

Spring 1992

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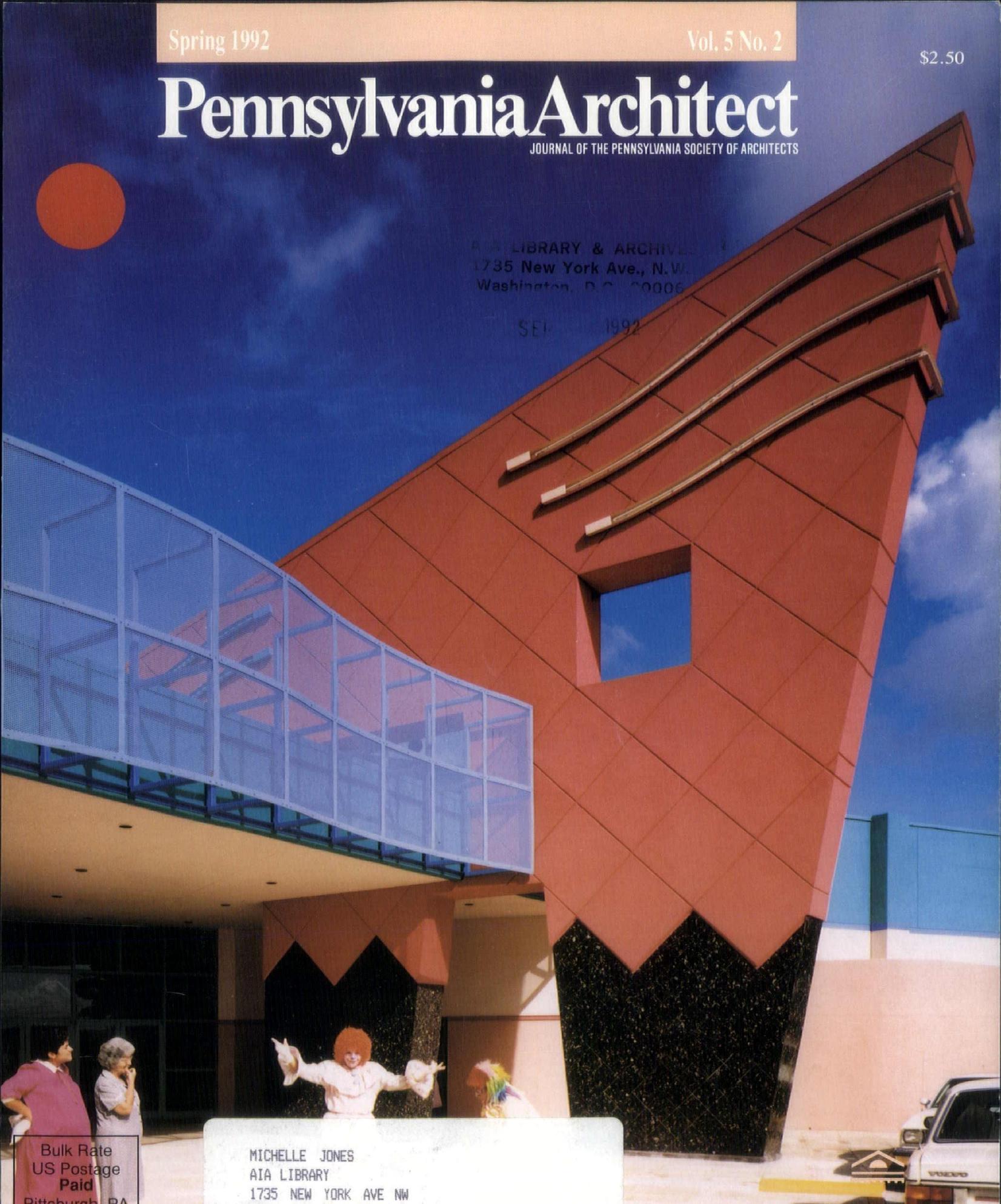
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About the Cover

The renovation of Plaza Carolina, a successful San Juan shopping center, resulted in a more sophisticated and uniquely Puerto Rican environment. The complete story can be found on page 8.

Photography by: Shapiro Petrauskas Gelber

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The Editor's Letter

It was just a regular editorial board meeting in Harrisburg at PSA headquarters. Time for us to look at a group of project submissions and perform the other minutiae that make up our sessions. Now before us appeared an unanticipated article for review and possible inclusion in the upcoming *Pennsylvania Architect* which would be featuring retail facilities. As we passed it around there were few comments; it was mostly quiet. It didn't really fit in this issue, of course. It belonged in one featuring health care facilities. Gradually we sensed that it seemed to be very right that we should indeed publish it in this issue, even though the magazine's focus was on retail spaces. The projects that would be featured are so different, to be stage sets for merchandise. The purpose of store design is to encourage the purchase of an object through manipulation of the shopper in some way.

The article by Beth Sulit about Children's Seashore House, a pediatric rehabilitation hospital in Philadelphia, served to remind us in a powerful way who are our real clients. It is in no way intended to belittle or denigrate the "retail" work we do, but to remind us of our ultimate client: the patient, the shopper, the office worker, the person who actually uses the room. This person does not pay the fee directly, but Diakesha is our real focus, no matter in what guise she appears.

John A. Fatula, A.I.A.
Editor

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Playing Without a Handicap

By: Beth Kephart Sulit

Some time ago, I had the privilege of touring Children's Seashore House, a \$40 million pediatric rehabilitation hospital, in the company of some of the children who call this Philadelphia institution home. I went because I wanted to learn to see architecture through the eyes of the disabled young. What I got instead was an education of the heart.

It is almost winter, yet the sun breaks through the arched roof glass with all the confidence of spring, bleaching the walls and each scarce element between a warmer shade of white. Like a classroom just ahead of the morning bell, the atrium and its ring of rooms are noiseless: anticipatory.

From deep inside the walls, a child cries. An adult gives comfort. Again, the silence comes.

Another quarter hour, and the silence is once more broken—this time by a procession of two young patients and two adult therapists, who move arrhythmically toward a child-sized room. Places are taken, an interview begins, and in the swell of introductions one impression comes more forcefully than any other: the choked-off spirit of the smallest child, whose name, one learns, is Diakesha.

Floating above the two impossibly large disks of her wheeled chair, this chocolate-featured nine-year-old is shadow slim, sustained only, it seems, by the intravenous fluid bottle by her head. Her hands lie limp in her lap, an obligatory bucket pushed to one side. From her waist fall a faded pair of jeans, the right side caught up in a thick knot to close off a newly legless cavity. Her face is neither angry nor self-pitying; rather, it is numb—depleted by the rapidity with which a long-undetected cancer has robbed her of a leg and ripped away the unconcernedness that buoys up the young.

Though she does not choose to speak and is not spoken of, Diakesha remains the true focus of the others in the room. Finally, it is Kristen, the other child, who breaks the spell. "I'm not sure she's up to this," she offers. "She had chemo four days ago, and she's been getting pretty

sick." Diakesha moans as if to say the nausea is coming on. Kristen sways forward, and strokes the tiny hand.

The interview's sorting through of pasts and preferences continues on, the focus now shifting to Kristen, whose small voice is mapping out the outlines of her day. Up at 7:30, breakfast in bed, a bath. 9:30: physical therapy. A quiet pause. Group lunch, then 1 1/2 hours of semi-private school lessons. Later, the great extracurriculars: arts and crafts, stress management games, picnics, field trips. For dinner, Supper Club—the invasion of the downstairs "adult" cafeteria or the production of a group-made meal in the occupational-therapy kitchen. Afterwards, a visit from family—Kristen's mother, her twin sister, her older sister—who come loaded down with school lessons, home food, a piece of news. And then the nights, the final settling in, the words between roommates, the thoughts pressed against the window glass, against a world in which "normal," ultimately, is defined in a way Kristen is not.

