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Architecture**Boston**

Generation X

Photographs  
by Elsa Dorfman

Where Will  
the Children Play?

## Generations

MARCH•APRIL 2006



US \$6.95 / CANADA \$10.50



# BRIDGING THE GAP

Photographs by

*Elsa Dorfman*

**H**ow do you build a community? For all the expertise of architects, planners, contractors, and developers, no one can provide the most essential ingredient: time. Only time can provide the shared experience and history that begin to define a community, and only time can foster the transmission of values that give a community its unique identity.

Boston is known nationally for the special character of its architectural community — its unusual degree of collegiality, activism, and commitment to the public good. These are values that have been transmitted from generation to generation in time-honored ways: through teaching, mentoring, and by example.

The idiosyncratic character of the architectural profession means that generational relationships in architecture probably stretch standard sociological definitions. Architects might not reach the height of their careers until their 60s and often continue to practice throughout their lives. Teachers and students frequently become later collaborators. Older architects know they can learn as much from their younger colleagues as they themselves can teach. The architectural community is small enough that individuals know one another personally or by only one or two degrees of separation. News of distinguished work travels fast.

The portraits on the following pages demonstrate the richness of the generational connections in Boston's architectural community. They were taken by Elsa Dorfman, an internationally recognized portrait photographer based in Cambridge, who works with a 200-pound, 20x24 Polaroid camera, one of only six in the world. Her work represents another kind of generational link, capturing moments in people's lives, revealing personalities, and preserving memories for a future time. It is no accident that her website (<http://elsa.photo.net>) is organized around the most recognized symbol of connections within the Boston community: the diagram of Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority subway lines, commonly called the T map.

—Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA



*Michael and Maryann. December 22, 2004. Dufur*

Landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh and architect Maryann Thompson AIA met as teacher and student at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, later becoming employer and employee. Their shared design

sensibilities led to their current relationship as collaborators and friends — an example of the fluid nature of some generational relationships and the cross-disciplinary collaborations that are increasingly common in Boston.