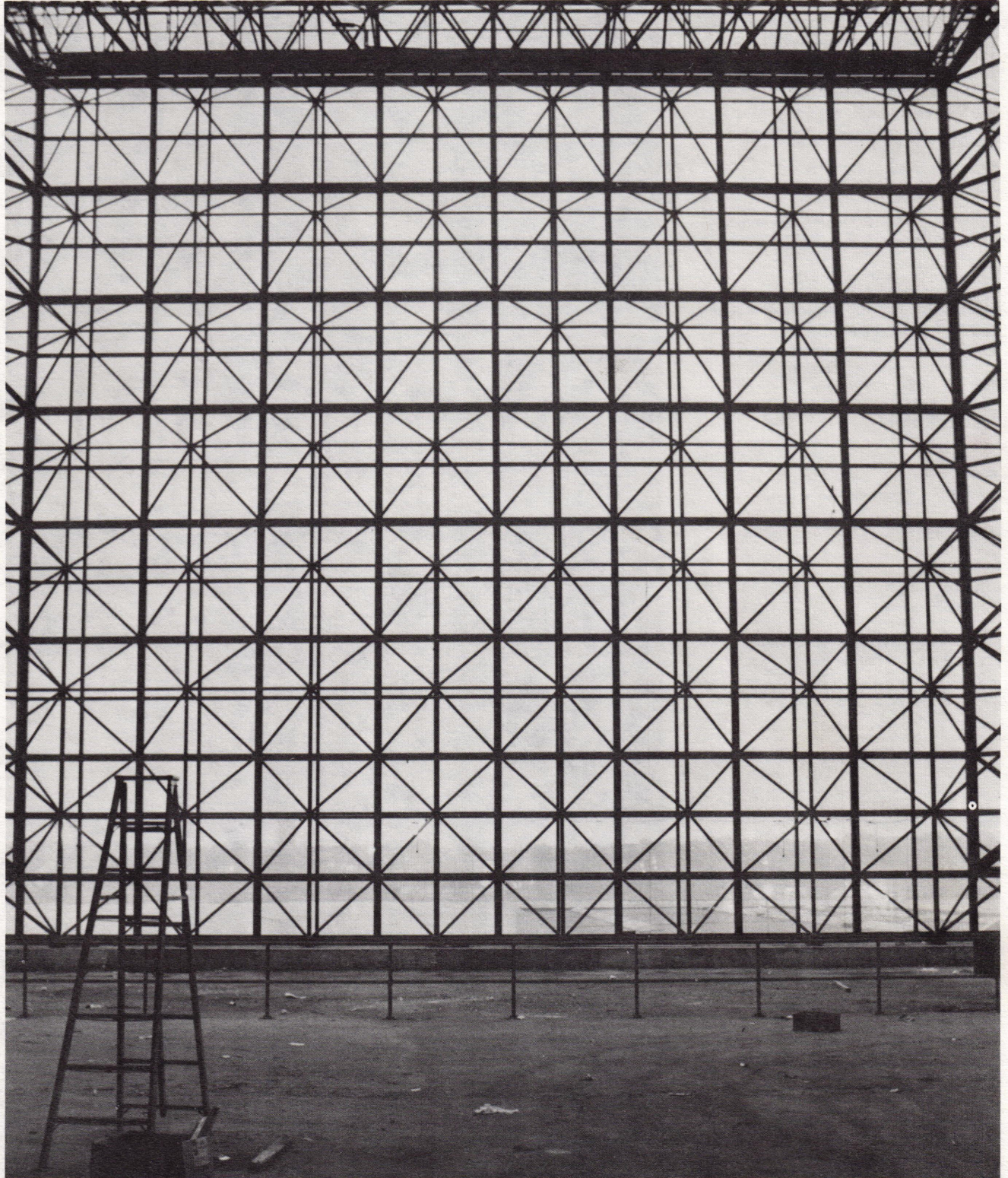


OCULUS

an eye on new york architecture

The New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

Volume 47, Number 4, December 1985



The space frame of the new Convention Center at times produces linear, two-dimensional optical effects.

Photo: Stan Ries

OCULUS

Volume 47, Number 4, December 1985

Oculus

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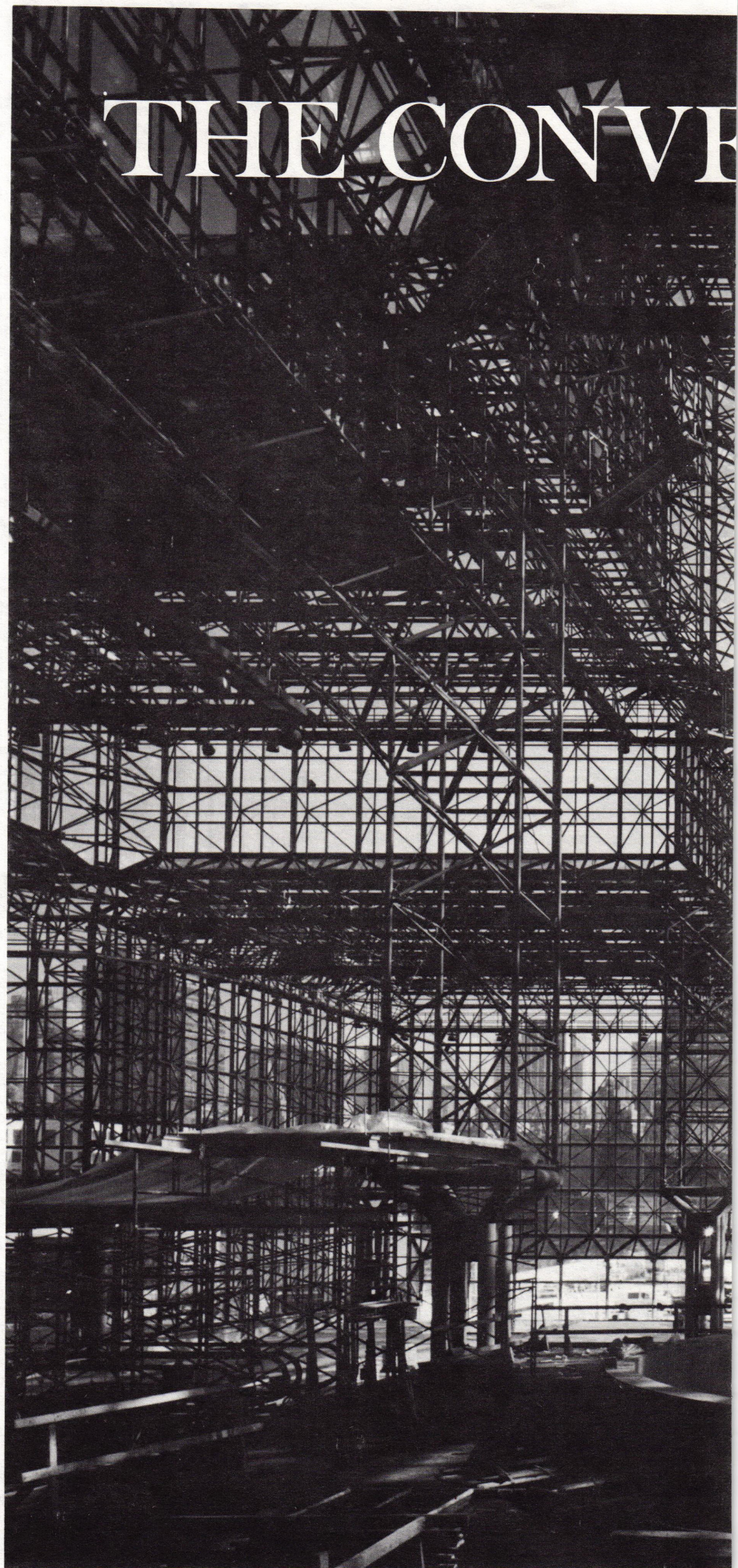
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NTION CENTER

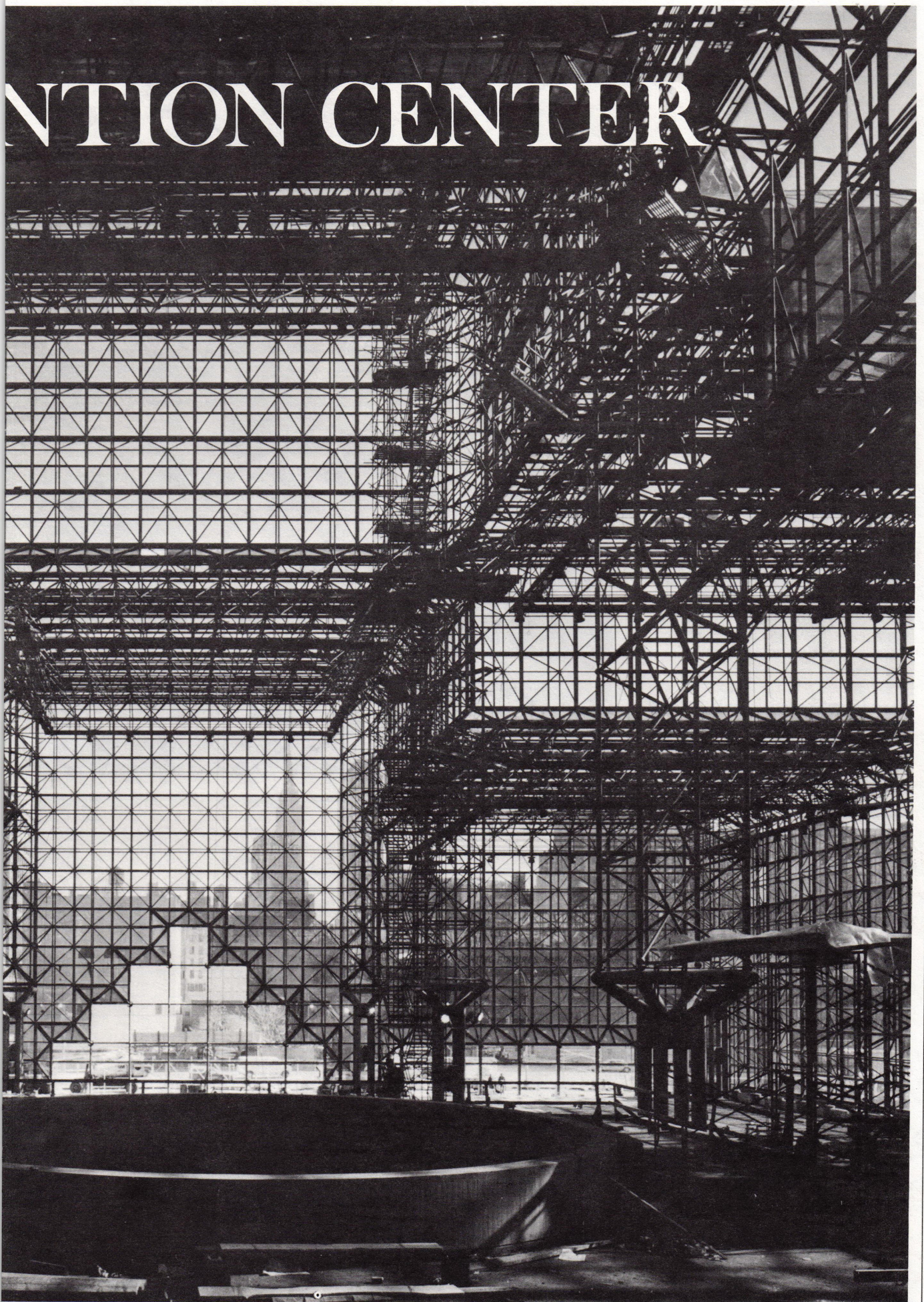


Photo: Stan Ries

The Convention Center

A Tour with James I. Freed

James I. Freed, F.A.I.A., is a partner in I.M. Pei & Partners and the principal in charge of design for the New York Convention Center.

