SCI-Arc's Origins

Exodus from Cal Poly and the Formation of an Alternative Pedagogy

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This paper investigates the culture of the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) in Los Angeles during the 1970s. SCI-Arc was founded in 1972 by its first director, Ray Kappe, and six faculty that included Shelly Kappe, Ahde Lahti, Thom Mayne, Bill Simonian, Glenn Small, and James Stafford. These architects left California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, to create an alternative to American architectural education through a curriculum that embraced experimentation and diversity. At SCI-Arc, students and faculty were counterparts. A goal was to create a flexible and self-critical institution of architecture that could be easily invigorated and inspired. This research revealed the pedagogy of SCI-Arc in the 1970s, which sought to develop the students' architectural knowledge through their creative discipline within a malleable program of study.

Architectural education can be and has been a means for protest and experimentation. It has offered ways to revoke conventions and create something new—finding new freedoms, coupled with new burdens. The Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) is a school that set its pedagogical ambitions toward attitudes of freedom through self-study. Ray Kappe, a Los Angeles based architect and professor, proposed the formation of SCI-Arc and was the school's first director. SCI-Arc opened on 2 October 1972, in a leased Santa Monica warehouse for which Kappe supplied the rent deposit.[1] The school sought an alternative approach for educating future architects. This approach favoured individualism and horizontal social structures. SCI-Arc's unique pedagogy distanced itself from large-scale university regulations and encouraged personalized design methods from the faculty and students. These considerations allowed the founding faculty at SCI-Arc to embrace novel strategies of architectural teaching. Qualities such as these, as well as a turbulent pre-history

1. Glenn Small, "SCI-Arc Illusionist," *Small at Large* (blog), online at http://www.smallatlarge.com/2012/08/illusionist (accessed August 25, 2012).

that established some of the pedagogical origins and the social structures leading to the inception of SCI-Arc, make this school a compelling case study into the ways that an academic environment challenged architectural discourse in the 1970s.

Exodus from Cal Poly

Prior to starting SCI-Arc, Kappe was the inaugural chair of the architecture department at California State Polytechnic University in Pomona (Cal Poly) in 1968. At Cal Poly, Kappe sought to integrate the architecture, urban planning, and landscape architecture departments within the School of Environmental Design. This integration was due to his belief that architecture should take a role in urban issues, implement advancing technologies, and recognize the benefits of interdisciplinary learning. Within two years Kappe grew Cal Poly's architecture school from 25 to 200 students.

After a confrontation with the Dean of the College of Environmental Design, William Dale, Kappe was asked to resign from the position of Chair on 14 April 1972.[2] The disagreement between Kappe and Dale stemmed from Kappe's belief that Cal Poly's program was growing too large and going in the wrong direction. In 1971 Cal Poly admitted an additional 150 students, increasing the size of the architecture school to 350 students.[3] Cal Poly President Robert Kramer's point of view was documented in an 26 April 1972, LA Times article that stated he "removed Kappe because the architect was not on campus every day, because he changed the architecture curriculum 'without the appropriate approvals,' because he switched class hours without permission and for other violations of 'administrative policies and procedures'."[4] Kramer, claimed that Kappe was fired "for not living within the letter of the curriculum and schedule."[5]

Kappe believed that Kramer "'[did not] like our program being as free-swinging as it is' and that the 'unconventional faculty . . . [were] a little bit threatening to the president'."[6] In my discussions with Kappe he affirmed that he "established both the curriculum [and] schedule and hired all of the faculty [and that they] lived within the prescribed curriculum but were also doing experimental projects."[7] This is also suggested by Kappe's quote in the 1972 *LA Times* article, where he stated "we have a nonstatic curriculum . . . we set up problems for the students and

2. William Trombley, "Cal Poly Ousts Architectural Chairman," *LA Times*, April 26,1972, B1.

3. Ray Kappe, "SCI-Arc History," unpublished manuscript, December 19, 2012.

4. Trombley, "Cal Poly Ousts Architectural Chairman."

5. Art Seidenbaum, "In Case of Firing," *LA Times*, May 3, 1972, F1.

6. Trombley, "Cal Poly Ousts Architectural Chairman."

7. Ray Kappe, pers. corr., March 1, 2013.

then switch them if they are not working out. This means you move hours and people around. It is the only way to have a viable program in architecture."[8]

