

Oculus

Power Crisis at Mid-Year Reported by Samton

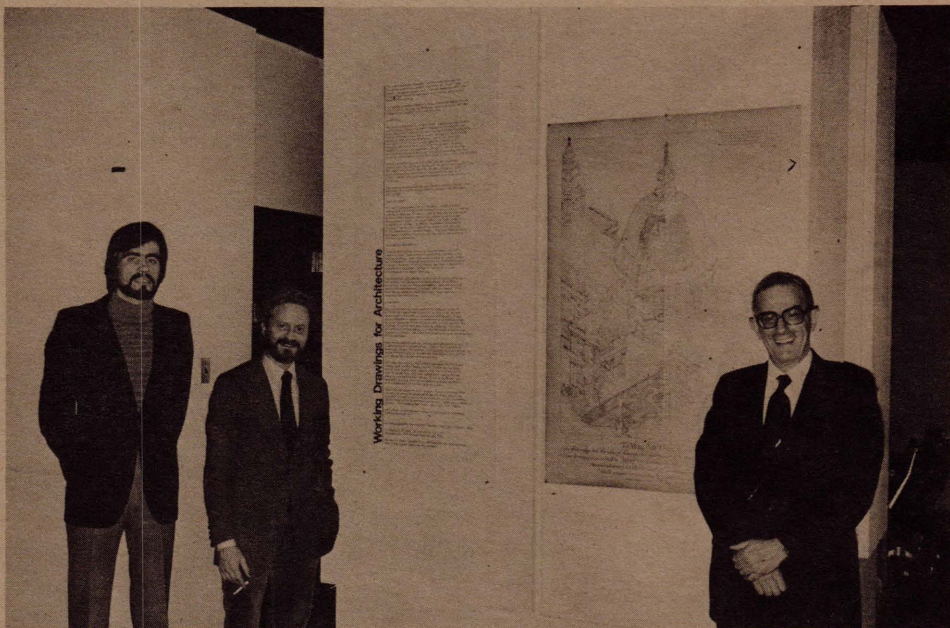
It may seem contradictory to extend best wishes for the New Year (and note that the old one apparently saw the bottoming out for architects economically), and at the same time to lament what appears to me to be a growing power-crisis, or influence crisis, in our profession.

On one hand most of the 30-odd Chapter committees have been effectively involved in increasingly complex professional matters; committee members often feel that they alone do not have all the answers - that in a peer relationship there is as much to learn as to offer, and their meetings are apt to be quite constructive. But these committees are usually more influential within the architectural community than without.

On the other hand, politicians and the lay public are apt to see architects through narrow images - the man in the white suit, detached and expensive, as Tom Brokaw of the "Today" show remarked in an interview about a recent book of architects' houses.

I make this observation at a moment of frustration after six months of a mayoral campaign in which the Chapter repeatedly attempted - with

Exhibit on Working Drawings for Architecture Opened at Chapter Headquarters



The "Working Drawings for Architecture" exhibit on display at the Chapter includes drawings from Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, SOM, Gwathmey-Siegel, Davis-Brody, Richard Meier, The Eggers Group, Stephen B. Jacobs, Pritchard-Swan, Timothy Wood, & Partners, Peter Eisenman, Ezra Ehrenkrantz, Giorgio Cavaglieri and others. Pictured from l. to r. Mike Petrovic and Paul Segal who planned and mounted the exhibit and Carl Petrilli in front of the drawing he loaned to the exhibit.

varying success - to focus on some key issues and to influence the candidates. They, and their representatives, more often than not seemed puzzled by what we were up to, as though they were dealing with a profession about the motives and purposes of which they knew next to nothing. Further, as I was told at a recent meeting of construction leaders, the Chapter is only one of several local architec-

tural organizations.

