

# OCULUS

an eye on new york architecture

The New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

Volume 50, Number 3, November 1987



*The Hearst Magazine Building, 57th Street and Eighth Avenue, designed by Joseph Urban.*

*Photo: Stan Ries*

# OCULUS

Volume 50, Number 3, November 1987

## Oculus

Editor: C. Ray Smith  
 Managing Editor: Marian Page  
 Art Director: Abigail Sturges  
 Typesetting: Susan Schechter  
 Printer: The Nugent Organization  
 Photographer: Stan Ries

The New York Chapter of  
 the American Institute of Architects  
 457 Madison Avenue  
 New York, New York 10022  
 212-838-9670

Lenore M. Lucey, *Executive Director*  
 Cathanne Piesla, *Executive Secretary*

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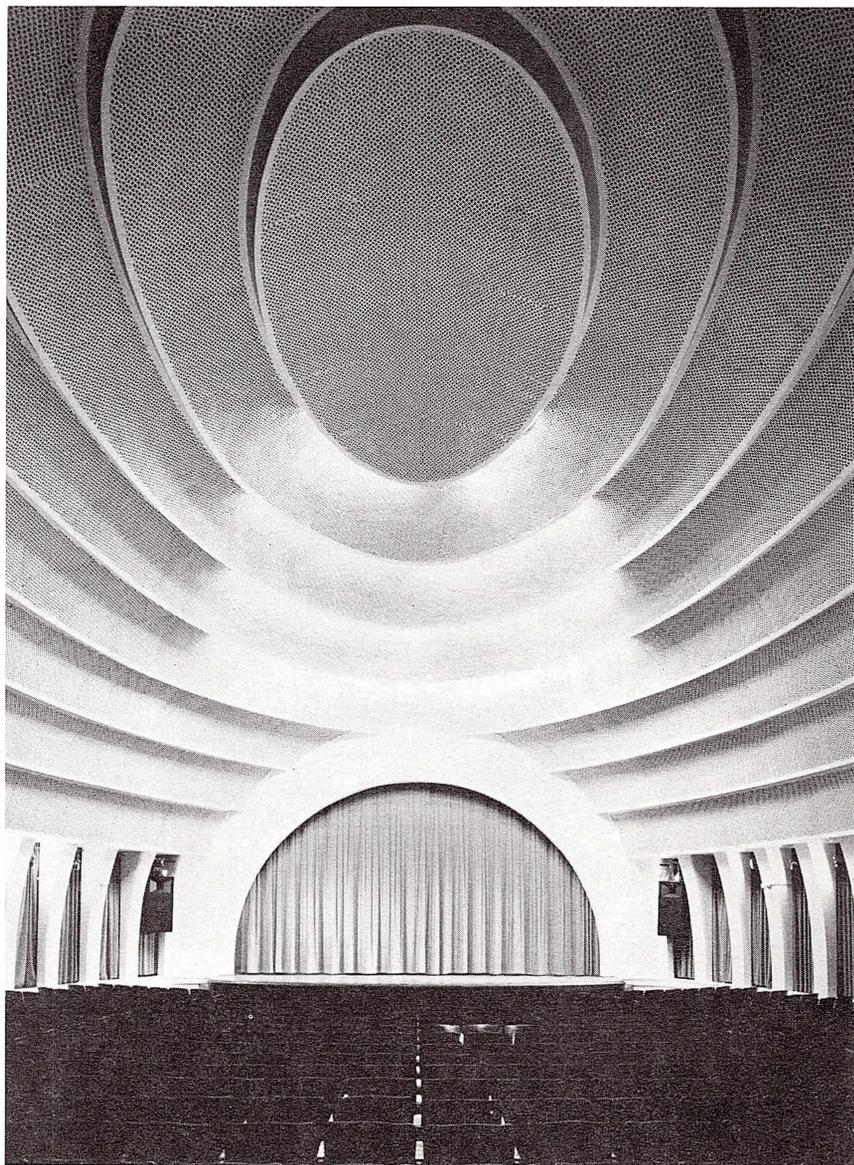
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*The New School Auditorium, designed by Joseph Urban, photographed in 1987 to show how it looks to our modern eyes and cameras.*

*On November 17 the Cooper-Hewitt Museum will open an exhibition on the work of the Viennese architect Joseph Urban, who worked in New York quite prominently in the 1920s. Oculus has asked the curator of that exhibition Timothy Rub, who is Assistant Director of the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College, to discuss the exhibition in the form of an interview. The exhibition will be on view at the Cooper-Hewitt until March 6, 1988.*

**Q:** Before we ask you why the Cooper-Hewitt Museum decided to do an exhibition on the work of the architect Joseph Urban at this time, we should begin by asking who Urban was.

**A:** Joseph Urban was, in fact, a household name in the 1920s, when he worked in New York. Urban seemed to be in all the places — between 1890 and 1930 — where important things were happening in the arts with which he

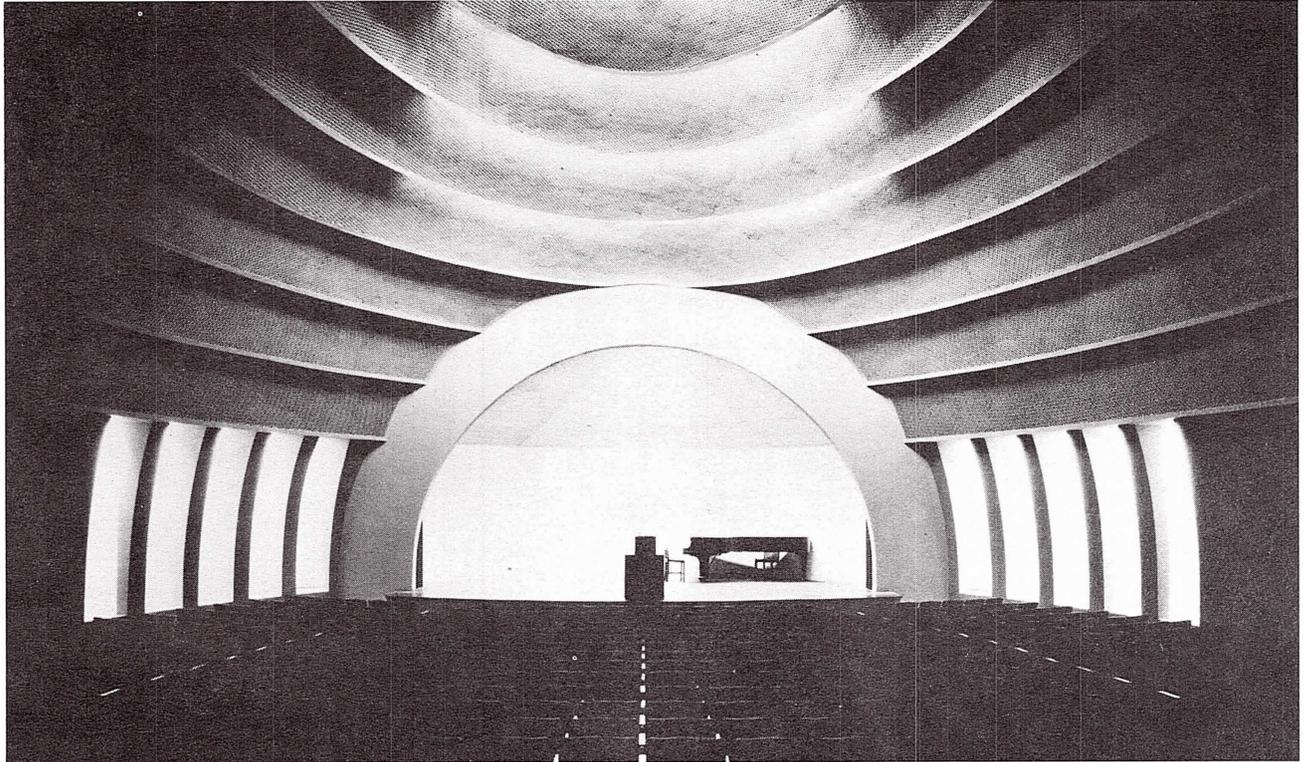
was involved: that is, with architecture, illustration, and interior design at first; then with stage design, and, toward the end of his career, with architecture and interior design once again.