The Jacob K. Javits Convention Center of New York—renamed as such last winter—will open at the beginning of April 1986. So it is time to find out what the city will be getting from this version of the Convention Center, which was begun in 1979.

From a distance, the new Convention Center rises undramatically on the exterior as a blocky black box that is almost invisible, since it has a low silhouette and no brightness of surface. Self effacing as it seems, closer inspection forces another evaluation:

At last, a major public building we can be proud of. Probably not since the Municipal Building of McKim Mead & White in 1914 has New York sponsored a building of such refinement—a major interior space, complexity ordered into simple understanding, and materials presented with straightforward clarity and high finish. Seldom does the city present itself with such class.

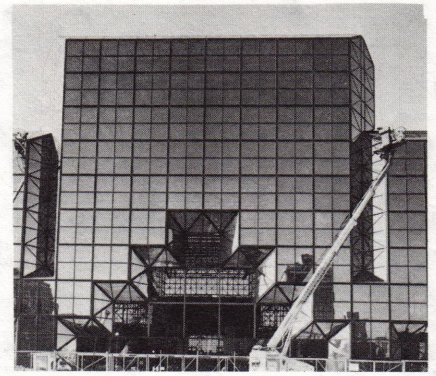
What brings this reevaluation about? Knowledge that the interior will serve as a light fixture to enliven the exterior, that the exterior lighting and graphics are yet to come, and, above all, a tour of the building itself, which is hard to fault.

The Site

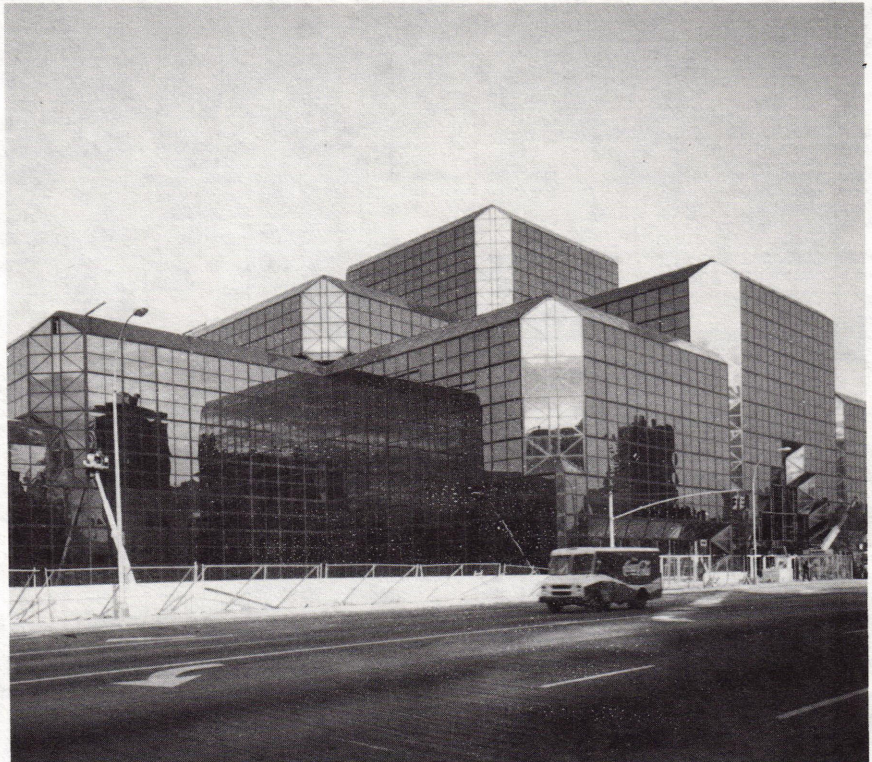
Constructed on 18 acres of land, the Convention Center is located between 34th and 38th Streets bounded by 11th and 12th Avenues. Because of the slope in grade—the high point on 11th Avenue is at 35th Street, the low point at 38th Street—a viaduct previously existed on 11th Avenue.

Organization of Elements

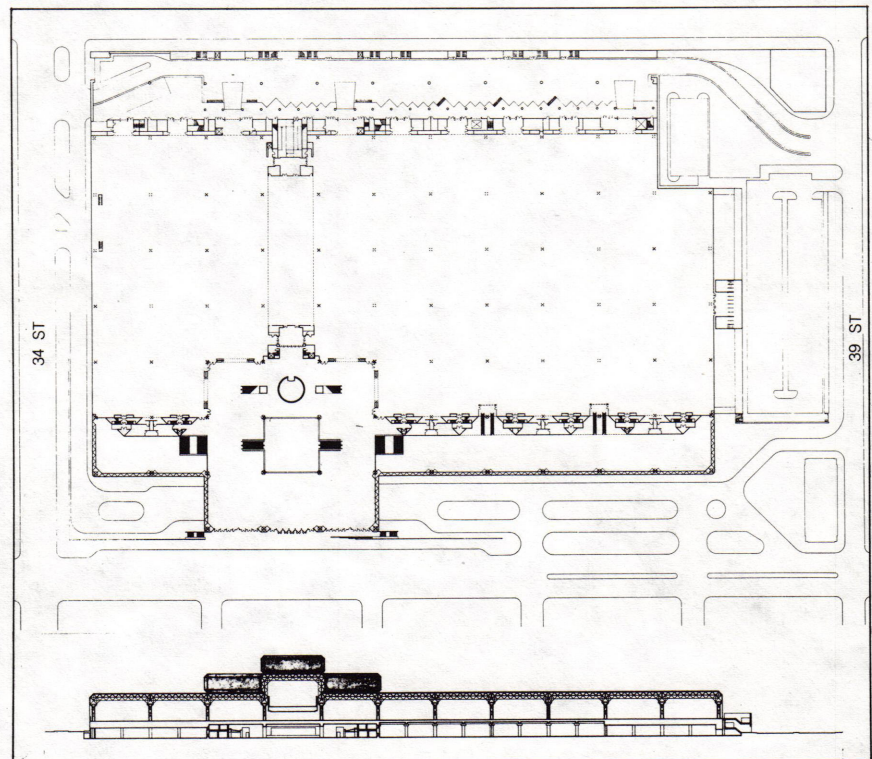
The Center encloses 1.6 to 1.7 million square feet of space. All exhibition activities are organized on a North-South axis; all amenities on an East-



1.



2.



1. The main entrance to the Great Hall is on 11th Avenue at 35th Street.

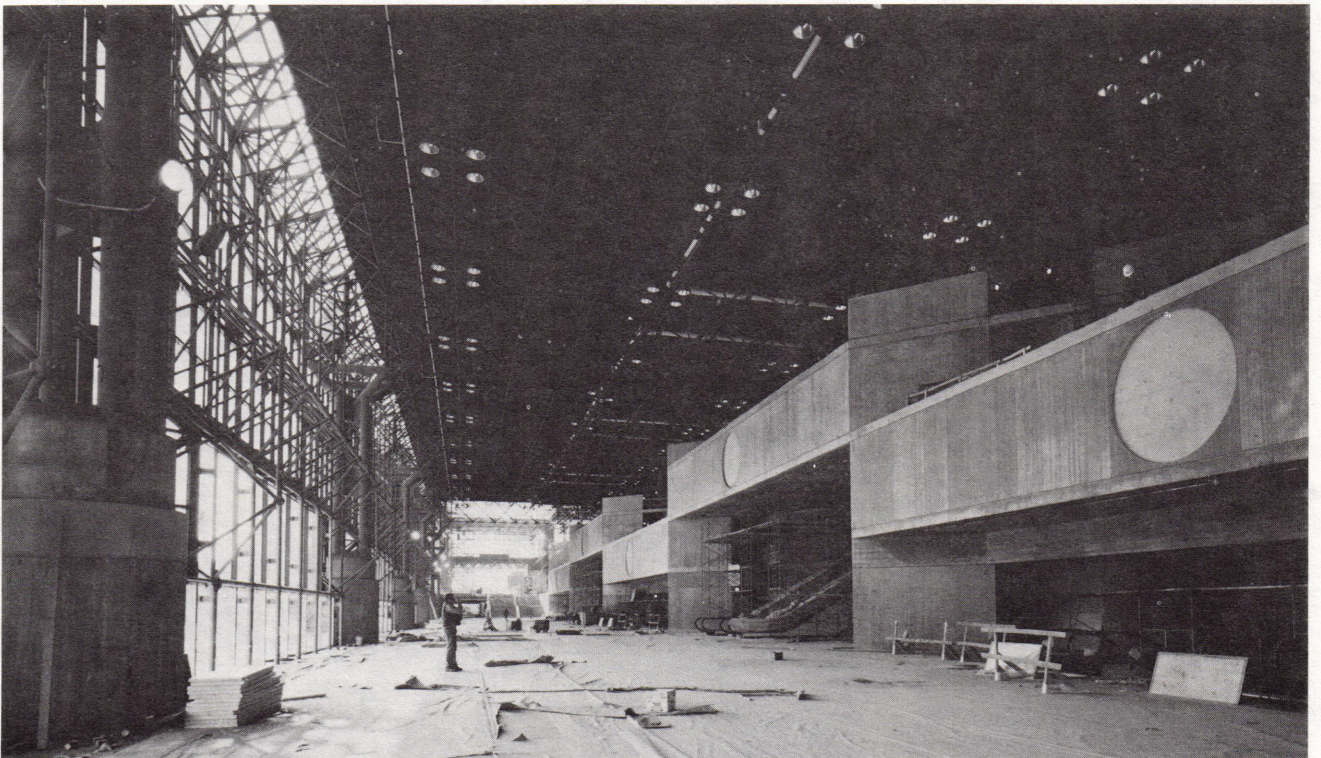
2. The central block is 90 ft. square.

