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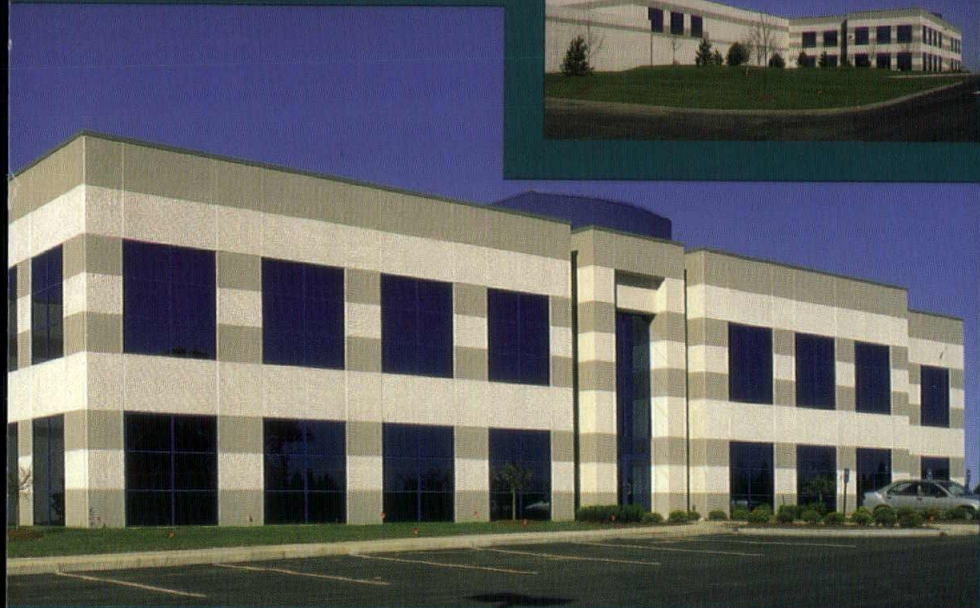
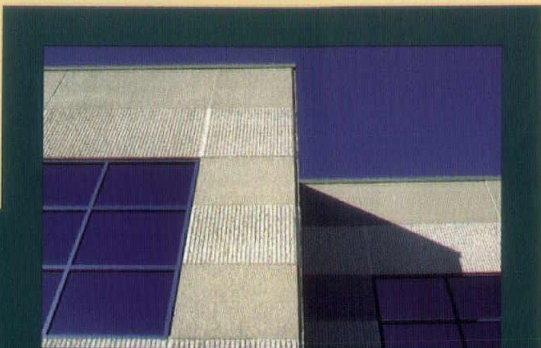
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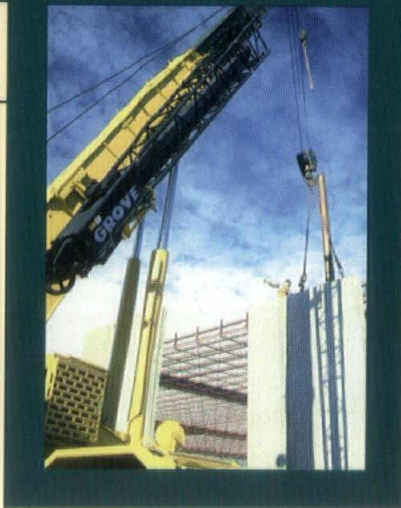
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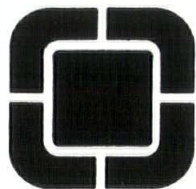
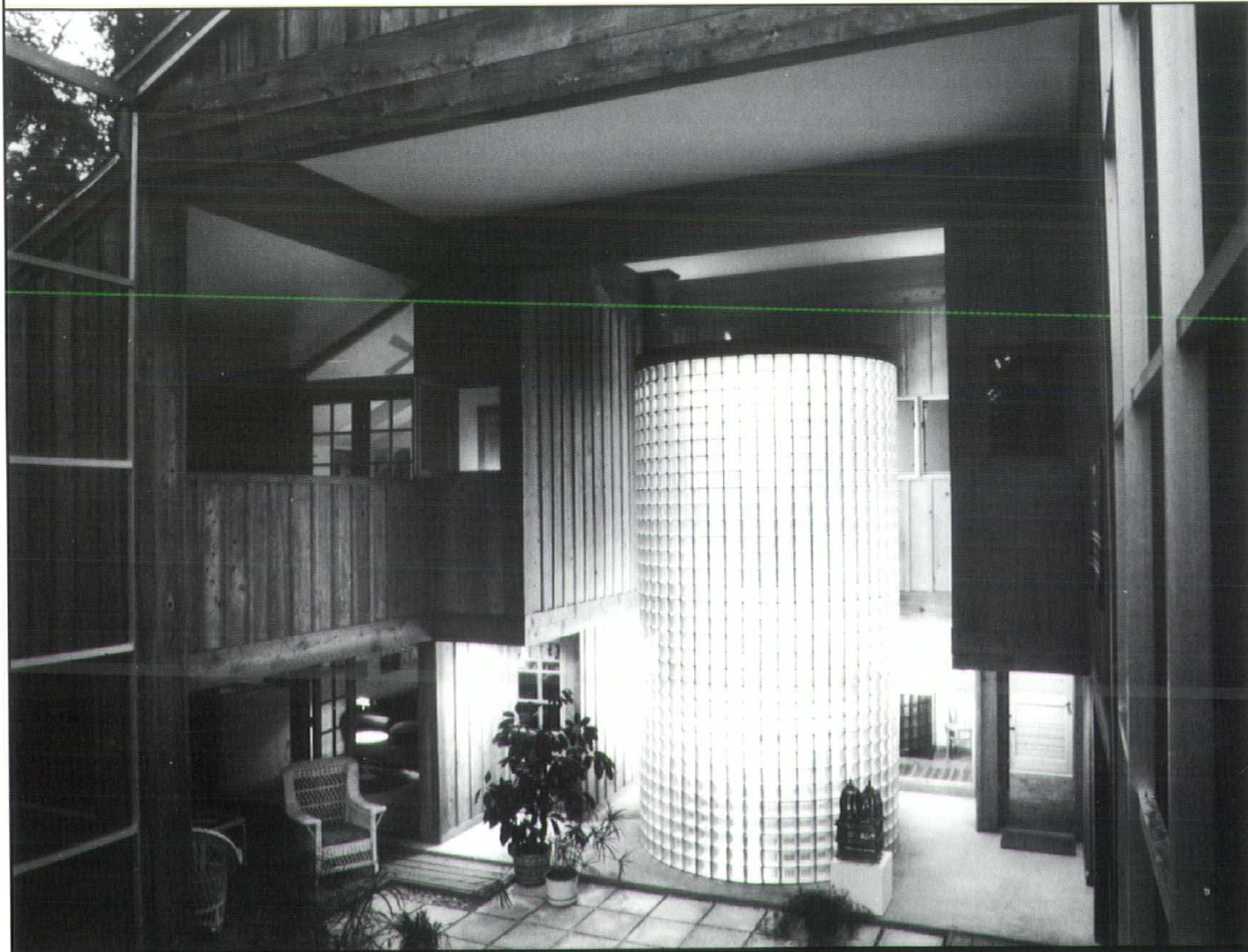
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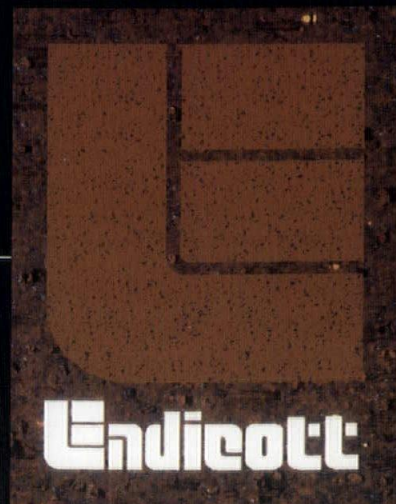
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# Architects

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Issue No. 98:226

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Jane Tewes

**Art Director**  
Kent Mauck

**Publisher**  
Kent Mauck

Mauck+Associates  
16 3rd Street, Suite 200  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
515/243-6010

**Advertising Manager**  
Jane Nieland

Mauck+Associates  
15/243-6010  
Box 515/243-6011

**Printing**  
Wheelerland Companies, Montezuma, Iowa

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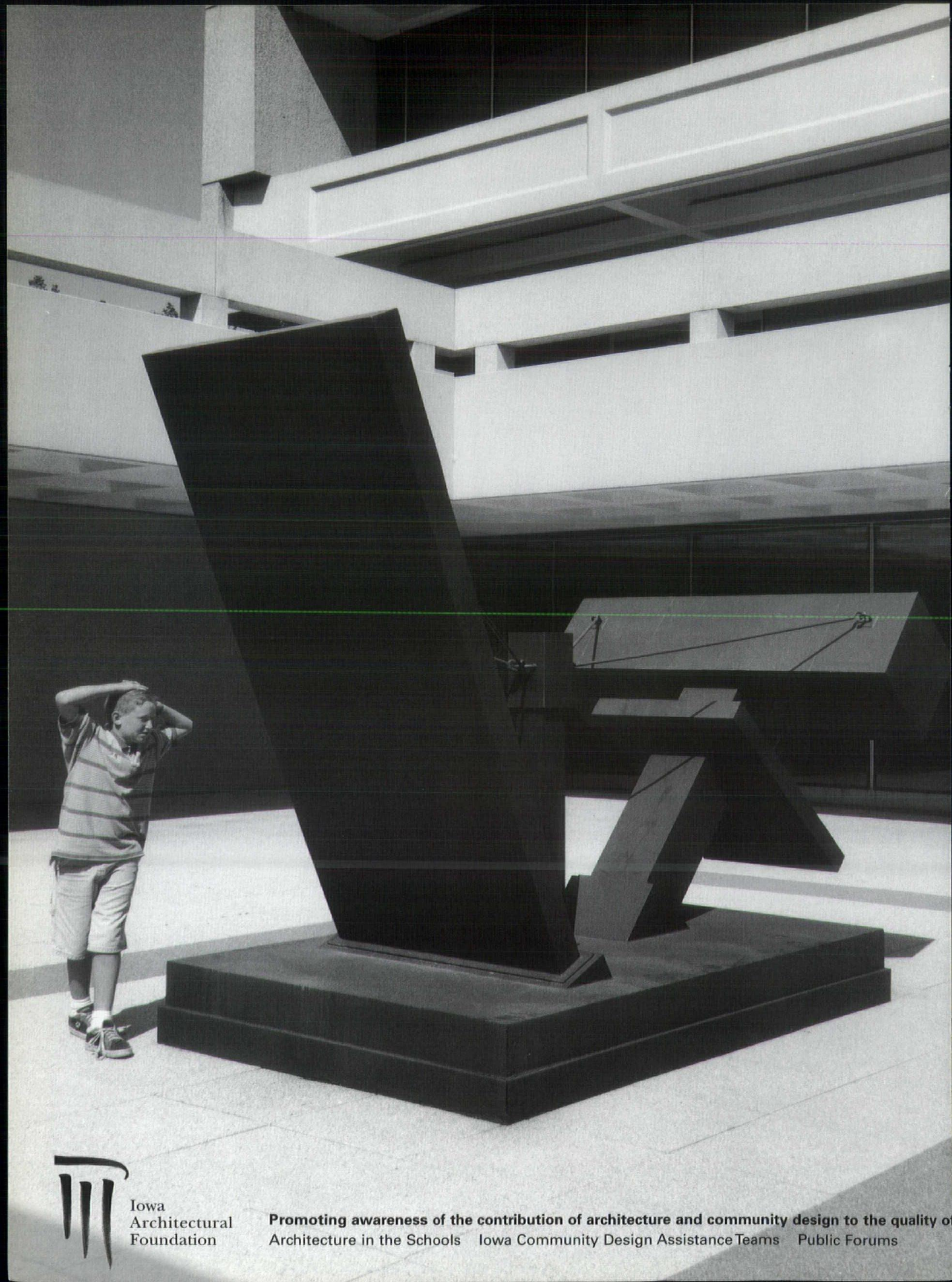
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### Cover

EMC Insurance  
Companies Expansion,  
Des Moines, Iowa,  
Brooks Borg Skiles  
Architecture Engineer-  
ing. Photo by Farshid  
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Architectural  
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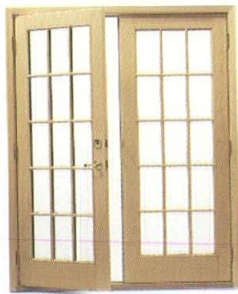
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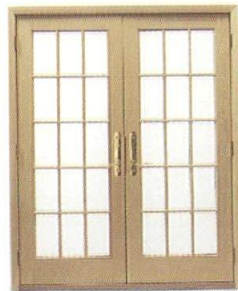


*"I'd like all wood,  
inside and out."*



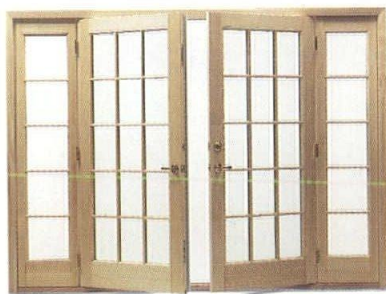
"OK."

