

Building Scene

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

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Building's beauty: in the eye of the photographer

By Dale Northup
special writer

THE ARCHITECTURAL photograph visually tells us how we live, work and entertain ourselves. By looking at images of architecture in trade journals and homes magazines, our desire for a certain lifestyle in the commercial or residential environment is vicariously tempted.

We say to ourselves, "Why isn't my work place like that?" Or "Why can't I live that way?"

In our society, the architectural photographer is challenged with the creation of a visual impression that will in some way transport the viewer into a mirror that reflects a desirable architectural style or space. The photographs on architecture we confront daily are hidden persuaders that can sometimes serve as a catalyst for potential building projects of businesses and developers.

Among some of the current area architectural photographers who visually facilitate the building scene are Christopher Lark and Glen Calvin Moon. Their entry into the world of photography, like many other photographers, has been one of tenacity and dedication. Within their profession, they are essentially self-taught, making their work all the more admirable.

LIKE THE FRENCH impressionist painter Claude Monet, who did 30 canvases of the Rouen Cathedral, these photographers follow a similar path by going out into the built environment to capture the play of light on the surface of a building. Their objective is to capture light, often missed by the human eye, that enhances the architectural character of a structure. Like Monet, these photographers can sometimes be more successful in capturing the right picture at sunrise or sunset.

On the other hand, Moon believes that the architectural details are sometimes lost in shadows created on sunny days. Blue skies are preferable to the "white-out" of cloudy days. The bottom line is to be in the right place at the right time, which requires patience that can often involve an 18-hour day. With a background in advertising, complemented by a degree in architecture, Moon sees his best shot as a "visual logo" for the building.

There are also precarious moments that sometimes require shots from the rooftop of another building to capture an aerial view that grips the entire structure in a way that a shot from the ground cannot.

Such was the case with Christopher Lark when he took numerous shots of the BASF Building on Telegraph Road in Southfield. They were done at different times, both night and day, with the light quality emphasizing various features of the building that became an interplay of positive and negative elements.

Another detail shot by Lark of the Michigan National Bank headquarters in Farmington Hills is a time study involving the warm glow of sunset playing off the brick surface of the building with a dramatically rising moon in the background. It is also the slow shutter speed of the camera that can capture the fleeting quality of light.

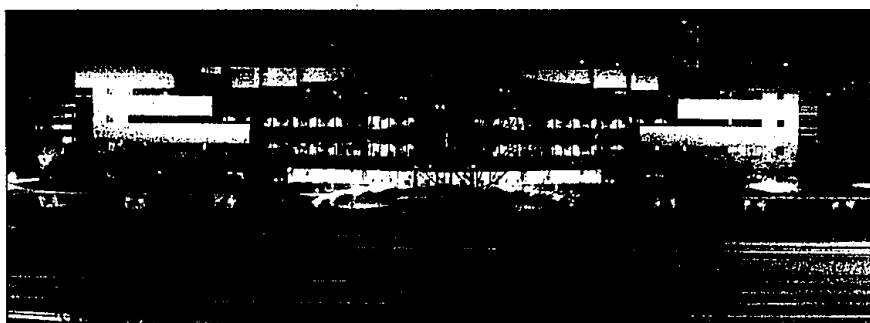
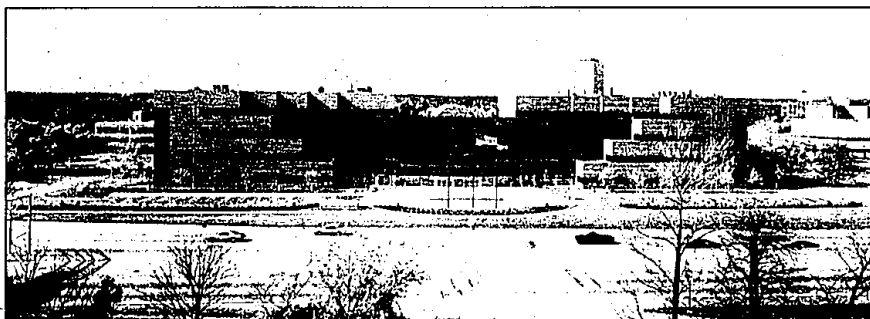
Buildings don't move, but light does. And, in that instantaneous moment, it becomes the task of such architectural photographers as Lark and Moon to arrest the transitory quality of light on film to enhance the man-made environment that is often lost to the human eye.

Dale Northup is a college professor and architectural historian.

Photographs are hidden persuaders that can sometimes serve as a catalyst for potential building projects.



The Michigan National Bank headquarters captured at sundown/moonrise.



The BASF Building on Telegraph in Southfield seems to change images depending on the light as photographed by Chris Lark.

Geography added to retail site selection process

By Gerald Frawley
staff writer

Applied geography — not a remedial high school class, but the best way to site a retail facility.

Demographics have long been used to help site retail outlets, but today consultants are blending demographics with geography to insure success.

One might think a retail chain would be pleased to be on any well-traveled street in a middle class to affluent community, but cut-throat competition demands much more.

Retailers and developers invest millions of dollars each year in research to determine where to build or locate — they strive for any edge they can get. David Huntoon, vice president of Thompson Associates, a national research consulting firm with an office in Ann Arbor that specializes in site location and consum-

er research, said experience has taught his firm that applied geography often succeeds where traditional siting wisdom fails.

LOCAL RETAIL outlets for Murray's Discount Auto Stores, Foodland Distributors, supermarkets, Sports Authority, and national clients like the building material giants Home Depot and hyper-marts like Safeway Supermarkets have used Thompson Associates to determine the best locations for projects.

Huntoon said applied geography — when coupled with demographic information and population projections — makes siting retail facilities less luck and more science, he said.

Geographers are educated and trained in natural features, climate, resources and population that develops map making skills, enhances knowledge of transportation patterns, and gives them a historical

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Thompson Associates

perspectives on why development occurs.

Thompson Associates employees 20 full-time geographers among its 50-person staff to aid in pin-pointing preferred retail sites, Huntoon said.

LARRY OSIECKI, director of store development for Foodland Distributors, Livonia, said store location is absolutely critical — especially for supermarkets.

"Convenience is the most important factor is a supermarket's location," he said. If people find it easier to go elsewhere, he said they will. That's why food distributors hire marketing firms to help them site their supermarkets, he said.

Osiecki said Foodland Distributors has used other research consulting firms but has been most pleased with Thompson Associates and its methods. More than any other fac-

tor, retailers are looking for a company that knows a local market, he said.

Huntoon said people with a geography background — and this is critical for a national-based consultant — are more adept at quickly developing a sense for an area. Geography is different from other sciences like physics or chemistry, which are based on hard mathematical rules. Geography studies are less restrictive, he said.

Geographers study everything from urban planning to land impacts on history, Huntoon said. As a result, geographers develop an almost intuitive feeling for a location's chance for success or failure.

THE PROCESS IS not much removed from a typical siting procedure. Say, for example, a supermarket developer was interested in siting a new store in western Wayne

County.

"First, we conduct a location study, which includes evaluating nearby competition for price, retail strategies, specialty offerings," Huntoon said. "Next we gather local source data — census data, population and growth projections — and determine in an area even needs another retailer."

Once all that data are correlated, Huntoon said the process of breaking the area down into a geographic trade area begins. "For a supermarket, that's about three square miles."

That three square miles is then broken down into geographic sectors with each one having its own distinct characteristics, he said.

"Three or four miles can make a world of difference," Huntoon said. "In some cases, a quarter mile can a difference."