Harvard Kennedy School of Government in 2010. The theme of the Conference was “Adaptation and Innovation in the Middle East.” The Dubai Initiative lectures were entitled; “Transformation of the Holy City of Makkah alMukarramah,” and “ Contemporary Architecture in Riyadh”. Also in 2010 , he was asked to serve on a **UNESCO Scientific Committee** intended to save Hassan Fathy’s village of New Gourna from destruction. At the first Unesco Conference labeled “Safeguarding of New Gourna Village,” held in Luxor, Egypt, in early October, 2010, Steele presented a comprehensive “History of the Work of Hassan Fathy,” to set the stage for Committee deliberation over the next several days.

## INVITED LECTURES

Due to this extensive knowledge of the work of Hassan Fathy, many invited lectures, such as those at Unesco, have been related to publications on him, and on related topics, such as sustainability. These include several lectures at the Prince of Wales’s Institute for Architecture on him, as well as “Hassan Fathy, Un Architecte Égyptien” (Hassan Fathy, An Egyptian Architect) at the **Institut du Monde Arabe**, in Paris, a presentation entitled “Hassan Fathy: Precursor of Sustainability.” at the **Aramco Symposium on Hassan Fathy** organized by Aramco World Magazine at the University of Texas, Austin.

Other Lectureships, such as the Keynote at **Woodbury University, Los Angeles**, on “The Emerging City, Transformations, Tensions and Traditions” and on “Parametric Architecture” at **Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia**, for the Malaysian Institute of Architects, in Kuala Lumpur, as well as **The Landis Lecture** at **Lafayette College**, in **Easton Pa.**, entitled “Sustainability and Architecture,” and the **Hyde Distinguished Lecture** at the **University of Nebraska-Lincoln** on “Contemporary Museums,” and **Future Cities Conference, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**, on “The Effect Of Computer Technology on the Workplace and the City” and “City Identity in the 21st Century, Challenges and Opportunities,” at the **Fifth Ajman International Planning Conference**, at **Ajman University, Ajman, U.A.E.**, in 2011, all touch on current issues in architecture and urbanism.