*"Oh, and I want it to  
be really secure."*



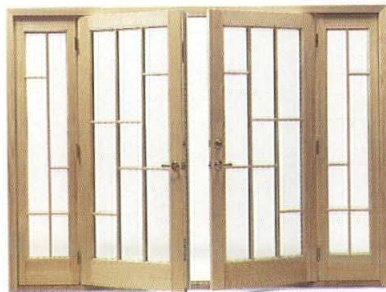
"OK."

*"Maybe some  
sidelights."*



"OK."

*"You know,  
a different  
design for the  
panes might  
be better."*



"OK."

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Part Number

**C**ompanies, through most of the 1990s, have been adjusting to tight business markets. Downsizing set the tone to cope with slipping market shares and heightened competition. As companies restructured, they suppressed the notion of paternalism. Employees were to be responsible for their careers, to acquire all the necessary skills, yet be prepared to change jobs, employers, or even industry. After several years of tight labor markets, businesses rediscovered the value of corporate loyalty. However, surveys, from 1990 to 1997, by International Survey Research Corporation, show that companies have not overcome a deep skepticism among employees that employers will toss them out with the next shift in strategy.

Businesses are not pretending to offer a lifelong employment, but more of a mutual commitment between employer and employee. Employers are trying all sorts of programs to cement a new notion of loyalty. Companies are reaching out to help workers develop skills to advance their careers; making it easier to change jobs within the company; persuading their temporary workers to stay onboard; and redeploy workers from downsized units to expanding ones.

Many workers were asked to sacrifice community and stability in the name of efficiency. Growing companies have recognized that the culture of modern workers has become detached. A worker operating with

distributed loyalties and allegiances is likely to shift toward an employer with the best perks. With today's trend in the workforce to switch jobs regularly, those that remain will need more attention to stay happy. "Why would anyone choose to live or work in anything other than a stimulating, revitalizing environment?" says Bob Propst, inventor of Action Office furniture, a 1960s predecessor to the cubicle.

Individuals come to work in an office environment for many reasons, most of them for the interaction that is human nature; to learn from each other; the nuances of face to face work; and the creativity of group work. This issue of *Iowa Architect* magazine features Iowa companies that recently built a pledge to offer workers more than just satisfying their task requirements. Nevertheless, ultimately the workers will judge whether they have created a social environment conducive to a sense of citizenry and commitment that deserve their corporate loyalty.

*Stephen Knowles, AIA*  
*Editor, Iowa Architect*

**IOWA Architect**

With today's trend in the workforce to switch jobs regularly, those that remain will need more attention to stay happy. "Why would anyone choose to live or work in anything other than a stimulating, revitalizing environment?"

# arts

## Kisho Kurokawa

Marking the finale of the Japan 2000 celebration, the Art Institute of Chicago presents "Japan 2000: Kisho Kurokawa" from Oct. 17, 1998, through Jan. 3, 1999. Organized by the Royal Institute of British Architects and circulated internationally, the exhibition examines the work of one of Japan's most distinguished architects and his influence on Japanese design.

## Mary Cassatt

A total of 125 paintings, pastels, drawings and prints by American artist Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) will be on view at the Art Institute of Chicago from Oct. 13, 1998, through Jan. 10, 1999. "Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman" overviews the career of the only American painter invited to exhibit in the Impressionist exhibitions in Paris. Cassatt's close friendship and working relationship with such seminal figures as Degas, Monet and Pissarro place her at the heart of one of the most important artistic movements in Western history.

## Mariko Mori

The Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago will present the work of contemporary Japanese artist Mariko Mori from Oct. 10, 1998, through March 14, 1999. "Mariko Mori" will feature approximately 15 works including installations, video works and large scale photographs drawing upon elements of popular Japanese culture.

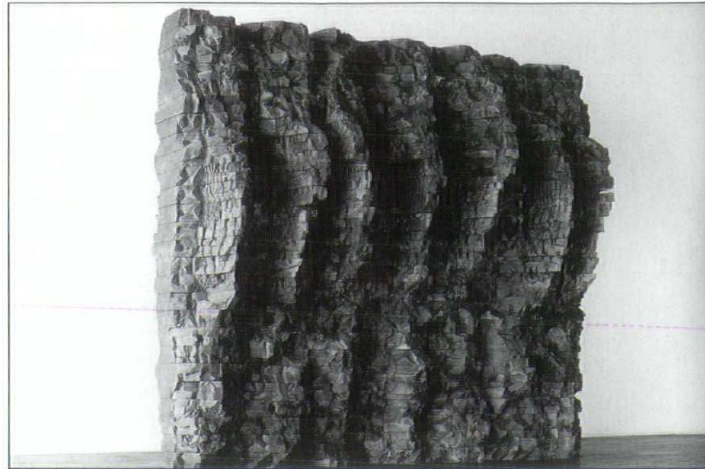
## Jose Bedia

As part of the 20/21 series investigating rising contemporary artists and the vitality and diversity of recent regional, national and international art, the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, Neb., will present "20/21: Jose Bedia," Nov. 14, 1998, through Jan. 31, 1999. Bedia's powerful paintings and mixed media installations derive from a transcultural Cuban heritage and from spiritual experiences sought in the teachings of Tibetan monks, Lakota Sioux and African elders.

## Monet and Bazille

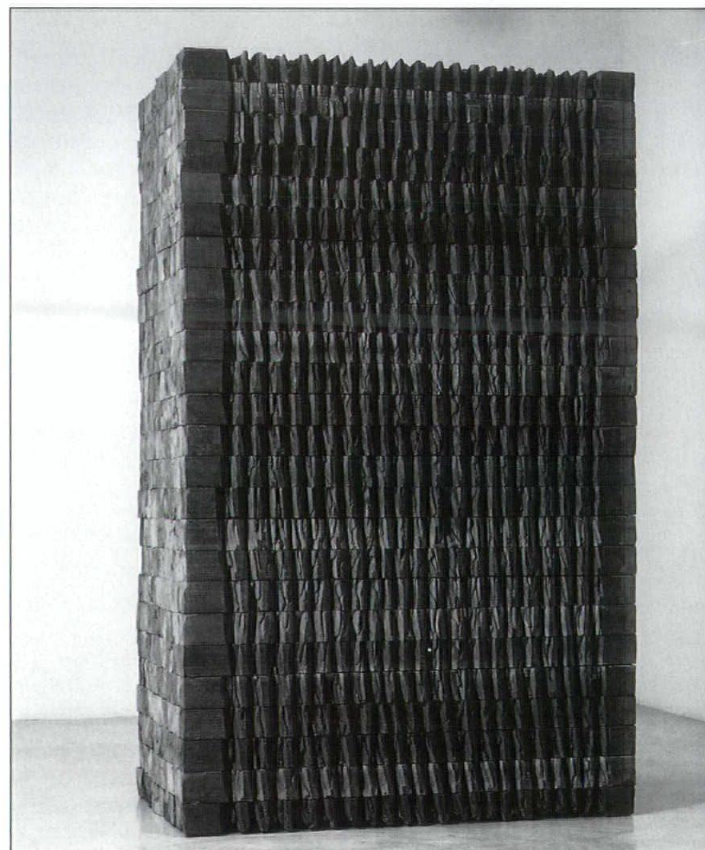
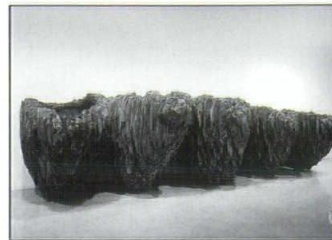
"Claude Monet and Frederic Bazille: Early Impressionism and Collaboration in the Studio" examines the brief but momentous relationship between two of the 19th centuries' best known artists. The exhibition, on view at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Ga., from Oct. 20, 1998, through Jan. 17, 1999, includes 25 paintings created between 1864 and 1870. During this time period, the two artists shared studios in Paris and struggled to develop the new style of painting that later became known as Impressionism.

PAUL MANKINS, AIA



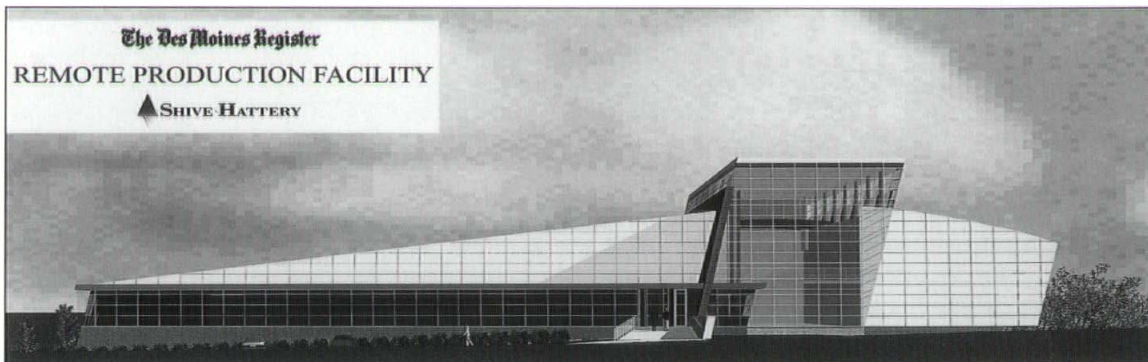
## Ursula von Rydingsvard

A group of larger than life sculptures by contemporary artist Ursula von Rydingsvard will be shown at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art through March 28, 1999. The exhibition, "Ursula von Rydingsvard," features seven of the artist's massive and mysterious configurations, five of which will be installed outdoors in the Kansas City Sculpture Park. The artist is known for her monumental works in cedar and recently completed her first outdoor work for Microsoft Corporation in Redmond, Wash.



## GreatAmerica Building

Construction is underway on the new 8-story, 150,000-square-foot GreatAmerica Building, designed by OPN Architects, in downtown Cedar Rapids. The project, located near the Cedar River, kicks off the first phase of extensive riverfront development. The building design is very site specific, with a strong urban-sensitive facade on First Street facing downtown and an equally strong geometric statement facing east across the river. The building is clad with a multicolored reflective glass curtain wall and granite aggregate precast base.