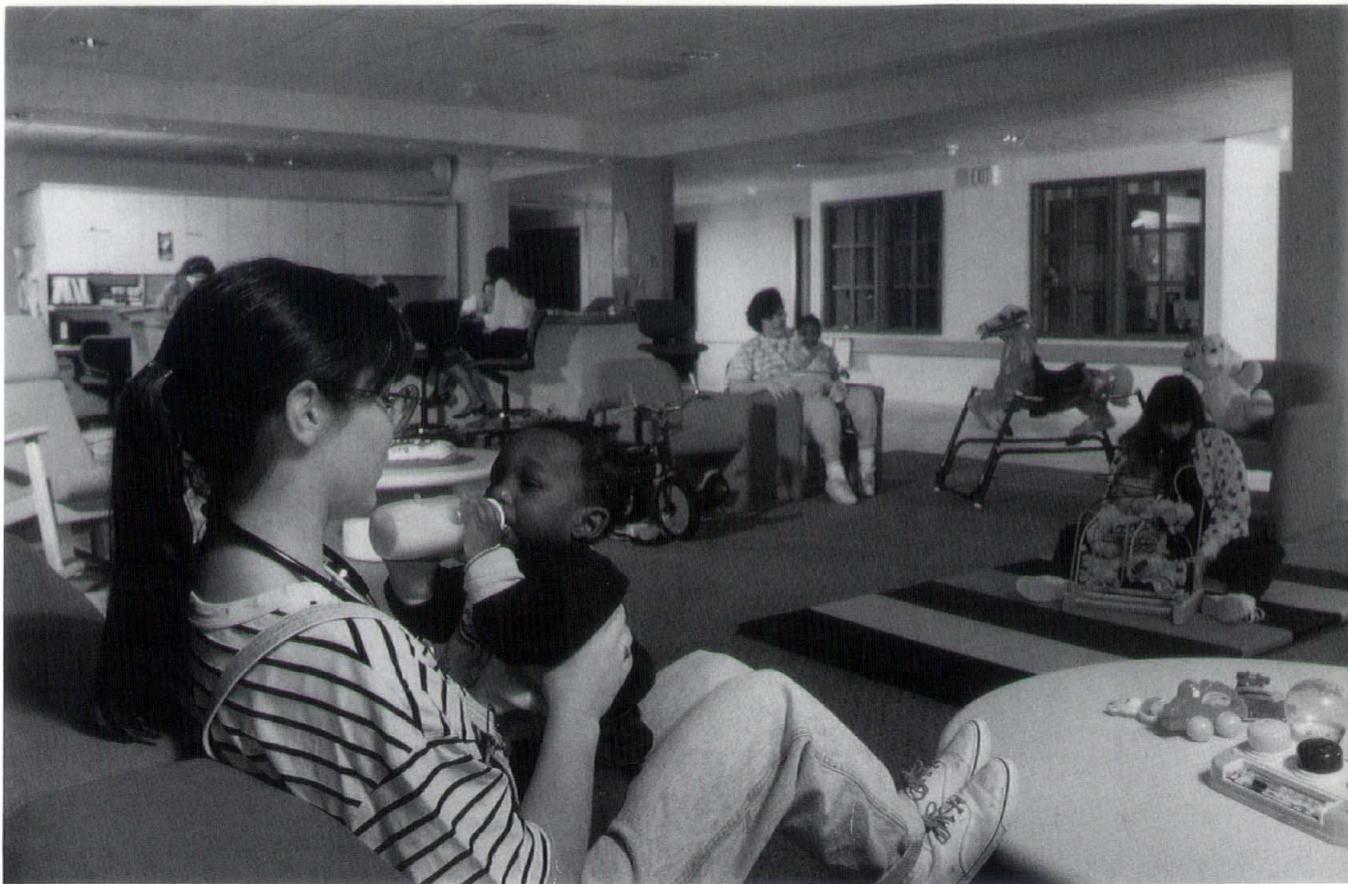
It is only much later that the real business of the day is initiated: a child-guided tour through the \$40 million Children's Seashore House, this place that Diakesha, Kristen and close to sixty other children are currently calling home. One of less than ten pediatric rehabilitation hospitals of its kind in the nation, the facility is significant not only in the medical community, where it is recognized for its groundbreaking research in such areas as feeding anomalies and biobehavioral disorders, but because it represents a dramatic break in tradition for the institution itself, whose inpatient unit spent its first 118 years by the

Atlantic City sea before relocating to the Philadelphia Center for Health Care Sciences in 1990.

Designed to give children a better-than-even shot at beating their disabilities, Children's Seashore House caters to those between the ages of one month and 18 years whose

immediate medical needs have been accommodated, and who now require comprehensive therapy. At times, Children's Seashore House patients also require the attention of physicians outside its immediate bounds, and when this happens, its neighbors—The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Hospital of University of Pennsylvania, and University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine—are there to provide support. Within the great variety of cases and programs that arise at Children's Seashore House, there is this constant: "handicap"—both the word and the disabling concept—never surfaces. A fundamental belief that the embrace of a loving staff and a homelike environment are essential to the healing process always does.

But, beyond the architecture, the philosophy, and the availability of medical resources and know-how, Children's Seashore House offers something even more profound to those whose life course has brought them here: a place of community. Membership to this elite club extracts



one of the highest prices a person can pay—the lonely waging of war against spina bifida, cerebral palsy, head trauma, cancer, premature birth, a broken body, biobehavioral disorders, the unwanted gift of addiction from a crack- or cocaine-dependent mother. Once inside, however, Children's Seashore House patients find a degree of mutual respect and civility only rarely experienced in the outside world. Much of this social structure, it is true, is defined for the children by the institution. Still, it is the children who make the construct work—the disabled who seek out a personal niche, mold the resources to their needs, and empower themselves and their peers with the will to carry on.

Kristen's tour of the third floor begins, Diakesha having slipped back into her room for rest. She does not, as an adult might, start with a description of the third floor's clinical design, which features a neurorehabilitation unit, a biobehavioral unit, and a

In addition to addressing the special medical and rehabilitative needs of a child, Children's Seashore House is designed to provide a nurturing environment sensitive to the child's well-being. Patient rooms are grouped around open multi-purpose living rooms where many daily activities such as eating, play and therapy can take place in a home-like setting.

medical/surgical rehabilitation unit. She does not point out that the ventilator-dependent children are situated one floor above. Instead, Kristen starts with a gesture to something far more immediate, and in her mind, more important: the subdued checkerboard pattern on the floor. "I use the floor to help me learn how to walk," she says as she lifts her brand new Jordache up and over a color block.

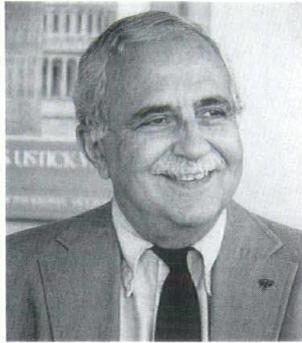
It's not that Kristen is learning to walk, so much that she is relearning what only eight months ago was as natural as giggling and boy talk. It was then that this pretty 13-year-old came down with what she so matter-of-factly refers to as RSD, or Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy, in the language of her doctors. This

continues on page 26

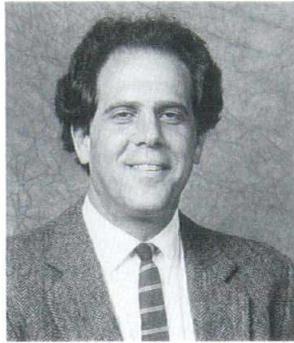
Three New Fellows from Pennsylvania



James Oleg Kruhly, FAIA



Herbert W. Levy, FAIA



Donald Marc Prowler, FAIA

Three PSA members—James Oleg Kruhly, Herbert W. Levy and Donald Mark Prowler—have been made Fellows of the American Institute of Architects. They will be presented with their medals on June 20th during the AIA national convention in Boston.

A total of 123 members were selected this year for Fellowship status by the College of Fellows.

James Oleg Kruhly was awarded Fellowship status for promoting “the aesthetic, scientific and practical efficiency of the profession.” His projects have been widely recognized for their contributions to design. He has been awarded the Gold Medal of the Philadelphia Chapter of the AIA, the Design Award of the Pennsylvania Society of Architects, and the National Trust’s Great American Homes Award.

Kruhly’s design contributions have been recognized in publication of his work in *Architectural Record*, *Faith and Form* and *Preservation News*. He was the first recipient of the Philadelphia Chapter’s AIA Young Architect Award. In addition, he has influenced design in the profession by teaching architecture students at Drexel University, Temple University

and the Graduate School of Fine Arts of the University of Pennsylvania.

