

## PROFILE

### Sylvester Damianos, FAIA, National AIA Vice President

**Firm:** Damianos and Associates.

**Training:** Carnegie Institute of Technology, Bachelor of Architecture; Technological Institute of Delft, Graduate Study.

**Personals:** Married, three children.

**Awards, Honors:** Vice President, National AIA, 1987; Director, AIA 1985-87; Who's Who in America; Honor Award, Pgh. Chapter AIA for Engineers Club, 1983; Fellow AIA 1982; President's Award, Pgh. Chapter AIA 1981. [Ed.Note: These are only a few of his more recent awards. He has also received awards and prizes for his artwork and has held numerous one- or two-man shows. Most significant early awards include Fulbright Scholar, 1956 and the Stewart L. Brown Scholarship Award, 1955.]

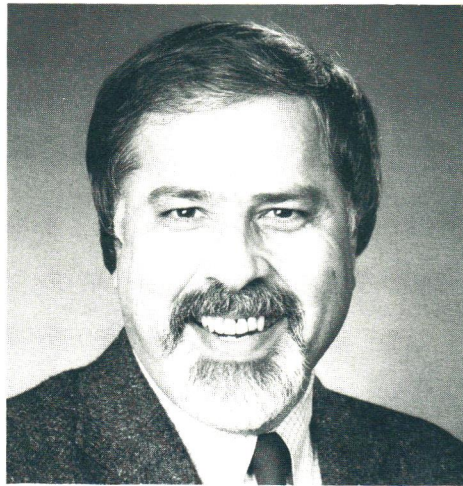
**Leisure Time Activities:** I still involve myself with art and I'm starting to re-acquaint myself with good music. There are times I get the urge to cook Chinese with my wife. I like to garden, play tennis, travel.

**Specialty:** I get involved with projects on a plane that takes me away from the details but allows me to see the big picture. I can get involved with the conceptual aspect of any project, whether or not I follow it in detail. I join in and become the firm critic. The national work and especially the juries have helped. My ability to respond quickly is getting better. I can look at something and say, "It's on course," or help change the course. That's my main value to the firm right now.

**When and Why You Chose Architecture as a Career:** I never had a lifelong ambition to be an architect because I really didn't know what an architect was. That points to the failure of our profession to inform and educate those who aren't exposed to it by other means. I was being pushed by my principal to go into engineering, but I didn't know what engineering was either. Finally, I ended up in a Vocational High School, taking drafting. It wasn't until I finished high school and my Dad said, "You've got to go to college," that I tried to enroll at Pitt in aeronautical engineering. They wouldn't take me because of the vocational background. I decided to take a drafting job, but my Dad said, "Try Carnegie Tech." I figured that if Pitt wouldn't take me I'd never get into engineering at Tech. But I'd always liked construction, so I applied to the School of Architecture. It was two weeks before the opening of school so they waived the requirements. It was that chancy.

**Favorite Project or Building:** In terms of renovations or recycled buildings, I like the North Side Library and Public Theater and the gallery for the Pittsburgh Plan for Art. Of the new buildings, the Grandview Towers on Mount Washington is very satisfying. None of these are perfect. It's like any piece of artwork—if you're totally satisfied, you're finished.

**Favorite Pittsburgh Building:** I like Paul Schweikher's Student Union Building at



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Duquesne. Although I didn't have him as Head of Department, his philosophy of architecture, his approach to design is something I've always related to. He could take basic materials [cement] and refine the use of them to a very successful extent. It's a personal satisfaction because that's what I employ in my art. It's what you do with your materials that matters. **Favorite Building in the World:** The chapel at Ronchamp, by Le Corbusier. It was being built when I was in school. When I first saw it in a magazine, I didn't think much of it. But

when I went to Europe on a Fulbright I went to see it and I've never forgotten it.

**Most Enjoyable Aspect of Architecture:** I enjoy taking a problem, resolving it, creating a design that satisfies the needs of a client. It's an absolute thrill to take something that's presented in words, convert that into a program and then into a set of documents and have a building follow. The whole process is a thrill.

**Least Enjoyable:** The paperwork is the least enjoyable—the administrative process: contracts, the necessity to document each day, the insurance coverage you have to have, and invoicing of services done. The entire paperwork process is just unbelievable.

**World's Greatest Architect:** Le Corbusier. His architecture did not rely on materials. He was creating designs and buildings in areas without skilled craftsmen yet he pulled off these magnificent concepts.

**Most Aesthetically Pleasing City:** In historical terms, I'd select the city of Thera in San Turini, Greece. It's a lovely garden on top of a very high mountain. In today's terms, I think Pittsburgh is shaping up as one of the best.

**Advice to a Student of Architecture:** Be patient and broaden your base by knowing as much as you can about business, marketing and banking. These will enhance your skills and abilities in architecture. To be an architect in the old sense may not be enough. The more diversified an architect can be, the better his practice will be.

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