Some of the arguments appeared to emerge from disparities between opinions about the academy and the profession. Kappe was fully engaged in his professional practice and the faculty he hired was mostly comprised of practitioners. His attitude surrounding the role of the profession is clear. Kappe told *LA Times* writer, William Trombley, "he recruited professors with experience in the field, not a group of theorists."[9] The faculty in the architecture department spent 1-2 days per week in private practice; Kappe too was only on campus three days per week. These schedules were permitted through verbal agreements Kappe had with Dean Dale.[10] President Kramer suggested a different attitude regarding the emphasis the architects placed on professional practice. Kramer said,

> we have more rigidities and inflexibility than some other institutions of higher learning. . . .. These people in architecture believe that being in the profession of architecture is the most important thing in the world. I don't think they realize the obligation they have . . . as members of the college community.[11]

Although removed as the department chair, Kappe was to maintain a tenured faculty position at the school, however, many Cal Poly students felt differently than the administration and pushed for Kappe's reinstatement as chair. Over 500 participants staged a protest, more than 300 students signed a petition,[12] and t-shirts with Kappe's photograph were worn.[13] A student and faculty fact finding committee was created to investigate this matter and it was determined by them that "there was no substance to the charges against Kappe and that Kramer was 'unjustified' in dismissing him . . . and said he had 'the unanimous support of his faculty and the near unanimous support of students in his department'."[14]

In August of 1972 Kappe's firing was brought to trial in the Los Angeles Superior Court. An LA Times article that was published on 14 September 1972, approximately three weeks before SCI-Arc opened, explained that Judge Robert A. Wenke

> ordered Kramer and the trustees of the California State Universities and Colleges either reinstate Kappe as department chairman or hold a hearing where the reasons for his

8. Kappe cited in Trombley, "Cal Poly Ousts Architectural Chairman."

9. Kappe cited in Trombley, "Cal Poly Ousts Architectural Chairman."

10. Trombley, "Cal Poly Ousts Architectural Chairman."

11. Trombley, "Cal Poly Ousts Architectural Chairman."

12. Seidenbaum, "In Case of Firing."

13. David Weinstein, "Playing with Space," *Eichler Network*, online at http://www.eichlernetwork.com/article/playing-space?page=0,0 (accessed January 30, 2013).

14. William Trombley, "Dismissal of Cal Poly Pomona Architect Hit: Student-Faculty Group Charges President Erred in Ouster of Department Head," *LA Times*, May 29, 1972, C8.

demotion could be aired . . .. Kappe said he could have won
his chairman's job back in a second court action but did not
try because "I do not think one can operate if the adminis-
tration doesn't support you . . .. it's hard enough to make a
program work if you have everything working for you."[15]

15. William Trombley, "Ex-Cal Poly Pomona
Architect Director Will Open New School,"
LA Times, September 14, 1972, C1.

Also, by August 1972, Kappe was more engaged with the
prospects and excitement of starting a new school.

Origins of a New School

When I asked Kappe about the preparations for starting SCI-Arc
he said that he and a group of faculty began informal conversation
in the spring of 1972, and then later in the summer the faculty
met with students at the future SCI-Arc facility. "The faculty who
were willing to leave Cal Poly met first to make sure everyone was
on board with the move. Later we met with the students . . . and
made sure they were ready to go ahead with the move. 150 signed
up, but only 50 eventually came." The pedagogical impetus for
starting SCI-Arc was to experiment with "how an architectural
program could evolve with diminished constraints and a great
deal of freedom." What inspired Kappe to start SCI-Arc was that
he "thought it would be fun." Kappe recalled that he did not take
notes in preparation for the schools opening, and that the only
documentation occurred after the first weeks of operation.[16]

16. Kappe, pers. corr.

When Kappe left Cal Poly, six others joined him as founding
faculty of SCI-Arc. These instructors included Shelly Kappe,
Ahde Lahti, Thom Mayne, Bill Simonian, Glenn Small, and
James Stafford. An intention of this faculty was to eliminate
the bureaucracy that was viewed as detrimental to an academic
environment. They focused their efforts on effective teaching
methods that would develop an architecture student's creativity,
intuition, and design purpose. An attitude at SCI-Arc was that its
instructors were "advanced learners,"[17] as Ray Kappe described
it in a 1976 interview with LA Times reporter, John Dreyfuss.
This kind of relationship between students and faculty sought to
develop a mutual curiosity and establish a creative energy that
could be deployed within architectural work.

