



Acre Architects co-founder Stephen Kopp and his partner Monica Adair will be speaking about their work at the Tides Institute of Museum and Art in Eastport, Maine next week. PHOTO: KELLY LAWSON/SUBMITTED

Saint John architects to share east coast vision

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A pair of Saint John architects who use narrative as the foundation for their projects will share their own story during a lecture in Eastport, Maine, this week.

Acre Architects founders Stephen Kopp and Monica Adair will be speaking at an annual event sponsored by the Tides Institute of Museum and Art.

Kopp said he thinks he and his partner were chosen for the event because of their cross-border work and their focus on "storied architecture."

"Architecture as cultural storytelling ... all of our projects that we do have a real narrative about the place, the client, the business or the home. There's always a story behind them," he said.

Kopp and Adair met while studying at the University of Toronto. They came to Saint John seven years ago after spending time working in New York City. They chose to start their own firm in the Port City four years ago because Adair grew up here and because they thought the region had a lot of important stories to tell. Though their office is here, the firm does projects up and down the east coast.

"We see really our work stretching from New York up to Newfoundland, just ignoring borders. The stories and ideas of what the east can be. We think they can move beyond nostalgia. We're more than lighthouses and dorries," Kopp said.

Kopp and Adair are planning to focus the lecture on projects from the past four years, particularly their adaptive reuse projects. One such project the pair are currently working on is

a boutique hotel in Brooklyn that is a former ironworks factory built by Icelandic entrepreneurs.

"Part of it will be new, part of it old, but tying it all into a spirit of adventurers and explorers," Kopp said, explaining their approach.

Acre Architects is also planning more local projects and Kopp said they are excited to be turning an old train round house into a new building for Picaroons Brewery on the north side of the river in Fredericton. They've also made their mark on some of Saint John's historic buildings, including the patio at Happinez wine bar on Princess Street and EN Sushi Bar on Canterbury Street.

Kopp said he hopes the audience take away from the lecture is an understanding of how architecture can add to the story of a place.

"It's always a good chance to reflect on your work. As architects we're doing the work, so you're in the trenches, and it's nice to step back once in a while and be able to discuss the projects with people," he said.

The Tides Institute has hosted the lecture for several years.

"Our institutional mission has kind of a cross-border perspective, both U.S. and Canada," Hugh French, Tides Institute director, said.

He added that they try to alternate between Canadian and American speakers. Past speakers have included Halifax architect Brian MacKay-Lyons and Kiel Moe from the Harvard Graduate School of Design. This year's lecture will be held on Aug. 7 at 7 p.m. at the institute's main building on Water Street in Eastport.