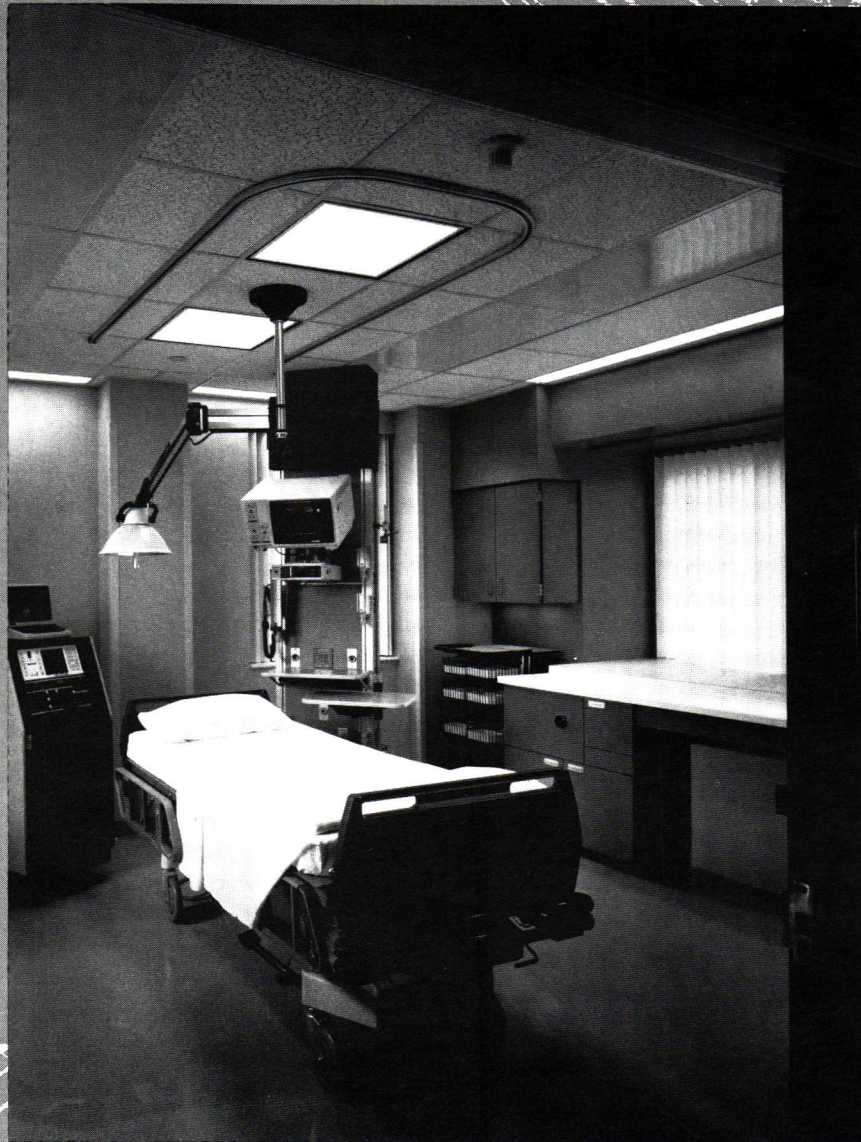
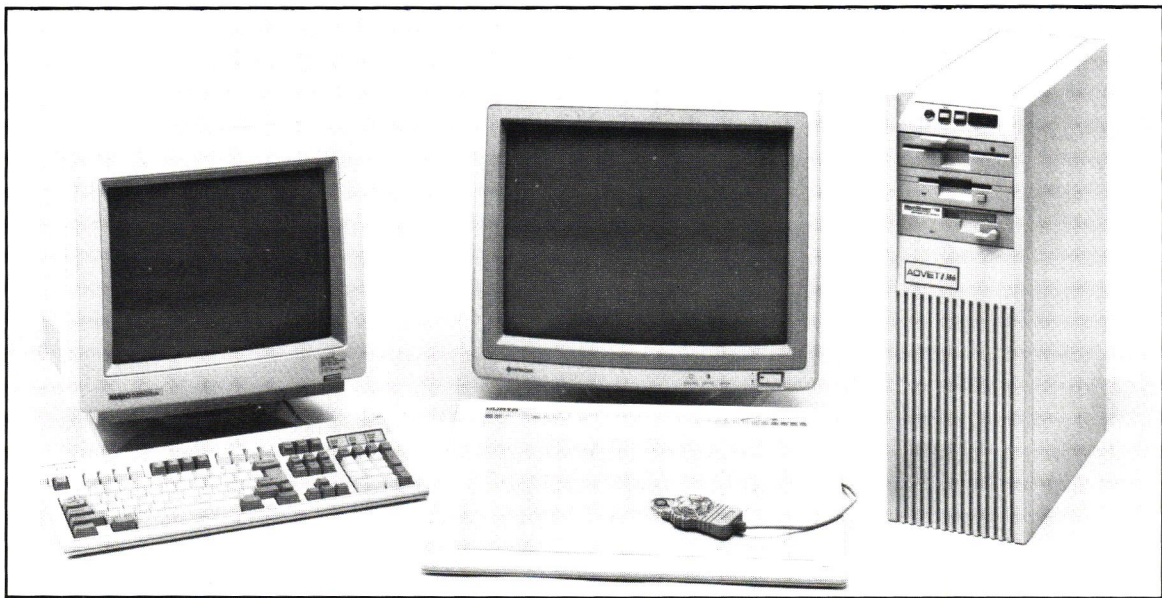


