

Aric Lasher, FAIA

By Thomas H. Beeby, FAIA Emeritus

Aric Lasher was raised in Detroit, a city that had abandoned its historical core in the hope of a new and better life created by the automobile. In the late 1920's, outside of Detroit, Cranbrook Academy was designed by Eliel Saarinen to provide an exemplar for the educational integration of the Arts and Crafts tradition in the face of growing industrialization. The Cranbrook campus and its curriculum was admired by Aric and became the subject of his thesis at Cornell University, involving an extension to the original campus. His final presentation replicated the masterful perspective by Eliel Saarinen — then extended that drawing to show his design proposal that was illustrated with equal graphic virtuosity. Aric's thesis was awarded the Charles Goodwin Sands medal for the best thesis of the class.

When Aric joined HBRA Architects, he had already completed a portion of his internship in Switzerland. It was clear from his initial interview that he was an exceptional individual, for he possessed an encyclopedic visual memory, accompanied by a deep information base in the humanities. He could speak eloquently about the visual arts, literature and film. His initial years in Chicago were beneficial to the firm, where he became a key figure in the artistic development of many projects. He earned the respect of all those who worked with him, making him a candidate for a governing position.

At this moment, Aric made a career decision to apply to the film program at USC in order to attain a master's degree, qualifying him to design film sets. Earlier in life, he discovered that drawing could be a method of enquiry. With a pencil, he could study a subject to understand its configuration, construction and place in the world. Drawing was a discipline which promoted understanding of historical form, which then could fuel a creative process that projected the past into the future in a legible manner. Through the seemingly simple act of applying pencil to paper, Aric Lasher could unleash the power of his imagination to create places of genuine resonance. Not only that, by hand drawing construction documents in order to realize movie sets, he could create and define entire environments with materials that evoked a vast range of human response. His control of light became a tool that subtly controlled mood affected by color. The detailed development of ornamental formation and assembly that was so critical to films with historical settings could be perfected through research and drawings. The craft of making traditional detail today responded to Saarinen's heroic effort to counter the destructive forces of abstraction. Ironically, Aric mastered the complexities of architectural design by temporarily abandoning the profession.

Returning to Chicago after a ten-year hiatus, he soon became a principal and eventually CEO and Artistic Director of HBRA Architects. His life follows a clear path, leading from his childhood observations to his professional mastery of the complex discipline of architecture. His maturity grew from a deep love of beauty that drove his attainment of skills necessary for focused personal study through the discipline of drawing. His drawings are not abstract graphic patterns, nor are they seductive renderings intended to obfuscate ulterior motivation. Aric's drawings are a search for truth within the reality of life for they precisely illustrate the built environment and the human condition.