This frustration is behind our present intention to establish a "speakers bureau," described in the article by Alex Kouzmanoff, Lee Pomeroy and David Spector elsewhere in this issue. Its purpose, simply put, will be to blow the architects' horn, to advertise the services we perform, the problems we

continued on page 2

continued from page 1

can solve, and the difference which good architecture and planning can make.

We also need to establish more direct contacts with people in the incoming Koch administration. We have always been most influential when key deputy mayors and commissioners have come to know us and have not only listened to us but have actively sought our advice.

I urge Chapter members, many of whom I unfortunately have not been able to know personally, to let us know if you can participate in these efforts. We need all the help we can get; the success of the Chapter really depends on the whole membership. □

Peter Samton, President

To Serve on a Community Planning Board Start by Calling Boro President Stein

Community Boards need to have among their members architects who can bring to bear their technical knowledge of urban design, zoning and related matters, which form a major part of their agenda.

Chapter members interested in being appointed to a Manhattan community board, who live in the area of the board or who work there and live elsewhere in the borough, and are willing to be actively involved, should without delay, call Borough President Stein's Director of Community Boards, Mr. Don Hazen at 566-4300. □

Speakers Bureau Organized At Chapter

The idea of organizing a Speakers Bureau for the purpose of promoting and articulating architectural services to communities, schools and businesses was presented to the executive committee by Jonathan Barnett. Subsequently, a meeting was held at the headquarters to further discuss the proposition in terms of both intentions and organizational consequence. Brochures, position papers and topics were considered.

It was decided that the time was right for architects to be heard loud and clear, via the rostrum as well as the pen.

We are pleased to announce the formation of a Speakers Bureau with the intended function of communicating about architecture to the broad spectrum of our potential clients. There is conceptual and organizational work to be done to implement this intent. Members: please contact Alexander Kouzmanoff c/o New York Chapter, AIA, 730-1221. (See also, article by Peter Samton page one.) □

*Alex Kouzmanoff
David K. Spector
Lee Harris Pomeroy*

Candidates for Membership And New Members

Information received by the Secretary of the NYC/AIA regarding the qualifications of candidates for membership will be considered confidential:

AIA Member

Daniel T. Casey
Jerome M. Greenfeld
Robert E. Kelley
Helmut A. Loser

AIA Associate

Angelo Volonakis

The NYC/AIA Welcomes the following New Members:

AIA Member

Edward G. Blankenship
Takeo Nakata
Pak-Cheung Wong

AIA Associate

Prabhu Bakrania
Marvin Cutler
Michael Ressler

**New York Chapter
The American Institute of Architects**
20 West 40th Street
New York, New York 10018
212/730-1221
George S. Lewis, Executive Director

Executive Committee 1977/78
Peter Samton, President
Charles E. Hughes, 1st Vice President
George A. Dudley, Vice President
Joseph Wasserman, Vice President
Stephen A. Kliment, Secretary
Anna M. Halpin, Treasurer
Jonathan Barnett, Director
Michael McCarthy, Director
Rosaria Piomelli, Director
John Belle, Director
Roy Friedberg, Director
Robert A. M. Stern, Director

Oculus Committee
Denis Glen Kuhn, Editor/Chairman
Albert Barash
Stephen N. Carter
Mary Jane Clark
Bonnell Irvine
Lawrence Levine
Kenneth Ricci
William C. Shopsisin

Stephen A. Kliment
Secretary, NYC/AIA
Cathanne Piesla
Chapter Staff Member

Executive Committee Upbraids Outgoing Mayor for Some Weak Appointments and Steps Up Contacts with Mayor Koch

A hefty portion of the Executive Committee's Dec. 1 meeting was given over to a close look at the caliber of city appointments to posts that influence the urban built environment. For example, a strong letter was sent to City Council Majority Leader Thomas J. Cuite opposing confirmation of an individual appointed by former Mayor Beame to the Board of Standards and Appeals, on the grounds that the man had no previous experience in handling the sensitive issues of building codes and zoning.

