Jesse Reiser
Reiser/Umemoto Studio
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Ages: 29
Education: BArch, Cooper Union, 1981; MArch, Cranbrook Academy of Art, 1984.
Occupation: Architect, sculptor.
Comments: I’m trying to recapture what’s been lost in architecture, what it was before it became a service profession. I think there are great possibilities now—certain people are moving towards a more expanded notion of architecture as a means of interpreting the world, as it did up to the end of the 18th Century. On the other hand, there are people trying to make it a more efficient, technical exercise. I consider architecture the mother of all the arts.

Paul Florian
William Worn
Stephen Wierzbowksi
Florian-Wierzbowksi
Chicago

Ages: 37 (Florian, Worn), 34 (Wierzbowksi).
Experience: Have worked for Sir Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners; Holabird & Root; Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; Machado/Silvetti.
Occupation: Collaboration of architects and artists involved in residential, exhibition, and furniture designs.
Comments: We’ve modeled our office after that of Charles Eames, where work is structured as a collaborative effort among architects, artists, and graphic designers, and where no stone is left untorn in solving a problem. In Bauhaus fashion, we also believe you can design anything once the problem is properly set up. That has allowed us to work at several scales, from the design of furniture and exhibits to houses and shops. We consider all of it to be architecture.

Exhibition design is an excellent way of testing ideas since museums don’t have as many preconceptions as homeowners about their public image. We treat the museum as a civic place so that the inside of the gallery takes on the character of an exterior public space. Such scale shifts, and ambiguous formlessness in general, is very much a part of all our work. It allows the familiar to appear new and the new, familiar.

Kvong Park
REFRONT
Art and Architecture
New York

Age: 32
Experience: Architectural work in offices in Detroit and New York; art works exhibited in galleries in New York, Michigan, and Illinois.
Occupation: Founder and director of STOREFRONT for Art and Architecture, a not-for-profit organization that provides space for the exhibition and discussion of critical issues in the arts and society.
Comments: We support art and architecture that engages public issues, whether they’re social issues such as homelessness or aesthetic issues such as that posed by the Whitney Museum addition. We try to break artists and architects out of the isolation that comes with commercial pressures by providing a forum where alternative works can be exhibited and new ideas discussed.

We want to show, particularly to young architects, the alternatives. We’re often misunderstood as being unfocused, when what we’re trying to be is evolutionary.

We also try to promote collaborations both internally among the people of STOREFRONT and externally with community groups and public agencies. That collaboration is important because problems such as homelessness can’t be solved by any one profession or group. I feel that there’s a growing interest among artists and architects in aesthetic freedom and moral responsibility, but there are not enough places where they can come together to discuss openly their work and its relation to public issues. I’d like to see many more active organizations like STOREFRONT, although it isn’t easy. What really keeps the place going are the people who give it their time and support.

Two memory theaters: Mnemonic Architecture for a Village on the Hudson River (left, top and bottom) and Theater for the Occupations of Saturn (above). Elements of the latter sculpture have been enlarged and reworked for a landscape design in Sands Point, N.Y.
Age: 25–35.
Education: Varied professional degrees.
Experience: Founded Oasis in 1982 as a nonprofit, after-hours studio where architects and artists could work on individual projects in a critical environment.
Occupations: Practicing architects, artists, composer.
Comments: Oasis is at any given time defined by its members. It’s a fluid situation. We now have 16 full members who pay for studio space and 75 affiliate members. We’ve got three group projects going: Touchstone magazine (underwritten by Charette Corporation and Payette Associates); an installation for City Hall Plaza as part of First Night 1987 (see caption); and the Boston Projects, which are intended to identify leftover spaces in Boston and propose new uses. We also sponsor member shows and lectures.

Age: 31.
Occupation: Architect, theatrical lighting and production consultant.
Comments: Theatrical lighting gives you the opportunity to use light in creating illusions. Often architects take lighting for granted and do not realize its potential, for example, in making small spaces appear larger.

Kevin J. Flynn
Michael Fox Incorporated
St. Louis

The advantage of being involved in theater as an architect is the gratification of seeing your ideas quickly built. The two fields complement each other, and in fact, there are a number of architects who have studied and worked in both.

Ages: 29.
Experience: Both were project designers for the Residential Design Group and architects for Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory.
Occupation: Own and operate a personnel service for architectural temps.
Comments: We saw a need in the profession for an architectural temp service that would relieve firms of having to hire and fire and that would give employees job security. Encouraged by the results of market research, we began ArchiTemps in 1985.

T. Haley
ArchiTems Personnel Services
Oakland, Calif.

There are five categories of people who come to us. There are those who see temporary work with a variety of firms as a way of finding the ideal permanent job. There are those, mostly just out of school, who see it as a way of getting a variety of experiences. There are independent architects who seek temporary work during lulls in their own practices; many of these employees also are our clients when they have a lot of work and need staff. There are some people who just don’t want permanent work—who want a periodic change of environment. Finally, there are retired people who want to continue working yet don’t want a full-time job.