17. John Dreyfuss, "Mundane to Mile High:
Architecture in the Halls of Lively," *LA Times*,
March 10, 1976, F1.

Kappe explained to me recently that the role of the founding
faculty was

primarily studio instructors, but [they] . . . also were to teach a seminar. I [Ray] taught structures, mechanical systems, and urban design besides studio, directing the school, managing finances, and interviewing new students. We had what we called an all-school seminar that all [faculty] were supposed to share, but that did not work out, so I took it over and taught it as well. The others were supposed to be involved in interviews, but this did not work out either, and only Bill Simonian continued to help with the interviews. Some [faculty] worked on graphics, exhibits, or assisting with the development of the space [the school, and] Shelly Kappe was in charge of public relations and later headed our night program.[18]

18. Kappe, pers. corr.

The curriculum at SCI-Arc appeared typical for an architecture school in the 1970s. The 1973-74 school catalogue described seminars that would meet from 9am to noon that included Historical Survey of Architecture and Community Patterns, Theory of Structure, Building Science, Design Process, Los Angeles Environment, Environmental Control Systems, Professional Practice, Photography, Graphic Communications, and Communication Techniques. Some seminars were more focused on representational aspects, perhaps not common to an architecture school. These included Photo Silk Screening and Video as a Tool for Communication. Design studios were organized simply as Basic Design, Architectural Design, and Urban Design.[19]

19. SCI-Arc Catalog, unpublished document, 1973.

One way that a horizontal approach was being attempted was described in the school's Philosophy in the 1973-74 catalogue,

> years of study are not physically separated. This allows for greater flexibility in teaching and learning methods, and provides a greater interchange between all levels of students. Consequently, faculty will be able to input where individual needs arise without concern of class autonomy. It is our desire to be a true community.[20]

20. SCI-Arc Catalog, unpublished document, 1973.

Studios focused on holistic approaches to design problems, seminars were interdisciplinary, each student would have a faculty mentor, and advanced students were expected to help the younger students. Flexibility and experimentation were central concerns. Kappe explained to me that flexibility in architectural education is developed by "the attitude of the director and faculty. It accommodates students and/or faculty who have special desires

or approaches to the education process."[21] The 1973-74 school catalogue suggested how this could be implemented. "At SCI-Arc we will encourage continuous self-study and self-evaluation by students and faculty. Everything is to be tried and evaluated, and it is to be changed for the better on the basis of experiment and experience." One of the requirements for admission described the character of the student. The catalogue stated "drive and determination, a capacity for hard work, and a sense of purpose are more important that one's previous record of attainment."[22]

In SCI-Arc's first year there were 75 students, two-thirds of whom transferred from Cal Poly. The other 25 students were recruited when students who were already signed up to attend SCI-Arc travelled in California to spread the word that a new architecture school was starting.[23] In 1976 there were 188 students, 22 of which were international students, and with 27 of which were female students. By 1979 the number students grew to 240, with 44 of which were international students and 29 of which were female students.[24] Initially, assignments were not issued and grades were not given.

There was not a rubric for passing or failing or for receiving credit. SCI-Arc was established for the self-directed and curious student to engage their ideas directly, getting guidance from instructors as work progressed. The phrase, "a college without walls,"[25] was a concept that SCI-Arc adopted early on and speaks to this kind of freedom. Many students grew uncomfortable with some of these liberties, which included an uncoordinated curriculum and lack of a grading policy. Kappe remarked in 1976 that "except for the 5% of the students who were extremely self-directed, it didn't work . . .. The theory was that students should want to learn; should want to get turned on to an issue and follow that issue through."[26] When I asked Kappe to speculate why the students resisted a model of education that gave them more freedom and desired more structure in the curriculum, he said, "it is difficult for most people to establish their own programs. It is always easier to respond." He suggested that it is similar to thesis, but "even more difficult for younger students."[27]

A college without walls is a concept that was becoming popular in the 1970s. Some of the founding SCI-Arc faculty, including Ray Kappe, attended the International Design Conference in Aspen (IDCA) in the summer of 1972. At this conference alternative pedagogical structures were discussed and one of the speakers was John Bremer, author of *School Without Walls*. Session topics

21. Kappe, pers. corr.

22. SCI-Arc Catalog (unpublished document, 1973).

23. SCI-Arc Catalog (unpublished document, 1973).

24. Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, *Architecture Schools In North America* (Princeton, NJ: ACSA, 1979): 112-113.