Herbert W. Levy, an AIA member for over thirty years, has sought to bring credit to the Institute and the profession through service to the component structure, and involvement with the public sector and historic preservation. His Fellowship was awarded for coordinating the “building industry and the profession of architecture.” Serving on an advisory group, he helped re-establish a long-lapsed AIA/White House relationship. Now Pennsylvania’s Regional Director, he serves as commissioner of the Committee on Historic Resources where he previously spent seven years as an appointed member.

While a director of the Pennsylvania Society of Architects, he founded the *Pennsylvania Architect* magazine and served as its first editor. As PSA president, he established a R/UDAT-type program with the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs providing services to financially depressed communities. Under his direction, the Society published a student guide, *The Five Schools of Architecture in Pennsylvania*.

Donald Marc Prowler was recognized with Fellowship for advancing “the science and art of planning and building by advancing the standards of architectural education, training and practice.” He is a member of the faculties of the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University, where he teaches building climatology and natural energy systems. In 1983, he won a *Progressive Architecture* award for his work on energy curriculum development for architecture schools.

Mr. Prowler writes extensively on many aspects of architecture. He is the author of the book *Modest Mansions*, which examines residential design principles for a general audience. His critical pieces appear regularly in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Metropolis* and *Progressive Architecture*, for which Mr. Prowler is a regional correspondent.

As a practicing architect, Don Prowler has won design awards from the Pennsylvania Society of Architects and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In 1982, as part of a team, he was awarded first place in the Monroeville Civic Center national design competition.

MPB Architects Receives Award

MPB Architects is pleased to announce that it has received a 1991 Award for Healthcare Facilities Design from Modern Healthcare and the American Institute of Architects for the Thomas Jefferson University Hospital Emergency and Trauma Center, Philadelphia, PA.

The Award was presented to Clarke Van Sant, AIA, a partner with

the firm, on November 1, 1991, in ceremonies in San Antonio, Texas. Mr. Van Sant was the partner-in-charge and Andre Zlotnicki, AIA was the project designer.

Two New Postcard Books Published by The Preservation Press

The Preservation Press of the National Trust for Historic Preservation brings back the whimsical architecture of roadside diners and motels with the publication of *Curious Architecture: Views from America's Past*. Previous collections, each containing 24 full-color postcards, are *Ducks and Diners*, featuring fanciful roadside architecture; *Picture Palaces*, featuring interiors and exteriors of movie palaces in their heyday; *Mostly Moderne*, featuring Art Deco and Moderne storefronts; *Built to Amuse*, featuring amusement parks; and *Down by the Seaside*, featuring seaside resorts in the 19th century. All postcards come from the Curt Teich Postcard Archives of the Lake County (IL) Museum.

Of the 20 postcards included in *Curious Architecture*, 12 no longer exist, leaving these postcards as the only visible documentaion of their existence.

Frank Lloyd Wright was one of the most famous and prolific architects in America. During his career he worked on more than 1,100 projects. While most of his commissions resulted in drawings, more than 500 structures were built, and among those, one-quarter were residential. The collection of designs included in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Domestic Architecture and*

Objects spans Wright's residential work from 1889 to 1950 and includes his home and studio. Also part of this volume are his collectible remnants, including tables, chairs, and art glass from the demolished Joseph W. Husser House.

Individual copies of *Curious Architecture and Frank Lloyd Wright: Domestic Architecture and Objects* can be ordered directly from the

Preservation Press, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036; 202/673-4058 or 1-800/766-6847 for \$7.95 each plus \$4.00 shipping and handling.

Reviewers, librarians, booksellers, and educators wanting additional information should contact: Margaret Gore, Marketing Manager, 202/673-4066 or FAX 202/673-4172. □

In the article entitled "Mercyhurst Road Rally" that appeared in the winter 1992 issue of the *Pennsylvania Architect*, Mr. Dave Arney's name was inadvertently omitted from the list of Erie Architects who served as monitors for the rally. The editors apologize for this oversight.

Architectural and
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Plaza Carolina

Location: San Juan, Puerto Rico

Architect: Shapiro Petruskas Gelber

Contractor: Bird Construction Co., Inc.

Plaza Carolina is a successful San Juan shopping center located in a growing middle class township well to the southeast of the historic center. The regional mall includes three major department stores, a large food court, 120 mall shops, public utility and medical offices. Although the mall was economically successful and well patronized by the immediate community, the new management team decided that a renovation was necessary to realize the full potential of the project.

The goals of the renovation were to increase shopping visits by the more sophisticated shopper moving into the region, to capture a portion of the nearby hotel tourist market, to improve the tenant mix with stateside tenants previously reluctant to commit to Puerto Rico, to demonstrate the new management's commitment to Plaza Carolina and Puerto Rico and to attract new tenants to the contemplated expansion of the center.

A new design which created a more sophisticated and uniquely Puerto Rican environment allowed the project to attain these goals. Regular and new mall shoppers feel the mall was redesigned specifically for them. Tourist spending has increased and an additional stateside department store has agreed to add a store in an expansion now under design.

The theme of the Plaza Carolina Renovation is the life and land of Puerto Rico itself. The original mall, a dark box with no skylighting and ill-conceived entries, could have been built anywhere—Topeka, Buffalo, Knoxville—and identical buildings were. The renovation theme places Plaza Carolina where it should be—a vibrant part of Puerto Rico.

The design expresses the beauty and excitement of the island's natural environment, its cultural and leisure activities, and the enduring quality of life as a fiesta. The facade colors reflect the tropical environment: bone, aqua, bright blue and coral symbolize the sand, sea and sunsets of Puerto Rico. The slashing diagonals of the entries rising above the roof line represent the sailing ships of old and help locate the entries from surrounding highways. The creative use of colorful, wavy



and decorative neon and of punched metal set a lively yet sophisticated fiesta atmosphere. Ceramic tile patterns on the floors, palms in planters and the fountain recall the beautiful shaded outdoor courtyards of traditional San Juan retail buildings. The skylights' natural light playing across the trellis shades and onto the floor is especially striking in a building which had no natural light.

Puerto Rico is an island economy that includes a large local craftsman labor force along with high costs on imported materials. The design has included as much locally made material and local craftsmanship as possible. The new railings recall the wrought iron of old San Juan. The design theme is carried through all of the signage and graphics, including the parking lot entry signs and security towers, and into the Bougainvillea of the new mall logo.



Within an extraordinarily limited budget and the need to appeal to the center's traditional working class shopper while attracting the upper class tourist, Plaza Carolina's new image can only be in Puerto Rico. The success of the new design has just been recognized by a prestigious industry design award and, more importantly, by the very positive response from the center's shoppers and neighbors. □

*Electrical Engineer: Leonardo J. Vidal, P.E.
Structural Engineer: Severud Associates
Photography: Shapiro Petruskas Gelber*

Burgunder Dodge

Location: Bridgeville, PA

Architect: Ewing-Rubin Architects

Contractor: B&B Contractors and Developers, Inc.

The Burgunder automobile dealership was designed to fit into its long and narrow site which is located at the intersection of Interstate 79 and Route 50 in Bridgeville, PA, near Pittsburgh. The site is next to Chartiers Creek with a sewage line running down the middle of it. The building was designed to function as a giant advertisement for the dealership. The graphics, color and diagonal lines of its highly visible facade grab the attention of the high-speed traffic as it passes by.

Factors that contribute to the forming of the building's shape were: the main sewer line in the middle of the site, the flood plane of Chartiers Creek, the zoning set back lines and a highway ramp.

The flying buttresses visually anchor the building to the site, expand its size and help direct the users of the building to the various entrances. The round towers serve as storage areas and angled columns in

the showroom support a sloped roof which shades the glass areas below. The Dodge corporate colors inspired the colors used on the building, from the "Dodge Red" metal panels to the grey, white and red striping of the split-face concrete masonry units.

