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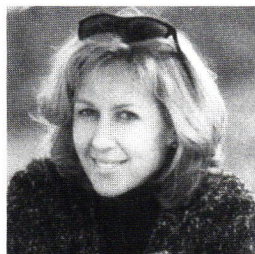
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The French Connection

By Tracy Certo



As I read about Perkins Eastman and UDA and others who are lending their design expertise in the Gulf Coast area it is not only impressive but also heartening.

One of the many things that impressed me

during a recent but all too brief visit to Buenos Aires was the architecture. From my sixth-story hotel room on a busy city street I stepped out on the half-moon shaped balcony (how Evita!) and felt at one with the splendid street scene all around me. Buenos Aires is like two cities: street-level with its urban congestion that reminded me of New York (and for the record I love both cities) and the above-street level where the architecture takes center stage. The buildings, many frosting-white and bearing strong French influence, were rundown in cases but still stunning in this city that was once nicknamed the Paris of South America.

I was so enamored by it all that I nearly passed on the tour of Teatro Colon, the block-long, legendary theater that Albert Filoni, AIA had the opportunity to work on (p. 14). A friend I met in the city on my last day insisted we do it. Never one for organized tours I questioned the decision. Didn't we want to spend more time in artsy Boca? And would that leave enough time to stroll through the Recoleta, the amazing cemetery? Must we? I persisted. My friend, Connie, a solid Type A attorney from New York City, said yes, we absolutely must and I caved. What a great move. I'll be forever grateful to her.

The hour-long tour was one of the highlights of my trip. We got an upclose glimpse of the backstage world, from the zapateria with its thousands of shoes (wacky and colorful and showy shoes, some with heels that tower over two feet high) to music and dance rehearsals for, in this case, *Peter and the Wolf*. The building itself is a wonder and I wanted to learn more about it than I possibly could in an hour. While the theater was magnificent and the president's box quite divine, the show stopper was the stuff going on downstairs and backstage: skilled and speedy

seamstresses making fabulous costumes out of every fabric imaginable, artists painting an enormous backdrop for the stage while it was on the floor on one of the lower levels, props of every size, material and kind. It was a land of magic and fantasy. Can you imagine, I asked Connie, working in a place like this?

Months later, Al Filoni had the chance and what an opportunity it was. Although it lacked a perfect ending—in reality, the story lacks an ending altogether at this point—Al made the most of it and directed an opera during his stay in Buenos Aires. Read all about it here.

On the subject of architecture with French roots, anyone who has spent time in New Orleans knows the treasure trove of buildings found there. So it's hard to imagine losing so many. Quintin Kittle, AIA, a native of Mississippi, recently spent a week assessing damage in his home state and he reports back here (p.10). We also report on efforts by local architects making a difference in the hurricane-ravaged areas. This story was suggested to us by an architect so if we missed you, drop us a line and we'll include you in a follow-up the next issue.

Although I've never been to the Mississippi Gulf, I've been to New Orleans a number of times over the years, each trip memorable. Like many of you, I have a great affection for the city and I have friends who live there. So as I read about Perkins Eastman and UDA and others who are lending their design expertise in this area it is not only impressive but also heartening. To everyone who agreed to share their story, I thank you.

You can contact the editor at tcerto@adelphia.net.

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On the cover: The remaining pieces of two homes in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. Photo by Quintin Kittle, AIA

AIA Pittsburgh serves 12 Western Pennsylvania counties as the local component of the American Institute of Architects and AIA Pennsylvania. The objective of AIA Pittsburgh is to improve, for society, the quality of the built environment by further raising the standards of architectural education, training and practice; fostering design excellence; and promoting the value of architectural services to the public. AIA membership is open to all registered architects, architectural interns, and a limited number of professionals in supporting fields.

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Lessons Learned: Grassroots Conference

By Tom Briney, AIA

Each February the leadership of

AIA Pittsburgh attends the annual Grassroots Conference sponsored by AIA National. Obviously, the real advantage of a conference in Washington, DC is using the opportunity to meet with Congressional representatives and discuss

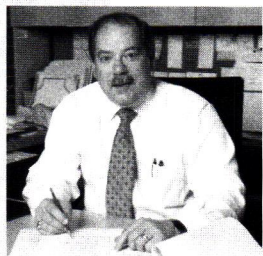
(and advocate) support of pending legislation that impacts our profession. Last year was my first trip to Grassroots. Aside from the memory of being scheduled into sessions during every waking minute, I came away from the experience with a real appreciation of the commitment we share in trying to make a difference. To me, this was especially evident during Advocacy Day, when we met with our representatives and engaged them in real dialogue about issues.

Using last year as an example, we had especially productive meetings with Melissa Hart, Mike Doyle, Tim Murphy's staff and Rick Santorum. These meetings (as part of larger AIA effort) contributed to several important AIA-sponsored provisions being included in crucial energy and transportation laws (H.R. 3 and H.R. 6 respectively). In a similar way, this advocacy also resulted in enactment of important provisions for Brownfields Redevelopment, Low Income Housing, Historic Preservation and Redevelopment/Investment Incentives. These meetings were an important lesson for us because it became clear that this type of advocacy is an important resource for our elected officials as they consider their support and sponsorship of legislation. Interestingly, in these meetings, we were also challenged by our legislators to help them in solving specific problems in their districts by

taking an active leadership role. Architects, it seems, are perceived as having the right set of skills, outlook, and energy to influence quality outcomes.

The legislative agendas at the local, state and national level should be topics of common interest to all of us. The hard reality is that in spite of our good reputation and passion for issues, we face a complex challenge when we want to influence legislation. And don't forget that part of this challenge is supporting the election and re-election of public servants who embrace our issue agendas. To me, lobbying is an activity that I only partially understand, at best. If you accept the definition of lobbying as: "trying to influence an official to take a desired action", then we all need to begin thinking of ourselves as potential lobbyists. In January, I wrote about "Outreach" and "Participation". The type of activism that I am suggesting supports both these ideas.

AIA Pittsburgh has a diverse and articulate membership. Based upon the recent conversations I've had, we are passionate about design, our region, creating livable communities and the issues that impact them all. At Build Pittsburgh last year, we committed ourselves to taking an active role in influencing positive change for our region. My suggestion is that we can become part of the solution by taking an active role in influencing policy. Each of us can play an important role, whether by contributing to ArchiPAC or PA PAC, volunteering for local municipal boards and commissions, or simply e-mailing your representatives. The critical lesson is that you each have a respected voice and point of view, and making it heard serves us all.



Architects, it seems, are perceived as having the right set of skills, outlook, and energy to influence quality outcomes.



New E-zine bursts into being: POP City

If you, like many astute Pittsburghers, don't buy into the negative image of our fair city, this is for you. A new e-magazine called Pop City, launching in late February, is designed to tap into the vibrant, dynamic, anything is possible city we all know and love. Eve Picker of no wall productions and wedoproperty is the publisher and Tracy Certo, the editor of this publication is the managing editor.

Each issue of Pop City will be sent to your e-mailbox weekly with up to three features including an urban think piece, a development feature and a remarkable people/places article. We welcome your ideas. Anything Pittsburgh with a twist—positive, authentic and compelling. There is much to celebrate in this city and so many people creating cause for celebration, that Pop City was simply meant to be. We hope you love it. www.popcitymedia.com

AIA Honor Award for Pittsburgh's Children's Museum

The Pittsburgh Children's Museum won a 2006 AIA Honor Award for Architecture. It was one of eight projects in the U.S., and three in Europe. The museum's renovation and expansion was designed by Koning Eizenberg Architecture, with Perkins Eastman Architects PC as the local architects. "An important new civic building for the city, this new centerpiece addition connects into other prominent revitalized historic structures to create a new children's museum," said the jurors.

