Then a flash, grabbed it.

There's a still. It's pulled from a video. Can't see much. The video is dark. Father McNamee is off to the side.
It was 1993, St. Louis American Institute of Architects Annual Awards. The Jesuit is on stage. He’s up there for the Basilica. It’s a craft award for a lifetime achievement. But it is not for Father McNamee. The award is for another father and a son. They were glaziers. The father was Paul Heuduck. The son was Arno Heuduck. Paul and Arno Heuduck installed one of the largest mosaic collections in the world, ever. Heuducks and crew were off-on scaffolds for seventy years, hanging on a ledge. Bit by bit they plunged into a myth. Son Arno died weeks after the last mosaic was set. McNamee was on stage with Arno’s widow and family that night.

Construction on the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis started in 1908. Except for the mosaics it was done in twenty years. But the mosaics took time. There was a story to tell, a lot to cover up, up there. Sometime in the eighties a Cardinal told McNamee to move it along. Get it done. And he did. That night AIA St. Louis recognized what McNamee managed. That’s why he was on stage with a glaziers’ family.

The transcript that follows is off the audio track of a video taken the night of the AIA award ceremony.

The Speaker-Presenter Transcript:

...let me tell you a little bit of what I know about the project. It is for glass mosaics. It was completed in March of 89, and the tradesmen we are honoring here died in November of that year. We know that he accepted his last contract knowing that he probably was praying that he would live to complete it, and his dream came true. But this isn’t only his lifetime achievement award or his dream. His father before him started in 1923, and if my arithmetic is right, that is pushing seventy years on contributions on one project to create this masterpiece.

There’s 83,000 square feet of glass mosaics on the ceiling of the St. Louis Cathedral. There are seven thousand colors, two hundred shades of gold, forty one million individual pieces, some of them the size of your thumbnail. There’s no comparable mosaic in quality or quantity anyplace in the western hemisphere, and it’s right here in our own hometown.

And then this from the short spoken “widow Heuduck.”

I am very happy to thank the AIA for this award for my husband. He put in many long hours in the Cathedral.
now some of the jury comments:
If there ever was a project deserving of a craftsmanship award this is it fabulous, incredible, truly overwhelming
can design intense be exceeded?
they gave us back their life of talent and love
with great pleasure we award this project

Second Award, Same Night Same Night
Fr. McNamee was supposed to be back on stage with me. It was later that evening, another ribbon.
But he stayed in his seat. He didn’t come up. The second award was for an add-on. It was an annex to a 1912 Edwardian concert hall. Not particularly sacred. Not so grand. The concert hall was the Sheldon. The Sheldon was set in mid town St. Louis, squeezed between an old theater-vaudeville district and a Jesuit University. The hall was a one time platform for smart chat, a stage for Einstein, Eisenhower and Hemingway. But times and voices change. Things go gritty. The hall looked to try to turn it around. McNamee and I were Sheldon directors, both on the building committee. I was off and on chairman. I pushed the design, sometimes over the disquiet of the board.

Just like the Cathedral this project involved scaffolds and catwalks. And maybe a passage into myth, or at least a try. The Sheldon annex picked up a design award. It was a first place. The former Dean of Architecture at Columbia University James Polshek presented it. But it was all still a maybe. Deal not closed. The award was for an unbuilt project.
described by the architects

This Janus project, with its double gesture to the boulevard and to the center of an empty block, with its existing classical front and its mute Large Glass wall, reflects the current urban scenario. The project is fragmentary from its inception.

We propose a major new entry with a face to the parking lots at the rear. In this part of the city, the traditional perspectival space of the boulevard had been all but displaced by a shifting horizontal immensity. Instead of attempting to reinstate the status of the boulevard at the apex of the hierarchy of public urban space, something that assumes a massive redevelopment package, we penetrate the block, occupying strategically, partially, its center: just enough to control and define the space.

There is no master plan: how and when the rest of the building will be used is still the territory of the dreams of individuals. The project acknowledges that there are limits to architecture and development: the architect will not solve the world’s (social, economic, environmental) problems: and the developer cannot provide an inexhaustible resource or the outmoded aspiration.

David Davis and Lorens Holm Architects

described by James Polshek

This project has particular meaning for me because architecture is about bringing people together not just about bricks and mortar... a place for the performing arts... that brings together... a modern spirit... a spirit of the 21st century, a project about a building that is a landmark... it is an extraordinary undertaking... it is a project that we wanted to encourage the people who were developing it, building it, to go ahead and do it. The plans tell the whole story... sense of context, sense of the struggle, sense in the way the status quo was being struggled. The use of collage, new juxtaposed against that which exists... a spirit and sense of the spatial rigor and the ambiguity of the space... this great wing which unites the new and the old.

described by the national press

The Sheldon Theater, a 1912 landmark in St. Louis’s re-viving Grand Center district that was threatened with closure last year, is being expanded to the tune of 42,000 sq. ft in an adjoining, now vacant parking facility. The first phrase of the project, to be finished this October and designed by Professor Lorens Holm of Washington University School of Architecture in conjunction with David Davis Associates of St. Louis, includes construction of a 10,000 sq. ft glass enclosed atrium. The atrium, which includes a 150 seat black-box theater, provides much needed handicapped accessibility to the Sheldon. Only minor cosmetic restoration to the concert hall is planned, to avoid interfering with its acoustics. The remaining program, to be completed by 1998, includes exterior restoration, new workshop space, and a recording studio.