We see the company expanding in three areas: expanding the number of services to include such things as screening prospective employees or helping with staff planning; expanding our geographical coverage; and expanding the disciplines we offer to include such fields as engineering.

We’ve been encouraged by the response of architects to our service, many have wondered why something like this hadn’t been done before.

Set for Moon on a Rainbow Shawl, Edison Theater, Washington University.

The Gateway to the Future (above, left and right), a collaborative design by Oasis for New Year’s Eve (First Night), 1986.
Age: 33.
Occupation: Principal in a firm that uses the design process to develop, position, and name new products and companies.
Comments: Our design process for new products is based upon an architectural model. We program information, generate schematic ideas using outside consultants, develop the most fertile ideas, and specify a fully developed brand personality.

The more time architects spend thinking beyond the making of buildings, the better off the profession and society will be. What architects have to offer clients is a process, which does not have to lead to a building. Corporate America has begun to recognize the value of the design process in developing products, but few architects see what they do as having any connection to that.

What we have tried to do is to take the design process and apply it as broadly as possible. Our project mix is varied, bordering on insane. A recent week found us delving into carbon zinc and alkaline battery differences, exploring Pee Wee Herman’s promotional possibilities for child/adult markets, comparing acne problems of teenagers yesterday and today, and analyzing “premium” products.

Wesley R. Janz
Janz/Abrahamson
Minneapolis, Minn.

Age: 33.
Comments: I get very bored doing just one thing. I try to get involved in all aspects of design—color, lighting, furniture, even clothes. I don’t buy art by other people—I do it myself and change it from month to month.

It’s very flattering to be one of maybe two American designers who have signed with Artemide. [Lombardi’s candle sconce, called Lantern, will be introduced by Artemide this fall.] But I won’t spend the rest of my life doing lighting. I’m wide open.

Steven A. Lombardi
San Diego, Calif.

Age: 38.
Education: BArch, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 1970; Master of Science in Architecture Studies, MIT, 1984.
Occupation: Senior architect, Public Facilities Department, City of Boston.
Comments: Working in the public sector is not an alternative to architecture per se, but an alternative to being in a conventional office. We are the voice of the client—the City of Boston. Some 450 buildings are currently owned by the city, and many will be improved or altered as part of Boston’s new five-year plan.

My job is to make sure that the architects on those projects get the information they really need, when they need it. My team also ensures that the clients’ needs are accurately reflected, and that bidding and construction run smoothly.

It is essential that the architect be the designer. I can influence aesthetic questions, but I don’t want to control them. Our goal is to choose good, strong architects appropriate to the task and then let them do their work.

I’m working in a city that I care about. This particular program was attractive to me because it’s new—it started only last August. I was worried that this was a departure from the normal career path of an architect, but now I feel that I’m actually stronger. An architect learns through case studies. I’m doing three police stations now, for example, and it’s interesting to watch the similarities and differences. We have an impact on the environment at large scale.

I don’t, however, intend to do this forever, in the standard bureaucratic sense of working until pensioned. I’ll do this until I’m not learning anymore, or until I feel I’m no longer contributing.
Duo Dickinson
Mackall & Dickinson, Architects
Branford, Conn.

Age: 31.

Education: BArch, Cornell University, 1978.


Occupation: Architect, author of mass market books on architecture: Adding On, The Small House, and (to be published next year) The New American Home; Adjunct Professor of Architecture at Roger Williams College.

Comments: I started to write because I wanted to demystify architecture for the public, to show that architecture isn’t exclusive or only for the rich. Like psychotherapy, architecture, which once seemed esoteric to people, is now more widely understood and depended upon.

Young architects with low budget projects have to be creative in ways large firms do not. And we have to listen more to clients. You quickly learn that providing a service and making a product are not mutually exclusive.

The advantage of pursuing more than one career is that there are always options when times get tough. With the various things that I do, I sometimes find myself in the position of being an arsonist and fireman at the same time.

Duo Dickinson’s own house (above left) and the cover of his book Adding On published by McGraw-Hill.

Stephen Skinner
Omnibus Simulation
Los Angeles, Calif.

Age: 28.

Education: BA in Architecture, University of California, Berkeley, 1980.


Occupation: Manager of computer modeling for a company that provides computer graphics and animation services for the motion picture and television industry.

Comments: I use my architectural training in my present job. Because of the three-dimensional nature of our work, many of the same visual and spatial skills come into play. We work extensively, for example, with orthographic drawings and models in order to design and digitize our computer models. But some aspects of my architectural experience, such as the organization of projects, I have had to unlearn: In the film business, things can change up to the last minute.