The proof of the effectiveness of a commercial building is determined by the fulfillment of its function. The function of Burgunder Dodge is the selling of automobiles and trucks. The owner, Albert Burgunder, reports that since December 1989 when he moved into this building, which is directly across the street from his old facility, his sales have greatly increased. □

*Structural Engineer: Watson Engineers
Mechanical Engineer: Claitman Engineers
Electrical Engineer: Engineering Solutions
Photography: Rocky Raco*



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The Food Gallery

Location: Peters Township, Pittsburgh, PA

Architect: Johnson/Schmidt and Associates

Contractor: Jeffco Construction Company

The Food Gallery is an upscale emporium designed to cater to the sophisticated consumer in the Peters Township area of Pittsburgh, PA, offering prepared gourmet dishes like Beef Wellington and some 70 others. It reflects the changing tastes of modern day food shoppers.

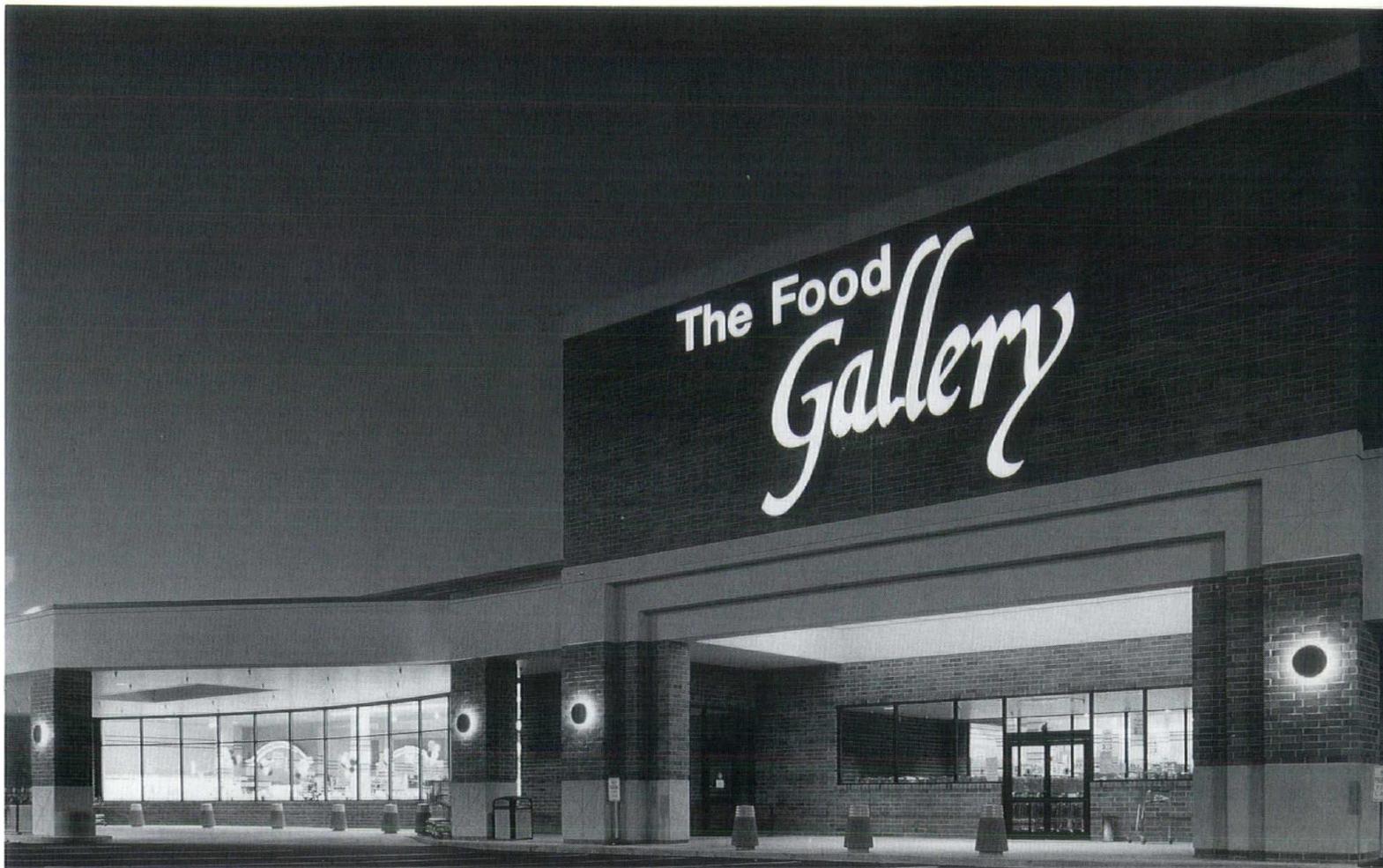
The exterior features a 35-foot-high brick arch which initiates an axis visually linking the exterior directly to the store's canopied entranceway. This 45,000-square-foot structure contains myriad specialty items. Upon entering the store the customer is ushered through spacious aisles by a series of arches accented with neon tube lights.

Centrally nestled within the store is a 50-foot-wide, brick-paved "Market Street" complete with trees, Victorian-style street lamps and streamlined European cases. Paramount to the design, Market Street emulates an open European marketplace with specialty shops lining a central access. The customer is presented with a floral department, confectionery counter, gourmet coffee shop, bakery and "The Grill," a quick-service restaurant with a fifteen-item menu. Each specialty area was designed to be unique, yet create a conceptual neighborhood reminiscent of traditional market shopping.

continues







The rest of the store boasts other design elements such as vaulted skylights, neon signage, ceramic tile and painted wood millwork.

A subtle color scheme of tans (tone on tone) creates a neutral backdrop for the store's product. Claret red accents were selected to highlight the design and were used throughout the store in signage, tile work, wood trim and grocery cases. □

Structural Engineer: Brace Engineering
Mechanical Engineer: Claitman Engineering
Electrical Engineer: Starr Electric
Photographers: Dave Aschkenas and Richard Golumb



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The Cherry Hill Mall

Location: Cherry Hill, New Jersey

Architect: Dagit-Saylor Architects

Contractor: R. H. Shoemaker, Inc.

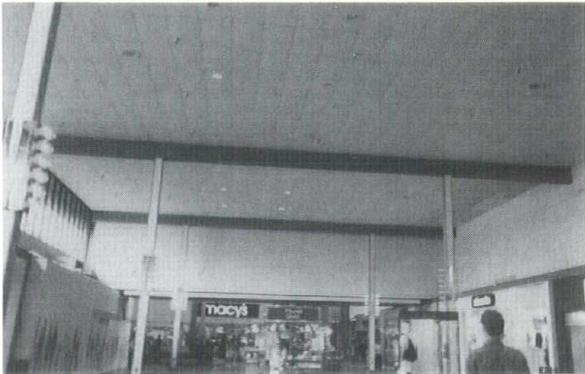
The Cherry Hill Mall is one of America's earliest examples of a shopping mall. It was developed by The Rouse Company and

Strawbridge and Clothier in 1961 and designed by Victor Gruen with the simple goal of presenting shoppers a choice of stores in an enclosed, climate-controlled environment. More recently, while the enclosure had plenty of skylights and other pleasant amenities that had resulted from three expansions and a number of

renovations, the street lacked both the sparkle of newness and the consistency of design it once had.

The architect studied the streetscape with the idea of developing a variety of places with a consistent architectural language. Much like designing a large urban park, the elements of the language are lighting fixtures, paving, planting, street furniture, kiosks, stairs and fountains. The client wanted even more skylights to enhance the urban street-like character of the public spaces. By using light fixtures and

continues



Before construction







Before construction

modulating the daylight with ribbons of perforated metal barrel vaults below the skylights, the street was transformed into a sophisticated urban environment. Additionally, a "kit of parts" incorporating lighting, signs, and metal and marble detailing served needed functions for concourse areas throughout the center. While activating the concourse areas, these features, along with extensive finish upgrades, carry through a consistent design theme.

