



STAN BERTHEAUD (CONSULTING PRODUCER, LEFT) AND MICHAEL SELDITCH (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER/DIRECTOR, RIGHT) ARE THE CO-CREATORS OF THE TELEVISION SERIES ARCHITECTURE SCHOOL. THEY STAND ON THE SITE IN NEW ORLEANS AS THE STUDENTS BREAK GROUND FOR THE FOUNDATION OF AN URBANBUILD HOUSE.

PHOTO RACHEL CLIFT

THE TV SET

THREE ARCHITECTS EXCHANGED THE BUILDING SITE FOR THE TELEVISION STUDIO. 'ARCHITECTURE IS A GLAMOROUS PROFESSION. UNTIL YOU'RE IN IT.'

Text **Katya Tylevich**



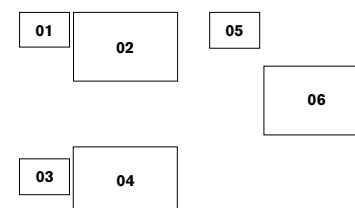
Architecture School 2008

This six-part documentary series follows a group of students enrolled in Tulane University's School of Architecture as they design and build an affordable house intended for a home-buyer in post-Katrina devastated New Orleans. Filmed during the 2007-2008 school year, the series follows the construction of the third home in Tulane University's URBANbuild programme, which offers fourth-year architecture students the opportunity to design and build a low-cost single-family dwelling. Cofounded in 2005 by Reed Kroloff and Ila Berman, URBANbuild is a partnership between the Tulane School of Architecture and Neighborhood Housing Services of New Orleans (NHS), a 32-year-old not-for-profit agency that works to restore urban neighbourhoods and offers assistance to first-time, low-income home-buyers. NHS facilitates the sale of URBANbuild houses, while also providing the capital and the land. Tulane supplies the creativity, the expertise and the manpower, in the form of the students themselves.



'I APPLIED FOR FILM SCHOOL BECAUSE I WANTED TO GET AWAY FROM ARCHITECTURE AND MY EX-WIFE'

– Stan Bertheaud –



01 THE FINAL REVIEW. BYRON MOUTON STANDS AT THE FRONT OF THE CLASS. REED KROLOFF (LOWER LEFT, TURNING TOWARDS CAMERA) WAS THE DEAN OF THE TULANE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AT THE TIME AND IS NOW THE DIRECTOR OF CRANBROOK ACADEMY OF ART.

02 EACH STUDENT DESIGNED A HOUSE. AFTER A FINAL REVIEW, THEY VOTED FOR THE HOUSE THEY WANTED TO BUILD (NO ONE WAS ALLOWED TO VOTE FOR HIS OR HER OWN DESIGN). ADRIANA CAMACHO'S DESIGN WON BY A LANDSLIDE. BYRON MOUTON (PROFESSOR/ARCHITECT) STANDS AT THE LEFT. ROB TATE (CAMERA/EDITOR) STANDS IN THE BACK ON THE RIGHT WITH CAMERA.

03 ADRIANA CAMACHO, THE WINNER OF THE DESIGN COMPETITION, WORKS ON THE MODEL OF HER S HOUSE.

04 THE CONCRETE FOUNDATIONS HAVE BEEN POURED. THE HOUSE WILL REST ON BLOCK FOOTINGS 3 FEET (91.4 CM) ABOVE THE GROUND, CLEARING THE CITY'S FLOOD PLAIN.

05 THE S HOUSE IS ALMOST COMPLETE.

06 THE CREW (RIGHT) DOES A TIME LAPSE OF THE FINISHED HOUSE AS IT GETS DARK.

I've been in Los Angeles long enough. Maybe this is finally my chance to get discovered. It's all about right-time-right-place, baby, and I'm in West Hollywood sitting across from a producer/director whose résumé is a hit list that includes *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and *Project Jay*, and a production designer credited for super-shows like *Lost*, *24* and *CSI: Miami*.