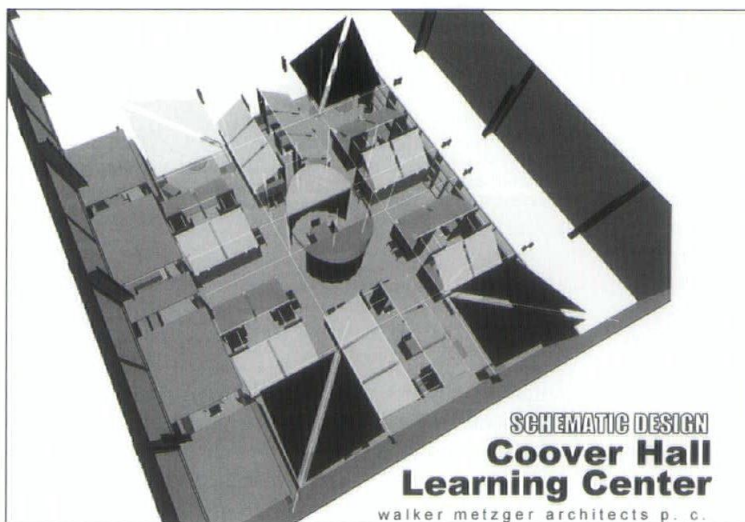


## The Des Moines Register Remote Production Facility

Shive-Hattery's West Des Moines office has completed the design for The Des Moines Register's remote production facility. This 120,000-square-foot building will

contain all of the manufacturing departments necessary to produce and ship the daily newspaper. A primary purpose of the facility is to house a state-of-the-art press.

The building is clad in metal wall and roof panels, precast concrete and glass curtain wall.



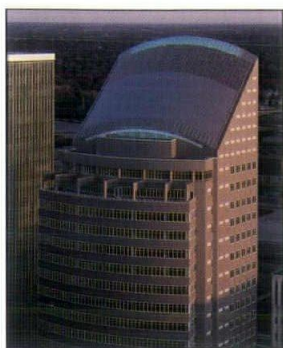
## Coover Hall Learning Center

Iowa State University and the College of Electrical Engineering commissioned Walker Metzger Architects to remodel 3,700-square feet of the former Rotating Electrical Machinery Laboratory in Coover Hall. Color, texture, creative lighting and the varying volumes create an engaging "creative village" to inspire students. The new space will create an "active learning center," including eight learning clusters and 28 teaching assistant workstations.

PORTFOLIO

# Design Equals Technology

EMC INSURANCE COMPANIES EXPANSION



**With its expressive various forms, the EMC Insurance building is definitely a needed structure in downtown Des Moines. This project encapsulates current modernist design with technology to create a building for the entire next century.**

**Right: A clean, well-lighted place. Sunlight pours through and illuminates the gridded interior panels that recall the exterior grids of steel and glass—an ordered aesthetic is established.**

**Project:** EMC Insurance Companies Expansion, Des Moines, Iowa

**Architect:** Brooks Borg Skiles Architecture Engineering, Des Moines, Iowa

**Design Team:** Rod Nelson, AIA, managing partner; William Anderson, AIA, partner in charge of design; Steven Strassburg, AIA, project designer/project architect

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**Exterior Envelope Contractor:** Architectural Wall Systems Co.

**General Contractor:** Neumann-Kiewit Constructors

**Mechanical Contractor:** Baker Mechanical, Inc.

**Photographer:** Farshid Assassi

MARK E. BLUNCK

The evolution of a skyline is a curious and often haphazard process. For decades, a single building will be the dominant feature, and in one bold stroke, a new structure will arise to completely alter the landscape. Downtown Des Moines has experienced a transformation in its skyline: The most dramatic change occurred in 1975 with the Cor-Ten steel-clad Ruan Center. The building never really changed to all those amazing colors promised by the architect, but it is an adequate late example of the glass and steel slab concept prevalent throughout the post-war era. The 801 Grand Avenue building, built in 1990 by Hellmuth, Obata, Kassabaum, is a cookie-cutter type seen nearly everywhere around the country, with the proverbial multisided form capped by a postmodern inspired pointy little hat.

The ultimate challenge for a client and architect in creating a new office building in an urban environment is to maximize square footage within a tightly controlled structural envelope, and yet design a unique form unseen in the skyline. The Des Moines firm of Brooks Borg Skiles Architecture Engineering has accomplished such a feat in a visually exciting 20-story project for EMC Insurance Companies.

In the initial stages of the process, the firm offered several different design options to the client and discussed both the positive and negative implications of each proposal. It was decided within the firm that the new building should be parallel to the existing grid, and that its unique form would already achieve the object quality desired by the client. The result is a welcome and distinct addition to the downtown area—a building that offers both a modernist use of form and advanced technological systems to achieve the goal of a 100-year building.

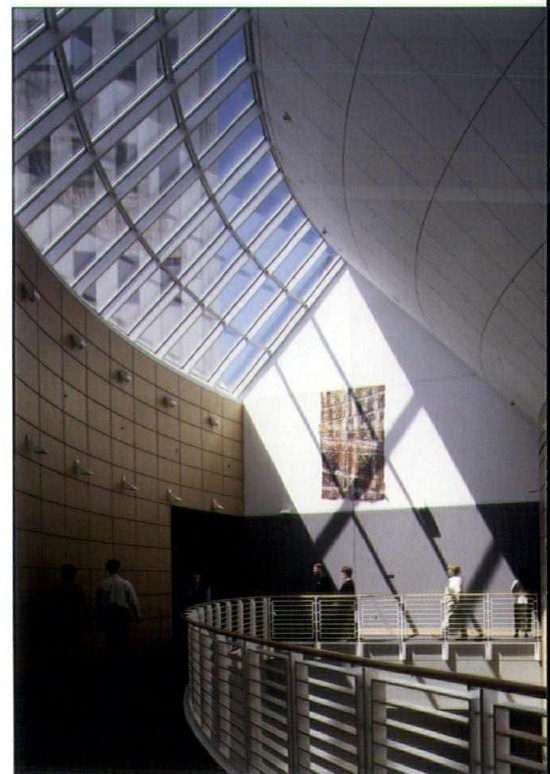
The EMC building is a skillful composition of line, curve and angle, with each form clearly expressed in juxtaposition to an adjacent section. The curved north horizontal curtain wall encloses open office spaces, and the fenestration banding enhances the relatively modest height of the structure, as this section is in scale to the nearby Hub Tower. At the top of this north wall is an abrupt 45-degree angled roof section, not merely sliced straight across its apex, but topped by a curved band of windows on the southern elevation. The curvilinear effect of the north side is countered by a southern slab with recessed glazing near the top and a curved curtain wall reiterating the opposite side form and bisecting the flat wall.

At ground level, a colonnade mediates the scale of a 400-foot high structure and metal canopies recall the angles and forms employed on other parts of the building. Inventive approaches were utilized in the positioning of skywalk and handicapped accesses to provide a secure environment. The interior is most


impressive at the second floor skywalk level, as atrium is created at the north/south and east/west junctures, enabling one to peer up to the striking curlicue lights at the top. The interior materials consist of environmentally sensitive grids of techgrain wall cladding, visually connecting the interior with the exterior curtain wall. A Mac Hornecker sculpture entitled "Prairie Wind," is located within the 2-story lobby on the northern side.

The utilization of non-endangered woods for the interior is actually a material and philosophical extension of the building technology ethic employed in many aspects of construction. Since the client desired a building with a century life span, advanced systems were used in the project that will allow the structure to endure with minimal maintenance. The visual aspect of this is the Rainscreen cladding and Vision Wall system. Nearly all buildings experience pressure differences along their walls, with the negative interior pressure attempting to draw in moisture from the positive exterior pressure. In the Rainscreen system, exterior and interior pressures are equal and 95 percent of the water is screened off, away from insulation and sealants that are not exposed to ultraviolet rays, further prolonging the life of the building.

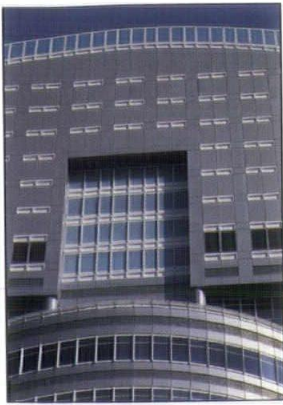
The curtain wall glazing consists of Visionwall





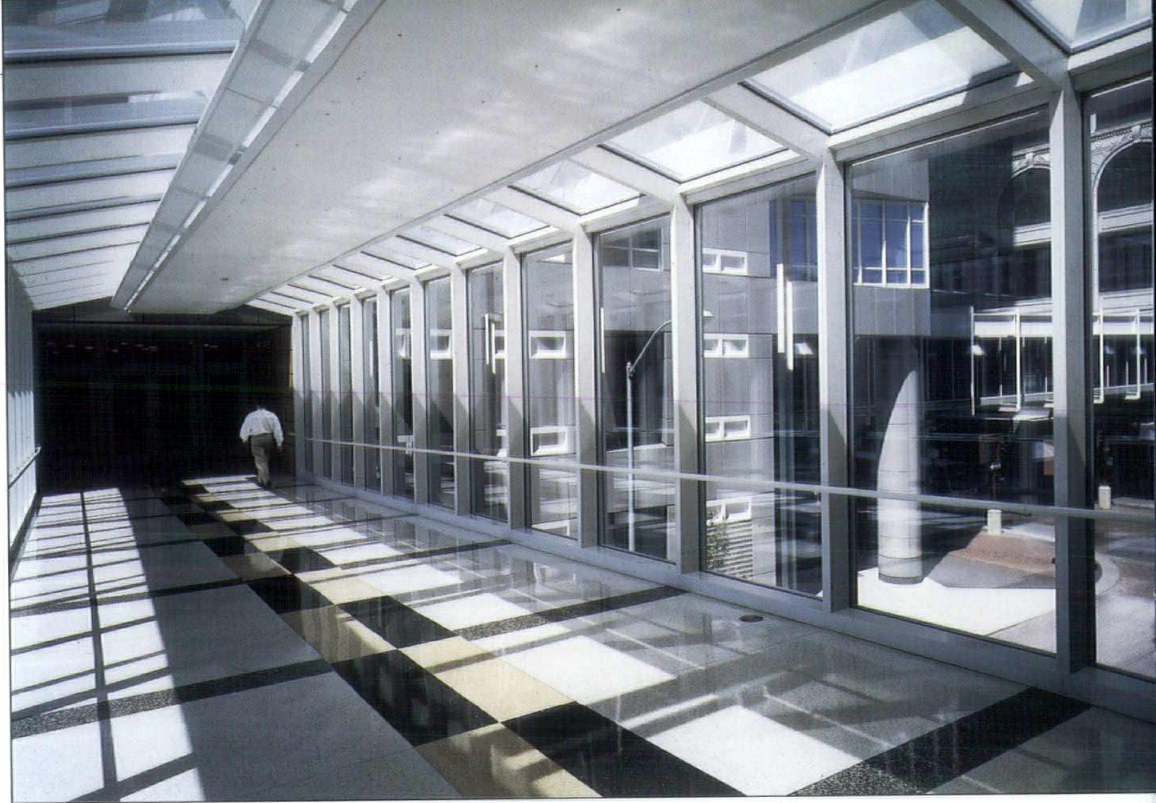


The ultimate challenge in creating a 20-story office building in an urban environment is to maximize square footage within a tightly controlled structural envelope, and yet design a unique form unseen in the skyline.



**Above:** The angled roof section is topped by a curved band of windows on the southern elevation.

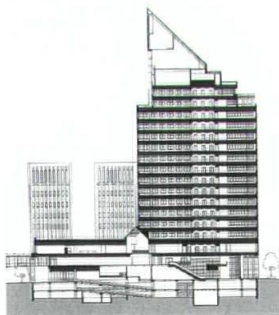
**Upper Right:** The skywalk structure is pulled away from the Visionwall glass.