As for those fluttering, five-inch transparent panels that form the wind sculpture, jurors thought they symbolized "children's advocacy and the revitalization of Pittsburgh's historic North Side."

AIA Pittsburgh congratulates everyone involved in the project, including the museum's executive director, Jane Werner.

Carnegie Museum of Art in 10 Best Art Museums for Kids

You always knew it was top-notch for kids. Now the rest of the country will get clued in.

Carengie Musuem of Art has just been ranked number five in the nation for kids in a first-ever data-driven survey to assess the family friendliness of American art museums by *Child Magazine*.

Mover and Shaker

Congratulations to Edward A. Shriver, Jr., AIA, founder and 2006 chair of AIA's new Retail and Entertainment Committee (REC). A national knowledge community, the REC was formed to foster the discussion and dissemination of knowledge about the retail and entertainment environments among practitioners, developers, retailers and the general public regarding how the quality of retail environments directly impacts the quality of life in a community. As an expert in corporate and retail development, Shriver formed this knowledge community because

"better retail design can help communities to create or repair a core social environment within their communities. A better understanding of, and ability to achieve, a higher quality of retail/entertainment design will allow architects to help clients and communities to manage and control retail development to achieve long term community improvements as well as improved retail health and success."

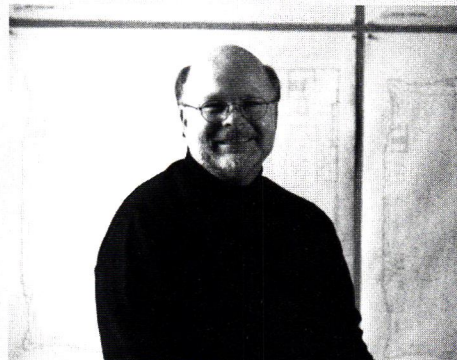
Members of Strada are part of the advisory board along with the Walt Disney Company, Economic Research Associates, Gensler, and RTKL. Membership is open to current members of AIA nationally.

The goals of the group are to:

- Provide a forum for discussion about issues and best practices in the area of retail and entertainment architecture and urban design by actively engaging members of the AIA as well as allied professions and public officials.
- Provide examples of how quality retail design promotes more livable communities through the creation of places that engender and reinforce a sense of community and to assist members and their clients in promoting high quality retail design.
- Promote the creation of new knowledge through selected research projects of particular interest and use to the retail design community including retail's role in the community, retail and sustainability, and retail and the marketplace.

The advisory group meets monthly by conference call and will host conferences, workshops and other member activities. Look for the REC's workshop at the AIA National Convention in Los Angeles, CA this June entitled "Designing The Magic: Design Process Employed by Imagineering."

With more than 20 years of retail and corporate project experience, Shriver's work ranges from the remodel of the Galleria Mall to the recent work on the North Shore for Continental Real Estate Companies and downtown retail planning projects such as the Fifth Avenue District plan for MadisonMarquette and Toll Brothers. He is currently leading the transformation of the former Lazarus department store into the new Platt Place, a mixed-use development; Del Monte Foods Pittsburgh office on the North Shore; and The Crossroads, a revitalization plan for downtown Washington, PA.





REBUILDING AFTER KATRINA:

PITTSBURGH ARCHITECTS GEAR UP

BY TRACY CERTO • PHOTOS BY QUINTIN KITTLE, AIA (except where noted)

Perkins Eastman

Sometimes sending a check just isn't enough.

In the aftermath of Katrina, Perkins Eastman decided to offer up to six months of employment and housing to architects who lost their homes. Going through the local AIA chapters in Mississippi and New Orleans, the firm posted their offer and received grateful responses from several architects but in the end, only got one taker.

Undeterred, they opted for a Plan B: offering incentives to their own employees to volunteer. "We offered five volunteer scholarships with up to five days off and \$1000 of expenses if they signed up with a registered provider," said David Hoglund, FAIA. Quintin Kittle, AIA, he noted, had already initiated volunteer work of his own (see page 10). This plan met with more success when seven employees offered to volunteer with an eighth in the wings.

"There was an overwhelming interest from the firm," says Hoglund who was pleased with both the plan and the response. "It fit what we wanted to do—more hands-on im-

pact and it was great for morale." Stories that people like Quintin came back with interested others, he added.

In the meantime, Hoglund's 20-year-old daughter, Sarah, provided another opportunity for Perkins Eastman to support recovery efforts. A student at Elon College in North Carolina, Sarah traveled to Mississippi with classmates to clean houses and offer help. "These people had received bids of \$15 - \$20,000 for clean up and these kids did it for free for nine or ten properties," said Hoglund. Since most people were uninsured it provided a valuable service as Sarah and her group prepared houses for rebuilding by removing furniture and debris and gutting the interior down to the studs. To support her efforts, Perkins Eastman donated \$1500 worth of supplies.

"Sending checks is a pretty hollow feeling," says Hoglund who, like many who had donated, wondered where his money to the 9/11 funds went. Hands-on efforts offer a multitude of benefits. "It's a good thing for us," Hoglund says, "and made every one feel good."

"We offered five volunteer scholarships with up to five days off and \$1000 of expenses if they signed up with a registered provider. There was an overwhelming interest from the firm."

— DAVID HOGLUND, FAIA



The front cottage (of three) at the Charnley House (now Rudimann House) in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. The collapsed portion to the left was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright while working as a young draftsman for Louis Sullivan. Sullivan's own personal summer house on the adjacent property completely floated away without a trace. The two other cottages were totally destroyed.

Don Carter, FAIA and the Urban Land Institute (ULI)

For Don Carter, visiting New Orleans as a member of the Urban Land Institute's Advisory panel was the one of the most intense professional experiences of his career. In November, he spent a week in the hurricane-ravaged city where he interviewed more than 200 people, toured decimated neighborhoods and took part in an impassioned town meeting of 300 people where 70 people spoke about their life-altering experiences.

"It was heartbreaking to see the devastated and empty neighborhoods and to hear the personal stories of people from all walks of life and incomes," Carter said. "No group was spared, but no group suffered more than poor African Americans."

In the now famous ninth ward, Carter's firm, UDA, had prepared the master plan for Desire Homes, a HUD Hope VI public housing transformation that was under construction. On August 28th, the plan was one-third complete, with more than 100 units occupied. And then Katrina struck. "The houses were flooded to the middle of the first floor. At UDA we downloaded aerial photos which showed the extent of flooding," Carter said. Seeing the photos was disheartening but then Carter visited the site in New Orleans which was far worse. "It was haunting. No one has determined if the units are salvageable."

If he saw the worst of things, he also saw encouraging signs of renewal. "It was heartening to see the French Quarter up and running again, barges on the river, and people returning to houses in the neighborhoods on higher ground. Tulane students returned in January. Mardi Gras and Jazz fest will be held in the spring as always and the city is already preparing for its 300th birthday in 2018."

The signs of life and return of community were especially gratifying to see since the purpose of the week-long ULI advisory panel was to create a vision for the future of the

city. The ULI panel was invited by Mayor Ray Nagin and his blue ribbon committee, the Bring New Orleans Back Commission.

ULI Advisory Panels were convened after the L.A. Rodney King riots and the Oklahoma City bombing, notes Carter who adds that Pittsburgh has benefited from them on more than one occasion: for the Pittsburgh Technology Center, the Cultural District, and, most recently, on Airport Area Development.

