Introduction

The 2015-16 Preservation as Provocation, International Student Design Competition challenges students and multi-disciplinary teams in architecture, preservation, landscape architecture, planning, engineering, sustainable design and other cross-disciplines, to create a new Visitor Center and approach experience for the iconic Farnsworth House by Mies van der Rohe in Plano, Illinois. The competition is organized by the American Institute of Architects Historic Resources Committee (AIA/HRC) along with the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA), funded by the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT), a unit of the National Park Service and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The Purpose

Many already consider the Farnsworth House, one of the most important buildings of the twentieth century, an architectural pilgrimage site. This sublime building reflects the architectural past and is a source of inspiration for the present. While it is one of the most studied buildings from the mid-century, it has only recently become a public place. The current visitor center was constructed quickly and affordably to solve immediate visitor service needs but does not reflect the character and quality that Farnsworth represents. Also, as the site programming, staff, and offerings have developed, the current visitors center has become inadequate for current operational needs. It lacks sufficient space for the proper greeting and orientation of visitors, for visitor amenities and for staff and support functions.

Creating a design for a new building that must relate in some significant way to an iconic structure presents the designer with multiple challenges. The new building(s) should respectfully express a relationship with the historic, while at the same time rest comfortably in the present and provides insight to the physical and social context of the Farnsworth House and site. The varying relationship, over time, between served and servant spaces are but one example of the critical issues presented by this project that need to be explored. The goal of this competition is to explore how the collaboration between historic buildings and new design can produce uniquely accretive-layered landscapes. Farnsworth House has transitioned from a private retreat home to a thriving cultural site. Re-imagining the Visitors Center secures the social and economic vision of this place that is a setting for arts programming, education and inspiration as well as a dynamic and progressive house museum.

* This Text is from the Competition Announcement. [http://www.acsa-arch.org/programs-events/competitions/2015-2016-preservation-as-provocation](http://www.acsa-arch.org/programs-events/competitions/2015-2016-preservation-as-provocation)