

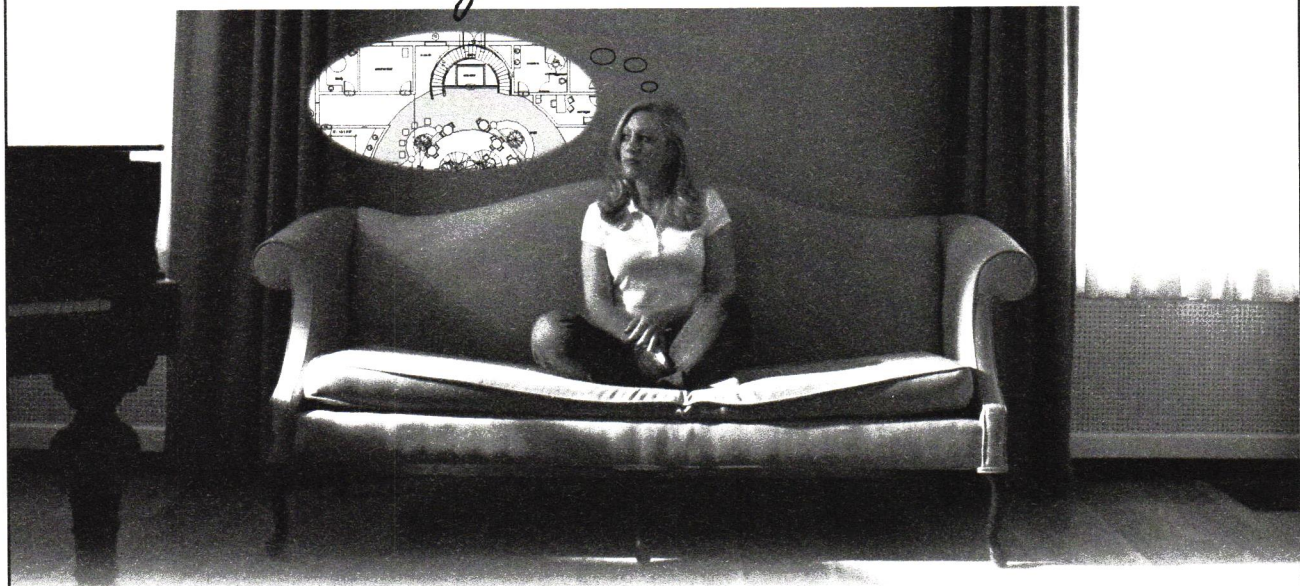
COLUMNS



DEC/09 The Design Awards Issue: Design Pittsburgh 2009 award winners |
The Architect as City Builder: A profile of Philadelphia's Alan Greenberger, FAIA |
Design Pittsburgh event photos | AIA Pittsburgh, a chapter of the American Institute of Architects

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HOMEFRONT

BY ANNE J. SWAGER, HON. AIA



2009 has been the hardest year I have ever experienced for the profession of architecture. Our concern began to grow in December 2008, when we heard rumblings from AIA National about how bad things were across the country. By this time the credit crunch had begun, which, as we all know, is the kiss of death for projects. I put my pencil to paper and reworked all of the budget calculations. I used a pretty simple and nonscientific technique: I cut every revenue line item by 20%. As always, finding the savings on the expense side was much more difficult. We cut production of this magazine to four times a year, froze employee wages, and ran lean and mean on travel expenses by sharing rooms and other expenses. In the early winter we started to see the unemployment numbers grow and by late winter/early spring it felt catastrophic.

By that time, we were already well into planning, re-planning, and reinventing. Unfortunately, my revenue projections were coming true, so we looked for new ways to meet member needs while keeping costs down. In response to unprecedented times, the Board of Directors courageously agreed to cease holding monthly membership meetings and move to a more committee intensive structure. We started an unemployed architects group and, like all of our committees, opened it to any architect, intern architect, interior designer, or related professional – members and non-members alike.

The group meets every other Friday and hosts a variety of speakers. Often times, speakers talk about subjects relating to unemployment – and just as often they don't. The discussions are always spirited and members of the group have begun to share their expertise with each other about networking, web design, and new business formation. For us, this group brings the AIA new vital energy.

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ON THE COVER: South Side Courtyard House by studio d'ARC architects, P.C., Photo: Massery Photography, Inc.




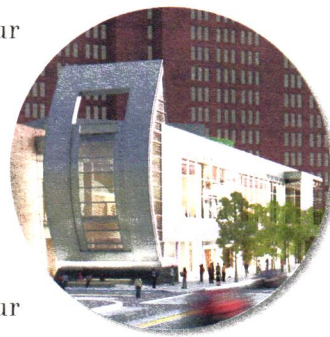
Out of necessity, we trimmed Design Pittsburgh from a series of events to just one evening. Through first vice-president Kevin Wagstaff's leadership, we secured Allison Williams, FAIA as the jury chair, and convinced the August Wilson Center to open their doors and let us exhibit the design boards for several days before our big evening. Our unemployed architects came through like gangbusters and helped with installation, registration, and the break-down of the exhibit.