The result of Cherry Hill's extensive renovation was the creation of a dignified, elegant ambiance for upscale shoppers and retailers alike and the renewing of the mall as the premier regional center in the greater Philadelphia area. □

Structural Engineer: Nick Kamariotis, Kamariotis + Associates

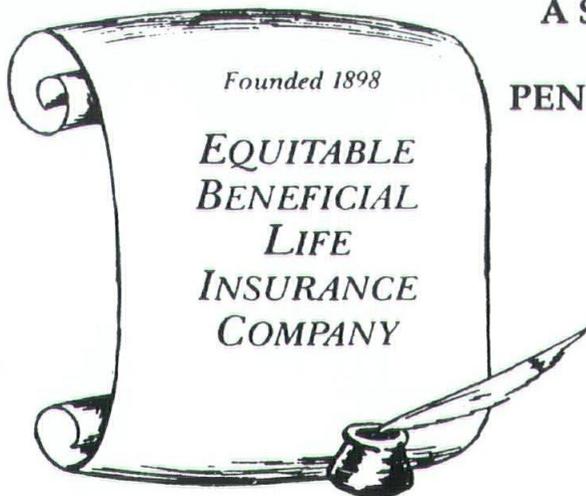
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Electrical Engineer: Harold Coehn & Associates

Photography: Tom Crane

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Ardmore Farmers Market

Location: Ardmore, PA

Architect: Stephen Varenhorst Architects in Association with
Hugh Boyd Architect

Contractor: Belgrade Construction

The Ardmore Farmers Market consists of 16 individual food stalls operated by Amish and Mennonite families as well as a variety of independent food merchants. Constructed ten years ago within a 1930s Art Deco movie theater, the Market was modeled after the traditional farmers markets of Eastern Pennsylvania. The overall image was one of a single, open-market space with a series of matching, painted, white wood stalls.

The Ardmore Market has proved so successful that the original finishes and fixtures could not be adequately maintained and cleaned. Proper storage was nonexistent and the local

health department was threatening to close the Market. While there was a great need for an upgrade, it was equally important to maintain the vitality and character of the Market. A large number of workshops were conducted with the individual merchants, particularly the Amish, to arrive at a design that they felt comfortable with and would be traditionally acceptable.

With these concerns in mind, a new system of modular, stainless steel, front and back counters were designed to be easily movable for cleaning and flexible enough so that they could take a variety of sneeze guards and display step

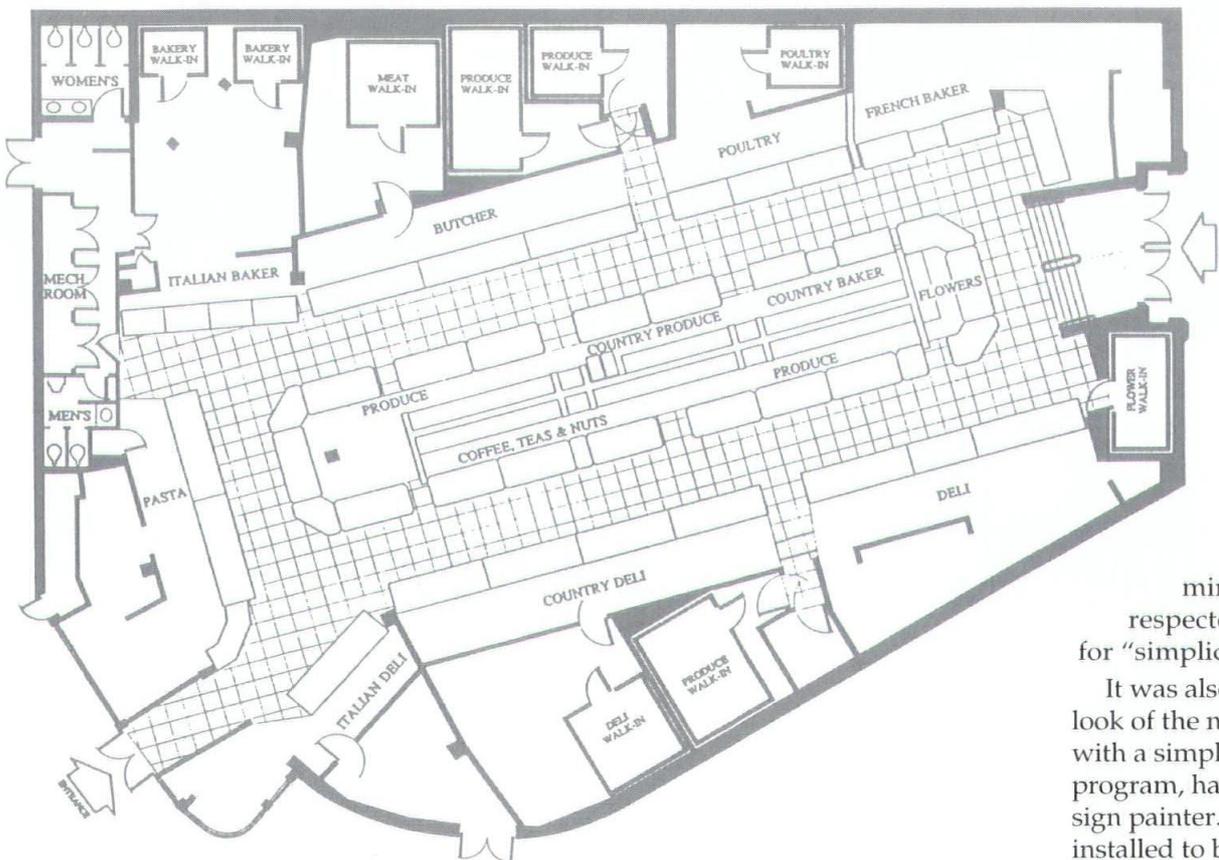
configurations. Patterns of old plough seats were used to derive the design for the perforated and embossed counter skirts.

A center spine wall was built containing water and electrical raceways to the individual stalls so that the tenants' constantly changing requirements could be accommodated.

The center wall's white tile design, with minimal accents, has

respected the Amish's preference for "simplicity."

It was also necessary to soften the look of the new stainless steel fixtures with a simple, painted wood signage program, hand lettered by an Amish sign painter. New lighting was also installed to better accent the displays. □





Mechanical Engineer: Bruce E. Brooks & Associates
 Electrical Engineer: Mulhern Associates
 Photographer: Tom Bernard



Eastern Pennsylvania Chapter Awards



Architect:
Synergetics Architects
Reading, PA

Project:
Front & Washington Parking
Deck and Pedestrian Walkway
Reading, PA



Architect:
Dresden Architects Ltd.
Easton, PA

Project:
Dave Phillips Music &
Sound Addition & Renovation
Phillipsburg, NJ



Architect:
R.K.R. Hess Associates
East Stroudsburg, PA

Project:
Ross Residence
Stroudsburg, PA

Architect:
Schoonover, Strunk & Vanderhoof
Architects
East Stroudsburg, PA

Project:
Children's Playhouse
East Stroudsburg, PA



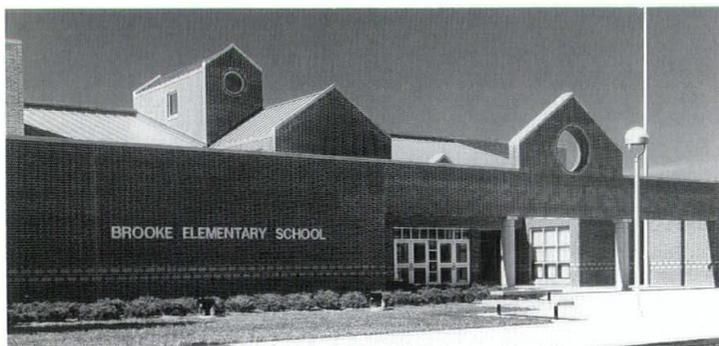
Architect:
Spillman Farmer
Shoemaker
Pell Whildin, P.C.
Bethlehem, PA

Project:
Murray H. Goodman
Stadium,
Lehigh University
Bethlehem, PA

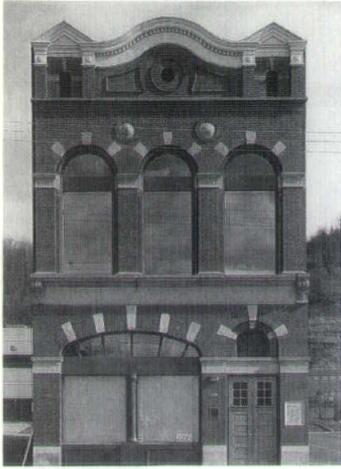


Architect:
The Architectural Studio
Allentown, PA

Project:
Brooke Elementary School for Spring-Ford Area School
District
Montgomery County, PA



