

COLUMNS



SEP/10

A Sustainable Ideal: Local designers discuss how sustainability affects aesthetics | Into The Great Wide Open: Architects position themselves for the future | Design Pittsburgh 2010 Jurors | AIA Pittsburgh, a chapter of the American Institute of Architects

COLUMNS



Big thinking for a big world.

chatham UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE FOR GRADUATE STUDIES

Woodland Road . . . Pittsburgh, PA 15232

800-837-1290 . . . admissions@chatham.edu

MASTER of LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



- Post-professional degree offered for students with a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture or architecture; first professional degree offered for students with a bachelor's degree in any other discipline
- Curriculum prepares graduates to become eligible for landscape architecture registration exam
- Curriculum emphasizes environmental conservation, landscape design, planning and management, and sustainable development
- Learn to balance the natural and built environment, and to ensure a harmonious relationship between people and their urban, suburban, and rural landscapes
- Curriculum reflects the multi-disciplinary nature of the profession, and prepares each student to collaborate with other design fields including architecture, urban planning, and engineering

Chatham also offers a [MASTER OF ARTS IN LANDSCAPE STUDIES](#)

www.chatham.edu/mla

MASTERS Programs in INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE



MASTER of INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE

- For students with a bachelor's degree in a field other than interior design
- Prepares students to become interior designers who can transform a conceptual design idea through problem solving and graphic communication into a detailed solution that addresses human behavior, aesthetics, building technologies, and the health, safety, and welfare of the public

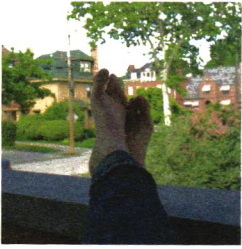
MS in INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE

- For students with an undergraduate degree in interior design or architecture
- An online program that allows students to explore a specific building type, user group, or design issue in depth and to develop a specialization
- Graduates are prepared for a future in higher education, a doctoral program, or a specialized career in interior design

www.chatham.edu/mia or www.chatham.edu/msia

HOMEFRONT

BY BECKY SPEVACK



Ted Mosby. You may not recognize the name, but I'm sure you'll recognize the archetype. He's an architect in his mid-thirties. He started his career working for a prominent architecture firm, in the hopes that working so closely with one so admired would impact his own work and give him the chance to be part of the design team for something great. Being let go from that firm, he decided to strike out and start his own practice out of his apartment, but found this to be more difficult than anticipated, unable to develop the much needed client base. After a period of struggle, he accepts a teaching position at a local, though noteworthy, university, enthusiastic to share his love of the subject to the next generation.

If you're still reading, by this point you are potentially racking your brain: Do I know a Ted Mosby? Is the name familiar? Have we met? Well, not likely, unless you're a fan of the sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*, in which he is one of the main characters. This character, while also trying to lead an honest and self-examined life, is a far cry from the portrayal of architects such as "Juror 8" in the 1957 film *12 Angry Men*. Just as the ways in which the profession is perceived has changed over the decades, so too has the profession. Perhaps most drastically over the last 10 years, advances in technology, shifts in the economy, and a redefining of the workplace has created a whole new work environment. Both of the main features in this issue address this change in their own ways. The first, "A Sustainable Ideal", takes a look at whether the trend towards greener building has influenced a design aesthetic. Our second feature, "Into the Great Wide Open" addresses this ever-changing world and how the role of architect is evolving to stay relevant. Just as Ted Mosby

continued page 2

SEP/10

In this Issue



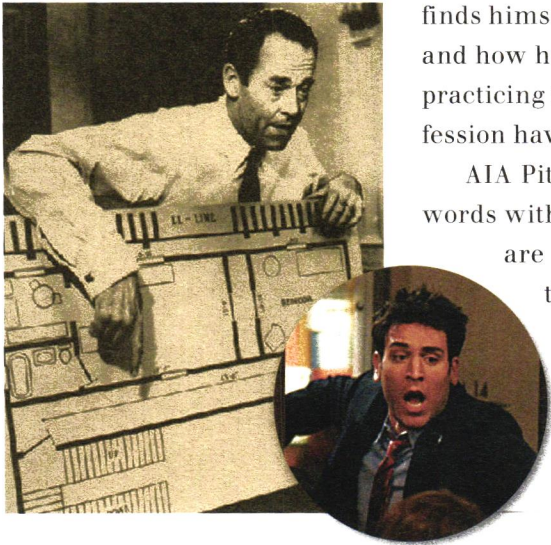
A Sustainable Ideal: Local designers

discuss how sustainability affects aesthetics page 7 | Into The Great Wide Open:


Architects position themselves for the future page 25 | Design Pittsburgh 2010

Jurors page 14 | Breaking Ground page 16





finds himself in a position to evaluate and re-evaluate his career and how he defines himself as ‘architect’, so too do many of you practicing in the real world stumble upon how shifts in the profession have impacted you.

AIA Pittsburgh and *Columns* hopes you continue to find the words within these pages resonant. Your thoughts and feedback are always welcome, and especially in this time, when there are more questions than answers, we would love to hear about your experiences as we navigate through this new landscape. My inbox is always open; I can be reached at bspevack@aiapgh.org. 



AVENUE APARTMENTS - BRADDOCK PA
A FALBO-PENROSE JOINT VENTURE
ROTHSCHILD DOYNO COLLABORATIVE

 **MISTICK CONSTRUCTION**

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
BUILDING COMMUNITIES FOR LIFE
mistickconstruction.com

THE VIRTUE OF SKEPTICISM

BY KEVIN WAGSTAFF, AIA

Most institutions demand unqualified faith; but the institution of science makes skepticism a virtue.”

– ROBERT K. MERTON, AMERICAN SOCIOLOGIST

My old college dictionary defines architecture as “the science, art, or profession of designing and constructing buildings, bridges, etc.” It is this marriage of disciplines that makes architecture so rich, and so difficult. The aesthetics of architecture has always gotten the lion’s share of the history, press, and glory. While the aesthetic priority largely continues today, the rapid rise of environmental concerns is changing how both the profession and the public think about architecture. The rise of environmental concerns is really a renewed focus on the scientific aspects of the complex chemistry that makes good architecture. Avant-garde innovations in form and surface made possible by computer aided design look increasingly self-indulgent and perhaps even irrelevant when considered through a framework that gives environmental performance equal consideration. This elevation of the science in architecture is challenging the profession to reconsider how we design good buildings and how we evaluate the merits of architectural work.



While we are making progress as a profession, I am often disappointed by architects and journalists making shallow or dubious claims regarding the sustainable features of a building. Too often imperatives of style are clearly in the driver’s seat and the performance aspects of the building are just compensating for a questionable decision driven by fashion. Prime examples are any number of new “green” residential towers with floor to ceiling glass on all sides of the building. I believe we need to take the responsibilities of science more seriously. Science demands rigor

– a systematic methodology based on evidence. Science is not based on faith or dogma. Carl Sagan captures the responsibility of science beautifully in his book, “The Demon-Haunted World”:

“If it is to be applied consistently, science imposes, in exchange for its manifold gifts, a certain onerous burden: We are enjoined, no matter how uncomfortable it might be, to consider ourselves and our cultural institutions scientifically – not to accept uncritically whatever we are told; to surmount as best we can our hopes, conceits, and unexamined beliefs; to view ourselves as we really are.”

In short Carl Sagan is calling for skepticism, not the false skepticism that serves only to defend a preconceived ideological position, but empirical skepticism that looks for evidence before accepting claims. This is a skill we all possess. As Mr. Sagan puts it:

“The tenets of skepticism do not require an advanced degree to master, as most successful used car buyers demonstrate. The whole idea of a democratic application of skepticism is that everyone should have the essential tools to effectively and constructively evaluate claims to knowledge. All science asks is to employ the same levels of skepticism we use in buying a used car or in judging the quality of analgesics or beer from their television commercials.”

It strikes me that scientific skepticism is much needed in our collective pursuit of sustainable design. The community of architecture should welcome new ideas, but subject them to rigorous scrutiny. We will most quickly advance the quality of building performance, and its successful synthesis with aesthetics, if we adopt the scientific approach – a delicate mix of openness and skepticism, encouraging experimentation and vigorous debate. **G**