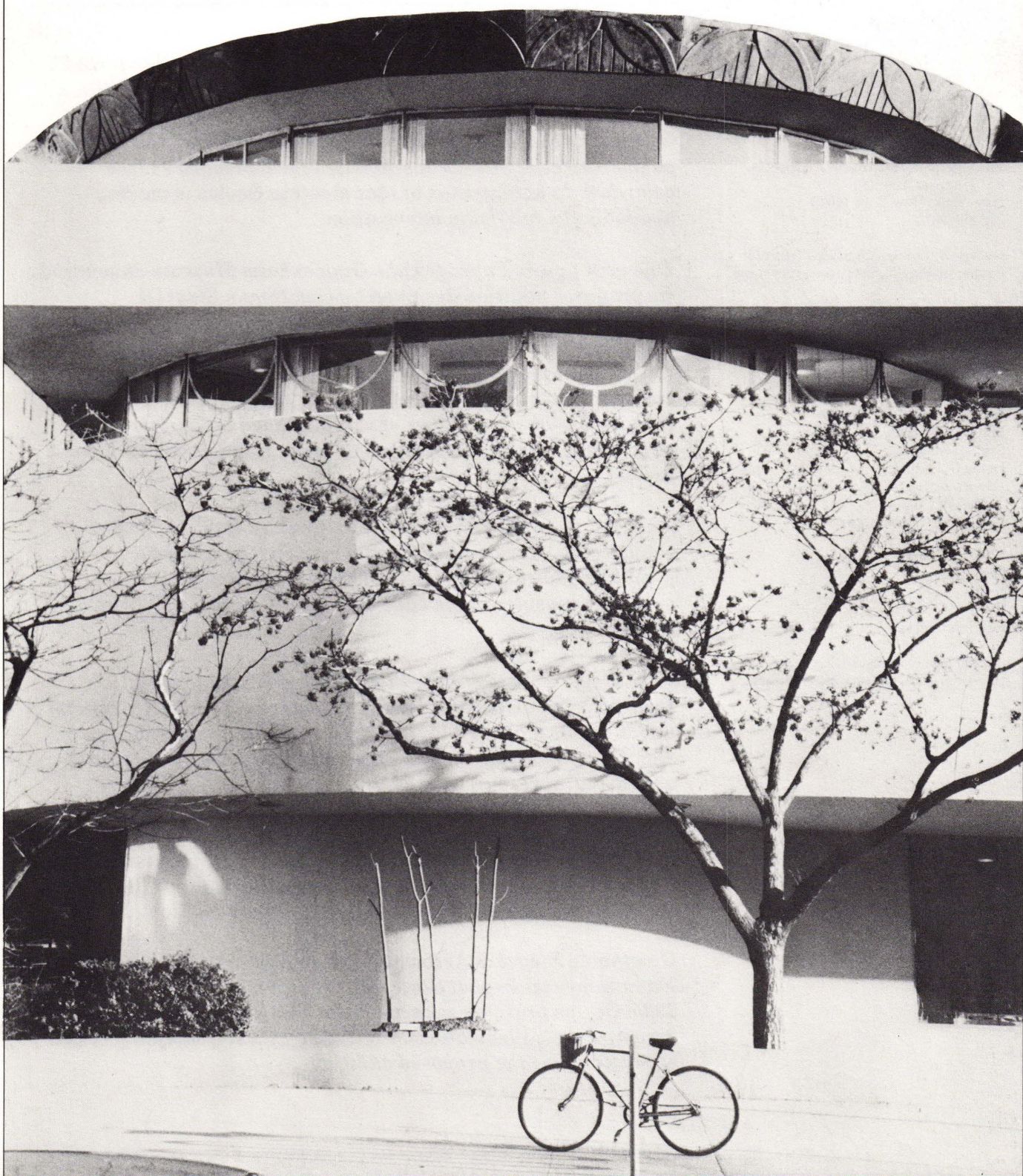


# OCULUS

an eye on new york architecture

The New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

Volume 47, Number 6, February 1986



OCULUS

## THE GUGGENHEIM

Volume 47, Number 6, February 1986

## Oculus

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*It should be stated at the start that the New York Chapter/AIA is not taking a position—pro or con—on the proposed addition to the Guggenheim Museum. It has, however, accepted Gwathmey Siegel's offer to make a presentation of the design at an open meeting, which is scheduled for February 25 (see calendar). In anticipation of that meeting Oculus is making available the following information.*

*One year ago, in February, the Guggenheim Museum announced its proposed addition designed by Gwathmey Siegel & Associates. In June, revisions to the design were announced, and Community Planning Board 8, which received numerous letters both in support and in opposition, approved the required variances. Further refinements to the scheme were announced in October, when a number of neighborhood organizations expressed their opinions. Some of those opinions are excerpted below.*

*At the end of October, City Environmental Quality Review required an environmental impact statement about the proposed addition. For the first time, we are told, purely aesthetic considerations have been used as a basis for that request. It reads:*

*"The Departments of City Planning and Environmental Protection as CEQR Lead Agencies have determined, pursuant to 6 NYCRR, Part 617.11, that the proposed . . . project may significantly impair the character or quality of an important architectural resource.*

*"The Guggenheim Museum . . . represents a unique concept and architectural expression as a museum. As such, it constitutes an important architectural resource whose character or quality might potentially be impaired by the proposed action . . ."*

*Gwathmey Siegel & Associates have prepared the requested Environmental Impact Statement, which is dated November 21, 1985. Oculus presents excerpts from that nine-page text and accompanying illustrations. Following that is a sampling of the opinions about the proposed addition.*

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# INHEIM ADDITION

## The Environmental Impact Statement

by Gwathmey Siegel & Associates

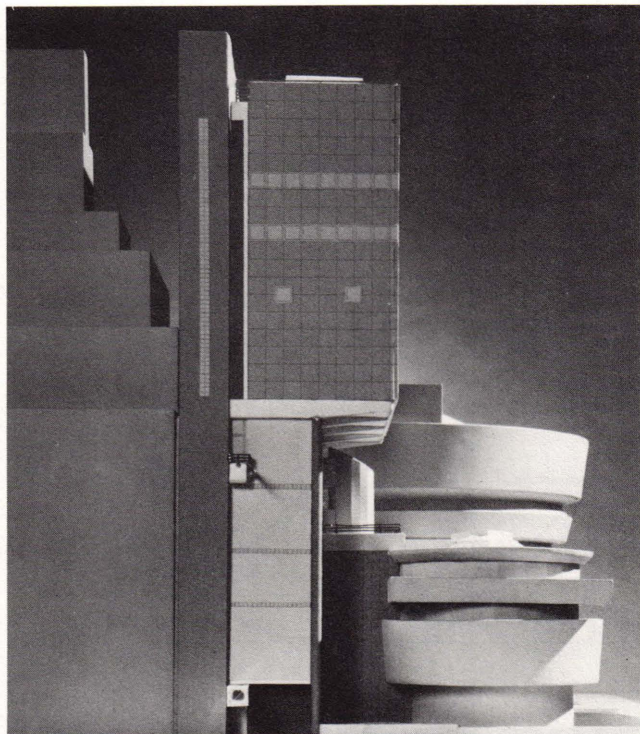


Photo: Dan Cornish/ESTO

Model, proposed addition from the North.

The existing building, located on Fifth Avenue between 89th and 88th Street facing Central Park, was originally designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1946 and completed in October 1959. It is a cream-colored cast-in-place concrete structure containing one of the great major spaces of the 20th Century. The main gallery is formed by a continuous, spiraling, cantilevered ramp, originating at the ground floor, completing seven spirals, and rising to a skylight dome 96 feet above the ground. The ramp, defined on the interior by a low guard wall, overlooks the central skylight volume and affords views across the continuous spiral, which expands as it rises, creating the dynamic shell . . .

A cylindrical utility core, a semi-circular elevator tower, and a triangular open stair rise through the volume on the Northeast quadrant to form the literal and visual vertical anchors to the space. Natural light from the dome and a continuous band of artificial light under the skylight on the exterior wall illuminate the volume both generally and specifically . . .