On the other hand, now that Mayor Koch's selection and screening committees were moving into high gear, all Chapter members were urged to seek out potential architect candidates for positions on city commissions and community boards. Members should feed such names to the Chapter office (730-1221). The office will make sure the names reach the proper hands on the various selection committees.

To avoid this kind of last minute haste in finding good names, the Executive Committee felt a long-term effort is needed which would serve to develop a useful backlog.

Other actions included:

- A vote to establish a student membership category. See MISCELLANY column page 6.
- A decision to mail a series of letters to Chapter member firms pointing out the financial benefits, under the new national dues structure, of having as many as possible of the registered architects in their firm join the AIA.
- A vote to again hold the lapsed major social event

through which to raise scholarship funds.

- A show of concern over a possible move by Comptroller Harrison Goldin to rewrite city contracts with engineering consultants to penalize them for cost overruns and offer bonuses when a job comes in under the budget.

Chapter members note: you may inspect you Executive Committee's minutes in their entirety at the Chapter's offices. □

Stephen Kliment

Political Affairs Committee Update:

Following the election, the Political Affairs Committee, Herbert Oppenheimer, Chairman, organized efforts to reach Mayor-elect Koch and his people on several fronts.

- Peter Samton and others met, at Mr. Koch's suggestion, with Mr. Tony Gliedman to discuss the Housing Preservation and Development Department in particular and planning policies in general. There was a follow-up meeting with Messrs. Perry Soskin and Mike McDonald.

- Meetings are being sought with Deputy Mayor Badillo and Planning Commission Chairman Wagner to discuss a Chapter position paper Administrative Proposals for Planning, Housing and Community Development (included in this mailing), prepared by Joseph Wasserman and Bernard Marson.

- William A. Hall, chairman of the Public Agencies Committee, and others met with Mr. Koch's advisory panel on appointments to the Department of General

Services to recommend strongly that a commissioner be appointed who is thoroughly conversant with construction because of its importance to the city's economic development.

- There were meetings with Mayor Beame's CPC Chairman Victor Marrero and with Landmarks Chairman Beverly Moss Spatt to review activities in those commissions.

- There will be a meeting with Manhattan Borough President to discuss community planning boards as well as other matters apt to come before the Board of Estimate.

- The Chapter made certain recommendations for key appointments, and Peter Samton exchanged views with the heads of other construction industry organizations at meetings of the Council of Presidents.

- The Times on Dec. 21 '77 published a letter from Peter Samton protesting Mayor Beame's lame-duck appointment of an architect to the Board of Standards and Appeals, made without consultation with the Chapter or other architectural organizations. □

George Lewis

A New Game in Town : Anyone for Ornament ?

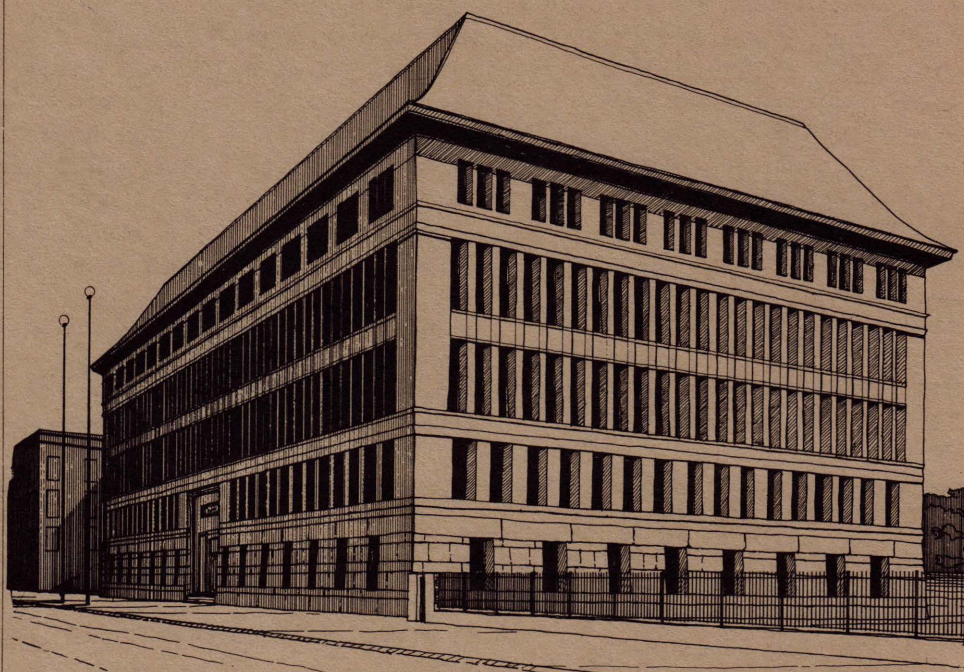
The shortcomings of establishment modern have been eloquently documented by men like Venturi for the past eleven years. Recently the alternatives to the international style have also begun to be categorized in such books as "The Language of Post-Modern Architecture" by Charles Jenks.

