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## X Marks the Artist

BY NORM POWERS

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Edwin Meek

Asheville has long held a favored spot in the hearts of architecture aficionados, beloved for its eclectic range of styles from the Gothic-inspired Grove Arcade to the sturdy internationalism of the I.M. Pei Building.

Pei inhabits the rarified constellation of international "starchitects" that includes Rem Koolhaas, Zaha Hadid, Renzo Piano and Frank Gehry, to name a few; but those responsible for Asheville's rich architectural heritage have by and large labored in obscurity.

Even more regrettable is that many of them were also talented artists in other media, from works on paper and canvas to sculpture, photography and the decorative arts. The Asheville section of the American Institute of Architects intends to provide some enlightenment with this month's "Art X Architects," on view at The Gallery at Pack Place.

"We've been wanting to do this for several years," says Mary Fierle, the executive director of AIA/Asheville. "It's just a natural, since so many architects create artwork other than their buildings." About 20 architects will be exhibiting in a variety of media in the show, which will be running during the North Carolina AIA's Design Conference in downtown Asheville in mid-month. The show's artist's reception on the 15th, in fact, is incorporated as a conference event. It's the first show of its kind undertaken by the Asheville AIA, joining chapters in other states who frequently like to remind art lovers that designing a building is just another facet of creative inspiration.

"Painting to me is a way to look at and study architectural space in an abstract way," says Peter Alberice, of Asheville's Camille-Alberice Architects, whose mixed media work on canvas and paper will be included in the AIA show. His work has been shown regionally for some years and is known for its rich palette of browns, greens and yellows drawn from the landscape of northern Italy. Among Peter's cited influences is Louis Kahn, one of the 20th century's most influential architects best known for Yale

University's Art Center, completed in 1954. Kahn once remarked that light only had meaning when it meets a wall, indicating architecture's shared interest with painters and photographers in linking their work with the natural world around them.

Indeed, the AIA show's subtitle, "Connecting art, architecture and our built environment," emphasizes the familial relationship between art on a smaller scale and the brick-and-steel artwork we move through every day. "There was an inseparable connection between architectural design and art as early as 200 B.C., in Pompeii," says AIA/Asheville president Terry Meek, whose chosen alternate medium is photography. "Leon Battista Alberti was the first great architect of the Italian Renaissance and was the prototypical Renaissance man — a creative, versatile man who excelled in many vocations. Architects have long expressed their creative impulses in more than one mode or medium."

That versatility remains in evidence in our own time. Atlanta architect John Portman's sculpture and paintings have been exhibited at the High Museum in that city; Maya Lin, who designed the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington, is also a respected architect; and the exquisite conceptual drawings of Frank Lloyd Wright are highly prized by collectors and were a key resource for the recent restoration of the Guggenheim Museum in New York. Terry Meek is represented in the AIA show this month by several of his carefully observed black-and-white photographs, many of them Brassai-like slices of Parisian street life, from two lovers wrapped in an embrace to a lonely, contemplative woman at a café. "I purchased my first camera in the early 1990s," Terry says. "I enjoy the beauty of small, still moments and capturing them for all time."



Peter Alberice

Architects responsible for some of the city's signature buildings are accorded a special place in the show. Among them are William Dodge, a member of the city's fabled architectural firm Six Associates of the mid-20th century and a designer of residential complexes like the Enka Corporation Employee Houses. Dodge was equally admired for his woodworking and silversmithing, examples of which will be on exhibit. Paintings by fellow Six Associates architect Anthony Lord, who designed the Citizen-Times Building, are also included in the show along with works on canvas by Douglas Ellington, whose City Building and S&W Cafeteria gave downtown Asheville its prized Art Deco ambience.

With all this cross-fertilization on display, the AIA/Asheville show revitalizes the link between the artistic impulse and the buildings that shelter us, house our collective endeavors, and define our social activities. We live in and move through works of art every day, creative expressions we usually take for granted. Sometimes the most remarkable art is, not just in front of us, but all around us.

To learn more about Asheville's unique architectural heritage, visit the National Park Service's website at [nps.org/nr/travel/](http://nps.org/nr/travel/)



Alan Wingfield

</asheville/architecture.htm>