Urban — having been in Vienna around 1900, and having emigrated to the United States and working in New York after 1915 — represents an important link between the modernist aesthetic that had developed in Europe, especially in the European capitals, around the turn of the century and the modernist aesthetic that emerges in New York during the late 1920s. He was a vital link in several areas, in particular architecture and stage design.

Urban had a fascinating career. Born in 1872 in Vienna, he died in New York in 1933, at the very depth of the Great Depression. He had just finished work (which he directed from his bed in the hospital) on two of his finest projects

# EXHIBITION: THE WORK OF JOSEPH URBAN, 1872-1933

by Timothy Rub



*The New School Auditorium photographed in 1930, showing the image of "white architecture" envisioned by Joseph Urban.*

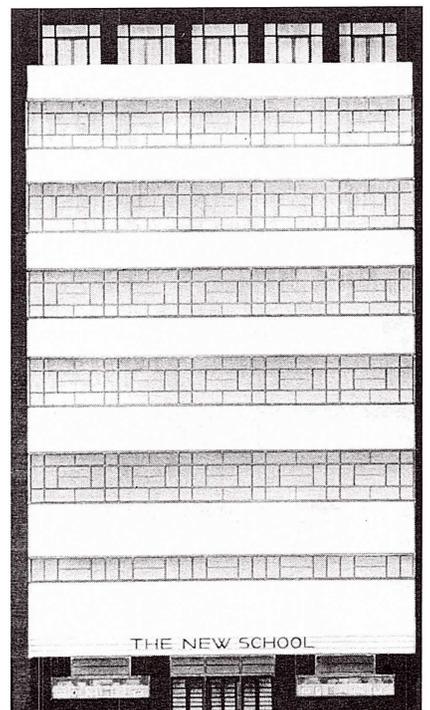
— one, an apartment for the writer Katherine Brush on East 57th Street in New York, and the other the color scheme for the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago.

Urban was trained as an architect in Vienna at the Royal Academy, entering into his studies in the late 1880s and finishing around 1892-1893. A highly respected pupil, he was admired especially for his talents in rendering and illustration, his wealth of ideas, and his ability to work quickly — skills that would serve him well later in his career when he was recruited to be a stage designer for opera and contemporary theater.

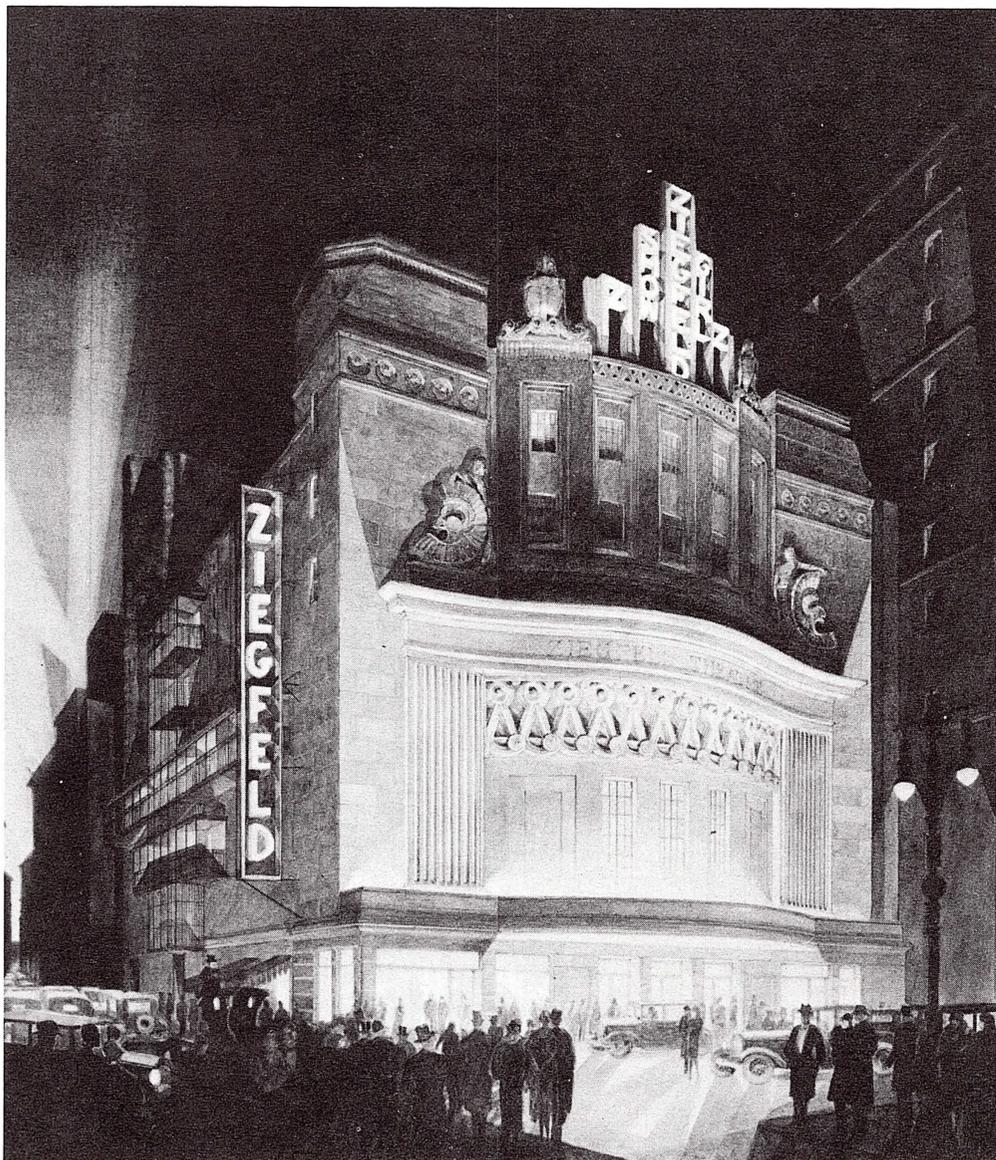
As one might expect, his training was largely academic in character. He studied under Baron Karl von Hasenauer, one of the leading Viennese architects of the period, who had a keen appreciation of Urban's talents and helped him secure some of his earliest commissions. But, like so

many of the younger architects of this period, he soon came under the influence of Otto Wagner and some of the younger architects in his circle, particularly Olbrich and Hoffmann. So, one finds that by 1898-1899, when he finally began to get some important commissions in Austria and, at the same time, the modern movement began to flourish in Vienna, his work is in the advanced style of the day — that is the so-called *Jugendstil*.

