

C O L U M N S



VOLUME 5, NO. 9

THE PITTSBURGH CHAPTER, AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

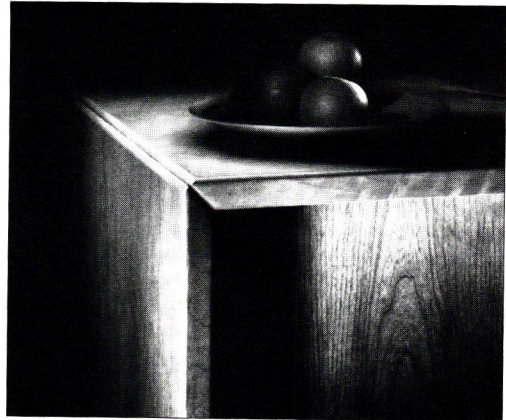
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COLUMNS is published ten times a year by the Pittsburgh Chapter AIA in association with the Cantor Group. Telephone: 412/661-3734; FAX: 412/661-6287.

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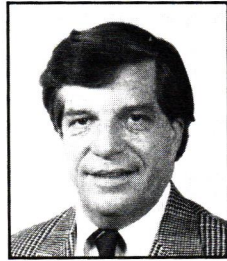
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View Point: Serious Fun

Douglas C. Berryman, AIA, President



Years ago, when I was in architectural school, our class was afforded the opportunity to tour the offices of Mies Van der Rohe in Chicago. Sometime during that visit, the group found itself literally at the feet of the master, and, having been inundated with the regimentation of the office and the work in evidence, one of the more flippant students asked Mies what proved to be an ill-timed question: "Where's the fun?" There was an icy stare on the face of the man; a brief, stony silence; then the response, "Younk man, Architechurr iss a SERIOUSS BISSNESS!"

And so it is. I've thought about that anecdote often over the years; it used to be something I'd tell with the intent to impress a listener with a pearl gleaned from one of the masters of architecture first-hand. Going through the daily process of practicing "the business," dealing with the demands of clients, deadlines, threats, both real imagined, of litigation on potential oversights (both real and imagined), etc., etc., I find myself telling the story with a different perspective.

There is, and always should be, an amount of fun in what we do. We can take ourselves too seriously, after all, and our ability to create spaces, buildings, urban plans, and "non-traditional" themes of practice comes in no small measure from a frivolity absent in other professions. But at times, I wonder where the fun is, or where it went. Then there are occasions when it is obvious that it is a serious business, and we must comport ourselves accordingly.

The recent demise of the Syria Mosque can be lamented as much for the loss of a "public space" as for an example of architecture. One concept, it seems to me, is no more serious than the other, in this case. We can hope that whatever building takes its place will be designed in such a way that it will be a positive addition to the built environment, but there are no guarantees that this will happen. But if the new edifice contains at least an attitude, and at best a venue for public access and use, then perhaps all would not be lost. Any effort that local architects make, whether through actual design or the voiced concern of "good design," should be considered a responsibility that we have to the public and the buildings that affect their lives.

Another aspect of our profession which should be taken seriously is fast approaching: the election of new board members for the Chapter. At the October meeting, which will be, for the most part, a "town meeting" type of gathering, we will have before us a slate of nominees presented by the Nominating Committee of the Chapter Board. I encourage you all to give some thought not only to those worthy members who have been nominated, but also to be ready and able to nominate candidates from the floor. The "ability" to nominate from the floor conveys that the potential nominee be willing and understanding of the time and effort commitment that goes with the office. I look forward to lively discussion, questioning, and... fun. ■■■

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A sweep of neon light ushers clients into Corporate Video Services, designed by Gardner Architects.
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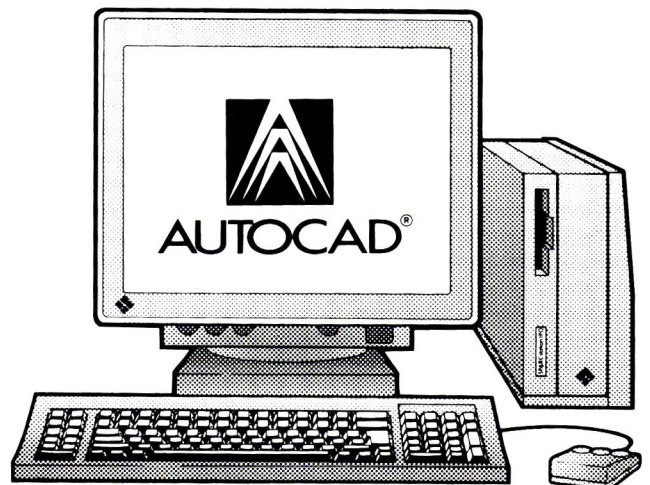
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