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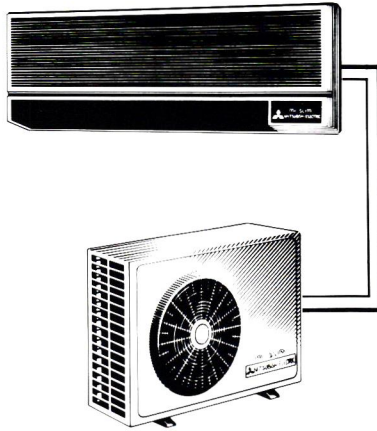
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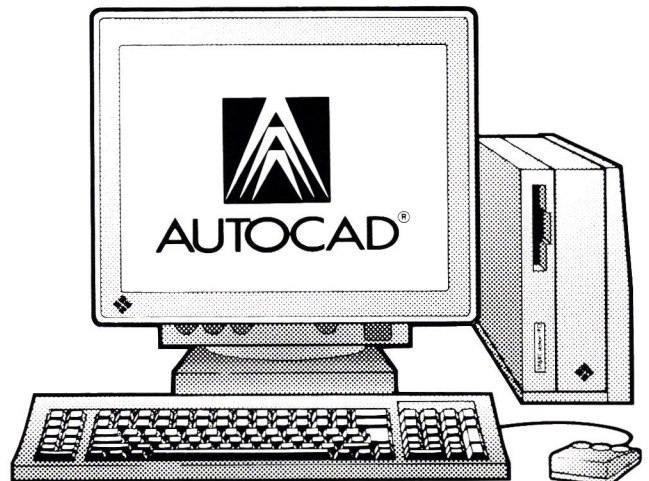
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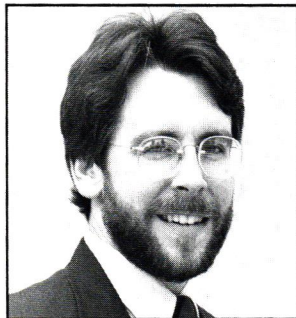
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View Point: Thoughts on the AIA

Rob Pfaffmann, AIA, President



"The Artist fashions himself in that ceaseless oscillation from himself to others, midway between beauty he cannot do without and the community from which he cannot tear himself. This is why the true artist scorns nothing. They force themselves to understand rather than judging."

— Albert Camus

It seems appropriate to kick off my term as president by giving you my personal thoughts on the AIA. I, like many architects, am not without strong opinions about what makes great architecture. Likewise, most architects

seem to have pretty strong opinions about the AIA. The opinions range from the cynical ("it's just an old boys club") to the self-interested ("Just give me a design award and AIA after my name.")

When I joined as a freshly minted architect in 1983, I was new to Pittsburgh and had many cynical opinions, sometimes justified, sometimes not. To give you added perspective, I grew up in the politically active time and place of Massachusetts in the 60s and 70s, which I suspect results in my more activist orientation. "Question authority." "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem." You know the lines.

My own views of the Chapter priorities are typically divided into two categories:

Architects: our professional "self-interest" or practice issues such as licensing, selection processes, etc. Architects need professional support systems such as communications, documents, and professional development seminars. If we do nothing else, these things must work to support our livelihood. I consider these tasks basics that must be established and maintained before we decide to undertake the more challenging efforts at education and advocacy for architecture.

Architecture: The reason we are architects. We sometimes forget that our profession is not well understood by the general public. It needs explanation, education, advocacy. Examples are public awards programs, design charettes, commentary in the press, public forums, and other types of outreach to the community at large. The Remaking Cities RUDAT, being the mother of all examples locally, needn't prevent us from taking on smaller efforts.

We should not be afraid of the diversity of our views—we need a voice for quality architecture and planning in government (it is a disgrace that there are no architects on the planning commission). We need to manage as a profession our collective image (let's make sure that architect jokes never resemble lawyer jokes). We also need to strengthen our relations with the many other organizations that should be our natural allies. I intend to make efforts to clarify and strengthen our relations with allied design professionals (ASLA, ASID, APA), preservation and urban policy groups (PHLF, Preservation Pittsburgh, Historic Review Commission), Community Design Center (I participate on the board), governmental agencies (DCP, URA) and of course, politicians (anyone interested in organizing informal breakfast meetings?)

As my predecessor Doug Berryman so eloquently pointed out in this columns last year, we need to reach out to show the hidden VALUE of our services, whether it be insights into the construction process or the impact of good design. The Chapter can play an important part in showing our potential clients the value of architects and architecture.

None of the above will happen if WE don't participate. The resources that are most difficult to come by for this Chapter are people's time. We all have good ideas floating around in our heads; the question is, do we have the will and desire to act upon them? ■■■

On the Cover Oakland's Eye and Ear Institute Medical Office Building, designed by IKM, Inc. Story on page 6.



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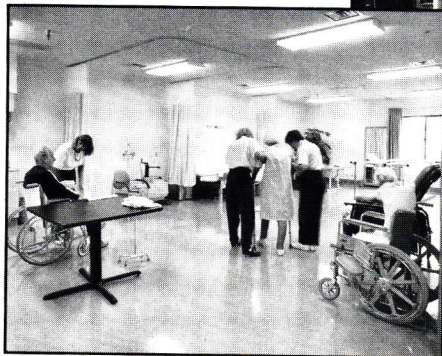
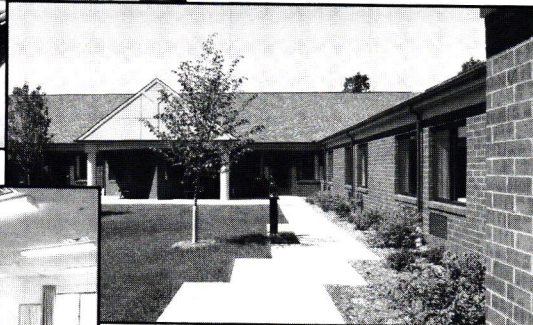
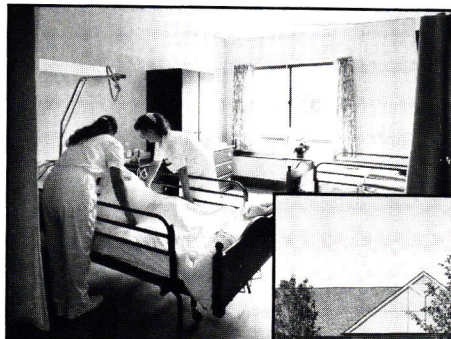
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