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SPRING 2016

GRASSROOTS DETROIT 2016 LUDMILLA PAVLOVA-GILLHAM AIA, WMAIA PRESIDENT-ELECT

On a chilly Tuesday in February I landed in Detroit for my first AIA Grassroots event, hosted at the iconic Renaissance Center designed by John Portman & Associates in 1977 and renovated by SOM in 2000 for General Motors. Henry Ford II's blockbuster and city-defining landmark development on the US side of the Detroit River consists of four octagonal 39-story office towers that surround a 73-story cylindrical hotel rising from a square-shaped podium of mixed uses, including an auto showroom at the base and a conference center (AIA Guide to Detroit Architecture). The opening reception was hosted at the crisply designed Coach Insignia restaurant on the top floor of the hotel – the space was buzzing with a great diversity of architects from across the US. It featured a stunning 360 degree view of Detroit and its 19th-century street plan of monumental avenues and traffic circles that fan out from the heart of the downtown. Formerly known as the Paris of the West, Detroit is beginning to rebuild itself on the solid structure of its architectural heritage and strong work ethic (the Detroit Land Bank is selling properties with a minimum bid of \$1,000 per Jessica Probus, What it's Actually Like to Buy a \$500 House in Detroit, BuzzFeed, 5/31/15) . On my first evening I ventured out for a Mediterranean dinner into the city's Greektown Historic District, which is home to the MGM Grand casino – an urban prototype of the future Springfield casino.

The conference itself kicked off with a panel discussion entitled: "What Cities Need from Architects." Panel members included mayors and municipal leaders from Detroit, Tampa, Birmingham and Seattle. Cities are reinventing themselves. They're reclaiming industrial landscapes and riverfronts by creating green infrastructure that supports civic activities and recreation. They're renovating facilities to support technological innovation and small business entrepreneurship, and they're working with architects and planners to engage the public in revitalizing neighborhoods that support local culture and community organizations.

I was fortunate to attend a workshop on "Strategic Foresight: Connecting Members to Prosperity." In it, chapter leaders engaged in frank discussions concerning challenges in professional practice as well as brainstorming on how best to position members for success. Key issues included changing demographics in firms, aging membership, engaging emerging professionals/retaining talented employees, coping with complexity in project delivery

and technical issues, managing client expectations, the accelerating pace of change in technology and communications, and the continued need to educate the public on the value of architecture. In addition to this workshop, there were many other high interest presentations and discussions concerning AIA organization and the most effective ways of providing value to members. Anyone wishing to read session materials from various programs should feel free to email me and I would be happy to share them.

The reception at the Detroit Institute of Arts provided a beautiful venue for networking and sheer aesthetic pleasure. The galleries on the lower level were open and offered a much needed respite from PowerPoint slides! They were filled with beautiful artworks that fortunately escaped the auction block during Detroit's bankruptcy. The final keynote was an outstanding speech given by Jennifer Granholm, former Governor of Michigan, who addressed the political landscape and predicted that states will indeed take action by rebuilding physical infrastructure and investing in education and technological innovation. She received a standing ovation for her passionate appeal – begging dramatically, down on her knees - for architects to help rebuild American cities and abandoned communities.



GM Showroom



Detroit Institute of Arts



Detroit Renaissance Center

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THE WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

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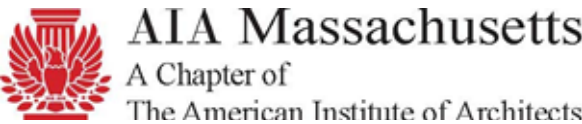
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COVER PHOTO: PETER PEIRCE

MASSACHUSETTS UPDATE SPRING 2016

CHRIS FARLEY AIA



AIA Massachusetts (AIAMA) is the state-wide legislative and regulatory body representing the three state chapters of the AIA; the Boston Society of Architects (BSA), AIA Central MA, and WMAIA. The following is a brief list of some of the bills currently making their way through the legislature;

- HB2196 - An Act establishing the building code coordinating council
- SB122 - An Act promoting the planning and development of sustainable communities
- SB1747 - An Act combating climate change – Carbon neutral bill
- SB1973 - An Act providing for the establishment of a comprehensive adaptation management plan in response to climate change
- HB2843 - An Act relative to the state building code – (no more "stretch" anything codes)

These bills can be reviewed in more detail at <https://malegislature.gov/Bills>. On the regulatory front, AIA MA has been asked to participate on a number of state commissions/task forces. Each commission/task force is tasked with solving a particular problem related to the built environment.

