

# Oculus

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an eye on New York Architecture

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©Arnold Newman

The only surviving architects in Arnold Newman's classic photograph of the architects of Lincoln Center—Philip Johnson and Max Abramovitz—were featured speakers in the Architectural League's "Masters of Architecture" lecture series (see Profiles, page 6). Johnson designed the New York State Theater on the left; Abramovitz designed Philharmonic Hall on the right (his late partner, Wallace Harrison, was responsible for the Metropolitan Opera House in the middle). From left to right: (standing) Edward Matthews, Philip Johnson, Jo Meilziner, Wallace Harrison, Pietro Belluschi, (sunken) John D. Rockefeller 3rd, Eero Saarinen, Gordon Bunshaft, Max Abramovitz

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**A Letter from  
 the Editor:**



Jayne Merkel

I remember, when I first became interested in art history, going into a gallery at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and finding my favorite painting missing. Others had been rearranged. I was so annoyed that I hardly looked at the ones put in their places. It had simply never occurred to me that the works in a museum would change.

Later, I came to realize that I and everybody else have the same reaction to the streets we walk down, the stores where we shop, the restaurants where we eat, and the magazines we read. So as you see changes in *Oculus* in the upcoming months, you will probably feel out of sorts from time to time — though only temporarily, I hope. One of the things I want to do is develop a slightly more consistent format with roughly the same features in the same locations every month, so that you can go directly to what you like most. But it will take a while to find just the right mix. During that time the magazine will be redesigned, so even continuing features will look different. There will be **Profiles** of architects in every issue, discussions of buildings, urban designs, and other changes **In the Streetscape**, as well as projects that are **On the Drawing Boards**. There will be articles about what is going on **In the Galleries**, **At the Podium**, **At the Bookstores**, and **In the Schools**. We shall continue to tell you who deserves **Kudos** and take the **Pulse** of emerging architects. One new feature, **Architectural Tourist**, has been appropriated from a similar one, "Architectural Traveler," that *Any* editor Cynthia Davidson initiated at *Inland Architect* when she was editor there. Our intention is not only to keep AIA members

informed about the architecture being designed, displayed, discussed, and published in New York, but to interest the rest of the world in what we all care about so passionately.

*Oculus* will continue to invite architects whose works are being severely criticized to write **Rebuttals**. We will ask members of the New York architectural community to provide **Off the Cuff** comments on projects and issues that people are talking about. And, of course, the magazine will keep readers abreast of what is happening **Around the Chapter** without interference of the editorial staff.

I feel extraordinarily lucky to have inherited a publication that Suzanne Stephens and Peter Slatin made lively, independent, interesting, and informed. With the staff and writers they assembled and new people who will be appearing all the time, I hope to bring you a magazine you will rush to read. But we will need your help. Our staff is small and lean. Please let us know *in writing* — one page at most, a paragraph is ideal — about commissions you receive, awards you win, projects you complete, articles we have written, and buildings and places you have seen that you find interesting or appalling. We would especially love to have napkin sketches of projects just getting under way for **On the Drawing Boards**. Include a telephone number so we can get back to you for more information. Send us black-and-white glossy photographs if you like, but only if you can spare them. We may need to keep them on file and lack the resources for returns. Remember, all deadlines for copy are the fifteenth of the month, six weeks before an issue appears (January 15 for March), but the sooner we hear from you, the better.

Write soon.

Sincerely,

*Jayne Merkel*

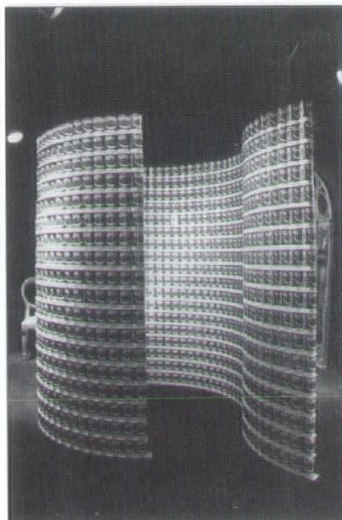


## Around Town: CANstruction II

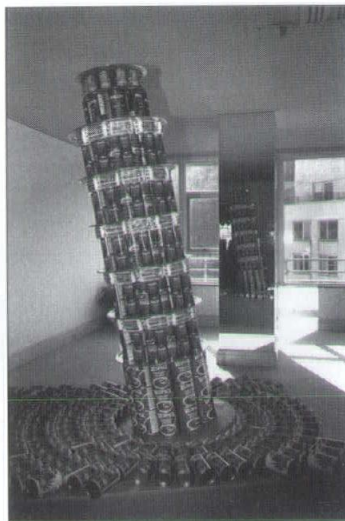
by Matthew Barhydt

In a spirit of mock seriousness, awards were presented on November 10 at the second annual CANstruction competition to benefit Food for Survival, before an enthusiastic crowd at the Decoration and Design Building. Jurors included Kurt Andersen, editor-in-chief of *New York* magazine; Louis Oliver Gropp, editor-in-chief of *House Beautiful*; Rosanne Haggerty, executive director of the Common Ground Community; Mel Hammock, president, Mel Hammock & Company; Joseph B. Rose, chairman of the City Planning Commission; Edwin Schlossberg, of Edwin Schlossberg, Inc.; and architect Robert A. M. Stern. From a field of 24, the jurors gave awards for "Best Meal," "Structural Ingenuity," "Best Use of Labels," and the most coveted prize, "Jurors' Favorite." The rules were simple: Each entrant was given a ten-by-ten-by-eight-foot space donated by a showroom in the D&D Building; constructions had to be structurally self-supporting; filled cans of any sizes with labels intact were to be the primary building material, but accessory props were permitted; and no adhesives other than Velcro or double-faced tape could be used.

