Current crisis of architecture and the city

Khaleela Zaman
DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

Most architecture students, upon coming to the Illinois Institute of Technology, are set on becoming an architect. This seems to be a reasonable assumption. But once they get out into the real world, will their goals and priorities in their career change? Miguel Robles-Duran went to architecture school and practiced as an architect for a while, but he was unsatisfied. He felt that architecture was not the solution to the problems in our cities today. A little over a decade ago, Robles-Duran decided he was not going to consider himself an architect anymore. He had figured out that the current state of architecture is in crisis. From his experience in cities of Mexico and around the world, he realized that the urban problem could not be fixed solely through tearing old buildings down and erecting new ones in their place. The problem was rooted much deeper.

Robles-Duran is mostly concerned with the inequity of modern society and how cities are now built for status symbols, money, the wealthy, and not for people. After thinking about these problems, it was clear that architecture alone was not the solution and that the problem was not only the architecture previously built. The problem stemmed from politics, to economics, to precedent–it's been done for years, so why should it be done any differ-

ently? The same problem has existed since the fifteenth century, while Leon Battista Alberti was writing his great architectural treatise. Centuries ago, Alberti wrote in his treatise about how "mean" clients do not deserve the work of architects.

Everyone has seen cities being represented by their iconic architecture. Their skylines have been engrained into the minds of the people. But where are the people who live in those cities? Are they important when referencing the city? Not to the leading financiers and the wealthy of the world today. Miguel Robles-Duran began noticing these representations and questioning them. When he saw an image at an airport created by Financial Times of an island filled with a dense agglomeration of iconic buildings throughout the world, he realized that image was how the builders of this type of world see it. The reason why cities are not being built for people is because those influencing the building and maintenance of these cities are concentrated on their appearance, their aesthetics, and not on the well-being of their inhabitants. Above all, Robles-Duran found out that "architecture is the decoration of all the processes that make the city."

Today, Miguel Robles-Duran considers himself an urban practitioner, studying transdisciplinary topics that go into building our cities, in order to counteract the crisis. He

cofounded "Cohabitation Strategies," an organization that mostly partners with foundations in different cities, helping them reach a certain goal of creating bonds between community members, and then creating organizations in those communities to ensure their efforts will be continued once the initial goal is reached. Currently, Cohabitation Strategies has an exhibit called "Uneven Growth" in the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, which investigates the current affordable housing crisis in that city. With fifty percent of New Yorkers living below the poverty line, while empty buildings and vacant lots sit boarded up, forcing many of these people into shelters, there is clearly a huge affordable housing problem in a city considered one of the greatest in the world. Cohabitation Strategies has also proposed a comprehensive new affordable housing model for New York City.

Following Miguel Robles-Duran's Cloud Talk on February 27, the topic of affordable housing, and this crisis he spoke of in the state of architecture today struck a consonant chord within some current architecture students and professors and a dissonant chord within others. Hopefully, his discourse has lit a fire within someone to help transform cities as we know them today, into humane places where inhabitants are of top priority.

Cage match: beat-down on Boehner

Timothy Ayodele
TECHNEWS WRITER

In a world of elephants, donkeys, and all the animals in between, things are bound to go tooth and nail. Another day, another dollar at the Grand Old Party (GOP) (conservative party). It seems that the already loosely-led GOP is struggling as its leaders find rising difficulty in corralling enough votes to get back in the ring. Last week Friday, The GOP called in the goon squad to straight mob their fumbling leader/Speaker of the House, John Boehner. Here's how it went down.

