

WASHINGTON PROFILE

Stephen Yablon, A.B. '75

Designing a Passion for Architecture

One of Stephen Yablon's childhood hobbies led him to his true calling. Growing up in his hometown of Charleston, South Carolina, Yablon, A.B. '75, was always drawing, but "it never occurred to me that there was a profession in which I could use my artistic skills," he says. It wasn't until he entered Washington University and met a fellow student who was studying architecture that he realized design could be a career.

Yablon visited the architecture school and was accepted into the program his sophomore year. Before completing the program, however, he took some time off to pursue music, his other passion. He played professionally in Charleston and later in Europe.

"While traveling, I spent most of my time there studying and sketching the architecture and public places of Paris and Rome and how Greek temples sat in the landscape," he says. "I figured that if I was this obsessed, it must be my true calling."

After graduating from the University, Yablon worked for architectural firms in Boston before earning a master's degree in architecture from Columbia University in New York. He then spent 13 years in several New York City firms, including Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects and I. M. Pei & Partners, before forming his own firm, Stephen Yablon Architect PLLC, in 1995.

The firm designs academic, visual, and performing arts centers; health-care facilities; single family houses; community centers; and innovative workplaces. Their clients have included the National Park Service, the City of New York, Columbia University, St. John's University, SONY, the New York City Housing Authority, and numerous private and non-profit organizations.

Stephen Yablon Architect PLLC recently won an international competition for a visitor's pavilion on the "Big Dig" in Boston and was awarded second place in a Royal Institute of British Architect's competition for a sustainable corporate headquarters in Northern England. The firm has been selected twice for Mayor Bloomberg's prestigious Design Excellence Program for the City of New York.

A dramatic light-filled boxing arena forms the centerpiece of one of Yablon's most recent buildings, a \$12.5 million community center in the South Bronx for the New York City Housing Authority. "The building is a focal point for the community and expresses its pride in a legendary youth boxing program [located there]," he says.



Courtesy Photo

Stephen Yablon founded his own architectural firm, and he has won several design competitions and awards for his recent projects.

The project won a Design Excellence Award from the National Society of Registered Architects and was one of nine New York projects selected for the recent AIA exhibit *Berlin/New York Dialogues*, shown in both Berlin and New York.

With each project, Yablon tries "to create a clear, strong expression of an idea that synthesizes something unique about the site and client using contemporary materials and sustainable strategies. I've always been inspired by the modernist movement and find it an endless source of ideas."

One thing Yablon enjoys most about architecture is being able to "work with people when things are going well for them ... it's very exciting to help clients create a physical expression of their aspirations," he says.

Washington University helped him get where he is today, Yablon says. "I was lucky that the University had such a great architecture school. I had some very influential professors," he says. "I also took a lot of wonderful courses in the liberal arts curriculum that gave me a more rounded education."

Another of Yablon's passions is his family. "What I am most proud of in my life are my two kids [a son and a daughter]," he says.

He has been married to his wife, Suzanne Nutt, for 24 years. She is the chief operating officer at his architectural firm.

"She and I work very closely on all strategic decisions," Yablon says. "It's amazing, since it has really worked and brought us even closer together."

To learn more about Yablon's work and view some of his recent projects, visit www.syarch.com. —Blair Leible Garwitz