All participants were architects, designers, or engineers, except for one placement office and one reprographic firm. As the evening's program promised, there were "whimsical, wacky structures," but many of this year's constructions were more social commentary than architecture. Two firms, Buttrick, White & Burtis and Gillis Associates Architects, P.C., submitted metaphors for global hunger modeled on the United Nations complex, complete with Secretariat and General Assembly buildings. F2's tree-like *Can-de-labras* represented "a newly-merged architecture and design firm" and "those feelings of warmth and satisfaction...associated with a good meal," according to the project statement. *The Information Highway—It Can Pass Us By!*, Consulting for Architects' "building-block play set," was intended to remind the observer that "we need to pause and make sure



CAN can CaN, jurors' favorite, Polshek & Partners



The Leaning Tower of Pizza, first honorable mention, Fox & Fowle Architects



The 'Oreo' Express, second honorable mention, Butler Rogers Baskett Architects, P.C.

all of society's members are transported to better times." The only entry that actually suggested a method of building with cans was Diane Lewis's prototype wall construction, *The Can House*. Her drawings and three-dimensional models for different types of stacked-can infill surrounded by a structural framework were challenging, although untested.

In the nonsensical spirit of the prize names themselves, the jury gave the best meal award to Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates' *Prima Cena (First Supper)*, a mixed-media installation that featured slides of Leonardo's *Last Supper* flashing over an altar of cans. Consulting engineers Weiskopf & Pickworth won the structural ingenuity award for a plethora of international canned foods tightly bound in a small-scale version of the *Statue of*

*Liberty*. The best label award went to Haines Lundberg & Wachler's seven-foot-high, double-sided flag called *American Distress/American Hope*. Illustrating the American flag on one side and the Red Cross flag on the other, this sinuous, S-shaped assembly was one of the few that was made only of cans.

Deservedly, Polshek & Partners won the top prize for its entry, *CAN can CaN*, a refreshing play of rhythm, scale, and mass. This construction was no more than it claimed to be—an aesthetically pleasing and witty over-size version of a can. At their discretion, the jury awarded two honorable mentions, the first to Fox & Fowle Architects for its clever and appropriately-named *Leaning Tower of Pizza* and the second to Butler Rogers Baskett Architects for *The 'Oreo'*

*Express*, a Disney-esque fantasyland of canned and boxed food notable for its playfulness.

Had there been an award for best irony, it would have gone to Thornton-Tomasetti Engineers. At almost eight feet tall, the replica of the gigantic, twin Petronas Towers project in Malaysia would have been more impressive if one of the towers hadn't been tilting towards the other. At least it was only soup cans and cracker boxes.

## Around the Country: John Lautner

by Lester P. Korzilius, AIA

If architecture were strictly the creation of spaces that uplift the human spirit, John Lautner, FAIA, the California architect who died on October 24 at the age of 83, would have had few peers. In a career that spanned 60 years, Lautner created a series of houses with both tremendous dynamism and deep repose, in this respect surpassing even his mentor, Frank Lloyd Wright, for whom he worked from 1933 to 1939. He is perhaps best known for the Arango Residence in Acapulco, Mexico, a project that embodies recurrent themes in his work. A soaring concrete roof, which frames a panoramic view of Acapulco Bay, provides a feeling of shelter at the same time that it opens to an infinite horizontal vista. Surrounding the main outdoor living space is a serpentine pool with an overflowing edge that visually merges with the bay, making it appear part of the living space.

Other well known Lautner buildings are the Elrod Residence in Palm Springs, the Segal House in Malibu, and Silvertop in Los Angeles. Every project was conceived around a central idea from which its structural forms, spatial arrangements, siting, and detailing emanated. To Lautner, the underlying concept of the building was the most important aspect of architecture. Without an understanding of each building's central idea, it is impossible to appreciate the depth of genius in Lautner's best work. He built what few architects are capable of imagining. A poor draftsman, he developed a strong intuitive sense of architectural



space. Although it is space that is not captured by photographs, his houses received numerous design awards, were widely published, and have been featured in numerous exhibitions in New York, most recently at Columbia University. A monograph on John Lautner's architecture of openness, restfulness, humanism, and joy was just published by Artemis Press.

## On the Drawing Boards (Someday): Ecological Design

by Matthew Barhydt

It wasn't one of those preternatural action movies, but one important new film that recently premiered in New York was all the more disturbing for its grounding in reality. On November 18, the Cooper-Hewitt Museum kicked off a two-day seminar, "Design on the Ecological Frontier," at Cooper Union with a showing of *Ecological Design: Inventing the Future*. By New Yorkers Brian Danitz and Tzelovanikov, the film presents a contextual overview of seminal work on practical solutions to severe ecological problems that increasingly affect the built environment.

*Ecological Design* finds its inspiration in R. Buckminster Fuller's belief that an ingenious use of science and industry could lead to environmentally-sound transportation, habitats, and cities. It features appearances by author Stewart Brand, describing his book, *The Whole Earth Catalogue*, as an encyclopedia of tools to construct Fuller's world, and Ian McHarg, landscape architect and author of *Design with Nature*, discussing Fuller's impact on his own ideas. Anthropologist M. Catherine Bateson says solutions to ecological problems cannot be modeled on the low technology of indigenous cultures. Paolo Soleri argues that Western man's democratic traditions led to urban sprawl and suburban form. James Wines contends, "The twentieth century has done nothing but virtually take out" the earth's resources. He predicts an ecological revolution in architecture rivaling the upheaval of modern architecture.

