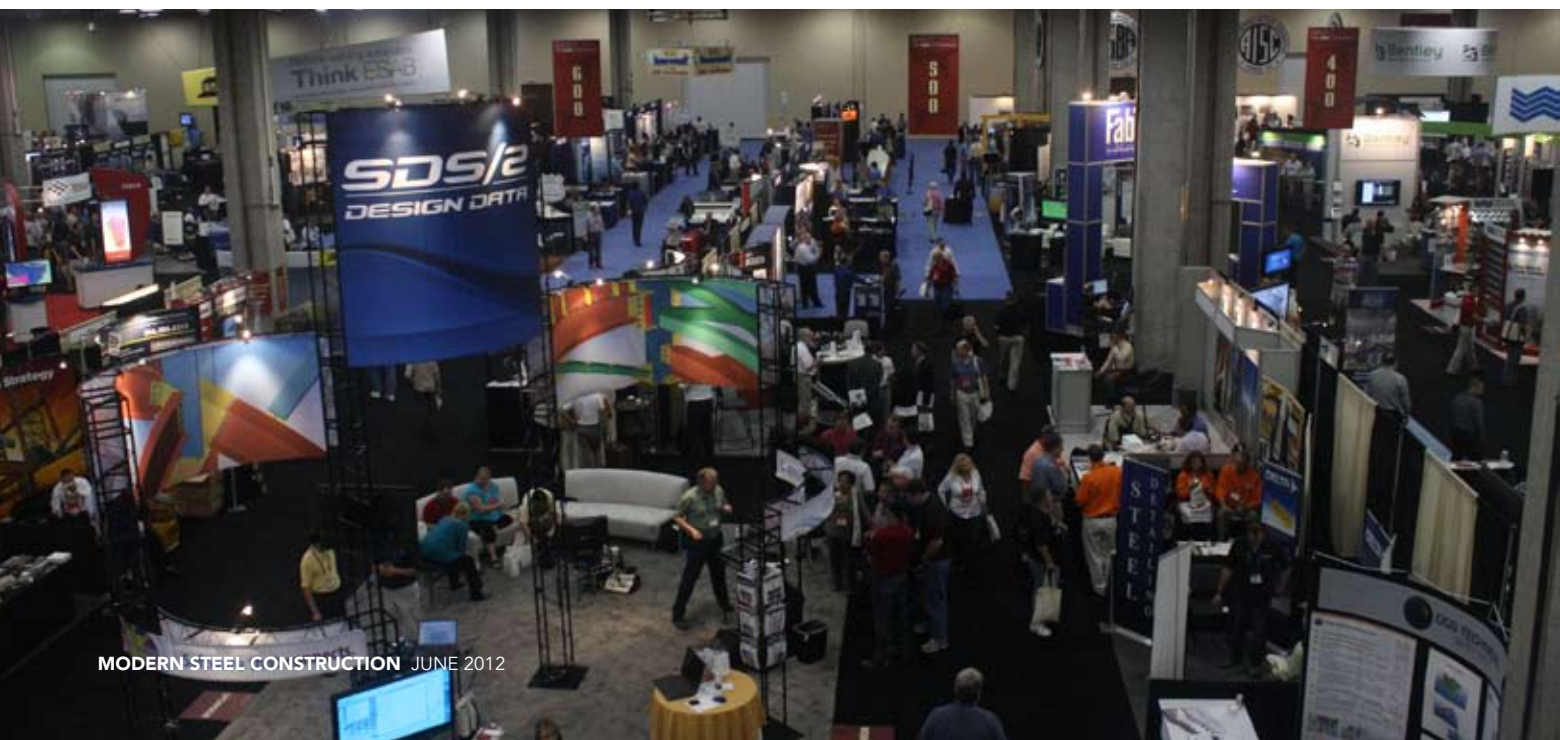




Everything's Bigger in TX

BY GEOFF WEISENBERGER

Dallas plays host to one of the largest Steel Conferences ever.



"AS A NATION, we need to get creative making and building things again."

With this statement, Dan DiMicco, Chairman and CEO of Nucor Corporation, kicked off the 2012 NASCC: The Steel Conference in Dallas in April. And it was certainly directed at the right crowd.

Having just accepted AISC's Robert P. Stupp Award for Leadership Excellence at the Wednesday keynote session, DiMicco spoke to engineers, fabricators, equipment manufacturers and others in the steel industry—in other words, people who know quite well the importance of manufacturing and construction—about how a service-based economy is unsustainable and the need to reinvigorate the country's manufacturing sector. "It's up to all of you to make a difference," he urged.

Of course, building and making things is what The Steel Conference is all about. And things are looking up. While the construction market has been down for the last few years, there are signs that it has hit bottom and is starting to improve, albeit slowly (for more on this trend, see "Optimism Breeds Optimism" on p. 26). And despite public perception, domestic manufacturing is once again on the rise. Throughout the ups and downs of the past few years, the U.S. structural steel industry has remained strong, and this was certainly reflected in this year's show, where the entire exhibit hall was sold out and the attendance of 3,587 made it the third largest Steel Conference ever. This year's event was held at the Gaylord Texan—which houses exhibit space, session rooms, sleeping rooms and dining and entertainment options all under one roof (a similar setup to the 2010 show in Orlando)—allowing attendees to easily mingle both during the day and after-hours and minimizing "commutes" back to hotel rooms.