Pittsburgh Chapter Awards



1991 Honor Award

Architect:
IAS/Integrated
Architectural Service
Pittsburgh, PA

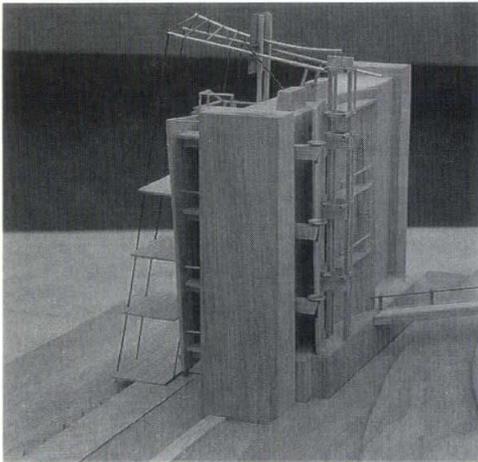
Project:
No. 7 Fire Station
Pittsburgh, PA



1991 Honor Award

Architect:
UDA Architects
Pittsburgh, PA

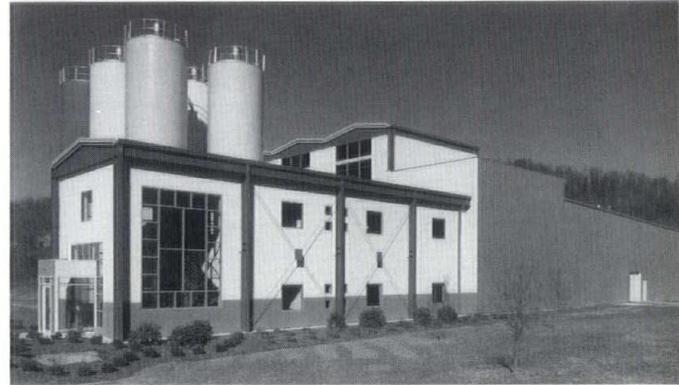
Project:
House & House
Fronts for
Randolph
Neighborhood
Richmond, VA



1991 Honor Award

Architect:
Kingsland Scott Bauer
Havekotte
Pittsburgh, PA

Project:
Winfield Corporation
Clarksburg, WV



1991 Open Plan Award

Architect:
Bruce Lindsey Paul Rosenblatt
Associates
Pittsburgh, PA

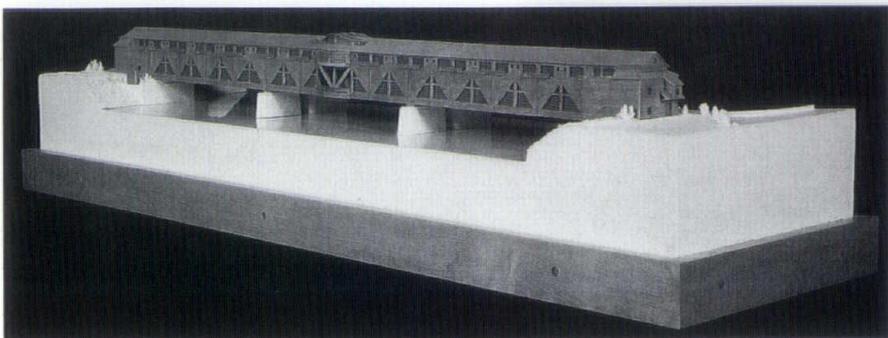
Project:
Piers Project, Pittsburgh's Three Rivers
Pittsburgh, PA



1991 Open Plan Award

Architect:
Michael Graybrook, Architect
Pittsburgh, PA

Project:
Tanto, Inc.
Sardis, PA



1991 Open Plan Award

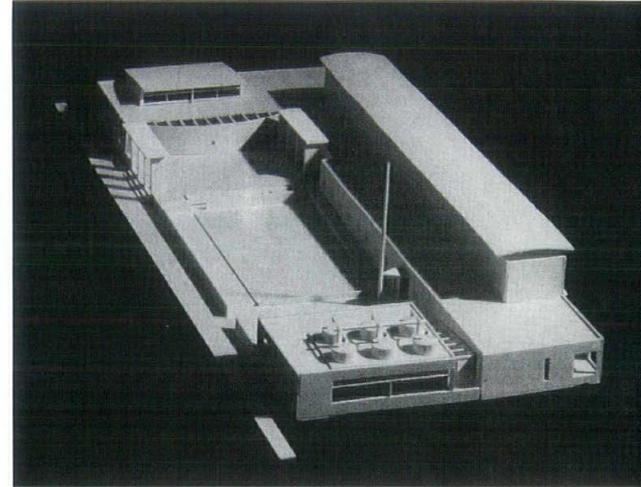
Architect:
McCormick McCarthy
Pittsburgh, PA

Project:
Foxburg Bridge
Foxburg, PA

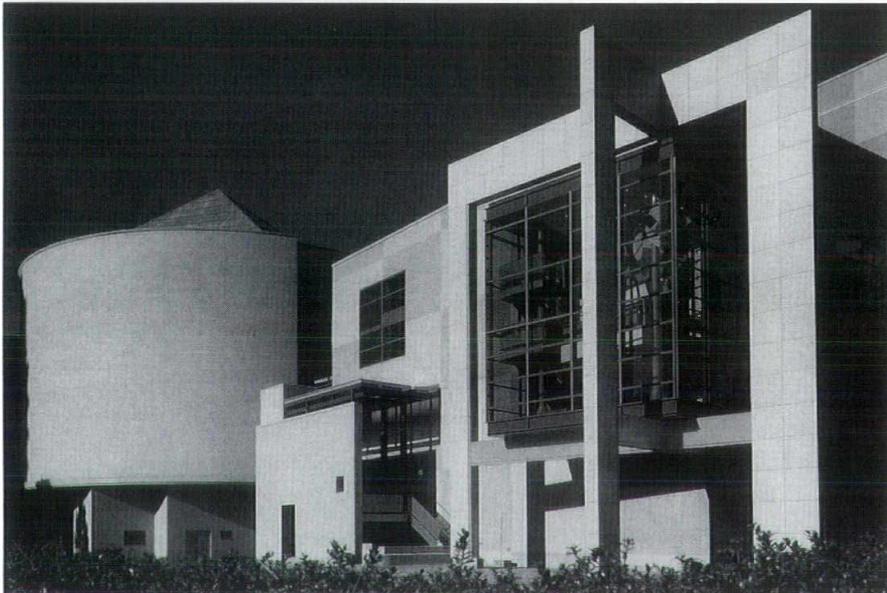
Philadelphia Chapter Awards



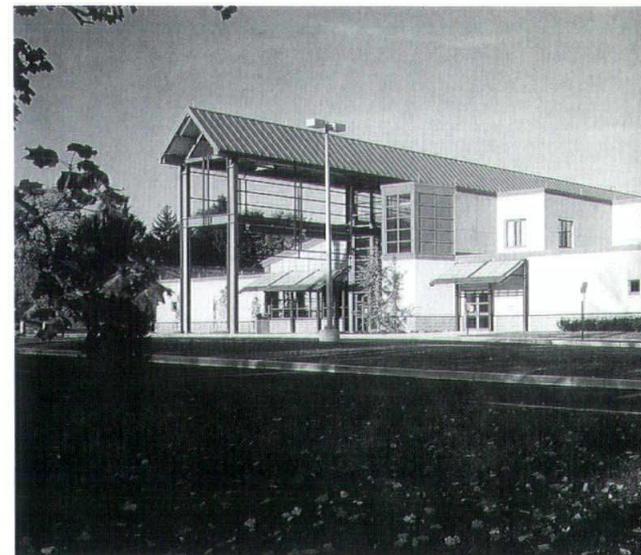
Architect:
Michael E. Peters, AIA
Philadelphia, PA
Project:
Renovations to Jamey's Enoteca
Philadelphia, PA