Danitz and Tzelovanikov showcase the Rocky Mountain Institute by

Hunter and Amory Lovins as one of the most environmentally sound and efficient homes ever built. Paul MacCready talks about his revolutionary flying machine, the Gossamer Albatross, and his solar-powered car, the Sunracer. Biosphere II appears, described as controversial. The landscape architects of Andropogon, Lesley Sauer and Carol Franklin, explain their methodology for remaking industrial corridors outside of Philadelphia. In the Brazilian city of Curitiba, the mayor, Jaime Lerner, sums up his radical improvement in the quality of life: "Use your car less and separate out your garbage." Then the film comes full circle to Fuller with biochemist John Todd in one of his geodesic living machines, which contains a natural ecosystem that continuously provides for the heating and cooling needs of the inhabitants.

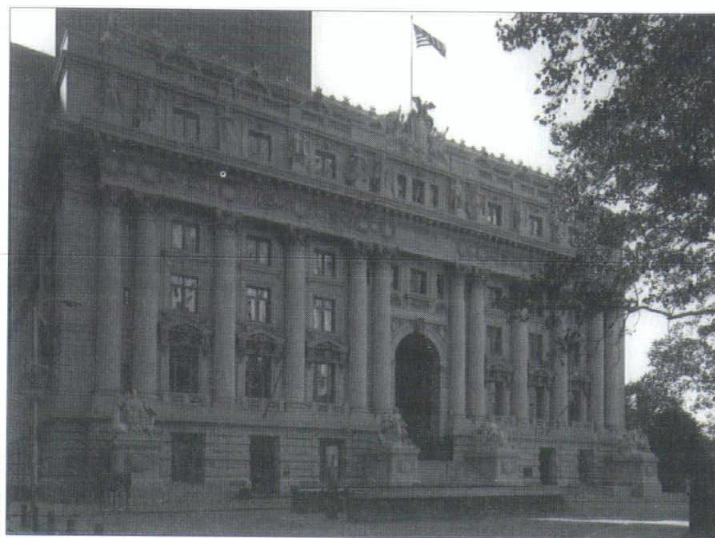
While Danitz and Tzelovanikov, who begin working with the Cooper-Hewitt this month to develop an educational program based on their film, are to be commended for an approach that is not antiurban, antigrowth, or antitechnology, a more critical attitude would have demonstrated the enormous difficulties that proponents of this design approach face in gaining wide acceptance.

## In the Streetscape: the U.S. Custom House and National Museum of the American Indian

by Jayne Merkel

Both the restored Alexander Hamilton United States Custom House in Lower Manhattan and a branch of the Smithsonian's new National Museum of the American Indian on its lower floors are signs of our time. And the signs show that we are more sensitive today than we were when the magnificent Beaux Arts Custom House was built between 1900 and 1907. That flamboyant edifice by Cass Gilbert epitomized the values of the dominant culture at the turn of the century.

Today, in a humbler mood, other cultures are being recognized, as the existence of the legislatively-mandated museum proves. This branch is locat-



Restored U.S. Custom House, renovation by Denis Kuhn of Ehrenkrantz & Eckstut

ed here, because a New York banker, George Gustav Heye, assembled a collection of Indian artifacts long before their value was widely appreciated. Now the collection has been institutionalized, and Native Americans such as the museum's director, W. Richard West, Jr., a Southern Cheyenne, are in charge of the presentation of the artifacts.

The contradiction between Gilbert's brash self-assurance and today's more reticent attitude created a minefield that the architect of the renovation and new museum spaces, Denis Kuhn, FAIA, of Ehrenkrantz & Eckstut, had to negotiate carefully. But the building's location on a prominent site between New York Harbor and Wall Street made it convenient for tourists visiting the nearby *Statue of Liberty* and Ellis Island. We are entranced by the glorious landmarks of earlier periods because our time places so little emphasis on celebrating the public realm. When a building like the Custom House comes along, we do whatever it takes (and spend whatever it costs) to restore and use it.

Kuhn and his colleagues studied the spectacular old edifice and engaged researchers, consultants, and artisans. They spent \$60 million renovating the 52,000-square-foot structure and creating new quarters for the United States Bankruptcy Courts and the Heye Center galleries. The project was funded by the federal General Services Administration. In the process, Kuhn became an admirer of Gilbert, who won the commission in a competition



Denis Kuhn in galleries of the National Museum of the American Indian

over Carrère & Hastings, Trowbridge & Livingston, Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, and other prominent architects, many of whom also submitted schemes in a rather Baroque version of the French Beaux Arts style in favor at the time.

"Gilbert was not a mere imitator," Kuhn says. He delights in the sweeping oblong staircases at both ends of the enormous foyer and the elaborate decorative scheme in carved relief, painted panels, and pressed, stenciled, and gilded canvas wall-covering. But the spaces Kuhn designed, both for the courts and the museum, are infinitely more modest, quiet, and subtle.

The simplified postmodern courtrooms on the upper floors are much more attractive than the plain old offices that were there before. Gilbert lavished his abundant detail only on the main rooms the public entered and the exterior, where a gigantic three-story-high colonnade of engaged pilasters on top of a sturdy, rusticated base makes the structure seem bigger than it actually is. Massive allegorical



sculptures of the four continents by Daniel Chester French and an elaborate barrel-vaulted entrance staircase make the Custom House seem important. And, as Robert A. M. Stern pointed out in *New York 1900*, the scheme signifies New York's "role as the leading American metropolis, representative of America's role in the world."