This is an alternative career that other architects should consider. Many of the people in my department have had design backgrounds. There also is a lot of on-the-job training, even for people who studied computers in college, which I didn’t. Another benefit is the salary, which is higher than what I could expect in a design firm.

The music video for Mick Jagger’s “Hard Woman” involved a composite technique in which a film of Jagger going through his motions on a stage against a neutral background is overlaid with a film of computer-generated characters animated to fit Jagger’s movements.

Kenneth Sanders
Architectural Systems Research
Santa Ana, Calif.

Age: 28.

Education: BArch, University of California, Berkeley, 1980.


Occupation: CAD consultant to architects, providing system selection and implementation as well as software development.

Comments: Most CAD systems are general purpose drawing systems that are forced to fit architects’ requirements. Also, most are too hard for the average architect to use; the people driving the development of software are often not that concerned with its accessibility. Companies focus on adding features to their systems without addressing basic architectural issues, such as how a set of drawings might be organized or modified.

The fault lies as much with the architectural profession as it does with computer vendors. The profession has never defined what an architectural CAD system should be; the AIA, which should help with that definition, has instead acted as a dealer. At the same time, many CAD vendors have not described what their systems can do in terms that architects can understand. As a result, architects’ expectations are usually either too high or too low. They are either disappointed when a system doesn’t do all that they hoped or unaware that a system can do more than they think possible.

I think all architecture students should acquire some computer skills, not because it will make them more money, but because those skills will be needed by everyone in the future. I still think of myself as an architect and see myself returning to a firm. My role now is primarily one of education—helping people’s expectations fit the reality and creating a greater independence in the use of computers on the part of architects. In one sense, my job is to make my job obsolete.
**Kathleen A. Dorgan**  
Capital Hill Improvement Corporation  
Albany, N.Y.

**Age:** 30  
**Education:** BArch, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 1981.  
**Experience:** Architectural designer, Troy Architectural Program, a nonprofit community design center, 1977–1980.  
**Occupation:** Executive director, Capitol Hill Improvement Corporation.  
**Comments:** Community design centers are to the practice of architecture what legal aid societies are to law. People make a conscious decision to work in community design when they could make more money elsewhere. At the same time, I can look back on almost any day’s work and see something worthwhile. A lot of the work we do is not architecture but loan packaging or homeownership seminars. At present, however, we’re doing a lot of design work. Most of it is rehabilitation, but we’re now building five new facilities to house the homeless. This is an obvious need for architects in this field. Right now there is not much information in most of the schools about community design centers, and that’s a problem. It’s an opportunity to get into parts of the design process a young architect might not get into for years in conventional practice.

**Lucila A. Peña**  
Trammell Crow Design and Construction  
Dallas

**Age:** 30  
**Education:** B Design, University of Florida, 1978; MArch, Cornell University, 1982.  
**Experience:** Project designer, WZMH Group, Dallas, 1982–1984.  
**Occupation:** Director of Design, Trammell Crow Design and Construction/Dallas Market Center Company, Dallas.  
**Comments:** When I was with WZMH, all I did was schematic design. I enjoyed that very much but felt I needed to learn more about the whole process. There are a lot of factors other than design that influence whether or not a project goes ahead. Eighty percent of the projects I’m working on now get built, so I’ve gotten a lot of experience very fast. We develop the program for a project, select the architects, and work with them on the design. I’m earning more as a developer than as an architect, but you have to enjoy what you’re doing, or it isn’t worth it.

**Mark T. Reeves**  
Sparber, Shevin, Shapo & Heilbronner  
Miami, Fla.

**Age:** 32  
**Education:** BArch, 1978; MArch, 1980; Juris Doctor, University of Miami, 1984.  
**Experience:** Lecturer in Architecture, University of Miami, 1980–81; Architect, Connell Associates, 1980–84; Attorney, Sparber, Shevin, Shapo & Heilbronner, 1984–present.  
**Occupation:** Attorney, with specialty in construction, zoning, and land-use law.  
**Comments:** I became interested in law dealing with public contracts as an architect. I also saw a need since our part of Florida has a vast regulatory framework dealing with zoning and land-use matters. Backgrounds in architecture and law are totally complementary. For anyone involved in business, a basic legal education is becoming essential. Also, the trend among law firms is to specialize, so that attorneys with previous professional experience are in high demand. I’d recommend it for other architects. I continued to work as an architect while going to law school at night. While I was numb with work, I still think that that is the way to do it. I can’t see stopping one career to learn about another. I never went through a trauma of switching careers because I never had the time. I left the architectural firm on a Friday and began at the law firm on the following Monday.

I’ve stayed active in architectural organizations and have written a legal column for the local AIA publication. I’ve personally gotten a lot out of it. If I ever went back to architecture, it would be to try my hand, on the side, as a developer. The architectural background lets you see how buildings go together, and the legal background, how building deals are made.