**Right:** At ground level, a colonnade mediates the scale of a 400-foot high structure.



**Below:** View to East.



MARK E. BLUNCK

high-performance glass with an R-8 value and acoustical properties of concrete block. The window is fabricated with two panes of glass three inches apart; suspended in between the panes are two films one inch apart, creating a total of three 1-inch air spaces. This glass technology reduces the HVAC load by 20 percent, and was approximately 25 percent higher in initial costs. However, the payback period is estimated at only 2.5 years—a small price to pay for a structure designed to last a century. The skywalk connection also employs the Visionwall system and the HVAC loads have also been decreased in that public area.

Hidden beneath the dramatic sloped top of the EMC building is a state-of-the-art HVAC system that reduces energy consumption, thereby lessening the

environmental impact of the building—a concern carried throughout the design and construction. Office buildings require year-round cooling, and this project, a low temperature (10 degrees cooler than conventional systems) air distribution network was designed to greatly reduce air quantities, duct size and fan horsepower. The fan itself is a tested aerodynamic design reducing space, horsepower and providing quiet operation. This colder air requires a special high induction low temperature air diffuser in the conditioned spaces, providing the same air throw as a conventional diffuser with a smaller amount of air.

The chiller and ice storage system provides peak cooling; ice is manufactured at night, thereby reducing energy demand and associated costs during peak hours. One chiller can handle the entire building cooling load by making ice at night and cooling during the day. Heating is accomplished by circulating hot water through a heating water supply and return loop. Ten of the 12 boilers are piped in a separate loop to a heat exchanger providing hot water for the building, and the other 10 boilers serve heating needs and the hydro snow melt system heat exchanger.

This new addition to the Des Moines skyline is visually stunning, with its myriad of tightly constructed forms embracing one another in a structure utilizing powerful geometry to express itself as an object unlike its neighbors. The use of advanced building and system technologies is admirable for its appreciation of the true meaning of modernism—appropriate design with appropriate technology for the age in which we build.

—Mark E. Blunck is a 10-year contributor to *Iowa Architect*. His article on the current work of the Eames firm now appears in *Echoes Magazine*.

curve and angle. Metal canopies recall the angles and forms employed on other parts of the building.



# Corporate Construction

THE PRINCIPAL FINANCIAL GROUP: CORPORATE FOUR

**Below Far Left: The building and plaza create an energized civic space.** Photo: David Meyer

**Below Far Right: Even slight environmental shifts in wind or humidity alter fog produced by the mist fountain. The ephemeral element contrasts with the aesthetic rigor played out in the plaza and building.** Photo: David Meyer

When a corporate client is most widely known for providing insurance—an arena not generally associated with creative endeavors—inspired, community-responsive construction is not likely to result. Yet that is exactly what can happen when the client's objective goes beyond creating an ordinary facility.

Having decided to add to its corporate campus in the early 1990s, the Principal Financial Group chose to create a lively facility that would contribute to the roster of architecturally significant structures in Iowa. Gregg Narber, senior vice president and chair of the art committee, recently explained, "We wanted a world-class facility that would serve our business needs and also create an inviting urban space for Des Moines." Helmut Jahn, FAIA, was hired to design the building; Peter Walker and Partners was contracted for the landscape architecture; and Maya Lin was commissioned to create a work of art in conjunction with the building. The individual visions and collaboration of the three resulted in one of Des Moines' most significant corporate constructions in recent years.

The building's greatest achievement is the way it creates an energized civic space. Three key features contribute to its success in accomplishing this: 1) the manner in which it both expresses its site and is com-

pletely integrated into it; 2) the intellectual and physical journeys it provides; and 3) the gift it offers the community as a gathering place.

Officially called "Corporate Four," the structure belies its dull name. Its shape suggests its nickname, "Z" building." Each end of the "Z" runs parallel to the street it faces: Seventh Street to the east and Eighth Street to the west. The interior, connecting stroke of "Z" is bordered by Park Street to the north and a dynamic 4.4-acre plaza spreading south of the building. Located on the edge of downtown, Jahn's building serves as a conceptual and physical entrance to the city. Its welcoming presence directs people from the north parking areas to the city's center.

No matter what the vantage point, the building and its plaza are visually engaging; expectations of shape and dimensions shift depending on one's perspective. Because of the wonderful way it activates its neighborhood (its jutting angles contrast with the count-down box-like buildings that surround it), the building draws one's gaze when downtown is viewed from the upper floor of a nearby building. The facility is not only provocative when viewed from a car traveling on an adjacent street: the angled sections and path through the building entice during the day; at night, lighting dramatizes the building and further heightens

**Right: Shapes and patterns on the plaza suggest a physical and conceptual gateway through the building to downtown.** Photo: Dean Tanner, Primary Image

**Project:** The Principal Financial Group: Corporate Four, Des Moines, Iowa

**Architect:** Murphy/Jahn, Inc. Architects, Chicago, Ill.

**Artist:** Maya Lin

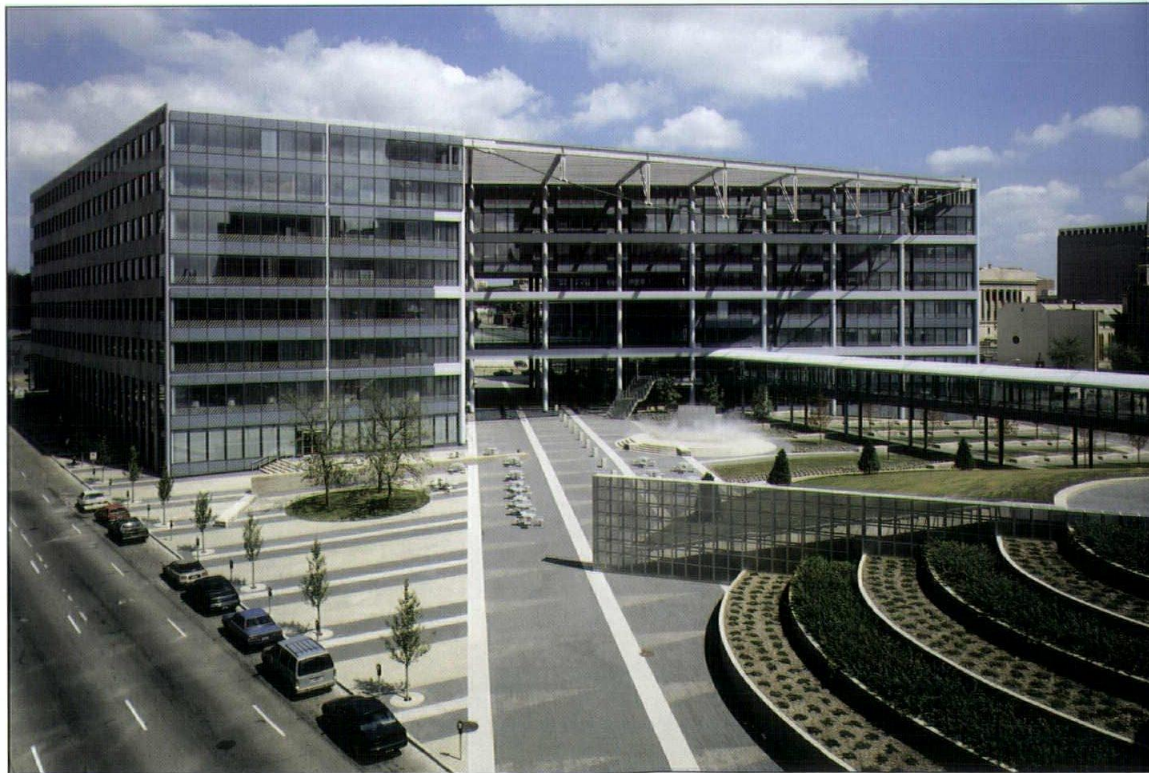
**Artist Consultants:** Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture, Hobbs Architectural Fountains

**General Contractor:** The Weitz Company, Inc.

**Landscape Architect:** Peter Walker and Partners

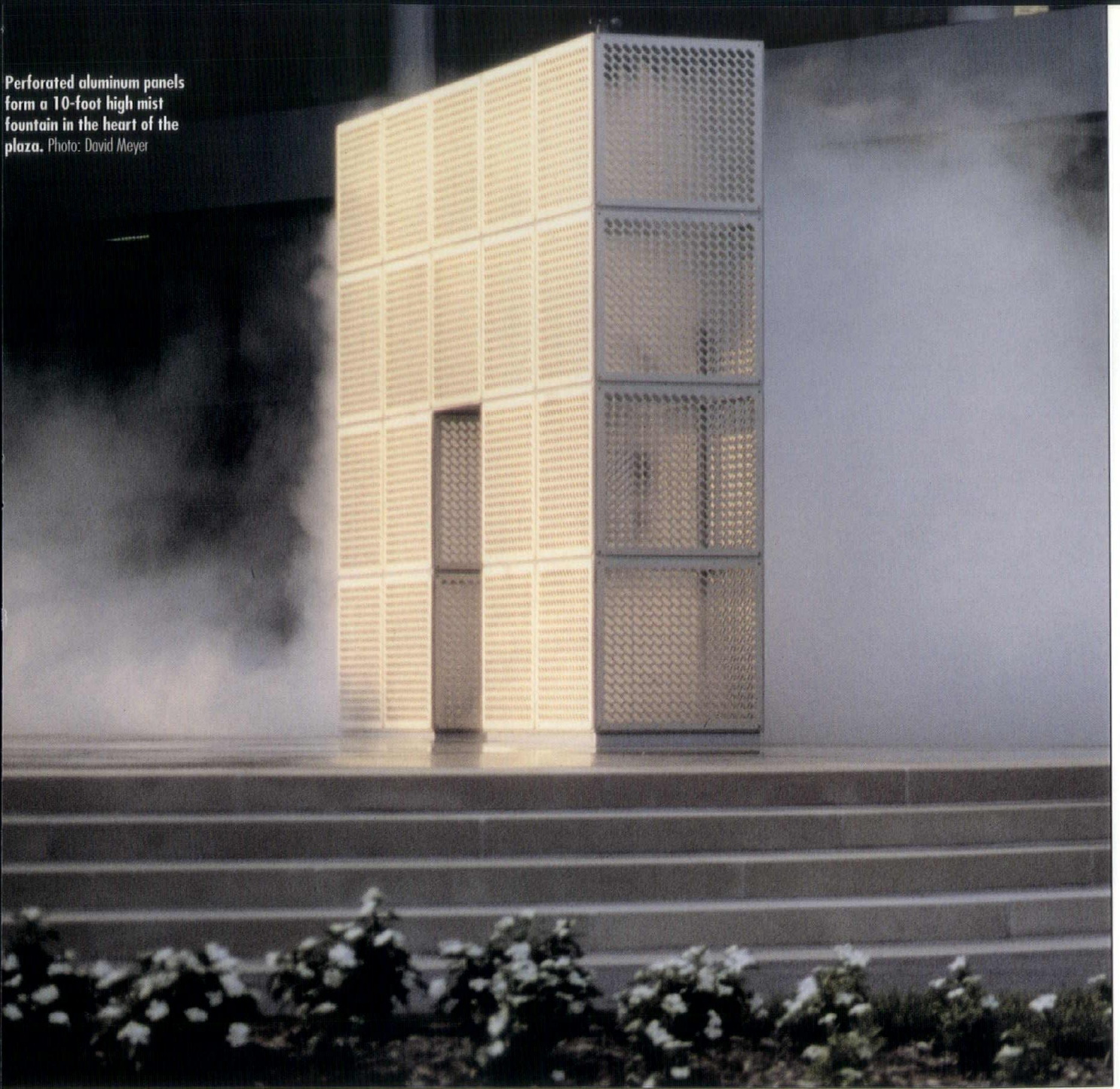
**Mechanical/Electrical Engineer:** Cosentini Associates

**Structural Engineer:** Thornton Tomasetti, Cohen Barreto Machertas



COLLEEN VOJVODICH

Perforated aluminum panels form a 10-foot high mist fountain in the heart of the plaza. Photo: David Meyer





**Above: Repetitive bands of seating, walking paths, grass and flower beds create a strong visual pattern on the plaza.** Photo: David Meyer

**Right: Tree uplights, the mist fountain, skywalks and other elements are lanterns that dramatize the building at night.** Photo: Dean Tanner, Primary Image



**Below Right: The expansive dining area is divided into smaller areas through the use of seating partitions and color. Each area is represented with a distinct color that functions on two planes: seat hue mimicking "neon clouds."** Photo: Dean Tanner, Primary Image

seduction. The facility takes on an "Alice in Wonderland" quality when one walks through the plaza. One experiences massive terracing planting beds as a sculptural tower rising 25 feet. Other elements on the plaza become pure forms, with alternating scales of low and high.

