Dear Editor:

Along with Arthur Rosenblatt, I also watched Robert Hughes’ TV series “The Shock of the New,” the third installment of which was quite critical of contemporary architecture, particularly the “Modern Movement.” I agree that Hughes’ criticism should spark discussion in the Chapter but I am less interested in a Pavlovian defense of our profession than in understanding why the public generally perceives modern architecture as having failed to help improve man’s condition or to delight his spirit. In preparation for the “dialogue” for which Arthur calls, I suggest some walking tours to see what we have done to our city. A reading of Jim Fitch’s review of the Architectural League exhibition in the May, 1981 Oculus would also help.

Simon Breines

Thank you for publishing Arthur Rosenblatt’s thoughtful letter related to criticism of the modern architectural concepts born in Europe at the time of World War I, which have so strongly marked the built environment of our century.

It is regrettable to notice how forgetful are many who search for new forms, sometimes just in hope of notoriety. It is easy to overlook the goals that inspired the masters of the first quarter of our century and their work. Their effort was to turn over funds, then spent in poor imitation of Renaissance and Classical decoration into the development of better housing facilities and of serviceable spaces; their designs were the result of philosophical and political decisions. Corbusier, Gropius and the Bauhaus proved that attractive, aesthetic values could be obtained in a pleasant environment by the simple assemblage of well-proportioned geometric forms.

The present revival of imitative decoration, sometimes executed without the skill and the competence of the 19th century craftsmen, who would work for inadequate wages, is frequently a return to discarded concepts of the past that were pushed aside by the acceptance of functional and rational architectural design.

Giorgio Cavaglieri

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Significant Architecture Awards for Structures Built from 1931-1961. The New York State Association of Architects is calling for nominations for the 1981 NYSSAA/AIA Significant Architecture Awards for Excellence in Architecture. Only buildings completed between 1931 and 1961 in New York State are eligible. The objective of the competition is to recognize distinguished architectural design after a period of time has elapsed in which the function, aesthetic statement and execution can be reassessed.

All material must be submitted in a Fullview, 8½ x 11” binder. The first page should be devoted to a statement by the sponsoring group (or AIA member). The second page should consist of a short description of the original project, a statement of the condition of the project with respect to use and general appearance at the time of the submission, and a brief outline of the transformations, if any, which may have taken place in the interim period. The current location and name of the project should also be included. Each submission should include sufficient photographs (either black-and-white or color), slides and plans to properly illustrate the project as it now stands. Any other pertinent material illustrating the project in its original condition, if available, should also be included with the submission in order to assist the jury in its evaluation of the extent of intervening changes.

Nominations should be made to the Honor Award Jury for extended use. Nominate only those structures located in your Chapter area, and name no more than three nominations. There is no entry fee. Deadline for submissions is June 30, 1981. For important information, write to Richard Roth, Jr., AIA, Chairman Design Awards Competition, NYSSAA/AIA, 13 Northern Blvd., Albany, N.Y. 11210.
George Lewis

Annual Meeting
The Chapter will meet on board the ship Peking at the South Street Sea-
port in the late afternoon of Monday, June 22. There will be tours of work in
progress in the Museum buildings, awards will be given, and a reception
will follow. Members are urged to come and to bring friends to this great
occasion. Details will follow in a special announcement.

Overseas Practice Exhibit
Work done abroad by 25-odd Chapter
firms will be shown in an exhibit open-
ing Tuesday, June 9 at 6:00 p.m. in the
Urban Center; Ambassador William
vanden Heuvel will speak. It will con-
stitute a continuation of the Overseas
Practice Committee’s examination of
American architects’ effect on foreign
cultures, a subject which was dis-
cussed in the Committee’s remarkable
seminar in March, 1980, “American
Architecture for Export: Fragile,
Handle with Care.”

Raquel Ramati
There will be an informal reception for
Ms. Ramati, whose book How to Save
Your Own Street has just been pub-
lished, on Thursday, June 11 at 6:00
o’clock. She was Director of the Urban
Design Group in the Department of
City Planning 1974-81.

Public Architects Committee
A new committee has been formed
through which the Chapter hopes to
recognize the responsibilities and
work of the large number of architects
in government agencies in the New
York City area. A seminar is planned
for Thursday, June 18; further infor-
mation will follow.

Old Merchant’s House
This wonderfully restored Greek
Revival town house with most of its
original furnishings is where the His-
toric Buildings Committee held its
May meeting. Committee member
Joseph Robert’s imagination, skills
and many years of work have made
possible what can now be seen Sun-
days from 1 to 4 p.m., 29 East Fourth
Street. As the AIA Guide puts it, “The
original house is all there.”