25. John Dreyfuss, "Mundane to Mile High: Architecture in the Halls of Lively," *LA Times*, March 10, 1976, F1.

26. Dreyfuss, "Mundane to Mile High."

27. Kappe, pers. corr.

28. Mildred Friedman, ed. "International Design Conference in Aspen: The Invisible City." *Design Quarterly* 86/87 (1972).

29. Kappe, pers. corr.

30. John Bremer. *School Without Walls, Philadelphia's Parkway Program* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 46-47.

included Students on Learning, Experimental Urban Schools, Education and Politics, Conversations: School Programs, and The City as a Classroom.[28] Other speakers included Marcus Foster, author of *Making Schools Work: Strategies for Changing Education*, Beatrice and Ronald Gross, authors of *Radical School Reform*, and Herbert Kohl, author of *The Open Classroom*. I asked Ray Kappe about the influence this conference had on the shaping of SCI-Arc's pedagogy. He recalled that the proceedings did not change his opinions about pedagogy, but reinforced what he was planning for SCI-Arc.[29]

In Bremer's book, *School Without Walls*, he outlines five aspects of the curriculum at the experimental public school called, The Parkway Program, which he formerly directed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and began in 1969.

> The first aspect . . . is freedom and responsibility. The second aspect is the social and administrative organization and more particularly the student's role, which in Parkway is seen to be as cooperator, as manager, and as artist (the third aspect). But the student as artist needs to know his material; just as the potter must know, understand, and respect his clay to see its possibilities, so the student must know, understand, and respect his material—the city. It is the city, therefore, that constitutes the fourth aspect of Parkway's curriculum. Every student must come to know the city, the complex places, processes, and people with which he lives. He must know it for what it is, understand it in terms of what it can do, and respect it for what it could be . . ..

> The fifth and final aspect of Parkway's curriculum is contained in its catologs . . ... In it are listed conventional subjects, not so conventional subjects, and completely unconventional ones. The catalogs indicate that courses are taught by certified teachers, university interns, students, parents, individual volunteers, cultural institutions, businesses, social service agencies, and city employees.[30]

All of these aspects that Bremer outlines are directly relatable to philosophies considered valuable at SCI-Arc, that is, freedom, responsibility, social organization of a community, students engaged in the complexity of urban life, and even the outlier, the catalogue, which held a critical place within the school by the way it announced programs, gave an explanation of school objectives, and provided details about curriculum and faculty.

At the 1972 IDCA conference, Bremer suggested the importance of a school's climate in regard to effective teaching. He suggested that, "there is an invisible and private curriculum which is the social structure of the school."[31] Bremer went on to say that, "you spend more energy maintaining the system than you do in doing the work that the system was set up to achieve." I spoke with Kappe about the functioning of SCI-Arc along similar lines. I asked him about effective teaching and that it seemed to be a primary concern for the faculty at SCI-Arc. I described my understanding that in a typical tenure track position it is common that teaching is approximately one third of the workload, with another 1/3 dedicated to research, and another to departmental and university committees. The three parts, among others overseen by administration, maintain what Bremer might call the "system." When I asked Kappe how he viewed research and committee work among the faculty at SCI-Arc and how those responsibilities compared to the expected time commitments of teaching he replied, "we did not have anything expected of faculty other than teaching . . .. [There were] no committees. [There was] one faculty meeting per year, but . . . [there were] several all-school meetings when there were grievances or information to be shared."[32] The precision of this looseness and the efforts placed on teaching suggests one way that SCI-Arc sustained a "school without walls" concept and responded to some of the rigidity they had experienced at Cal Poly.

