



AIA Minnesota

A Society of The American Institute of Architects

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Images available upon request

*Project: Recreational Facilities Building
Architect: Ralph Rapson and Associates*



AIA Minnesota Announces 2006 25 Year Award Recipient

Minneapolis, Minnesota – The Recreational Facilities Building at the Southern Illinois University has won AIA Minnesota’s prestigious 25-Year Award for 2006. The Recreational Facilities Building was designed in the mid 1970s by Ralph Rapson, FAIA, Ralph Rapson and Associates, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

AIA Minnesota established the 25-Year Award in 1981 to recognize exemplary architectural projects, 25 years or older, that have withstood the test of time. The jurors critiqued the seven submissions this year based on information assembled in a binder from the architect/architectural firm. They did not visit the project sites. Jury members were Marc Swackhamer, professor at the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, University of Minnesota–Twin Cities; Tom Meyer, FAIA, principal at MS&R in Minneapolis; and Nathan Knutson, principal at Vincent James Associates Architects also in Minneapolis. The jury thoughtfully considered a building’s social impact, the complexity of its program and the state of its current condition as factors in weighing each entry’s architectural importance.

The large student recreational facility houses 9 basketball courts, an Olympic size swimming and diving pool, dance and exercise rooms, handball and squash courts, among other amenities, all within an immense 235,000 square foot space. The project required maximum functional and usable space at minimum first cost and minimum life-cycle cost. When first reviewing the submission, the jurors were most struck by how well the building has stood the test of time, not only physically but also its design. “It looks as though it could have been built now,” commented a juror.

The Recreational Facilities Building was also recognized for its massive size, but light and airy feel. Rapson had successfully brought the large building down to human scale through a clear structural system. Another juror described the building as, “unapologetic” and having “good bones.” By this, he meant the building was easily adaptable, and the entire structure was “seamless and integral throughout.” Barrel vaulted features, flanked by fire escape stairs, as well as the use of primary colors in the interior also caught the attention of the jurors. The Recreational Facilities Building was chosen due to its overall infrastructure, its strong relationship to the site, and its timeless design.

The American Institute of Architects Minnesota, founded in 1892, is dedicated to strengthening our communities, improving our built environment and providing exceptional design. For more information on the organization and Minnesota architectural firms, reference our Web site at www.aia-mn.org and pick up a copy of Architecture Minnesota, the award-winning architectural magazine of the Midwest.