

COLUMNS

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First Women in Architecture Reception a Rousing Success



Karen Madigan, AIA, (left) welcomes Deborah Elliot, Assoc., Gunther Kaier Architects, and Louisa Grauel, MacLachan, Cornelius & Filoni.

Champagne was not the only thing bubbling in the elegant offices of Poli & Madigan when over 60 women architects and graduating students met last February for an informal evening of discussion. "You could feel the excitement," says Karen Madigan, AIA, Chapter Liaison to the National WIA Committee and host for the first official gathering of Pittsburgh women architects. "I think everyone was thrilled to see so many women colleagues in one place. We were literally wall to wall."

From a makeshift podium, Madigan welcomed her guests and urged those attending to become involved in Chapter activities and to work to raise the profile of women in the profession. Reporters from the Pittsburgh Press joined COLUMNS staff in reporting this exciting beginning.

Madigan feels that now is the right time for an increase in the level of professional activity among women architects in Pittsburgh. Philadelphia has an active WIA Committee

and has established several worthwhile programs and activities for the entire professional community in the area. As a result, the Philadelphia Chapter now has six or seven women on the Board of Directors where formerly there were none, and the first woman is now serving as president-elect of the Chapter.

Madigan is quick to dispel notions of separatism. "One woman called me yesterday and asked about having gripe sessions. To me that's not interesting. Keep those for your friends. The point of the meetings is to do worthwhile professional activities."

Madigan invited local women to share their opinions in a follow-up letter to the February meeting. She is also encouraging more women to join the Pittsburgh Chapter. Of the 77 practitioners, only 18 (23%) are full members and 12 (15%) are associates. The total, 30, represents only 7% of the Pittsburgh Chapter membership.

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AIA Convention Marks a Century of Women's Achievements

A nationwide celebration of 100 years of women in architecture will kick off this month at the 1988 National Convention of the American Institute of Architects. "That Exceptional One: Women in Architecture, 1888-1988" will open May 15-18 at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York City and will travel to 14 major cities during the next three years.*

The exhibition highlights a century of women's achievements in architectural design, practice, and theory beginning with the first woman elected to the AIA: Louise Blanchard Bethune, FAIA (1856-1913). Bethune entered the field in the late 1870's as an apprentice to a Buffalo architect and received her degree from Cornell in 1880, the first female educated in a recognized architectural program. During her career, she built a variety of schools, churches, factories, stables and baseball fields.

The exhibition takes its name from a 1955 article for young students written by AIA Gold Medalist Pietri Belluschi, FAIA, who wrote he

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**[Pittsburgh may be one of them! Marsha Berger, AIA, Regional Liaison to National WIA, is talking with curators now. We'll keep you posted!]*

Livonia Osborne Stevenson: A Pittsburgh Pioneer



Livonia Stevenson: "I love the old Beaux Arts Buildings. The architecture today seems so temporary. They don't use real materials, just tin and plastic. Buildings seem disposable. Perhaps the architects plan to keep themselves busy rebuilding them when they fall apart."

Livonia Osborn Stevenson is 82 going on 25. Her blue eyes sparkle as she recalls her student days at Carnegie Tech. "Lee Osborn was my name back then. Livonia was too long for those men in the Architecture Department. They were really wonderful guys—I still hear from several of them."

Mrs. Stevenson, Class of '26, was the first woman to graduate from the Department of Architecture. Her uncle, an engineer, had arranged a scholarship from Rensselaer but her mother didn't want her so far from home. She stayed in Pittsburgh attending Tech, and worked for her degree in architecture instead of engineering, as her uncle had hoped. She has fond memories of the studio. "The frieze was painted white and was decorated with profiles of past graduates. We used to play guessing games, identifying the famous faces."

Was it different in the twenties? Not really. "My problems as a girl student were similar to the ones the students tell me about today. The faculty seemed to pay more attention to the men students and they usually got better grades. I guess women have to be stubborn and work harder to succeed. I did, and it was a challenge."

Mrs. Stevenson recalls Henry Hornbostel with a laugh. 'He was so volatile, expressive,

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BREAKING GROUND

Kudos



IKM Incorporated took first prize for their "Downtown Pittsburgh Skyline" costume at the Palladian Ball, the March fundraiser for the Community Design Center of Pittsburgh. Pictured above are John Schrott (PPG Place), Tom Hartley (State Office Building) and Tim McManus (Fifth Avenue Place). Not shown: Jeff Brown (Gulf Building) and David Roth (CNG Building). Mr. Roth also designed and built the headpieces. CDCP Director Lynn Manion was pleased with the Ball's success: over 300 people raised close to \$10,000 for the Design Fund. "We've started a tradition that's sure to become a gala annual event."

Transitions

Design Alliance has moved its offices from Gateway 3 to PPG Five. During the week-end of April 22-23, the firm completed its transfer, upping office space from 4500 to 6500 square feet and consolidating design libraries. Design Alliance has a history of participatory management; over half the firm's architects are either partners or officers. According to Bill Kerr, AIA, this style of practice will continue, enhanced by the open design of workstations in the new location. Please drop by for a visit and tour.

Design Alliance will donate drafting tables and other office equipment to a non-profit client, Abraxas, which is constructing a residential treatment and educational center for people with chemical dependency problems.



Here and There

Williams Trebilcock Whitehead is designing a new Adult Outpatient Facility for The Rehabilitation Institute of Pittsburgh. Project architect is John P. Pekruhn.