John Belle

Design for Moving People Conference
At the Design for Moving People Con-
ference on May 14, Mayor Koch wel-
come over 150 people who work on
transit systems from Seattle to Miami
and New Orleans to Montreal. He be-
gan the conference by asking, “How do
you describe something which . . .
may have no great physical beauty or
charm as you did, but still has be-
come a hallmark of our culture; which
has had a profound and positive influ-
ence on the very shape and extent of
our man-made environment?”
His answer was “public transportation
environments.”

Mayor Koch then proceeded to discuss
the importance of “paying more atten-
tion — now — to the substantial ben-
efits of good design and quality art-
works in our public transportation en-
vironments.”

Richard Ravitch, Chairman of the Met-
ropolitan Transportation Authority,
made an introductory remark, which
to the surprise of New Yorkers pre-
sent, included the acknowledgement
that design counts and can play a sig-
ificant role in increasing ridership.

Then the conference was launched into
orbit by a Peter Chernyeyeff special,
an illustrated hour and a half lecture
covering the examples of good design
on transit systems all over the con-

tinent.

Four workshops followed on “Can We
Afford It?,” “Will the Community Ac-
cept It?,” “Can Artists and Architects
Work Together?,” and “What about
Maintenance and Vandalism?” All
were quite well attended. Case studies
from New York, Portland, Oregon, Los
Angeles and Dade County, Florida ex-
amined such issues as rehabilitation,

Building Industry Advisory Council
Request
The AIA Code Committee meets
monthly at Chapter headquarters and
discusses a wide range of issues affect-
ing chapter members such as pending
legislation, code revision, Building
Department Administrative proce-
dures, agency staffing and appoint-
ments. The committee solicits your
comments concerning problems that
chapter members may be having with
legislation or administrative proce-
dures at the New York City Building
Department. The Code Committee
will act as a clearing house for these
problems and bring them to the atten-
tion of city officials. Presently, the
Building Industry Advisory Council is
asking Chapter members to partici-
pate in a sub-committee that will dis-
cuss with the Building Department
methods to reduce paperwork and sim-
pify procedures at the Department. If
any member is interested in participat-
ing in this BIAC committee would
they please contact Gerald Hallissy at
(212) 421-3712.”

with tours arranged by the Transit
Authority, and the Municipal Art Soci-
ety and the Port Authority.

One couldn’t help thinking that our
visitors must have wondered if the
conference would have any impact on
our own transit system. “Where do
you start?” asked one overwhelmed
visitor gazing at the 42 Street and
Lexington platform. She was surprised
at the answer “with a conference like
this that shows our politicians and
bureaucrats that it’s already being
done elsewhere.” A little shame going
a long way to energize New York egos.

One day, with the right attitude from
the MTA and the TA, the design com-

unity of New York may be allowed to
bring the real life of good design to our
own transit system and the two mil-

lion people who struggle to use it
everyday.
Oculus welcomes information for the calendar pertaining to public events about architecture. 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, the final details of the events are likely to change. It is recommended, therefore, that events be checked with the sponsoring institution before attending.

CONTINUING EVENTS

SHAKESPEARE: THE GLOBE AND THE WORLD
This major exhibition includes four priceless copies of the First Folio of Shakespeare’s work plus many other materials of inestimable value from the collections of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. Museum of Natural History, C.P.W. at 79th St., 873-1300. Opens June 18, closes Sept. 20

LE CORBUSIER: EARLY DRAWINGS: 1911-1962
An exhibition of drawings and models from the first two stages in the development of Le Corbusier’s Church of Saint-Pierre at Firminy, commissioned in 1960, and the last of his buildings to be realized. IAUS, 8 West 40th St., 398-9474. Closes June 13

DAVID LEVINE: CARICATURES OF BRITISH AUTHORS
Sir Walter Scott, Lord Tennyson, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Oscar Wilde, and Joseph Conrad are among the more than 40 caricatures on display in connection with the exhibition of British literary manuscripts. Pierpont Morgan Library, 29 East 36th St., 685-0008. Closes July 31

ARSHILE GORKY, 1904-1948: A RETROSPECTIVE
Gorky, an important influence on the development of Abstract Expressionism, imbued his canvases with a visionary spirit, paying homage to them in traditional art, to nature and to personal experience—all without compromise for the formal concerns of pure painting. The Guggenheim, 1071 Fifth Ave., 860-1300. Closes July 19
WEDNESDAY 3

