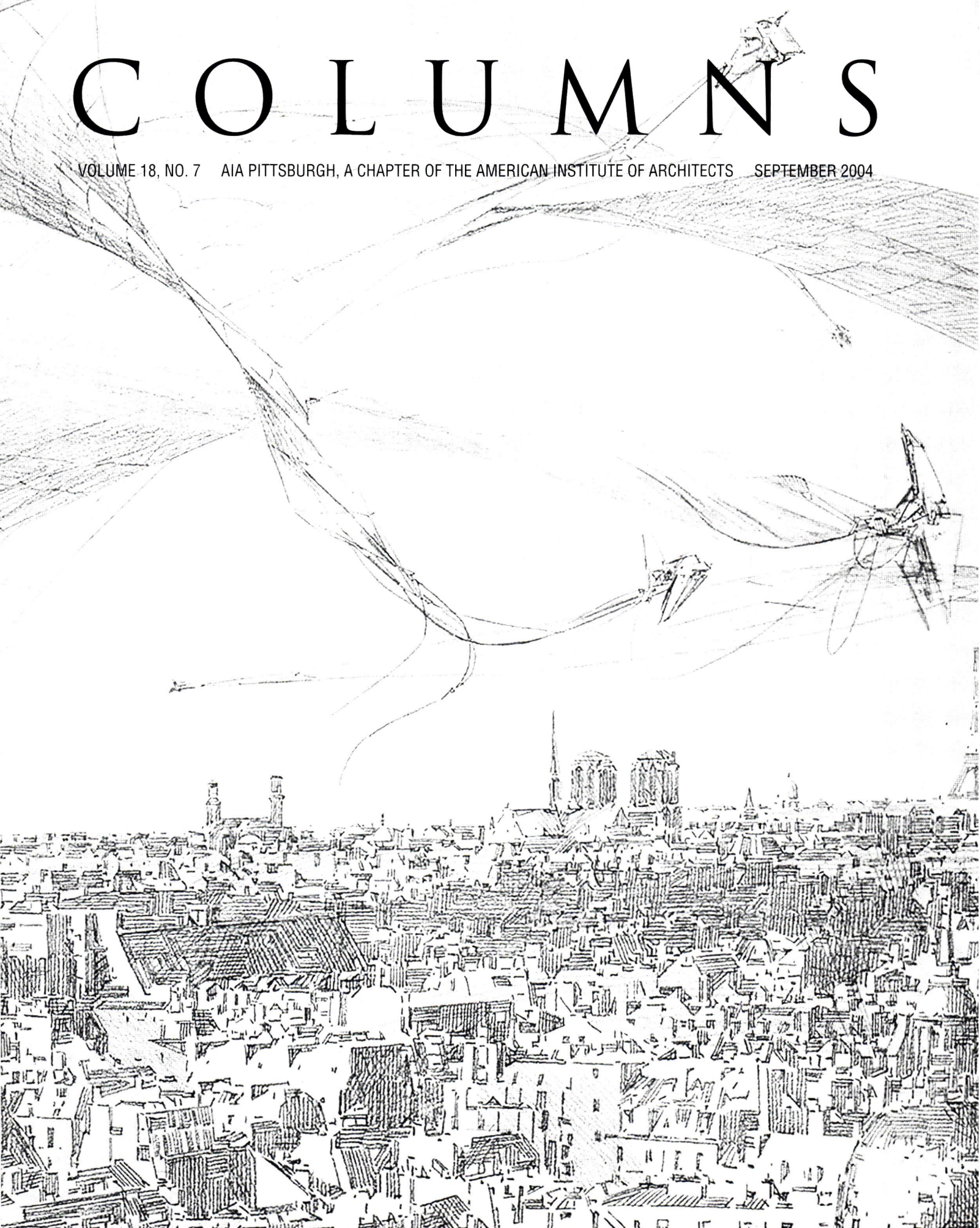


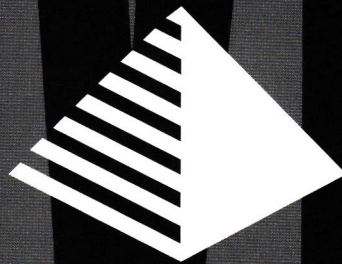
C O L U M N S

VOLUME 18, NO. 7 AIA PITTSBURGH, A CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS SEPTEMBER 2004