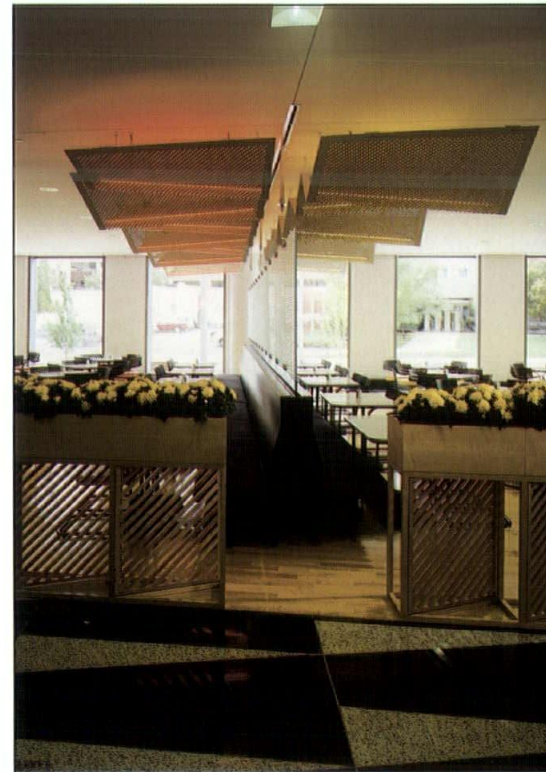
Whether a location for a community-wide event or a site for a solitary lunch outdoors, the plaza creates an important sense of place. The variety of counter-balanced forms and shapes visually break up the immense area. Abundant seating allows for comfortable personal space, but alternately, the plaza provides a perfect civic experience. The mist fountain's platform serves as a stage, and the grounds easily accommodate more than 1,000 people.

The building and its plaza cleverly unify The Principal corporate complex. Prior to construction of Jahn's building, facilities on the campus were disassociated. Skywalks connected the buildings, but there were no true aesthetic bonds. Jahn brought cohesion to the campus by creating a plaza which serves as a visual core that other company buildings seem to spiral out from. Parallel materials and other unifying elements further emphasize a connection between the corporate buildings. An immense grassy berm and stone staircase physically connect the plaza to Corporate One, and a striking skywalk that reveals much of its structural framework connects the two buildings as well. Limestone used throughout the plaza and on the east and west facades of Jahn's building is a material cue taken from Corporate One, which is sheathed in limestone.

While alluding to adjacent structures, Jahn's building also plays with concepts of interior and exterior. The building is comprised of two distinct wings (east and west) that rise eight stories. Bridging the wings is a glass-encased skywalk that seems to float between the third floors. Levels six through eight are completely connected, and form a canopy that establishes a 90-foot wide protected zone between the wings. The open building core is skinned in fritted glass, as are the north and south facades. This creates an interesting dialogue

with the limestone-clad east and west facades. The contrast between the substantial nature of limestone and the fragile, transparent nature of glass dramatizes the hard exterior shell created on the east/west axis and interior zone through the core of the building.

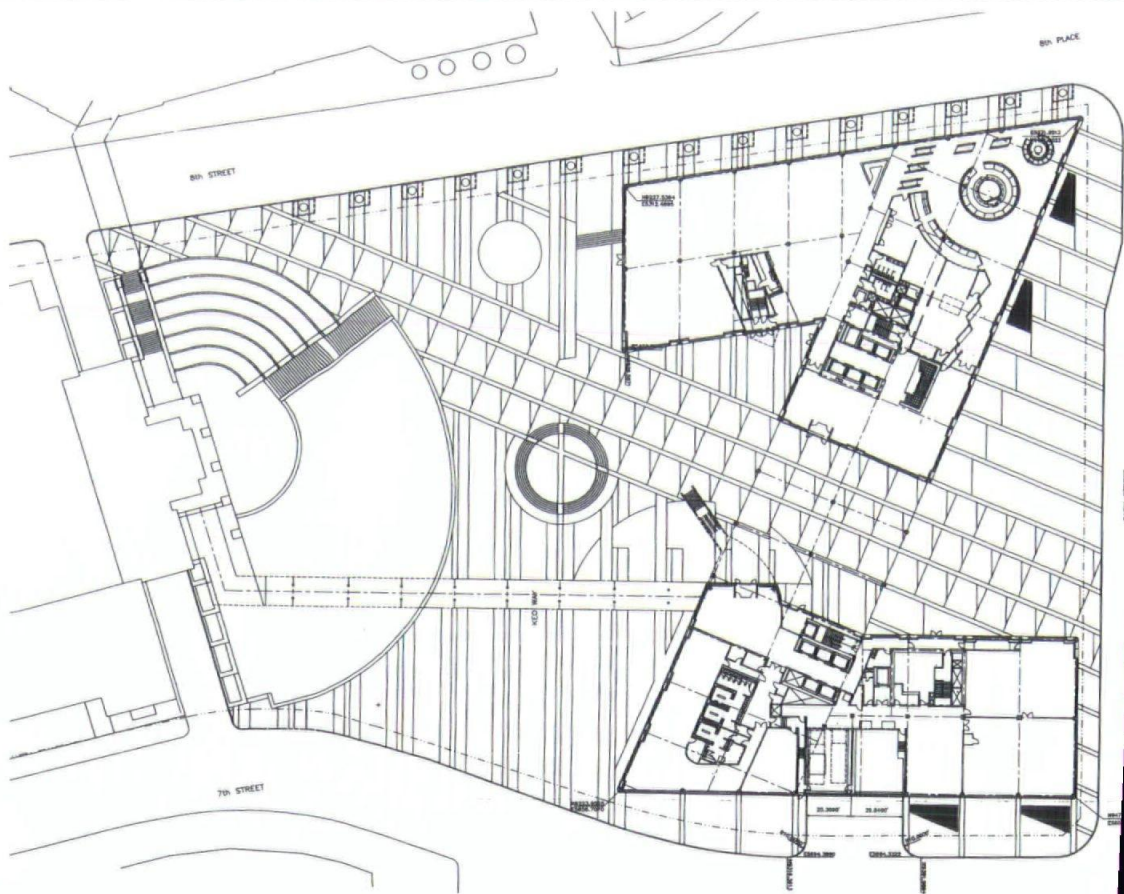
One of the building's central unifying elements is a massive truss that juts from the structure's roof line and hovers above the plaza. This bold feature provides a foil for the massive twin cable that gently arcs from the framework's tips. While this element visually connects the building's two wings it also highlights the repeated edge-shaped patterns prominent in the stone work of





encased skywalk  
wings of the build-  
es the pronounced  
elements and con-  
alette employed  
t the facility.  
Tanner, Primary Image

Right: The facility's shape suggests its nickname: "the 'Z' building." Each end of the "Z" runs parallel to the street it faces.



*"Though Principal Financial Group is a private building, it becomes at its important location a public building. Through its design it is a civic contribution and becomes a public event. The gardens, the mist fountain, the loggia, the gate through the building and the orchard beyond are urban topologies which invite to stop and relax or just pass through the site and blur the usual distinction between public and private space," says Helmut Jahn, FAIA.*

plaza floor and throughout the interior of the building. Similarly, the cable's arc references the curves of the plaza's immense planting beds, the parameter of the rock garden and the line of the grand staircase's landing.

Gentle arcs juxtaposed with sharply angled shapes establish only one of the many contrasts that create an energetic tension throughout the facility. Opaque surfaces are contrasted with the generous use of glass and numerous applications of perforated stainless steel and aluminum that appears semi-transparent. Among other applications, perforated aluminum panels form the 10-foot high misting fountain in the heart of the plaza. Perforated stainless steel lines the inside of elevator cabs, and aluminum panels constitute an exterior barrier wall that roots its adjacent staircase. Additional contrasts include near-black terrazzo counter-topped with near-white terrazzo in lobbies and core pathways; reflective materials and surfaces played against matte ones; and the rough, irregular black granite in the rock garden opposing the formal and repetitive shapes and lines on the plaza.

Among the repeating elements on the plaza are large, low rectangular blocks of limestone functioning as abundant seating. These are alternated with walking paths, grassy areas and flower beds containing a single type of annual planting. David Meyer, a principal with Peter Walker and Partners, explained that the beds were conceived as "monolithic bands of color on the plaza." Another repeated and regular form on the plaza is the line of 22 lighting pylons which emphasize the pathway through the building.

Artificial and natural lighting are important parts of Jahn's architectural lexicon, and they take several forms in this construction. The liberal use of glass cladding allows for abundant natural light throughout the building. Cold cathode tubes hover in metal arcs embedded in the ceiling. They have the dual purpose of

lighting and serving as part of the aesthetic facade. The parallel lines that visually define the building. Above the dining area, which is located on the first floor in the west wing, are colorful neon tubes near the partially folded "clouds" of perforated aluminum.

The dining area, which includes an interior cafe and coffee bar, is open to the public. It features maple floors and brightly colored seating that contrasts with the neon lighting above it. Opposing the dining area is the fitness center on the first floor, east wing. For convenience, the fitness center offers shower facilities and a variety of exercise equipment. Other features in the 1,000,000-square-foot building include conference and meeting rooms, and various support functions including computer facilities and mail systems. The building accommodates up to 2,000 employees with semi-outdoor areas. The palette of the building's interior is characteristic of Jahn: grey, black and white predominate, with bright teal core walls adding spice.

Integrated into the building is an artwork by Jaume Plensa, widely regarded as one of the most important visionary artists of this century. Among many recognitions, Time magazine selected her as one of the 50 most influential leaders in America under 40, and the centennial edition of Architecture magazine cited her design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as one of the top 100 designs of our century.

Lin selected an interior site for her work—the first three floors of the east side of the building. Her architectural intervention, her artwork plaza, "Shift in the Stream," is inextricably bound to its site. "Shift in the Stream," it introduces trickling water down panes of a two-story glass curtain wall, creating a view of lobbies from work spaces on the second and third floors. The water disappears into the base of the glass on the first floor only to reappear as a stream embedded in the floor. One can feel the cool





**Left: Maya Lin introduces small streams down an interior 2-story glass wall. The streams are reminiscent of water trickling down a cave wall, or a light rain streaking a window.**

Photo: Cameron Campbell



sculpture that is not co-opted by its site, rather creating its own place within an existing space.”

A major artwork by Maya Lin would on its own be significant. Similarly, a unique and successful Helmut Jahn building would on its own be important. Together they create a nationally significant project that makes a meaningful contribution to the social and cultural landscape of Iowa. Further, they prove that when the client is willing to push boundaries, architecture that does far more than merely provide office space can result.

—Colleen Vojvodich has produced a number of books focusing on contemporary art and she has lectured at Stanford University and the University of Santa Clara. Curator for the Principal Financial Group, Vojvodich has served on grant review panels for the states of Nebraska and Iowa.