SCI-Arc was funded by students' tuition, and faculty salaries could be inconsistent. When I spoke with Thom Mayne, he joked that one year he didn't even get paid.[33] The salary structure, according to Kappe, "was to establish a salary equivalent to a mid-level associate professor, which was $15,000. We were less than that in the first year but met it in the second year. Faculty members were reimbursed for the amount less than $15,000 that they received in the first year." In 1972, SCI-Arc's tuition was $500 per semester. According to the Institute of Education Sciences, the average annual cost of tuition at private degree granting institutions in the United States was $1,898.[34]

Without a departmental staff, students handled many of the day-to-day operations. For example, an economics, design, and fabrication exercise that occurred at SCI-Arc was that the first students would pay $50 for materials to construct and own their studio space. Kappe described to me his interest with this endeavour and claimed,

31. Warren G. Bennis, John Bremer, John Sullivan, Alan C. Green and John Holt, "Critics Look at the System," *Design Quarterly* 86/87 (1972): 58.

32. Kappe, pers. corr.

33. Thom Mayne, interview with Benjamin J. Smith, July 25, 2012.

34. National Center for Education Statistics, online at http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d07/tables/dt07_320.asp (accessed February 22, 2013).

people are more protective of what they own, and it was a lesson in making, owning, and selling for profit. We wanted the students to own not only their environment, but equipment (slide projectors, etc.) as well. We felt this was a way to have them treat these items with more respect.[35]

35. Kappe, pers. corr.

Ambitions like these did not last for very long, but facilitated dissolutions of some of the we/they mentalities that are common in educational environments.

By 1974 a more structured curriculum emerged. Several pedagogical models had been explored. These included an independent studio with a student working directly with an instructor, a more typical design curriculum of studios and seminars, and an alternative program that focused a group of students and faculty on a common theme or theoretical topic. The alternative program did not last a full year. One program that did grow successfully was the graduate program, which had begun in 1972. Only three graduate students were part of the original 1972 class and they were integrated with the undergraduates. In 1974 the graduate program grew to twelve students with Thom Mayne acting as the graduate studio instructor. In 1976 the undergraduate program received accreditation by the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) and in 1978 the graduate program was accredited.[36]

36. Kappe, "SCI-Arc History."

SCI-Arc and Architects of the LA School

As SCI-Arc developed an influential group of architects in Los Angeles also emerged. This group of architects is largely known as the "LA School"—a term introduced by Charles Jencks in his article "LA Style/LA School" from 1983.[37] While there is not a definitive list of members that make up the LA School, the group is typically understood to include Eric Owen Moss, James Stafford, Robert Mangurian, Craig Hodgetts, Frank Gehry, Coy Howard, Thane Roberts, Fred Fischer, Michael Rotondi, and Thom Mayne, all of whom had affiliations to SCI-Arc in the 1970s and 1980s.

37. Charles Jencks, "Los Angeles Now: 29 April-29 May, 1983: LA Style-LA School," *AA Files* 5 (1984): 90-93.

What separated the LA School from other avant-garde architects of the previous decade was that they defied classification along theoretical or stylistic similarities in the way that the Whites or Grays had. Neither is the LA School cohesive under the label "Silvers,"[38] a label that a group of UCLA faculty who shared interests in technology had claimed in 1974. The shared values of

38. Charles Jencks, "The Los Angeles Silvers: Tim Vreeland, Anthony Lumsden, Frank Dimster, Eugene Kupper, Cesar Pelli, Paul Kennon," *A & U: Architecture and Urbanism* 70 (1976): 9-20.

the LA School were more ambiguous and resisted distinctions that established inferred theoretical or stylistic overlaps. Olivier Boissière's 1980 article in *Domus* described this generation of Los Angeles architects as

> people who have no formal ties and who know, appreciate, and are ready to help one another if need be and whose friendship is all the more untroubled for the fact that their researches move in clearly different directions. One is a long way here from the intrigues of New York. What these Californians have in common is the place they work in, a California that puts up the least resistance to innovation and adventure.[39]

39. Olivier Boissière, "Ten California Architects," *Domus* 604 (1980): 17-31.

These Los Angeles architects were more influenced by Bob Dylan and Robert Rauschenberg than Arnold Schoenberg and Jacques Derrida. Their work appealed to haptic qualities of architectural experience. This can be seen in opposition to the more intellectually inclined work developed on the American East Coast, where architects such as Peter Eisenman and John Hejduk developed semiotic and analytical systems for architectural form.