In New Orleans, the panel met daily in small groups to discuss specific topics, then in large gatherings to discuss recommendations and priorities. Carter's role? Housing policies, including principles for rebuilding traditional neighborhoods and historic and contextual guidelines for the architecture. In doing so, he worked with the city and urban planning group which in turn added a housing group since it was such a high-priority issue for returning families.

Their recommendations were grouped in three areas: economic development and culture; planning, infrastructure, and housing; and government efficiency.

Anyone following the news in New Orleans is aware of the sensitivity of rebuilding efforts since some zones are far better suited for re-

development than others. When Carter was asked how the panel dealt with these issues, he responded, "Most of the areas with the worst flooding were built in the 1960's and 1970's on low-lying marsh and wetlands that had been filled with dredge material from the Lake. The soil is spongy. The areas least flooded were the historic neighborhoods which over time had weathered previous floods and hurricanes. It is not a black and white issue, because white and black neighborhoods were in both categories, flooded and not flooded. It is a matter of designing with or against nature."

The ULI group outlined zones that were likely for redevelopment and identified those hard-hit areas with the potential for mass buy-out and conversion to green space.

"This idea of not building in flood prone areas, which was unfairly misinterpreted and misrepresented by a few local politicians and social activists, was embraced by many citizens and groups and criticized by others, much of the criticism coming with accusations of racism," said Carter. "We did not present it as a wholesale abandonment to wetlands of those areas. We cautioned everyone that more study was needed before those boundaries could be drawn. FEMA will have a lot to say about where rebuilding can occur and under what circumstances, such as housing on stilts."

One proposal from the group is to establish a public development corporation that would buy and sell property to speed the redevelopment efforts—an idea based on the national Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC) which dealt with the savings and loan crash in the 1980s. "In effect, it allows an entity to take over the mortgages of individual home owners and return their equity to them," Carter explained. "Then the home owner could take the equity and rebuild on-site or elsewhere."

If that sounds similar to the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, it's because one of the ULI advisors was a key member of that group. "Senator Baker of Louisiana proposed a similar bill to Congress recently for the State, but he is finding it slow going with the Administration of Congress. Nothing has been done so far in New Orleans or Louisiana on this front."

Also proposed from ULI but not yet initiated was the idea for an oversight board with powers over the city's finances and establishing a flood control network. The purpose, says Carter, is to reassure outside public and private investors that new investments would be handled properly and to counter New Orleans' nasty reputation for graft and corruption.

The ULI Advisory Panel was organized into five working groups parallel to five of the seven committees of the Bring Back New Orleans Commission (city and urban planning, economic development, culture, infrastructure, and government efficiency). The two other areas, education and health, were outside the core competencies of typical ULI Panels and the Commission hired consultants and advisors for those.

"Most of the areas with the worst flooding were built in the 1960's and 1970's on low-lying marsh and wetlands that had been filled with dredge material from the Lake. The soil is spongy. The areas least flooded were the historic neighborhoods."
— DON CARTER



This destroyed home on Water Street (the irony stings) in Biloxi is slated for demolition after review by Biloxi Historical commission. The house is directly behind the Church of the Redeemer, famous for the standing bell tower that survived Hurricane Camille in 1969, but did not make it through Katrina.



Telltale sign in Ocean Springs, MS.



This is the workshop my father and I built some 30 years ago in the backyard of my family's house in Ocean Springs. It has now withstood countless hurricanes.

Quintin Kittle, AIA Perkins Eastman

For Quintin Kittle the choice was obvious. Having grown up in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, a town that suffered extensive hurricane damage, he didn't hesitate to volunteer through AIA National to do assessment damage in the area.

Leaving Pittsburgh on January 21st for a week, Quintin promised to call *Columns* from the road and he did, even as a strong gulf wind whistled loudly through his cell phone. Although his on the road report was riveting—we think he could have a career with a network—we later discovered he kept a journal of his time there and we asked (okay, begged) him to share it with us. And now we thank him for that. Highlights of his amazing trip follows.

Quintin Kittle, AIA Reports from Waveland, Mississippi



In front of the historic Barq House (of root beer fame) in Biloxi, MS. The Barq family sold this place and moved two doors down from my childhood home. The Barq House sustained very little damage.

According to an NPR report, Waveland had a population of 7000 prior to Katrina. Since the hurricane only 1000 have returned to the decimated community. Quintin Kittle saw it firsthand and was in awe.

■ “South of the railroad tracks, literally, it is gone. There is nothing, from the entire beachfront to the railroad tracks—not a house standing. That’s staggering to me. There were hundreds of houses. One that was built on metal stilts is left but it’s uninhabitable, the only structure left on the beach, 20 feet up in the air. Gorgeous older homes that have been here for a long time are just leveled. From the photos you just don’t see the depth of it.

■ “After five days I’m sort of numb to it, it’s so widespread. I followed it on the web but didn’t realize how widespread it was. There’s building material, clothes, drapes—just junk, from plates to furniture, clothes, bricks, cars. The cars have just all floated around and the trees are filled with clothes and building plastic bags.”

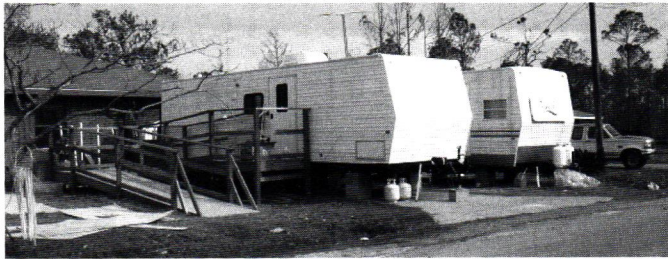
■ “I wrote an email to my wife the other night and told her there’s even a strand of Christmas tree lights that floated through.”

■ “There are no street signs so I’m having a hard time finding my way. I see hundred year old oaks fallen in this part. It’s shocking.”

OCEAN SPRINGS MS

1/21/06

SINCE THE BRIDGE TO D.S. IS IN COMPLETE AND TOTAL RUIN, I TOOK THE INTERSTATE (I-10) AS OPPOSED TO TAKING THE SCenic ROUTE ALONG HIGHWAY 90. ^{FROM AIRPORT} AT FIRST, ~~THE D-BUSH~~ THE DAMAGE I SAW WAS CONSISTENT WITH TYPICAL WIND DAMAGE OF A HURICANE: TREES, WIND BLOWN DEBRIS; SIDING BLOWN OFF HOUSES, BROKEN WINDOWS, TWISTED SIGNS ETC. HAVING BEEN THROUGH SEVERAL HURICANES ~~WHEN~~ GROWING UP HERE, NOTHING SEEMED OUT OF PLACE. EXITING THE INTERSTATE FOR D.S. IS WHEN I NOTICED ~~THE DAMAGE~~ THINGS A LITTLE ~~SLIGHTLY~~ CLEARER. WHILE THE WINDOWS & DOORS WERE INTACT, THE INSIDES OF THE HOUSES WERE RUINED. THE ~~WAS~~ HOUSE HAD BEEN SUBMERGED IN WATER.



FEMA trailer.



Katrina Cottage, 300 sf pre-fab house, in Ocean Springs that was part of the NUC program.



Destroyed home in Gulf Hills Ocean Springs, MS.

PASSING THE ENTRANCE TO
GULF HILLS, AN UPGRADE GOLF
COMMUNITY W/ A RESORT HOTEL &
GOLF COURSE, THE GATE HOUSE
& ENTRANCE WAS WELL GONE.
FOR THE LONGEST TIME YOU
COULD DRIVE BY THE ENTRANCE
& NOT SEE THE GOLF COURSE
BUT NOW ITS COMPLETELY GONE.