3. Parallel to 11th Avenue is the Concourse, where registration will take place.



1.

Photos: Stan Ries



3.

The Convention Center

West axis. Visitors enter and exit on the East side of the building at 11th Avenue; goods enter and exit on the West side at 12th Avenue. The main lobby space is on the East with a secondary public area on the West.

"A building like this," architect Freed points out, "lives or dies on how it handles people and how it handles goods."

Circulation

Pedestrian circulation is on an East-West spine; vehicular circulation is on North-South spines. All pedestrians enter at 11th Avenue—either into the Great Hall, which is at the high rise of the land at 35th Street, or into the registration and circulation concourse, which is a level below.

Below grade, circulation spines are terminated by "light slots" (windows) at the perimeter wall, so that even during the day one has some suggestion of where one is. James Freed envisions the circulation system as a multi-level and multi-entrance scheme like Grand Central Station.

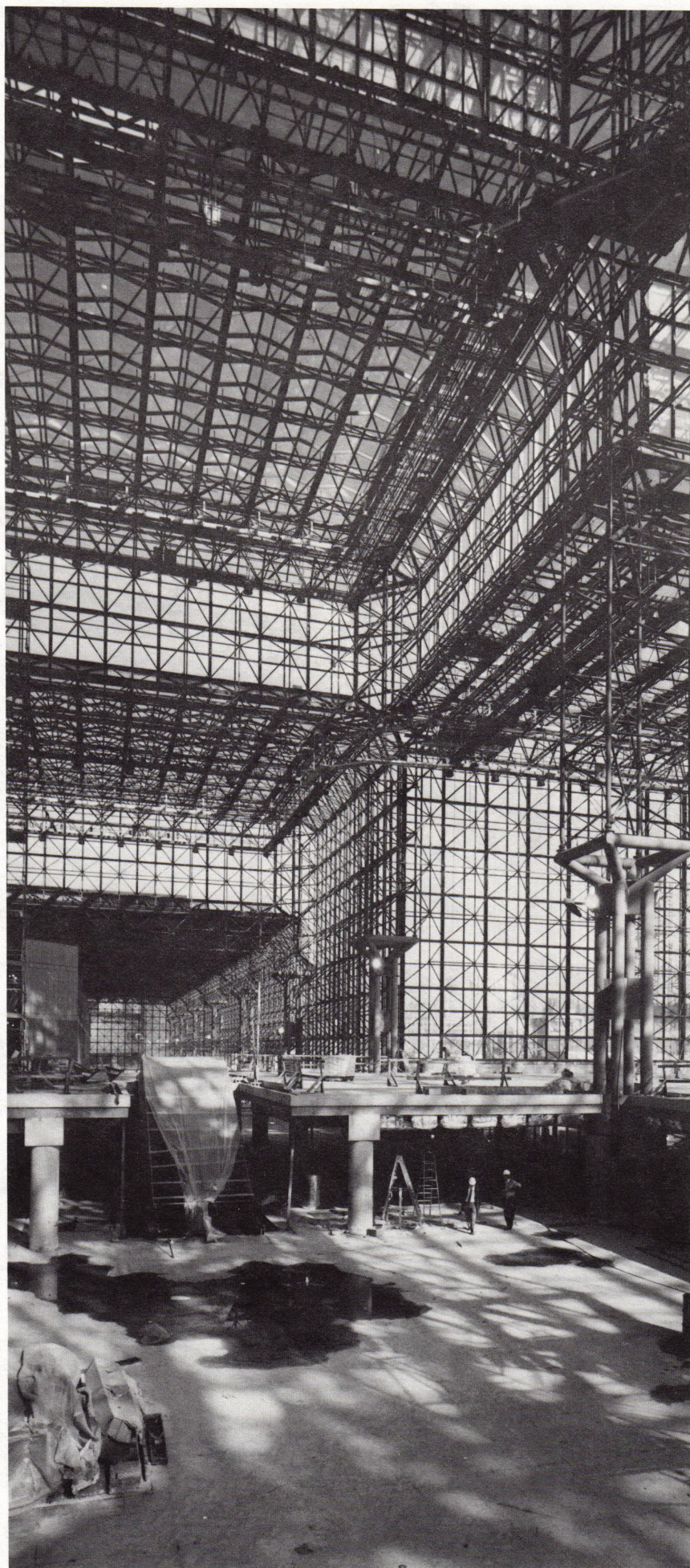
Exhibition Spaces

There are two floors of exhibition spaces plus a mezzanine. In comparison with the NY Coliseum, which offers approximately 350,000 sq. ft. of exhibition space, the new Convention Center will offer approximately 700,000 sq. ft. for exhibitions. That space can be arranged for one vast exhibition or for ten separate ones simultaneously.

Public Amenities

There will be 100 or so meeting rooms; a cafeteria for 800; a banquet room with stage that will accommodate 5,000 to 6,000 for theater-like presentations; foodstands throughout the exhibition spaces; and a series of restaurants. The Galleria on the E-W spine is envisioned as a midtown commercial street with neon signs, shops, cafes, and other idealized visions of city streetlife.

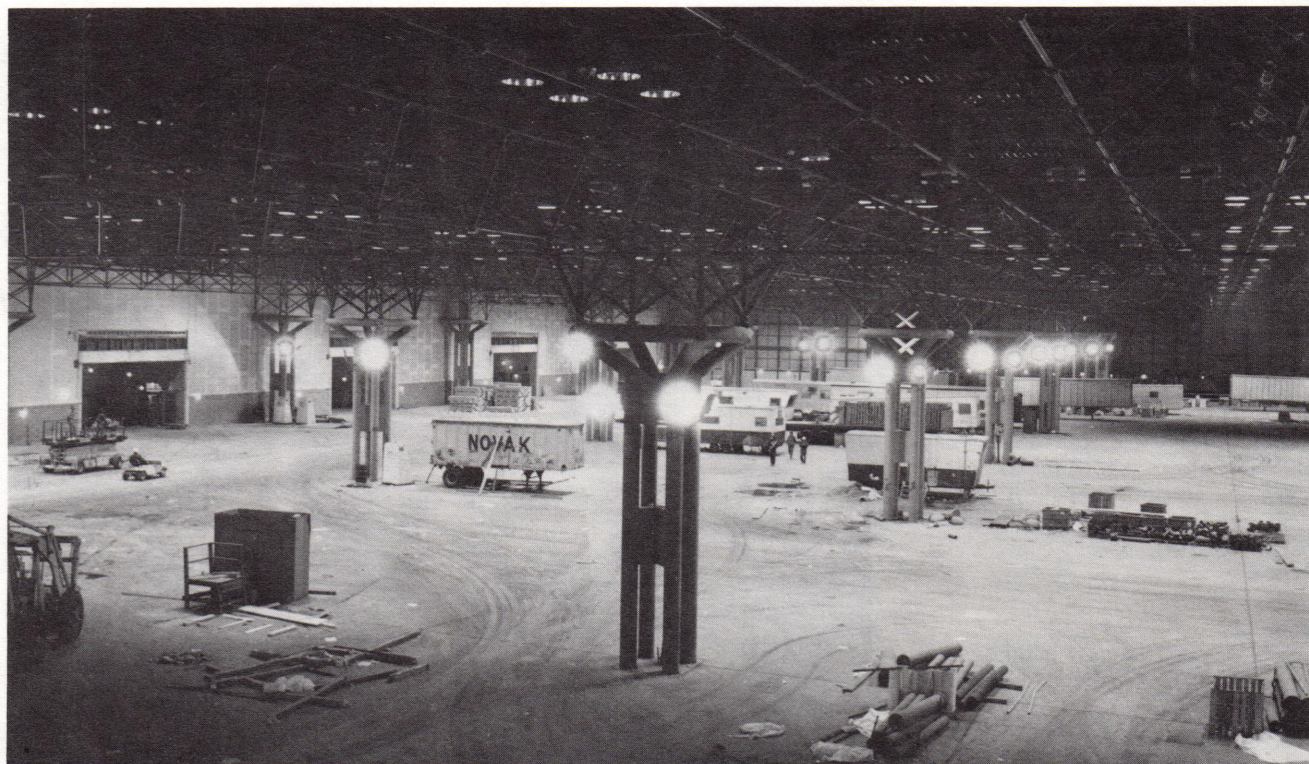
The aim is that the restaurants and shops can be supported independently of exhibitions and conventions, and



1. The height of the Great Hall—which Convention Center officials seem bent on dubbing “the Crystal Palace”—is 135 ft. from the 11th Avenue level and approximately 150 ft. from the Concourse level. Center officials are fond of saying that the Statue of Liberty would fit into the space without her pedestal.

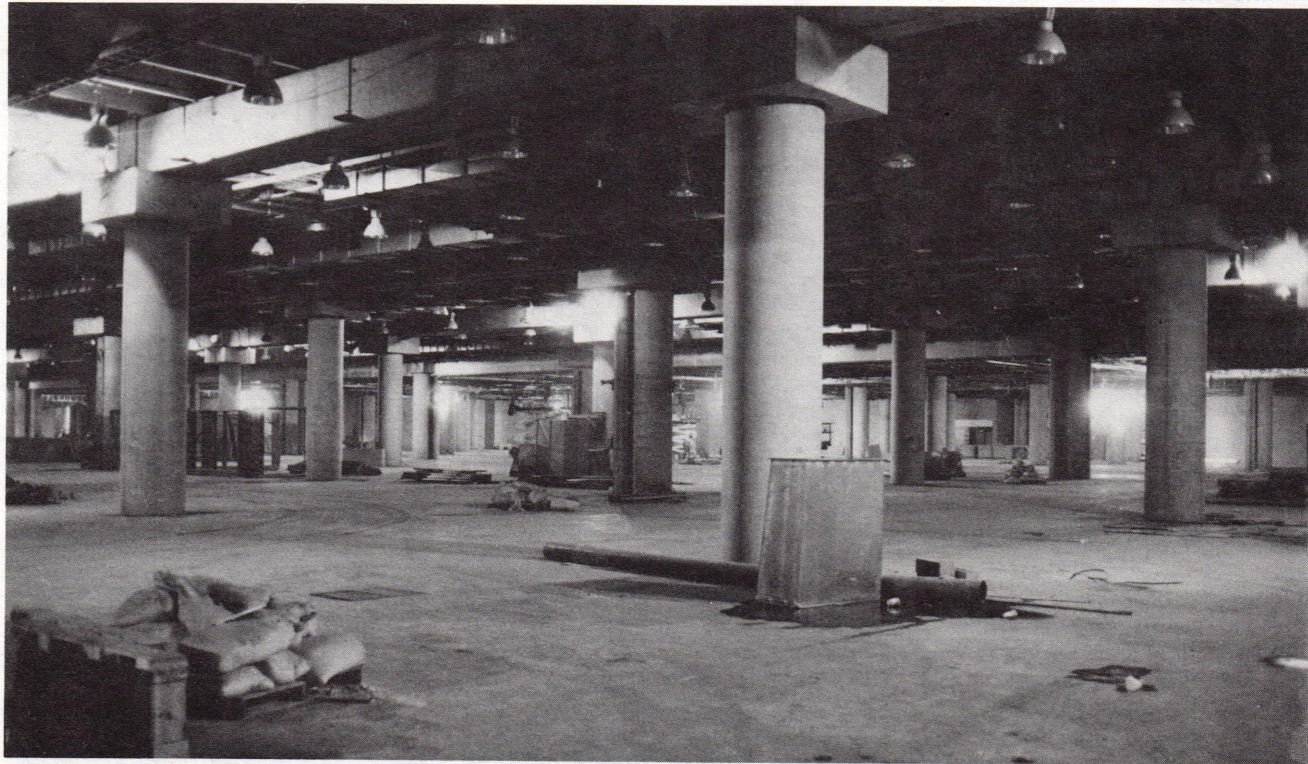
2. Exhibition Space No. 2 is a 500,000 sq. ft. space on the level of the Great Hall.