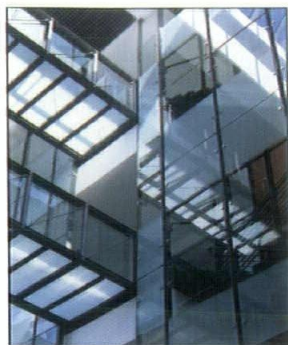
**Below Left: Because Maya Lin shifts Helmut Jahn’s architecture, viewers may not know exactly where the architecture ends and the art begins. Lin worked in tandem with Jahn to modify portions of the building including colors, floor patterns and materials. On the first floor, Lin embedded a small stream into an expansive break in the plaster wall.**

Photo: King Au, Studio AU

...hing a hand into the crevice of the broken plaster  
...on the first floor, or one can sit on a nearby bench  
...enjoy the calming sounds of the babbling “brook.”  
...e building allowed her to “bring my environmen-  
...artworks indoors—and interact with a site that was  
...mpletely man-made, yet create a pure landscape

# Site as Architecture, Building as Foil

THE NEW MEREDITH PROJECT



**The latest addition to the Meredith complex is more corporate than communal, subtly referencing itself and shaping an internal world surrounded by an impressive new landscape. The project extends tentative arms outward, through this landscape, ready to lead one into an imaginary, populated downtown district. If only projects developed by future decision-makers and their architects could demonstrate how to build that kind of district.**

**Below Right: Here the site is the architecture. The building is a restrained compositional foil in what will become a breathtaking garden.**

**Project:** Meredith Corporation Expansion, Des Moines, Iowa

**Architect:** Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture, Des Moines, Iowa

**General Contractor:** Neumann Brothers, Inc.

**Landscape Architect:** Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture, design; Heard Gardens, Ltd., plant selection

**Mechanical/Electrical Engineer:** Alvine and Associates

**Photographer:** Farshid Assassi

**Structural Engineer:** Shuck-Britson, Inc.

PATRICIA ZINGSHEIM, AIA

Meredith's new expansion of its corporate complex at Locust and 17th Street on the periphery of the downtown is deeply meaningful to the Des Moines community. It is the anchor project for the Gateway District, a proposed downtown neighborhood initiated by the Des Moines Vision Plan and followed up with seven years of planning and a recent dollar appropriation by the City Council and the Des Moines Development Corporation. The company's long and successful history is part of the city's story. Its stellar evolution is an illustration of entrepreneurial innovation that the whole community is proud of. Its creative presence reverberates and elevates the state-of-the-art of publishing, graphic design and photography in central Iowa. Networks with New York City and other parts of the world enrich Des Moines' culture by bringing interesting and talented people into the downtown.

The most brilliant and moving aspect of the new Meredith project is the power of the site to hold its own as a designed artifact in the same way that a building is a designed artifact. The site's purpose in this project is far greater than a "tableau vivant" for building-as-centerpiece. Here the site is the architecture. The building is a restrained compositional foil in what will become a breathtaking garden. Yet this chemistry between building and site does not promise a place that will ever be animated with street-level activity.

The flat site has become a rich terrain of rolling topography eliciting nostalgia for the countryside of Iowa. A hillock has been created between Grand Avenue and Locust Street and mounted with gradual steps to where the east entrance of the building meets the axial wall pointing toward the high-rise core of downtown. This movement, north-south, is a beautiful experience. It dramatically links two important downtown streets. It counters the strong east/west axis of this site and the entire downtown, and it provides pedestrian access through the super block created by the elimination of 16th Street through this block.

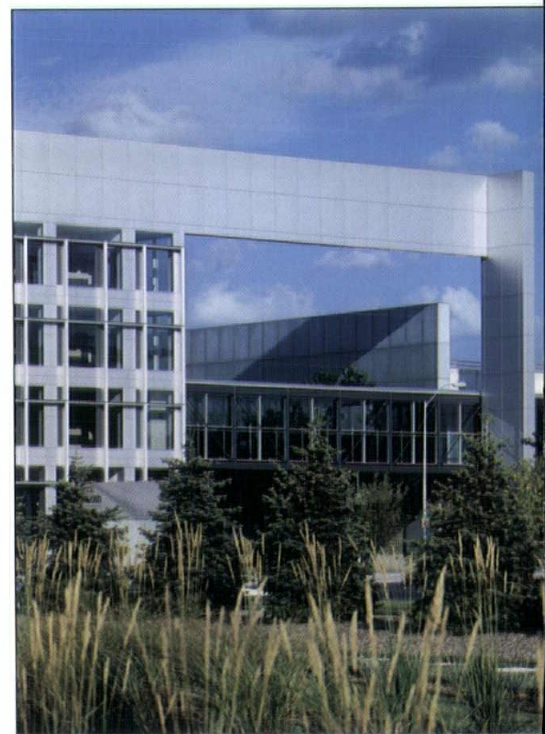
Each fall, the rich yellow of the ginkgo grove will be seen behind the red of the maples and the deep green line of the east/west rows of evergreens. Tree selection, wide walkways, formal dynamics established between this site and the surrounding streets demonstrate a response to the unique formal conditions of the urban context. For example, the axial shift of downtown Des Moines' street grid occurs at this point. In response to this abstract condition, walkways and landscape grasses are configured as an extension of the center line of Grand Avenue through the site's west block.

Meredith, already a leader in architectural expression with the construction of the original brick structure by Proudfoot Bird and Rawson, in 1902, hired Charles Herbert and Associates, in 1981, to remodel. Charles

Herbert and Associates designed a whole new concept for the corporate environment and highlighted original masonry building by the mirror and aluminum sheathed wall of the new building. Structured paving, glass-roofed light courts, artwork, outdoor space and a media center coalesced into a successful composition of interior and exterior space. These skillfully designed innovations supported the company's creative work methods, accommodated educational events, and earned state, regional and national awards.

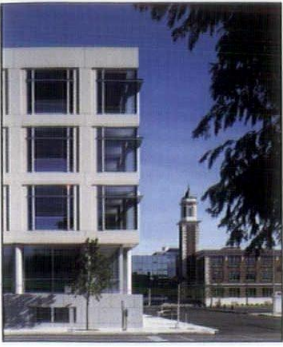
For now, the architecture of the building, dependent on the future maturation of the landscaped site, is difficult to view correctly. The criticism I've heard from the "person-on-the-street"—that the architecture is overly dry and lifeless—misunderstands its formal role as a backdrop for the site and reflects the fact that sensitive and urbane formal arrangements are made without the urbane planning arrangements that would have put people in the picture.

The building has all the elements of modernism arranged with sophistication: piloti, the vertical plane element, the mirrored geometric volume, the ubiquitous grid, the externally expressed diagram of the interior organization, the plaid of superimposed screens, the concrete frame, the futuristic wall defining the edge of the downtown from the west—all finely done by a hands-on architect with a keen sense of how to combine and organize materials into a rational, well-proportioned whole.



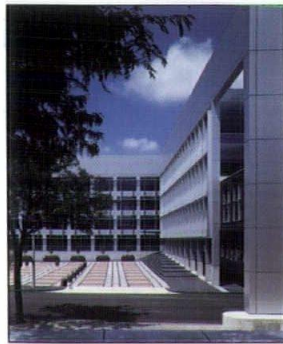
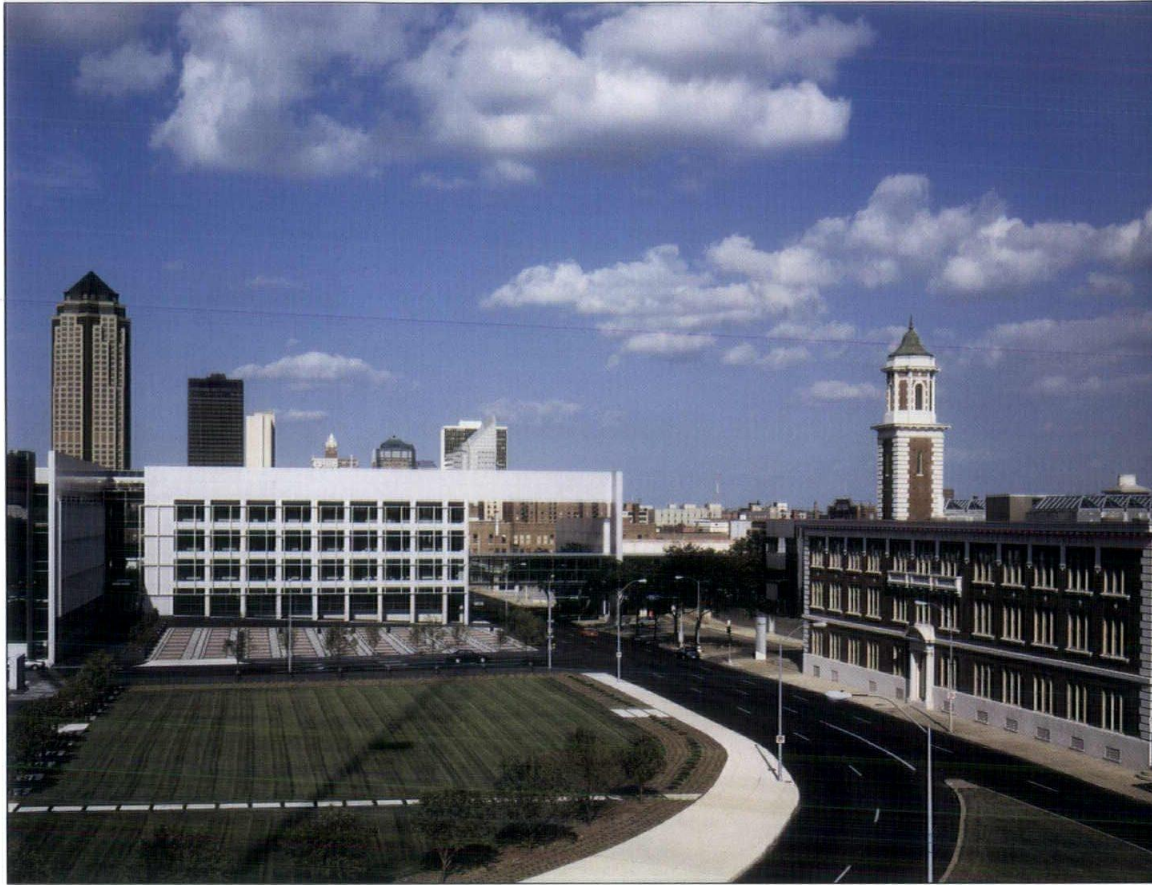


As stair towers reflect the  
original Meredith building  
across the street. Exterior grid  
patterns and geometric  
forms are repeated within.



**Above:** Logical references are made to the existing composition across the street by repeating vertical white planes on edge.

**Right:** The new Meredith building, the existing Meredith building and the frame of the skywalk bridge shape a “gateway space” to pass through, moving east on Locust Street toward the high rise core, the riverfront and terminating at the State Capitol.



**Above and Far Right:** The building has all the elements of modernism arranged with sophistication: piloti, the vertical planar element, the mirrored geometric volume, the ubiquitous grid, the externally expressed diagram of the internal organization, the plaid of superimposed screens, the concrete frame and, the futuristic wall defining the edge of the downtown from the west.

**Bottom Right:** Offices surround an internal plaza, the heart of a centripetal whole.

Logical references are made to the existing composition across the street by using reflective glass at the stair towers, repeating vertical white planes on edge and the alignment of the new block-long concrete east wall with the existing concrete parking garage wall.

The building has typical office floor plans, with the focus on an internal plaza as the heart of a centripetal whole. With offices surrounding that plaza and without services bringing the public here, it is difficult to imagine any spontaneous or flexible use of the space. It will require formal programming to be something other than an entry court.

Imagine the possibility for employees to come out of this building into a teeming neighborhood at lunch time: to picnic, meet other downtown workers, roller blade, ice skate, shop for a new shade of lipstick or a cigar, or have a project meeting over coffee in a sidewalk cafe. And, after work, imagine downtown workers and new downtown residents congregating in “Gateway” to have a drink or supper in an outdoor garden, to listen to music and introduce each other to new people. This could be the future of the Gateway West District if this initial somewhat hematic western/terminus/gateway project sponsored by Meredith is followed with development that includes non-corporate, street-related commercial uses that are so vital to an energized city.