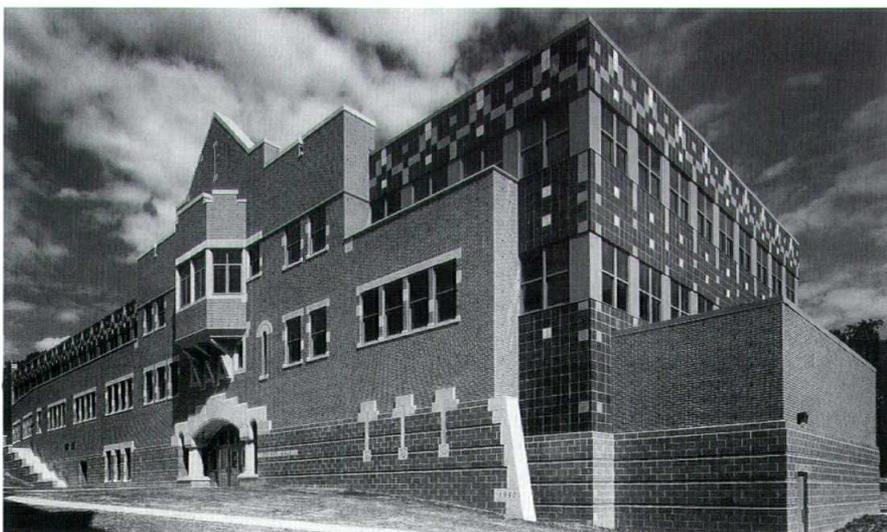
Architect:
Spangler Semler Schlenker Architects
Philadelphia, PA
Project:
Matteson Public Library
Matteson, IL



Architect:
Geddes Brecher Qualls Cunningham
Philadelphia, PA
Project:
The Franklin Institute
Futures Center
Philadelphia, PA



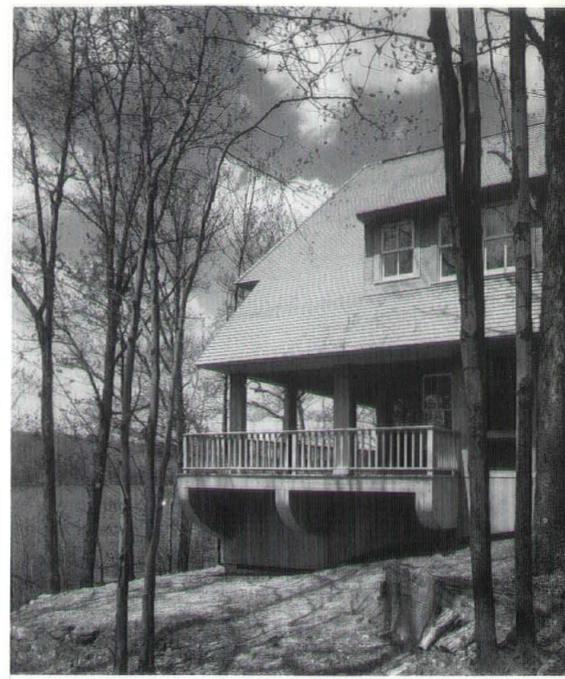
Architect:
FRIDAY Architects/Planners Inc.
Philadelphia, PA
Project:
John Miller Dickey Hall, Lincoln University
Lincoln University, PA





Architect:
Agoos/Lovera Architects
Philadelphia, PA

Project:
Architect's Own Offices
Philadelphia, PA



Architect:
Steinberg and Schade Architects
Philadelphia, PA

Project:
Steinberg House
Lords Valley, PA



Architect:
Bohlin Cywinski Jackson
Wilkes-Barre/Pittsburgh/
Philadelphia, PA

Project:
Bucks County Library Center
Doylestown, PA

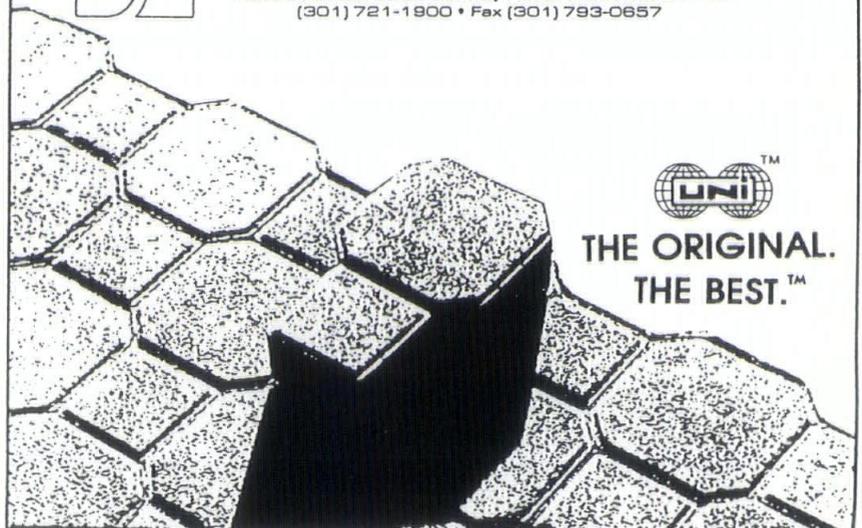
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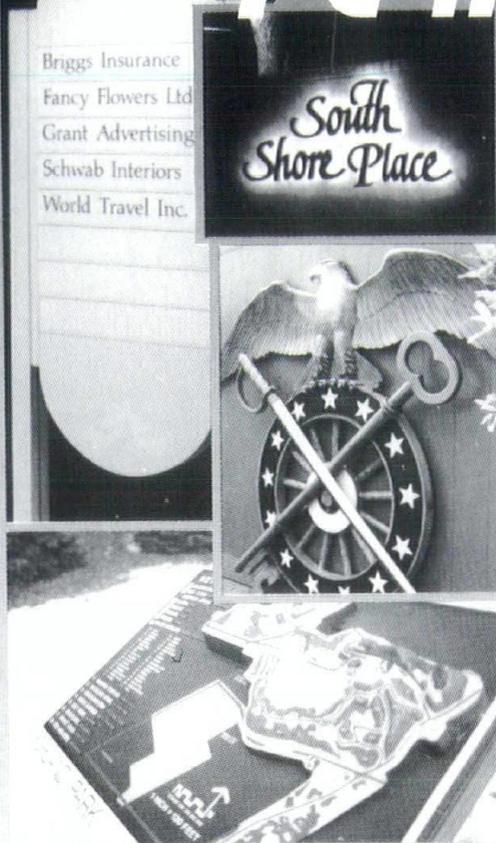
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Playing Without a Handicap continued

condition, normally brought about by some sort of external trauma, just sort of happened to Kristen. "My nerves are confused, they send constant pain messages to my brain and I hurt all the time," she says with the remoteness of a clinician. "There is no way to describe the pain, except that sometimes it pulls and sometimes it cramps." Kristen's goal at Children's Seashore House is, in her words, "to go painfree for a while, to learn to walk like a normal child." In pursuit of that, she receives regular nerve blocks, which cut the pain and increase her ability to participate in the rigors of 1 1/4 hours of physical therapy per day. Hospitalization is fast becoming an accepted part of her life. March, April, May, and June, now October and November have already been given away to walls like these.

As Kristen's tour moves on, the emphasis remains those elements most able adults would likely overlook. There is, for example, the lengthy excursion into the children's pantry, a small incision in a corridor wall, that is well-stocked with chips, sodas, candies, and crackers. "That's my cake," she says, smiling broadly at a box in the refrigerator. "I turned 13 Sunday night, and the party was a surprise."

With the tour now out of the pantry and into the patient wings, Kristen is again unmasking seemingly secondary features—closets with full-length mirrors, wall space for well-wishing cards, a sleep alcove for parents who choose to spend the night, a family-gathering room. Then there is the matter of the interior window walls that line the patient rooms. Whereas an adult might chafe at the apparent lack of privacy, Kristen finds great wisdom in the design. "These windows let me check on my friends without disturbing them," she says. As the tour is brushing by Diakesha's room, Kristen underscores her point. "See," she says of the body that makes a barely discernible outline in the white bed sheets, "Diakesha is sleeping."