3. Exhibition Space No. 1 is a 250,000 sq. ft. space on the Concourse level. Freed refers to it as “the Egyptian Hall” because of its column detailing and clear-span 90 ft. square structure. “Downstairs at Karnak” was the verdict.



2.

Photos: Stan Ries



3.

The Convention Center

that the Convention Center can become a true and full-time center of the city.

Transportation

In the main, parking is provided only for those who will work in the Center. A shuttle bus system is planned between trade shows and midtown hotels. Across 11th Avenue a bus plaza is planned — with idealized water jet (25 ft. high in the model), trees, and other arrival amenities. The 34th Street crosstown bus goes virtually to the front door of the Center.

People who come by car for the boat show, the flower show, the automobile show, and the antiques show are expected to use the 15 to 20 thousand parking spots in nearby commercial garages.

Code

There was no adequate building code for an 80,000-occupancy building of this kind, architect Freed points out. "So the city set up a special committee headed by the commissioners of Buildings, Fire, Traffic, and so on, to develop a set of criteria for safety. And a consultant was engaged to work out a set of standards acceptable to the city. Sprinklers, for example, are double the standard capacity."

Structural System

The building is based on clear-span blocks that are 90 ft. square, which breaks down to a 10 ft. x 10 ft. superstructure, a 5 ft. x 5 ft. grid, and increments of 1 ft. 3½ in.

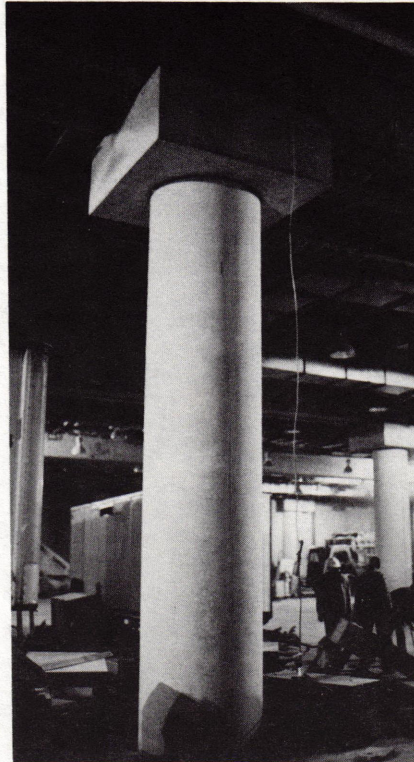
The structural system is a composite of 1) concrete foundations up to the lowest exhibition level; 2) a concrete structure of massive round piers, precast beams, and walls finished with board-formwork and snaptie holes revealed, along with some fin-form texture for floor-level definition and for edging; and 3) steel above the public level. The four-column steel piers are concrete filled. Flooring throughout is of terrazzo in a three-tone, star-form motif of light reds.

cont'd. p. 13

1. Column detail

2. Split concrete columns will accommodate sliding partitions.

3. Paradigm of the structural system.

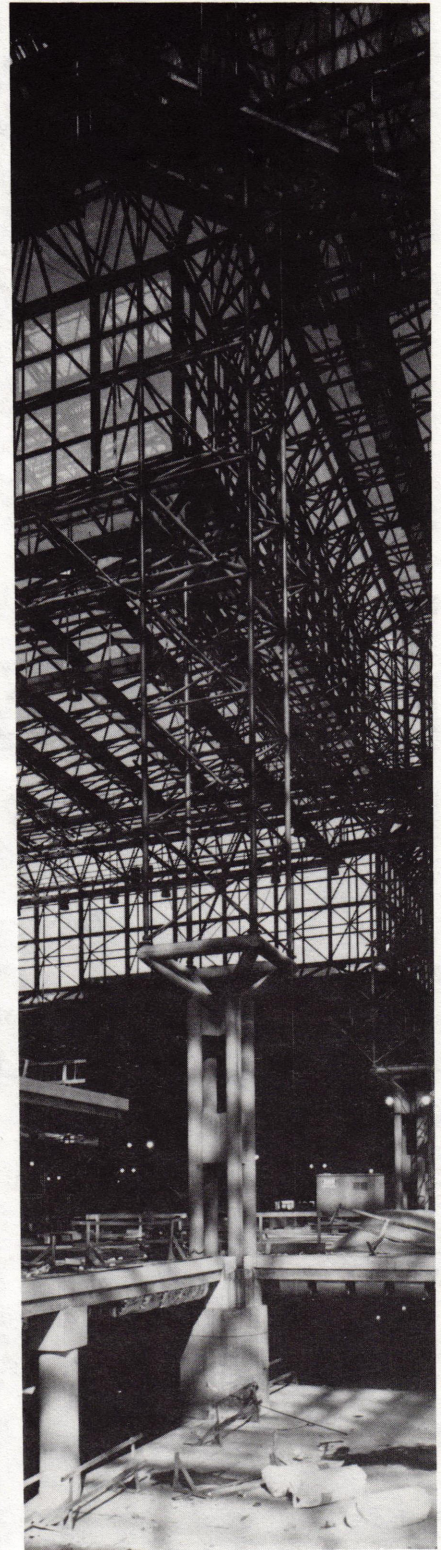


1.

Photos: Stan Ries



2.



3.

Names and News

Coming Chapter Events

• Tuesday, December 10, 6-7:30 pm. The Urban Center. "The Role of the Architect on a CM Project" in the seminar series that Barry B. LePatner is conducting for NYC/AIA. Panelists will be Gene McGovern of Lehrer/McGovern; John Belle; and Ken Block, LePatner's partner.

• Tuesday, December 17, 6 pm. The Urban Center. The Energy & Environment Committee will sponsor a seminar on "The Economics of Energy Conservation." Independent consultant Andrew Padian and Scott Lewis of the Metropolitan Solar Energy Society, among others, will present the facts.

• Tuesday, January 14, 5:30 pm. The Urban Center. The Corporate Architects Committee will sponsor a speaker/panel discussion on "The Facilities Market: Opportunity and Challenge for Architects." Guest speaker will be Anne Falluchi, editor and co-publisher of *Facilities Design and Management* magazine, supported by a panel of executive architects representing IBM, AT&T, American Express/Shearson, and other corporations. Topic of the discussion is to be: How different corporate building departments operate, how outside design firms are retained, how projects are executed, what opportunities and problems are associated with the facilities sector. Paul Segal will host the event.



A model of the Staten Island Children's Museum.

Architect and architectural historian Stuart Wrede has been appointed curator in the Museum of Modern Art's Department of Architecture and Design according to Arthur Drexler, director of the Department. J. Stewart Johnson, the Museum's curator of design since 1976 has taken a sabbatical leave to study at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, for which he was awarded a John L. Loeb Fellowship . . . The Society of Architectural Historians has scheduled an architectural study tour of China, June 9-July 1 . . . Cooper, Eckstut Associates have been named one of ten finalists in an international design competition sponsored by the City of Paris for development of a mixed-use plan for Parc Citroen Cevennes along the River Seine . . . December 1 marked the opening of the Staten Island Children's Museum in its newly renovated quarters at the historic Snug Harbor Cultural Center. The 3-story brick Italianate structure was converted to its present use by architects Jeffrey Hannigan, David Prendergast, and James Sawyer. Said David Prendergast: "We found the Snug Harbor context to be inspirational in creating forms that were playful interpretations of these historic precedents" . . . Alexander Jackson Davis, George B. Post, John McComb, Jr., Richard Morris Hunt, James Renwick, Isaiah Rogers, are just a few of the architects whose no-longer-existing New York City buildings are illustrated in "New York

Re-Viewed," an exhibition of 19th and early 20th-century photographs from the collection of the Art Commission on view at City Hall until June . . . Carmi Bee of Rothzeit Kaiserman Thomson & Bee served as a judge of "Renaissance '85," the rehabilitation and remodeling design competition co-sponsored by *Remodeling* magazine and the NAHB National Remodelers Council . . . Peter Pran of Russo + Sonder was represented with 15 built and unbuilt projects in the exhibition and catalog, "150 Years of Chicago Architecture," held at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry this fall . . . Andrew MacNair has been appointed chairman of the undergraduate school of architecture at Pratt Institute. "I am also teaching there and still publishing magazines," MacNair told *Oculus*. "In addition I am director of the non-profit organization, the International Network for Art & Architecture, which produces an annual summer research studio called The Manhattan Studio" . . . Hambrecht Terrell International, the New York-based interior design/architectural firm, has opened a branch office in London. "We want to be the first interior design/architectural firm to establish a strong presence in Europe," explained Hambrecht. The firm also announced the appointment of architect Brian L. Swanson to the position of Senior Project Designer to oversee the expansion of its Shopping Center
cont'd. p. 12

OCULUS NYC/AIA DEC 85

CONTINUING EVENTS

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 2

CADD FOR THE ARCHITECT

Three seminars: "How to Choose CADD," "Getting the Most from your CADD System," and "Making Money with your CADD System." Grand Hyatt Hotel, NYC. To register: 1-800-CADD/CAM.

PROVENCAL WATER COLORS

Remy Camoin, 1985 recipient of the AIA's Delano-Aldrich Emmerson Fellowship, exhibits 15 sketches. 380 Art Gallery, 380 Bleecker St.

