

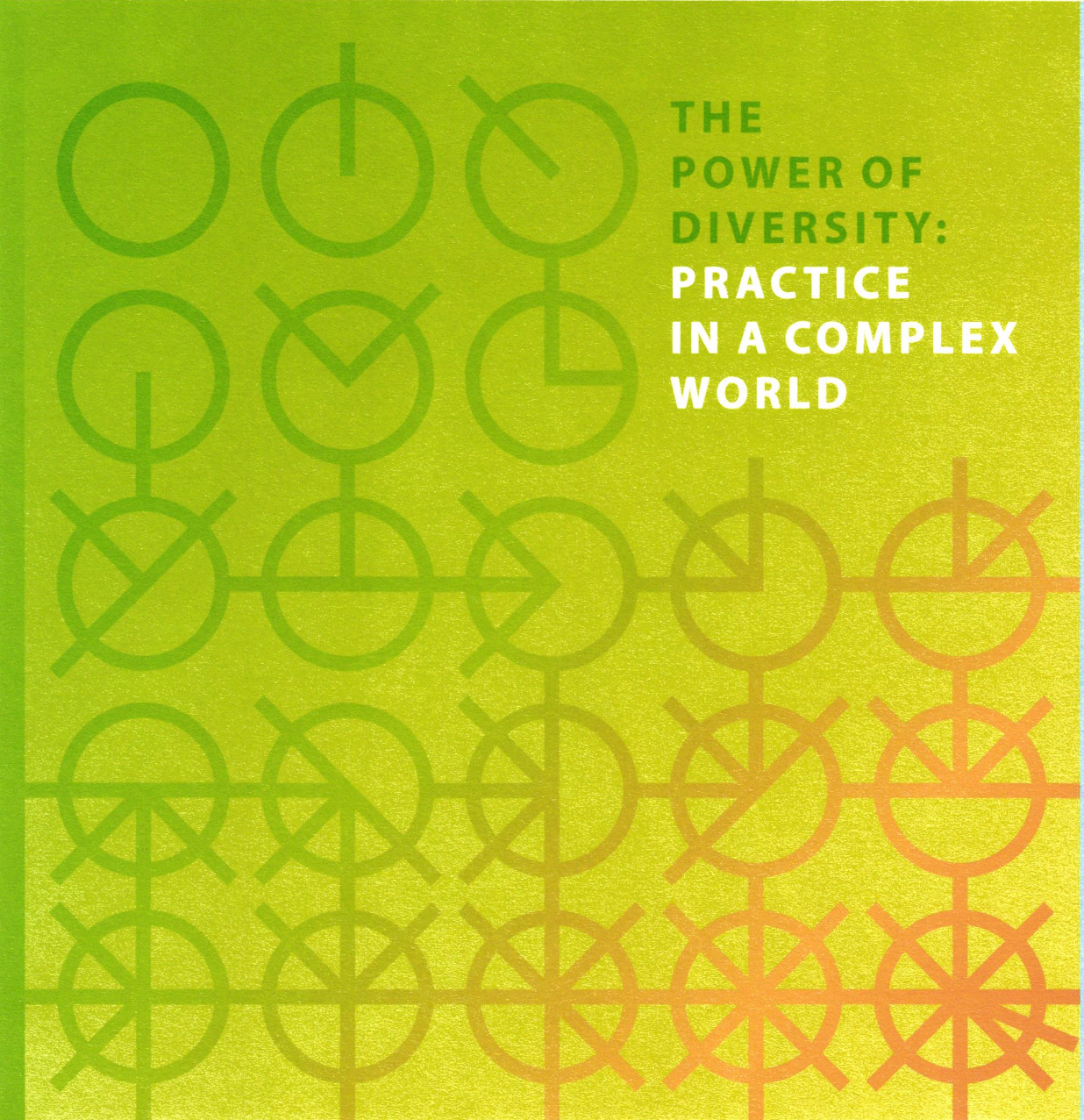
COLUMNS



MAR/09

Designed For Hard Times: The economy's impact on architecture | Spaces of the Imagination: The work of Giovanni Piranesi | Habitat: Exploring the places where architects work | AIA Pittsburgh, a chapter of the American Institute of Architects

