



Gilbert Alan Rosenthal

September 14, 1952 - June 27, 2011

Gilbert A. Rosenthal, FAIA, Architect

Rebuilder of Cities

Gilbert A. Rosenthal, a principal in the Philadelphia design firm of Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT), died on June 27, 2011, at the Penn Hospice at Rittenhouse. Death was the result of complications from cancer, which he fought courageously for 12 years. He was 58.

After receiving a Bachelor of Architecture degree from Cornell and a Masters of Architecture degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Design, he spent six years practicing in Pittsburgh and teaching at Carnegie-Melon University. He was recruited in 1983 by Wallace Roberts & Todd to build an architecture practice within what was known at that time as an internationally renowned planning and landscape firm. He succeeded, and practiced at WRT as a principal since 1988.

Over a career spanning 35 years, Rosenthal's architectural specialty was the revitalization of post-industrial cities, including poor urban neighborhoods and abandoned waterfronts, transforming them into viable mixed-income communities for which he won countless awards. His legacy is the result of more than a billion dollars of public investment in the demolition of deteriorating public housing and its replacement with new homes affordable to former residents in more than forty cities including Seattle, Louisville, Jacksonville, Tulsa, Buffalo, Birmingham Baltimore, Mobile, Meridian, and New Orleans. Providing quality of life to the underserved through architectural

design was the driving passion of his professional life and he was most fulfilled when collaborating with residents to design their communities. For this extensive body of work, the American Institute of Architects elevated Rosenthal to the College of Fellows in 2006.

The transformation of Robert Taylor Homes on the south side of Chicago led him to Denmark, where he was the guest of the Ministers of Housing and Integration, offering observations on social housing as part of an international colloquium. In remarks captured on video in Denmark, Rosenthal stated, "If I have one primary message to give, it's the message I've been giving to my children since they were born: Your job is to leave the world a little better than you found it. Not a little more used up, not a little more paved or dangerous, but a little better. That can happen through music, it can happen through art and architecture, through medicine or research. It can happen by simply caring for other people. You must be a good owner of the planet."

Local examples of his work may be seen in the redevelopment of the Richard Allen Homes in North Philadelphia, for which he won his second Progressive Architecture Award, and in Waterfront Square, a condominium complex on reclaimed land along the Delaware River. Quadrangle, a continuing care retirement community in Haverford, and Valley Creek Corporate Center in Exton were designed to retain virgin open space for perpetuity. The new student housing projects he designed at Ursinus College are built on reclaimed land, extending the campus into the valley in order to complete a larger master plan. In a dramatic change of scale, and a commitment to mixed use and transit-related development, Rosenthal also designed the new Atlantic City Convention Center and Rail Terminal. Comprising more than one million square feet, it is New Jersey's largest public project.

He was a prolific author, writing articles on the practice of architecture for journals and educators. A lasting gift to the WRT staff was his publication in 2010 of "Gil's Guide to Business Development," a humorous book full of quips and stories of how (and how not) to market professional services.

In addition to his architecture and urban design practice, Rosenthal was an

educator to all, particularly to his staff. He taught and was guest lecturer at numerous institutions, including the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard University's Kennedy School, Cornell University, Carnegie-Mellon University, Temple University, Bennington College, and Drexel University. Most recently he gave the Keynote Address at Roger Williams University.

He served on the board of Federation Housing and on Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program Advisory Board, as well as the Building Industry Association's Government Affairs Committee. He was a mentor in the Philadelphia Futures' Sponsor-A-Scholar Program and a member of the University Barge Club.

He is survived by his wife of 27 years, the Very Reverend Judith Sullivan, Dean of the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral, by their two daughters, Emily Wynne Rosenthal and Grace Sullivan Rosenthal, and by a sister.

A memorial service led by Rabbi David Straus will be held at Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral, 38th Street between Chestnut and Market Streets, on July 8 at 1pm. Interment was private. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the "Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania" in memory of Gilbert Rosenthal. Attn: Karrie Borgelt, 3535 Market Street, Suite 750, Philadelphia, PA 19104. Funds given in his name will be directed to the Abramson Cancer Center.

Previous Events

Service

JUL 8. 1:00 PM (ET)

The Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral
19 S 38th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Tribute Wall



“ *Stellar work there eveyrone. I'll keep on reading.* `##imported-begin##Queenie##imported-end##`”

August 17, 2011 at 11:22 PM