UDA: Planning Louisiana's Recovery

UDA is a major part of the planning group for rebuilding Louisiana. In November, Rob Robinson, AIA of the Pittsburgh architecture and urban planning firm, a sub-contractor to Calthorpe, attended the Louisiana Recovery and Rebuilding Conference where 650 people from all sectors of the community put forth goals and principles for action.

Since the conference, the Louisiana Recovery Authority endorsed those goals and principles which will provide the framework for rebuilding efforts of the New Orleans metro area and the southern Louisiana Gulf Coast region.

UDA is part of the community planning team, responsible for planning and architectural standards and tools through the creation of two research publications, explained Robinson. The firm will be collaborating with Calthorpe Associates, which is responsible for long-range vision and Duany Plater-Zyberk which will focus on local design charrettes.

"We're doing two components: regional pattern book and the Louisiana tool kit, sort of the urban parts and pieces that make up different settlement patterns," Robinson said. The first one is due in May with work completed on the second by July and publication to follow. The charrette reports will come out as they're done.

The objective? To provide a starting point, focusing on what was once there. "The first publication will be targeted to local builders and homeowners trying to repair then builders and developers coming in to do new housing," said Robinson. "We're trying to set a vocabulary of architecture, what you find in different regions of Louisiana. What are the patterns there? So as people come back to rebuild they have a sense of what's involved in that region." Different areas have completely different architectural styles, materials and urban patterns. "Baton Rouge is a bit more of an amalgam of what you see in American cities from the early 1900s and forward," he pointed out, while New Orleans' architecture is more rooted in Spanish and French influence.

The regional pattern book is meant to help guide FEMA and others proposing massive new settlements, to maintain the pattern and form as something that belongs in Louisiana, said the architect. "We will set parameters for what makes sense there."

Two teams will be working on the project: an architecture team led by Eric Osth, AIA and an urban design team led by Alex Laporte and Andrew Dresdner with overall involvement by Ray Gindroz, FAIA. In addition, Donald Zeilman, AIA and Jeremy Welsh are working on the book with designer Terri Wolfe.

Although Robinson has traveled to New Orleans several times already, they are just now starting public meetings—initial briefings and reconnaissance. "It will be interesting to see what kind of consensus we get in kinds of patterns," he said. "The state of Louisiana is remarkably rural."



Examples of various architectural styles in Louisiana.

PHOTOS BY UDA

AIA National – David Downey, Assoc. AIA

The unanimous endorsement of the goals and principals by the Louisiana Recovery Authority came as no surprise to AIA's David Downey, Assoc. AIA, who is managing director of the Center for Communities by Design and has been heading AIA disaster relief efforts. "It's exactly what they should have done," he said, "since it came from people in the affected area. It was the people who had been displaced and impacted and knew the region better than anyone in the country." What did surprise Downey, pleasantly so, was the announcement that the conference was scheduled. "We had planned on holding it ourselves," he said.

The conference was modeled after the work AIA New York and New York New Visions did following 9/11, he explained. That collaboration is now housed in New York through the AIA Center for Architecture.

When asked about his role in helping to lead the disaster recovery efforts, Downey said, "It's been a tremendous experience, absolutely positive. I can remember early on understanding the generosity and interest of architects across the country to volunteer and become involved and to help their colleagues. It was just immense." He was "fascinated" by the response of architects across the country who helped in a number of ways through various organizations in their communities.

"At every turn it's very rewarding to find ways to position AIA Mississippi or Louisiana or New Orleans to have a seat at the table—and to have the skills, ability, and resources to make sure the components and individual architects are in the position to help rebuild their communities," said Downey. "From a single office in Washington DC, it's challenging to understand how we can help without becoming a new workload for affected people." The challenge is striking a balance to help others help themselves, he noted.

If the challenge is great, the rewards are plentiful and Downey has found inspiration working with architects in the impacted areas. "The resolve of the affected people is just amazing," says Downey. "With everything being lost and starting from scratch, they're more concerned with helping their fellow committee members and persons than themselves. That's testimony to the caring nature of the architect."

Lessons Learned

Although Downey says the rewards are many, the flip side is the frustrations with multiple organizations and federal, state and local bureaucracies. The future challenge for AIA national disaster assistance programs is finding ways to work more closely with or provide opportunities for FEMA and other response programs. "Everyone sees the serious need for improvement. The collaboration with other organizations like the American Planning Association, has been a cornerstone of success, active at both the national and local level. My new vision is a model of collaboration, true to the Sri Lanka team, which goes to the heart of integrated design."

Citizens' conference created framework

Presented by the AIA in collaboration with the American Planning Association, the Louisiana Recovery and Rebuilding Conference in New Orleans in November was cosponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the American Society of Civil Engineers at the request of Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco and the Louisiana Recovery Authority. The goals and policies they recommended and then endorsed by the LRA are:

1. Create infrastructure that supports recovery by restoring confidence, enhancing quality of life, and withstanding future disasters by:
 - Category 5 protection—levees, restored wetlands, and an independent authority to ensure ongoing maintenance and funding
 - Improved services including communications, energy, and other key elements
 - Sustainable, equitable, and transparent approaches to rebuilding and future development
2. Promote economic growth that benefits everyone through:
 - A diverse economy encompassing traditional and emerging industries, supported by both respect for the region's historic character and innovative funding strategies (incentives, and public/private partnerships)
 - A foundation for growth including quality education and job training, housing, transportation, and other key elements available regardless of income
 - Equity that includes living wages and career tracks, benefits everyone in the region, and provides long-term economic opportunity
3. Provide public services that enhance quality of life for everyone through:
 - High quality education at every level as the center for rebuilding communities
 - Regional transit, coordinated with opportunities for community development
 - Great parks and other public spaces that serve communities and support flood control
4. Pursue policies that promote a healthy environment and healthy people by:
 - Deciding where to rebuild, investing in protecting these areas, and dedicating remaining areas to natural uses
 - Sustainable approaches to every facet of rebuilding—energy, transit, land use, building design, and other elements
 - Walkable communities that, through their planning and design, promote healthy lifestyles
5. Plan and design communities that advance livability by:
 - Preserving the best of the past as the core for rebuilding while anticipating future needs
 - Mixed-income, mixed-use neighborhoods that foster diversity and social equity
 - Smart growth at an urban, suburban, and rural scale that balances recovery and sustainability

A CONVERSATION WITH AL FILONI: Designing for Teatro Colon

(and staging a major production there, too)

BY TRACY CERTO

Al Filoni, AIA, had the opportunity of a lifetime when he was asked by former Pittsburgh Opera director Tito Capobianco, to propose an addition for the famed and fabulous Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It was the fulfillment of a dream but also had the elements of a nightmare: employee strikes, a controversy on his design, and sudden change in plans of the theater's director that could change everything. And yet while designing the addition, Filoni had yet another chance of a lifetime: to stage a major Wagner production at Teatro Colon, the second largest opera house in the world (after Sydney) located on the widest street in the world (Avenue de Julio). He shares recollections of his experience with *Columns* in this candid conversation.



A Fulbright Scholar who years ago had studied with renowned theater architect Werner Ruhner, Filoni designed both Heinz Hall and Benedum Hall with his firm MacLachlan, Cornelius & Filoni. He is also a member of the International Organization of Theater Architects.

Q: During a trip to Buenos Aires last year I had the good fortune to tour the Teatro Colon which was easily one of the highlights of my trip. It's a fascinating and beautiful place rich with history. How did you get so lucky to get this job?

Isn't it fantastic? Tito Capabianco, who ran our opera, is Argentinean and retired now, worked in the Teatro Colon as a young man. He met his wife who was in ballet. The theater has been in disarray for a number of years in terms of operation. Tito was asked by the government to take over as general and artistic director. The goal was a first-class addition by 2008.