MONDAY 9

1876: Richardson presented designs for New York Capitol Senate Chamber.

EXHIBITION

Ritual Renewal of Space in Kakunodale and Shiraiwa, curated by Fred Thompson, University of Waterloo, Ontario. Columbia Graduate School of Architecture & Planning, 280-3473. Closes Dec. 13.

THE ENERGY OF LIGHT

An exhibition of contemporary architectural projects that utilize light as an esthetic element and as a practical energy resource. Pratt Manhattan Center Gallery, 160 Lex. 718-636-3517. Closes Dec. 14.

TUESDAY 3

EXHIBITION

Garden and Campus: The Landscape Architecture of Beatriz Farrand. Harvard Graduate School of Design, Gund Hall Gallery, 48 Quincy St., Cambridge. 617-495-9340. Closes Jan. 3.

LECTURE

Robert Campbell of the Boston Globe on "What buildings mean or why hospitals shouldn't be sterile" in 5-Tues. series on Contemporary Architecture: A Critic's View. 8 pm. The Metropolitan Museum. 570-3949.

TUESDAY 10

NYC/AIA SEMINAR

Panel discussion on "The Role of the Architect on a CM Project" in Barry B. LePatner series for the AIA with panelists Gene McGovern of Lehrer/McGovern, John Belle, and Ken Block. 6-7:30 pm. The Urban Center, 457 Madison. 838-9670.

PANEL DISCUSSION

"Art Against the Wall: Building the New Museum II" sponsored by the Architectural League and moderated by Suzanne Stephens. 6:30 pm. The New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West. 753-1722.

EXHIBITION

Michael Graves and Robert Venturi — Architectural Prints, Drawings, and Household Objects. John Nichols Printmakers, 83 Grand St. 226-1243. Closes Jan. 4.

EXHIBITION

"City Light" — featuring 75 black-and-white photographs of the city's architecture — is the inaugural exhibition at the new branch of the International Center of Photography, 77 W. 45 St. 860-1783. Closes Jan. 11. Closes Jan. 11.

WEDNESDAY 4

NYC/AIA CORPORATE ARCHITECTS

Committee meeting. 12 noon. 838-9670.

NYC/AIA ARCHITECTS-IN-TRAINING COURSE

Denis Glen Kuhn on "Design and Technical Productions." 6-8 pm. NIAE, 30 W. 22 St. 838-9670.

LECTURE

Diana Balmori on "Campus: Rural, Suburban, Urban: notes for a new synthesis" in Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture & Planning series. 6 pm. Wood Audit. 280-3473.

WEDNESDAY 11

NYC/AIA ARCHITECTS-IN-TRAINING COURSE

Jerry Hallissy and Paul Segal on "Construction Phase Services and Summation." 6-8 pm. NIAE, 30 W. 22 St. 838-9670.

LECTURE

Louis I. Kahn in India discussed by Marshall D. Meyers in 5-Wed. series on "A History of Reciprocity: Indian & Western Architecture." 6:15 pm. Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 860-6868.

JAMES I. FREED

Lecture. 6 pm. Harvard Graduate School of Design, Gund Hall, 48 Quincy St., Cambridge. 617-495-9340.

EXHIBITION

Mackintosh to Mollino, Fifty Years of Chair Design. Barry Friedman Ltd., 26 E. 82 St. 794-8950. Closes Feb. 13.

EXHIBITION

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

THURSDAY 5

PANEL DISCUSSION

"Art Against the Wall: Building the New Museum I" with architects, artists, and curators. Sponsored by the Architectural League and moderated by Suzanne Stephens. 6:30 pm. The New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West. 753-1722.

COVENT GARDEN

Lecture on its past, present, architectural treasures, restoration, etc. The Royal Oak Foundation, 41 E. 72 St. 861-1529.

THURSDAY 12

EXHIBITION

Andre Kertesz: Of Paris and New York. Metropolitan Museum. 879-5500.

PANEL DISCUSSION

"Art Against the Wall: Building the New Museum III" sponsored by the Architectural League and moderated by Suzanne Stephens. 6:30 pm. The New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West. 753-1722.

EXHIBITION

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

EXHIBITION

The Architect and the British Country House, 1620-1920. The Octagon Museum, Washington, DC. 202-638-3105. Closes April 6.

FRIDAY 6

EXHIBITION

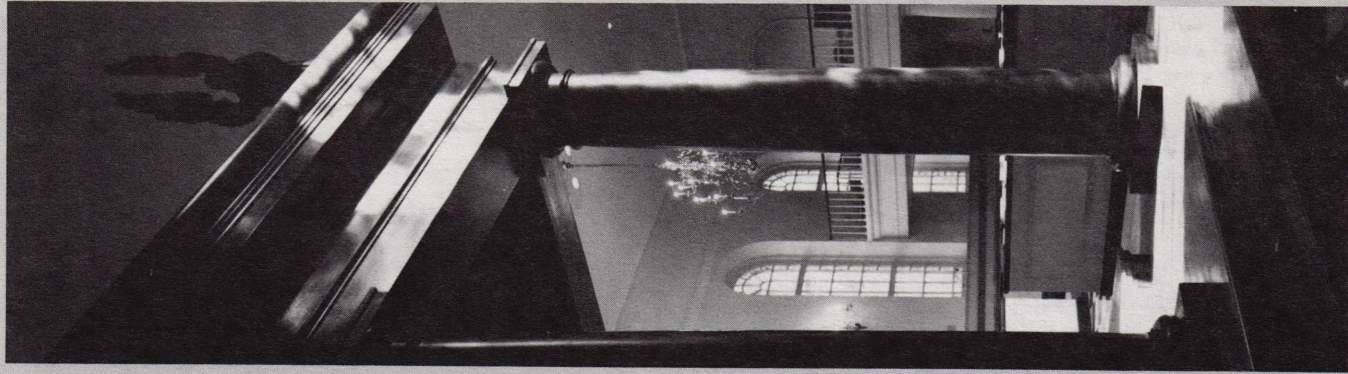
Michael Graves, new drawings. Max Protetch Gallery, 37 W. 57 St. 838-7436. Closes Jan. 4.

SEMINAR, DEC. 8-11

Annual graphic arts conference presented by Pratt Center for Computer Graphics in Design. Marriott Marquis, NYC. Information: Pratt Center, 9 Skyline Drive, Hawthorne, NY 10532. 914-592-1155.

FRIDAY 13

1937: President Roosevelt sketched design for U.S. Naval Hospital, Bethesda.



TUESDAY 17

NYC/AIA SEMINAR
"The Economics of Energy Conservation," sponsored by NYC/AIA's Energy and Environment Committee with independent consultant Andrew Padian, and Scott Lewis of Metropolitan Solar Energy Society, among others, 6 pm. The Urban Center, 457 Madison. 838-9670.

WEDNESDAY 18

1888: Public works administrator Robert Moses born.

TUESDAY 24

1865: Architecture critic Sir Charles Eastlake died.

WEDNESDAY 25

TUESDAY 31

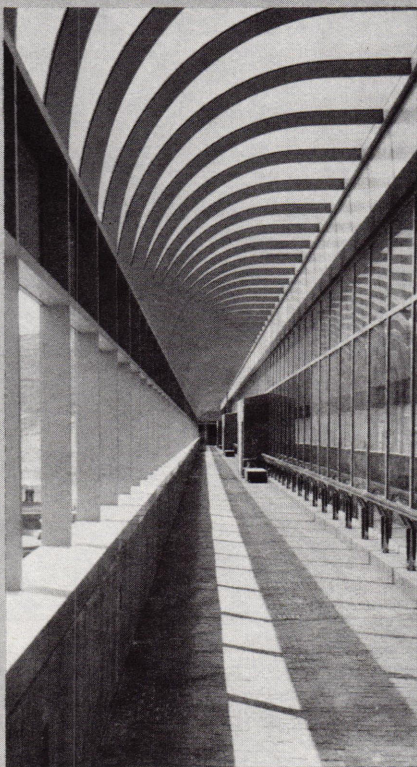
1671: French Academy of Architecture opened.

WEDNESDAY 1 JAN



St. Luke's Chapel newly restored by Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates.

Names and News



Powerhouse of Gatje Papachristou Smith.

cont'd. from p. 9

Design Devision . . . The Smithsonian Institution is offering two seminars on "British Country Homes," Jan. 5-11 and Jan. 12-18, to study the social and cultural history of Britain's country houses with scholars from England . . . Hamilton Smith of Gatje Papachristou Smith attended the dedication of the Richard B. Russell Dam and Powerhouse, which he designed, as a guest of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Located on the upper Savannah River, it is the Corps' largest hydroelectric project in the Southeast . . . Mitchell/Giurgola Architects were named winners of the national architecture competition for the design of the Suffolk County Courthouse . . . Brooklyn Museum has selected Terrance R. Williams to be the Professional Advisor for its forthcoming invitational competition to be held this spring. Williams and his staff are currently working with the Museum to develop the building program and competition guidelines.

Credits for Battery Park City

Herewith a reprint of the credits to associate architects and consultants of Battery Park City, previously published in *Oculus* February and March 1985, and referred to in the November 1985 issue.

World Financial Center

- Design Architects for Entire Project: Cesar Pelli Associates
- Overall Coordinating Architects and Architects for Buildings A, C and the Winter Garden: Adamson Associates, Toronto
- Architects for Buildings B, D and all Bridges: Haines Lundberg Waehler
- Structural Engineers for Buildings A and C: M.S. Yolles & Partners Ltd.
- Structural Engineers for Buildings B, D, Winter Garden and all Bridges: Lev Zetlin Associates Inc. & Thornton Tomasetti, P.C.
- Mechanical and Electrical Engineers for the project: Norman D. Kurtz of the F&K Group, Associated with The Mitchell Partnership Ltd., Mulvey & Banani International Inc.
- Foundation Engineers: Mueser, Rutledge, Johnston & Desimone
- Landscape Architects: M. Paul Friedberg & Partners
- Architectural Lighting Design Lighting Consultants: Jules Fisher and Paul Marantz

Rector Place Residential Area

- Site or Parcel: Park Rose, River Rose 15 stories, 232 units. Developer and Architects: Rockrose Development Corporation with Chas. Moore/Rothzeit Kaiserman Thomson & Bee.

