

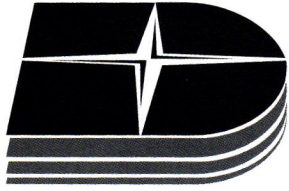
C O L U M N S



**TIPS ON PHOTOGRAPHING
ARCHITECTURE**

**RECLAIMING OUR
CULTURAL GEMS**

**LESSONS LEARNED:
Communities Facing
Developers**



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Happy New Possibilities by Tracy Certo



New Year's Day has always spoken to me of possibilities: The wonderful things that could lie ahead if only we make them happen.

The best thing about a new year is

all the possibilities that lie ahead. Although the ringing out of the old on New Year's Eve is too melancholy for my tastes, the ringing in of the new is ripe with new challenges and new directions. It's a fresh calendar to post with 365 new days stretched out like blank canvases before you. New Year's Day has always spoken to me of possibilities: The wonderful things that lie ahead if only we make them happen.

Since taking over as editor, I've been hearing a lot regarding this theme—from the Riverfront Task Force in the November issue to the Pittsburgh Children's Museum and the National Aviary in this one.

It's not often I go to the Children's Museum without children (never before, in fact) but I greatly enjoyed my recent visit. It coincided with the final installation of the 26-foot high poodle sphinx. When I went to interview Chris Siefert for the article on Reclaiming our Cultural Heritage, (p.6), the museum was closed. The staff had just crowned the huge, imposing and totally fun fantasy figure and I let out a gasp when I rounded the corner and saw it. Imagine the kids' reactions.

On the second floor of the museum—where the poodle's shocking pink hair is at eye level, quite a sight—Chris showed me all six designs submitted by various architectural firms for the expansion of the Children's Museum. From the blob (“We would meet so many people who would come just to see this building,” he offered) to the winning nightlight design, “It's six different ideas of what architecture should be doing in 2000,” says Chris. Think of the possibilities.

Later that same day, I communed with the hyacinth macaw during my visit at the National Aviary. A day doesn't get much better than this. This gorgeous Brazilian native, it's black eyes rimmed in brilliant yellow met me with a penetrating gaze. He was showing off, clacking his black tongue at me, then hanging from his beak from the top of the cage as if to say, Is this cool or what?

Very cool. Just like the the National Aviary which is perched (sorry, bird puns) on the brink of big change. Some of the possibilities? Moving to the North Shore. Training eagles to fly down from Mt. Washington right into a new bird theater. Releasing a large flock of doves each day from the point. Ever see a flock of doves released? Dayton Baker asked me. It's a beautiful sight. They flock and fly one way and then another before heading back to their destination. Once, at a Rose Parade the float right in front of us released dozens of white doves. It was magical and the crowd loved it.

With or without such theater, the Pittsburgh Children's Museum and the National Aviary are two crowning achievements in our city and yet, it seems neither are given their due. Each draws over 100,000 a year to an area of town that's less and less a magnet. (The Hazlett is gone. What's left to attract?)

One, the children's museum is a stimulating and educational experience for our greatest resource, namely children. The other, the aviary, is a place of conservation for our other greatest resource, namely nature.

After listening to Chris and Dayton within hours of each other, I drove home from the North Side, charged. As Dayton said, and you hear this more and more lately, “Pittsburgh is a very exciting place to be right now.” Pink poodle sphinxes and blue hyacinth macaws and all.

While you're filling in your new 2001 calendar, save a date for the Children's Museum and the Aviary. Take your kids or borrow someone's. The memories you create will continue to inspire for a long time to come.

Wishing you all the best year ever, filled with enriching possibilities.

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On the cover: Interior, Allegheny County Courthouse.
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Dickie's House

by Anne J. Swager, Hon. AIA

As a teenager, I had a couple of dates

with a young man named Dickie Geier. My parents were impressed because not only was Dickie's father the President of Cincinnati Millacron, and because he was a talented man, but also because his family founded the company. Dickie was a nice boy, reasonably attractive and very polite. I remember him as being extremely considerate and kind. He was so nice he was almost a nerd, but then he drove a really cool sporty little car, a one of its kind in the city. The relationship never went anywhere. While I liked him a lot, I thought he was boring, perhaps even dull. Dickie wasn't quick on his feet and for me at that age a witty repartee went a long way.



Nothing can replace for me the actual experience of seeing a great building or a great place but often it is the photograph I see initially that gets me to the place.

I cannot remember what Dickie looked like but I do remember his house. He lived underground. As you approached the house on a long driveway you saw nothing but rolling hills and some black stacks stuck in some earthen mounds. I remember not realizing I was at a house until we were walking through the front door. What completely wowed me was how open the back of the house was. It was mostly glass and opened up onto a lake. I doubt that he told me who designed it but frankly, it wouldn't have made any difference. I knew nothing about architects or architecture at the time.