—Patricia Zingsheim, AIA, AICP, is a senior associate with Thompson Design Group, Inc., in Boston, Mass. Current urban design projects include North Coast Harbor and West Side Market in Cleveland, Ohio, Governors Island in Manhattan, N.Y., Ocean Boulevard in Long Branch, N.J., and the Seaport District in Boston. Previously, she worked for the city of Des Moines in planning and urban design.

**PATRICIA ZINGSHEIM, AIA**

# A Change for the Bette

IT'S NOT THE SAME OLD CUBICLE ANYMORE

**Interior corporate architecture is concerned with much more than furniture choices and corner offices, as demonstrated with two projects by RDG Bussard Dikis.**

**Below Right: Wayfinding—an important element in the Pioneer Hi-Bred offices—was established with nodes, constructed from color-impregnated plaster and backlit onyx.**

**Below Far Right: The focus of the interior space is the stair, an organic form which alludes to the shape of a seed and was formed from steel cables and cherry stairs.**

Corporate success is usually measured in quantifiable terms of profits and products. Yet in recent years, an increasingly common ingredient of a company's fortunes is gauged by the satisfaction—and therefore efficiency and productivity—of its workforce. Companies of all shapes and sizes have found that attention to the layout, materials and assemblage of interior working environments can do much to ensure the positive day-to-day interactions of employees. A corporate space can promote an identity not necessarily dependent on logos and products: In effect, a company's architecture represents a literal and visceral connection to its philosophy.

Such is the case with the interior projects for Pioneer Hi-Bred International and Equitable Insurance, designed by RDG Bussard Dikis. By connecting the corporate culture with the material selection and plan, each acknowledges that the finishes, as well as the way they are put together, is as much of a reflection of the company's ethos as planning concepts and spatial arrangements. Instead of allocating resources to a conventional interpretation of public space—lobbies, meeting rooms—this new corporate architecture is now investing that money and effort in a “new” public space for employees—nodes, hallways and cafeterias. In addition, no longer are employees segregated

from management: The hierarchy is less stratified, spaces more fluid than sequential.

These revisions are evident in the new administrative and executive headquarters for Pioneer Hi-Bred. The company's corn breeding program began in 1936, today, it employs 4,700 people worldwide and sells hybrid seed corn in 100 countries. Its home base remains in Des Moines, and its connection to its roots are particularly apparent in its new office in the Capitol Plaza building in downtown Des Moines.

The company consolidated four locations and 300 people into 104,000 square feet, taking over the eighth floor and most of the seventh floor. Pioneer had several design concerns, said Marjorie Brown, AIA, project architect with RDG Bussard Dikis: providing a cohesive environment between the two floors; maintaining a “simple elegance” in furnishings and finishes appropriate for everyone from international visitors to job applicants; and ensuring wayfinding. To do this in the three-sided space of Capitol Plaza “presented several unique issues,” said Brown. The building's center atrium was utilized for orientation, views and gathering-space backdrops. The circulation paths are shared spaces—workrooms and breakrooms—set against the atrium walls, with offices around the exterior perimeter. Wayfinding “nodes” identify departments and repeat material choices.

**Project:** Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Capital Square, Des Moines, Iowa  
**Architect:** RDG Bussard Dikis, Des Moines, Iowa  
**Audio/Visual Systems Design:** Jamieson and Associates, Inc.  
**Design/Build:** Baker Electric, Inc., Baker Mechanical, Inc.  
**General Contractor:** The Weitz Company, Inc.  
**Structural Engineer:** Structural Consultants, PC  
**Photographer:** Farshid Assassi, interiors; Robert Willits, models

KELLY ROBERSON





stair, which is designed to  
nect the main entrance, on  
eighth floor, to the offices  
he seventh, opens itself to  
eal its structure; stabilizing  
les are secured in an  
rsized pin in the floor.



**Right:** Long hallways are broken up by walls of custom-designed wood panels, which can be rearranged as the company's space needs change.

**Far Right:** Wayfinding nodes are practical—anchoring the corners and providing coffee bars and coat storage—and visual, made of plaster topped by frosted glass.



The signature element of the space is the stair, a physical and visual connection from the main entrance of the eighth floor to the seventh floor below. The central spine of the stair, a rib-like steel support formed from four metal plates, curves underneath cherry wood steps. Cables, which provide stability, run vertically inside the stair's curve and are secured in the ceiling and in the floor in an oversized metal pin, recalling the form of a seed, said Brown.

Rural forms, textures and colors provided the abstraction for much of the concept and material choices in the Pioneer headquarters, said Brown. Walls and nodes were formed from a color-impregnated plaster topped by backlit onyx, and the color palette is mostly browns, golds and olives. Cherry wood is stained in two colors, and the floors of the public spaces are granite. Patterns—from the cherry ceiling grid to the carpet—resemble the plots of agricultural fields; in addition, the grid is carried “through” clerestory windows into perimeter offices. In the large conference room, the shape of a seed again inspired the form of the conference table. A band of granite along the table's inner edge hides a state-of-the-art audio visual system, with access to data and phone lines; overhead cameras can project objects laying on the tabletop onto a leather-clad presentation wall.

The interior architecture for the Equitable Life Insurance Company supplied a different sort of challenge. The company was moving into a new building in which they were the sole tenant, but the exterior shell had been designed by a different firm. Although RDG Bussard Dikis dealt with the same issues of layout and material assemblage, in this case, the firm's connections between interior and exterior spaces were explicit and intentional.

Founded in 1867, Equitable is the oldest stock life insurance company west of the Mississippi River. Its new 205,000-square-foot building centralized four locations and can accommodate 2,800 people. The first floor is divided between mail and document processing and distribution and large, flexible training rooms. Floors two through five are office space; the west half of

floor six is the cafeteria, with a computer center finishing out the east half.

Once again, the company's policies towards personnel are reflected in the design of the interior spaces. “The company really cared about the quality the space for all workers,” said Matt Niebuhr, project designer with RDG Bussard Dikis. “They wanted general employees to have use of the space, and wanted to integrate management on all floors.” Circulation issues and the need for a flexible space that could evolve over time were paramount concerns. Wayfinding nodes of plaster topped by frosted, lit glass have a three-fold function: They serve as informal department identifiers, anchor the corners and house coffee bars and coat storage, and also provide space for art display. Circulation paths are defined by custom-designed built wood panels, which can be reconfigured as space requirements change. As with the Pioneer project, most of the work spaces have access to exterior daylight when that was not possible, said Niebuhr, partition walls were topped with clerestories to usher light through.

Many details in the interior took cues from exterior including limestone-clad columns, which echo the exterior finish; anigre wood walls and a entry/security door recalling exterior lobby features; and metal channels on the wood walls, which come from the exterior building. At the entry, a color-impregnated plaster wall in pale yellow curves across from a layered, backlit wall patchworked from striated and frosted glass, both against a floor of honed and flamed granite.

Corporations will always measure success in dollars and cents. But as attention to the architecture of employees' spaces proves to be a measure of the productivity and success of a workforce, more companies may find themselves following the lead of Pioneer Hi-Bred and Equitable—making spaces that are “people-oriented, attractive and engaging for everyone.

—Kelly Roberson is managing editor of *Texas Architect*

**Project:** Equitable of Iowa  
Companies Corporate Interiors,  
Des Moines, Iowa  
**Architect:** RDG Bussard Dikis,  
Des Moines, Iowa  
**Audio/Visual:** AVI Systems  
**Design/Build:** Baker Electric,  
Inc., Baker Mechanical, Inc.  
**General Contractor:**  
Graham Construction Co.  
**Photographer:** Farshid Assassi  
**Structural Engineer:**  
Structural Consultants, PC

**KELLY ROBERSON**

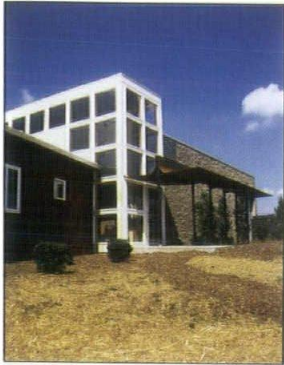


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long entry lobby wall  
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ter; it curves across from  
atchwork wall of striated  
frosted glass.



# Business + Pleasure

APPLIED ART & TECHNOLOGY



**Above: Historically, businesses that manipulate immateriality have found it easy to occupy any empty space: warehouses, garages...barns. In that sense, this custom-designed facility may be building on industry tradition.**

Photo: James Schaeffer

**Right: Front entry.** Photo: Greg Scheideman/Studio AU

**Project:** Applied Art & Technology, Urbandale, Iowa

**Architect:** AOV, Des Moines, Iowa

**Design Team:** Robert Olson, AIA, James Schaeffer, Ian Scott, Jerry Vande Krol, RA

**Electrical Contractor:** ABC Electric, Inc.

**General Contractor:** Venter-Spooner

**Interiors Consultant:** Cathie Christ

**Landscape Architect:** Bob Rennebohm, ASLA

**Landscape Contractor:** Heard Gardens, Ltd.

**Masonry Contractor:** Forrest & Associates

**Mechanical Contractor:** Wolin & Associates

**Millwork Contractor:** Cooper Woodworking

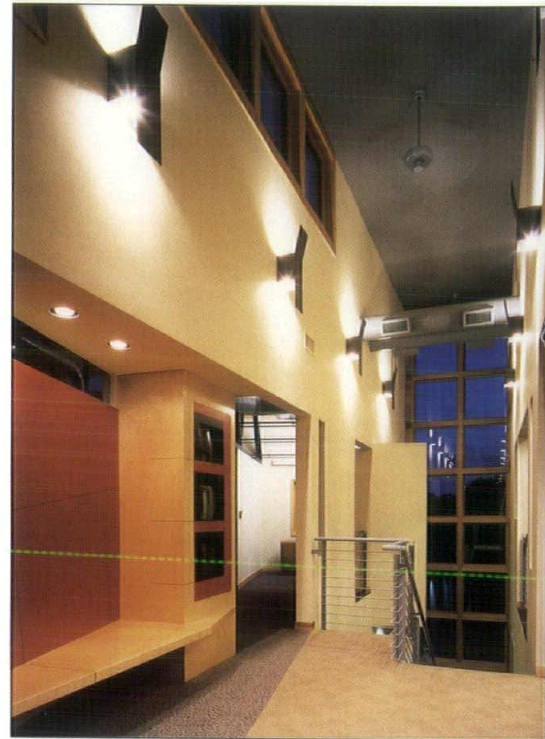
**Structural Engineer:** John Nigro, P.E.

The video production company, Applied Art & Technology, moved into its Urbandale facility just over a year ago. The business had outgrown its old warehouse accommodations near the State Capitol complex in Des Moines, and is now spreading out in a new suburban construction just east of Living History Farms. The building, designed by AOV Architecture, is a dramatically different environment—not only is there ample room for hard work, there is space for the imagination to take flight. From the intriguing curve of its rusty entry canopy to the open-ended views out over the fugitive landscape surrounding the building, the new company headquarters promises to be good for both business and pleasure.

Although AOV took cues from the rural and suburban vernacular when crafting the building exterior massing and detailing, they managed to steer clear of both sentimentality and banality. From a distance, the building is conspicuously novel but remarkably comfortable in its postmodern neighborhood. While its exterior materials are quite ordinary, this building's particular combination of cedar siding, split-faced block and Cor-Ten steel is intentionally uneasy—sharply juxtaposed rather than quietly blended. And the shocking white box of windows that both splits and joins the two main wings (one clad in cedar, the other in concrete block) reinforces the building's fragmented appearance. This center spine is much more abstract than the adjacent structures and exacerbates the ambiguity of the total composition. Aesthetic ambiguity works well in this site.