The two men talk to a screenwriter over speaker phone – a guy with two theatrically produced screenplays to his name, the most recent, *South of Heaven, West of Hell*, directed by and starring Dwight Yoakum with Vince Vaughn, Bridget Fonda and Billy Bob Thornton. The three men are speaking over each other, loudly exchanging ideas and (if I may) 'riffing', while I mentally narrate my *E! True Hollywood Story*, thinking how sweet life will be once someone in this room finally notices that I'm the next Liza Minnelli. (What?)

Minutes into our face-to-face, Selditch pulls the verbal equivalent of opening one side of his jacket to reveal it's lined with baggies of 'architectural stimulants'. We talk about the good stuff: his projects du jour. Like the architecture-competition reality show he has in the works – something along the lines of *Project Runway*, emphasis on *project*. He shows me the treatment he's pitching major networks now; it scans like a sexy modern architecture mag. Selditch goes on to describe a feature script he's developing with another writer; it's about a Frank Lloyd Wright house in peril. Naturally, we digress to brainstorm who'd play Grandmaster Frank himself.

We move on to past projects, like *Architecture School*, a documentary TV series Selditch created and oversaw with longtime friend Stan Bertheaud – the screenwriter mentioned above. Selditch and Bertheaud met in '89 while teaching design studio at Woodbury University



Nobody notices. In fact, my three tickets to stardom are too busy talking about – what else? – that ever-dazzling attention hog: architecture. I thought I was in a room full of Hollywood insiders. In fact, I'm in a room full of architects who are ... Hollywood insiders. A strange cocktail, indeed.

I meet Michael Selditch first, the above-mentioned producer/director who is also a writer, show-creator and show-runner for numerous unscripted TV programmes. He is the co-executive producer of *9 By Design*, a docudrama that follows New York husband-and-wife firm Sixx Design as they give the gift of flipped, hip interiors to Manhattan apartments and hotels while raising seven terribly photogenic children. It's after several friends of mine, and one blood relation, declare they're addicted to *9BD* that I decide to contact their Mother Superior. Selditch agrees to meet me in a hotel lounge in Beverly Hills.

in So-Cal, where Bertheaud still teaches today. *Architecture School*, which aired on Sundance in 2008, follows students from Tulane University's School of Architecture through the blood, sweat and renderings needed to rebuild hurricane-torn New Orleans. In 2009 the show won an International Documentary Association Award, bequeathed upon Selditch and Bertheaud by America's sweetheart, Ira Glass. Selditch later shows me their teaser for *Architecture School, Season Two*, which he and Bertheaud are currently shopping around. 'For your eyes only,' he says. Oh, how I wish there was a Perez Hilton of architecture to whom I could leak this teaser. It would get so many clicks!

So, how to explain all this architecture porn on Selditch's CV? Well, prior to immigrating to TV & Movie Land in roughly 1999 (initially as a set designer), Selditch practised as Citizen Architect for 14 years. He says he would still teach architecture today, if not for the erratic >>

schedule of his current day job. But, no, he wouldn't go back to practising architecture.

'I dropped architecture when I got my first producing gig on a reality show,' Selditch says. 'I never stopped loving architecture, but the profession . . . We share a dramatic pause. I ask if he misses it. 'I really, really miss it,' he says. Then he recalls the last project he ever did, two years ago: a renovation of his ex-boyfriend's apartment in Manhattan.

'We redid the kitchen, moved the rooms around, a complete gut job. It was the first time I had done a renovation in frickin' years. And that's when it all came rushing back to me,' he says. 'Contractor tricks, people not being accountable. I thought *this is why I don't do it any more.*'

Though it was difficult to part with 'the thrill of walking through a finished building', Selditch gets the same thrill sitting in the back

pared us,' Selditch says, while my mind travels elsewhere. To quote my thoughts: 'There are enough architects in Hollywood to warrant a *symposium* on the subject? Hold me.' And: 'Is there an architects' clique in Hollywood? I want in.'