WEDNESDAY 10

CHICAGO TRIBUNE TOWER: LATE ENTRIES
The original Tribune Tower competition was one of the more sensational architectural contests of 1922. This current exhibition has "late entries" by contemporary architects and artists invited to submit tower designs for a no contest, no prize exhibition, with no real building to be built. National Academy of Design, 1083 Fifth Ave., 369-4880. Opens June 10, closes Aug. 16

WEDNESDAY 17

THE ASTOR COURT
The Astor Court is a reconstruction of a Ming-dynasty garden court and was modeled on an existing scholar's court from a historic garden complex in Soochow, China: assembled by a team of skilled craftsmen from Soochow using ancient tools and techniques. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St., 979-5500. Opens June 18

WEDNESDAY 24

WEDNESDAY 1 JULY

THURSDAY 4

BALANCHINE/TSCHAIKOVSKY FESTIVAL
The New York State Theatre features a 10-day festival with 8 or 9 new ballets choreographed by Balanchine and several other Company choreographers. Philip Johnson is designing the single set for the festival. New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center, 870-5690. Beginning June 4, ending June 14

THURSDAY 11

RAQUEL RAMATI
AN INFORMAL BOOK RELEASE RECEPTION FOR MS. RAMATI'S RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOK, "HOW TO SAVE YOUR OWN STREET." MS. RAMATI WAS DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN DESIGN GROUP IN THE DEPT. OF CITY PLANNING, 1974-81. AIA, URBAN CENTER, 457 MADISON AVE., 838-9670. 6:00PM. JUNE 11

WOMEN IN ARCHITECTURE
Stow-Davis Showroom, 950 Third Ave. 6:30pm. June 11

THURSDAY 18

THE GOVERNMENT CONNECTION: "SHOULD ARCHITECTS WORK WITH IT OR IN IT?" FIRST IN A SERIES OF PANEL DISCUSSIONS SPONSORED BY THE ARCHITECTS IN GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE. AIA, URBAN CENTER, 457 MADISON AVE., 838-9670. 5:30PM-8:00PM. JUNE 18

THURSDAY 25

MARCEL BREUER: FURNITURE AND INTERIORS
On exhibition are 45 pieces of furniture by Breuer, original drawings and interior designs. Full-scale photographic enlargements of selected Breuer interiors are behind the related pieces of furniture to illustrate his overall approach to design problems. Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd St., 956-6100. Opens July 25, closes Sept. 15

THURSDAY 2

OLD MERCHANT'S HOUSE
JOSEPH ROBERTO'S SKILLFULLY RESTORED GREEK REVIVAL TOWNHOUSE WITH MOST OF ITS ORIGINAL FURNISHINGS IS OPEN TO BE VIEWED SUNDAYS FROM 1:00-4:00PM. 29 EAST FOURTH ST.
Preface: Eric Goshow  
Chairman of the Residential Design Awards Subcommittee  

The Residential Design Awards 1981

The Housing Committee of the Chapter has for a number of years administered our annual Residential Design Awards Program primarily as a single family house awards program, thus recognizing only one building type on the residential landscape. This year the Committee wanted to broaden the emphasis. We wanted to survey what New York City architects were accomplishing across the entire landscape of residential design, from interiors to multifamily housing, from new construction to rehab or alterations, even from built projects to recently designed but as yet unbuilt projects.

We hoped that an inclusive, rather than exclusive, approach would enable us to begin to grasp the pulse, or state-of-the-art, of what New York City architects are designing and thinking about. We were also aiming our approach at younger architects who might have provocative ideas to share but, as yet, no forum in which to exchange these ideas.

Thus, we were led to establish specific categories by which architects would identify their entry, and in which their entry would be judged. As those of you who received a poster announcing the awards program are well aware, eight categories were provided. Fortunately we received 89 submissions in all; three times as many total entries as in previous years.

We were also fortunate to be able to attract to our cause four jurors who are each well-known for their distinguished efforts in working in and thinking about the entire breadth of this residential landscape. They were: Bernard Rothzeid, Partner, Rothzeid, Kaiserman and Thomson, P.C.; Lewis Davis, Partner, Davis Brody and Associates; Joseph Wasserman, Gruzen & Partners; and June Vollman, Senior Editor, Housing Magazine. They conscientiously waded through each entry, and were able to cite a total of 20 projects to receive 17 citations representing all categories save one. The winning architects received citations formally presented at a reception held May 11, 1981, at Chapter headquarters.

These 20 projects, shown herein, will comprise a travelling exhibit to be displayed first at Chapter headquarters in the near future, before moving to other locations.

Comments by Joseph Wasserman  
from the reception honoring the Residential Design Awards.

