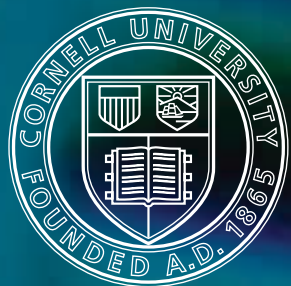


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When I was studying urban planning at Cornell in the mid '90s, I never imagined that I would run for elected office of any kind, much less end up in Congress. Now that I'm here, I feel strongly about using this opportunity to make a positive difference, both for my constituents and the country as a whole.

Ever since I first joined the House of Representatives in 2007, advancing solar power has been one of my highest policy priorities. This is because solar is well suited to help address some of the biggest challenges facing our nation: boosting our economic competitiveness, reducing our dependence on foreign energy, and mitigating our impact on the climate and natural environment. Solar provides a viable solution to all of these challenges.

People have talked about solar power's potential for decades, but in the last few years this industry has finally started to come into its own. It's very exciting. We have seen major improvements in solar economics and performance, and experts tell us that further improvements are on the way.

The fact is: solar is serious energy, and it is poised to make a major contribution to our nation's power needs. All this industry needs—like almost any fledgling industry—is supportive public policies and concerted advocacy to help it take root and thrive. I am committed to using my time in Congress—both on Capitol Hill and in Southern Arizona—to do all I can to promote a positive, pro-solar agenda for our nation.

Gabrielle Giffords (M.R.P. '97)
U.S. House of Representatives

"The city was so young—a really easy point of entry for anything," Kovel says. He worked for a building contractor for a year, and then got hired by Architropolis. While there, he served as lead on a project to build a house and music studio for Lenny Kravitz in Miami.

"That was a really important experience for me because it was a great creative design opportunity, but we were also building it all ourselves, so it was the best training one could have," Kovel says. In fact, many of Kovel's later projects would end up challenging the traditional boundaries between architect, contractor, interior designer, and owner.

Back in Portland after completing the Kravitz project, then-26-year-old Kovel decided to take a big gamble and start up his own firm. "I just went for it," says Kovel, acknowledging that it was probably a mix of youthful naïveté and bravado that enabled him to leave the stability of an established company to strike out on his own.

"I spent two months setting up my new office, and then I asked myself, what do I do now?"

Fate intervened—an old client from Architropolis commissioned Skylab to design a building in Los Angeles, and the work has been continuous since then, Kovel says. Although he has undertaken several projects outside his home base of Portland, it is that city that really played a big part in launching his career and forming his creative vision.

"I think of it as a really soulful place. It's less flashy on the surface than a place like L.A., and more internally substantial," Kovel says. "The thing about Portland, though, is it's not the type of city where you open up your doors and have great clients. We had to be really inventive about our opportunities, and industrious in making those opportunities turn out the best they could."

Skylab was owner, architect, and contractor on a number of its early projects, mostly out of necessity. Skylab's first project in Portland was the 1680 House, which was built on a parcel of land so steep it was considered unsuitable for construction. The concrete home fetched the highest price of any residential property in the city at that time. It also proved that Kovel is adept at utilizing to his advantage specs that others would deem obstacles, a skill reminiscent of the architect John Lautner, who Kovel cites as a favorite. Kovel would put that skill to use again when designing the Weave Building in downtown Portland.

The Weave is planned on an odd-shaped and small lot that is hemmed in by a national historic registry property to the west and a major city traffic artery to the north. Kovel says his proposed design "playfully reinterprets" the property line and creates a space defined by five points. The design strives to connect tenants to each other, to their neighborhood, and to the city at large, Kovel says. With its facade of angular glass panels separated by crenelated precast concrete, finished with a hand-troweled concrete stucco, it is destined to be eye-catching, especially for a city not known for its daring architecture, yet.



JAMES SIENA TAPPED FOR ALUMNI ARTIST AWARD

James Siena (B.F.A. '79) has been selected to receive the 2009–10 Eissner Artist of the Year Award, administered by the Cornell Council for the Arts.

Siena creates complex linear abstractions based on his own "visual algorithms," resulting in concentrated, vibrantly colored freehand geometric patterns. He works in a variety of media, including lithography, etching, painting, woodcut, drawing, and engraving.

An exhibition of his work will be displayed at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art from January 16 to April 20, 2010. Siena will receive the award and give a lecture on campus on April 16.