In 2008 the theater will be 100 years old. They wanted to get the operations straightened out and reclaim their position as one of the premiere opera houses in the world. When it opened in 1908 it was on par with Vienna, the Metropolitan Opera and LaScala. They had enough money that whole casts would travel the world and they attracted the best such as Toscanini. Once everyone heard the acoustics they loved to perform there. Acoustics were easily as good as Vienna and La Scala.

What did they want to do?

During presentation the theater stage is raked, a 3% slope quite common in old theaters. With a 67' diameter turntable—underneath the stage is a huge cavity of space; I would say is close to 60 by 60 by 60. They were proposing to close that space in for rehearsal rooms, to make the stage flat and get rid of the turntable since that would alter sightlines. And they were proposing adjusting the rake of the auditorium.

Tito's big concern was #1—acoustics. Plus he saw great value in the turntable, why get rid of it? He called me to be the consultant, so I spent several days there in the theater and gave him my recommendations in the summer of 2004.

And your recommendation?

"Whatever it was going to take, this had to stop." Fortunately they had not started construction. It was difficult to prove scientifically how it would alter acoustics but the huge space is typical and changing the floor of the auditorium seemed dangerous. Other than the functional space they'd gain, I didn't see where it would be a better theater.

Another issue related to all this: the theater was built at the time when scenery was all painted canvas and it has a huge fly house but over the years scenery has become three-dimensional. That theater wasn't designed for easy access for that.

The stage is a full level above the street in order to accommodate all these needs. In the early 70's they built underground on two sides of the theater foundation—three stories of underground space which house huge carpenter shops, scenery shops, wardrobe. The theater employs close to 1300 people.

They provided a very small elevator to try to get that scenery from those shops up to the stage level. The group renovating this (Argentinean architects) proposed three additional elevators. Now they should be 30' by 60' but no elevator they were proposing came anywhere near that. They were maybe 10 x 12.

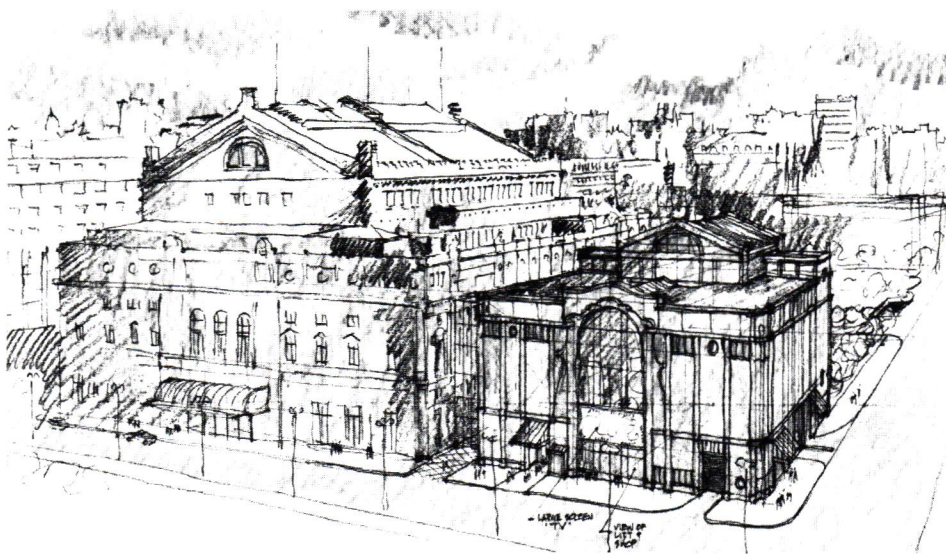
That was why they wanted to get rid of the turntable. It has a 50-foot wide proscenium but the turntable is 67 feet in diameter leaving no extra room. Tito knew this wasn't a solution. Next to the theater is a big open space the entire length of theater almost one block wide. The original plan was for outdoor space but it was never developed. It was this big parking lot.

I came up with idea of taking half of that space and building a new building adjacent to the theater with a huge loading dock area, a lift that could take an entire set up and down from the shops to the stage level. And like theaters in Vienna when these were delivered you could take the truck right to the stage level. Rehearsal rooms are above all that. It's at least 100 by 100 and multiple floors, built on top of these underground shops. It became a huge controversy. There had been a competition to create a park on this land.

Our plan includes half of the land being building and the land on the front street as a park that would be an outdoor theater—I even imagined a huge screen there like our high school (CAPA) and people who couldn't afford to go to the theater could watch on this television screen.

What is the likelihood your plan will be built anytime soon?

A series of strikes occurred and then Tito had some personal problems to attend to so he resigned. Without him there, I don't know if the new building will be pursued by anyone. With the economy of Argentina still failing the strikes are troubling. The exchange rate is now three pesos to a dollar so there have been no raises. They're trying to settle all kinds of issues.



Teatro Colon and the proposed addition.

How did you manage to stage Wagner?

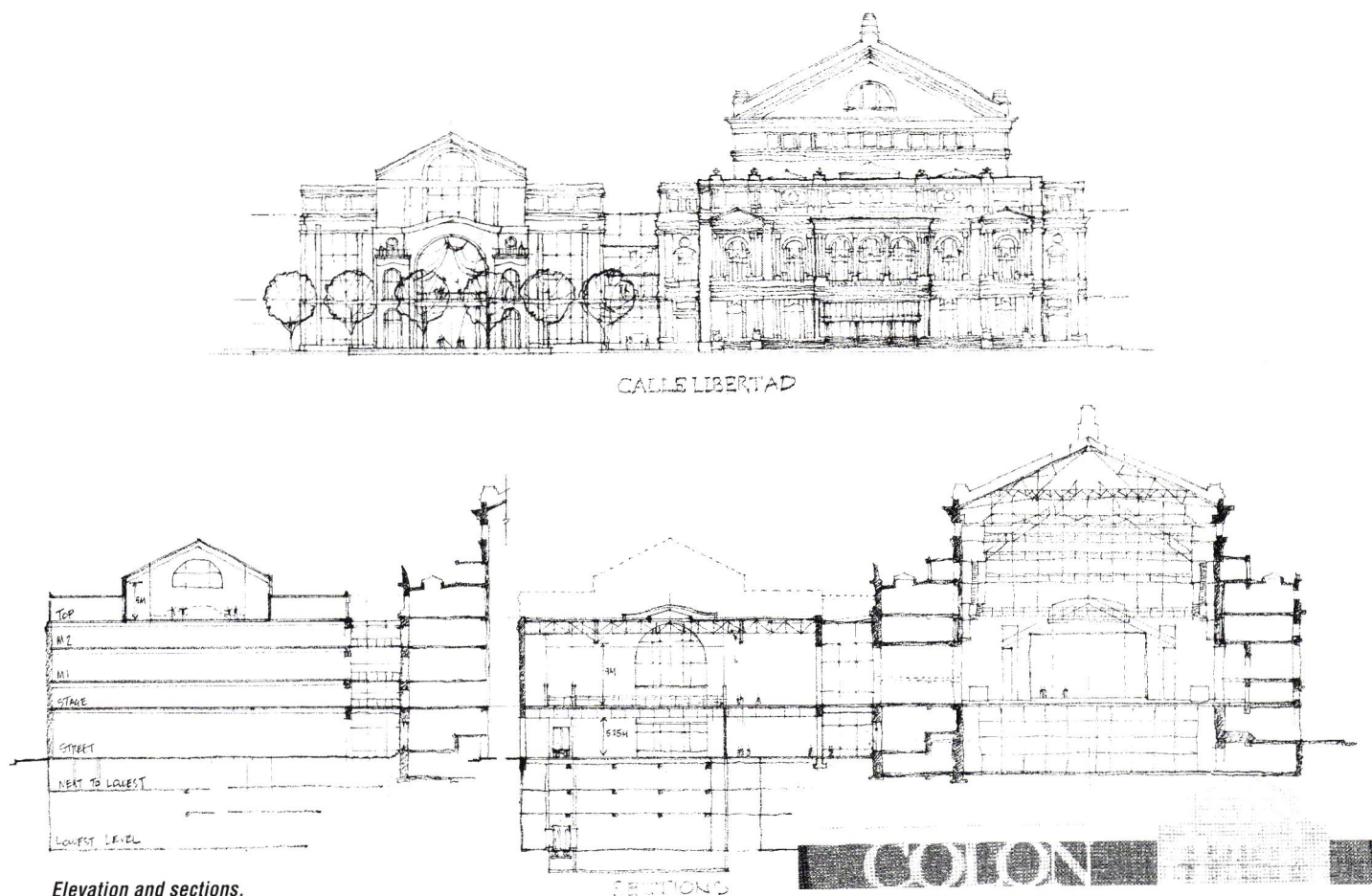
Kay Walker Castaldo asked if we would stage Wagner's *Valkyrie* and we did that at the Colon. I had done a number of operas here in Pittsburgh. I did all the set designs for this. Since I have been a Wagnerite since the late 50's, the chance to stage part of the Ring was a dream come true.