Architectural Record February 1992
hack

a lesson and line in
Sheldon renovations gobble up most of $2 million raised to date
The Sheldon was set to break ground a few days after that St. Louis AIA ceremony, but a problem...

It turned out some people didn’t particularly want a sense of struggle or a Janus faced ambiguity. The aphoristic is thin fare for a candied diet. Days from signing the construction contract it unravelled. An internecine fine arts bloodletting began. I was provocateur. Enter the press. Stories leaked and published about management misdeeds. The result was a temporary loss of the Sheldon Foundation’s protected charitable tax status. The architects are discharged. Architects then filed liens on the hall. Eventually the Sheldon’s executive director is fired. The Foundation announces the renovation is on hold. Father McNamee and I are on opposite sides. He stays. I leave. Then nothing for a while, a long while.
Annex Release 2 arrived four years after McNamee and I were on stage-apart. Release 2 was flat. While flat things show up, this was glaringly flat. And there was a program change. Still got from here to there and back, but the “process of passage” was gone. Passage paid no heed. The voids were annulled. Serial boxes packed the old garage. There were art galleries chock-a-block, little rooms, flat things everywhere. Not a void to be heard from.

One day a critic who careered in pictures came in to look. He had this to say.

I later found that the Sheldon Art Galleries were carved out of an old parking garage adjacent to the beaux-arts-style Sheldon Concert Hall. Loft-like galleries in former industrial spaces have set the style for the presentation of contemporary art from Soho and Chelsea in New York City to the Tate Modern in London. Instead of frankly acknowledging the old building’s history and nature in a similar forthright manner, architect Raymond Manz created small fussy spaces that have an unpleasant flow, and because the massive columns that hold the building up could not be moved, the sight lines are terrible. Worse yet is the way the space is finished. The floors, for instance, are a cheap parquet (the original concrete would have been more attractive, more appropriate and less expensive). The space looks like the gallery one would expect at a suburban junior college, not in an urban cultural complex in a city’s up-and-coming cultural neighborhood.

David Bonetti, Post Dispatch Visual Arts Critic, June 1, 2003
1. And when this was a break in the list
   only D was very mindful, and we were
   under the shadow of the relationship
   although P already was.

2. The most noted Jacobson complained the
delayed conclusion the instant.
   In 3 D7 found what D was signing
   an IT report at the big attention every
   D was knowledgeable.

3. He considered that he had
   written it which he in and that
   D had not yet signed off.

4. That an extent relationship was
   identified great unauthorized
   intervention in the contract.

5. D saw the map similar. That was
   mindful. Am sure that may be the subject of interest.

6. D was prepared for anything that
   D had not written D was not.

7. When doubts like a problem in event,
   that D might be talking to be
   in this done not.

8. After that small things did not show.
   D complained in the view of a little
   (4 DB) A not let in.

9. The little was
   2, 0, 0, 0, 0.

10. John, he didn't make me equal with
    an end 2 1 0 0 0 0. Without talking he
    will not make anything. More in the definitely
    endangered by economy usually with kind
    misunderstanding of who makes it.

11. D was involved in the mistake.

12. He made sure in the mistake.

13. The little thing did not show.

14. He made sure in the mistake.

15. The little thing did not show.

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64. He made sure in the mistake.

65. The little thing did not show.

66. He made sure in the mistake.
cursive transcription

1 --- D. beat up too much on P. That was a mistake. --- Now that we are on the topic of mistakes, --- We have suspected for a long time that W had cultivated a relationship with P. W went around D and me. on numerous occasions P. has refused to work with D. on the contract,... and displayed more knowledge of Sheldon financing then we did. --- "I’m not going to bid this because the Sheldon cannot afford it." our fears were confirmed when D. suggested that P. might be talking to W. W turns red. --- After that event things fell into place. P’s complaint came in the form of a letter (Oct 8) to W, not to D. (to get a bid n closing the roof) This letter was... --- 2 --- 6. And when this came to a head at the Sat. mtg. D. was never consulted, was never even asked his version of is relationship, although P. clearly was... --- 7. The most important evidence directly concerns the contract--- --- on Mon D. learned that Dale was signing off on P’s requests to use his masonry allowances, who D’s knowledge on Monday D. learned that W had written $19,000 check on work that D. had not yet signed off on. --- These are direct, unauthorized interactions on the contract. --- looks to me like W. G. has made an end run around DDA. without telling him, without authorization, even in the last meeting working directly with Lawler... John Cameron, staff reviewer heritage commission --- Kate Shea, commissioner of heritage, --- why did everyone gang up on the architects? --- why was a decision decided before hand, with the contractor and not with DDA. --- annex lower cornice drains why did Tim & Walter get together with Lawler + make a decision and spring it on DDA as if DDA was the enemy --- why was D. D. taken out of the loop --- " --- the last person to find out why did Lawler to Walter before he went to DDA --- 9 Oct Lawler’s letter to Walter (not to DDA) --- 13 Oct. Tues. DDA got Lawler’s letter --- if the whole point is to be a team player why was the whole thing handled in a way that provided maximum divisiveness --- Tim never asked for DDA’s input/point view/recommendations

image transcription

the plaza 20 plus years later