Selditch reads my ADD-riddled mind. He invites me to sit in on a meeting he's having with Barbosa and Bertheaud (on conference call) at his WeHo apartment next week. But keep it on the DL, he implores me; the two projects on the agenda are still hush-hush:

1. An architecture-show teaser, which the three men are working to realize.
2. A set design Barbosa is creating with Selditch for an HBO series. (Selditch says Barbosa is the only one who understands what he's asking for, because they can speak architect to architect.)

And here we come full circle: West Hollywood, Liza, dramatic swell. Consider this 'the



of a movie theatre, watching a crowd react to his film. 'That's the scary and fun part of both professions – putting something out there, letting go.' Besides, Selditch still identifies himself as an architect.

'I play the "architect card",' he laughs. 'In network meetings, I'll say, "Well, I used to be an architect so . . ." And people are always impressed. A lot of TV shows I've done are design-related because of my reputation as the "guy who was an architect and therefore knows what he's doing".'

Selditch tells me about the lecture series he and Bertheaud initiated some years ago, called 'Architects in Hollywood'. Selditch, Bertheaud and a roster of other, um, 'Architects in Hollywood' – including their good friend, Carlos Barbosa (the production designer from Scene 1 of this article) – spoke at various architecture schools about the experiences they had in going from blueprints to big screen. 'We talked about what we do and how architecture pre-

flashback'. The climax comes only weeks later at Barbosa's Hollywood apartment, where the four of us finally meet in person for an on-record, architects-behind-the-scenes tell-all.

CONFESSION 1:

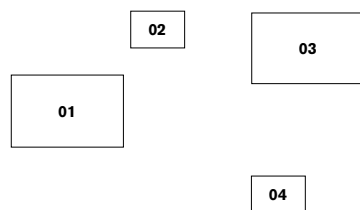
Stan Bertheaud: A single event really triggered my leaving architecture for film. I was living in New Orleans, and I got divorced. I applied for film school in LA because I wanted to get away from architecture and my ex-wife . . .

Carlos Barbosa: . . . who is an architect . . .

Bertheaud: I was surrounded by architects. I needed to get out of town.

Michael Selditch: You entered the 'Architects Witness Relocation Program'.

Bertheaud: Then in LA, screenwriting was an epiphany for me. It was very visual; I would think of pictures and write them out. I thought, *Holy shit! This is the purist way to create.* It even rivals sitting down late at night to sketch a design.'



01 DIPLOMAT SUITE AT THE UNITED NATIONS TOWER. THE USE OF A TRANSLIGHT (GIANT PHOTOGRAPH) OUTSIDE THE WINDOWS GIVES VIEWERS THE ILLUSION THAT THE ACTION IS TAKING PLACE ON THE 24TH FLOOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS TOWER. IN REALITY, THIS SET WAS BUILT ON STAGE. MID-CENTURY MODERN ARCHITECTURE AND FURNISHINGS WERE USED TO EVOKE THE ORIGINAL DESIGN OF THE UN COMPLEX, BUT NEW SOFFITS WERE INTRODUCED TO GIVE THE SET A 'RENOVATED OR UPGRADED' LOOK. IN THE PLOT OF 24, THIS SUITE SERVED AS A BASE FOR THE LEADER OF THE FICTIONALIZED ISLAMIC REPUBLIC WHILE HE ATTENDED NEGOTIATIONS.

02 CARLOS BARBOSA, ARCHITECT AND PRODUCTION DESIGNER OF TV SERIES 24, IN HIS OFFICE.

03 INTERIOR OF THE CTU SET. THE CTU SET WAS BUILT ON STAGE. THIS PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS THE BULLPEN AREA, WITH GLOWING PARTITIONS THAT CONFORM TO THE WORKSTATIONS. IN THE BACKGROUND ARE THE LOWER-LEVEL CONFERENCE ROOM AND DEBRIEFING ROOM, AS WELL AS THE UPPER-LEVEL DIRECTOR'S OFFICE. GLASS AND GLOSSY FINISHES WERE USED TO ACHIEVE BOTH MAXIMUM TRANSPARENCY AND A WORLD OF REFLECTIONS, WHICH CREATE A GREATER SENSE OF DEPTH.