While preparing *Valkyrie* we went through two strikes and opening night was postponed by several nights trying to

make up rehearsals. The conductor was Charles Detoit and oh, we had a fantastic time.

I made up my mind that our production was going to utilize the turntable to prove what an asset it was. We used it in all three acts rotating it to use as part of the drama.

Kay and I were so well prepared for what we wanted to do that we worked so hard and we had a core group that was



Elevation and sections.

so supportive. We were there for a month ahead and went to the theater every morning at 8 and went to every shop.

The strikes took away time from the building. We had to improve and improvise things. But we said, we're going to stage this opera if we have to go out in the park with a piano. It was, thankfully, a huge success. An experience I wouldn't have traded for anything.

What do you love about Teatro Colón?

It's an incredible theater. There are 20,000 shoes in the zapateria. You go in and say, Show us what you have. One huge room after another: collections of swords that go back to the opening of the theater. You could spend a month rummaging through.

If you couldn't find what you wanted they could make it. That's something we don't have in the smaller theaters here—maybe the Met and Chicago and San Francisco but the shops are remote in the last two.

Kay and I designed the costumes many of which were made in one day. There was a coat that was so beautiful we all wanted it. We asked if it was possible if the sleeve of the

coat and the collar could be made of vuitton—the fox—and in 20 minutes someone would show up with 10 samples of fur. Every fabric they wanted was in stock. We wanted Valkyries to have wild hair pieces and there was another room of people who only make wigs!

What was your impression of Buenos Aires?

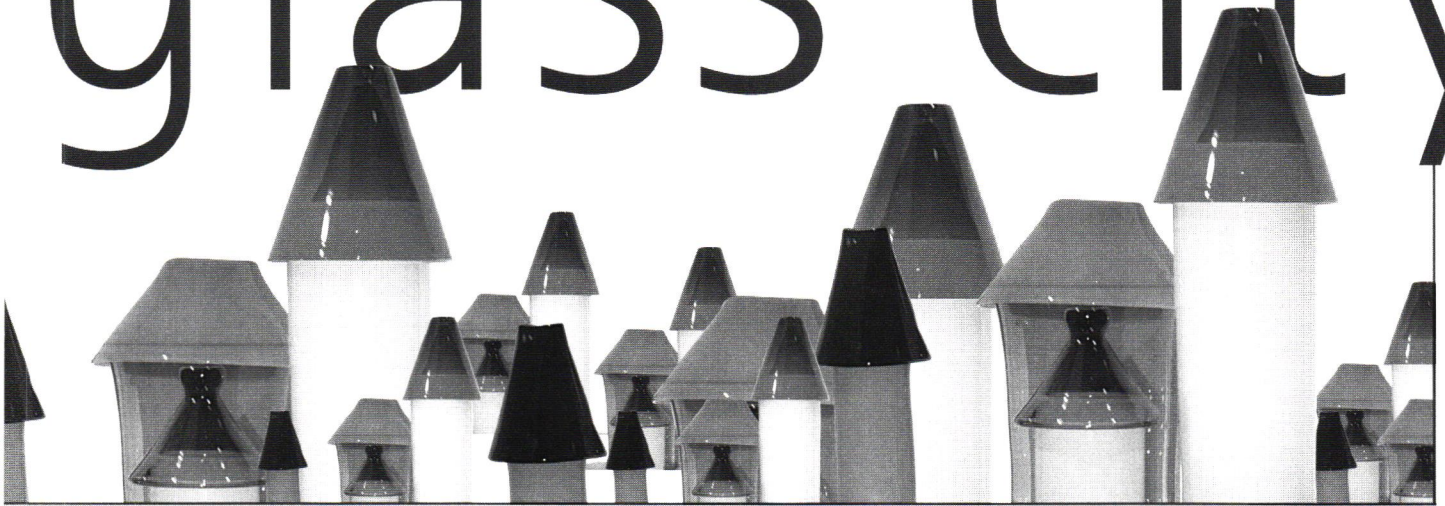
Well, first I don't know a word of Spanish. But it's a spectacular city; I was not prepared for such a cosmopolitan place.

When I took the tour I got to sit in the President's box which was a thrill. What did you think of the theater from an audience?

I sat all over the place. The Top Paradaiso—up there it was like being right on stage. The architects must have visited many theaters and had a sense of what worked and what didn't. The walls are convex in shape which is what we'd want to do today. They help scatter sound effectively. They took the best of what they could to design that theater.



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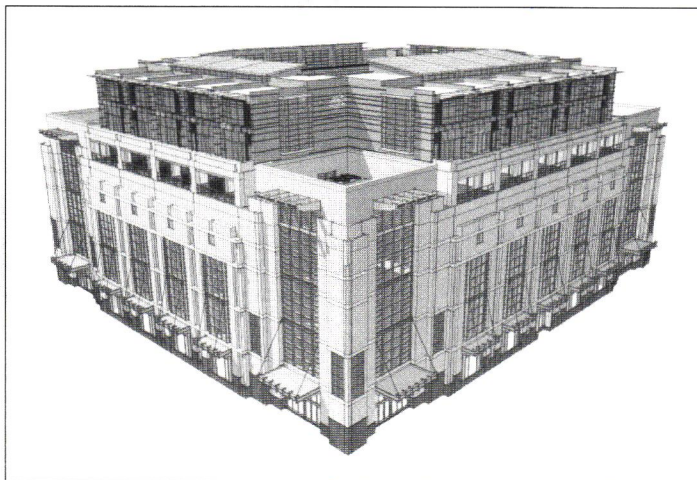
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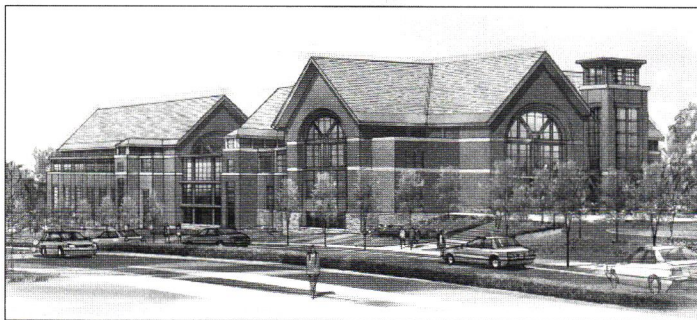
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From the Firms

► **Strada** has been commissioned by Millcraft Investments to design the conversion of the former 265,000 sf Lazarus Department Store and turn it into an exciting mixed-use project. The new Piatt Place (below) will include large Class A retail space, sizable floor plate office space with updated business infrastructure, and residential condominiums including both a variety of single level units as well as 19 rooftop townhouse units overlooking the city and arranged around an interior courtyard. The project is located in the heart of the retail district of downtown Pittsburgh, with a 500 car-parking garage below, and is designed to meet LEED sustainable design certification criteria.