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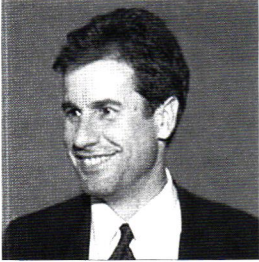
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The AIA Pittsburgh Brand

By Dan Rothschild, AIA



The goal of this exercise was to start to think about AIA Pittsburgh as a brand, and to determine how closely our brand characteristics related to those of AIA.

The summer vacation is a natural break

in our yearly cycle with time off from jobs and school-related activities. The break is also true for this magazine as we publish a double issue in July/August. The break also serves as a natural shift in the focus of my President Messages. For those of you following the path of this year's messages, I have focused on describing the process and attributes of the AIA Brand Study. In the last half of the year, I will be relating that information directly to our Pittsburgh chapter.

As a quick review, the AIA commissioned a brand study that was a participatory process including a wide range of constituencies. The results of that study are on AIA's website at www.aia.org/brand and can be summarized by the three core values that define and support the AIA brand:

Knowledge: We add to and facilitate sharing knowledge of design and practice through continuing education and knowledge communities, investment in research and development of practice tools and standards.

Advocacy: We give voice to our shared values as architects in order to influence the shape of our neighborhoods and our world, and to ensure the future health of our profession—through action and communication at the local, state, and national levels.

Community: We create opportunities for all architects to connect with each other, to share experiences and to celebrate great work, in local and regional communities, at national and international gatherings, and around common interests. We welcome and support all future members of our profession. We build relationships with others who participate in creating the built environment.

At this year's retreat, AIA Pittsburgh's Board of Directors learned about the AIA Brand Study and reviewed those findings with regard to our chapter. Our retreat encompassed the following tasks:

1. Identify AIA Pittsburgh's Brand Characteristics, both current and future.
2. Align brand characteristics with AIA Pittsburgh's products/services.
3. Identify current and future target audiences.
4. Chart a Gap Analysis that identifies weaknesses between products/services and target audiences.
5. Develop strategies to relate Brand/Products & Services/Target Audiences.

1. AIA Pittsburgh Brand Characteristics

The Board participated in a brainstorming session that re-

sulted in characteristics that were either currently associated with, or could someday be associated with, AIA Pittsburgh's brand. The goal of this exercise was to start to think about AIA Pittsburgh as a brand, and to determine how closely our brand characteristics related to those of AIA. Our characteristics included the following: Active, Advocates, Belonging, Benchmark, Community, Collective, Creativity, Design, Ethics, Fairness, Fellowship, Guidance, Inclusive, Innovators, Knowledge, Legitimacy, Mentoring, Motivators, Outreach, Part of Larger Network, Professionalism, Quality, Sharing, Standards, Supportive.

2. AIA Pittsburgh Brand/Products Relationship

The exercise continued to align the brand attributes with the twelve primary products of AIA Pittsburgh: Build Pittsburgh, *Columns* magazine, Design Pittsburgh, Electronic Forum (new product), Electronic Newsletter "What's Going On?!", Foundation for Architecture, Gold Medal, Leadership Forum, Membership Meetings, Membership Services, Website, Young Architects Forum.

3. AIA Pittsburgh Target Audiences

We then identified the target audiences of our services into the following categories:

Architects: Senior (20+ years), Middle (5 to 20 years), Junior (0 to 5 years), Architecture Students, Affiliate Consultants, Affiliate Contractors, Public (Buyers of Services), Public (Future Architects), Public (General), Foundations, Vendors and Manufacturers.

4. AIA Pittsburgh Gap Analysis Matrix

All information of Brand, Products, and Target Audiences were assembled into a matrix to determine our strengths and weaknesses. Board members agreed that this information would be extremely helpful when communicating the value propositions of our products and services to different target audiences.

5. Strategies to Strengthen Brand/Products & Services/Target Audiences

Toward the end of the retreat we identified Board members as "champions" of individual products and services and brainstormed goals for the year.