The America glorified was wealthy, white, and like the architecture, came from Western Europe. Ironically, the painted relief "sculptures" on the walls of the great domed oval vestibule leading to the Indian museum galleries represent not the peoples the

Europeans encountered when they arrived, but the explorers themselves who caused the Native Americans to lose their lands — Columbus, Gomez, Cabot, Cortoreal, Vespucci, Hudson, Block, and Verrazano.

That is the old order. The new order is more deferential, but not bland and neutral. Kuhn accomplished the transition by gradually reducing the scale of the elegant but empty oval and introducing softer materials. The old marble floors give way to new unpolished limestone, which soon changes to light natural wood and then to plain tan carpeting. Glass doors in handsome, solid stainless steel frames

lead into the galleries, but they are not as tall as the original openings, so a light-colored, decorative wood grid hangs over each doorway. A similar three-dimensional grid filled with light penetrates the middle of the deep, coved ceiling in the middle of the main galleries, demarcating the space and easing the transition from the very high-ceilinged spaces in the historic entry sequence to the generous but more humanly-scaled ones in the galleries, which curve down toward the long fabric-covered walls and embrace visitors a little.

At the top of those long walls, where the vaults begin to rise, Kuhn has created a clever device, a functional modern adaptation of a classical molding, which contains vents and tracks for the wall lighting. These stainless steel moldings subtly reflect the colors of the walls. The moldings and vaults give the galleries architectural character and link spaces filled with a variety of cases, displays, and interactive video screens. Small cubic galleries alternate with long ones. Attractive wooden upholstered benches, reminiscent of early Frank Lloyd Wright and de Stijl furniture, give visitors places to rest. Like Kuhn's signage system and other fixtures, they identify the museum's spaces within the Custom House as a whole.

As in all renovations, there is no perfect fit. The great oval rotunda, for all its majesty, stands empty, encircled by a marble balustrade installed in the 1930s, which inhibits circulation. "There really isn't anything you can do with that space," Kuhn explained.

The clerks who once waited on customers there must have looked like the miniature figures in a Piranesi landscape. As a whole, however, the Custom House complex provides welcome evidence that different cultures can live together in harmony (and style).

## Contributors

Matthew Barhydt, a practicing architect in New York City, recently received a master of arts in architecture and design criticism from Parsons School of Design.

Robert Benson, Ph.D., is architecture critic of *The Cincinnati Enquirer* and chair of the department of architecture, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.

Aaron Betsky, curator of architecture and design at the San Francisco Museum of Art, grew up in the Netherlands where his American parents taught at Dutch Universities.

Peter Blake, an architect and critic, was editor of *The Architectural Forum* and *Architecture Plus*.

Bruce Fowle is a partner in Fox & Fowle Architects.

Lester Korzilius, an architect in private practice in New York, worked for John Lautner during the 1970s.

Jayne Merkel is editor of *Oculus* and director of the graduate program in architecture and design criticism at Parsons School of Design.

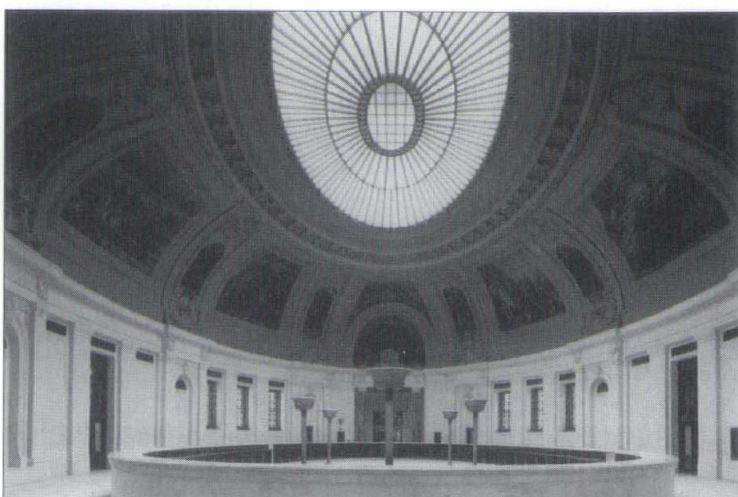
Wendy Moonan, a New York-based writer and critic, reports on design for *The New York Times* and other publications.



Entry hall of U.S. Custom House



Spiral staircase, restored U.S. Custom House



Oval rotunda in restored U.S. Custom House



# M A S T E R S O F

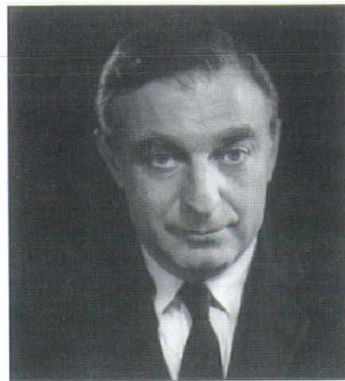
**Paul Rudolph,**

**Max Abramovitz,**

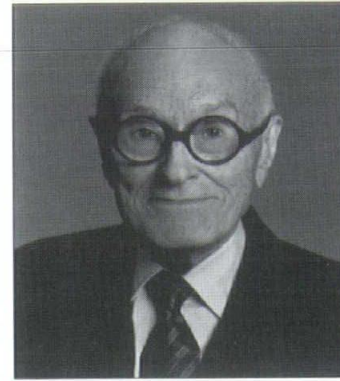
**Philip Johnson**



*Paul Rudolph*



*Max Abramovitz*



*Philip Johnson*

by Jayne Merkel

The thirst for new faces, styles, and ideas — simply for news — leads the media, museums, and lecture circuit to emerging talents more than old masters. But instead of focusing on 40 under 40, this fall's lecture series at the Architectural League, "Masters of Architecture," focused on five architects from 66 to 88: Paul Rudolph, Joseph Esherick, Max Abramovitz, E. Fay Jones, and Philip Johnson.