This is particularly true of the interiors he was doing at the time: in a large castle he designed for the Esterhazy family in Hungary, of which there are several fine watercolors in the exhibition; or in the work he did for many of his friends. Several years later, again under the influence of Hoffmann and Olbrich (and, at one remove, C.R. Mackintosh and other British architects, whose designs had caused such a stir in the Austrian capital), Urban's work began to take on a sparer, more geometric look —



*The New School exterior*



## Exhibition: The Work of Joseph Urban

1. *The Ziegfeld Theater, formerly at the northwest corner of Sixth Avenue and 54th Street, designed by Joseph Urban with Thomas Lamb. Drawing 1927-28. Courtesy Columbia University's Rarebook and Manuscript Library and Cooper-Hewitt.*

2. *Joseph Urban's proposed elevation for the Max Reinhardt Theater in New York, 1929. Courtesy Columbia University and Cooper-Hewitt.*

3. *Design for "A Commercial Building, Fifth Avenue, New York City"—a project by Joseph Urban, 1929. Courtesy Columbia University and Cooper-Hewitt.*

1. characteristics we associate with the Vienna Secession.

**Q:** You mentioned that he was active in other fields as well.

A. Yes. Urban claimed that architecture was his first love, but it was by no means his only activity, nor was it at times the most important. In addition to his early successes as an architect—such as his victory in the competition in 1898 to design the Kaiser Bridge to connect the Musikvereinshaus and Künstlerhaus in Vienna—Urban also gained widespread recognition as an illustrator, usually in collaboration with the artist Heinrich Leffler. Urban and Leffler won a number of awards for their illustrations of children's stories such as *Die Bücher der Chronika der Drei Schwestern* (1899) and Grimm's *Fairy Tales* (1902-1905).

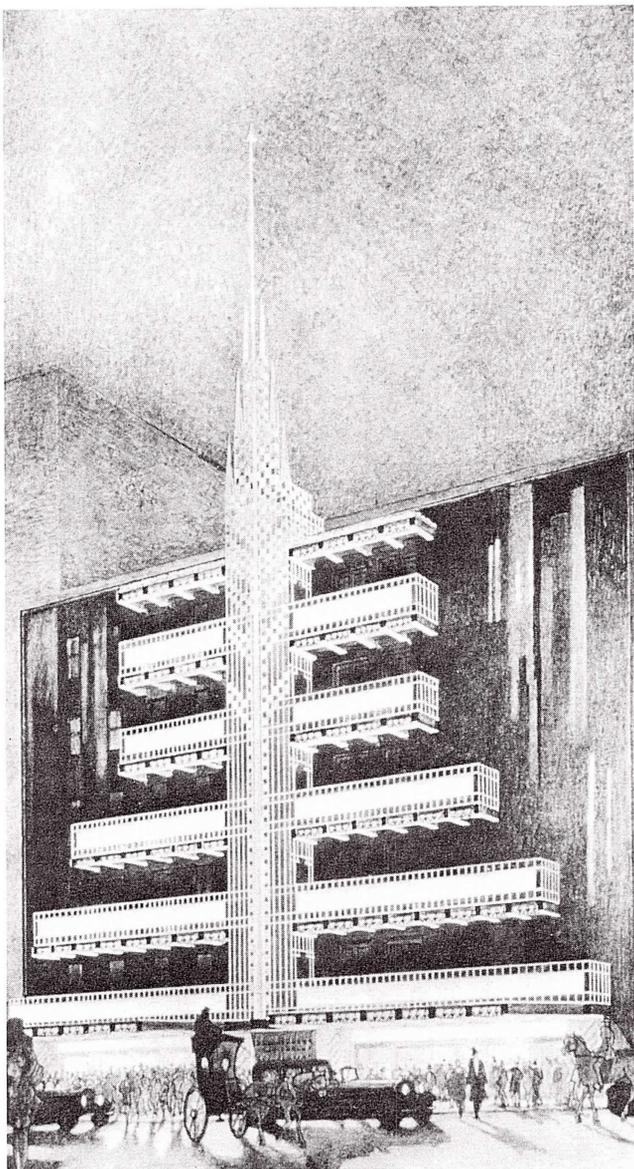
Urban also made significant contributions to artistic politics, which seemed to come naturally to all of those involved with the arts in

turn-of-the-century Vienna. Although he was a friend of many of the artists who founded the Vienna Secession, he did not join that group. Rather, in 1902 he and several other painters, writers, sculptors, and architects founded their own group, which they named the *Kunstlerbund Hagen*. A rival to the Secession, but not always as adventurous, the *Hagenbund*, as the group was also called, was organized for many of the same reasons; that is, to allow for the exhibition of more varied and more modern work than had been possible at the *Kunstlerhaus*, then the stronghold of conservatism. Urban played an important role in the group's early years, renovating the building that had been leased for exhibitions (which were held quarterly) and designing the installation for many of them.

This, again, brought him widespread recognition. It also—along with his training as an architect and his experience as an illustrator—provided Urban with a unique set of skills upon which he could draw in his

work as a stage designer. In 1907 he was asked to design the sets for several productions at the Hofburgtheater in Vienna. He was immediately successful, and over the next few years concentrated on designing for opera and the commercial theater in Vienna, Leipzig, Mannheim, Berlin, London, and Paris. There Henry Russell, then director of the Boston Opera Company, persuaded Urban to come to the United States.

Over the next twenty years, Urban's focus was on the theater. And this, understandably, formed the basis of his reputation—something Urban regretted more and more as he found out just how difficult it was in New York to gain acceptance as an architect when he was known primarily as a stage designer. In any event, Urban's talents predisposed him toward this kind of work. It suited his encyclopedic taste for the architecture and decorative arts of different countries and different historical periods, and his taste for



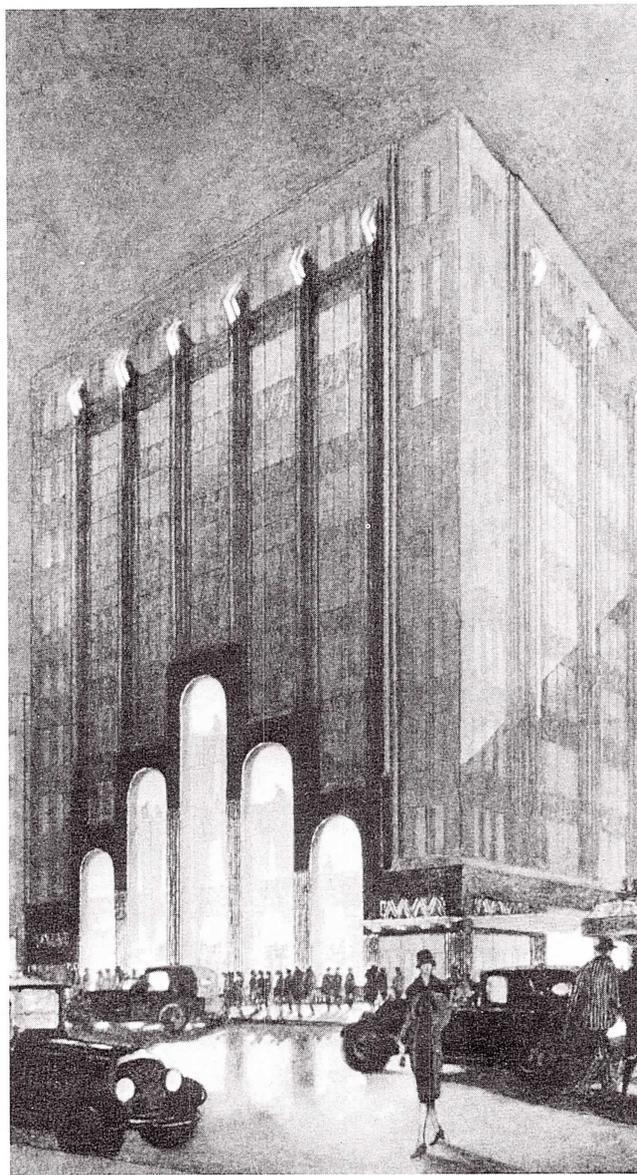
2.

fantasy — both of which had informed his work as an illustrator.