Adjacent and to the north of the main rotunda is a three-story rectilinear element, affording entry and bookstore on the ground floor, housing the Justin K. Thannhauser Gallery on the second floor, and administrative offices on the third floor. This element is capped on the northwest corner by a smaller rotunda internally defined by a four-story skylit space in its center; anchored by a lozenge-

cont'd. p. 4

## The Opinions: A Debate

by C. Ray Smith

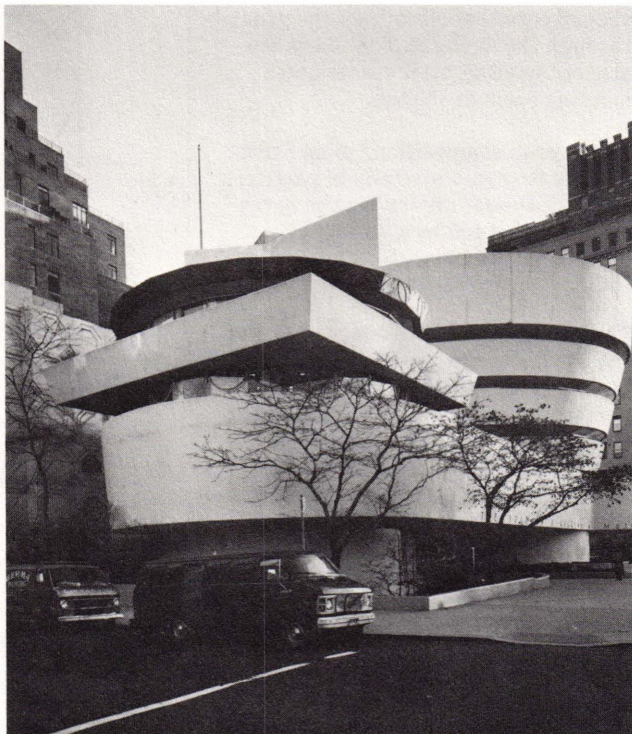


Photo: Stan Rtes

North corner, Guggenheim with Annex.

*Oculus* called approximately 30 people for their comments on this matter. Among them were 9 architects and 12 critics and other observers and neighbors. A number of the architects queried were those who, in most cases, are quite ready to make public their opinions on urban and architectural matters. This time, many of our customarily expected spokesmen have not been willing to be heard from. Of those who said they were willing, not all responded.

The reasons for reticence are several: First, in New York, the Wright community is not so outspoken as it can be elsewhere. Second, Gwathmey Siegel is a firm of undeniably sober, straightforward, and un-fussy architects who are devoted to clear thinking, sensibility, and careful consideration. And they deserve the respect and reputation that they have. Third, the hysterical railing and bad behavior from some professionals against the Whitney addition has made others retire from comment on the Guggenheim, so as in no way to be associated with such hystericism and bad form. Is the fourth reason that the proposed design is so good? Then why don't the architectural leaders speak up and say so?

Several givens are virtually axiomatic in the Guggenheim discussion: First, the Guggenheim is one of our principal architectural treasures. Second, the firm of Gwathmey Siegel is respected and does good and fine work.

cont'd. p. 5

## Impact Statement

*cont'd. from p. 3*

shaped core that rises from the ground through the skylight. The floors are also occupied by staff offices and a meeting room at the top.

The overall composition facing Fifth Avenue is asymmetrically bi-partite; a Small Rotunda "object" on the north corner connected by a horizontal element to the Large Rotunda "object" on the south corner.

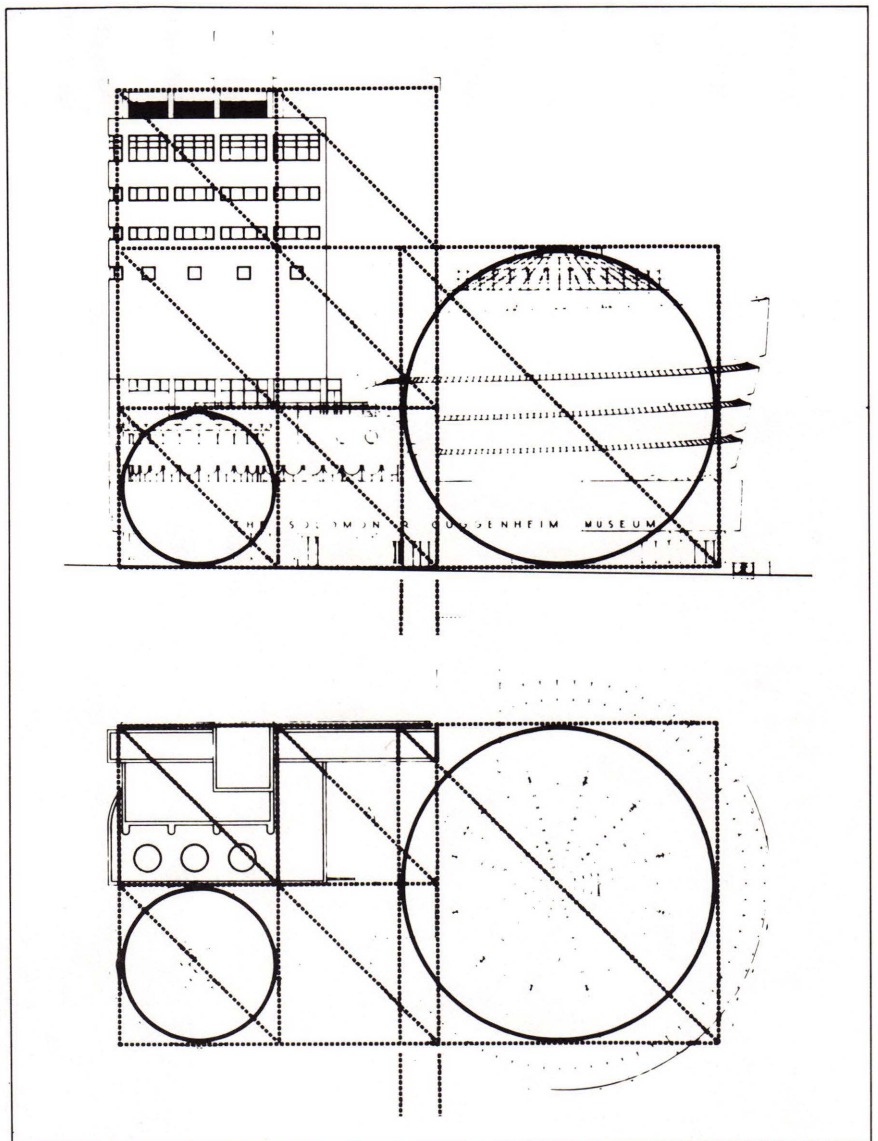
### The Annex

In 1968 an Annex to the original building was constructed in the northeast corner of the lot . . . The four-story concrete structure was designed by William Wesley Peters of the Taliesin Fellowship. It was built to house art storage and a fourth floor gallery for the permanent collection, as well as expanding the staff offices. The structure, both footings and columns, was designed and built to accommodate six additional floors . . .

### Wright's Proposed Additions

In April 1952, *Architectural Forum* published the drawings for the Guggenheim . . . and showed plans and perspectives depicting an addition on the present Annex site. This proposed 15-story building was to house galleries, archives, and artists' studios. The building measured 25 feet wide by 100 feet deep and 150 feet high. A precedent had been established by the original architect for an addition . . .

It should be noted, however, that the plans do not correspond to the perspectives. The building was proposed on the present Annex site, adjacent and West of 4 East 89th Street. The existing northeast fire stair of the original building was integrated into the proposed Annex, which would have produced a major intersection between the Large Rotunda and the rectangular slab. The perspectives, which were superimposed onto the original building perspective, show the slab receding behind the Large Rotunda, a physical impossibility given the site restrictions and the plan resolution. The perspective drawings were image-intended and unresolved



*Gwathmey Siegel's geometric analysis.*

insofar as the intersection between the two structures.

This is a critical point because in actuality the proposed rectangular slab block would have occupied the exact site of the present annex and of the proposed addition. That is the northeast area of the lot, or half block depth, immediately east of the Small Rotunda, facing 89th Street and extending 100 feet (North to South) on Fifth Avenue, leaving the Large Rotunda in its present 88th Street context of existing buildings. All references to an "orthogonal curtain backdrop" of the Wright original are thus half-block references.

It should be stressed . . . that if Wright's proposed slab was literally constructed it would not accommodate the required program nor be acceptable for permanent exhibition space. The net area per floor would have been 960 square feet in a 12-foot by 80-foot floor plate . . .

### Analysis of the Geometry

Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects . . . to understand the formal origin of the Wright design and enable us to initiate our design study, produced a geometric analysis.