COLUMNS



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HOMEFRONT

BY BECKY SPEVACK



Process. Merriam-Webster defines it as *a natural phenomenon marked by gradual changes that lead toward a particular result; a series of actions or operations conducing to an end; a continuous operation or treatment.* Process is something that I think about a lot, something that I believe plays a large role in my life, in my work, and in who I am. When asked to describe what sort of art I make, I usually refer to it as “process art”, and even though process art is not the most popular or well known movement in the art world, I could not imagine a more fitting description of my work or my mindset throughout the making. Much of my work involves various series of self-defined tasks, and the cast-offs of these tasks are what becomes the ‘art’ or product to be shown. An example of this self-defined process is a project in which I created my own tea ceremony, recording each cup of tea I drank within a specific period of time, creating ‘ink blots’ from the discarded tea bags. Even my love of glass and glassblowing ties back into process. The final product is not that important to me –it’s more a focus on the repetitive motions, the process of making. If there is something to show for it at the end – a cup or vase or bowl – great. If there is nothing to show, except for my sweat, great. Either way, spending my time working through each step, performing each action in sequence to strengthen my skills or explore the material is more valuable to me than creating some physical evidence of that time spent.

Similarly, I believe that architecture, and the act of designing, are directly tied to and wrapped around process. There is not necessarily a “right” way to go about this, but I am sure that many architects go through a series of steps as they create, with each individual and each new project informing that process. The act of creating, then evaluating, redesigning, showing to clients,

continued page 2

MAR/09

In this Issue | Designed For Hard Times: The economy’s impact

on architecture page 7 | Spaces of the Imagination: The work of Giovanni Piranesi page 25 |

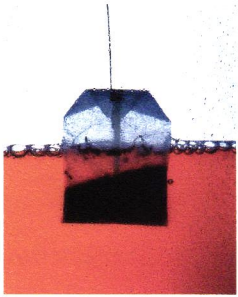


Habitat: Exploring the places where architects work

Breaking Ground page 16 |




page 14 |



reworking, et cetera is a process in and of itself. The need to evaluate where you stand and how to move forward is something the architectural community is familiar with, and within these pages, we take a look at the economy, and how local architectural firms have weathered past downturns. Through introspection, many firms have stood the test of time and trial, but not without being willing to look hard and make necessary changes. We hope that some of the stories told on these pages will be a help or inspiration to anyone out there wondering what comes next.

Just as businesses and individuals need to look inward and examine common practices and comforts, so too has *Columns* participated in some recent soul-searching. It's no surprise that times are tough, and the near future does not necessarily hold a lot of promise. Even with a stimulus package passed, questions of viability and sustainability cannot be ignored. Non-profits especially are feeling the pinch, and as AIA Pittsburgh moves through 2009, choices have to be made to ensure that we are providing the best services to our members, addressing your needs. As such, we have decided to reduce *Columns* to a quarterly publication, with the sincere hope of bringing it back in 2010 in it's bi-monthly form.

In the meantime, we are pooling our resources to provide every opportunity we can to serve you with the current recession in mind. Executive Director Anne Swager, Hon. AIA has been working with some local members to form the new Unemployed Architects Group. While it doesn't have the sexiest name imaginable, it gets right to the point – there have been multiple rounds of layoffs, and this group meets for lunch biweekly at the AIA Pittsburgh office to connect and be a support to one another in similar situations. You don't have to be a member to attend, we just want to help and encourage the community in whatever way we can. We are also currently working on our programming for Build Pittsburgh 2009, which is themed "Opportunities in Architecture for Challenging Times". This full day of continuing education will focus on giving you the tools to be best prepared to weather the storm in these challenging times.

As we move forward into spring, as our days get longer and perhaps even a little sunnier, we will continue to move through our series of steps to create opportunities for you, to serve you the best we can. Let us know what you think, how we might be able to help you or others, and we will try to respond to your requests. That's our process. 

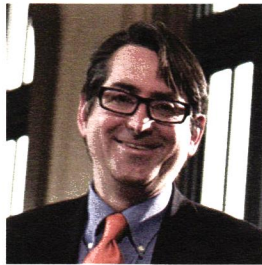
SO MUCH TO DO... SO LITTLE TIME

BY CHIP DESMONE, AIA

The Pittsburgh Chapter of the AIA is continually recognized as among the most innovative and well run chapters in the nation. This is due, in no small part, to the energetic efforts of its executive director, Anne Swager, Hon. AIA, and all of its immediate past presidents whose collective visions have impacted everything I have the honor and privilege to inherit. My special thanks go to our retiring president, Paula Maynes, AIA, for her steady, calm, and strong leadership during the past year – a year that saw us break new records in fundraising, income, education, outreach, and advocacy.