Once through the patient wing, the tour loops back out to the double-height atrium, where the interview began. Kristen is ticking off the enclaves that line the multi-purpose room with a practiced air: the Children's Seashore House Classroom, the Child Life room, the video arcade, the teen room, the arts and crafts room, the fourth-floor overhang that rims the atrium and connects the world of the children, pre-teens, and teens with that of the upstairs infants and toddlers. Nothing about this particular space speaks of health care; one finds no small innuendo of handicap. The thick walls silence the rasping cough of the city outside, the sun showers down, Kristen shares her confidences, and it is forgotten, if only for this instance, that this is a place built for children who suffer, and that this easy-speaking guide lives here with the knowledge of a personal disability, and with the thunder of pain.

It is when the guide and the guided reach the fourth floor that the tour adopts a new tempo. Unlike the subdued morning quiet of the floor below, the ventilator unit has all the sounds of an oversized living room—the clatter of lunch plates, the cry of an infant, the fussings of a caregiver, nursery songs. All the activity reminds Kristen of the friends she has accumulated here in Children's Seashore House, and she digresses, irrevocably, into stories of those she has met and cared about during her long bouts away from home. There is Jay, the boy who, like Kristen, suffers from RSD, and with whom she conducts an intense long-distance friendship now that he has moved home. There is Katie, who shared Kristen's deepest secrets as she beat back the tumor in her brain. There is the spikey-haired pre-teen, who on good days takes the elevator ride up to assist in the infant caregiving. There is the coma-encased boy down the hall whose arm is stroked with the hope that messages from without are received within. There are the others who read and play instruments to those who presently cannot.

However extraordinary the imagery of kids sidestepping their own disabilities to care for others is to the outsider, it is commonplace within the walls of Children's Seashore House, where leaders emphasize psychological nurturing and therapists hold friendship with patients as the primary objective. "We are here to give definition to the kids' days—to plan arts and crafts sessions, stress games, picnics, group meals, bedtime stories, television hours, trips to the Penn football games," says Cathy, one of the therapists. "But above all, we are here to be friends to the kids, to be the person they can talk to."

Kristen begins her next sentence with a "we," as if she, too, were providing the therapy. "We try to help the kids take their medicine," she says. "Like, today. Diakesha wouldn't take hers from the nurse, but we got her to take it with chocolate milk. Chocolate milk works a lot better than vanilla, because you can't taste as much."

Kristen's "we" is amusing—unnatural given her institutional role as patient, not caregiver. But then this is the whole point. Provided the space, the encouragement, and the freedom, children will reach out—will shatter the confines of their own disabilities—in an attempt to heal another. In doing so, they begin to heal themselves. When they have mastered the wide corridors of this overgrown house, when they have left their mark on group activities, when they have fought with their therapies and won, and when, finally, they have taken up the battle of another, then, perhaps, it is time to travel on.

Kristen's tour concludes back on the third floor in the Seashore House classroom, where a teacher from the School District of Philadelphia conducts daily, tailor-made lessons for the kids. Since Hazel, the refined head mistress is caught up in a meeting, the kids have a chance to chat, and the topic turns to the newspaper that the kids have been developing. The conversation gets

noisy—rambunctious, even—and then just as dramatically it stops.

"Look," Kristen is whispering loudly to her friends, "Diakesha is walking." And there, on the opposite side of the classroom window glass, at the far corner of the sun-streaked atrium, stands Diakesha, transformed in a ruffled dress, and upright on crutches.

Hilary, excitedly: "Oh, look, she is."

"Does she have her prosthesis?" wonders Susie.

"No, but she's walking," says Kristen again, and she moves to the open door and shouts, "Diakesha, you're looking good."

Diakesha pretends to take no notice of the commotion, and heads steadily toward the video arcade. The interviewer is invited to join her there, and by the time she arrives, Diakesha is already seated, her eyes steady on the screen. "Pac Man for two," she challenges.

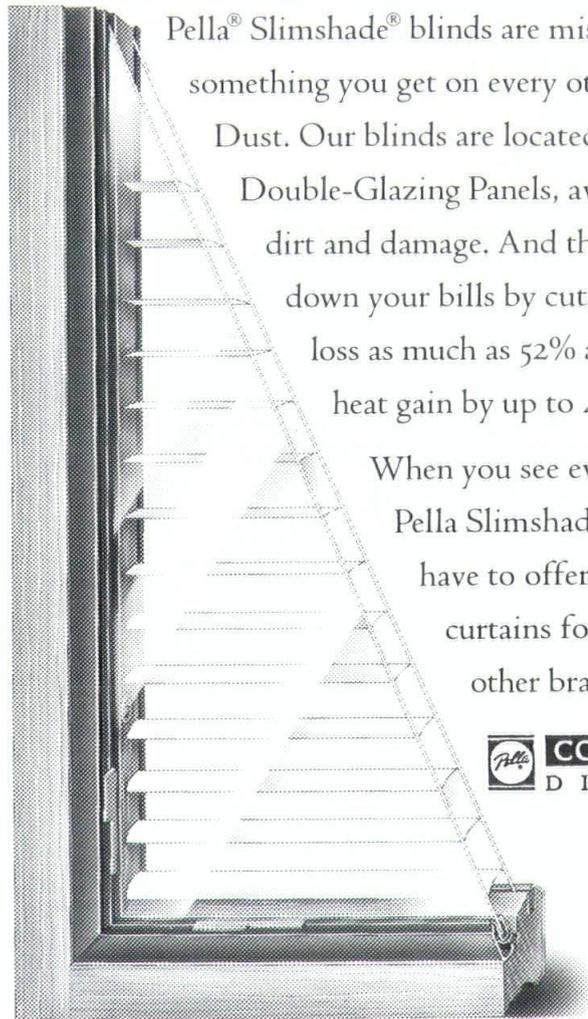
Having spent an adult life avoiding video games, the named contender tries to back out. But Diakesha is insistent. "Pac Man for two," she says again, still refusing to tilt her eyes up, and as she has already put the game in motion, her opponent gingerly takes a seat. Diakesha soon proves herself a rival with expert hands, and the chomping face on her screen escapes all forms of peril as it clears its path to safety. Then, without warning, the screen flips in opposite direction—placing the game in the hands of one so inept, so clumsy, that the utter eradication takes less than a moment.

"You're bad, you're bad," mumbles Diakesha, as the screen flips back toward her. The game is played out again—Diakesha merciless as she plays her hand, rueful as the opposing force plays hers. There is an overwhelming urge to ask for a moment of reprieve, a quick instruction, a beginner's handicap, and then it is remembered that there are no handicaps here—that there can be none. It's a fair fight, and Diakesha, thank God, is winning.

Children's Seashore House was designed by architects Geddes Brecher Qualls Cunningham and interior designers Daroff Design Inc.

The unique characteristics and special needs of the 151,000-square-foot pediatric rehabilitation hospital are clearly reflected in both the programming and design of the building's interior. Since children typically stay in the hospital for periods of 45 days or more, the inpatient floors have been designed to provide a non-institutional environment with a distinctly residential scale. Patient rooms are grouped around living room-like multi-purpose rooms in which many daily activities (eating, play, therapy) can take place in a communal home-like setting. Since patients are encouraged to be as ambulatory as possible, interior windows have been used extensively to interconnect the rooms visually and strengthen the tie between inside and outside. The use of several different multi-story interior atria further strengthens a sense of the whole; they orient the visitor and unite a range of treatment and inpatient areas designed for the special needs of the many types of patients and families served by the Seashore House. □

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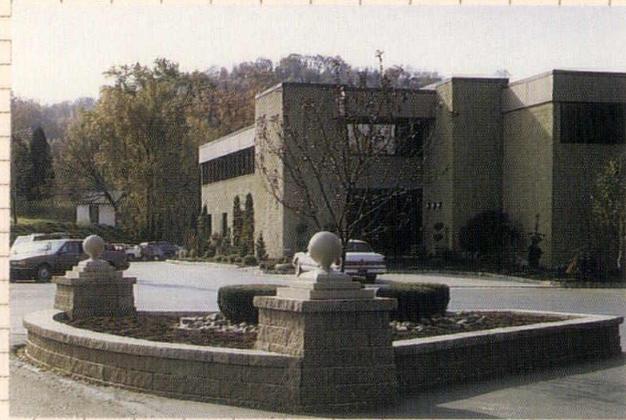
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