

Debatable Progress

Although Mr. Arnold's points ring true ("Are We Making Any Progress?", January, p. 82), one cannot help pointing out that our disposable society holds no value to people working as "tradesmen."

I spent 5½ years in a shop doing things the "old-fashioned" way, learning many skills that are now deemed obsolete. When you consider the options there are, who would choose to toil as my father did for over 37 years only to wind up with a meager pension (only propped up by Uncle Sam, since the company went out of business), instead of finding a more lucrative profession?

Also consider that since all of our friends in Congress have auctioned off much of what is left in our country, there is little incentive for younger people to aspire to labor in a shop, whether dark and grungy or bright and heated, only to be laid off after two years due to market inequities.

Gary Kiley

It's good to see this type of opinion piece ("Are We Making Any Progress?"). I would have preferred he had commented on how bad basic design plan quality and content has gotten in the last 15 or so years—and continues to worsen. I have taken a position in that period of time not to accept it, and the reaction has been generally negative from other professionals; so I concluded long ago that it was laziness.

As we work in most cases with basic structure, as is the case with the majority of commercial buildings, it is disconcerting that the functional quality of plans is so bad. We work with others' designs and do our own, and for more than 30 years have had a good method to critique ourselves. I believe it is as simple as caring about what you do.

It was probably 8-10 years ago that I wrote AISC about this issue. I received a letter in response that was generally favorable, relative to its content, but I have seen no appeal to the design professionals to get back on track.

**Phil Fetzer, V.P. Sales
Florida Welding Fabricators &
Erectors, Inc.**

On Architects and Engineers

Your January Editor's Note column brings to mind architect Leopold Eidlitz's (1823–1908) critique of 19th Century American Beaux Arts "starchitecture."

American architecture is the art of covering one thing with a second to imitate a third, which, if genuine, would not be desirable. "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose."

**Jeremy Scott Wood, AIA
Weston, Mass.**

In response to Scott Melnick's insightful January Editor's Note, our experience with Gehry and Associates has been limited but positive. The architect's design for the Jay Prizker Pavilion trellis (an elaborate, open canopy) called for 570 tons of steel pipe as large as 20 in. in diameter to be curved in two planes with multiple radii.

Long before the design was finalized, engineers at Skidmore, Owings and Merrill consulted us about curving the steel pipe. Although Chicago Metal could have followed the original design concept, our architecturally trained estimator suggested that each arch be curved in only one plane, and that the radii—ranging from 100 ft to 1,000 ft—change at each nodal junction.

This design change simplified the geometry for curving, fabrication, and erection, thereby reducing cost and construction time without compromising aesthetics or function. Gehry and Associates agreed to the change and even added their own twist: Each arch has a slight sideways tilt.

John Zils of SOM said Chicago Metal's advice "was a significant contribution to the project." As the result of the cooperation and teamwork of all parties, the work was performed with such precision that the structural steel fabricator, Acme Structural; the erector, Danny's Construction; and the general contractor, Walsh Construction, all remarked how "the trellis pieces went together so well."

**George Wendt, President
Chicago Metal Rolled Products**

Good Tips

"59 Tips and More for Economical Design" (January, p. 57) was an excellent article. I know none of it is new, but I thought it was well presented, concise, and beneficial to fabricators, detailers, and engineers. It is similar to a lot of sessions we have done previously, but this approach seems different. It would make a good session or even short course!

**Larry W. Jeffords, President,
Jeffords Steel and Engineering Co.**