Frank Lloyd Wright's lifelong explorations in the inherent geometry of circles, triangles, and squares culminated in the Guggenheim Museum. Here, he was able to demonstrate his geometric sophistication in the reconciliation of the circular and radial/triangular geometry of the rotundas with that of the rectilinear and Cartesian geometry of the Manhattan street grid. As in many of his circular thematic designs, there is an operative radial geometry, which in this case is based on the subdivision of a circle into twelve 30-degree sections. However, unlike most of his other circular works, the Guggenheim Museum has an additional overlaid square, Cartesian grid of 4-foot units, which is on the same orthogonal as the

*cont'd. p. 6*

## The Debate

*cont'd. from p. 3*

There has been some speaking out on the part of the architecture community, in fact. Those who have responded so far are quoted below. Additional responses will be published in succeeding issues.

### Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts

With concern for their neighborhood's treasures and with perhaps a few expected concerns about loss of views, on October 4, 1985, the Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts released a position paper, from which the following is an excerpt:

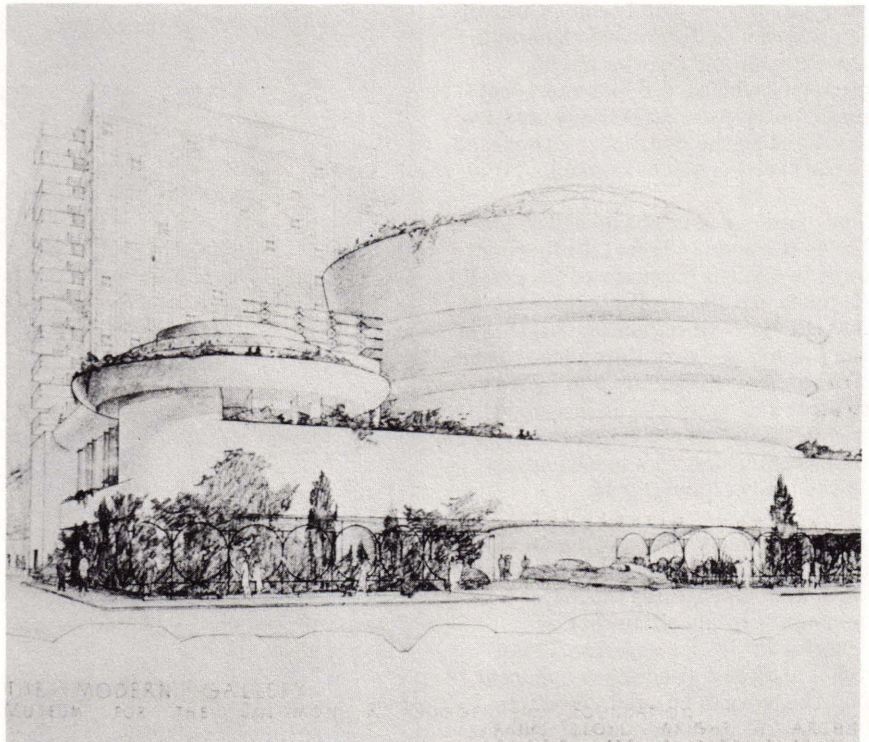
"The distinctive architectural geometry of the Guggenheim Museum is an integral part of Wright's design, and any change in the essential massing of the structure violates its integrity and cannot be supported. Therefore, Friends must oppose the current proposal to alter one of New York City's truly irreplaceable and invaluable architectural treasures."

### Paul Goldberger

In a telephone interview with *Oculus*, Goldberger notes: "A number of people who did not like the Whitney scheme have felt properly offended by the criticism of it. That same mood when transposed into the Guggenheim situation has made them feel that they are not going to say anything. The architects are so respected as members of the profession that many do not feel like speaking out against one of their schemes."

Goldberger has received a great deal of mail on the subject of the Guggenheim addition — nearly a hundred letters — and virtually none of them is in support of the scheme as proposed. A considerable number make the analogy between this design and a toilet — with the addition looking like a water closet. "Admittedly," he says, "this analogy takes the discussion away from the arena of serious dialogue." But, in addition to being amusing, it is enlightening.

In an article in *The New York Times* "The Case for Keeping Wright's Vision of the Guggenheim" (Nov. 10,



*Frank Lloyd Wright's proposed Annex of 1952.*

1985) Paul Goldberger wrote: "The most puzzling thing about the proposal to add to the Guggenheim Museum . . . is the relative silence with which it has been received . . . there seem to have been whimpers, not shrieks . . .

" . . . the forward section (of the proposed addition) . . . would project out so far that it would reach the midpoint of the main rotunda. It would thus fill, at least in part, the void over the north half of the Guggenheim that is absolutely critical to the integrity of this great building . . ."

And from Goldberger's *Times* article about modernism versus post-modernism in which he compares the responses to the Whitney addition and the Guggenheim addition (Nov. 24, 1985): "There has been no such outcry over the Guggenheim Museum's plan to alter and expand its Frank Lloyd Wright building, and it is hard not to wonder if one reason for this is that . . . Gwathmey Siegel & Associates has proposed not a post-modern but a

modernist addition. It is not Wright's own brand of modernism — it is more along the lines of the International Style rendered in tile — but it is a modernist work nonetheless. Could this be why the art and architectural communities have been relatively silent on this one — that in today's climate the Guggenheim addition is seen as a friendly intruder and not an alien one?"

### Carter Wiseman

Not every critic feels that the current proposal is inadequate. Writing in *New York* magazine (Dec. 85, p. 132f), Carter Wiseman considers the Gwathmey Siegel scheme as "Doing Right by Wright." He says, "And they (Gwathmey Siegel) have not merely survived but excelled. In the process they have created an outstanding example of how to accommodate this city's inexorable pressure for change while honoring and amplifying the best of the past . . . The addition will not alter the original design . . ."

*cont'd. p. 11*

## Impact Statement

*cont'd. from p. 4*

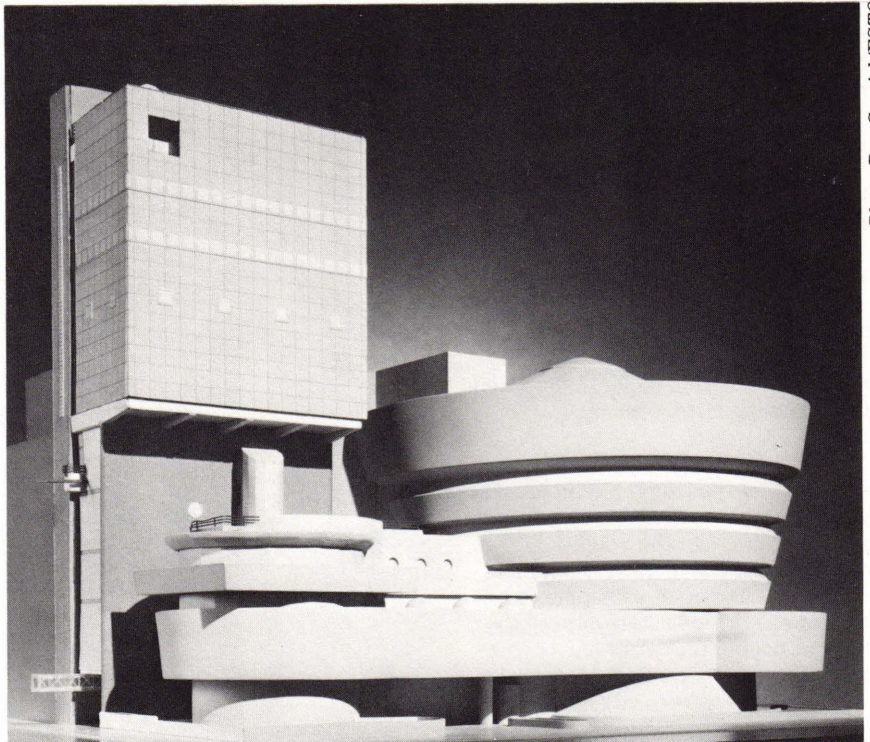
street grid. This grid becomes literally expressed as a decorative element in the exterior and interior paving patterns, which are 8-foot and 4-foot diameter circles respectively, and are arranged on the rectilinear as opposed to the radial or the hexagonal.

The diameter of the base wall of the Large Rotunda is 96 feet (24 four-foot units) while the diameter of the Small Rotunda circular roof is half that or 48 feet (12 four-foot units). The heights of the Large and Small Rotundas are the same as their diameters and hence spheres and cubes can be inscribed within them that are in direct and significant proportion to each other and to the rectilinear grid.

The direct geometric arrangement of these volumes to each other in space . . . is what constitutes the major volumetric composition that is perceived from the exterior. When this is analyzed, it becomes apparent that the site can be subdivided into two squares of 96 feet, one of which is subdivided in quarters . . .