Corrections

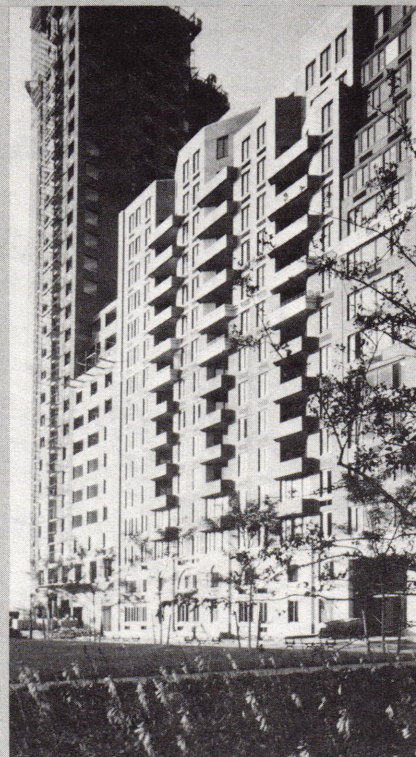
Oculus apologizes for the garbling of items in the October issue, third column of Names and News, page 10. Two items should have read as follows:

A 233-page catalog of films and videotapes presented at FAC-TV, the 4th International Festival of Films on Architecture and Planning, can be ordered from FACT/USA, 491 Broadway (966-0713).

An international workshop on "Heritage and Conservation: Jerusalem as a Laboratory," sponsored by the City of Jerusalem and The Conservation Foundation in Washington, D.C., will be held in Jerusalem, March 16-20. For more information: Phyllis Myers, The Conservation Foundation, 1255 23rd Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037 (202-293-4800).



World Financial Center.

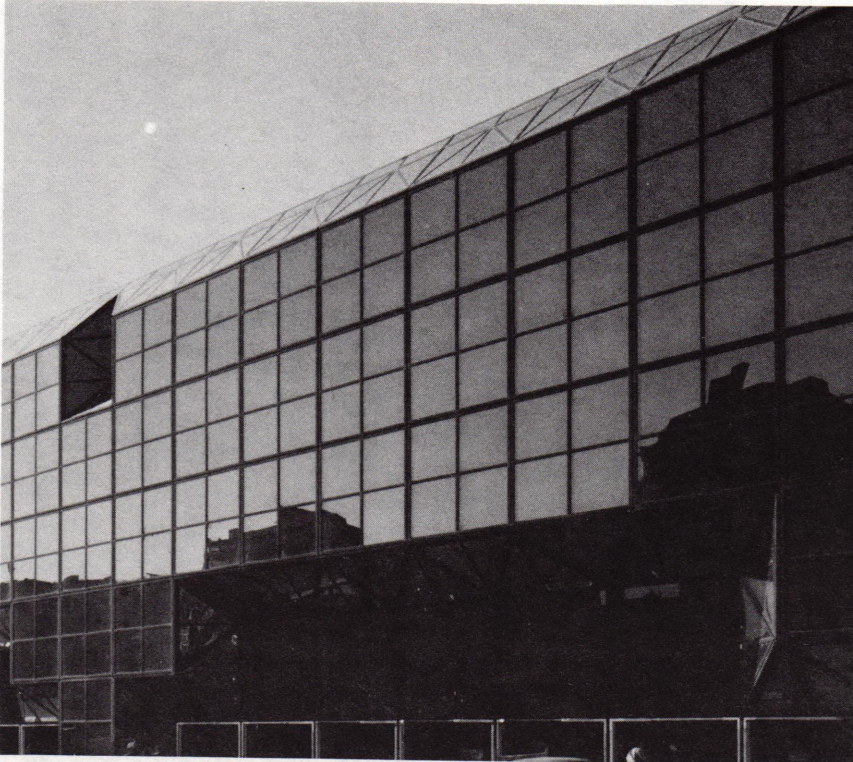


Park Rose, River Rose.

The Convention Center

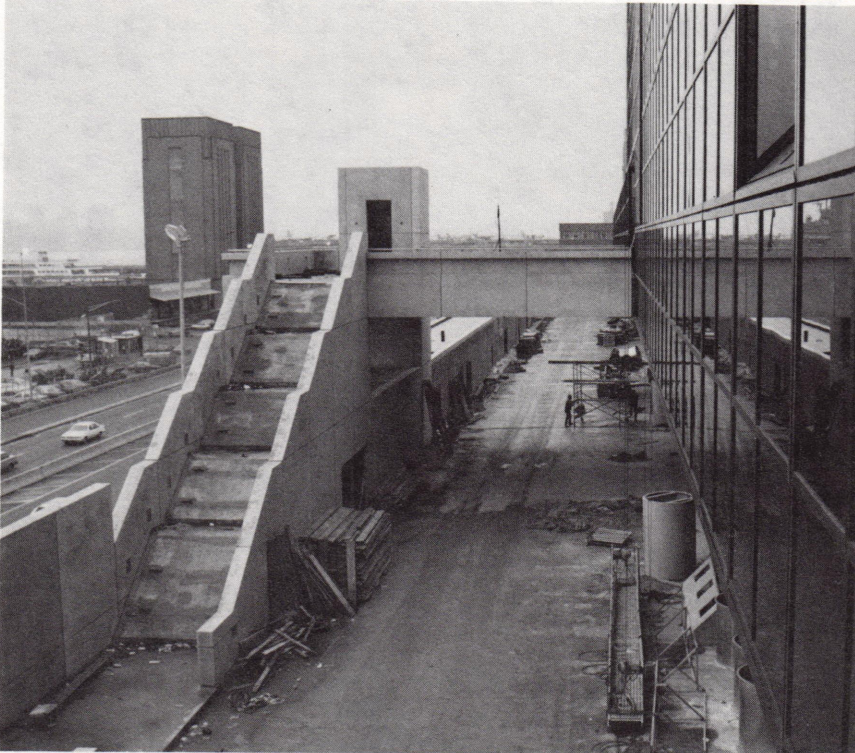
1. Each gray glass panel is 5 ft. square.

2. The entire wall on 12th Avenue is, according to James Freed, "a continuous set of fire stairs." Behind the wall are two levels of truck ramps and docks.



1.

Photos: Stan Ries



2.

cont'd. from p. 8

The Space Frame

James Freed refers to the steel structure as "texture," but more than one observer has been compelled to see it as "lace." At times its three-dimensional actuality vanishes and all one sees is a two-dimensional linear optical effect. The steel is painted a gray tone.

The space frame nodes, which stirred such concern and unclear controversy, were corrected by the addition of new subcontractors. The problem, Freed says, was one of "quality control in manufacturing the elements to the architects' performance specifications."

Glass

So deceptive is the unmodulated scale of the skin that we may be incredulous on first hearing that all the gray glass panels are 5 ft. square. Clear glass panels over entry doors are 10 ft. square. The glass used is slightly darker than originally envisioned. The original renderings were based on the use of a glass with a lighter coating, but it was not available.

This accounts for the discrepancy between the advertised renderings and the present reality of the dark gray. However, recent testing of the interior lighting indicates that the overall interior lighting at the catwalk level will make each catwalk read as a lighting fixture inside and will also enliven the building on the exterior.

Most convention centers are solid blocks like department stores—fully enclosed with little view from inside to outside or vice versa. And that tradition has been maintained in all the exhibition and sales spaces. In its public areas, however, the New York Convention Center is in a fairly new tradition of being a glass pavilion.

Light wells bring daylight into some of the interior spaces from the Great Hall—one a circular well, two others in key-hole form beneath escalators. The architects' aim was to gain "participation" of one space from

The Convention Center

another. Still to be seen are the glass railings that will permit further participation of daylight deep into the space.

Suspended Ceilings

Not installed at this writing are the suspended ceilings that, for economy's sake, will be installed under the coffered concrete slabs and will cover the mechanical, electrical, sprinkler, alarm, and other systems.

This regrettable money-saver has been designed with its own integral joining and pattern. Also not yet installed are the vast sliding partitions that will separate the major spaces. Both of these elements could greatly alter the visual effect of the finished interior.

Conclusion

One significant decision of the architect was that "Since the structure is the architecture [that is, its visual delight], none of the architecture was removed for budget cuts." This is a major lesson for public buildings.

The first impression of the Convention Center is one of a great space, of solid thinking, clarity of expression and refinement of materials and detailing. It looks, in this stage of completion, as though the Convention Center has been worth the wait, and that it will prove itself to be a victorious survivor of all the sensationalism and controversy.

— CRS

Convention Center Design Credits:

Architects: I.M. Pei & Partners
James I. Freed, principal in charge of design

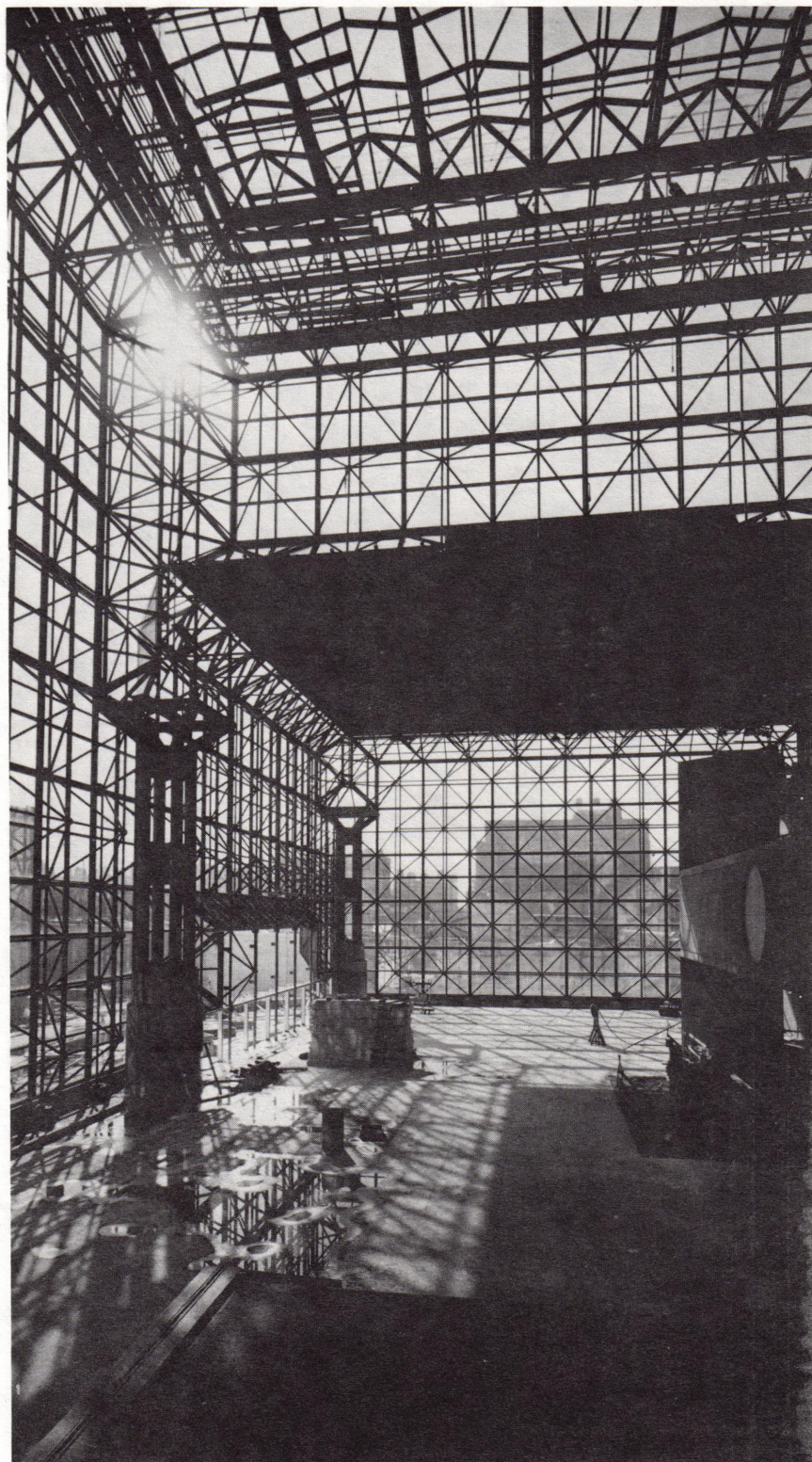
Mechanical: Syska & Hennessy

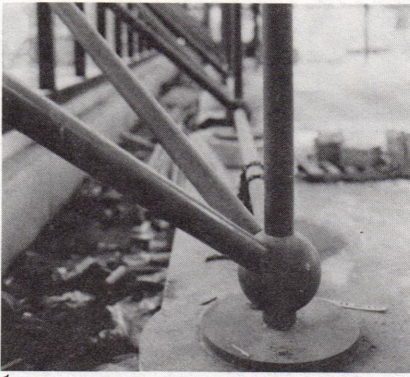
Structural: Weidlinger & Associates,
Matthys Levy in charge

Traffic: Travers Associates

Code: Rolph Jensen & Associates

Lighting: Jules Fisher & Paul Marantz Inc.





1.



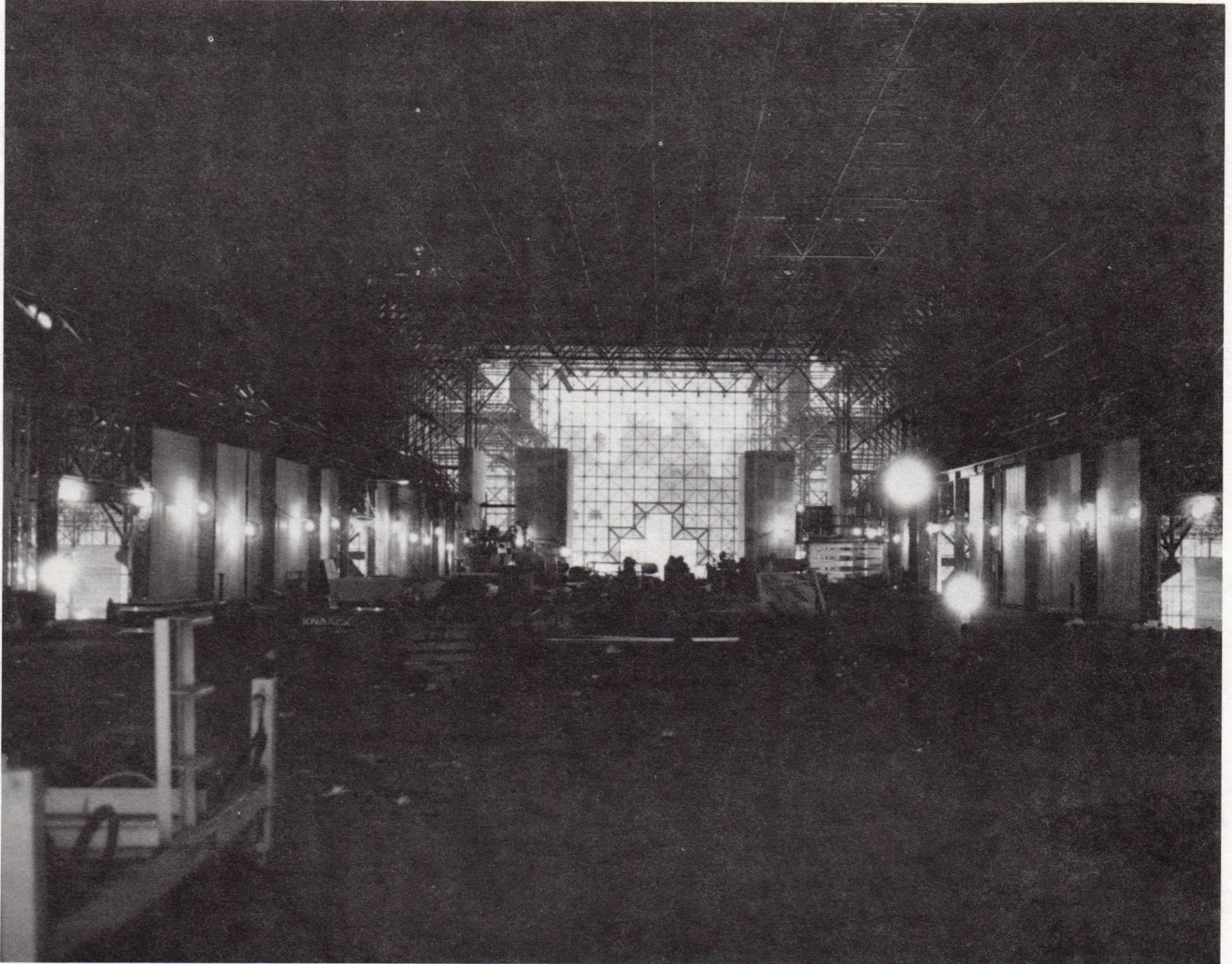
2.

1. Detail of the space frame.

2. The terrazzo pattern.

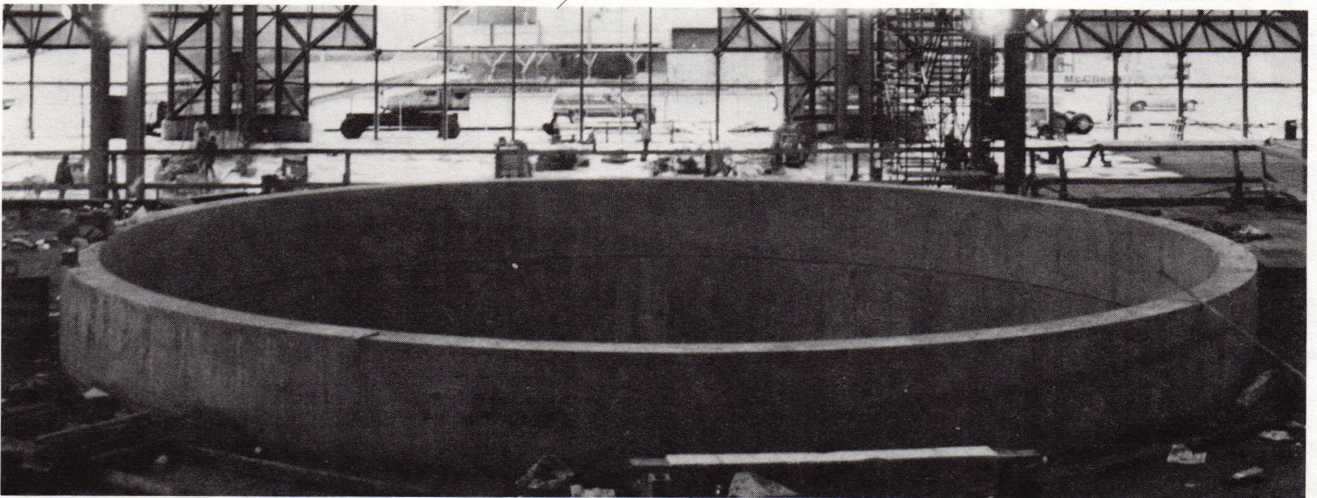
3. The Galleria is envisioned as a midtown commercial street.

4. A circular light well crowns the entrance to the banquetting hall.



3.

Photos: Stan Ries



4.



Lessons from the Convention Center

An Interview with Thomas F. Galvin

Thomas F. Galvin, F.A.I.A., is President and Chief Executive Officer of both the Convention Center Development Corporation and the Convention Center Operating Corporation. He has been president of the New York Chapter and of the State Association.

Q: The Convention Center must offer some lessons for architects. From your experience as an architect, a builder, and a longterm government official, can you outline some of those lessons for us?

A: It is in a political environment that this kind of project goes on. And therefore one can never forget the source of the money. In the case of the Convention Center, it is the State of New York, represented by the UDC and the TBTA (Triboro Bridge and Tunnel Authority), each comprising fifty percent ownership and contributing two members each to the governing board of the corporation.

There is also an operating corporation board comprising seven gubernatorial appointees and six members appointed by leaders of the State legislature. Therefore this is a complex political situation.

That would not make much difference unless there were cost, delay, and other problems. It is then that the architect can become vulnerable to criticism and can become a convenient political target and scapegoat.

Q: Why does the architect still get the blame?

A: The architects are always easy targets.

Q: How can they avoid being hit?

A: They cannot. In the case of the Convention Center, I think that any criticism will be overcome when the public sees the beauty of the building. Then they will quickly forget about the space frame and the node

problems. Then the architects will get a belated but justified accolade from an appreciative public.

