

## Awards, peer reviewed

Few professions award their members as frequently as architecture, a system that seems to benefit everyone. Criticizing this aspect of the architectural culture thus seems like party crashing, but as we award ourselves, other professions have begun to walk off with the family silver.

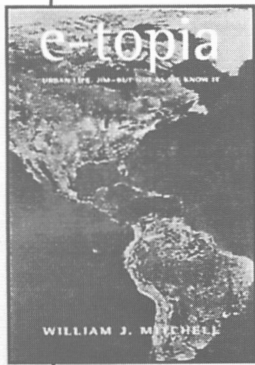
Awards have become, for architects, the major form of peer review. Since our field suffers from a lack of research, a dearth of peer-reviewed journals, and uncertainty about what constitutes our knowledge base, we have difficulty demonstrating the value of what we do apart from the awards we grant ourselves. Awards programmes, however, fail us in important ways. Jurors typically have just minutes to review a project and decide whether or not to keep it in for discussion in later rounds. Some juries seek to evaluate issues other than just aesthetics, but most end up basing their decisions on what they see, with little time to read.

As a result, the judging process fosters a certain conformity. Whatever differences exist among those judging the work, they need to reach a consensus in order to get on with things, adding peer pressure to the peer review. The process also culls innovations in areas like programming, technology, construction, or operations that are hard to see at a glance. It's no mystery when clients think our profession doesn't care about much other than form; we demonstrate that in what we award all the time.

Architecture schools in North America have begun to change the way they evaluate student work, with more one-on-one conversations with individual jurors as a kind of verbal peer review. Peer-reviewed journals like **arq** have also begun to up the ante, with two referees rendering independent opinions on every research paper we publish. The time has come to make similar changes to the awards process. The profession needs to find ways to recognize a greater range of innovation and to enable more independent judgments by jurors.

One option would be to adopt the traditional peer review process, with jurors reviewing work independently of each other. Another option would be to have more specialized awards programmes, with the appropriate juries focusing on a particular area. But one thing is certain: if we don't act, other fields will continue to walk off with services we should be providing and that are ours to lose.

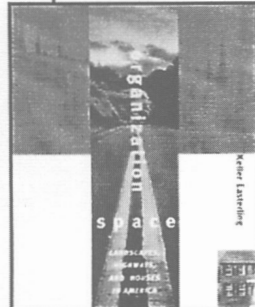
THE EDITORS



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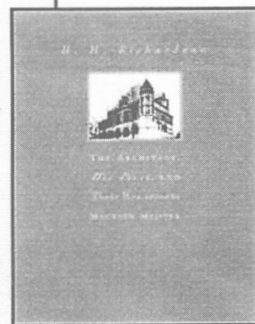
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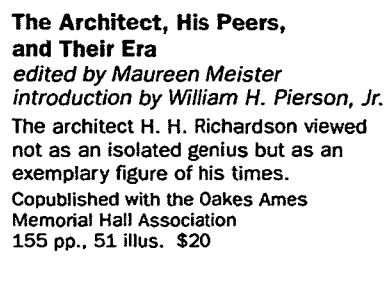
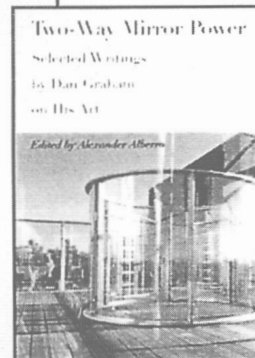
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