

Eye on Evanston: Thoughts on Design | Evanston architect Stuart Cohen

by Jack Weiss, Design Evanston October 15th, 2021

Longtime Design Evanston member Stuart Cohen received the American Institute of Architects' prestigious 2021 Lifetime Achievement Award on Oct. 15. In receiving this award, Cohen joined such Chicago architecture luminaries as John Syversten, Carol Ross Barney, Peter Landon, Stanley Tigerman, Ben Weese, Helmut Jahn, Gertrude Lempp Kerbis and Natalie De Blois.

Cohen was born in Chicago and raised in Winnetka. A graduate of Cornell University, he worked in New York for Richard Meier and Philip Johnson before returning to Chicago in 1973.



Julie Hacker and Stuart Cohen (Photo by Melissa Ann Pinney)

Cohen has had a multifaceted career, with groundbreaking research and writing informing his practice of architecture. He co-curated the influential "Chicago Architects" exhibition in 1976 which transformed the accepted viewpoint of the city's architectural history to make it broader

and more inclusive. He also wrote the exhibition's catalog, which Ada Louise Huxtable, The New York Times' architecture critic, called "provocative revisionist history."

At the time, he co-founded the Chicago Seven, a group of architects who were pushing against the status quo. In 1980 he was selected for inclusion in the American Architecture section of the Venice Biennale.

From 1973 to 2002, Cohen served as a professor of architecture at the University of Illinois, Chicago (UIC), and has guest-lectured at Harvard University, Columbia University, the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Notre Dame, among many others. He is currently a professor of architecture emeritus at UIC and was elevated into the AIA College of Fellows in 1985.



Evanston Service Center, 2020 Asbury St. (Photo by Barbara Karant)

Cohen has written four books on the history of Chicago architecture, including his latest, "Frank L. Wright and the Architects of Steinway Hall: A Study in Collaboration." He was a contributing author to two of Design Evanston's recent books, "Evanston: 150 Years 150 Places" and "Evanston's Design Heritage: Architects, Designers & Planners."



Milburn Park house. (Photo by Dave Burk/Hedrich Blessing)

Regarding Cohen's most recent book, Ralph Johnson, principal and design director at Perkins & Will, commented: "Both this body of work and his most recent books on the lesser-known aspects of Chicago's history of residential architecture have continued to inform our understanding of what Chicago architecture was and can become."

In their office, Cohen & Hacker Architects, at 1322 Sherman Avenue in Evanston, Stuart Cohen and Julie Hacker are a husband and wife team specializing in residential design. Their work combines open planning with the forms and details of traditional houses. They've lived and worked in Evanston since the mid-1980s.



101 Hamilton Street. (Photo by Tony Soluri)



101 Hamilton Street. (Photo by Dave Burk/Hedrich Blessing)

In 1991, Cohen and Hacker were included in Architectural Design magazine's AD 100 list of top architects. In 2007, they received Residential Architect magazine's Hall of Fame Leadership Award. Their residences are included in books on contemporary houses and were the subject of a 2009 monograph, "Transforming the Traditional: The Work of Cohen & Hacker Architects." In 2017, they received the Merchandise Mart's Hall of Fame Lifetime Achievement Award in Architecture. In 2018, Cohen received an Arthur Ross Award from the Institute for Classical Architecture and Art.

Source: Evanston's Design Heritage: Architects, Designers & Planners, 2020; AIA Chicago, 2021

Design Evanston's "Eye on Evanston" articles focus on Evanston's design history and advocate for good design. Visit designevanston.org to learn more about the organization.