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ON THE COVER

Bringing a human touch to sterile hospital spaces is a challenge for architects at Burt Hill Kosar Rittelmann Associates who have carved out a strong foothold in the specialized field of healthcare architecture. Shown here is a new surgical intensive care suite the firm designed for Presbyterian University Hospital.

THE PITTSBURGH CHAPTER AIA serves 12 Western Pennsylvania counties as the local component of the American Institute of Architects and the Pennsylvania Society of Architects. Membership is open to all registered architects, architectural interns, and a limited number of professionals in supporting fields. Chapter Headquarters: CNG Tower, 625 Liberty Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15222 412/471-9548.

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VIEW POINT

MARSHA BERGER, AIA, PRESIDENT



The handicapped are continuing to shape our nation as they have been doing for the past 40 years. No, it is not the blind nor the lame. It is all of us — those who own and drive a Car. The Car is the equivalent of a wheelchair for most Americans. We are immobilized without it.

As much as the increase in density of the inner city was caused by two simultaneous inventions — the trolley and the elevator (the elevator to stack more people in the same footprint and the trolley to bring them from farther away than the normal walking distance would allow) — federal legislation through the National Highway Act of 1953 (the interstate program) and the FHA home loan program can be held responsible for suburban sprawl.

Suburban. It's an interesting word. Below urban? Suburbia contains none of the pleasure of urban life with its easy access to cultural and sport attractions, university and medical centers, and most of all, shopping districts that contain the post office, the bank, the shoe repair shop, the barber, the grocery store, the druggist. And all are within walking distance of one's residence. To work and live in suburbia is to drive. To drive from one shopping center to another. To drive from work to home, and to drive again for entertainment. Everything is spaced so far apart and so scattered, with no center, no place, that mass transportation is impossible. All is geared for the individual in his mobilized cart. The street of humanly-scaled and humanly-paced facades has given way to highway signage — all to be read from a speed of 55 mph.

What was the reasoning for building this way? To escape the crowding of the city? Walking on the street to "rub elbows" and to see people, whether or not one knows them, is as much a value of urban life as walking on the street to run errands. The urban street can be thought of as an outdoor room. The walls are the building facades, and in summer the ceiling is the canopy formed by the trees that line the streets. There is a certain intimacy in this scale that solicits social interaction. The Car prevents all of this by isolating the individual from his environment.

The street is public. The mall is private. The mall locks its doors at night; no room for the homeless here. Its sole purpose of being is to take in money — consumerism. The focus is entirely inward and insular. Is weather a factor in a mall? Does the mall provide the bucolic pleasures of rural life that supposedly are the reason for the flight from the city? What about the inescapable hum of motors that hangs over the landscape like the dark cloud of air pollution that goes hand-in-hand with the Car?

Vehicular ways in the suburbs are designed for car speed and car capacity. Innovative plans for streets in new towns (and calling something a "town center" doesn't make it one) are being designed according to seconds of pedestrian crossing time. Revolutionary thinking, I'd say! Unless you are a city dweller.

Add to this the fact that a Car costs \$4000 each year. That is \$40,000 over ten years — the cost of a modest housing unit. A unit to house the homeless. Couldn't each family live with just one less car? I wonder what America would be like then? The possibilities stagger the mind. Δ