

# AIA Utah YAF: Collaborative Expression and Education in Utah

Contributed by AIA Utah

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## SUMMARY

The AIA Utah YAF Committee has taken up the charge of community outreach in Utah and in the Salt Lake area in order to influence the outcome of the built environment. Utah's young architects have created an "all 'creatives' welcome" atmosphere for out-of-the-box civic thinkers, through lectures, film series, competitions, performances and installations that provoke, inspire and promote the ideal that we are all in this together.

## THREE-PRONGED HIERARCHY

Situated in one of the nation's fastest growing regions, Utah is witnessing economic investment at a point when many cities instead are witnessing decline. It would be all too easy for the Young Architects to sit by and watch the reformation of Salt Lake occur without saying a word. There is no ambiguity in the group's priorities: to encourage the participation of newer professionals in AIA Utah's programs and activities and to assist young architects in their professional growth through the education of members and the public about the value of quality design. They distill their points into a three-pronged hierarchy: design awareness, professional growth, and education. They have employed this renewed philosophy since their call for participation in June of 2010.

## DESIGN AWARENESS

As these leaders move into their careers and grow as professionals, they are faced with the challenge of balancing what they learned in studio and integrating it with what they are learning as professionals within the rapidly changing world of architecture. This group seeks to bridge the divide through public and civic design discourse. They have achieved this through widely publicized events and competitions in the state, through the AIA UtahYAF website, through PechaKucha events, and interaction with elementary school students.

## Web Site

In order for Utah's YAF to have a voice in the geographically spread community, they developed a tool that would be interesting, informative, dynamic, and relevant. The Web site, launched in July 2010 ([www.aiautahyaf.org](http://www.aiautahyaf.org)) is a tool that is envisioned to grow in content and reach while still integrating back to the AIA Utah site.

## PechaKucha

PechaKucha is an event taking hold in many architectural communities around the globe. AIA Utah's YAF PechaKucha events invite wide slices of the public to the same table to discuss the relevancy of design in their lives. They have brought leaders from the Economic Development Agency, the local Choir school, Salt Lake City Council, Photographers, Architects, and a 12 year old girl with cystic fibrosis to the table to share their thoughts on why design matters in their lives. The result: a collective voice, shaping the city's choices for cultural, civic, and commercial investment.

## Educating Elementary Children through Architecture (EECTA)

EECTA is an 8-week program (1-hour lessons each week) allowing members of the architectural community to share their passion with school children, their families, and the community at large.

## PROFESSIONAL GROWTH SERIES

YAF sponsors programs in a professional growth series, creating meaningful events that contribute to continuing education and remain relevant to the changing landscape of practice. Examples include the seminar "The Gap –What You Don't Know You Need to Know" addressed legal, creative, and political implications of young architects' career choices, including licensure and insurance and a hosted "Lunch with the Fellows." Additionally, these type of offerings are combined with multiple hard hat tours, art events, and film series showings (in cooperation with the Utah Film Center); YAF provides considerable education for the component.

## EDUCATION

Competitions allow for educational opportunities through the challenge of meeting a set of design criteria in a collaborative setting. Participants learn from the events as well as those who view the responses.

## Ballet West / Fluid Adagio

Local, national, and international designers were invited to participate in a competition to design a temporary (now semi-permanent) art installation that occupies a vacant lot scheduled to become the site for Utah's premiere ballet company, Ballet West.

The site, adjacent to the historic Salt Lake Capitol theater downtown, provided a contextual challenge in an ever-changing urban fabric. The broader purpose was to advocate for a discussion about good design, encouraging the artistic endeavors of creative, young designers in the city. Cash prizes were awarded for the top designs, and the winner received funds for construction.

### **Sixty-Nine-Seventy – An Urban Ideas Competition**

New on the horizon for the YAF is the Sixty-Nine-Seventy competition, which plays off the synergy created with the Ballet West / Fluid Adagio competition. Adjoining blocks will be studied, and leaders from the city, county, and state will be brought to the table for competition guidelines, stakeholder needs, and the jurying. This competition will focus on the space in between, the tissue that connects what exists in Salt Lake, ultimately using connectivity as a tool to amplify the character of the city. The belief is that this competition will act as that catalyst to capture the imagination of the residents. This effort will educate the public about how the “cultural core” can become a genuinely created place.

## **RESOURCES**

### **More Best Practices**

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 21.06.02 The Art of Practice: A Gallery Show of Process and Design
- 22.08.03 Design Competitions as a Catalyst for Community Action
- 22.08.11 Revitalizing St. Louis: The Washington Avenue Windows Project

### **Feedback**

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### **Key Terms**

- Leadership
- Associations
- Design associations
- Architectural associations
- The American Institute of Architects
- AIA components