The jury found — with some notable exceptions — a lot to feel good about this year, and so we have probably outdone ourselves.

We have awarded 17 citations covering seven of the eight solicited categories. Perhaps, we can be criticized for lack of discrimination by choosing so many citations, but let me explain our predicament: We did not find any single entry that jumped out at us as something truly extraordinary, therefore no first awards have been made. We did, however, find a lot of work of a responsible nature and good aesthetic quality which indicated to us a very acceptable and elevated standard of practice on the whole. This, we feel, is something to cheer about. After all, that is what our profession is really about.

We congratulate you, the winners. We also congratulate your clients, many of whom are developers. It is clear that a growing number of leading developers are truly recognizing that the use of architects to produce quality designs is profitable. We invite your developer-clients to pass the word to their conferences about us — the architects. Perhaps you can tell them what thoughtful, well-executed planning and design may be doing for the value of your projects and, we would hope for the satisfaction you will have gained by creating better environments for people to live in.

As to the citations, we found, perhaps predictably, that the multifamily projects seemed to be the most successful entries as a group. We thought that the recycled buildings in this category particularly deserved recognition. The combination of an existing building in a neighborhood of an established character apparently has aided the designer to discover innovative ways to create new living places in the old shells.

The entries in the new multifamily category were unfortunately much less successful. We saw no new ideas of special distinction and that is to be sorely regretted. Within the recycled categories, however, we found a number of distinguished entries from younger, less recognized designers. We welcome your participation in entering these awards. Please tell your friends about this annual affair. We want to see all the best work done by local architects.

Nearly half of the 93 entries were in the new single family category. On the whole, the work was dismal. Try as we did, we could not unearth any new talent in this area. In fact we saw a lot of pretty bad stuff. Perhaps this lack of direction in the single family home is symbolic of the confusion surrounding the Post-modern aesthetic among architects.  

In any case, the jury found the work of older, well recognized architects to be much more tightly conceived and thoughtfully executed. It is always a pleasure to see the wonderful work of our distinguished colleagues, and to see that they still have plenty to show us — in fact it is very comforting for some of us to discover this fact. But we appeal to the new faces in this crowd and elsewhere to help us search out the next generation of talented designers.
Multifamily New Construction, Not Built

Comment
Bernard Rothzeid, Juror

One approaches the cartons of 93 entries with confidence; it should be easy to separate the wheat from the chaff. It turns out to be excruciatingly difficult. The largest number of portfolios is the houses/built category and too many were eliminated because flaws spoil fine intents. The Gwathmey-Siegel houses, however, are cool, precise, controlled—the style perfected.

It is the unbuilt categories where the greatest surprises lie, and that somehow is not surprising. One is anxious to see them built (some we cannot comprehend unless they are built). We find that we are in awe of the winners, some of the losers, and the broad range of talents combined with the daring of imaginative clients. Things are O.K. at the A.I.A.

Multifamily New Construction, Built

Photography by Otto Baitz

Stephen B. Jacobs & Associates, Architect
Gallery Apartments, New York

Alfredo De Vido, Architect
222 Columbia Heights, Bklyn.
Multifamily Rehab, Built

Stephen B. Jacobs & Associates, Architect
The Printing House, New York

Stephen B. Jacobs & Associates, Architect
Falls Mill, Norwich, Ct.

Avinash K. Malhotra, Architect
Bleecker Court, New York
Multifamily Rehab, Not Built

Shelly Kroop & James McCullar, Architects
EN REM Group 2, Bronx, NY

David Gura, Architect
Alexandria Condominium Apartments, NY

Stephen B. Jacobs & Associates, Architects
Christopher Street Housing, NY

Perkins & Will, Architects
Brooklyn Army Terminal Development

The Croxton Collaborative, Architects
Bulova Watch Factory, Sag Harbor, NY
Single Family New Construction, Built

Gwathmey/Siegel Architects
Residence in Texas

Photography: Richard Payne AIA

Ulrich Franzen & Associates
Photography: David Franzen

Gwathmey/Siegel Architects
Wesit Residence, Quogue

Gwathmey/Siegel Architects
Residence in Ohio

Photography: Richard Payne AIA

Gwathmey/Siegel Architects
Benenson Residence, Rye
Single Family New Construction, Not Built

Eisenman Robertson Architects
House in Dunes, South Hampton, NY

R.M. Klement and Frances Halsband
Single Family Rehab, Built

Lawrence Horovitz
Beigelian Residence, NY

Paul Segal & Associates
Rogers Apartment

Siris/Coomba, Architect
Ullick Loft, NY