Joseph Esherick, a prominent San Francisco architect and Berkeley professor who had never lectured in New York before, opened a lot of eyes when he surveyed his career. Not only did he do the enormously popular renovation of the Cannery in San Francisco, which helped launch the adaptive reuse movement in the 1970s, he also designed the influential Sea Ranch, the pioneering Monterey Aquarium, and a number of libraries at Santa Cruz, Mills, and other California colleges. His slides showed that he had been designing tall, thin, natural wood-sided, skylighted, shed-roofed town houses much like those at Sea Ranch for some years before it was built in 1963–65. Those of us who attributed Sea Ranch mainly to Moore, Lyndon, Turnbull, Whitaker clearly have some rewriting of history to do.

And those who think of E. Fay Jones as a Frank Lloyd Wright man who designed a gorgeous chapel in the woods are only half right. His beautifully-sited houses may suffer from his

"lifelong struggle to resist imitation" of his mentor, but they incorporate ideas from other historic sources, too — including Chenonceaux. Jones's famous Thorncrown Chapel in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, was inspired by Ste. Chappelle in Paris, but because of the minimal budget — \$150,000 in 1980 — he had to translate hand-crafted stone architecture into common two-by-fours, two-by-eights, and two-by-twelves. Not surprisingly, that exquisite little nondenominational chapel in an Ozark park led to a series of religious commissions, including one for a much larger chapel in the same park to accommodate the crowds that flock to Thorncrown.

These architects' special sensitivity to landscape showed how profoundly location affects an architect's work. The New Yorkers evinced more interest in the city; their work seemed both more time-bound and timely today.

Paul Rudolph, who grew up in small Southern towns, was educated at the Alabama Polytechnic Institute and Harvard Graduate School of Design (at the same time as Philip Johnson). He came to New York in 1965 from the deanship at Yale, where he had gone in 1957 after he making his mark with a series of adventurous houses in Florida. In New Haven, he became a celebrity. Then, almost as suddenly, he disappeared from the limelight as the brand of modern architecture he practiced went out of style.

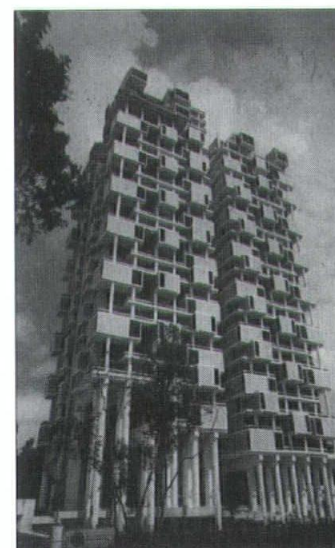
Rudolph concentrated mainly on the campus of Southeastern Massachusetts University, which he has been working on for 30 years, and four enormous projects in the Far East — the Colonnade Condominiums in Singapore, the Bond Centre in Hong Kong, the Dharmala Building in Jakarta, and the Concourse Building in Singapore.

With a startling consistency, he has maintained the same principles throughout his career, considering "site, architectural space, scale, structure, spirit, and function" in project after project. The Concourse, "the last of the line and still unfinished," even looks like the Boston Government Service Center of 1962–71. But it is infinitely more complex, despite the same polygonal geometry, solids balanced against voids, and horizontally banded low-rise mass wrapping around a plaza with a tower at one end. But at the Concourse, the octagonal tower has sides of different lengths and a stack of three-story atria that serve as centers for clusters of office floors.

Working in the same genre for decades, Rudolph has invented increasingly varied and interesting ways of dividing oversized buildings into manageable units. Because he has done so in megastructures, his examples have seldom been heeded. Maybe that will change now that stylish architects like Rem Koolhaas are looking at American modern architecture of the mid-century and talking about what

Rudolph calls "the new scale that descended upon us after World War II." Rudolph maintains, "It's so overwhelming, we still haven't figured it out." Like Koolhaas, he believes architects can't do much about it: "People think architects determine what is going to be done. Society determines what is going to be done." But unlike the younger Dutchman, he believes in imposing a systematized order.

Although he is horrified by the directions most of his old students took — "I wish I'd never heard of Yale University" — he still talks like a teacher. His recent towers rise on tall piloti because "the 120-foot height is very important. It's commensurate with what we see with our eyes from



*Colonnade Condominiums, Singapore, Paul Rudolph*



# ARCHITECTURE

the streets — the angle of vision,” he explained. Each tower is different, “because the materials are different, the sites are different.” Unlike some confirmed modernists, he believes “the vernacular has a lot to teach us.”

The Colonnade Condominiums suggest ways “to make houses in the sky rather than cubicles in a big box.” The 26-story rectangular tower is a well-ordered version of his famous 1967 proposal to build a creeping pyramidal megastructure with mass-produced parts over the West Side Highway. Though conventionally constructed on a concrete frame, the recent *de Stijl*-inspired composition, with solid walled, one-story private spaces balanced against glass-walled, two-story main living areas, looks modular.

As his own marble-and-stainless steel work spaces and living quarters on the top floors of an old Beekman Place town house show, Rudolph excels at this kind of composition, joining planes with cubes and enlivening space with balconies, stairways, and bridges. He creates subtle transitions between the intimacy of a quaint, human-scaled street and the massive sweep of the FDR Drive, over which his perch hovers dauntingly, taking in the whole East River and the lands beyond, while remaining firmly anchored to old New York.