One of the LA School architects, Eric Owen Moss, SCI-Arc's current director and an early faculty member, related that SCI-Arc was "a residual consequence of a movement," referring to the cultural and political movements of the 1960s in America, "whatever its beginnings, whether it is Marx or Marcuse . . . Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, or Bob Dylan." Moss was a student at Berkeley in the 1960s and described not wanting to choose a side, not being a fan of "caricature cartoons" of contagious ideologies. Moss felt that a remarkable characteristic of the 1960s was the era's unique ability to absorb novelty. Moss recalled that sentiment by stating, "so when one guy said, 'I am outside the box,' every schmuck selling vacuum cleaners is now outside the box, and not realizing the box they are outside is just another box that they are inside . . . and it struck me and I remember that. It was so striking."[40]

40. Eric Owen Moss, interview with Benjamin J. Smith, July 26, 2012.

Moss suggested that the merits of starting SCI-Arc, the commitment, energy, and conviction were what made its inception in 1972 credible, not its intellectual foundations, which he claimed were borrowed. He explained that most people "belong to something," that it is unusual for people to begin something.[41]

41. Moss, interview.

The intrigues of Moss' are characteristic of his belief in resisting prescriptions and finding pleasure in the struggle to solve problems and interrogate work forward. Moss suggested that architecture is "an act of investigating . . . [that] you can make something without knowing how to draw it or how to build it."[42] An example of Moss' work that embodies this kind of exploration is his 1999 project, Umbrella, a warping glass canopy in Culver City, California. Moss described Umbrella as a project that he and his office had to learn to build while it was being constructed. Although the project is only 14 years old, it is a project that is distinct due to the time when it was made. A project that with today's means of computation, he claimed, would be much easier to build. Moss' interest in this kind of exploration is coincident with the kind of rigor that he identified in beginning a school—something that takes commitment, energy, and conviction to recognize the unique character of things and anticipate their potential.

Over the years the SCI-Arc curriculum remained flexible. Students were encouraged to propose courses that they felt were missing. Coy Howard, a longstanding faculty member who first joined SCI-Arc in 1979, said it was common for students to present an idea for a class to Kappe and if demonstrated effectively, the student would be asked to organize the class and perhaps teach it.[43] Howard asserted that the location in Southern California was also critical for the attitudes being encouraged and fostered at SCI-Arc. He suggested some factors such as climate and weather, but also that the lack of a rigorous intellectual discourse on the West Coast was important. This particular quality enabled Howard to develop a do-it-yourself perspective. He said that he was actively engaged with figuring out architecture. He wanted to approach architecture differently than how he believed it was typically done, asking himself, "How do I do that?" and "What is going to be critical?" Howard described his interest in developing an inquisitive mind about how to ask the right questions when making architecture.[44]

Some of SCI-Arc's successes, in terms of accreditation and enrolment were due to what Howard termed, an "addictive personality."[45] He described visitors becoming enamoured by the inherent freedoms. It was a place where people were doing what they wanted to be doing. This quality gave SCI-Arc certain amounts of liberty with NAAB accreditors. Howard recalled that outsiders' interests were to let the school blossom.[46] In 1976, when SCI-Arc was first accredited it was felt that these organizations, NAAB and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), were

42. Moss, interview.

43. Coy Howard, interview with Benjamin J. Smith, July 30, 2012.

44. Howard, interview.

45. Howard, interview.

46. Howard, interview.

more liberal. Over time, NAAB and WASC put more constraints on the school, demanding things such as a real salary structure and the need for SCI-Arc to own its building.[47]

47. Howard, interview.

The successes did not come without struggle. In an academic environment based on individual freedom, where certain voices might stand out, it was critical to establish community-oriented initiatives. In 1975 there was a student meeting at SCI-Arc discussing performance criteria of the school for accreditation by NAAB. In a video of this meeting, a student, Jerry Compton, tried to organize consensus between students and faculty regarding the "creative community." At this meeting Compton suggested that the school needed to establish a greater sense of community. He proposed that there be "social interactions with the teachers." He explained that Kappe proposed