For the first time ever, the National Steel Bridge Alliance's World Steel Bridge Symposium was collocated with The Steel Conference. Cosponsored by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and up until now a standalone event, the Symposium brought nearly 20 bridge-related sessions and several exhibitors to The Steel Conference, as well as featured a Bridge Pavilion on the exhibit hall floor, further integrating the structural steel building and bridge worlds.

Also a first for The Steel Conference's educational offerings was the Technology in Steel Construction Conference (TSCC), 10 sessions that focused on building information modeling software and workflow as well as integrated project delivery. As BIM and IPD are still emerging concepts, the idea was to look at where they are today as well as what they might look like in the future; one session was titled "What will the Business of Steel Construction Look Like in the Year 2030." Speculative, of course, but the point of the presentation was that whatever the construction landscape looks like nearly two decades from now, it will likely look different than it does today.

The TSCC sessions went over well, especially for an inaugural run. Brian Cobb, of Structural Detailing, LLC in Brentwood, Tenn., had high praise for one of the sessions. "'Beyond the Rolling Schedule' was really good, to the point where I want to get Matt Gomez [one of the speakers] in front of some GCs to really show them what the process is and why they need to get a team involved," he said.

For the second year in a row, The Steel Conference included the Sustainable Steel Conference, a track of 10 sessions geared toward the greener side of structural steel. Topics ranged from practical, technical information, such as how to minimize ther-

SteelDay Sculpture Competition

Last year, a creative twist was added to SteelDay that temporarily changed the meaning of AESS from Architecturally Exposed Structural Steel to Artistically Expressed Sculptural Steel.

The SteelDay Sculpture Competition challenged AISC Full and Associate Members to release their inner Rodin and build a sculpture to be displayed on SteelDay as well as this year's NASCC: The Steel Conference in Dallas. The only rules (besides the membership requirement) were that the finished sculpture had to fit into a 2-ft x 2-ft x 2-ft box and be made entirely of steel.

Eight sculptures were entered into the competition and voted on at The Steel Conference. The winning sculpture was the Welder, submitted by Cody Builders Supply, an AISC member fabricator in Austin, Texas. Weighing in at 140 lbs and made mostly of ¼-in.-thick plate, the sculpture pushed the size limit for the competition and is exactly 2 ft tall.

Cody project manager Imre Szombathy, who made the sculpture, was inspired by sculptures he saw while in San Francisco, visiting a job for which Cody had fabricated the steel.

"There were huge statues of people welded together out of all kinds of junk," he recalls. "They had chains for hair and they were, like, 30 ft tall." He sketched out several ideas and eventually settled on the welder.

"I looked through the scrap bin for pieces to use on it," says Szombathy. "For the tops of some of the gloves' fingers, I used slices of HSS 4x3x $\frac{3}{8}$ that were drops from a project we had just done. I cut almost all of the pieces with the torch, and I used the torch to heat and bend pieces into shape. I came into the shop to work on it during the weekends, and I left it there when I was done."

You can view all eight entrants at SteelDay's Facebook page (visit aisc.org/steelday and click the Facebook link or login to Facebook and search on "SteelDay").





mal bridging of steel elements, to more theoretical discussions like attempting to answer the question “What is green steel?” (the short answer: It depends on many factors).

Another (all-day) educational track, “Ruby University: Technology Meets Constructability,” featured five sessions from Ruby + Associates exploring the principals of constructability and examining the common conundrum “It worked in the model; why doesn’t it work in the field?”

“Overall, NASCC was a very well-organized event,” said Baris Lostuvali, a senior project manager with HerreroBoldt, a San Francisco-based contractor. “It was nice to have sessions for technology, sustainability and delivery methods, which is not the case for other trade association events. AISC clearly sees the change in AEC and builds a very diverse program to educate and inform its people.”

The Wednesday keynote address, presented by University of Illinois psychology professor Daniel Simons, was a fascinating trip into the human mind—which, according to Simons, is much less reliable than we might think it is. Titled “The Invisible Gorilla: What We See and What We Miss,” weaved

together several real-life studies and stories, as well as a handful of experiments that involved audience participation, to demonstrate that people have a tendency to misremember things and that true multi-tasking is much more difficult than we take it to be. Remembering something confidently does not mean remembering it accurately, Simons revealed, so don’t be afraid to question things and speak up when you think that something is amiss. Doing so can minimize mistakes and bad decisions not only in the construction process, but throughout the rest of life as well.

Friday’s keynote session honored Michel Bruneau, the winner of this year’s T.R. Higgins Award. Bruneau was recognized for his recent paper on steel plate shear walls. Besides his paper, he also lectured on his other work, which includes new design concepts for seismic design, blast resistance and multi-hazard resistance concepts.

Next year, NASCC takes place in the shadow of the Gateway Arch. Information on the 2013 show in St. Louis will be available soon at www.aisc.org/nascc.

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