Bond Centre, Hong Kong, Paul Rudolph

Max Abramovitz, who is retiring, triggered memories as he surveyed a career that epitomized an era. Born in Chicago, he studied architecture at the University of Illinois and Columbia, where he taught and won a fellowship to the Ecole des Beaux Arts. “I always told the students to make contacts in other departments like law and business and get to know people who may be your clients some day,” he said. He must have taken his own advice, for he was invited back to the Illinois campus to design the enormous Assembly Hall of 1963 and the popular Krannert Art Center of 1977.

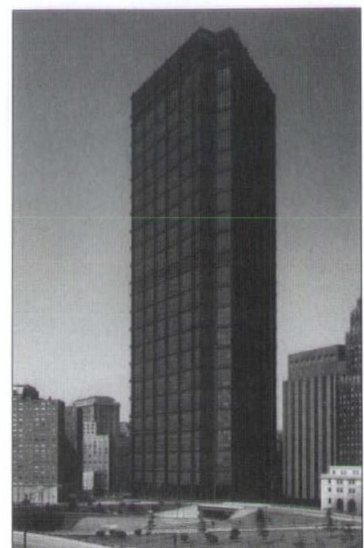
“I was lucky. I came back from France and got an offer to work with Wally Harrison, and we got involved in the World’s Fair [of 1939],” he said. Then they got involved in the United Nations and Lincoln Center, where Abramovitz designed Philharmonic Hall, and Harrison, the Metropolitan Opera House. “Wally got the work, but if you’re an architect, eventually you have to be your own man,” Abramovitz said. So he emphasized his own projects such as the structurally-expressive, concrete-domed Assembly Hall at Illinois and the handsome, boat-shaped Phoenix Mutual Life Insurance Building in Hartford of 1964, of which he noted, “I think I can blame myself for being one of the first to break the box.”

The works he did for manufacturers of building materials, however, best represent the aspirations their time. The Alcoa Building in Pittsburgh of 1952 was the first, but he apologized for including it: “I’ve avoided anything here that is Harrison & Abramovitz, so I don’t get accused of taking all the credit by Wally’s ghost” (who also appeared at Philip Johnson’s lecture). The aluminum-clad Alcoa Building established the idea of demonstrating the potential of that material for architecture. H&A’s Corning Glass Center in Corning, New York, of 1959 and Owens-Illinois World Headquarters in Toledo, Ohio, of 1984 showed what glass could do. But the most fascinating was Abramovitz’s U.S. Steel Building in Pittsburgh of 1968–71.

“It talks about how it was built,” the architect explained. “The verticals are steel columns. There are no vertical supports inside the building. I got the best engineer I could get, and we came to the conclusion that we had to take advantage of the triangular site. Italy was experimenting with columns, and we learned that if you put the columns far enough away from the wall, it would be fireproof. The columns are three feet out from the building, built in three 35-story units. But we ran into problems with the building department, so somebody, not me, came up with the brilliant idea, ‘Why don’t we put water (later antifreeze) inside the hollow columns?’ They did, and it worked.”

Philip Johnson, who grew up in Cleveland, went to Harvard and later, after a career as a critic and curator in New York, studied at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design (at the same time as Paul Rudolph). His lecture focused on the future rather than the past, except when he noted, “I started out as a Mies man, in case you’ve forgotten, but I wasn’t a good pupil. I didn’t work hard enough. I didn’t stick to his principles.”

He calls himself a chameleon, but his message came awfully close to what he said in his famous speech, “The Seven



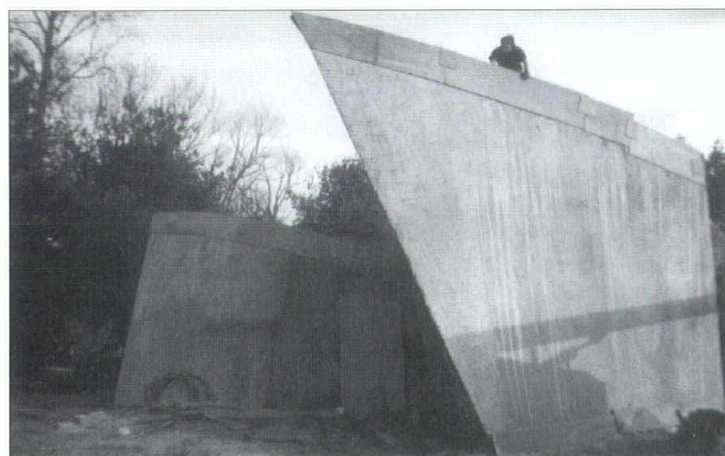
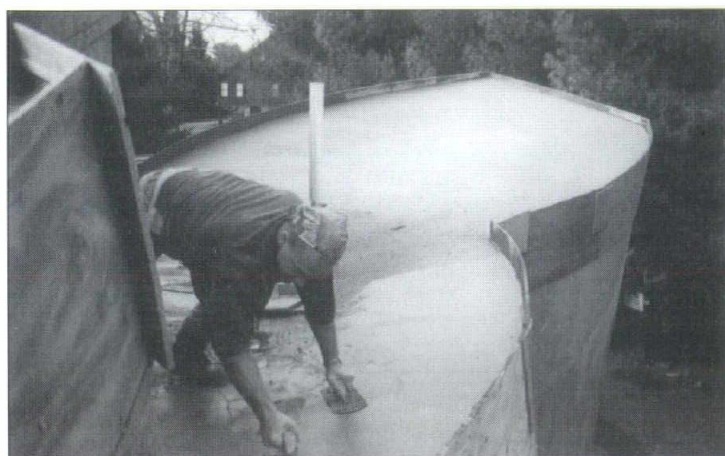
U.S. Steel Building, Pittsburgh, PA, Max Abramovitz

Crutches of Architecture,” at Harvard in 1954. “My interest is the art of architecture, not the technics or the sociology, not whether we do anything good, but whether we do anything beautiful,” he said. “If you don’t want to be a great architect, drive a trolley car or a taxi, but don’t stick around and draft up bathrooms. It isn’t dignified. You won’t make any money drafting out bathrooms anyhow, and a computer can do it quicker. But if you have the calling, it’s a religious calling, a profession like ours.”