Theater was an area, moreover, in which changes as radical as those in painting, sculpture, and architecture were being wrought. For example, there was a continuing controversy over the staging of Wagner's operas, and the work of Max Reinhardt, Gordon Craig, and Adolph Appia fascinated the artists of Urban's generation. Also, two important members of the Secession — Alfred Roller and Kolo Moser — spent much of their careers working as stage designers.

**Q:** Let's get Urban to New York.

**A:** As I mentioned, Urban was asked by Henry Russell in 1912 to become the principal set designer (his actual title was Production Manager) for the Boston Opera, and he accepted the offer, arriving with a staff of Austrian scene painters. By the time the company folded in 1914 he had designed more than thirty



3.

productions. However brief his tour of duty, the importance of Urban's work in Boston cannot be overestimated. As Deems Taylor and Kenneth Macgowan later wrote, it broke completely with existing traditions and introduced the so-called "new stagecraft" to the United States, particularly Urban's innovative use of light and color.

From Boston, Urban travelled to New York, where in 1915 he designed the sets for Edward Sheldon's *The Garden of Paradise*. The show failed, but Urban scored a brilliant success. The sets so impressed Florenz Ziegfeld that he hired Urban as the principal designer for the *Follies of 1915*. Their association lasted until Ziegfeld's death in the early 1930s. Urban also designed for the Metropolitan Opera — an association that began in 1917.

It is important to recognize the close relationship between his activities in the theater and his work as an architect and interior designer in the 1920s. First, most of his commissions came from those who knew his work in

the theater. The Club de Montmartre and the Sunrise Building, both in Palm Beach, were commissioned by Ziegfeld, as was the Ziegfeld Theater, designed in association with Thomas Lamb and completed in 1927. This project received the financial backing of William Randolph Hearst, who had found Marion Davies in the *Follies*, and had employed Urban as the set designer for his production company, Cosmopolitan Films. Later Hearst commissioned Urban to design the International Magazine Building on 57th Street and Eighth Avenue.

Another example of this pattern of patronage was Urban's appointment by Otto Kahn in 1925 as associate architect (with Benjamin Wistar Morris) to design new quarters on West 57th Street for the Metropolitan Opera — a project that, unfortunately, came to naught. These opportunities spurred Urban's interest in theater design, particularly in the relationship between the building and the theatrical production, and led to a series of innovative theater designs,



## Around the Chapter

by Lenore M. Lucey

• Being on the campus of Syracuse University added to the sense of collegial fellowship at the annual NYSAA Convention. NYC/AIA was pleased to see two new NYSAA board directors appointed to fill the seats being vacated in December by George S. Lewis and J. Carl Justin. We thank George and Carl for their many years of dedicated service. New directors representing the Chapter are Douglas Korves and Robert L. Cioppa. The Chapter is also represented on the NYSAA Board for 1988 by Sidney L. Delson, who was elected Secretary/Treasurer. Thanks to Doug, Bob and Sid for volunteering to fill these important positions and to represent the Chapter's interests at the state association.

• We congratulate L. William Chapin, II on election as New York Regional Director. We know that we will all be well served by Bill's dedication to the profession, to the AIA, and to New York's architects. Bill, who is a principal of L. William Chapin, II, Architect in Rochester, joins Laurie Maurer in serving as New York's voice on the Institute's board of directors.

• November will see the coalescing of final plans for AIA NYC 88! Another article on the Convention is elsewhere in this issue. Mark your calendar and plan to attend and participate in the biggest and best AIA Convention yet. NYC/AIA member architects are still being sought as panelists, moderators, tour leaders, and speakers. If you have not already indicated your interest in participating, please do so now. Send a note to the Chapter or call Regina Kelly for the name of the appropriate person to call.

• Barry LePatner's recent article in *Architecture* and conversations with several members prompt me to add a postscript to my June article on taking credit for your work: Do not forget Cornerstones! Once an almost automatic inclusion for any building, they have been out of fashion for many years. It is now time to bring them back. Include the requirements in your contract negotiations and specifications, and even consider

## Coming Chapter Events

• Tuesday, November 17, 6 pm. The Urban Center. A round table sponsored by the Committee on Architecture for Education will address the future of education and the future of educational facilities in New York City in response to the plans of the NYC Board of Education for over \$4.5 billion of capital construction. To be moderated by Alan Green, Vice President for Policy Planning & Academic Affairs at Cooper Union, the event will bring together the designers, users, and sponsors of public schools who otherwise would not have such an opportunity for open discussion. Representatives will be present from the Board of Education, the Task Force on Capital Financing and Construction, parent associations, student groups, and the educational and architectural communities.

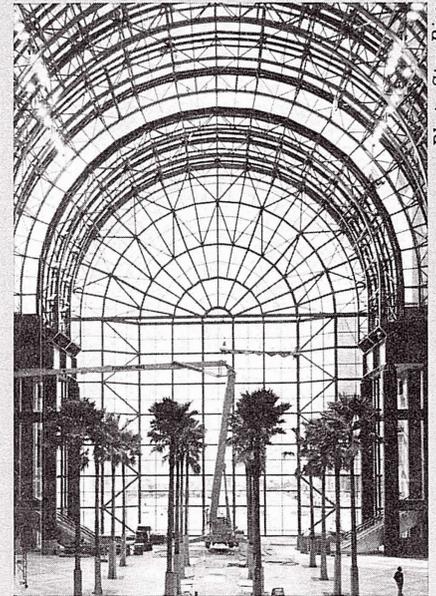
• Saturday, November 21, 7:30 pm. The Grand Ballroom, Waldorf Astoria Hotel. 1987 Architectural Heritage Ball in celebration of Heritage, Preservation, Scholarship. Cocktails, dinner, and dancing plus a look at the history of the Waldorf Astoria by A. Eugene Kohn, and this year's auction of architectural drawings and memorabilia conducted by Robert A.M. Stern. Proceeds will benefit NYC/AIA Foundation Scholarship Fund. For reservations 838-9670.

• Tuesday, November 10, 6:00 pm. Immediate past president Randy Croxton and executive committee director Doug Korves will represent the AIA position on licensing Interior Designers at a seminar at F.I.T. Katie Murphy Amphitheater, 227 W. 27 St. 838-9670.

having existing buildings retro-fitted. Tips from other members: Der Scutt advises obtaining approval to "do it yourself" if the owner will not include the cost in the project. For a modest amount a stone carver can be hired to credit you and the owner in a permanent way. Paul Segal suggests including not only buildings, but interiors as well. Your contract can call for a modest plaque to be installed at each project.

