

For Immediate Release
Headshot Attached

Contact: James Hollister, LEED AP
Marketing + PR Manager
Eskew+Dumez+Ripple
t | 504.561.8686
e | jhollister@eskewdumezripple.com

R. Allen Eskew, FAIA, visionary leader of the New Orleans' architectural community passed away on Tuesday, December 10, 2013. He was 65 years old.

Many will remember him for his built works and endless contributions to the civic and social fabric of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast Region. Projects such as the Audubon Institute's Aquarium of the Americas, the Shaw Center for the Arts, Downtown New Orleans' Champions Square, the award-winning Reinventing the Crescent Master Plan and its first phase, Crescent Park, to name a few. All bear the signature of a modern-day urban philosopher, designer extraordinaire, environmental and cultural steward, and community champion.

"Allen Eskew represented the best of architects and architecture," offered Robert Ivy, FAIA, Chief Executive Officer of the American Institute of Architects. "His life was marked by a passion and drive toward excellence that touched all who knew him or visited the places and spaces he created throughout his lifetime. Working in collaboration with other talented architects and planners, he created a body of enviable work, from master planning the New Orleans World's Fair to individual buildings ranging from civic enrichment to university research. Allen's infectious joy and his serious efforts made the world a better place."

One can argue that buildings are the lasting legacy of any architect worth remembering. However, in Allen's case, it can be argued that his greatest contributions and achievements are not framed by steel, glass, or mortar, but rather in the context of how they came to be. In an era of ever-increasing polarity, Allen had an uncanny knack for building consensus and progress through thoughtful discussion, creative thinking, the insertion of levity, and meaningful dialogue. Poised and confident, he led with humility, charm and an intellectual generosity that evokes a contemporary mash-up of Atticus Finch and "the Dude."

Allen's work represents one man's commitment to design as craft, but, more importantly, it speaks volumes to the character of a larger, deeply personal vision and the modus operandi of a humble civic leader and engaged citizen-architect. Allen always spoke passionately of his work and leadership in managing the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition. Seen as a seminal moment in his career, the massive undertaking prompted Allen to establish his own firm, Eskew, Vogt, Salvato & Filson, in the spring of 1986. The practice would continue to evolve and became Eskew+Dumez+Ripple in 2000. Over the

course of this period, Eskew would cultivate and nurture a design studio of national prominence and distinction.

Aside from his consistent investment into the physical development of the city, he went well beyond design to invest in the people who made it possible. Whether through his constant mentorship of young professionals across the region or his oft-unseen support of the entrepreneurial spinoffs from his own studio, Allen consistently placed people as his top priority. He never shied away from difficult conversations and almost rhythmically pursued change as a catalyst for positive opportunity.

“Allen went to extensive lengths to gather people around a table, be it for a design charette or a leisurely meal, and more often than not, the former morphed into the latter,” recalls Steve Dumez, his Partner and longtime colleague at the firm. “People mattered, communities mattered, culture, music and the arts mattered. Allen felt a tremendous responsibility to all of these and freely devoted his personal and professional time and resources to support them however he could.”

Allen loved New Orleans with an abiding passion that was contagious. One only need examine the critical role Allen played in the rebuilding efforts of the city and the long road to recovery following the destruction of Hurricane Katrina.

Regarding these efforts Alex Krieger, FAIA, wrote: “Ask most anyone to identify an architect consistently engaged in the voluminous, arduous, acrimonious, emotion-sapping yet crucial public discussions about the rebuilding of New Orleans following Katrina and Allen Eskew’s name will surface. He has been there: at all of the public ruminations and remains at the center of ongoing discussions. Not with the intention to seize advantage, spread theories, cajole or reprimand, but to help. Eskew believes that it is an obligation of citizenship to stay engaged, and to assist others about how to remain engaged as productively as possible.” Without the intention to do so, Allen became one of New Orleans’ greatest champions and a deeply personal hero to so many.

Immediate funeral arrangements will be private and a memorial tribute is being planned to honor Allen’s life and legacy shortly after the New Year.

In addition, a memorial fund is being established to honor Allen’s civic and mentorship legacy. Details will be made available in the coming weeks through the Eskew+Dumez+Ripple website.