

Columbus to host historic symposium on architect Harry Weese

Although he had a national reputation and designed more than 1,000 buildings, Modernist architect Harry Weese remains nearly absent from critical analysis and the history of modern architecture.

An April 4-5 symposium titled “Creative Syncretism, the Early Architectural Works of Harry Weese” at the Indiana University Center for Art and Design (IUCA+D) in Columbus, Indiana, will seek to change that, bringing attention to the man who designed the first Washington, D.C., metro stations and a number of Columbus buildings.

Renowned architects and design experts from across the country will gather to study, visit and discuss Weese’s significance in the history of modern architecture.

Columbus is a fitting location for the groundbreaking symposium because of the large concentration of Weese’s work here. Attendees will visit local Weese buildings, which were designed early in the architect’s career. Many of them are in close proximity to buildings by his teacher and mentor Eliel Saarinen and Saarinen’s son, Eero. Well known as a destination for design enthusiasts, Columbus is ranked sixth in the nation for architectural innovation and design by the American Institute of Architects and is home to 80+ significant works of modern architecture and public art.

On April 4 at 5 p.m., an introductory presentation by Bradley C. Brooks, director of historic resources and assistant curator, American Decorative Arts, Indianapolis Museum of Art, will be followed by the opening reception of the IUCA+D gallery exhibition for the Weese symposium at 6 p.m. The following day, a formal workshop will convene with a keynote lecture by Robert Brueggemann. A discussion panel moderated by Kelly Wilson, IUCA+D director, will feature prominent national architects whose work is inspired by regional modernism as well as architectural historians who place Weese’s work into a larger historical and social context. Speakers include:

- Marlon Blackwell, FAIA, Architect, Fayetteville, Arkansas
- Dr. Robert Brueggemann, University Distinguished Professor of Art History, Architecture and Urban Planning and Policy/Professor Emeritus, University of Illinois, Chicago, IL
- Frank Harmon, FAIA, Architect, Raleigh, NC
- Julie Snow, FAIA, Architect, Minneapolis, MN
- Maryann Thompson, FAIA, Architect, Landscape Architect, Cambridge, MA
- Cynthia Weese, FAIA, Architect, Former Dean of the School of Architecture at Washington University in St. Louis, Chicago, IL
- Ben Weese, FAIA, Architect, Chicago, IL (and brother to Harry Weese, subject of the symposium)

Harry Weese, a graduate of the architecture school at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a fellow at Cranbrook Academy of Art, designed more than a thousand buildings ranging in scale from a single-family home to the metro system of Washington, D.C. Although Weese was a self-avowed modernist, his early work in Columbus disregards numerous modernist conventions. Unfettered by the philosophical preconceptions of Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius, Weese appears, like Saarinen and Aalto, to subscribe to a more humanistic modernism. Here, in the smaller scale and experimental early work of Columbus, Weese's buildings provide insight into a uniquely American approach to mid-century modern architecture that never lost sight of the social, political, and economic realities of contemporary life.

WHAT: The Early Architectural Works of Harry Weese / Columbus, IN
WHEN: April 4 & 5, 2014
WHERE: IUCA+D Columbus, IN
INFO: www.indiana.edu/~weese
(812) 375-7550
lwestmar@indiana.edu

Existing Harry Weese-designed Buildings in Columbus, Indiana

Former Bartholomew County Home for the Aged, Salvation Army
4856 Norwood Drive

Columbus Village Apartments
1560 28th Street

Cosco Office Building
2525 State Street

Cummins Columbus Engine Plant
500 Central Avenue

Cummins Inc. Technical Center
1900 McKinley Avenue

First Baptist Church
3300 Fairlawn Drive

Former Irwin Union Bank and Trust, Eastbrook Plaza Branch
2580 Eastbrook Plaza

Former Irwin Union Bank and Trust, Hope Branch
645 Harrison Street
Hope, IN

Apparel Merchandising and Interior Design
Press Release: February 4, 2014

Hamilton Ice Center
2501 Lincoln Park Drive

Lauther House
Franklin Drive

Northside Middle School
1400 27th Street

Newlin House
Franklin Drive

Otter Creek Clubhouse
11522 East County Road 50 North

Schmitt Elementary School
2675 California Street