## AIA NYC 88! Host Chapter Party

by Michael Maas



Winter Garden

In the midst of the 1988 Convention the Chapter is planning to throw a most spectacular Host Chapter Party. Monday night, May 16, 1988, with good luck and good weather, the Host Chapter Party will join the long list of festivities and activities being planned for the 120th Annual AIA Convention.

Arrangements are still being finalized as of this writing; however, we are well on our way to securing the Winter Garden at Battery Park City. Working with representatives of Olympia & York, we have arranged for our party to be among the first gala events to be held in this newest New York City space.

We will be able to accommodate approximately twenty-five hundred guests for entertainment and dancing from early in the evening until early in the morning. Negotiations are under way with a number of leading caterers in order to insure that you, your guests, and our colleagues from around the country and the world will leave with a pleasant taste of the "Big Apple."

Volunteers are still needed! If you have any thoughts or suggestions please do not hesitate to call me at 212-696-8504.

# OCCULUS NYC/AIA NOV 87

## CONTINUING EVENTS

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

*Oculus welcomes information for the calendar pertaining to public events about architecture and the other design professions. It is due in writing by the 1st of the month for the following issue.*

*Because of the time lag between information received and printed, final details of events are likely to change. It is recommended that events be checked with sponsoring institutions before attending.*

### EXHIBITION

Entries in the Snug Harbor Music Hall National Design Competition. Municipal Art Society, The Urban Center. 935-3960. Closes Nov. 7.

### EXHIBITION

Postmodern Visions, Contemporary Architecture 1960-1985. IBM Gallery of Science and Art. 407-6100. Closes Nov. 7.

### EXHIBITION

Recent house designs by Steven Holl, New York; Krueck and Olsen, Chicago; Mark Mack, San Francisco; Thom Mayne, Los Angeles. John Nichols Gallery, 83 Grand St. 226-1243. Closes Nov. 28.

### EXHIBITION

Modelmaker as Master Artisan. Artisanspace Gallery, F.I.T., 227 W. 27 St. 760-7624. Closes Dec. 10.

### EXHIBITION

Architecture for Dinosaurs. Photos and drawings of the building of the American Museum of Natural History. Central Park West at 79 St. 769-5000. Closes Dec. 13.

### GALVESTON ARCHES

Seven fantasy arches designed by architect Charles Moore, Cesar Pelli, Stanley Tigerman, Michael Graves, Helmut Jahn, Boone Powell, Eugene Aubry. Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 860-6868. Closes Jan. 31.

### EXHIBITION

The Age of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent. Metropolitan Museum of Art. 879-5500. Closes Jan. 17.

### EXHIBITION

Jasper Cropsey: Artist and Architect. Oil paintings & architectural designs by the 19th-century landscape painter of the Hudson River School. New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West. 873-3400. Closes Feb. 14.

## MONDAY 2

### GAE AULENTI

In series on Artspaces and the Shape of the City moderated by Paul Goldberger. 8:15 pm. 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington, 996-1100.

## TUESDAY 3

### AMERICAN GOTHIC

First in a series of 6 lectures beginning with the first modern revival of the gothic styles in late 18th-century England and ending with the gothicized campuses and cathedrals of the 1920s. 6:15 pm. Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 860-6868.

## WEDNESDAY 4

### BUCKMINSTER FULLER

Exhibition. Max Protetch, 560 Broadway at Prince St. 838-7436. Closes Dec. 12.

### LECTURE

Palladio and the Villas of the Veneto by Peter Laurantzen, author of *The Palaces of Venice*, and the forthcoming *Palladio and the Villas of the Veneto*. 7-8 pm. Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 860-6868.

## TUESDAY 10

### EXHIBITION

Robert Adam and Kedleston: The Making of a Neo-Classical Masterpiece. The Octagon Museum, Washington, DC. 202-638-3105. Closes Jan. 10.

### SEMINAR ON LICENSING

The AIA position on licensing Interior Designers, presented by Randolph Croxton and Douglas Korves, in a seminar. F.I.T., 227 W. 27 St. 838-9670.

## MONDAY 9

### RENZO PIANO

In series on Artspaces and the Shape of the City moderated by Paul Goldberger. 8:15 pm. 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington. 996-1100.

### COURSE (NOV. 9-10)

Construction Claims and Law. Sponsored by the State University of New Jersey, Rutgers. Convent Station, NJ. To register: 201-932-4454.

## THURSDAY 5

### CONFERENCE (NOV. 5-6)

AIA Corporate Architects Committee and AIA Practice Committee joint conference on "The Architect and the Corporate Client: Getting Down to Business." New Orleans. Contact: Charlotte Franklin 202-626-7410.

### THE CITY TRANSFORMED

Beaux-Arts America: The City 1890-1915 by Barry S. Lewis in 92nd Street Y lecture series. 6-7:30 pm at the Central Synagogue Community House, 128 E. 55 St. 996-1100.

## THURSDAY 12

### LECTURE

A. Eugene Kohn on "Recent Work" in Pratt visiting lecture series. 6:30 pm. Higgins Hall, St. James Place & Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-3405.

### PANEL DISCUSSION

"The Architect in Society: Nazi Holocaust and Nuclear Genocide" sponsored by the ADPSR/NY and the Center on Violence and Human Survival, John Jay College. 7:30 pm. John Jay College, 444 W. 56 St. Magda Salvensen: 334-8104.

## FRIDAY 6

### SYMPOSIUM

Restaurant and Hotel Design's Sixth Design Symposium. IDCNY Long Island City. Karen Rifkin: 896-4800

### NEW YORK NATURALLY!

ON SAT. NOV. 7  
Workshops, exhibits, etc. on learning, enjoying, teaching about the natural and built environment of NYC. Sponsored by Environmental Education Advisory Council. 8:30 am-3 pm. Murry Bergtraum High School, 411 Pearl St. To register: Joseph Varon, 81-18 250 St. Bellerose, NY 11426.

## FRIDAY 13

### CAREER DAY ON SAT. NOV. 14

Eleventh Career Day in Architecture for NYC high school students & parents sponsored by the National Institute for Architectural Education. 9:30 am-1 pm, High School of Art & Design, 1075 Second Ave. For more information: 924-7000.

### SEMINAR (NOV. 15-18)

Renovation/Restoration of Buildings sponsored by the Dept. of Engineering Professional Development, University of Wisconsin. Colonial Williamsburg, VA. to Register: 800-262-6243.

### HUGH HARDY

In series on Artspaces and the Shape of the City moderated by Paul Goldberger. 8:15 pm. 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington. 996-1100.

### NYC/AIA ROUND TABLE

Architecture for Education, a round table on the future of education and educational facilities in NYC in light of planned capital construction. Sponsored by the Committee on Architecture for Education. 6-8 pm. The Urban Center. 838-9670.

### EXHIBITION

Joseph Urban: Vienna/New York. Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 860-6868. Closes March 6.

### BUILD BOSTON '87

Annual tradeshow of building products and services for the design and construction industry in New England sponsored by The Boston Society of Architects (Nov. 18-19). World Trade Center, Boston. 617-965-0055.

### BUILDINGS SHOW

The Philadelphia Civic Center (Nov. 18-20). For more information: Michelle Rantuccio or Alex Smith: 215-923-9600.

### LECTURE

"The Arts & Architecture at Black Mountain College" by Mary Emma Harris, author, in Pratt visiting lecture series. 6:30 pm. Higgins Hall, St. James Place & Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-3405.