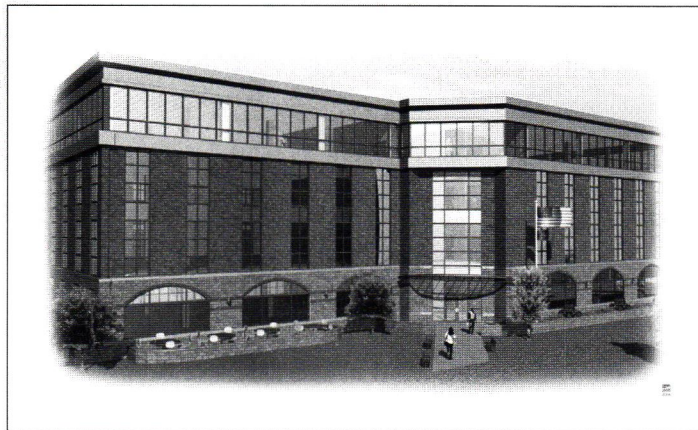
WTW Architects of Pittsburgh, in association with Truex Cullins and Partners of Burlington, VT, is designing the new \$61-million Davis Center (below) for the University of Vermont in Burlington. The Center is being designed to meet LEED standards and is expected to be among the first LEED certified student unions in the nation.



Saint Vincent College officials chose **Davis Gardner Gannon Pope Architecture (dgpp)** for a \$12 million, 40,000 sf building program on the campus which will house The Fred M. Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media and the new Saint Vincent College Conference Center and Exhibition Hall. dgpp was selected through a design competition of regional and national architectural firms.

General Industries of Charleroi, PA has been named the General Contractor on the new Green Energy Office Complex (above, right) in Monessen, PA, designed by **Gerard-Nagar**

Associates. The \$5.9 million dollar project includes a 58,000 sf, four-story class "A" office building located at the Monessen Riverfront Industrial Park.



Duquesne Light selected Massaro Corp. to provide pre-construction and general construction services to complete two new projects designed by **KSBA Architects** on the North Side. The two projects are part of the electric utility's \$500 million investment in the region's electrical infrastructure over the next several years, which is expected to add 150 full-time employees.

Landau Building Company has been awarded a number of contracts recently, including one to construct the National Energy Technology Lab for the U.S. Dept. of Energy, working with the Southwest Butler Family YMCA, and the Harrison County 4-H.

Business Briefs

► **Kelly W. Brown, AIA**, of **Radelet McCarthy Architects** recently became registered as an architect in Pennsylvania.

Edna LaMont, AIA and **Cassandra Renninger, AIA**, both of **Eckles Architecture** have recently completed their NCARB exams. The firm also announces its recent acquisition of Pascoe Engineering Consultants, Inc. with former Pascoe proprietor Chris Miller managing the Eckles HVAC, Plumbing, Fire Protection, and Electrical Engineering Services.

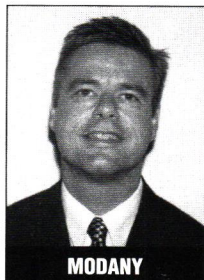


The Board of Directors of the Master Builders' Association (MBA) announced the appointment of Todd Dominick to its board. Mr. Dominick is president of Rycon Construction, Inc., a general contractor headquartered in Pittsburgh's Strip District.

Continental Building Systems announced the recent hire of David Hickenboth as project manager and the promotion of Robert Modany to project executive.



HICKENBOTH



MODANY

Kudos

► The New Student Union at the University of Akron (below) received the National Commercial Builders Council (NCBC) 2006 Grand Award in the Division VI – Type 3 – Institutional Category for its outstanding design. **WTW Architects** of Pittsburgh was the design architect for the project.

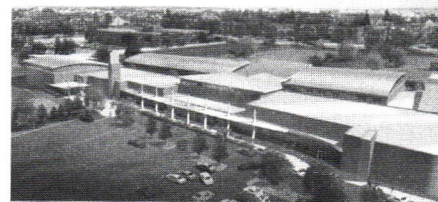


DENMARSH PHOTOGRAPHY

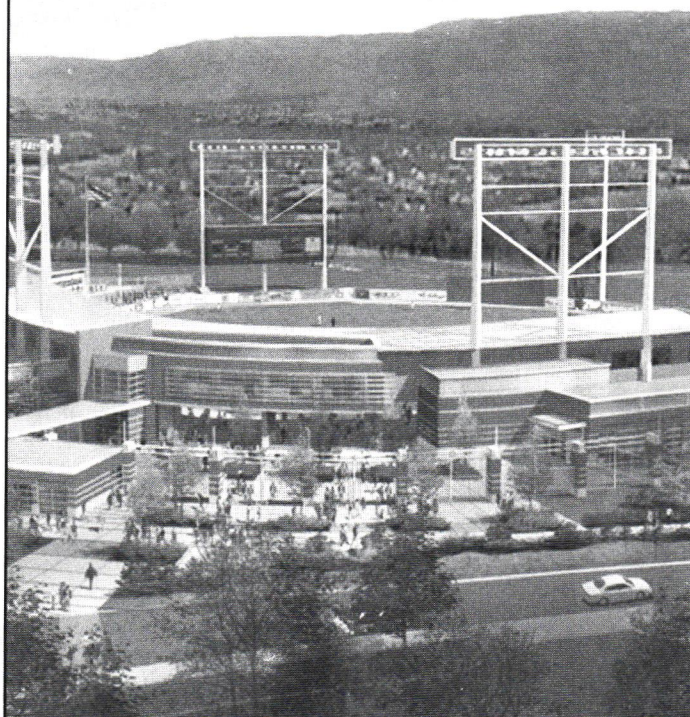
The Carnegie Mellon chapter of the **American Institute of Architecture Students** is happy to announce the election of its current president, **Andrew Caruso, AIAS** to the 2006-2007 National Board of Directors.

The Master Builders' Association honored local construction teams recently at their annual meeting. The Building Excellence Awards were given to member contractors and project teams for exemplary work, with awards going to Mascaro Construction Company, Jendoco Construction Company, and Allegheny Construction Group. See the MBA insert in this issue of *Columns* for complete details.

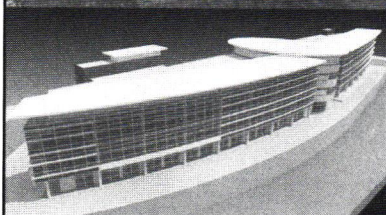
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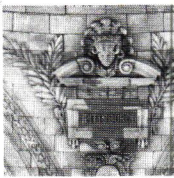
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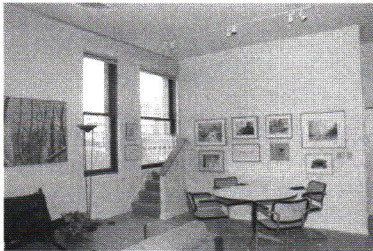
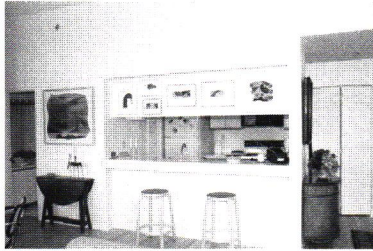
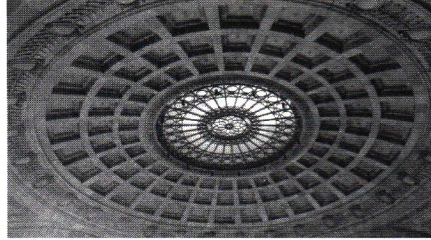
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HABITAT

Don Carter, FAIA and Bea Carter
The Pennsylvanian





When you live maintenance-free in the Pennsylvanian, the elegant and historic building atop the train station downtown, and you work nearby, your life is easier—by a lot, if Don and Bea Carter are indications.