These geometrics, that of the dynamic and direct relationship of the masses of the Large and Small Rotundas coupled with the integrated and overlaid four-foot square grid, become the basis to the two- and three-dimensional integration of the proposed addition into the existing Wright composition; one that is referential, contextual, and interpretively sympathetic. Our proposed addition incorporates through the existing structure, the four-foot grid. It volumetrically responds to the centerline of the Large Rotunda, and is literally the resulting half cube "object."

The intention of our proposed addition and renovation is to (1) solve the programmatic requirements of the Museum, (2) incorporate the existing structure of the Annex, (3) compositionally and materially resolve the addition to the original building formally, geometrically, and contextually. Thus, by expanding the Annex vertically, the proposed building would be (1) constructed over



*Model, the proposed building from Central Park.*

an existing approved structure and site that was designed accordingly, (2) would incorporate the existing three contiguous floors of the Annex into the original building, (3) would be the most efficient use of area and circulation, (4) would be the least aggressive architecturally, (5) would be the most sympathetic aesthetically to the original building, and (6) would coincide by implication and interpretation, with Frank Lloyd Wright's original intention for a building on that site.

### Organization

The renovation and addition would be organized as follows: The exterior and interior walls, plus the fire stair of the Annex would be removed, while the existing floors would remain. A new 12-foot wide by 88-foot long by 150-foot high core wall, (occupied by two new fire stairs, a passenger elevator, a freight elevator, duct shafts, and toilets) would be located on the northeast portion of the site. It would be immediately adjacent to 4 East 89th Street and would intersect the

original building's northeast fire stair at the sixth floor of the addition or the seventh ramp level of the existing building. This intersection, however, maintains a vertical reveal between the existing triangular stair and the intersection of the ramp forms to that stair, thus preserving the building's primary form.

. . . The proposed addition adds seven floors to the existing annex.

### The Cantilevered Block

Floors seven through eleven are larger, open loft floors, created by the structural transfer at the seventh floor from the existing column wall. The resulting cantilever element aligns with the center of the Large Rotunda (refer to the geometric analysis) as well as the east-most rectilinear balcony edge of the Small Rotunda and the west corner of the orthogonal 88th Street element of the original building.

It should be noted that the proposed  
*cont'd. p. 12*

## Chapter Reports

### Coming Chapter Events

• Saturday, February 8, 9 am-12 noon. The Urban Center. The Computer Applications Committee will sponsor a one-day workshop on "Learning How to Use Computer Aided Design," described as "a compressed training workshop designed to teach you the fundamentals of how to draw, design, and use CADD in three hours." Lee Kennedy will lead the workshop. \$20 to attend (\$10 for students). For reservations: 838-9670.

• Tuesday, February 18, 6 pm. Brickwork Design Center, Amster Yard, 211 E. 49th Street. The Energy and Environment Committee will sponsor a public meeting on "Masonry vs. Glazing—Energy Aspects of Exterior Wall Construction." Representatives from the Masonry Institute and the glass industry will lead the discussion.

• Tuesday, February 18, 6 pm. The Urban Center. Panel discussion sponsored by the Public Architects Committee on "Urban Design Group revisited" with Jonathan Barnett, Roberta Gratz, Raquel Ramati, Jaquelin Robertson, Myles Weintraub, and others. Ted Liebman will be the moderator.

• Tuesday, February 25, 6:00 pm. The Donnell Library. Gwathmey Siegel & Associates will present their proposal for an addition to Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum. Reservations must be made through the Chapter.

• Monday, March 3, 6 pm. The Urban Center. The Public Architects Committee will sponsor a "presentation, discussion, and reception" about the NEA grant for "Architects and Designers in Public Service," with a blue ribbon panel.

by George Lewis

• The December *Architecture* carried a prominent news article erroneously reporting Chapter participation in a Fine Arts Federation criticism of the proposed addition to the Guggenheim Museum. The Chapter neither authorized the Federation to speak for it, nor is it taking a position pro or con on the Guggenheim's plan.

• A search committee has been formed to find a successor to the present executive director. On it are Paul Segal, John Belle, Randolph R. Croxton, Judy Edelman, Theodore Liebman, Barbara Neski, James S. Polshek, Martin Raab, Alan Schwartzman, Terrance R. Williams, and John Winkler.

The following notice is being given wide circulation: "The New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, located at the Urban Center in the Villard Houses, New York City, seeks an individual to succeed its executive director, who is retiring after 17 years. Applicants should be prepared to recommend Chapter programs as well as to implement them; to communicate effectively within the Chapter and to the public, including public presentations of Chapter positions; to work closely with architects in matters of professional practice; and to be responsible for the administration of the Chapter."

• Paul Segal has written to Mayor Koch regretting that Martin Gallent apparently is not to be reappointed to the City Planning Commission. "In our view, he has superbly represented the best interests of the citizens of New York in situations where the Commission has, inevitably, been under pressure from special interests. While many of his opinions have been overruled, his presence as a conscience has been one of the Commission's strengths. We would very much like to see him reappointed. It has been said that his sixteen years have been long enough, but one thinks of Oliver Wendell Holmes' thirty on the Supreme Court. If someone else is to be appointed to take his place, we can only hope that he or she will approach

this great responsibility with equivalent disinterested insight and energy."

• The January *Oculus* included Chapter comments on the South Ferry Plaza project, stating that "it is imperative that an individual or individuals with keen architectural and urban design judgment" be included among those who will select the developer and architect. The Public Development Corporation, principal sponsor of the project, has appointed an advisory panel of four architects—Jonathan Barnett, Theodore Liebman, Peter Samton and Terrance Williams—and Michael Zisser, chairman of City & Regional Planning at Pratt Institute.

# OCULUS NYC/AIA FEB 86

*Oculus welcomes information for the calendar pertaining to public events about architecture and the other design professions. It is due by the 7th of the month for the following month's issue. Because of the time lag between information received and printed, final details of events are likely to change. It is recommended, therefore, that events be checked with the sponsoring institutions before attending.*

*Send Oculus Calendar information to: New York Chapter/AIA, 457 Madison Avenue, N.Y. 10022.*

## MONDAY 3

### ANTONIO SANT'ELIA

Exhibition of more than 80 important architectural drawings by the Italian Futurist artist and architect, 1886-1916. The Cooper Union, Cooper Square, NYC 254-6300. Closes Feb. 28.

## MONDAY 10

### MIES VAN DER ROHE

Centennial exhibition devoted to the architecture and furniture of the architect (1886-1969). The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St. 708-9400. Closes April 15.

## CONTINUING EVENTS

### EXHIBITION

Contemporary architectural projects that utilize light as an aesthetic element and a practical energy resource. Pratt Institute Gallery, 200 Willoughby Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-3517. Closes Feb. 6.

### EXHIBITION

"Go West, Landmarks Preservation Commission" featuring murals and color photographs of an increasingly threatened area of the Upper West Side. The Municipal Art Society, 457 Madison. 935-3960. Closes Feb. 12.

## TUESDAY 4

1933: Architect Addison Mizner died.

## TUESDAY 11

### EXHIBITION

Statue of Liberty Centennial. Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. & 103. 534-1672.

### EXHIBITION

"High Styles: Twentieth-Century American Design." Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. 570-3633. Closes Feb. 16.

### EXHIBITION

"Andre Kertesz: Of Paris and New York." Metropolitan Museum of Art. 879-5500. Closes Feb. 23.

## WEDNESDAY 5

### TWO EXHIBITIONS

Mies van der Rohe's architectural drawings and Paul Rudolph's architectural drawings. Max Protetch, 37 W. 57 St. 838-7436. Closes March 1.

### LECTURE

Yona Friedman, Paris architect, in Columbia Graduate School of Architecture and Planning spring series. 6 pm. Wood Auditorium. 280-3473.

## WEDNESDAY 12

### CONSTRUCTA '86 HANNOVER

International Building Trade Exhibition (Feb. 12-19), Hannover, West Germany. For information: Hannover Fairs USA Inc., P.O. Box 7066, 103 Carnegie Center, Princeton, N.J. 08540. 609-987-1202.

### LECTURE

Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk on "Our Work," Columbia Graduate School of Architecture and Planning spring series. 6 pm. Wood Auditorium. 280-3473.

### EXHIBITION

"American Rustic: Architecture and Furniture for the Landscape." The Dairy, Central Park's Visitor Center at 64th St., east of the Carousel. 397-3183. Closes Feb. 28.

### EXHIBITION

Statue of Liberty Celebration. The design, construction, and promotion of the statue. The New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West. 873-3400. Closes March 16.

