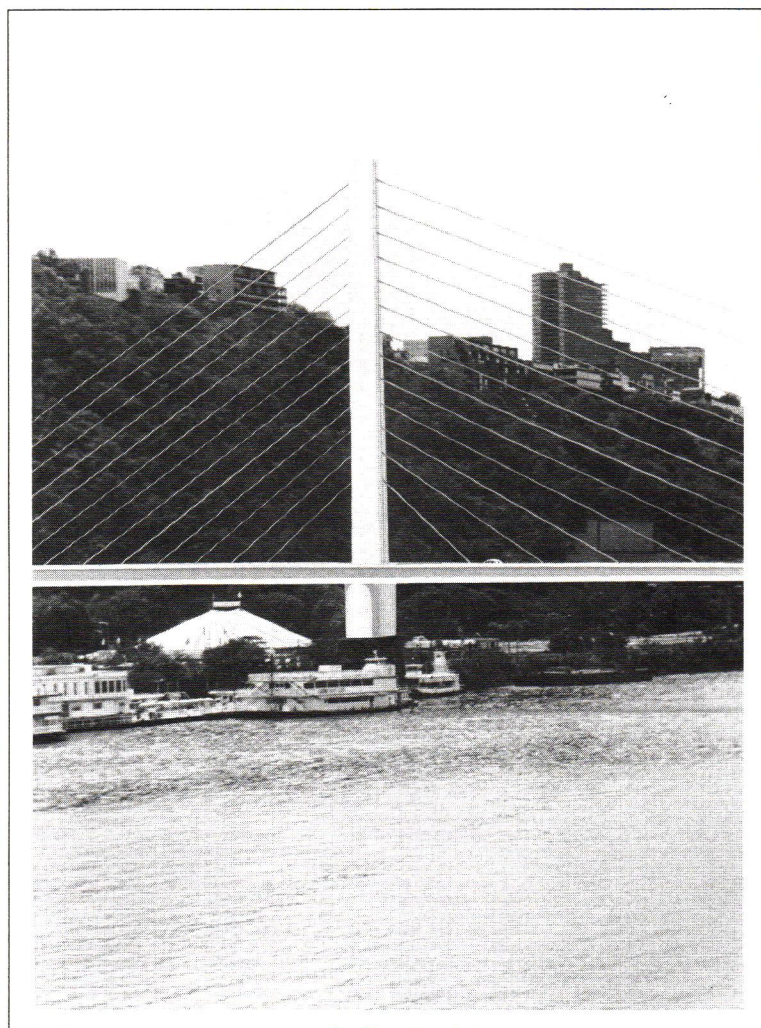


C O L U M N S



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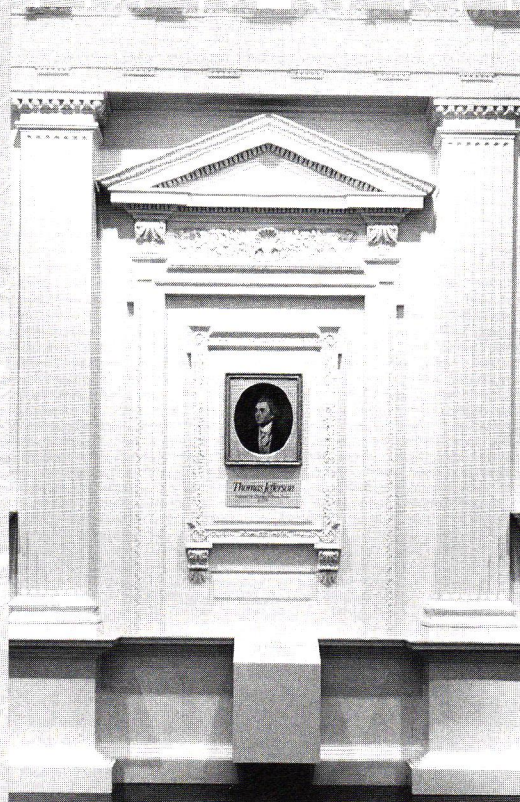
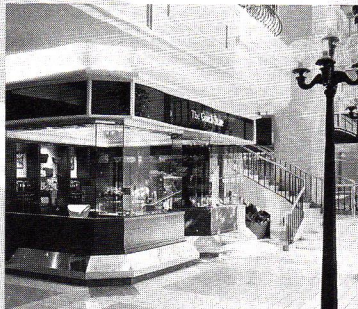
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A turning point for COLUMNS?

Rob Pfaffmann, AIA President

“Remember, the music

is not in the piano.”—Clement Monk



The constant tug of war between form and content is nothing new to those who design. Just as we struggle to bring the proper expression and life to our buildings, the Cantor Group and our communications committee is often struggling to find that same balance. It has to be said up front that Connie Cantor and her staff have had the

unenviable task of satisfying the world's most opinionated and demanding group of professionals. Some of us would prefer a more critical, scholarly orientation to things; others a more self-gratifying promotional approach. How can we balance these differing sensibilities?

Since its inception, COLUMNS has steadily improved both in graphic form and editorial content. It is now at a turning point: for a professional “rag” we want it to promote our members and their practices first. For those of us without professional marketing staff, or the ability to get published by *Architecture* magazine, our marketing efforts may benefit from a good looking local publication that can be brought to an interview or used in a cold call.

“Some of us would prefer a more critical, scholarly orientation to things; others a more self-gratifying promotional approach.”

The counterpoint to this point of view to which I subscribe is that our publication, while having an important role in promoting the work of the membership, must also develop a credibility founded on a tradition of solid editorial content. COLUMNS can reflect the ideals of our profession to the general public as well as the members. It also needs to be relevant to clients; often our institutional and government clients *are* architects.

The opportunity to place our profession out front as a respected source of information about the issues affecting the built environment can be effectively accomplished through COLUMNS directly and indirectly. Well-written articles about the value of architecture using our members' work as examples can be effective “seeds” only if they are tied to larger issues that the print and electronic media will latch on to. The opportunities are impressed on me each time we receive a comment about a story published in COLUMNS. Constructive criticism from professional journalists, graphic designers, photographers, and publicists is useful to the continuing improvement of our publication.

But ultimately we have to have something to say, ideas to express. We need to have an opinion. We need to disagree. We need to show the public that we can be self-critical. WE need to find that elusive balance between hard-edged journalism and self-indulgent promotional hype. If we don't, we lose our collective credibility and the real opportunities to extend the professions' positive impact upon the quality of our lives. The opportunity awaits us. 🏠

In This Issue

Bridge Over the River Mon 6

The latest on the Wabash project with a promise of a forum for architects' input.

What's Going Up (Or Down) in Pittsburgh? 8

Architects and city planners discuss the good and bad in the approval and planning process.

For the Birds 11

A new look for the Pittsburgh Aviary is hatching on the North Side.

View Point	3
Home Front	4
Executive Director	5
Bricks and Mortar	12
Breaking Ground	15
Engineers' Directory	21
Dossier	19
Calendar	13
Editorial Calendar	22
Advertisers Index	22
Marketplace	21
September Meetings	22, 23