IKM Incorporated has recently been selected by Pennsylvania State University to design a \$4.5 million classroom and laboratory building for the University Park Campus. Construction is expected to begin in late 1988 with occupancy scheduled for early 1990.

The Architectural Woodwork Institute requests volunteers from the Pittsburgh Chapter AIA to serve on their Board in an advisory capacity. Call Gary Martin, Fort Pitt Fixtures, for more information: 531-4010.

The Pittsburgh Chapter AIA has contributed to **The March of Dimes Walkathon**. Chairman this year is Westinghouse CEO, John Marous.

The Department of Architecture at **Miami University** in Oxford, Ohio, is planning an Architecture Alumni Reunion, June 10-12, 1988, in conjunction with Alumni Weekend at the University. Call Beth Dochinger, 513/529-6010 for details.

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POINT OF VIEW

by Marsha Berger, AIA
Regional Liaison to Women in
Architecture

Female architects are no different from male architects. Right? Wrong! Women are bringing special skills and talents to the profession that are just beginning to be recognized.

Carol Gilligan wrote *In a Different Voice*: "Sensitivity to the needs of others and the assumption of responsibility for taking care, lead women to attend to voices other than their own and to include in their judgment other points of view." Women are better listeners, many believe, and therefore better problem solvers. We hear the message *behind* the words as well as what is actually being said. We also find it easy to make and nurture relationships, a decided advantage when dealing with clients, and a key factor in the teamwork required for large projects. But more importantly, our translational skills and our ability to sort out complex relationships help to find innovative answers based on need more than on pure design.

It can be said that women put their egos on the line less often: we are more concerned with client satisfaction than winning a point. However, our commitment to high levels of design quality often leads us to one of the traditional



"Women have unique talents to offer."

women's roles, namely that of teacher. We take the time to educate our clients and lead them through the intricate design process. This way, our clients better understand the solutions and feel that they have had significant input.

Women also exhibit intense attention to detail and craftsmanship. I've often been called myopic and those who know me can attest to

the thickness of my glasses. But the "big picture" isn't enough for women architects. We all know the difference an inch makes! It was Flaubert, author of a classic novel about a woman freeing herself from the conventions of the day, who had the insight to remark, "Le bon Dieu est dans le détail."

Today, I see more women in roles of leadership. Opportunities for women architects need not be limited to those of sole practitioners and heads of small community firms. As more women advance to leadership positions in commerce and government, they will select the architects. Since clients tend to hire people like themselves (having the same attitudes and concerns), the new corporate leaders will summon their own sex to top positions in the large architectural firms.

We have unique talents to offer, and we are in a position to affect a course of action in our profession. As the Remaking Cities Conference showed, new demands are being made of architects where the human factor becomes paramount. We will be asked to deal with additional issues of environmental impact, community advocacy, cultural commitment and social responsibility. Women are the care-givers of the world—architecture is just one way we express it.

INSITES

Letters to the Editor:

To the Editor:

The Pittsburgh Chapter of the AIA, and in particular the many dedicated volunteers who made the RUDAT and *Remaking Cities* a forum for public discussion, should be commended for their efforts. In order to be effective in communicating the conclusions of RUDAT, the AIA must follow through and take an active role in the public debate over many other local and regional development issues. Although the Mon Valley RUDAT demands the first priority, the Pittsburgh Chapter must recognize that there are other local and regional issues affecting the quality of life in Pittsburgh and its environs. Many important and sometimes controversial local development issues go without notice or are poorly understood by the local media.

I will always remember naively attending a meeting of the Public Awareness Committee a few years ago, thinking I would hear vibrant discussion on improving public awareness about architecture and planning, especially at the grass roots level. Instead, I heard chat about "cocktail parties at The Carnegie" for those who already supported the architectural establishment. In essence, the Public Awareness Committee appeared to be an extension of the marketing arms of major architectural

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Reception (Continued from page 1)



Ana Guzman, AIA (left) chats with prospective member, Susan Tusick, Burt Hill Kosar Rittelmann Associates.



Over 60 women architects attended the meeting hosted by WIA Chapter Liaison, Karen Madigan, AIA. (Photos by Kathy Ayres.)

Possibilities for future activities include:

- Forming an official WIA Committee.
- Encouraging more women to serve on local chapter committees.
- Sponsoring events such as lectures, discussions, films, exhibits.
- Organizing regular meetings for the exchange of ideas.
- Establishing a speakers bureau for women architects.
- Developing relationships with other local women's organizations.
- Writing a series of articles, building or book reviews.

Madigan sees the potential benefits of both Chapter and WIA Committee membership for herself and others. "People often say to me, 'Oh you're an architect. There aren't many women architects. You must be one of the only ones.' That's because women are hidden. Before I hosted the meeting I only knew five or six women architects. I was flabbergasted when I found all the women."

"I think the timing is perfect to do something," says Madigan. Women are the fastest growing group of architects at present; in some schools enrollment is 50/50. The Women in Architecture movement is a response to this

change in the makeup of the profession. It is a mechanism which will involve women fully in the AIA and in the decision-making aspects of the profession.

[If you missed the WIA reception and would like to be included in future activities or mailings, please call Karen Madigan, 471-8008.]

Five years ago, Pamela Waters Studio, a New York graphics design firm, employed 16 women on a staff of 17. Waters described her firm as a soft-hat enterprise. The lone male was receptionist/secretary for the firm. We wonder how he does with the coffee machine!

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