- Commonwealth of Massachusetts Accelerated Energy Program (AEP) –Retrofitting 700 sites encompassing more than 4,800 buildings throughout the Commonwealth in 700 days.
- Boston Survivors Accessibility Alliance (BSAA) – Helping those who may need assistance with renovations to help transition to a new lifestyle.
- Blended Building Code
- Architectural Registration Board – New Regulations
- DPU Interconnection Sub-Group – Discussing ways in which the utilities can be more responsive to the needs/schedules of public and private construction projects.

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TWO TOWNS, TWO SCHOOLS, THREE FIRMS

DORRIE BROOKS AIA, NCARB



CONTE MIDDLE SCHOOL Photos by Dorrie Brooks

It was just my luck that the economy was in the dumps in the Spring of 2012 when I began looking for my first job in architecture. Fortunately for Margo Jones Architects (now Jones Whitsett Architects) the Massachusetts School Building Authority runs by its own logic. While most firms were cutting back in 2012, Margo's Greenfield design studio was hiring, and in a hurry. Two significant projects for the towns of South Hadley and North Adams had won state approval and were entering design development in the same period of time.

I was assigned to work on the renovation of Conte Middle School in North Adams (later renamed Colegrove Park Elementary School, K-7). A 79,000 sf, four story, yellow brick structure designed in the Renaissance Revival style in 1916, the school had been falling into disrepair for many years. While it sat on an enviable location overlooking Mass MoCA, its buckling floor boards and crumbling parapets did little to inspire local affection. City residents loved sharing gruesome stories with the design team about the leaky roof and the ghosts in the boiler room.

Fortunately, Margo P. Jones FAIA, NCARB, LEED-AP (Founding Principal) is not afraid of ghosts. While she lead one team in unlocking the secrets of Conte, in the summer of 2012, a second team in the office focused their efforts on pushing the design envelope of a very different project of similar size and student enrollment.

South Hadley's Plains Elementary was a proposed pre-K to 1st grade school that faced an easier political climate and a conveniently flat, wooded site. Here, where blue sky thinking was possible, Margo and associate principal Kristian Whitsett AIA, NCARB, LEED AP BD+C sought to come up with a design specific to the project context. It is a hallmark of Jones Whitsett Architects that we do not recycle designs. Instead, each project arises from its own analysis of constraints and possibilities. In this instance, faced with the tight timeline and a doubling up of document delivery deadlines, Margo and Kristian struggled to free up the necessary resources to devote to conceptual design. The solution Margo and Kristian came up with was to do something often shunned by design firms; they chose to collaborate with other architects.

For the North Adams project, Jones Whitsett divided the scope of work into interior and exterior, and asked Dietz and Company Architects of Springfield to focus on the building's exterior renovation, while our staff handled new construction, space programming, interior partitions, seismic upgrades, finishes, and project management.

Using Revit and a VPN connection both offices worked in parallel on the same model. As time passed, consultants joined the model, linking in their own work in 2D and 3D. Despite the distance and the ambitious timetable, the extra staff on the project allowed both teams more time to do archival document research, which enabled us to piece together a visual history of the building which provided a sort of treasure map we could use during demolition to locate and salvage historic details.

TWO TOWNS, TWO SCHOOLS, THREE FIRMS

Like a fun house mirror, the project in South Hadley was an inverse of the project in North Adams. To support the design of Plains Elementary, Margo tapped Kevin Flanagan, AIA and Boris Srdar, FAIA, from Seattle's design firm NAC. NAC and JWA shared many values, but freed from the constraints of New England conservatism, NAC's schools are often more formally innovative and successfully embrace the gentler northwest outdoors. Egged on by the collaboration with NAC, and perhaps by Kristian's own California sensibilities, JWA achieved a design that met South Hadley's expectations without the predictable references to the traditional red brick schoolhouse favored by many local school building committees.

Conceived as a coming together of neighborhoods, Plains is a cluster of sand colored two story forms gathered under two offset ribbon roofs. The abundant use of materials, including stained concrete flooring, porcelain wall tile, exposed glulam beams, and natural maple woodwork, relate the interior to the project's wooded site. At the playgrounds, ambitiously formed organic berms, water runnels and tree house-like platforms (designed by Dodson and Flinker, Landscape Architects) extend teaching, learning and play into the great outdoors.