### THE CITY TRANSFORMED

California Alternatives to the New York Mansion 1900-1915 by Barry S. Lewis in 92nd Street Y lecture series. 6-7:30 pm. at the Central Synagogue Community House, 128 E. 55 St. 996-1100.

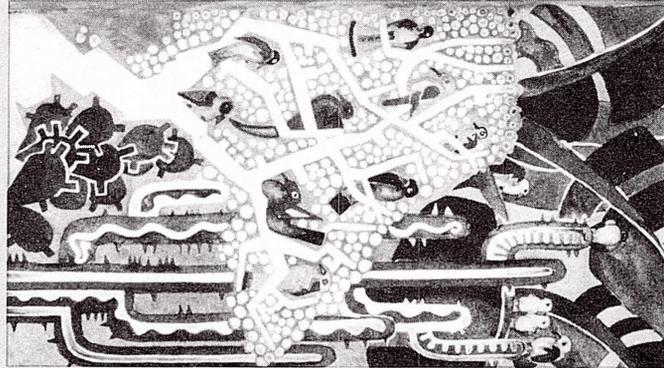
### NYC/AIA HERITAGE BALL

ON SAT. NOV. 21  
In celebration of Architectural Heritage, Preservation, Scholarship. Black tic. 7:30 pm. Grand Ballroom, Waldorf-Astoria. For reservations: 838-9670.

## MONDAY 23

### ROBERT MAYERS & JOHN SCHIFF

In series on Artspaces and the Shape of the City moderated by Paul Goldberger. 8:15 pm. 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington. 996-1100.



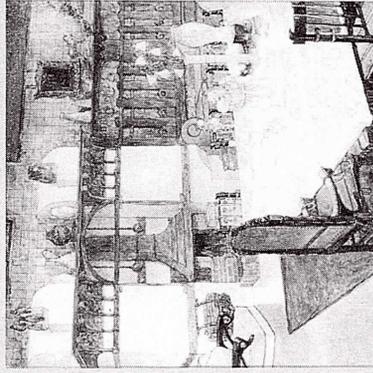
Urban's theater curtain design for "Rio Rita" in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1926. Courtesy Columbia and Cooper-Hewitt.

## TUESDAY 24

### EXHIBITION

On Being Homeless in New York: An Historical Perspective. Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 103 St. 534-1672.

## THURSDAY 26



Joseph Urban's design for Esterhazy Castle dining room, 1899. Courtesy Columbia and Cooper-Hewitt.

## TUESDAY 1 DEC

### DEADLINE

For receiving submissions in the Municipal Art Society's competition "Wanted: A Waterfront for New York." Waterfront Competition, Municipal Art Society, 457 Madison Ave., NYC 10022. 935-3960.

## WEDNESDAY 2 DEC

### FAMES FILM FESTIVAL

Eight short films produced by Charles and Ray Eames between 1955 and 1978. 6:30 pm. Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 860-6868.

## THURSDAY 3 DEC

### LECTURE

James Stuckey, president, Public Development Corporation on "Government-Urban Design-Metro Tech, Brooklyn: Case Studies" in Pratt visiting lecture series. 6:30 pm. Higgins Hall, St. James Place & Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-3405.

### THE CITY TRANSFORMED

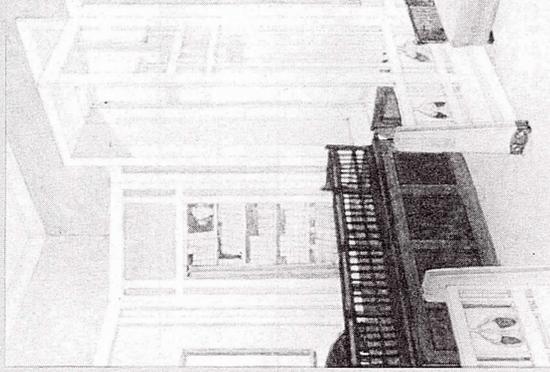
Art Deco: The European Roots 1900-1910 by Barry S. Lewis in 92nd Street Y lecture series. 6-7:30 pm. at the Central Synagogue Community House, 128 E. 55 St. 996-1100.

## FRIDAY 4 DEC

### CHRISTMAS DISPLAY

Annual Christmas Tree and Baroque Creche Display. Metropolitan Museum of Art. 879-5500. Through Jan. 3.

Urban's office design for "des Herrn Sectionschef von Stadler," Vienna, about 1906. Courtesy Columbia and Cooper-Hewitt.



## 1987 Architectural Heritage Ball

by Lenore M. Lucey

This year's Heritage Ball promises to be a humdinger! More room for the exhibit of drawings and memorabilia during the cocktail hour, a larger dance floor, and one of the City's most glorious ballrooms for dining and mingling. A night for breaking out the formal wear and stepping out with your clients and fellow members. Come see old friends, make new ones, and dance the evening away.

We urge you to take a table and invite your favorite client to join you for a gala evening. Clients are the profession's most valuable resource, and this is a chance to thank them with a wonderful time. The cost is modest and to the benefit of a very worthwhile cause: The New York Foundation for Architecture. The Foundation presents annual architecture scholarships and it shepherds the endowment of over one-half million dollars to foster "charitable, educational, literary, scientific, and philanthropic purposes, including the advancement of the profession of architecture and architectural research, service, and art . . ." You or your client have the satisfaction of knowing you have contributed to the **Heritage • Preservation • Scholarship** to which this annual event is dedicated.

The event will take place in the Waldorf-Astoria's Grand Ballroom. Donated artworks will be on display at that time, and throughout the evening so as to provide all the opportunity to enjoy and decide which pieces to bid on. Robert A.M. Stern will provide the evening's highlight with his own special contribution as this year's auctioneer. We expect spirited bidding, spurred on in part by NYC/AIA President A. Eugene Kohn's tribute to architects and history.

Gene Kohn and Architectural Heritage Ball Chair Marty Raab especially hope that you join them in encouraging the participation of the young people in your firm. Invite them to join their peers and other NYC/AIA members in a celebration of (with thanks to immediate past-president Randolph R. Croxton): "preserving the

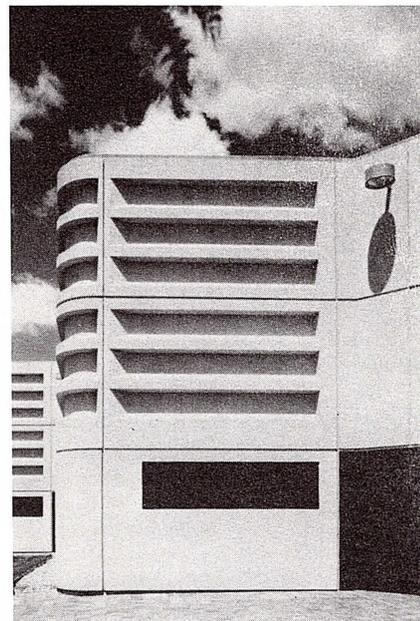
## Names and News

**Emilio Ambasz** won the 1987 Industrial Design Excellence Award for furniture & fixtures, for his design "Soffio," a modular lighting system . . . **Ellerbe Associates, Inc.**, based in Minneapolis, and **Welton Becket Associates**, based in Los Angeles, have signed a letter-of-intent to merge the two national architecture firms by late 1987 . . . **Ellen Mandelbaum's** proposal for the chapel window of the new boarding school designed by **Buttrick, White & Burtis** for the boys' choir of St. Thomas Church, received an Award of Excellence from *Modern Liturgy Magazine* . . . **Swanke Hayden Connell Ltd.** have announced the appointment of **Dominique Martinet** as Director, Business Development for domestic and international operations . . . **Rothzeit Kaiserman Thomson & Bee** have been selected to design the remodeling of the Donnell branch auditorium of the New York Public Library in association with **Brannigan-Lorelli Associates, Theater Consultants** . . . **Michael Fieldman & Partners** have announced that **Mark A. Walsh** and **Miles G. Cigolle** have been named partners; and **Rodney G. Crumrine, Stephen J. Hennebery,** and **Clinton S. Diener** have been appointed associates . . . Two New York City landmarks—The Algonquin Hotel on West 44th Street and the Beresford apartment building on Central Park

### Heritage Ball continued

best of the past, supporting the highest quality for the work of our time, and projecting the standard of excellence for what is yet to be . . ." This is the year for them to start a tradition of involvement with NYC/AIA, and what better way than with the best party of the year.