## THURSDAY 6

### CADD DEMONSTRATION

Haines Lundberg Wachler will demonstrate their Intergraph CADD installation for the Chapter membership. 5-7 pm. 2 Park Ave., 6th floor. Limited to 25 people so please reserve early: 696-8517.

### LECTURE

Douglas Davis. Sponsored by the Architectural League. 6:30 pm. The Urban Center, 457 Madison Ave. For information: 753-1722.

## THURSDAY 13

### LECTURE

Zaha Hadki and Craig Hodgetts. Sponsored by the Architectural League. 6:30 pm. Location to be announced. 753-1722.

### EXHIBITION

"Stuart Davis's New York." Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. & 103 St. 534-1672. Closes March 16.

### MEMPHIS/MILANO

Exhibition of design and architectural drawings by members of the design group, Memphis. Cooper-Hewitt Museum, 860-6868. Closes April 13.

## FRIDAY 7

### COMPUTER DRAWINGS

Opening of one-day exhibition of Computer Generated Drawings from major offices in New York City to be held in conjunction with workshop on CADD (see below). 6 pm. The Urban Center. 838-9670.

### WORKSHOP ON CADD ON SATURDAY, FEB. 8

"Learning How to Use Computer Aided Design" sponsored by NYC/AIA's Computer Applications Committee. 9 am-12 noon. The Urban Center. To reserve a seat: 838-9670.

## FRIDAY 14

1404: Leon Battista Alberti born.



## MONDAY 17

### EXHIBITION

Transforming the American Garden. The Urban Center, 457 Madison Ave. 935-3960. Closes March 14.

### EXHIBITION

Transformed Houses. Wood Auditorium, Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture and Planning. 280-3473. Closes March 7.

## MONDAY 24

1619: Architect Charles LeBrun born.

## TUESDAY 18

### NYC/AIA PANEL

"Urban Design Group revisited" sponsored by the Public Architects Committee with Jonathan Barnett, Roberta Gratz, Raquel Ramati, Jaquelin Robertson, Myles Weintraub, and others; moderated by Ted Liebman. 6 pm. The Urban Center.

### NYC/AIA PUBLIC MEETING

Sponsored by the Energy and Environment Committee on "Masonry vs. Glazing—Energy Aspects of Exterior Wall Construction." 6 pm. Brickwork Design Center, Amster Yard, 211 E. 49 St.

## TUESDAY 25

### NYC/AIA PRESENTATION

THE GUGGENHEIM ADDITION  
Gwathmey Siegel & Associates will present their proposal. 6:00 pm. The Donnell Library, 20 West 53 St. Call for reservations, 838-9670.

## WEDNESDAY 19

1898: Architecture critic Edward A. Weeks born.

## WEDNESDAY 26

### JOHN HEDJUK

Interviewed by David Shapiro. 8 pm. Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 860-6899.

## THURSDAY 20

### DRAWINGS

Seven architects processional arches for the Galveston Mardi Gras—Moore, Graves, Tigerman, Pelli, and Texas architects Morris Aubrey and Boone Powell. John Nichols Printmakers, 83 Grand St. 226-1243. Closes March 29.

### EXHIBITION

Paestum and the Doric Revival. National Academy of Design, 1083 Fifth Ave. 369-4880. Closes March 30.

### LECTURE

Tokyo architect Takefumi Aida. Sponsored by the Architectural League. 6:30 pm. The Urban Center. 753-1722.

## THURSDAY 27

## FRIDAY 21

1856: Architect H.P. Berlage born.

## FRIDAY 28

SYMPOSIUM ON SAT. MARCH 1  
"Memphis in Context" moderated by Sharon Lee Ryder. 10 am - 4 pm. Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 960-6899.

Photos: Stan Ries



## Names and News

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The American Institute of Architects has named nine foreign architects to Honorary Fellowship for their "esteemed character and distinguished achievements." They are John A. Davidson of Australia, Solange d'Herbez de la Tour of France, Abdel Wahed El Wakil of Egypt, Brian E. Eldred of Canada, Wilhelm Holzbauer of Austria, Henning Larsen of Denmark, Geoffrey Arthur Rowe of Great Britain, Heikke and Kaija Siren, husband and wife team from Finland. Honorary Fellowship is reserved for architects who are not U.S. citizens and do not practice in this country . . . Rothzeit Kaiserman Thomson & Bee have announced their new office location at 134 Charles Street in Greenwich Village . . . M. Paul Friedberg has been invited to give a series of lectures at the University of Tunghai in Taiwan, where he will also address the membership of the Annual Conference of Architects on the value of collaboration between landscape architects and architects . . . Charles Moore is to deliver the keynote address at the opening of Lighting World IV, which will take place in the Los Angeles Convention Center May 11, 12, and 13 . . . The Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture, Columbia University, is sponsoring a symposium, February 28-March 1, on "The Building and The Book: Architectural Publishing in America" (see calendar). The Center will also present its second annual series of scholarly meetings, "Buell Talks in American Architecture" on March 21 and 22. The talks will draw together about 15 doctoral candidates and their faculty advisors in American architectural subjects from universities across the country to present their findings to distinguished scholars in the field. The program is being organized by a committee composed of Vincent Scully of Yale, George Collins of Columbia, William Jordy of Brown, William Pierson of Williams, and Robert A.M. Stern, Buell Center director . . . Ari Bahat Architects have announced the formation of Electronic Interiors, Inc. with its showroom in the Plaza Hotel . . . The New York State Council on the Arts' Architecture, Planning, and

Design Program has announced that funding is available in two areas: Project Support and General Operating Support. Project Support includes, but is not limited to: exhibitions, slide shows and video; design studies; archival/conservation projects and research; historical landscape reports, historic structures reports and surveys; architectural and design competitions; feasibility and adaptive use studies; conferences, internships, lectures, tours, and workshops; as well as institutional development. General Operating Support is unrestricted support for ongoing activities of organizations created specifically to address the quality of the designed environment in New York State. March 1 is the deadline for applications. For more information: 614-2962 . . . Thomas Galvin is giving a six-session course on "The Convention Center Working for New York" beginning March 19 at the New School . . . The Parks Department's Natural Resources Group (NRG) has received a \$105,000 grant from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, which will fund ecological studies for Brooklyn's Marine Park and for Kissena and Alley Pond Parks in Queens . . . The Coxe Group Inc. of Philadelphia is preparing a 5th edition of "The Architects and Engineers Merger or Acquisition Circular" to provide a current listing of design firms seeking to acquire or be acquired. The circular summarizes key firm data, without source identification, under three categories: Firms seeking to merge or be acquired; firms sought for acquisition or merger; firms prepared either to acquire or be acquired. February 28, 1986 is the deadline for entries. For information on submitting a listing: Brian J. Lewis, The Coxe Group, Inc., 2 Mellon Bank Center, Philadelphia 19102, 215-561-2020 . . . Edgar Tafel was retained by Steelcase to lecture on Wright in London, Amsterdam, Brussels, and Stuttgart.

## The Debate

*cont'd. from p. 5*

Wiseman told *Oculus* that he has had a great deal of mail about the subject, admittedly most of it in opposition to his view. And he too has received a number of comments that compare the model photograph to a toilet.