This coming year will present a different set of challenges to our organization as we plan now for Build Pittsburgh (our annual continuing education conference), and subsequently, Design Pittsburgh. We remain ambitious in these plans, as Build Pittsburgh will grow with more offerings and increased learning opportunities – opportunities that will come from each other and from the vital manufacturers who assist us in creating a better built environment. All of this during an incredibly difficult economic period.

We will soon revisit our Strategic Plan and recognize some of our goals and limitations. The AIA's National and State chapters urge advocacy and engagement of its members in the political process, as decisions made by and during the political process impact our environment and our collective practices. On the local level, it is my expectation that AIA Pittsburgh will build upon our developing *Policy of Public Engagement*, begun under the stewardship of Paula's presidency. These plans shall include



discussions with the County Executive and Council, as well as the Mayor and City Council, on issues that impact our communities and our businesses through the built environment. It won't be easy. However, we have a framework that we use at the National Grassroots Convention, as well as the statewide leadership event, Architects Day. Let us know if you would like to participate.

Why should we care about what goes on in the political arena around us? Because elected officials make decisions that impact our profession. These decisions impact our ability to practice architecture in a manner that best suits the requirements of our clients' goals, and the greater good of the community at large. If we aren't at the table when these decisions are made, laws and regulations will be created that will constrain our clients, our profession, and our communities. More than any other profession or organization, architects and the AIA are uniquely qualified to guide our region in developing our many resources in a functional, efficient, and elegant way while being recognized as authoritative stewards of our environment.

So, as government officials hurriedly draw up plans for an immense spending spree to help jump start our economy, we will be there at the national, state, and particularly the local level, to make sure that our voice is heard, that our priorities are considered, and that our membership is participating fully in our national recovery. And the *Policy on Public Engagement* will help guide us in our local efforts to gain a more significant voice in the process. **C**

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.

AIA PITTSBURGH
945 Liberty Avenue, Loft #3
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Telephone: 412-471-9548
Fax: 412-471-9501

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Online: www.aiapgh.org
Email: info@aiapgh.org

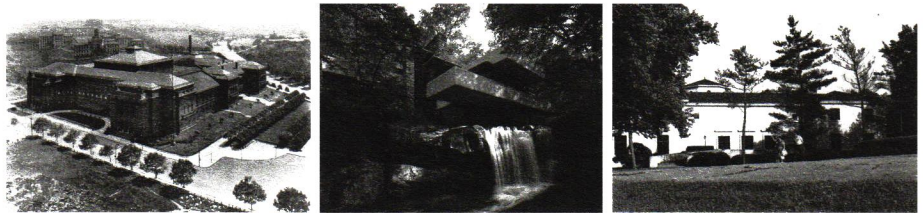
Volume 23, No. 1



PITTSBURGH'S FAVORITE ARCHITECTURE REVEALED!

Over the past two months, AIA Pittsburgh has brought to you and the public two photographic exhibits on display at SPACE Gallery – **America's Favorite Architecture** and **Pittsburgh's Favorite Architecture**. In case you missed the chance to view these, America's Favorite Architecture is a traveling exhibit that presents 150 images of the American Institute of Architects' public poll, conducted in conjunction with AIA150. Pittsburgh's Favorite Architecture is an exhibit of 25 of the most iconic buildings in our region, with an online gallery and the opportunity to vote for your favorite. The polling for Pittsburgh's Favorite Architecture closed on March 9th, and the top three choices were announced on March 12th at the closing reception at SPACE.

Pittsburgh's choice for favorite architecture was the **Carnegie Museum of Natural History**, followed by **Fallingwater** and the **Frick Fine Arts Building**. Thank you to all who voted and participated to make this exhibit a success! 



The Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Fallingwater, and the Frick Fine Arts Building

LOOKING FOR WORK? MAYBE WE CAN HELP...

Both AIA National and AIA Pittsburgh have services to help link employers looking to hire with architects looking for jobs. AIA has the Career Center, which is an electronic recruitment resource for the industry, and can be found at <http://careercenter.aia.org>. Locally, AIA Pittsburgh has an online Classified Ad page, which allows employers to post positions they are trying to fill. View ads at <http://www.aiapgh.org/aiapgh/classifieds.aspx>.

Additionally, AIA Pittsburgh has recently formed an Unemployed Architects Group, which meets for lunch biweekly at the AIA Pittsburgh offices downtown. You don't need to be a member to attend, just someone looking for work, or a community of others in a similar situation. To learn more or be added to the email list, contact Anne Swager at aswager@aiapgh.org. 