Both projects were completed successfully and turned over to their respective communities in late 2015 with the North Adams renovation project taking just three months longer than new construction in South Hadley. Both schools were well received by the MSBA and immediately surpassed predicted enrollment figure.

For me the rewarding part was getting to be on hand when teachers and students began the process of becoming a community in their new environment, especially at Conte where a small, political opposition had been vocal throughout design and construction. Once complete, residents of all ages, including many who had voted against funding the project, praised the school and appreciated the effort the architects had made to treat North Adam's history with respect.

Two towns, two sites, three design firms. Each school tells a different story. Where Conte embraces history, Plains embraces nature. Where Conte is familiar and traditional, Plains is playful, organic and unexpected. I don't doubt that Jones Whitsett Architects could have completed both projects without engaging other designers, but I genuinely believe both projects are better because of the choice made to collaborate.

Collaboration is never "the easy way." It's uncomfortable having to sorting through different opinions and ideas. But only by working through conflicting ideas can good design come about. It is a lesson I continue to reflect on as Jones Whitsett Architects sets out to tackle new challenges.



PLAINS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL Photos by Dorrie Brooks + Dave Ryan

THREE VILLAGES AND A FARM - THE BELCHERTOWN DART

DOUG ALBERTSON, BELCHERTOWN TOWN PLANNER + WAYNE FEIDEN FAICP, HON.WMAIA, DART TEAM LEADER + NORTHAMPTON DIRECTOR OF PLANNING + SUSTAINABILITY

Belchertown's Three Villages and a Farm brought the community together to examine its four primary focal areas: village center and common, four corners shopping area, former state school area, and Lampson Brook Farm. Only coordinated attention to all four areas can create the synergy Belchertown needs to become a more resilient and strong community.

Three Villages and a Farm is the community process and report that Belchertown requested when they applied for a Design and Resiliency Team (DART). This DART was a joint program of the New England Municipal Sustainability Network (NEMSN) and the American Institute of Architects (AIA). They build off the success of AIA's design assistance programs, with a strong focus on resiliency. For the Belchertown DART, WMAIA was instrumental in building support and finding UMass architecture and landscape architecture students who donated much of the graphics that made the report a success.

The Belchertown DART brought out nearly 70 community members to participate in guiding the future of their town. A broad range of residents and interests were represented, and many participants were new to public discussion. The small group discussion brought out some serious meaningful insights and concerns during the Monday forum. Farmers, parents with young children, elders, hunters, accessibility advocates, town officials and more put together their heads full of ideas and their hearts full of care for their community to inform the DART team and to also, and better, learn about and from each other.

Over the past several years, the town has been working on multiple areas of planning, with different entities concentrating on their own areas – the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation is redeveloping the former Belchertown State School campus, a citizens group created Jessica's Boundless Playground (New England's first fully-accessible playground and exercise area), the school department is contemplating expansion, the recreation department is developing more fields, the Department of Public Works is putting the redesign and reconstruction of State Street into the state's funding program, the planning and health departments have been working on promoting pedestrian and bicycle access, and the New England Small farm Institute is planning the legacy of their 400 acres – all in this same area of town. This DART provided a forum for all groups to interact and unite their aspirations into a cohesive vision.

The DART reflected what the community said in their final report, urging the community take a number of steps from better defining both the village and the state school, restoring the common, improving the State Street corridor, and building on the community's heritage. It identified some immediate actions that the town can take to build momentum.

Another 50 residents came to the final DART presentation at the end of the three day process. That there would be such a good turn-out for two evenings in one week is a sign that people care greatly about the place where they live. What many people got out of it, besides a sense of community and vision, are some tangible short-term recommendations to pursue. With these, the town can proceed with the guidance provided by its own community members.