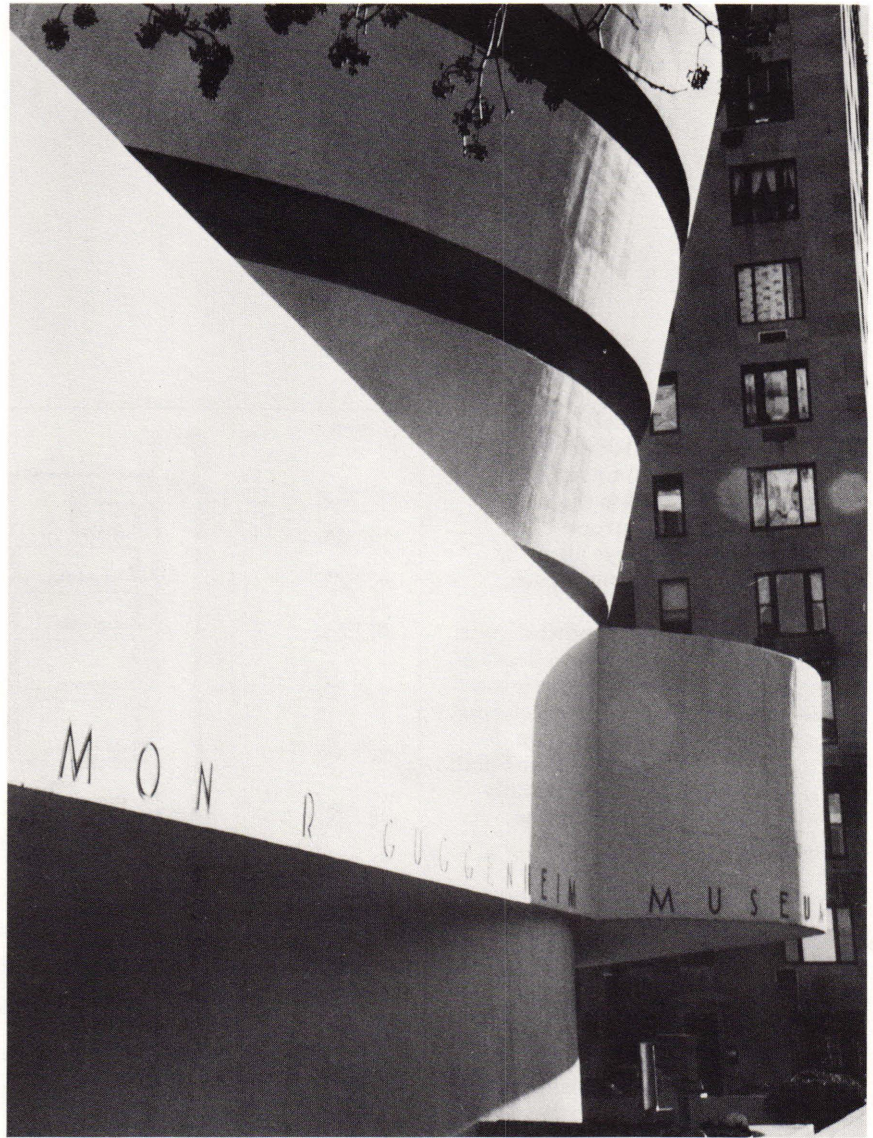
### Martin Filler

Writing in the February 86 issue of *House & Garden*, Martin Filler has vehemently called the scheme a case of "Wright Wronged." He writes to *Oculus*:

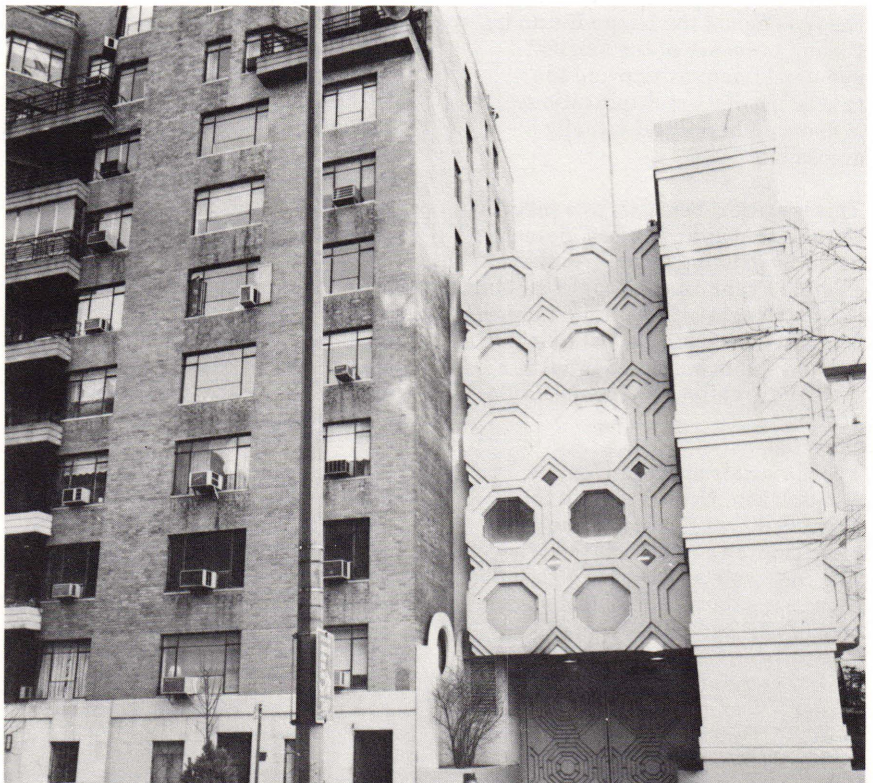
"The commission for a high-rise addition virtually on top of the Guggenheim Museum ought never to have been given, let alone accepted. But the blame for this potentially disastrous scheme correctly lies with its patrons rather than its designers. In asking Gwathmey Siegel for as much new space as possible, the administrators of the Guggenheim have acted as though there were indeed negotiable room for expansion when in fact there is not, if the integrity of Wright's last masterpiece is to be preserved. Stewardship over great works of art is a grave responsibility, and architectural history is rife with astonishing stories of neglect and malfeasance by those charged with handing a cultural heritage from one generation to another. If executed, this project will surely be added to them.

"That the custodians of a museum of art should be the perpetrators is all the more ironic, but points up the perversion of priorities in the increasingly congruent spheres of art, money, and real estate in this city during the past few years. Though the metropolis is predicated on the premise of the benefits of density, there are limits on how much growth — economic, physical, and institutional — is possible before chaos sets in and the megastructure collapses in upon itself. So symbolic and disturbing an image as a tower over the Guggenheim makes one feel that the urban apocalypse cannot be too far off and, much more vividly than the frantic overbuilding of midtown Manhattan, brings into sharp focus

*cont'd. p. 13*



Photos: Stan Rives



*The Annex of 1968 designed by Taliesin.*

## Impact Statement

*cont'd. from p. 6*

cantilever element (which is 74-feet high, 67-feet wide, and 38-feet deep to the core wall, and contains a total of 12,000 net square feet) is the major visible element of the proposed addition and would house all of the relocated Museum support space.

A new glass-enclosed cylindrical stair, connecting the fifth and sixth floors of permanent exhibition space, is located on the new sculpture terrace, relating, again by implication rather than imitation, to the skylights of the Small and Large Rotundas, while visually and literally interconnecting the permanent gallery space.

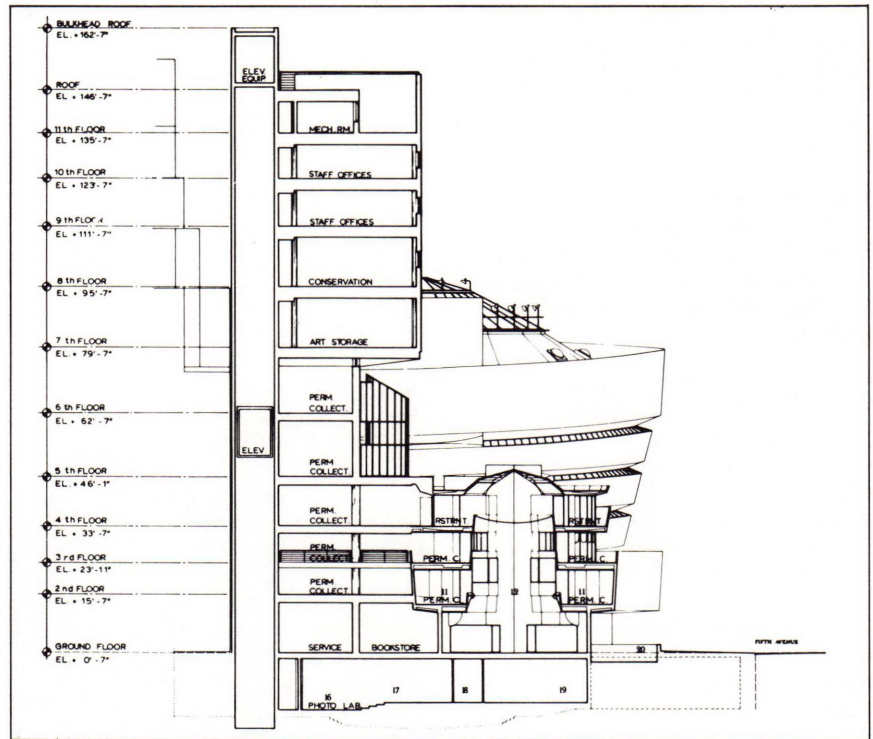
This thematic tri-partite notation relates to the overall composition. The "vertical reveal" of the column wall—between the top of the Small Rotunda and the bottom of the transfer truss—is 32 feet, rendering the cantilever element as the third object in a now tri-partite composition, consisting of the Large Rotunda, the Small Rotunda, and the new square. By initiating the cantilever element at the top edge of the Large Rotunda, the full presence of the original geometric composition and the revelation of its multiple intersections is unencumbered and visually accessible.