One of the most surprising directions emerging is the reappraisal and experimentation with ornament.

As Venturi pointed out in his duck and decorated shed analogy, the challenge of the majority of design programs is not how to create a suitable form for an opera house which can be solved by a duck form, but how to celebrate an office building, or affirm pride of ownership in one's development house. The international style failed when it was applied to the decorated shed kind of building program, which has been the real point of architecture in complex societies since Roman times.

John Summerson reminded us of the most enduring solution to this problem in a recent article. He suggested that ornament is one of the additional elements which can transform a building into a work of art; a "decorated shed," due in part to the communicative (linguistic) character of decoration.

Obviously Mr. Summerson is aware of the many other qualities needed to create a piece of architecture and we all know about silk purses and sows ears. What he is thinking about is the multivalent possibilities that ornament has been traditionally concerned with. To cite a



Mannesmann Offices, Dusseldorf, Germany, designed by Peter Behrens in 1911. Sketches by Jeffrey Hall.

specific example: In 1911, Peter Behrens designed an office building which was planned around a standard desk size. Resulting in a form efficiency which is more economical than most of the buildings put up today. He then placed the building in a vaguely northern Renaissance envelope with a prominent roof and announced the entrance with some Greek Doric columns, a solid looking door, some refined sculpture and an elegant monogram. He designed an efficient shed, decorated it, and in so doing, coded the building to the satisfaction of his clients and the building's neighbors.

For years we have been looking at such design as Behrens' building with a "close, but no cigar" attitude, regarding them as transitional forms destined to evolve into the final clarity of the international style.

Now we are looking at them as examples of a rich vocabulary of design which lives in the stream of history; solves practical problems in conventional ways; and can be as sensitive to the expressive needs of client, society, and designer as one wishes.

An exciting question then is posed: What kind of ornament? One possibility is a codification of pop elements, neon signage, etc. which has the linguistic characteristics of traditional ornament. Another is a revival of historic systems. A third is the creation of new forms; perhaps derived from a variety of sources, such as material or tool characteristics, or a re-combination of folk approaches such as chip-carving. There is also the possibility of several approaches combining, such as

continued on page 5

A Playground for All Children Competition Winner Announced

At a lively reception brunch held Tues., Nov. 22 at the Cooper Union Exhibit Gallery, it was announced that Hisham Ashkouri of Rockville Centre, New York, was the finalist (chosen from among four) whose scheme for a playground for disabled and able-bodied children would be built in Flushing Meadow Park.

Present at the gathering were over a hundred people from different organizations; governmental, educational, community, charitable, and architectural; which are involved in seeing that this playground scheme is brought to reality.

Among the key speakers were President John White of Cooper Union, Congressman Benjamin Rosenthal, Victor Marrero, Chairman of the City Planning Commission, and Parks Commissioner Joseph Davidson.

