

# C O L U M N S



**The Redesign of Phipps Conservatory  
and Botanical Gardens**

**Superior Interior Winners**

**Renovation Information Network:  
How Architects Benefit**

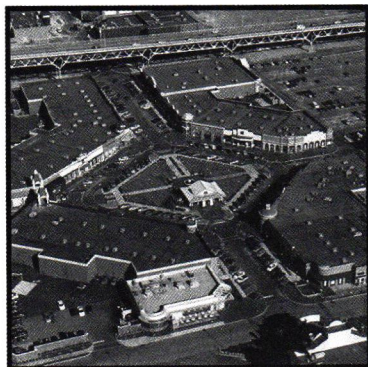
**Uniform Construction Code Q & A**

# BUILD *with a* WINNER.

CELEBRATING  
**20** Years  
1984 • 2004

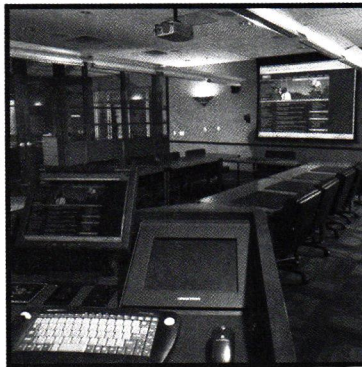
Renaissance 3 Architects

## *NAIOP's 2003 Award Winning Projects*



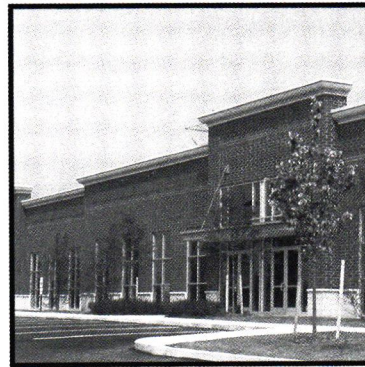
### **BEST MIXED USE**

The Waterfront  
The Waterfront Partners LLC  
Meacham & Apel Architects



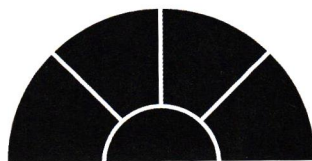
### **BUILD TO SUIT (Interior)**

Michael Baker Corporate Headquarters  
The Elmhurst Group  
Baker & Associates



### **SPECULATIVE BUILDING**

200 Cranberry Business Park  
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WTW Architects



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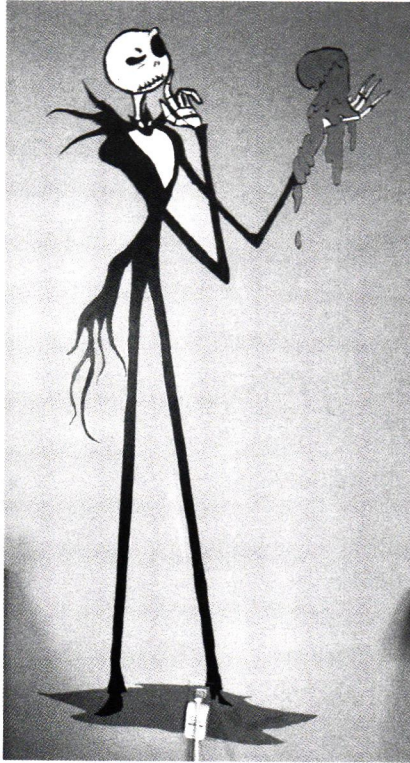
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## Fire Breathing Tiki Gods and Other Design Possibilities

By Tracy Certo



Dan's mural, a nod to Tim Burton.