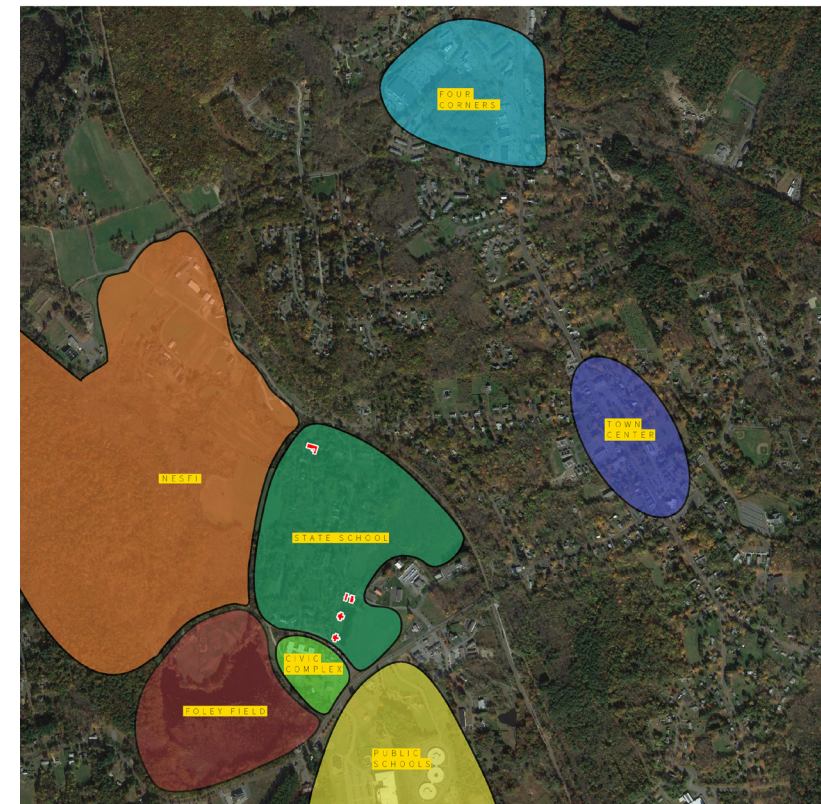
DART project logo:

Highlighting the unique character of Belchertown's three villages + a farm

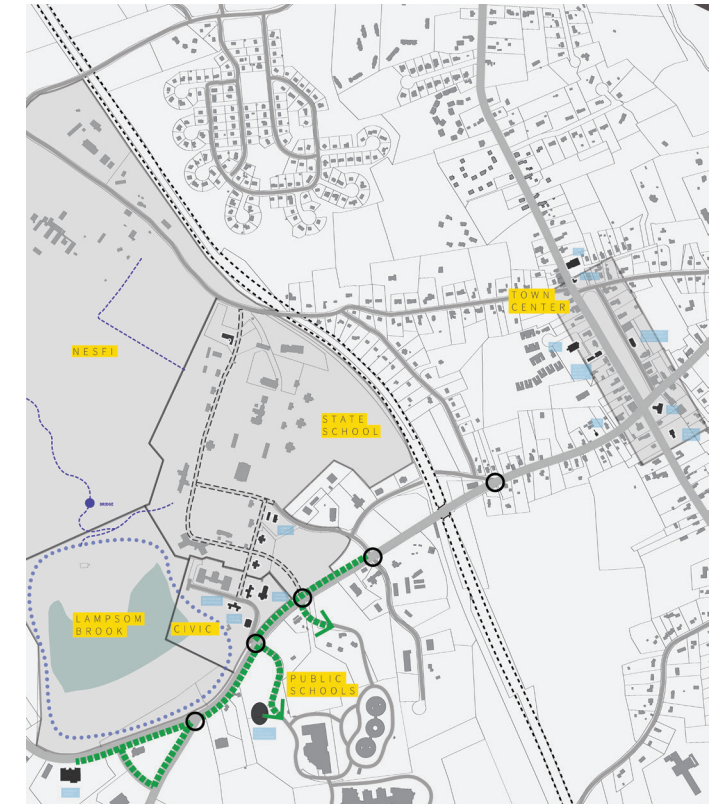


Credit for all graphics to DART and WMAIA volunteers

THREE VILLAGES AND A FARM - THE BELCHERTOWN DART



How the three villages and a farm fit together



Thinking of transportation corridor improvements



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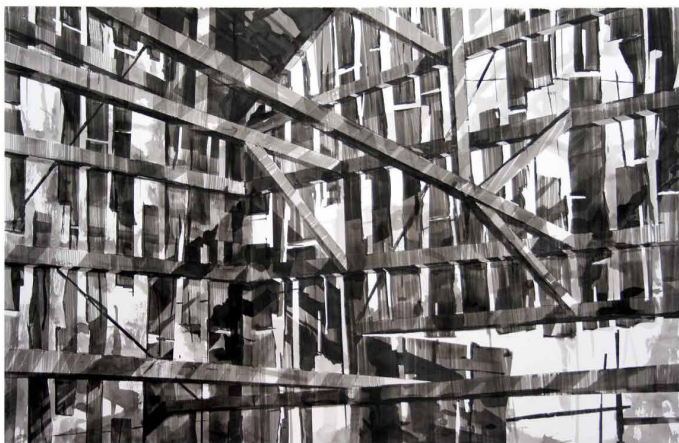
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Gurari Collections is pleased to present an exhibition entitled *SPACE IS THE PLACE*, by the artist Scott Tulay. Space, whether in motion, or as a fixed point, energizes Scott Tulay's drawing explorations. Formulating his point of view from that of an architect, and influenced by his degree in art history, Tulay breaks with convention in his spatially defined art. He is an artist-architect who, by day, has to apply rigorous standards in the built world, then, conversely, he creates imagined otherworldly works of art.

