



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

AIA MICHIGAN ANNOUNCES 2015 KORAB AWARD WINNER

May 5, 2015- Detroit, Michigan- The American Institute of Architects Michigan is proud to announce the Balthazar Korab Award will be awarded at the annual Design Awards celebration on June 5 at the Woodward Garden Theater in Detroit to James Willer, III. This award is named in honor of Balthazar Korab, Hon. AIA, renowned architect and photographer, who spent his career breathing life into architecture and the built environment. The Korab Award may be given each year in recognition of an individual's significant effort and contribution to architecture and/or the arts.

A Metropolitan Detroit native, James' passion for the emergence of a sustainable growth model for the post-industrial city has guided his professional, as well as academic and community pursuits within the City of Detroit. Currently James is the owner / operator of Workshop™, a reclaimed lumber furniture store which reintroduces small scale manufacturing within a retail storefront inside the iconic Fisher Building in Detroit's New Center. Workshop™ is the culmination of James' experiences and passions in building a Detroit deconstruction industry to further expand a local reclaimed building materials market.

James was taught fine arts at Albion College, professionally trained in carpentry at the Detroit Area Joint Apprenticeship Carpenters Training Committee, and formally educated in Architecture at Lawrence Technological University. Growing up as a fourth generation carpenter, James' youth and early career was spent learning the hands on aspects of the built environment building houses and working as a union commercial carpenter. Transitioning into general contracting, estimating and design/build construction project management, James oversaw the successful completion of many Detroit area commercial construction projects. From design/build contracting, James formally moved into architecture and design, working for the nationally recognized firms Victor Saroki and Associates and ArchiveDS, respectively.

In 2011, James co-founded Reclaim Detroit, developed the deconstruction curriculum and trained the initial workers, estimators and project managers. James established the materials diversion protocols, launched the warehousing, processing and milling of reclaimed lumber and was first-to-market in providing consumer access and confidence.

In 2010, James envisioned and co-founded Lincoln St. Art Park in Detroit's midtown adjacent to the City's only drop-off recycling facility. Applying for and securing a small grant to pilot a community land use reclamation project, the resulting art park has become an example of urban innovation in reuse of vacant, underutilized land.

In 2008, James authored the application for Detroit's Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT). The resulting grant, awarded by the American Institute of Architects (AIA), laid the foundation for the highly publicized Detroit Future City initiative. James also launched the Detroit Chapter of Pecha-Kucha Night.

The American Institute of Architects Michigan, headquartered in the historic Beaubien House across from the GM Renaissance Center in downtown Detroit, established its awards program to bring to public attention the value and importance of architectural excellence and to recognize those whose notable achievements encourage all to make excellence in architecture the standard. Visit www.aiami.com or call 313.965.4100 to learn more.

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