Siena's art is in many private and public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, and Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

His work has been featured in more than 100 solo and group exhibitions since 1981. He was included in the 2004 Whitney Biennial, a showcase for contemporary American and international artists, and since 2005 has mounted three successful solo exhibitions at New York's PaceWildenstein Gallery.

"James Siena is one of the most inventive, independent, focused, and prolific artists working today," wrote **Patricia Phillips**, former chair of the Department of Art, in her letter of nomination. "Thirty years after he received his B.F.A. from Cornell, Siena has emerged as one of the art world's internationally respected leaders. . . . [He] balances the traditions of 20th- and 21st-century abstraction with a maverick sensibility to craft-salient, if speculative, insights on the contemporary world, and the intricate workings of human perception."

The annual alumni artist award winner is selected by a jury of arts-related department chairs at Cornell.

Read the thank-you note from Siena to President Skorton: aap.cornell.edu/news/upload/Siena_Eissner_thanku.pdf.^{AAP}



Rendering of Skylab Architecture's Weave Building in Portland, Oregon. Provided.

Hornberger + Worstell is a San Francisco-based architecture and planning firm cofounded by **Mark Hornberger** (B.Arch. '73). Over the last 30 years, Hornberger + Worstell has become most well known for its work in hospitality and mixed-use project design. In recent years, Hornberger + Worstell has applied its expertise in hospitality design to a new arena: academia. The connection between hospitality and academic design is increasingly strong as today's students factor facilities and amenity into their choice of preferred schools. Hornberger + Worstell's recent student union addition at California State University—East Bay illustrates how the tenets of hospitality design—inviting public spaces that support multisource revenue generation, and seamless service connections to back-of-house operations—can be applied to an academic setting. With campus dining, retail outlets, student offices, internet cafe, a 400-seat divisible meeting hall, and outdoor commencement plaza, the union has become the most active gathering place on campus. The firm is currently designing student life facilities at both Sacramento and Sonoma State universities.



James Siena. Credit: Robert Stuart.

Another eye-popping Skylab project is also in the works—this one in Brooklyn. The building, commissioned by Flavor Paper—a firm that makes custom hand-screen-printed wallpaper—will be built in a former parking structure, and will house a production facility, showroom, two residential levels, and a deck. Two 50-foot-long wallpaper screening tables will be placed in the middle of the ground-floor space, allowing the mirrored ceiling to reflect the color of the paper all the way out to the street. The building's five levels are connected through a stair laced with a 60-foot-tall neon installation inspired by one of Flavor Paper's patterns. The building's original windows were replaced with new steel boxes, creating and balancing the dialogue between old and new, Kovel says.

Skylab has designed many other commercial and private spaces that have become landmarks around Portland. Doug Fir, a bar, restaurant, and live music venue on a major thoroughfare, is striking with its log-cabin-meets-1950s-diner exterior. Kovel says he drew on his experience in Colorado, where he built mostly log cabins, in designing Doug Fir. The interior continues the log cabin motif, but in combination with the plentiful mirrors, the effect is chic and urban.

Skylab's work is also well known to most preteens thanks to the film franchise *Twilight*, which features the Hoke House (otherwise known as the Cullen House in the film), a single-family home built on spec in 2007. Now Skylab is licensing the design of the house to *Twilight*'s production company so it can re-create the home on a stage set in Vancouver, where filming takes place.

Kovel's most game-changing work may prove to be "modular" prefab homes, a project Skylab is currently working on in partnership with Method Homes, a Seattle-based prefab home builder. If prefab conjures images of bland boxes making their way down the freeway on the back

of a flatbed truck, or the seemingly ubiquitous McMansion, then Kovel's modular homes will shock. Kovel says his firm's prefab homes, which are meant for urban locales, offer an approach to "moving beyond the old paradigm" of inflexible and nondurable housing stock.

"We imagined creating a system using a single basic geometric module that would scale to solve the space planning needs of programs from 100 square feet to thousands of square feet," Kovel says.

Perhaps the best part—they are affordable. Kovel even envisions operating his own assembly plant for the homes at some point, enabling him to bring "creatively designed homes to the masses."

Kovel and Skylab are intent on using the currently available methodology, economics, and materials, he says. "Every project we do is a current response, not just to our client, but to everything we've learned or seen," Kovel says. "A lot of our projects are metaphors for other times, but to recreate something from another era without your own conceptual overtaking, to me that is just theatrical set creation," Kovel says.^{AAP}

—Nancy Seewald