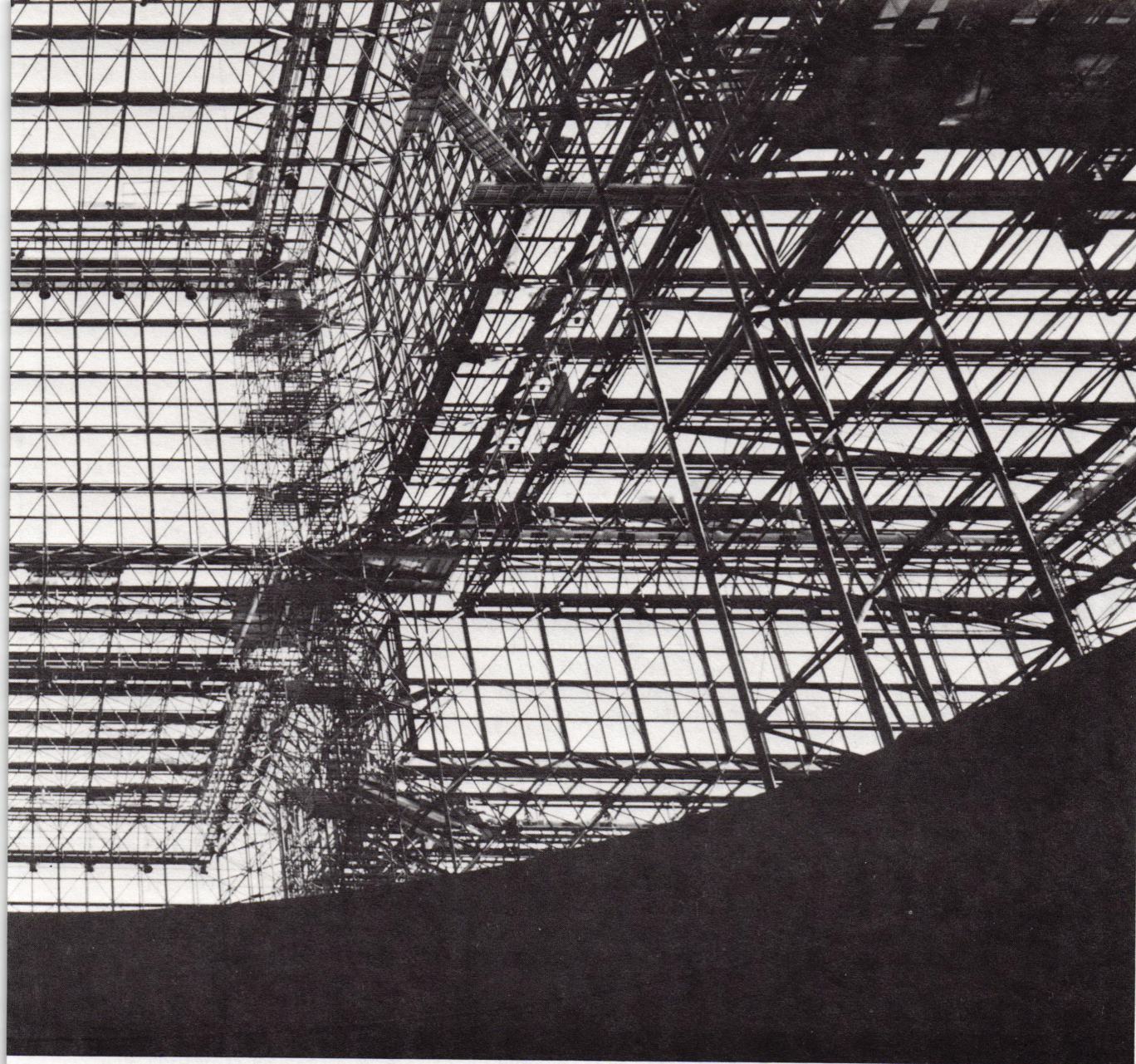
Q: Why doesn't the blame get focused on the construction manager or the owner?

A: The fault goes sometimes to the architect, sometimes to the construction manager, and sometimes to the owner. But the architect is vulnerable because he is presumed to have the power to be the judge of quality and performance.

Q: How should architects deal with public buildings to avoid this problem?

A: You have to be prepared to defend your design, to defend the social and environmental impact of your design. All of that is magnified in the public sector.

To a great extent this comes down to a broad range of skills that architects do not get their licenses for:



interpersonal relating, communicating skills, public relations, and political acumen.

The project itself is a subject for sensationalism. A publication can—and some do on a regular basis—take subject matter out of context without any understanding of the nature of the problem. They blow it up out of proportion and make it into a critical point that has the potential to damage not only the architects but the market for the project. They make off-the-top-of-the-head assumptions that can require costly consulting fees to counteract.

This affects future rentals and bookings and the ability to get financing. In our case, we have recently had a re-financing of the bond issue and we had to go through an elaborate engineering exercise to assure the bond underwriters and the investment community that we had a safe building.

Q: Do you have to rise to every red herring?

A: Yes. The nature of the problem is more often than not that writers, reporters, and commentators are professional and responsible and will present a fair and factual story. However, the editors aim to make it into a more interesting story, often a more sensational story. They edit the stories in a way to take things out of context. Then come the headline writers, who commit the final act of sensationalism to dramatize the point they want to make.

For example, after one recent story was presented by the writer, the editors rejected the story and suggested the writer call a spokesman who was in opposition to the spokesman of the first version. The result is obvious—controversy.

It seems that there is an inordinate amount of time and energy expended

on defending a record that was OK to begin with.

Q: What must architects learn from this?

A: Those who want to get involved in a major public project have to anticipate and prepare for coming under political and public scrutiny and carping criticism. I hate to have to say that there is almost no defense for an architect. There is very little they can do to defend their efforts. They must always depend on those people who are running the project to be the buffer between themselves and the public criticism.

Q: Is this the same in all cities, or does New York create a special nasty mess of wasting time to get a good building built?

A: For some reason, there is a lightning rod that makes convention centers the focus of controversy in every city they are built in.

The Corporate Architects Committee

Facilities Practice

by Peter El Gindi

Through its Corporate Architects Committee, the New York Chapter provides a forum for members affiliated with public and private corporations, institutions, agencies, and other organizations. The Committee's seminars, surveys, public programs, and group tours to corporate facilities are designed to heighten awareness of the challenging and exciting opportunity for architects in those areas.

Increasingly, corporations, institutions, public agencies, and other organizations that have ongoing building and design programs are relying on the services of an inhouse staff of professionals to complement, or even substitute for, outside consultants.

In inhouse group that coordinates these services goes by different names. "Facilities Department" is gaining wide usage, probably because it offers the widest application for the diverse functions. Others are absorbed into the Real Estate Division, Engineering Resources, Property Management, Building Services, and other headings. The services may involve only interior planning and furniture procurement, or include comprehensive architectural, engineering, and construction services. Still others may be tasked with the administration of outside consultants only. The inhouse staff may include 1000 members, as at IBM, or only a single professional.

Over 130 members of the New York Chapter have reported employment in industry; they represent some 50 corporations in the metropolitan area. The Architects in Industry Committee at the National AIA reported recently that corporate architects "are one of the fastest growing segments of the AIA membership at a rate of 1 percent to 1½ percent per year."

Peter El Gindi, Chairman of the Chapter's Corporate Architects Committee, is affiliated with Navy Resale Systems.

Some universities have added Facilities Planning and Management to their curricula (including Cornell). Several magazines have emerged to cater to this new market sector (including *Facilities Design and Management*, *Corporate Design and Realty*, and *Building Operating and Management*). And new "professional" associations have sprung up to organize its practitioners. (The largest, International Facilities Management Association is only 4 years old and boasts over 1000 members including architects.)

The argument has been made that services provided by inhouse groups could just as well be accomplished by private design firms. There is some basis to this argument since some public agencies and corporations retain outside firms on an "open contract" basis for the performance of such services. However, inhouse consultants came about because major clients—such as IBM, Westinghouse, Hilton, and others—wanted to exert more design control. It was also part of the overall corporate strategy to improve public image by establishing design standards and carrying them through from one project to the other.

The inhouse architects can also provide services that many design firms have been reluctant to perform because they were not "creative" in nature: upgrading existing space, providing a repaving or reroofing spec, or settling a minor dispute with a contractor or supplier long after the project is completed. All projects, large and small, must be treated by inhouse departments with equanimity.

There are other benefits for organizations:

- **Specialization.** Inhouse architects serve one client and become expert in their type of projects and operations. In contrast, architects in private practice often prefer to be "generalists." To a business executive who is accustomed to specialized practice in every other field, the I-can-

design-anything approach is not always convincing.

- **Availability.** Inhouse architects are available on call; they have no other clients. They can attend to an unscheduled trip or meeting immediately if management desires.

- **Privacy.** During the early stages, a project may not be ready for exposure. Competitors, stockholders, and other factors may preclude releasing information about the project to outside consultants. The inhouse architect is "one of us" and can provide professional assistance where it is needed.

- **Economy.** Familiarity with the organization—its standards, practices, and politics—gives the inhouse architect an edge in the early programming and budgeting of the project, so that outside consultants can proceed with the nuts and bolts without spending time and money on a "learning curve." Inhouse architects can also streamline the execution of several concurrent projects and act as expeditors when critical decisions are needed.

Facilities Practice is often viewed as an abandonment of architectural practice. In fact, the reverse is often true. Architects who have gone into corporate or public practice have often done so because they did not find professional fulfillment down the traditional path. In their cases, the private sector did not offer the challenging projects and responsibilities they had longed for, and they had the courage to change courses.

Facilities Practice varies widely from one organization to another, and can provide any or all of these opportunities.

- **Involvement** with large and complex projects as well as responsibility for many concurrent projects, which may not be possible in a smaller design firm.

- **Proximity to Management** and the decision process, which affects the planning and execution of a project. In his position, an inhouse architect can determine the wheres and hows of a project, and can help shape the architecture of our built environment.

- **Develop business acumen** from working in a business environment. He must learn to justify actions and recommendations in financial and practical terms. For some, the experience has led to a partnership in a firm or an independent practice.

- **Continuity of service** and professional development. Since organizations generate their own projects, the workload and staffing can be scheduled each fiscal year, rather than from project to project. This allows an inhouse architect to transfer the benefit of his experience from one project to the next, year after year. His expertise is cumulative, gaining depth over the years.

There are, of course, drawbacks and pitfalls in Facilities Practice that an inhouse architect must be wary of. In some cases, projects can be repetitive and corporate standards unyielding, stifling the creative process altogether. At times the demands of a corporate employer may conflict with good professional practice. And there is always the danger that an architect's immersion in the business environment can lead to professional isolation and stagnation.

Despite the potential drawbacks, Facilities Practice is a potentially lucrative market for architects seeking career alternatives. First, because an increasing number of corporations and organizations are warming up to the idea that they are better off leaving technical affairs to professionals rather than to their business and financial members. And second, because most of the positions traditionally held by non-architects are "up for grabs" to architects willing to go after them. Because of their particular education and expertise, architects are logical candidates for

thousands of positions in the facilities sector.

The implications are enormous:

- The employment opportunities could help stem the potential oversupply of architects expected, as thousands of new candidates enter the market.

- Corporate and public sector salaries are equal to highest in the private sector and can help alleviate the compensation profile of our profession.

- Support for the aspirations and practices of our profession will be more forthcoming from architects holding key positions in the facilities sector than from others. An inhouse architect can, for example, influence the selection decision in favor of an architectural firm, or help structure a more equitable fee for a firm less experienced in negotiations.

- Architects working in close proximity to developers of projects can educate them on a daily basis in the advantages of good design, and contribute to the building of a better environment.

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