> having a break at 6 o'clock everyday and going upstairs and having a wine social, or ya know, a pot-luck thing . . . where the instructors are gonna be there . . . so we can relate to them. When we first started the school the idea was that there would be ten instructors and that every student would have as much interaction [with them as they needed], but that doesn't happen.[48]

48. Stephen Albert, Roland Coate, Jerry Compton, Shelly Kappe, Bill Simonian, Glen Small and Arnie Stalk, September 7, 1975. "Accreditation Meeting Roland Coate Stephen Albert," SCI-Arc Media Archive, Southern California Institute of Architecture, online at http://sma.sciarc.edu/video/accreditation-meeting-roland-coate-stephen-albert/ (accessed February 27, 2013).

It is hard to estimate what the direct fallout of this meeting was, but eventually SCI-Arc adopted a weekly social event organized by the student union. It was called Friday's at Five and became a time within the school where students and faculty would get together and socialize in a relatively casual manner. Fridays at Five is a tradition that continues at SCI-Arc today.

In my recent interview with Thom Mayne, he called SCI-Arc an "amazing resource" where he had the freedom to experiment as a young architect. He referred to himself at that time as an "advanced student," not far off from Kappe's description of advanced learners. Mayne described that as a teacher he would arrive at SCI-Arc to teach studio at noon, oftentimes leaving after midnight four days a week, and on Saturdays. He felt that the environment at SCI-Arc was unique, that it accommodated non-traditional methods of architectural exploration. He remembered students rigging up cameras to take 360-degree photographs to explore aspects of perception—explorations that did not necessarily result with the design of a building. These investigations explored nuanced qualities experience, not easily described verbally.[49]

49. Thom Mayne, interview with Benjamin J. Smith, July 25, 2012.

Mayne regarded SCI-Arc as a world off on its own. In many ways this was true. It wasn't a department or a college within a larger institution. It could stray from assumed rules and meander more freely. SCI-Arc was a school where faculty asked as many questions as the students. Mayne described the origins of SCI-Arc and explained,

> we had so few definable intentions, other than these vague ideas of being experimental and allow for diversity and being minimally administered, and [believing that] would remove the huge amount of roadblocks that seemed to jamb up thinking in an architectural environment . . .. [The atmosphere at SCI-Arc had a] powerful collective view that [wasn't] obvious, that [wasn't] representing ideological similarities, or formal similarities . . .. It [was] much more complex than that. There [were] ideas taking place there [was] a connective glue, which affected me. My guess is that it is very possible that it affected many people there. We played off each other somehow.[50]

50. Mayne, interview.

Conclusion

The philosophy of SCI-Arc provided a climate for diversity from within courses that might be described as relatively common for an architecture curriculum. The school's framework was not systematic or hierarchical and was motivated by dynamic exchange, experimentation, and innovation. No prevailing ideology was mandated. The decisions of the school were very democratic, usually with Kappe moderating and catalyzing the final decisions. The ideology that emerged became one of a disciplined looseness—rigor through self-initiative and self-motivation. The freedoms at SCI-Arc demonstrate one context of limits, successes, and failures within this dynamic. Ray Kappe's pedagogy that embraced personal experimentation and the diverse personalities of the LA School fed the creative experimentation of SCI-Arc students.

The 1970s was ripe for alternative movements in architecture. New pedagogical models were explored. SCI-Arc tested multiple methods of teaching and learning that fostered freedom and autonomy of the individual designer—faculty member and student. Over time a structured curriculum became identifiable and the B.Arch degree achieved accreditation by NAAB within

four years of its inception. Rather than a progressive institution, or progressive outlier within the context of architectural education, SCI-Arc is perhaps best viewed as an institution of progress, a school that Ray Kappe intended to be "the best school it could be."[51]

51. Kappe, pers. corr.

Architecture is a diverse discipline. The architects and students at SCI-Arc during this time appeal to architecture's diversity and demonstrate the expression of a discipline that can transform through pedagogy. As the boundaries of architecture shift and oscillate, determining its various trajectories, motivations, and intentions is critical to continue movement forward.