Significantly, AOV did not take cues from the process of video production when making choices about the exterior forms and materials for the company's new headquarters. Historically, businesses that manipulate immateriality have found it easy to occupy any empty space: warehouses, garages...barns. In that sense, this custom-designed facility may be building on industry tradition, however unconsciously. And, in keeping with tradition, this video production company's interior space is another world. The split-faced block is the studio, a tall, wide, empty space where lights and props come and go. The cedar shed is an array of offices and editing suites where privacy and territory are defined by sheets of aniline-dyed plywood and carpet variations. These intense splashes of color and pattern completely ignore the simple cedar shell—which you cannot see, of course, when you look out across the meadow that falls from the walk-out basement down to the wetland area on the property line.

The public is welcomed between the studio and office wings. Three TV screens are stacked to the left and compete for attention. The space enclosed by the



white window box is long, narrow and very high, it gets even higher as you move downstairs toward the meadow. The view is compelling; the rest of neighborhood is screened by trees. At that lower level a comfortable dining area is to the right and a bright hallway on the left opens out onto a narrow wood deck. The “backyard” was recently planted with native wildflowers and a little village of birdhouses established in the soggy area just beyond the lawn. The day I visited, it was all blooming and I saw birds I didn't recognize. I was a bit jealous that I didn't get to eat lunch there on a regular basis.

—Clare Cardinal-Pett is an associate professor of architecture at Iowa State University.

CLARE CARDINAL-PETT



This video production company's interior space is another world. Sheets of aniline-dyed plywood separate the office area and sport one of the company's many "Telly Awards," for outstanding television commercials.

# design digest

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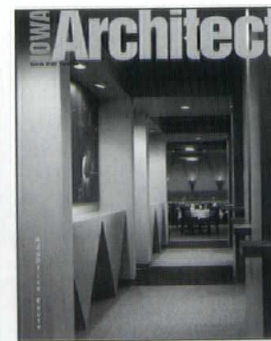
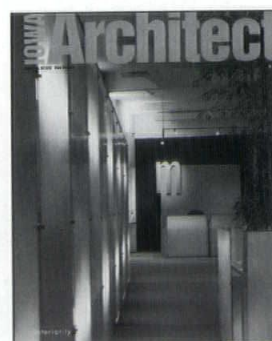
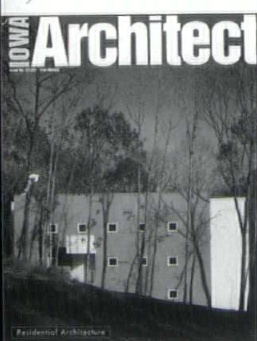
### Midwest Living Idea Home

This year marks the first time that Midwest Living magazine's Idea Home has been built in the Des Moines area. The Idea Home project started eight years ago as a way to bring the pages of Midwest Living to life for its readers. This year, the home is being built in six states, in the residential suburbs of Kansas City, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee and the Twin Cities, as well as the Timberline Development in Urbandale, Iowa. An anticipated 20,000 visitors in each city will tour the Idea Homes to witness the latest in home design and product trends for the Midwest. The architects, builders, designers and public relations agency for this project are also from the Midwest. The home will be featured in the October issue of Midwest Living magazine.



### Iowa Architect Magazine Awarded

Three Iowa Architect magazine covers were given the Award of Excellence at the Art Directors Association of Iowa's 40th Annual Design Exhibition: Issue No. 97:221, Residential Architecture, photography by Dale Photographics, Inc.; Issue No. 97:222, Interiority, photography by Farshid Assassi; and Issue No. 97:223, Adaptive Reuse, photography by Greg Scheideman, Studio AU. The covers were designed by Deb Yoder and Kent Mauck, of Mauck+Associates, who design and publish Iowa Architect.



### Engelbrecht Gains Fellowship

Mark Engelbrecht, FAIA, was invested into the prestigious College of Fellows at the AIA National Convention in San Francisco, May 15, 1998. The honor of fellowship is conferred on architects with at least 10 years of membership in the AIA, who have made contributions of national significance to the profession. During his 30-year career, Engelbrecht has exemplified the positive role of the architect practitioner-educator.



Engelbrecht has been the design principal of a firm since 1966, only two years after receiving his graduate degree from Columbia University. His practice, Engelbrecht & Griffin Architects, P.C., has won numerous design awards, establishing a national reputation with a wide range of senior living environments. Major works in 20 states attest to the validity of Engelbrecht's work in this field.

Three years after founding his practice, Engelbrecht began teaching. In 1982, he was promoted to the rank of full professor in a part-time adjunct position—an anomaly. A few years later, he was awarded tenure at the rank of professor. Engelbrecht was appointed dean of the College of Design at Iowa State University in 1994. He was recruited as a candidate by a cross section of college faculty while he was teaching in Rome. His long-distance candidacy proved successful due to his ability to describe and share a vision of an invigorated college, with an emphasis upon collaboration, multi-disciplinary work, direct inclusion of practitioners and international engagements.

### Iowa Project Wins International Award

Praxair, Inc., of Ankeny, Iowa, has received an award from the 1998 Business Week/Architectural Record Awards. This annual international program honors architects and their clients who utilize good design in achieving strategic business goals.

The project, designed by Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture, was one of eight awards given among hundreds of participants. Entrants submitted architectural images, as well as a mission statement and business plan, including a description of how the project fits into the organization's overall business strategy. The entrants also provided a detailed description of measurable results, including explanations of how the project design helped achieve those results.

The jury was composed of prominent architects, including Charles Gwathmey, FAIA, and Rodolfo Machado, AIA, as well as executives from various major corporations. The award winners will be recognized this fall in the October issue of Architectural Record and the Nov. 3 issue of Business Week.

GREG LEHMAN, AIA

### Correction

Please note the following changes to the 1998 Iowa Architect Directory:

- Savage-Ver Ploeg & Associates, e-mail address, Design@SVPA-Arch.com
- Shive-Hattery, Inc., additional office, 800 First Street NW, PO Box 1803, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406-1599, phone 319/364-0227 or 800/798-0227, fax 319/364-4251
- Aimee Burke and KC Gerlitz, associates, Design Alliance, Inc., 2700 Westown Parkway, Suite 310, West Des Moines, IA 50266, phone 515/225-3469

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## **Meredith Corporation Expansion**

**Curtain wall:** Moduline; **aluminum panels:** Sobotec; **precast concrete:** Wilson Precast; **ceilings:** Armstrong; **carpet:** Durkan; **office systems:** Herman Miller; **indirect lighting:** Peerless; **granite:** Cold Springs Granite Co.; **glass:** Tempglass; **EIFs:** Synergy

## **Equitable of Iowa Companies Corporate Interiors**

**Metalworks:** Ramark Industries, Inc.; **millwork:** Graham Millwork; **audio/visual:** AVI System; **plasterwork:** Color, Inc.; **decorative glass:** Skyline Design; **stonework:** Seedorff Masonry, Inc.; **carpet:** Collins & Aikman

## **Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Capital Square**

**Metalworks:** Ramark Industries, Inc.; **millwork:** Woodcraft Architectural Millwork; **stonework:** Des Moines Marble and Mantel Co.; **plasterwork:** R. Weaver; **lamine glass:** Sumiglass by American Glasssmith; **audio/visual systems contractor:** A Systems; **leather upholstery:** Specialty Enterprises; **workstation seating:** Herman Miller; **files:** Hatworth; **board room seating:** Keilhaur; **board room side table:** HFB; **carpet:** Bentley & Prince Street

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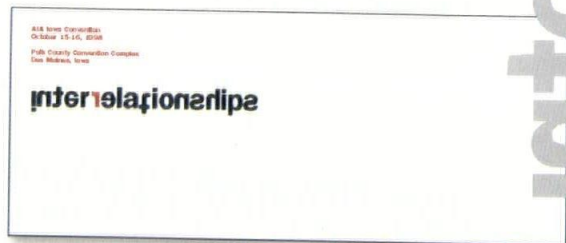
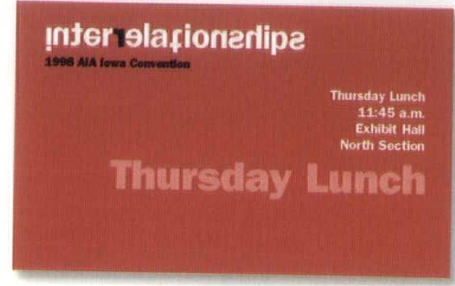
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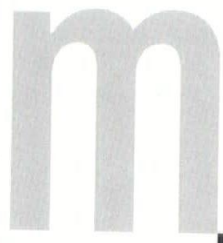


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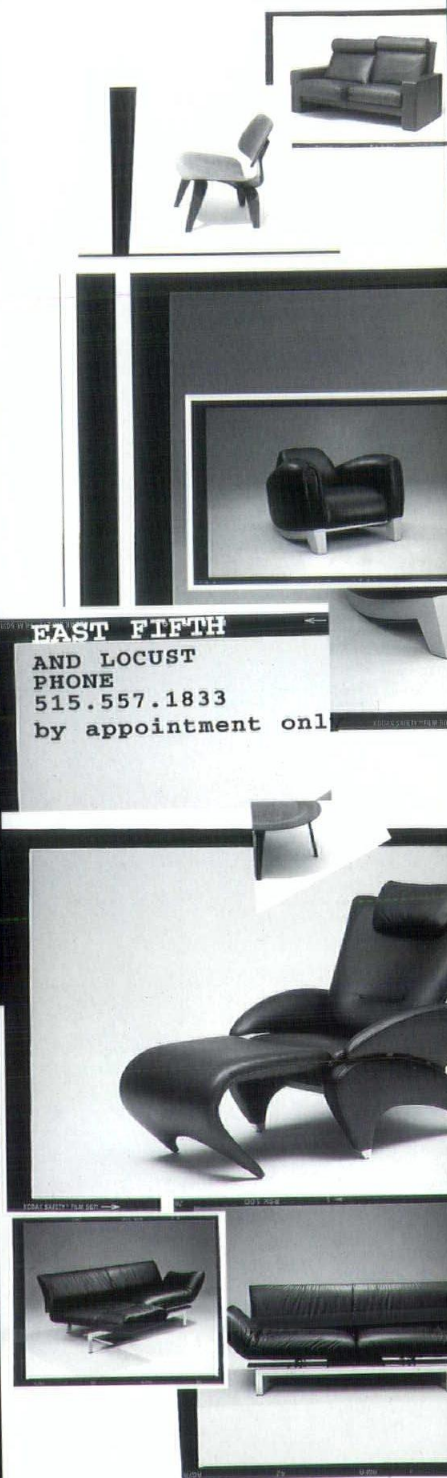
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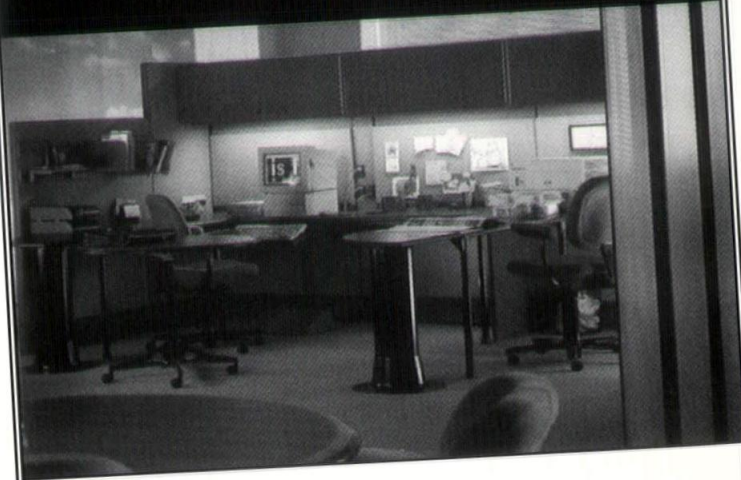
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