Since moving there in 1997, downtown “has only gotten better every year,” says Don Carter, FAIA of Urban Design Associates. He and his wife, Bea, had wanted to move downtown from their Regent Square house for years. They had searched for a long time and at one point even considered development of a building. Then they saw the two-story apartment in the Pennsylvanian. “We were immediately sold,” said Bea.

They love it for a many reasons: from walking mere minutes to their offices to the sweeping view and spill of daylight from the row of long windows that illuminates their main floor. Not to mention the soaring 13-foot ceilings and conveniences such as offsite storage.

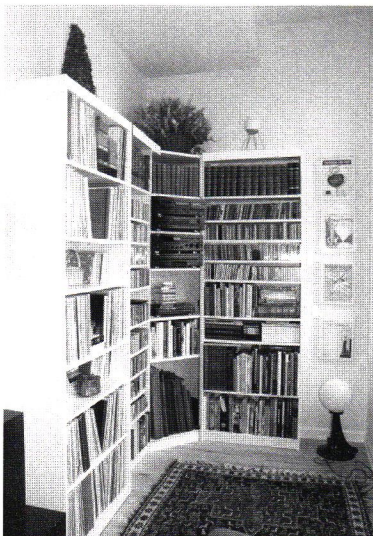
It’s an urban dream of a space.

“We feel like we’re in the middle of things,” says Bea who is the director of Alcoa’s Roy A. Hunt Foundation. During the day they can pop home for lunch, adds Don who enjoys a great view of the Gulf Building, where UDA is located on the 31st floor, from their bedroom and office.

True urbanites, they walk nearly everywhere and when they need to leave downtown, they hail a cab from the nearby Westin. To return home, they take the bus.



A GLIMPSE OF ARCHITECTS AT HOME



When their two grown children, Andrew and Laura, visit from Los Angeles, or others visit, they can stay in the guest suite on the premises. Or in one of the corporate suites. No space issues here.

Four or five times a year there’s a social for all residents under the dramatic and magnificent rotunda of the Pennsylvanian. There they can meet their neighbors, full-time and part-time. Since a number of corporations maintain suites there, they see different people all the time.

They take full advantage of their urban setting by carving out routes for running (Bea) or biking (Don). There’s more time for recreation when they’re not working on maintenance of their house. The management is top-notch they say, and everything is taken care of. If there’s anything they miss from their home ownership days, it’s the front porch. But then they never had much time for porch sitting anyway.

photos & text by tracy certo

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- A Tribute to David Lewis, FAIA
- A Juror's Perspective, by Roxanne Sherbeck, AIA

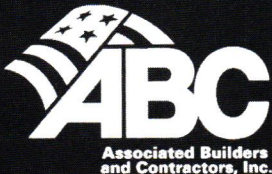
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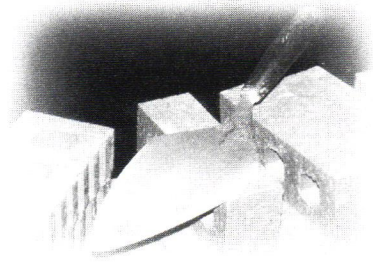
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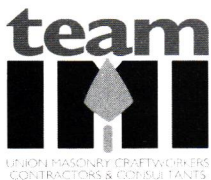
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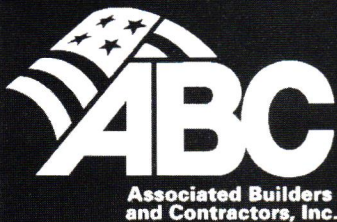
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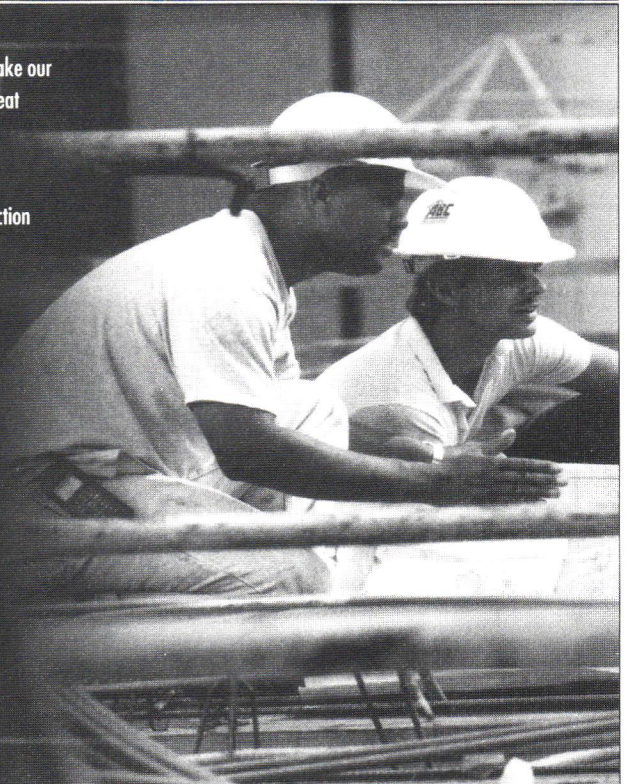
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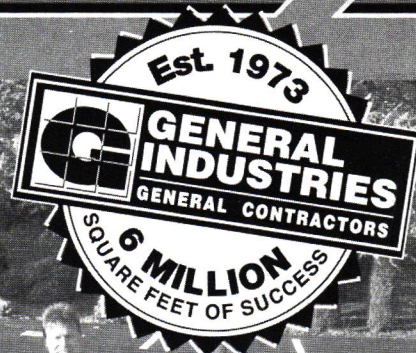
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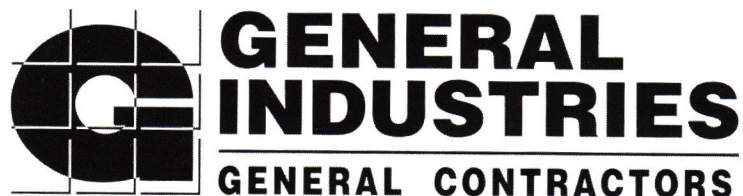


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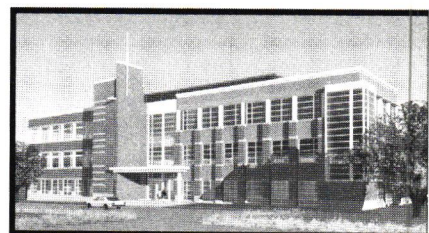
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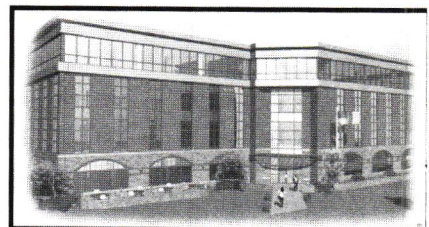
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