It was tremendous to have qualified and enthusiastic help, but with such a radical change in programming, for several weeks leading up to the event we were all very concerned about the turn-out. We struggled with pricing; although the one ticket price was less expensive than the total of combined events in previous years, we were hoping that this choice was not cost prohibitive to our guests. And although the RSVPs were maddeningly slow at first, if you went to the event, you know the ending to this story.

It was a huge success! We had over 450 people. The venue worked perfectly. The exhibit lit up Liberty Avenue. You could still party or come into the auditorium and hear the awards ceremony. Rebecca Flora was genuinely excited to receive our Gold Medal and many of you attended her reception to thank her for her accomplishments.

I joked that evening that maybe all of you really thought the recession was over and that is why you turned out in such strength. I know that's not true. I think instead that we all came together to celebrate what is good. The August Wilson Center is a great new addition to the Cultural District. The projects on display show the care you have for your work and the winners showed how transformative your work can be.

As we move into another challenging year, I thank you for the opportunity to work with and for you as we all continue to reinvent ourselves and what we do in response to these unprecedented times. 



OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

BY CHIP DESMONE, AIA

Despite the historically challenging times faced by your AIA this year, we succeeded in maximizing our programming capabilities and opportunities to positively position our organization for the future. We improved outreach, and will continue to do so in our relationships with the public sector, students at local universities, and advocacy with our elected officials.

Excellent programming for the annual Build Pittsburgh convention helped us to maintain our attendance of over 200 participants. The keynote speaker James Cramer gave excellent recommendations for staying strong during changing times. Thanks to the efforts of our staff, we were able to provide complimentary attendance to our temporarily unemployed members.

Advocacy for our profession and its challenges were represented at our annual National Grassroots Convention in Washington, D.C. as well as our statewide convention in Harrisburg for Architect's Day. This extended to the local level during testimony at city council hearings, and will continue at our upcoming legislative breakfast briefing with locally elected officials.

Design Pittsburgh was organized this year by Kevin Wagstaff, AIA, our incoming President, who did a spectacular job. The awards jury was chaired by Allison Williams, FAIA – the architect for the August Wilson Center, where the event was held. The 89 entries showed the depth in exceptional quality of design coming from our members who received 17 awards for their achievements. The event saw staggering attendance, reaching over 450 people, an increase of



almost 25%. Despite today's economy, we maintained our robust sponsorship levels of previous years thanks to the tireless efforts of our revenue committee. Attendance records were also broken at our Gold Medal Reception. Nearly 150 people came and supported Rebecca Flora's efforts in moving Pittsburgh to the forefront of cities with multiple LEED certified buildings promoting a culture of sustainability. Other notable statistics for your AIA this year include...

- 3,800 attendees for America's Favorite Architecture exhibit at SPACE Gallery
- 4,000 visits to pittsburghsfavoritearchitecture.com in the month of October
- 1,200 votes for the People's Choice Award
- 119 fans on AIA Pittsburgh's Facebook page which generated 110 views in October
- Media coverage in the Post-Gazette, Pop City, Pittsburgh Magazine and WQED

Lastly, you should recognize that the Presidency of your chapter is merely a caretaker's job, for which I have been deeply honored to serve. The incredible effort required to make this organization so strong happens from the dedication of our brilliant staff, Becky Spevack, Rachael Kelley, and Elizabeth Shirey. Most importantly, the march of our continued success comes from the determined efforts of our Executive Director of 20 years (!), Anne Swager, Hon. AIA, without whom our organization would only perform a fraction of what it accomplishes today.

Thank you! 

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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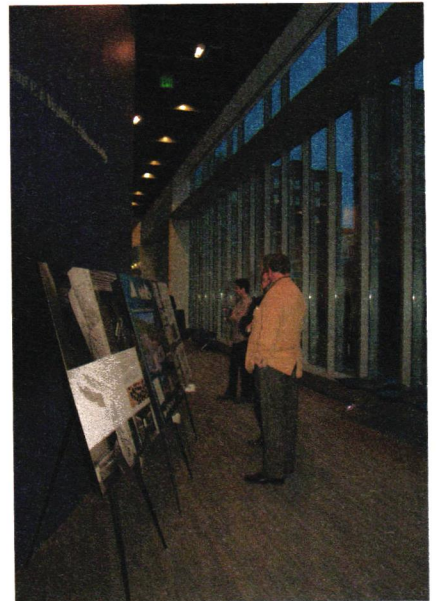


DESIGN PITTSBURGH 2009

Design Pittsburgh creates opportunities for architecture, design, and community to converge, and nowhere was this more true than at this year's celebration! The evening of October 22nd encapsulated three celebrations – the Gold Medal Reception, the Gala, and the Design Awards Ceremony – all held at the recently completed August Wilson Center for African American Culture. The evening began with an intimate reception to honor Gold Medal recipient Rebecca Flora, followed by Gala festivities, time to view this year's 89 design entries, and ended with lead juror and architect of the Center, Allison Williams, FAIA, providing jury commentary as each award was presented to an audience of more than 400. **C**



David Roth, AIA provides the music



Reviewing the projects

