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Keynote Speaker
Rebecca Hoffberger
Founder of & Director of the Visionary Art Museum

Conference Co-Chairs
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<http://www.new.towson.edu/multiculturalinstitute/>

Empowering The Creative Community

9:00 A.M. To 5:00 P.M.
University Union

Wednesday
March 9, 2005

free and open
to the public



sustainable city by miriam desharnais

BALTIMORE GreenWeek

When you think of Baltimore, does the word "green" drift before your eyes? Lush, verdant, leafy ... wait, was that a piece of litter that just blew by? Some times living in the city makes it difficult to remember how nature fits into our lives and how we fit into nature. Yet there are groups of people—sustainable designers, ecologically minded architects and others of their ilk—who want to bring us models of what a harmonious environment could look like. They bring it to us through the annual Baltimore Green Week, to be held this year April 2 through 8 at various spots throughout the city.

Baltimore Green Week began with a conference call two years ago among a group of design and construction professionals who share a passion for keeping development sustainable. This small but dedicated subculture is like the architectural equivalent of the Slow Food movement, and they started to plan a get-together where they could exchange ideas and products. It quickly blossomed into a series of programs, and Baltimore Green Week evolved as a sort of umbrella organization for groups with shared interests. They held their first program in March 2004.

What was surprising was how many regular folks turned out. The public's response to last year's five-day series of events shocked even the organizers, who never anticipated that three and a half months of hard work would attract several hundred people interested in sustainable design.

Let's pause for a moment here and make sure we're all clear on what sustainable design means: "That's the big question," says Baltimore Green Week founding member Megan Nash. "It's being cognizant not only of the resources we use in the

building of a structure, but of how to conserve over the whole life of the building.

"We're not focused on projects that get a quick return on an investment in, say, five years" Nash says, "but with making something that lasts eighty years, longer even, and creates some harmony between the natural environment and the built environment."

Interior designer and secretary of the Baltimore Green Week board, Julie Brady, offers examples of sustainable home design. "I have radiant heating in my house, which works well and saves money," Brady says. "I use paints that are low in VOCs [volatile organic compounds], and [use] insulation and cabinets that have not been treated with formaldehyde. It results in cleaner air because there is less off-gassing."

I wonder aloud how an apartment dweller like me can incorporate green design at home, and Brady rattles off a string of practices I either already do or have been thinking of doing—simple things ranging from using a weather-proofing kit on windows, to buying local goods when possible (saving resources used in transportation), to thrifting, salvaging and swapping rather than buying new. I'm greener than I realized!

Although a certain amount of theory is a part of Baltimore Green Week, the ultimate goal is to draw many new voices into a discussion on how to make practical daily choices. The program offerings are diverse, open to the public, and mostly free.

—Miriam DesHarnais lives the green life in Hampden. She wrote about the Baltimore Rumor Control Hotline in February.

Baltimore Green Week April 2–8

Here's a sampling of events happening during Baltimore Green Week. Visit www.baltimoregreengreenweek.org for up-to-date program listings, times, and contact information.

Saturday, April 2:
Project Clean Stream offers a chance for you and your wee ones to muck about in Baltimore Watershed streams picking up trash. (Julie Brady says her 4-year-old son likes picking up trash so much that she's getting him his own poker stick.)

Sunday, April 3:
The Eco Festival, cohosted with the Baltimore City Department of Parks and Recreation, sounds like the Maryland Home and Garden Show, minus the bad pizza and aluminum siding salespeople. It promises educational programs and access to vendors with sustainable ideas for the homeowner and the renter alike.

Monday, April 4:
The Discussion Forum on Livable Communities is an opportunity for residents to meet civic leaders and experts to explore how we can work together for more livable communities.

Wednesday, April 6
AIA sponsors a lecture on the Historic Preservation Movement with journalist and urban critic Roberta Brandes Gratz, author of *The Living City: How America's Cities are Being Revitalized by Thinking Small in a Big Way*, and *Cities Back from the Edge: New Life for Downtown*.

Want to volunteer to help organize and execute Baltimore Green Week? Contact Baltimore Green Week at info@baltimoregreengreenweek.org or call 443-573-4136.