Berkshiremuseum

The BerkshireNow gallery space at the Berkshire Museum will feature an innovative exhibition of the work of architect Stephen Dietemann, along with that of three photographers who have documented his work as an architect, from Saturday, March 5, through Sunday, May 22, 2016. A reception and panel discussion will be held on Friday, May 6, from 5 to 8 p.m., in conjunction with Pittsfield's First Fridays Artswalk, when the Museum's BerkshireNow gallery is open to the public at no cost. Dietemann has been designing award-winning, energy-conscious, sustainable, contemporary residences in the Berkshires since 2002, with an emphasis on creating homes that not only work on, but enhance, challenging sites.



Photo by Jon Hankin

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AFTER

Photo by Ethan Drinker



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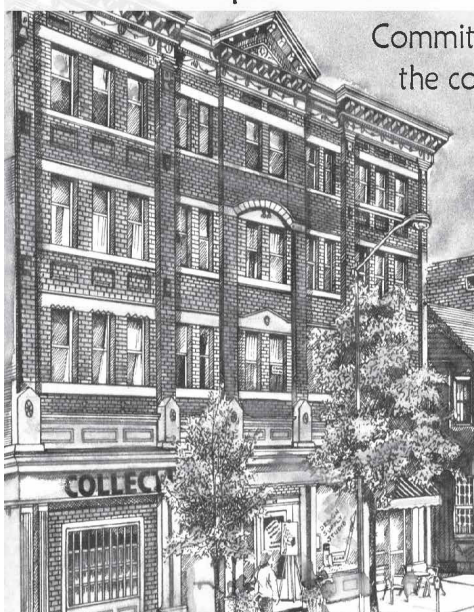
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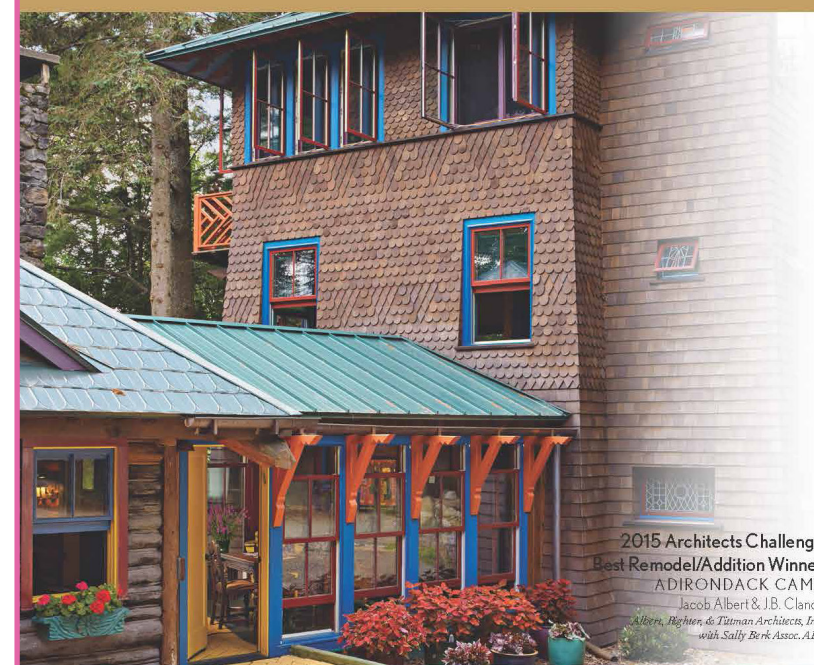
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BEFORE + AFTER AUSTIN DESIGN INC.