Johnson was disarmingly honest in assessing his own career: “I’m not a great architect. I’m a public figure. I’m on television. I get prizes, silly things. The great architect is Frank Gehry.”

He didn’t pull any punches in describing how architecture works today: “That row of tall buildings I’m doing on the West Side for Donald Trump, four whole blocks, quite a thing to build....I’ve been working with forms that were laid out by a renderer at the request of SOM to show what the West Side committee wanted Trump to do with his land — make it look like Central Park West....They went and made a brochure of how high the cornices are, where the setbacks go, how high the towers are, what materials — brick and stone on the base to





Visitor center at Philip Johnson estate.

make it look as if they had white boots on....And then they made the city pass a law. It makes a straight jacket that I struggle against every day. *But* in the interstices, you can learn anything.

"After that I had the delightful project of redesigning the Gulf & Western Building, which we all know is the most prominent building in the

city, and it's not very pretty," he continued, introducing another oddity of our time. "The idea of prettification of an existing building in the biggest, most important city in the world is daunting, because what can you do? The module is there. The steel is there. The height permits will never be repeated, so we can't touch the size of the building or the square footage,

so we had to re clad, redecorate the building....That's one of our jobs, isn't it, to decorate? That isn't architecture either. You sit and do the detailing. And what do you think? It's gold. So we're building a gold building because, in case you didn't know it, Mr. Trump is very fond of gold."

Johnson noted that the restrictions he rankles under are not just a New York phenomenon or an American one. "The worst one is a building I'm doing in Berlin that looks exactly like a building of Berlin in 1910."

Unlike most architects, however, Johnson has one perfect client — himself. So he was able to close his presentation with a project in his new "sculptural" mode, for a visitor center at his house in Connecticut. Whenever he changed styles, he did another building on the 40-acre property that he has now given to the National Trust — a veritable museum of Philip Johnson's architecture and a lot of people's ideas.

"This building was a model that Frank Stella, the great painter, was working on that I adopted, so I say. I'm always adopting people. This time it was a Frank Stella thing that he thought was architecture, but it looked for all the world like a piece of sculpture. So I said, 'Well, Frank, if we build it big, what would it look like?' He was out the other day and said, 'Oh, it's wonderful.'...I get wild about the way it's built. I just get up and walk around and around it. Then I had to put in a window because I had to know how the light feels. To be able to build a building and build it the way architects did in the Middle Ages! In our day, you make a drawing and send it out to somebody else, and then it's built and you say, 'Oh, yaaa.' But when you get a chance to get your hands on a building and change it while it's under your hands...." He drifted off for a minute, dreaming about how wonderful it is.

## In the Bookstores

by Jayne Merkel

### Philip Johnson, Life and Work

Franz Schulze's *Philip Johnson, Life and Work* (New York: Knopf, 496 pages, 125 black-and-white photographs, 22 pages of notes, and a scholarly bibliography, 6 1/4 x 9 1/4, \$30.00 paper) follows the model of the author's fine biography of Mies van der Rohe. But though Mies was a man of few words and Johnson is a man of many, Schulze told the story of Mies's life in the architect's own words more than he did here. The reader learns more about Johnson's personal life than is really pertinent because, for most of his career, he kept his romantic life quite separate from the social whirl that fed his practice. Yet the relevant story of his breakup with John Burgee is told from Johnson's point of view. The book fails to explain how he manages to be both an iconoclast and the symbol of the Establishment, or how he can define the mainstream while moving beyond it. And it skirts the issue of appropriation embodied by Johnson, which is crucial because it questions modernism's most cherished value, originality, and that questioning did not stop when postmodernism went out of style. Franz Schulze, a widely-published professor of art at Lake Forest College, is a conscientious scholar, knowledgeable historian, and clear and engaging writer, but his insight is buried in the details of Johnson's long, frenetic, and glamorous life.

### Philip Johnson, The Architect in His Own Words

Two graduate student lecturers at Harvard, Hilary Lewis and John O'Connor, characterize the architect by letting him speak for himself. The interviews in *Philip Johnson, The Architect in His Own Words* (New York: Rizzoli, 208 pages, 30 color photographs, 30 duotones, 10 3/4 x 12 1/4, \$50 cloth) are confined to professional matters and focused on specific works. Since the interviews never touch on Johnson's personal life, the reader does not learn here either how it affected the evolution of his architecture — or if it did.

The interviews reveal the architect's



greatest strength (and a reason for his constant change) — his ability to criticize his own work. Of the AT&T Building lobby he says, "I used cushioned capitals...a device of the year 1100, and there are very fine examples of it all over France. So what is it doing in that skyscraper? It is the details, you see, and I can't work them out in spite of knowing my Brunelleschi. You wouldn't take any of his entrances and stretch them out that way with a great big arch and the lesser colonnade. Because the entrance to the AT&T Building is Brunelleschi's Pazzi Chapel. Only it ain't....I was trying to apply things that didn't fit."