It was a heated time for Boehner. For the past two years he has taken haymakers from Obama's administrative office, leading the old bull to grow weary. As his iron abs waned, the GOP goon squad started to take cheap jabs of budget delays to try and make the
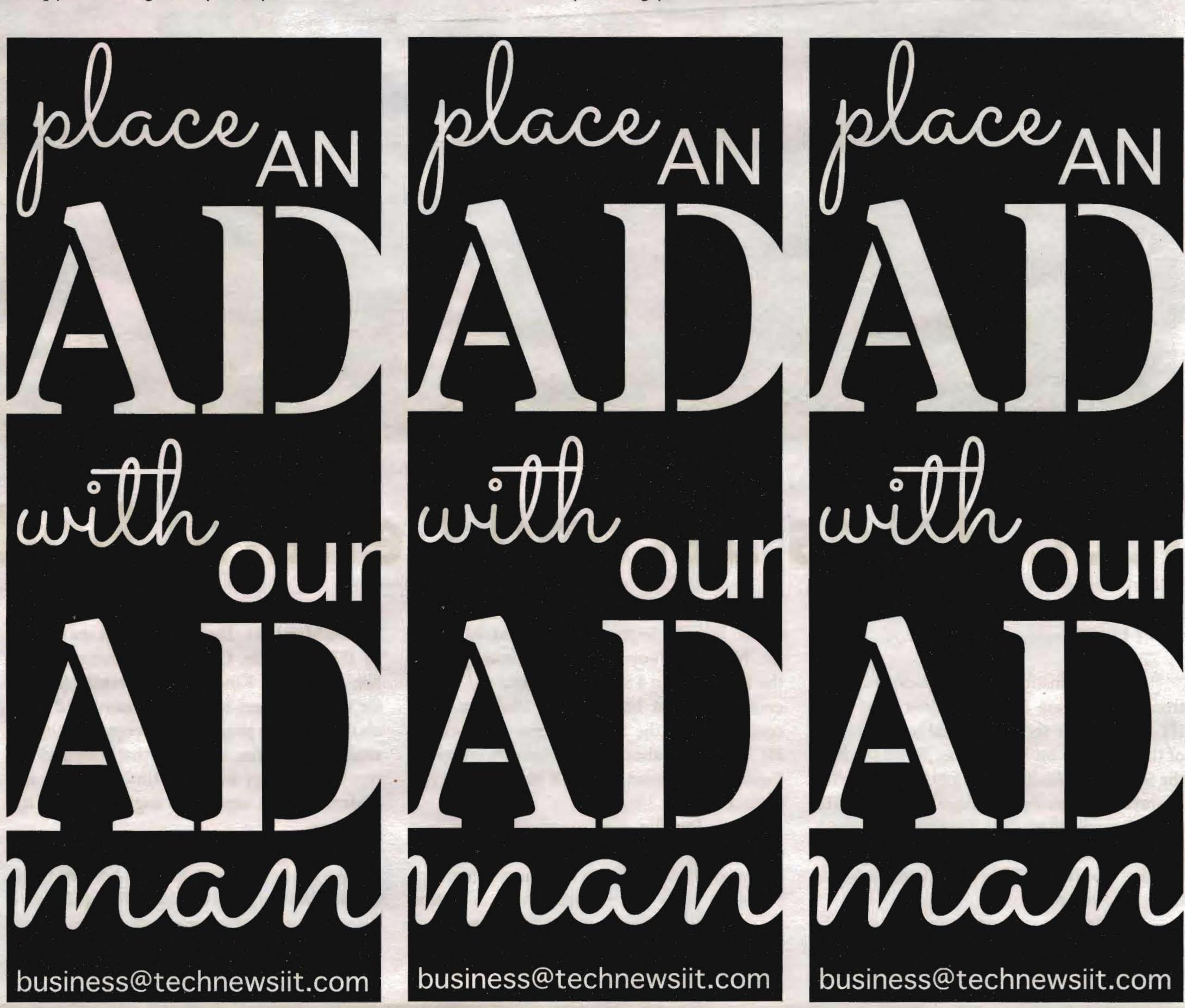
president look like a punk. But John, knowing what he needed to do to end the violence, uppercut himself unconscious by conceding to the democratic Senate's budget plan last year. Of course the GOP, especially some of the more conservative members, weren't so happy with Boehner's decision, so for the past year they have been undermining the House Speaker at every turn. But last week, it was time for action.

The next match featured a bill that would stop Homeland Security from shutting down. This bill was pivotal to helping Boehner watch the throne from the goonies that have been spying on it for the past year, but the GOP decided they just weren't having it. Despite an entire week of Boehner and other party leaders trying as hard as they can to sway the squad, the time for reckoning had come.

That Friday evening, just as Boehner

thought the vote was going well, things got insane. 52 republicans sprang out from all sides and start stomping on Boehner. Reports claim the use of bats, steel toed boots, and even brass knuckles used to break the House Speaker to a pulp. Some of Boehner's best friends were even reported in the mosh pit. Democrats in the House refrained mostly from joining in, deciding to leave the face stomping to the boys in red.

Overall this isn't just a right hook to Boehner's face, but his pride. The defeat of the Homeland Security bill is a testament to Boehner's weakening grip on the house as the fragmented GOP struggles to find a banner to rally under. Until the GOP are able to sort out their overarching goals ahead of the 2016 presidential election, they are just feeding into the Democratic agenda.