AFTER



BEFORE

This is the fourth major renovation of the brewery that Austin Design has collaborated with owner Janet Egelston on, going back to 1995. Over the winter of 2013-14, the fourth and most ambitious re-visioning of the Northampton Brewery was launched. Other than the 2004 sun room and the second floor dining room, nearly everything was reconfigured, updated, and expanded. The bar was moved and became a free-standing oval with many more seats; the kitchen was gutted and refitted, adding an open service area with pizza and rotisserie ovens; the brewery itself was completely reworked, adding large windows for day lighting, all-new easily-sanitized surfaces, room for a canning line and small tours, and internal viewing from the bar. The rooftop biergarten was expanded once again and a spacious full-service covered bar added. The upper deck now extends out toward Hampton Ave. Overhead glass doors added to the brewery below help to establish more of a street presence.

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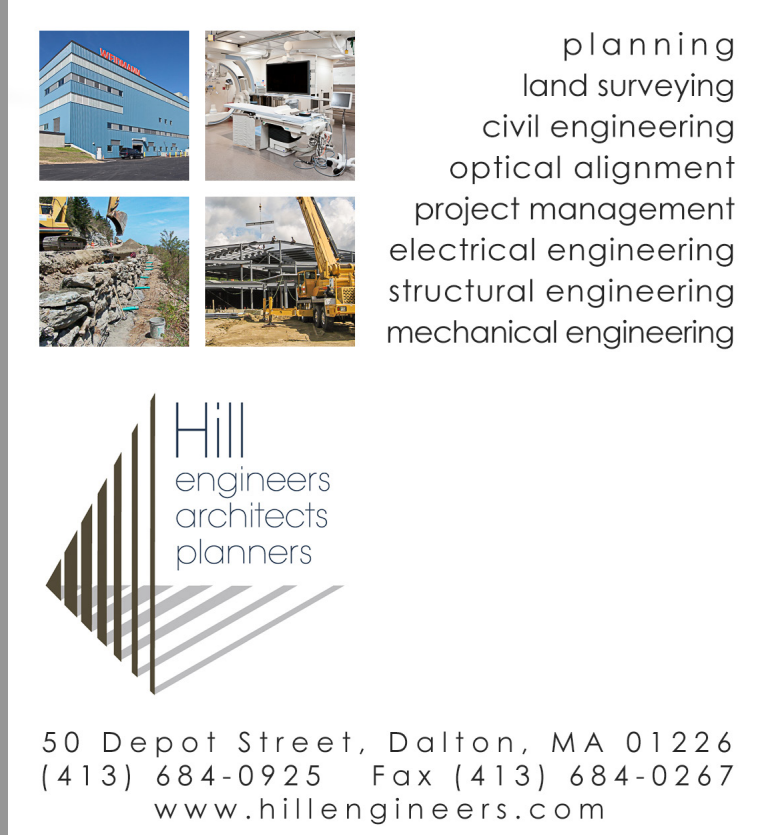
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THINGS TO DO + SEE IN WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

MASS MoCA LIZ DESCHENES:
THROUGH APRIL 24th



"Camera literally means 'room' in Latin," the artist has pointed out. Her works draw attention to the rooms they occupy by reflecting the environment in their mirror-like surfaces and in their shaped supports which are designed to mimic the shadows and light of their particular location. Occupying space in a sculptural fashion, Deschenes' photographs have variously been draped on the floor, hinged at right angles to the wall, situated in the corners, and suspended from the ceiling. Both their careful placement and their non-referential images make close observers aware of not only the parameters of the medium but also of their own perceptual and physical experience in the gallery.

MASS MoCA THE SPACE BETWEEN: GROUP EXHIBITION
ON VIEW BEGINNING APRIL 16th 2016



The Space Between inhabits these spaces of "just passing through," including an impossibly long stretch of hopscotch beginning at the museum and leading into downtown North Adams. The exhibition brings together artists to install work in various interstitial or transitional spaces on, around, and beyond the campus of the museum.

Mead Art Museum JOURNEYS IN SPACE AND MEMORY:
URBAN SCENES AND LANDSCAPES BY
RUSSIAN ARTISTS



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FEATURED ARTISAN

STONE SOUP CONCRETE

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Stone Soup works with architects, builders and individuals in a collaborative endeavor to design and create beautiful and unique items for both residential and commercial settings. Michael Paulson, founder of Stone Soup concrete, says “It is the relationships we have built with our clients and community that are the foundation of our business. These relationships and the fun and exciting challenges that we discover with each and every project keep us inspired and running strong after 15 years in business.” For more information: www.stonesoupconcrete.com



All Photos: Stone Soup Concrete

STONE SOUP CONCRETE

FEATURED ARTISAN



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