So . . . send in your reservations now, and mark your calendar for a special night. Reservations can be made by phone, and followed up with your check. Tables are available for ten, or twelve persons. Please note that we can accept reservations only up until 5 pm on Friday, the Thirteenth of November. Final payment must reach the Chapter by 5 pm Monday, the Sixteenth of November.



West—have been officially designated as such by the Landmarks Preservation Commission . . . **James Stewart Polshek** is to be one of the speakers at the November 12th panel discussion on "The Architect in Society: Nazi Holocaust and Nuclear Genocide" (see calendar) . . . The 4th International Making Cities Livable Conference will be held in Charleston, South Carolina, March 8-12. For more information and to register: **Phoebe Miller** 803-724-7400 . . . **Gruzen Samton Steinglass** have promoted senior associates **Philip M. Jones** and **Timothy Schmiderer** to the position of associate partner . . . **Michael Maas** is the author of an article, "Learning to Love Lloyd's, London's most controversial new building takes a little getting used to" in the August 1987 issue of *Diversion*. "It is not in any way intended to be an architectural critique," Maas told *Oculus*, "but rather a helpful guide for tourists who may follow me." . . . **Bill N. Lacy** has been named president of the board of directors of the International Design Conference in Aspen. "After 36 years," said Lacy of the Aspen Conference, "it remains one of the most exciting platforms for the exchange of ideas and for exposure to design at many levels." . . . The **Eggers Group** has promoted **Frank J. Pastor** to senior vice president . . . The Cathedral of St. John the Divine is selling its stones. "You can't take it with you but the stone you buy in the name of a friend or family member will help to build a great cathedral and to train city youth in valuable skills." For more information: The Development Office, The Cathedral of St. John the Divine, 1047 Amsterdam Ave., NYC 10025 . . . **Robert B. Marquis** was one of three featured speakers at the 1987 Annual Meeting of the Kansas Society of Architects/AIA in Wichita in September. In October he also gave a

*First two buildings of Cali Associates' High Technology Center in Franklyn Township, New Jersey, designed by Herbert Beckhard Frank Richlan & Associates with Brant-Kuybida.*

## Design Credits: Letters

lecture and acted as visiting critic at the European campus of the Southern California Institute of Architecture at Vico Morcote (near Lugano) in Switzerland. . . . John E. Numemaker, executive vice president of Perkins & Will moderated a workshop on "The Planning, Design, and Construction of Research Laboratories" in New Orleans in September. . . . *America by Design* by Spiro Kostof has been published. It is a companion volume to the five-part television series aired this fall.

### Competitions

Entries are invited in the 1988 Presidential Design Awards "to recognize successful achievements in federal design projects or activities, and to honor those individuals who have made outstanding contributions to federal design." Works sponsored, authorized, commissioned, produced, or supported by any department or agency of the U.S. government and that have been completed and in use between January 1, 1977 and January 1, 1987 are eligible. These include products or activities in: architecture, engineering design, interior design, landscape architecture, urban design, historic preservation, and planning. January 14, 1988 is the deadline for submissions. For entry forms: Design Arts Program, National Endowment for the Arts, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20506. 202-682-5437. . . . The 32nd R.S. Reynolds Memorial Award for Distinguished Architecture Using Aluminum is inviting entries. "The Award is conferred annually on an architect or team of architects who, in the judgment of the profession, designed a permanent, significant work of architecture, in the creation of which aluminum has been an important contributing factor." To be considered for the Award, an architect need simply notify the American Institute of Architects, or be nominated by others. November 13th is the deadline for nominations to be postmarked. For further information, nomination forms, etc.: R.S. Reynolds Memorial Award, American Institute of Architects, 1735 New York Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20006.

*Our report on the Snug Harbor Music Hall competition in the September 1987 Oculus has prompted yet another series of distraught letters about Design Credits. The editors have therefore asked those who brought these matters to our attention to explain the steps in how the credits get misprinted. Our objective was to draw some lessons on guidelines for prevention in the future.*

Dear Editor:

This letter is in regard to the confusion over the design credits for our entry into the Snug Harbor Music Hall Design Competition. It appears that there was some mix up in information between what we provided to *Oculus* Managing Editor Marian Page, and information provided by Barbara Kavanaugh, the P.R. person at Snug Harbor. In our original response to the RFP, Stephen Wanta was listed as the "Project Director," and Jay Bargmann as "Project Manager." Our staffing plan was changed when we started work on the actual competition. After we won, we forwarded the list below to Barbara Kavanaugh; however, she neglected to change her press releases. (She has since apologized for this and has changed them accordingly.) We were not sent a copy of this press release, and therefore were unaware of the fact that this out of date information was still being circulated. The attached list is also what we sent directly to Marian Page. It seems that the new and the old were combined into what was printed in *Oculus*.

In the correction below, we have further revised the credits to put our team in a simpler, alphabetical order: Rafael Vinoly, Principal in Charge of Design.  
Jacqueline Welsh, Vice President—Design.  
Project Team: Marwan Al-Sayed, Tracy Aronoff, Edward Frierson, Greg Karn, Meredith Robinson, Jennifer Schab, Roger Sherman, Stephen Wanta.  
Giorgio Bellavitis, Restoration Architect  
Knudson-Benson, Theatre Consultants  
Rafael Vinoly  
Rafael Vinoly Architects

Ms. Barbara Kavanaugh  
Public Relations Director  
Snug Harbor Cultural Center, Inc.

Dear Ms. Kavanaugh:  
As per our telephone conversation today, would you kindly correct credits for our team's competition entry as follows:

### Project Design Team

Jan Hird Pokorny, Architects & Planners  
Leslie Armstrong, Armstrong Cumming, Associate Architects  
Roger Morgan Studio, Inc., Theatre Design Consultants  
John L. Altieri, P.E., Consulting Mechanical/Electrical Engineer  
Robert Silman Associates, P.C., Consultant Structural Engineer

Members of our firm who should receive special recognition are the following:

Robert Motzkin, Project Director  
Claude Armstrong, Project Architect  
Bjorg Bastiansen, Designer  
Richard Pieper, Architectural Conservator

We would appreciate the insertion of an errata sheet in the competition brochure as well as corrections on the credits accompanying the display material both at Snug Harbor and at the Municipal Art Society.