This is critical because, by rendering the addition as an "object" detached from the existing structure, the original Frank Lloyd Wright building is both integrated to and juxtaposed from the new addition, establishing a tension and balance, essential to a resolved architectural composition.

### Materials

The materials proposed for the addition attempt to mediate the existing street fabric and the cream-color painted concrete of the Museum. The core wall (adjacent to 4 East 89th Street) is a dark beige 1-foot square quarry tile, summarizing and neutralizing the varying colored brick, limestones, and granites on East 89th Street.

On the 89th Street facade the new walls of the renovated Annex and the



*Section, the proposed building.*

new fifth and sixth floors are lightweight concrete matching the existing cream color of the original building. This makes a visual bridge as well as programmatic references between the two, in that all the cream-colored structures, new and existing, represent public space.

The existing column wall of the Annex is poured concrete, colored terra cotta, again making a reference to East 89th Street as well as establishing a sympathetic, contextual "background" wall to the Small Rotunda.

The cantilevered element is rendered in 4-foot square gray-green porcelain panels with gray-green flush glazing. The 4-foot grid recalls the existing dimensional precedent and the semi-reflective material is recessive to the original structure while reconfirming and supporting its solidity.

In summary, we offer the following facts and observations:

1. The original building is an

asymmetrical bi-partite composition with the Large Rotunda on the south reading as a contextually free "object." In Wright's original scheme, the Large Rotunda was on the North (1948 drawings), but because the adjacent buildings on 88th Street (south) were townhouses as opposed to the apartment house on 4 East 89th Street, he flipped the scheme to preserve the "object" image of the Large Rotunda with its implied non-referential background. The Small Rotunda, however, is always read against the unrelated (to it) apartment building. This condition provoked Wright in 1952 to propose his version of the Annex, a 15-story gridded rectangular slab presenting a planer background to the North portion of the site . . .

2. The present Annex is visually unrelated to both the context of the street and to the original building. It does not address the issue of the contextual imbalance or the necessary mediation between the original  
*cont'd. p. 14*

## The Debate

*cont'd. from p. 11*

just how much we are losing and how very little we are gaining. If the artifacts that embody the values we as a society honor most are endangered by those entrusted to protect them, then it falls to the rest of us, professionals and laymen alike, to prevent it from going any further, or we, too, become their accomplices."

### Carnegie Hill Neighbors, Inc.

"... Gwathmey Siegel's addition is a large, rectilinear mass, with a protruding cube—the very antithesis of the building of which Wright himself said, 'For the first time, a building has been designed which destroys everything square, rectilinear.' The addition cannot be justified by an attempt to relate it to Wright's design by a series of circles and squares.

"The proposed tower would dominate and trivialize Wright's masterpiece. It would loom over both rotundas, reducing them to a bas-relief base. The great main rotunda would no longer soar, free in the air that surrounds it.

"Carnegie Hill Neighbors feel that the Museum should not meet its needs for administrative and storage space by damaging this building, perhaps its greatest work of art; it must place these services off site. This may result in a slight loss of convenience, but it should be the obvious choice of the trustees of this renowned museum."

### Victoria Newhouse

The president of the Architectural History Foundation writes to *Oculus*: "To gain 13,000 square feet—the amount of space provided by a typical luxury home today—the directors of the Guggenheim Museum are contemplating the sacrifice of New York City's most important building.

"The proposed addition to Frank Lloyd Wright's museum presents several parallels with an earlier, and now notorious, attempt to expand the work of a great American architect: In 1895, when Thomas Jefferson's Rotunda of 1817 at the University of Virginia was destroyed by fire, a building commission recommended its external



*The Guggenheim Museum from Central*

restoration, with possible modification of the interior, and the addition of new buildings to accommodate the university's expanding needs. As with the Guggenheim's choice of Gwathmey Siegel, the university's Rector and Board of Visitors (comparable to the Museum's president and trustees) appointed one of the preeminent architectural firms of the day—McKim, Mead & White. Like the Guggenheim, the university had already added to Jefferson's complex, and like the problems we now acknowledge with the various modifications imposed on Wright's project and on his building (with the possible exception of Richard Meier's library), the faculty confessed, "with a certain shame, that not one of them has added in the least degree to the harmony and beauty and magnificence of the original composition."

"The distinguished firm of Gwathmey Siegel offers an erudite rationale for its addition to the Guggenheim based on Wright's drawings for the project; Stanford White also tried to second-

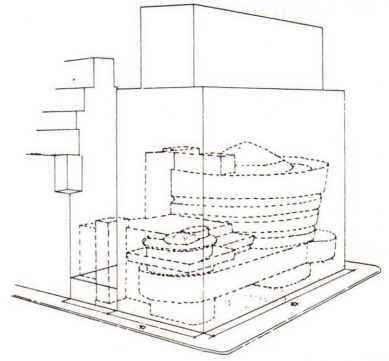
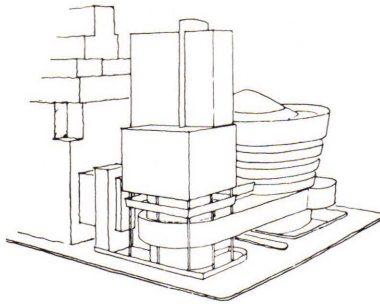
guess his predecessor, justifying his opening up of the Rotunda with the suggestion that Jefferson had wanted a larger space but was forced by circumstances to subdivide the interior. As for the new buildings he designed for the campus, White admitted to being "scared to death" about adding to Jefferson's plan, and indeed, the university imposed site restrictions on the architect that forced him to place his buildings at the end of the open lawn. The Museum has likewise restricted Gwathmey Siegel, who is obliged to work with a site that cannot possibly accommodate the program for it.

"For years the McKim, Mead & White additions to the University of Virginia campus were bemoaned as "a mutilation," and in 1973-76 the Rotunda was, in fact, restored to its original state. (It is conceivable that if the Gwathmey Siegel addition is built, a future generation will do the same.) Practical considerations did not allow removal of the McKim, Mead & White  
*cont'd. p. 15*

## Impact Statement

*Alternative scheme: a complying building.*

*Alternative scheme: an as-of-right building, assuming demolition of the present building.*



*cont'd. from p. 12*

building and its neighboring structures.

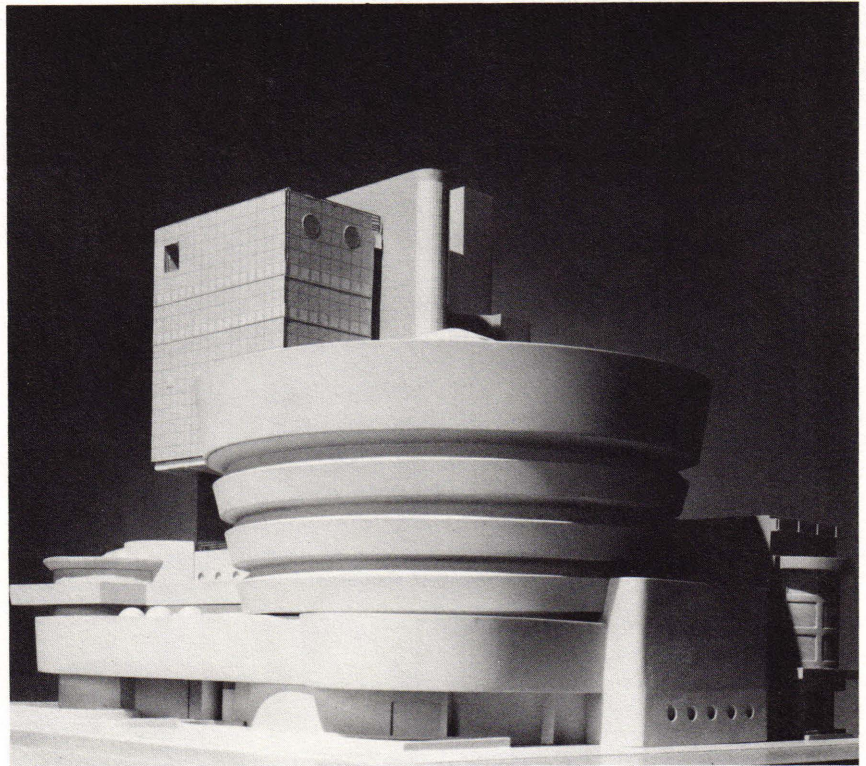
3. Our scheme proposes a core wall to the East, which establishes a vertical datum with the corner apartment buildings on 88th and 89th Streets and Fifth Avenue, thus framing the site. Off that wall, beginning at the top of the Large Rotunda is our square cantilevered "object," establishing a dialogue and counterpoint to the original. It is now a tri-partite composition, that is not simply a background wall but a carefully conceived asymmetrical assemblage. The whole has been put in context while, the essential primary object, the Large Rotunda, can still be read as "free."

