



May 11, 2007

Via e-mail (kristen@aiany.org)

Ms. Kristen Richards
Editor-in-Chief, *Oculus*
AIA New York
Center For Architecture
536 LaGuardia Place
New York, NY 10012

Re: “Epitaph for a Critic” published in Winter 2005/06 *Oculus*

Dear Ms. Richards:

In the Winter 2005/06 issue, Sheri Olson, FAIA, described a dispute arising from an architectural criticism she wrote for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (“Epitaph for a Critic”). In her *Oculus* piece, Ms. Olson included the following erroneous description of a proceeding before the AIA’s National Ethics Council (NEC): “When the situation became public, an outraged local architect filed a formal complaint with National AIA’s Ethics Committee against the firm for backroom intimidation and won (the firm was required to write a public letter of apology).” In fact, however, no ethics violation was ever found by the NEC regarding the dispute described and, because of confidentiality constraints described below, the NEC has made no public statement on this matter until now.

This letter has been submitted to *Oculus* only after careful deliberation. The Institute’s Bylaws provide the NEC with exclusive authority to rule on charges that any Member has violated the Institute’s Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. The Bylaws also require that any such charge and all related records and proceedings be confidential. All AIA Members are bound to follow the Bylaws, and each party to an ethics proceeding is specifically required to agree to maintain confidentiality. Exceptions to the confidentiality requirement may occur (1) when a violation is found and certain penalties are imposed or (2) when the Institute’s President determines that the best interests of the Institute require release of information.

The confidentiality requirement serves multiple purposes. Confidentiality of ethics proceedings prevents the tarnishing of professional reputations when no ethics violation is ultimately found by the NEC. Confidentiality also serves to prevent the dissemination of inaccurate information about ethics proceedings. In this instance, in accordance with

Page 2
Ms. Kristen Richards
May 11, 2007

the Bylaws, AIA President R.K. Stewart, FAIA, has authorized the NEC to respond to Ms. Olson's statement in the *Oculus* article.

The members of the National Ethics Council and the Institute regret that this matter must once again be raised in a public forum but believe that it is required to maintain the integrity of the ethics complaint process and set the record straight.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phillip T. Markwood". The signature is written in a cursive style and is set against a light gray rectangular background.

Phillip T. Markwood, FAIA
Chair, National Ethics Council

cc: Fredric Bell, FAIA, AIA New York Executive Director
(via e-mail bell@aiany.org)