



## The Fresno ArcHop

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Among the public, there is a genuine curiosity about architecture and a mystique that surrounds architects. In contrast, the Central Valley's news media (print, television, and internet) exhibits ignorance and/or disregard of architecture's importance to the vibrance of a city. Our conclusion is to avoid being reactionary as opposed to fighting the media on every subpar article. With ArcHop, we take architecture to the public in an effort to educate them and give them the tools to think critically about the built environment.

The need for an improved built environment in Fresno and the Central Valley is evident. While growing rapidly, there are few examples of quality planning, architecture, and landscape. The state of our built environment does not reflect the talent and potential of our local design community. This, however, is not the state of our arts and culture, which are vibrant and excelling.

In October 2007, ArcHop was launched as a quarterly program of the AIA San Joaquin Chapter. The program emphasizes the importance of quality architecture by showcasing a gallery exhibition of architectural works and panel discussions of relevant architectural topics. ArcHop gets its name from the successful monthly Art Hop event held in Down-

town Fresno. Art Hop brings the public in close contact with artists in galleries and studios. From this interaction comes a higher understanding of art on the part of the public. We model our event on the premise of Art Hop, and also share its date and heavily trafficked venues, thus building on the symbiotic relationship between arts and architecture.

Turn-out for ArcHop has been strong. 500 people attended the October event. We had 400 for the January exhibition and standing room only for the panel discussion. The April event grew to fill two venues and nearly doubled in panel discussion attendance. ArcHop continues to grow in popularity and relevance.

In planning the forth event, we look to students. Fresno lacks an accredited architecture school. All of our brightest designers leave the region to study. The July 3<sup>rd</sup> exhibit will showcase the work of these students, paired with a panel discussion with architectural educators. ©

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*Anthony C. Pings and Associates, New Harvest Church, photo by Michael Urbaneck*