I have read through our Design Team Qualifications response to the RFQ and I still don't understand where your credits came from. For your information I have enclosed the Proposed Staffing Diagram in the response to the RFQ and the credits listing submitted with our competition entry.

I think in the future it would be wise to clear credits with each of the entrants before publication. Thank you for your assistance on this matter.

Robert Motzkin  
Jan Hird Pokorny, Architects & Planners





## Exhibition: The Work of Joseph Urban



1.

*cont'd. from p. 6*

Urban had expended a great deal of effort in the 1920s to convince the public that he was a capable architect; and that he had, in fact, been trained as one. Even so, it was an uphill battle. (The documents are at Columbia University today.)

The New School was important for Urban. It was a big job, it was something other than a theater (although it was to contain an auditorium), and it was an opportunity to design something modern in character. Certainly that was what Johnson wanted. As you know, the building received mixed reviews: while it was relatively advanced for New York, it didn't go far enough to please younger critics such as Philip Johnson, who noted, with some justification, that the building's seeming modernism was largely veneer.

The interiors were quite fine, particularly the auditorium (in which

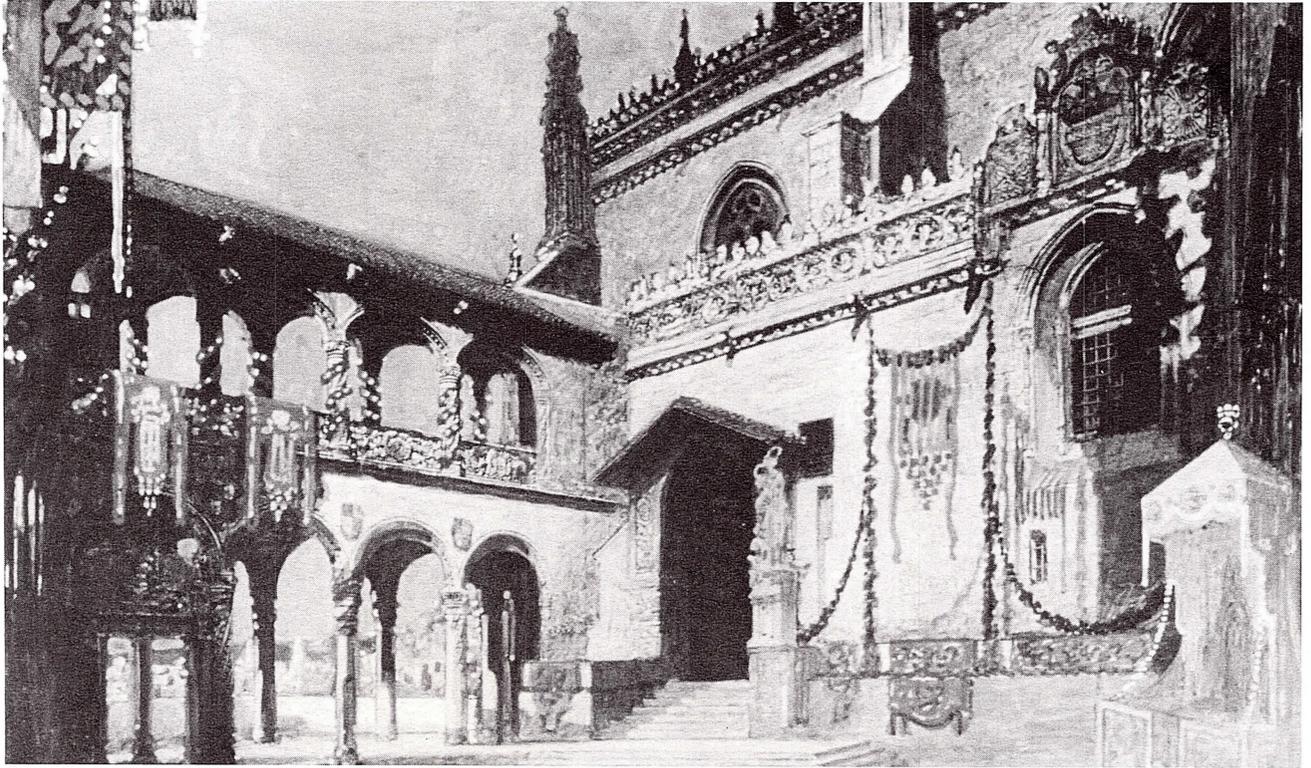
Urban realized on an intimate scale many of his ambitions for theater design), and the library. In the New School interiors Urban also used color in a relatively novel way, to create broad and often striking contrasts between wall and ceiling planes. The use of integral color in architecture was the subject of much discussion among designers in New York in the late 1920s, and Urban's talents in this area were greatly admired. The New School interiors were a good example of the effects he sought, and his ideas were further developed in his competition design for the Palace of the Soviets and in his work as color consultant for the Century of Progress Exposition held in Chicago in 1933.

**Q:** You mentioned Urban's work in interior design and the decorative arts.

**A:** Yes. He was very active in this area, particularly after he set up an architecture office in New York in 1926. Given the kind of work he had done in Vienna — which included the complete design of interiors, including

1. Bar at the Park Avenue Restaurant/Club in New York designed by Joseph Urban, 1931.

2. Joseph Urban's opera set for a City Square (Act III, Scene 2) in Don Carlos at the Metropolitan Opera in 1920. Courtesy Columbia University and the Cooper-Hewitt Museum.



2. furniture, rugs, decorative objects, and the like — it was perhaps inevitable that he would see decorative design as an adjunct to his architecture practice. Again, contemporaries marveled at Urban's abilities to design everything from furniture, to fabrics, to the accessories for a woman's night table.

**Q:** Has any of his work survived for us to see?

**A:** Very little. I should point out that Urban had become involved with the decorative arts in the early 1920s through his work as the production designer for Hearst's Cosmopolitan Films, and as the founder and financial sponsor of the Wiener Werkstaate of America, which opened its showrooms on Fifth Avenue in 1922. Urban was also an active member of a number of the associations formed by designers in the late 1920s to promote modern design. One was AUDAC, the American Union of Decorative Artists and Craftsmen, which exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum. Another was the

American Designers Gallery on West 57th Street, which opened in 1928.

Urban was also invited to design several interiors, along with architects such as Raymond Hood, Ralph Walker, Ely Jacques Kahn, and Eliel Saarinen, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's *Eleventh Exhibition of American Industrial Art* in 1929. Finally, Urban again became active as an exhibition designer toward the end of his career. One important example that comes to mind was his installation of the annual exhibition of the Architectural League of New York in 1933, for which Urban received the President's medal.

**Q:** Back to our original question: Why Urban now, and why at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum?

**A:** Your second question is easy to answer, but the first is more interesting. The Cooper-Hewitt places a great deal of emphasis in its exhibition schedule on architecture, the decorative arts, and stage design; these represent, of course, some of the

strengths of the collection. So it seemed natural to propose an exhibition on Urban, who made important contributions in all of these fields.

As for the first question. As you know, in the last decade or so there has been a renewal of interest both in New York and in the 1920s. Urban played a significant role then in several different fields here and he deserves considerably more attention than he has received. Urban also was, as I've noted, something of a stylistic chameleon, adept at designing just about anything you could want. I've never been tempted to label it a kind of pluralism *avant le lettre*, but it is interesting to speculate on the parallels between the 1920s and the present day (why else would there be so much interest?), and to note the extraordinary diversity of the period as reflected in the work of this one man.

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