I have never forgotten the house. It was one of those experiences when you know you are in a splendid and special place. Unlike anything I had ever seen, I was fascinated with why it was underground and how it must feel to live underground. The transformation from the front of the house, which was completely nondescript to the glass back of the house, which curled around a portion of the lake, was simply awesome. The protection of the earth over the house kept it cool in the summer and, conversely, warm in the winter (a novel approach back in those inexpensive energy days). I thought it all rather extraordinary and I bored my friends for weeks with "Geier House" stories. Dickie never asked me out again after that day. I suspect I was

way too interested in his house instead of him as he might have hoped. Then again, maybe he found me boring as well.

While in Borders this past week I couldn't resist picking up a copy of Metropolis. Last night I sat down to savor my new magazine and lo and behold, right in the middle of an article on Philip Johnson, there was a picture of the Geier House. Amazingly, I recognized the lake and the stacks on the house even before I read the caption affirming that it was the Geier House. Though I don't remember the exact spot which was photographed, the picture hints at the transition from underground to open and makes you want to see more. I wish I could see the house now through my more educated eyes but then I doubt Dickie would invite me especially since I have now called him boring in this article.

I read with avid interest the article on architectural photography in this issue of Columns. I am grateful to all the photographers who shared some of their secrets and generously gave of their time to help educate us. Further, I have to agree with the advice given *that a good project deserves a good photograph*. Nothing can replace for me the actual experience of seeing a great building or a great place but often it is the photograph I see initially that gets me to the place.

In January, I will begin working with a small contingent of AIA Pittsburgh Board members and a graphic designer to develop a new look for Columns. After 10 plus years of a similar look, we have decided that we need a new face. While I think our content is strong, our look is tired. All of us look forward to a reinvigorated magazine that portrays your work as best we can within our budgetary constraints. Your input into the process is welcome and indeed, you can expect a small number of questionnaires designed to give us guidance.

Mostly though, we need your good quality photographs of the wonderful work you do. I know we can count on you to help us step up to a higher standard.



NEW COLUMN FOR COLUMNS

We're getting ready to launch the new column that features a unique perspective on architectural issues—namely, yours. David Vater, AIA is the winner of the contest to name the column. His winning entry? **In Perspective**. His prize, whatever that is, will be announced...well, eventually. We hope to have many submissions by then. Think about it: 750 words, any issue of your choice. Call ahead to discuss if you'd like: 563-7173.

Architecture Tour to Columbus, Indiana

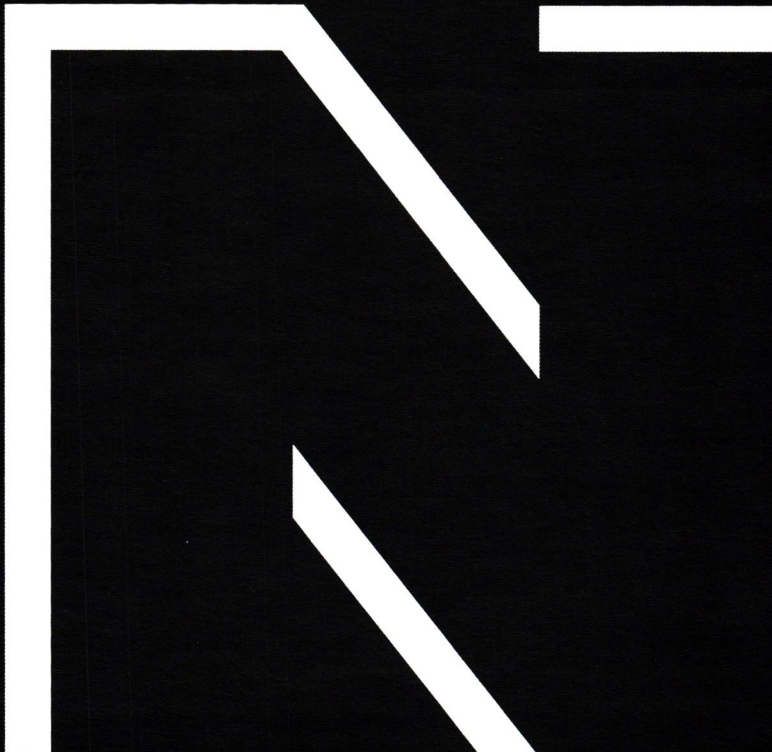
The AIA Pittsburgh Foundation for Architecture is sponsoring a spring tour to Columbus, Indiana. Columbus is a city of renowned architectural character, featuring the work of architects Cesar Pelli, Richard Meier, SOM, I.M. Pei, Gunnar Birkets, Robert Stern, Robert Venturi, Deborah Berke, Eero Saarinen and William Rawn. These projects were built with the support of the Cummins Foundation Building Program, a unique program designed to promote high-quality and innovative architecture.

The road trip, which is tentatively scheduled for early May, might also include a stop in Columbus, Ohio, to tour Peter Eisenman's Wexner Center for the Arts. Complete details will be published in the next Columns.

Addition

In the September issue of Columns, the story Remaking the City featured the MonConn Bridge. The project firm for the MonCon Bridge project was Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc., an international planning and design firm with a Pittsburgh office.

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