04 THE ACCESS TUNNEL. IN THE STORY, THIS TUNNEL LINKS MANHATTAN WITH THE SUBTERRANEAN LOCATION OF THE CTU (COUNTER TERRORIST UNIT) FACILITY LOCATED AT THE SOUTHERN END OF ROOSEVELT ISLAND ACROSS THE EAST RIVER FROM THE UNITED NATIONS. THE TUNNEL WAS BUILT ON STAGE; A SKELETON OF WOODEN RIBS COVERED IN A LAYER OF WOODEN BEND BOARD WAS FINISHED WITH WOODEN TILE BOARD. TILES WERE PAINTED TO IMITATE THE FINISH OF 'SUBWAY TILES'.

CONFESSION 2:

Barbosa: I came to Los Angeles in the late '80s as an architect running away from the New Orleans recession. I crashed on Stan's couch for a while, got a job here at a big architecture firm and then this guy [points to Stan Bertheaud] said, 'Hey! Help us out on set!' I got the movie bug at the same time I became disillusioned with the corporate structure of architecture. I hated the office I worked in, but I love architecture. I live and breathe it. So I felt I'd found a different canvas for it in film. . . . I had a good architecture portfolio at that time, but I kept hearing, 'Doesn't matter. You haven't done film.' So I went home and, with images of real architecture projects I had done, I completed a fake film portfolio of bogus productions.

Bertheaud: Carlos, I didn't know you did *La Dolce Vita: Spanish version.*

Barbosa: That fake résumé got me my first break.

CONFESSION 3:

Barbosa: The Art Directors Guild has about 2500 members, and at least 50 to 60 per cent of them are trained architects.

Me: So, the cynical conclusion is that there are no jobs in architecture?

Selditch: The cynical conclusion is that architecture's just not fun.

Barbosa: The corporate structure sucks.

Selditch: You burn out on it.

CONFESSION 4:

Bertheaud: I've always wanted to do a show like *Mad Men* about architects.

[Note to self: I like where this is going.]

What the tape recorders caught, off record:

Selditch: I have always been a big fan of Louis Kahn, and I remember when I first saw The Kimbell I felt I knew the building intensely, down to the details of the handrails, though I had never been there before. It was the same chilly feeling that comes with meeting a celebrity at Starbucks. [Laughs.]

Bertheaud: Yeah, architects tell stories like 'I saw Ronchamp' or 'I saw Falling Water . . .

Selditch: . . . and it's so much more beautiful in person.'

Bertheaud: Whereas in Hollywood it's more like, 'I was eating the other day, next to John Malkovich . . .

Selditch: . . . and he's so much shorter in person.' You know, my former colleagues in architecture have a fascination with Hollywood. They have a fantasy image of this world. In the same way, non-architects have a fantasy image of architects. It's a glamorous profession . . .

Bertheaud: . . . until you're in it. <



'I HATED THE OFFICE I WORKED IN, BUT I LOVE ARCHITECTURE. I LIVE AND BREATHE IT'

– Carlos Barbosa –

24 – Season 8 2010

In this drama series, each season covers one 24-hour period. Set 18 months after season 7, the season 8 story arc involves Jack Bauer contending with assassination threats made during a peace conference between President of the United States Allison Taylor and President Omar Hassan of the fictional Islamic Republic of Kamistan (IRK), a country similar to Iran. Kamistani terrorists, resentful of America and disappointed at Hassan's willingness to concede their attempts at developing nuclear weapons, turn against their country with the secret aid of the Russian mob. The season is set in New York City, with the Counter Terrorist Unit's New York City office having been reactivated, but while there were originally no plans for filming in New York owing to budget constraints, some scenes were shot on location.