The effort to be responsive, yet interpretive was primary. Our building is geometrically and physically derived from the existing buildings, mediates the context, and ultimately enriches Frank Lloyd Wright's original masterpiece . . .

### Alternate Schemes

We have evaluated several alternative design solutions . . . Although the proposed building penetrates the sky exposure plane on the 89th Street facade, does not comply with P.I. street-wall requirements, and encroaches by an additional small amount on lot coverage and rear yard equivalents, (and requires a special permit and variance), we believe there is no other way to design and construct a new building in a satisfactory physical relationship to the existing buildings so as to produce an integrated development.

The other schemes we studied, including a Complying Building, would disrupt critical functions of the Museum during construction, be prohibitively expensive, and not result in an efficient, cost-effective, integrated development for the Museum. In addition, it would have an extremely detrimental impact on Frank Lloyd Wright's design, rendering his original concept largely unrecognizable.



The second scheme, which complies with the Fifth Avenue Street Wall Ordinance would totally obliterate the existing structure and place a large vertical mass on the entire site. This mass would be 201-feet long (along Fifth Avenue), 70-feet deep (along 88th and 89th Streets) and rise to a height of 150-feet before setting back 20-feet on the three street facades and rising to a total height of 210-feet. We felt this was both inappropriate, unrealistic, and counter productive.

Another scheme investigated is the construction of underground sidewalk vaults around the perimeter of the existing building. Upon detailed analysis this alternative proves unacceptable for a number of reasons: The space produced would be (1) extremely costly construction, (2) unable to be insured for storing or exhibiting art due to the presence of documented active underground streams, (3) extreme difficulty in climate and humidity control, and (4) disruption of access to and continued operation of the existing museum

during the substantial portion of the construction.

Every element of the proposed building has been examined in an effort to reduce its area and bulk, while retaining a functional, efficient facility in terms of construction, staffing, and operation. We are, therefore, firmly convinced that the proposed building is the minimum necessary to permit the development of an integrated community facility and that it thereby creates the least detriment to the character of the neighborhood and the use of nearby zoning lots.

There are no alternative designs which we could recommend, given the program, the site constraints, the existing conditions, and the historic significance of Frank Lloyd Wright's building. We feel the process of research and development with the Museum has produced a solution of restraint, respect, and importance, and one that will make a great institution serve its public even better.

## The Debate

cont'd. from p. 13

buildings which, despite their intrinsic merit, continue to contradict the very essence of Jefferson's brilliant plan.

"May the Guggenheim Museum's Board of Directors learn from the lessons of history!

"(I am indebted to Leland Roth's *McKim, Mead & White*, New York, 1984 for the information on McKim, Mead & White at the University of Virginia.)"

### CIVITAS

CIVITAS is an organization that is concerned primarily with maintaining light, air, and quality of life on the East Side.

"CIVITAS is entirely sympathetic to the Guggenheim Museum's need for expansion, particularly for additional exhibition space. But the building is a masterpiece and a prime East Side amenity. CIVITAS opposes addition to this building in the proposed form and hopes that another solution may be found."

### Arthur Drexler

Like others at the Museum of Modern Art, Arthur Drexler is loath to cast the first stone at the Guggenheim addition. But he asks:

"How does one talk about things that are professionally embarrassing? It is a problem that is becoming complex. The Whitney addition is problematic. But I find the campaign against it professionally unconscionable. Whichever way you turn you find a professional problem — one of a conflict of ethics."

### Abraham Geller

One could not resist wanting to know Abe Geller's opinion:

"There is no doubt that the most difficult project an architect can be asked to produce is an addition to a renowned masterwork by a celebrated architect. The pitfalls are many and the rewards are few. The architect steers his design past the Scylla of a demanding program and away from the Charybdis of public detractors and

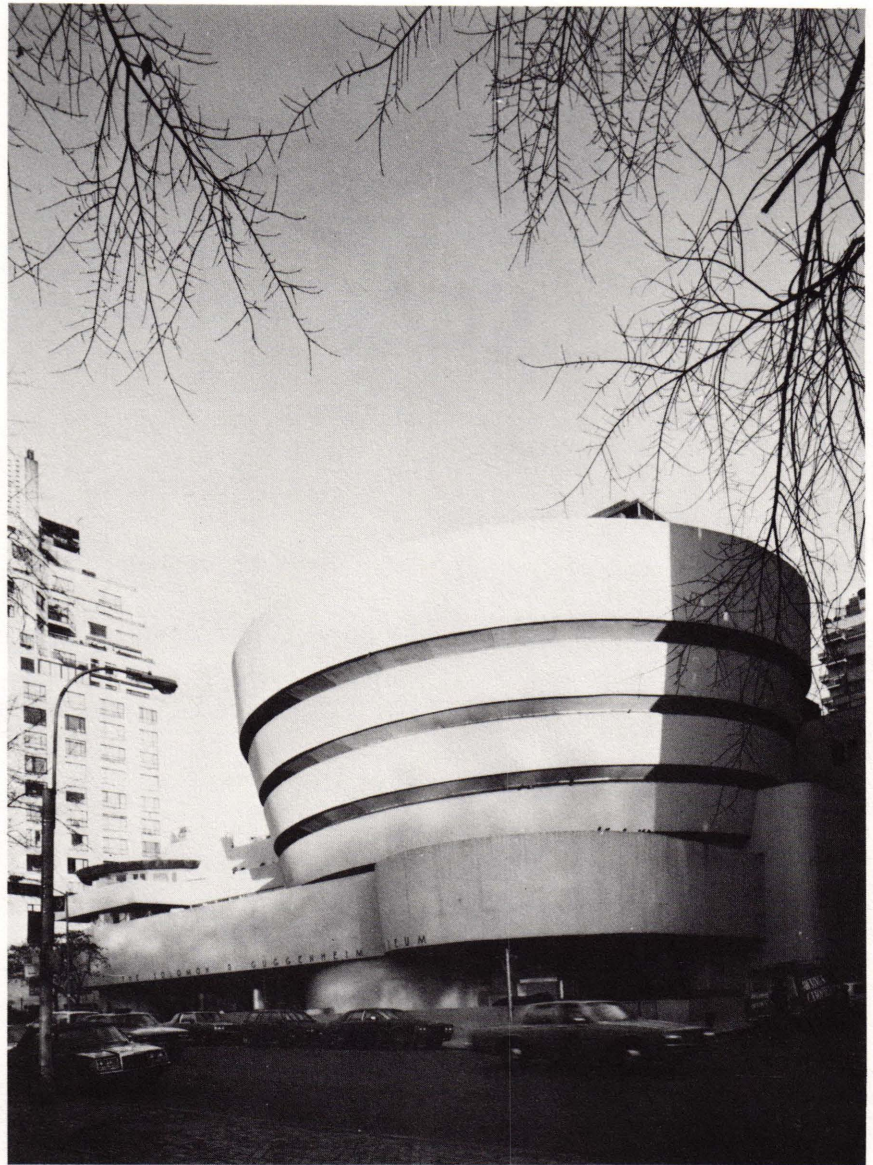


Photo: Stan Ries

critics. He must wonder why he undertook the venture to begin with. On the whole, however, my belief is that Gwathmey Siegel, having undertaken a most formidable task, have, after a number of perceptive revisions, brought about more than an acceptable accommodation with Wright's building. Their solution respects the existing structure, acting as a reserved background, but with architectural nuances that complement Wright's strong spiral forms."

### James Marston Fitch

"... Taken all together, it seems to me a fairly successful emendation of one of the century's most powerful polemics. The most puzzling thing about this controversy is that those who attack Gwathmey Siegel on Fifth Avenue are the same ones who praise Michael Graves on Madison Avenue. With such a scale of aesthetic values, rational judgment becomes impossible. Whatever reservations one might have about the Guggenheim, reason totters at the

charge of its being *worse* than the Whitney."

### Other Comments

It is embarrassing to note that a number of architects who last June wrote letters in support of the Gwathmey Siegel scheme to the Board of Standards and Appeals and to Community Board 8 now privately admit their concern or disapproval of the scheme. But they do not want to be publicly quoted, despite their "off the record" concern, which *Oculus* respects. And this is alarming.

Now, the profession itself has gotten itself into a bind that will not permit the most knowledgeable guardians of our architectural heritage to speak out in protection. Surely, this situation must change.

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