

The AIA National Convention 2025 – Boston, Massachusetts
Catarina Echols



It is not often that one has the opportunity to go to the National Convention two years in a row. Last year, in Washington D.C., it was my first time attending, so my level of anticipation was perhaps more elevated. I was also looking forward to returning to a city I had not been to for a while and revisiting all the museums at the National Mall. I carefully studied all the sessions being offered and tried to work through the overlapping favorites. I made sure to stay through Sunday so I could have that extra day to experience the city without compromising my time at the convention.



One of the most upsetting aspects of the conventions is having 5 seminars being offered at the same time and having to decide which to attend. This is particularly frustrating when there are two days when most of the educational classes are only offered by vendors at the exhibition hall. These classes are often limited in terms of space and acoustics. I am a great supporter of the vendors, not only because of their sponsorship of the event but, and much more importantly, because of what they offer in terms of providing us with an opportunity to visually experience the product while being able to ask questions and getting familiar with its applicability to present and future projects. I spend many hours at the exhibition hall and have been able to provide greater solutions to many of my ongoing projects, so this portion of the convention is definitely essential. That being said, I just think it would be better if the classes associated with the products were offered in the same class format as the project seminars. I do

not think that those attending would forgo visiting and spending time with the vendors if the CEU opportunities were being provided elsewhere, not in immediate adjacency to the product itself.



Perhaps this was just a coincidence, but it just happened that at the previous convention I was actually able to listen to a seminar about a local project and experience that project after the convention during my visit to the National Mall. It allowed me the opportunity to contrast the photos and project highlights in real life. It was interesting to note that in a couple of instances, the longevity of a renovation was compromised by a poor selection of materials, which degraded at a rate that compromised the design intent and rendered a newly improved building a candidate for yet another renovation. This is particularly frustrating when the original remodel was so vastly expensive. But, as architects, we ought to support the exploration of new methods and materials and learn from the process. Innovation is a hard task for a multitude of reasons. The city itself was not at all what I recalled. Many of the museums were in dire need of renovation albeit many were already in the process of transformation, as attested by the barricades, congested traffic, and long lines of visitors. Thankfully in Boston, the city was fully

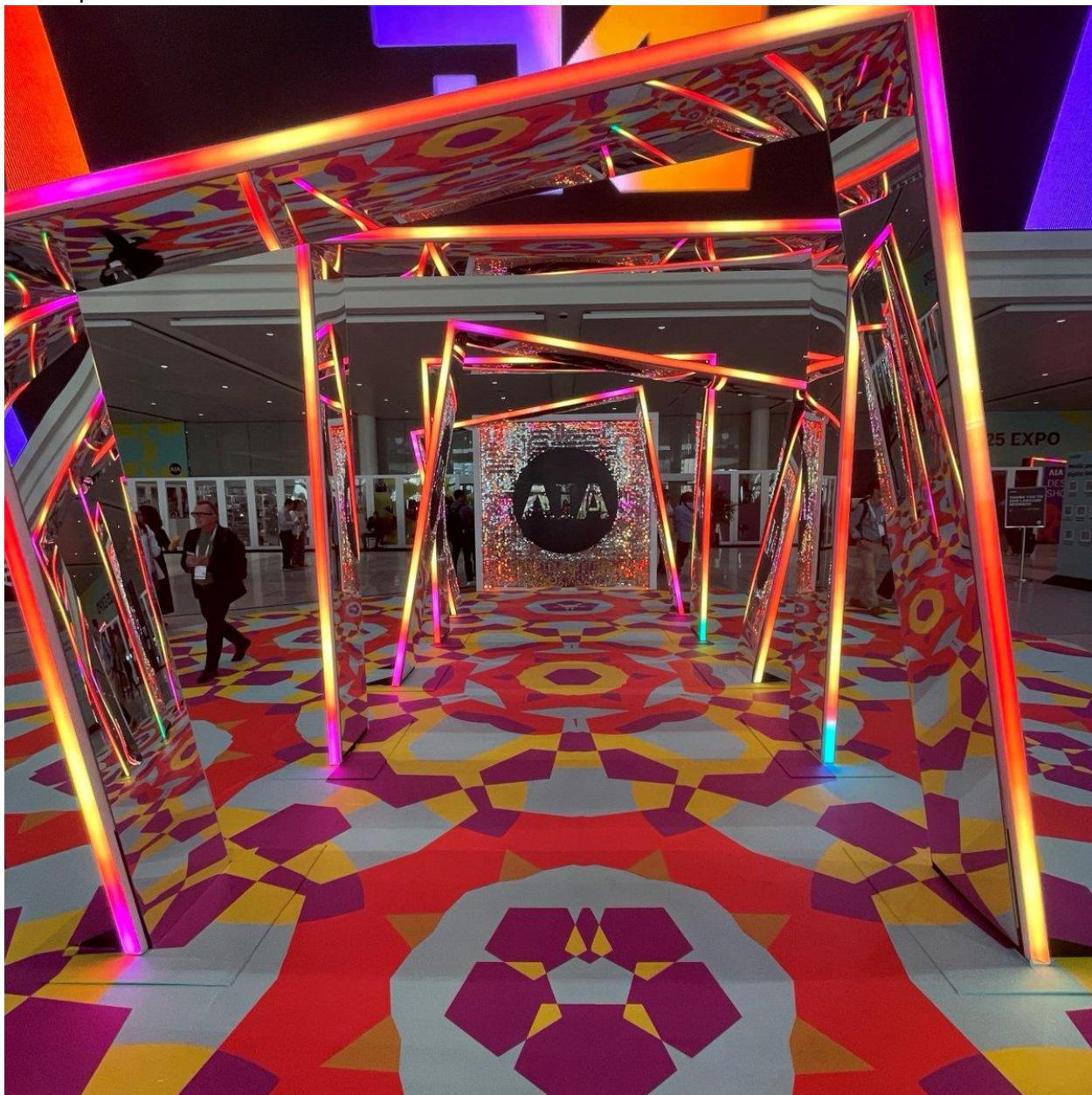
functional, and my experience of the city was not compromised by infrastructure



improvements.

The focus of the seminars at the Boston convention were more on artificial intelligence and other computer aided design and analytical techniques, than I had experienced in DC. The sustainability concept of embodied carbon, and the social equality considerations of community empathy were still the focus on many of the presentations. Mix use developments that associated education institutions with housing, shopping, hospitality, and outdoor usable space, were interesting and proposed a fully functional city block that catered to all. The keynote speakers were energizing, and the prize recipients were deserving of acknowledgement for their

accomplishments.



All in all, another great experience that I recommend to all that are really interested in architecture.