

Karen A. Loysen, AIA

If I hadn't become an architect, I'd be a gentleman farmer.

Columns gets to know the new President of AIA Pittsburgh...



Firm: UDA Architects

School: Bachelor of Architecture, Carnegie Mellon University, 1979

First job: Roadside fruit and vegetable stand.

First architecture job: Jamrom-Keegan Associates, 1975.

If I hadn't become an architect: I'd be a gentleman farmer.

The best part of becoming an architect: The beginning of each job when you can let your imagination run unchecked about all of the potential of a project.

Favorite architect: Carlo Scarpa.

Building I wish I'd designed: Castlevicchio, Verona (Scarpa); Maison de Verre, Paris (Pierre Chareau).

I really wish I'd designed: Aalto's glass vase.

I've always wanted to tell my boss(es): They probably already know this, but I'd really rather start the work day around 9:00 or so.

I've always wanted to tell clients: Set your budget to build a quality building. It's worth the money.

The most annoying thing architects do: Agree to competing for the lowest possible fee.

Advice to young architects: Love making buildings.

Pittsburgh wish list: River quays by Daniel Burnham
an airport by Foster
a jail by Corbu
a science center by Behnisch
a bridge by Calatrava

Worst idea ever proposed for Pittsburgh: The gondola connecting Mount Washington to Three Rivers Stadium.

Best building in Pittsburgh: I can't pick just one. My favorites are the Hornbostel collection at Carnegie Mellon and The Pennsylvanian. The fluted metal columns inside the City-County Building are also a Hornbostel treat.

Building I'd like to blow up: (the first one) Sheraton Station Square.

Best gift for an architect: Money.

Favorite architecture book: *An Architecture of Reality*.

Someday I'd like to: Own 10 acres or so on Martha's Vineyard, grow flowers and raise goats.

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It isn't that belonging to the AIA is all giving. Not at all. In fact, it is very much about getting things back. Many aspects of belonging are self-serving, some with short term and some with longer term pay-backs. When you begin to think about the full range of things which the AIA does and what you receive, it's not a bad value. You certainly get more effect from your dues than if you would have spent them individually towards the same kinds of goals. And that is if you are purely a contributor of dues. Clearly, you get even more if you are an active participant.

It is true that many, if not all, activities and accomplishments of the AIA benefit all architects, whether or not they are members. The reason to join then is to be a participant. When you write those three letters "AIA" after your name you signify membership participation in the professional community of architects and in the collective activities of the AIA on behalf of architecture and architects. When you write "RA" after your name, you are an individual practitioner. That, I think, is the answer to the question. 🏠