In the upcoming President's Messages for the last half of this year, I will focus on detailed information of the challenges, opportunities, and successes we as a chapter face in clarifying our brand, and using that strategy to become a more effective and responsive organization. As always, the Board of Directors welcomes your input into this process, so please feel free to contact me directly at danr@rdarch.com or the AIA Pittsburgh office at info@aiajppgh.org.

IN THIS ISSUE

<i>Pitt's Mascaro Sustainability Initiative</i> . . . 6	Breaking New Ground in Research
<i>Design Awards Preview</i> 12	Including an interview with Jury Chair Bill Fain, FAIA
<i>Lebbeus Woods</i> 14	Experimental Architecture at HAC
News 5	
Breaking Ground 17	
Calendar 21	

AIA Pittsburgh serves 12 Western Pennsylvania counties as the local component of the American Institute of Architects and AIA Pennsylvania. The objective of AIA Pittsburgh is to improve, for society, the quality of the built environment by further raising the standards of architectural education, training and practice; fostering design excellence; and promoting the value of architectural services to the public. AIA membership is open to all registered architects, architectural interns, and a limited number of professionals in supporting fields.

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Justifying Your Services

By Anne J. Swager, Hon., AIA

Election season always brings great debate

on issues that affect us, such as the perennial discussion on the cost of health care and health insurance. As the chief cook and bottle washer at AIA Pittsburgh, I share the concern rising health care costs have on our bottom



Who can complain about the costs of your services if it can be proven that you increase worker productivity, improve healing rates, or improve the learning environment for a child?

line. As the mother of a child with "special needs", I have lots of experience both positive and negative with the health care industry. I can certainly see inefficiencies and obvious ways to cut costs. I can also see the tremendous strides in health care that have resulted from big investments in research and development. The most poignant advance for me was the drug used to treat my youngest child when she became ill as an infant. If she had been born five years earlier, she most likely would have died. Unfortunately, many of my experiences since have been about what is not covered, what is not available and how long you have to wait to see a specialist. Worst of all are the precious few moments you get with the paid expert, the doctor. As a result, I have learned to educate myself about options and to advocate for my own care and that of my family. Despite its hassles, health care is essential. And despite the continued discussion, real improvements in the system do not look to be on the horizon.

When I first started at the AIA, I marveled at how the lawyers and the doctors got it right. Their services are essential. Something that no one else can perform and better yet, no one else would ever dream of doing themselves. You might design your own house addition but you wouldn't perform an appendectomy on yourself or (unless you were mighty foolish) defend yourself in a murder trial. Hence, doctors and lawyers command a premium for their services and get it. Even better, health care is insured. It is a "right" of being gainfully employed and at one point the liability was unlimited. If you were sick, no matter what you had, you saw a doctor, got treated and it was paid for as part of your annual compensation.

Obviously, the liability has changed and a lot is no longer covered but we still expect a certain level of care to be paid for by our insurance plan.

In this issue, we explore research and development initiatives in the architecture and engineering industry. Justification for your services is being taken to a different level and to me, a welcome one. Who can complain about the costs of your services if it can be proven that you increase worker productivity, improve healing rates, or improve the learning environment for a child? Who can argue with costs based on quantifiable benefits? The research in and of itself is fascinating but best of all it comes with the added benefit of making the case for what you do that much easier. I have one misgiving though. The research can strengthen the work you do but it does not relieve us of making the case for beauty and good design. Beauty for beauty's sake is still a worthwhile endeavor and one that we should insist upon for our places. Obviously, the uplifting of a person's soul is a difficult benefit to measure but it is still a worthy outcome. We will never know how those moments in the average Joe's life where he or she comes upon a special place, building, architectural detail or park changes the person's next move, next several moves, or day or outlook for a lifetime. Not being able to measure however, does not subtract from the necessity of beauty to help us enrich our lives. Focusing on quantifiable results is a necessity but it does not have to be at the expense of the addition of good design and beauty to our lives.

Unlike architects, doctors aren't doing as well these days. Their salaries have been questioned and, with the advent of managed care, much of their decision making has been usurped by insurance companies. You have to wonder if some of this comes from moving from the medical profession to the healthcare industry.