All enthusiastically expounded upon the playground's merits, stating that what is proposed here is indeed precedent setting; there being very few, if any, public playgrounds, worldwide, with any provision for their enjoyment by disabled children.

Construction is expected to start in the fall of next year. The playground is budgeted at \$800,000. with at least half the cost to be met by the Federal Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

After Jan. 1, a resource book, illustrating the winning scheme will be available from the Department of City Planning. □

Larry Levine

New York City to Hold Public Seminars on Waterways Pollution

The City Planning Commission and the Department of Environmental Protection - Water Resources, announced that there will be five public seminars on pollution in city waterways, one in each borough, during Jan. and Feb. '78.

The seminars will be open to the general public free of charge. They are designed to educate citizens about problems, alternative ways of solving them and the costs of water quality management in New York City, so that citizens can review alternative plans at a citywide workshop and participate in the selection of the final plan.

The seminars are part of the federally-funded New York City 208 Water Quality Management Planning Program, a two-year study being conducted by the Departments of City Planning and Environmental Protection under Section 208 of the Water Pollution Control Act of '72.

The act mandates public participation for achievement of "fishable and swimmable" waters, wherever possible, by '83.

The all-day seminars will be conducted by the City College of New York, The College of Staten Island, Cooper Union, Hunter College and New York University under the auspices of the Departments of City Planning and Environmental Protection and the 208 Citizens Advisory Committee. See CALENDAR for topics, dates and times. □



*Detail view of main entrance
to Behrens' building.*

continued from page 4

a Neon Ionic Column.

Considering ornament as a language opens up a way of re-entering architecture into the mainstream of culture. Accessible and legible to the broad audience, it once enjoyed in the eighteenth century, when a sophisticated knowledge of the classical orders was a required part of any education. □

Iver Lofving

Miscellany

●The very informative series of 4 Office Practice Seminars, limited to 40 participants, has been sold out each session.

●The Continuing Education Committee's recent seminar on Pin Registered Overlay Drafting, conducted by Rolland D. Thompson, attracted over 60 people.

●Prompted by the Student Affairs Committee, the Chapter has established a Student Affiliate membership category, dues \$6.00. Architectural school students interested in joining should call the chapter office.

●George Lewis was one of a dozen speakers, including David Rockefeller, John Keith and Harry Van Arsdale, at a press conference organized by the Westway Coalition. Lewis described Westway as "one of the greatest opportunities in New York's history to transform a major section of the city."

●"The Nativity in Stained Glass," edited by chapter member Philip Ives (Walker, \$8.95) was reviewed in the Dec.18 Sunday Times.

Correction

In an article about the Architectural League in the Dec.'77 Issue, there was a reference to Marita O'Hare as executive director. Actually, the League staff is led by Ms. O'Hare, Administrative Director, and Deborah Nevins, Program Director.□

Architects in Industry Committee Plan '78 Activities

With the growing trend among corporations of having professionals on staff, the role of the Architects in Industry Committee (AIC) has been increasing within the Chapter. The AIC is planning a series of events for '78 to further acquaint the Chapter with the various activities of an Architect in Industry.

In the past years, the AIC has sponsored field visits to facilities which have been built and/or are operated under the guidance of a staff architect. These programs will continue in '78 with a visit to American Airlines new Baggage and Passenger Facility at JFK and at least

one other facility.

A roundtable discussion of the role of the Architect in Industry will take place on Jan.18 (see calendar). Each of the committee members will briefly describe his role within his corporation and its relationship to the profession as a whole. A general discussion will follow. The corporations represented range from banks to international airlines; from retail store chains to major utilities and the responsibilities of the architects are just as varied. All Chapter members and students and their guests are welcome to the roundtable and facilities visits.□

Peter Thompson



*A view of bureaucracy in action: the agency review process.
Drawing by Albert Lorenz.*