### One wintry Sunday afternoon

my teenage son asked me to watch one of his favorite T.V. shows with him, insisting I would love it. How could I resist? Turns out it was the Discovery Channel's *Monster House*, an over-the-top complete house renovation show featuring a team of changing professionals, and always, an architect. This time the team included a carpenter, landscape architect, scenic artist and even a "gadget god". How could you do without? For an hour we watched as they transformed a bland tract house into an exotic and extreme "Tropical House", complete with bamboo cabinets in the kitchen and a hibachi-style grill table under a powerful exhaust hood. You could just picture a chef flinging knives and flipping shrimp onto waiting plates.

The highlight was the conversion of the conventional brick fireplace into a Foam-Tec, fire-breathing tiki god fueled by a propane tank with eyes that flash red when motion is detected. (Dan thought that would be awesome in our living room but I pointed out that it might freak out the dog.)

With ideas like these, the design team is a bit cocky, with an admirable anything-is-possible attitude. When they couldn't fit a 32-foot boat into the backyard they sawed it in half—surprisingly easy to do if you ever have the need—and featured it "shipwrecked" by the black-bottomed lagoon, which was originally a plain pool. Wouldn't you?

In the downstairs bathroom, a shower morphed into a cave —Foam-Tec again which can be painted to appear like anything—with waterfall sprays crafted of six hidden showerheads. Amazingly, they did all this in five days, and on an unlimited budget.

As the clock ticks, things go wrong of course and in the last ten minutes of the show there's panic, real or otherwise—will or won't they complete it by midnight, in time for the family to move in so they win the boffo set of macho tools? (The gadget god gasps!) It makes for wild and wacky T.V. viewing but it's also kinda wonderful.

For one, it imparts some good lessons on teamwork, determination and innovation in design matters to the teen audience it is attracting. As does the wildly imaginative

sister show, *Monster Garage*, where they recently converted a police car into a donut shop complete with deep fryer and humming conveyer belt. The cops thought it was a hoot and frankly, so did I.

Although the Monster shows are extreme, the proliferation of home and design shows flooding the airwaves is raising awareness of design matters and in this case, endless design possibilities. In her article on page 12 on The Renovation Information Network<sup>SM</sup>, Tara Merenda mentions how these shows benefit architects by making homeowners aware of their value. *Before and After*, also on HGTV, features architect renovations. One episode I saw, where they remodeled a Georgetown townhouse—from blah to stunning—thanked the AIA for their help.

A real estate friend just told me how *Designed To Sell*, where pros work their magic on drab houses going up for sale, is creating buzz as well as demand. Her clients are now asking what they can do to improve their homes for maximum resale and, more tellingly, who can they call for help? If there's one group of professionals who appreciate a well-designed house, it's real estate agents. The message,

says my friend, is suddenly catching fire and she's thrilled.

Not only are these shows suggesting good ideas but they're also granting good publicity. Awhile back I was watching a HGTV show about Traditional Neighborhood Developments across the country.

And, surprise, they showed Washington's Landing and one of its architects, Don Montgomery of Montgomery & Rust, Inc. Pittsburgh got a great plug as did one of our fine architects.

Maybe it's a coincidence but after viewing several *Monster House* shows, Dan was recently inspired to paint a six foot mural in his bedroom. He projected an illustration full-blown on his wall then traced and painted it. It's wild and wacky but kinda wonderful and it's great to see him using his imagination and talents. Can I note that he completed it in under five days and on a limited budget? Since it doesn't breathe fire, I approve.

*For one, it imparts some good lessons on teamwork, determination and innovation in design matters to the teen audience it is attracting.*

### IN THIS ISSUE

#### *Cultural Evolutions*

In this issue *Columns* takes a look at the expansion of Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens

#### *Superior Interiors*

*Columns* spotlights AIA members projects

#### *Renovation Information Network*

Connecting Homeowners with Architects

#### *Uniform Construction Code*

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**On the cover:** Illustration of the renovated Phipps with a courtyard six feet below the grade at Schenley Drive and on either side of the dome, a green roof—a foot of sod and grass which will appear like part of the lawn. IKM Incorporated.