His comments do, however, elucidate the work. He describes the MoMA Garden, for example, as "a room, not a garden. It's an urban room with definite doorways and processions. And yet it's easy enough to penetrate. If you're not forced to move that way and this way, you won't see anything. So you always see a lot of sculpture." He was able to do what he wanted there. Because the garden was built in the backyard of old Mrs. Rockefeller's house, her son Nelson was the client. Johnson did not have to work with a committee. "I talked with Alfred [Barr, the museum's founder] about everything because he was my best friend, and with René [D'Harnoncourt, the director]. Nelson I seldom saw, but he trusted René and me." Pennzoil Place in Houston succeeded for the opposite reason, because the client, Hugh Liedtke, got involved. "He wanted a top on the building. He wanted a building with character that would stand out from the undecorated glass boxes around town. So we did...the parrot's beak twist at the top, which intrigues passersby so much." When the developer, Johnson's friend and patron Gerry Hines, wanted to take the top off for budgetary reasons, Liedtke saved the day — and one of Johnson's best works.

Another revelation is his continuing respect for the modern masters. Asked which twentieth-century architect he would choose to design a house for himself, he says, "I think Corbu. Because he was the most amenable to beautiful shapes that are new. When he used his head, like at

Ronchamp, he was the most original." The value of originality is not, it seems, gone for good.

### The Oral History of Modern Architecture

In the 1950s, when John Peter came up with the idea of doing the series of interviews that became *The Oral History of Modern Architecture* (New York: Abrams, 320 pages, 200 black-and-white illustrations, 9 x 11 1/4, \$75.00 cloth), oral history was in its infancy, and tape-recorded interviews were rare. "I thought about doing a series on painters, but Cezanne was dead. Then I thought about doing sculptors, but Rodin was dead," he said. "But because architecture lags behind the other arts, since it takes people and money, etcetera," he realized that in the discipline he covered as a reporter for *Look* and *Life*, NBC and CBS, many seminal figures were still alive — Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and Mies van der Rohe. So off he went with his huge and heavy "portable" tape recorder that used big reels of tape and filled a small suitcase. And none too soon. The book has just been published, though the interviews all took place before 1966, the year Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* was published.

Luckily, Peter decided not to take the advice of the people at Columbia's new department of oral history where they erased and reused all the tapes after transcribing them, because "historians don't like to sit around and listen to a lot of tapes." Sixteen of the 59 interviews are enclosed on a compact disc — those with Wright, Le Corbusier, Gropius, Mies, Johnson, Alvar Aalto, Marcel Breuer, Louis Kahn, Pier Luigi Nervi, Richard Neutra, Oscar Niemeyer, J. J. P. Oud, I. M. Pei, Eero Saarinen, Jose Luis Sert, and Kenzo Tange. The book includes comments by various architects on technology, society, and art, biographies, bibliographies, assessments, and comments on the "revolution" itself. "Modern architecture is one of the great transformations," Peter said. "At the turn of the century, when the *Oral History* begins, there was no modern architecture. Sixty-one years later, when it closes, nothing was built throughout the civilized world but modern architecture."

Because the interviews were completed so long ago, the book is both a period piece and a record for the ages. Many of the architects now seem inconsequential. There are fewer New Yorkers than there would have been later (only Johnson, Pei, Breuer,

Gordon Bunshaft, L. L. Rado, Edward Durrell Stone, and engineers Mario Salvadori and Paul Weidlinger). A lot of the predictions, especially on technology and mass-production, seem quaintly off the mark today. Some criticisms were later rectified, like Eero Saarinen's 1956 concern about context: "We've only been architects of single buildings, with very little regard for what goes on left or right or in front.... Partly because we've been in such a tremendous growth that whatever was to the left or right of our building would be changed in a few years." Other observations, like one of Paul Rudolph's, transcend time: "A building should be meaningful form from no matter what distance you look at it, if you are quickly flying over it or riding by it in a vehicle. It should have a certain diagrammatic quality which can be read....If you approach it by foot, it has to have additional layers of meaning. You have to see things you haven't seen before."

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## URBAN CENTER BOOKS' TOP 10

*As of November 25, 1994*

1. **Delirious New York**, Rem Koolhaas (Monacelli Press, paper, \$35.00).
2. **A Workshop for Peace: Designing the United Nations Headquarters**, George A. Dudley (Architectural History Foundation/MIT Press, cloth, \$65.00).
3. **John Lautner Architect**, ed. Frank Escher (Artemis, cloth, \$95.00).
4. **Transparent Cities**, Brian McGrath (Sites Books, boxed, \$29.00).
5. **Philip Johnson: Life and Work**, Franz Schulze (Knopf, cloth, \$30.00).
6. **The Architecture of Good Intention: Towards a Possible Retrospect**, Colin Rowe (Academy, paper, \$35.00).
7. **Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization**, Richard Sennett (Norton, cloth, \$27.50).
8. **Historical Atlas of New York City**, Eric Homberger (Henry Holt, cloth, \$45.00).
9. **Construction Intention Detail: Five Projects from Five Swiss Architects**, ed. Mark Gilbert (Artemis, paper, \$19.95).
10. **Invisible Gardens: The Search for Modernism in the American Landscape**, Peter Walker and Melanie Simo (MIT Press, cloth, \$50.00).

## RIZZOLI BOOKSTORES' TOP 10

*As of November 25, 1994*

1. **Jerusalem Architecture**, David Kroyanker (Vendome, cloth, \$65.00).
2. **Mexico Houses of the Pacific**, Marie Colle (Alti, cloth, \$65.00).
3. **Philip Johnson: The Architect in His Own Words**, Hilary Lewis and John O'Connor (Rizzoli, cloth, \$50.00).
4. **Great Houses of England and Wales**, Hugh Montgomery-Massingbred (Rizzoli, cloth, \$55.00).
5. **Morphosis Volume II**, introduction by Richard Weinstein (Rizzoli, paper, \$40.00).
6. **New York Great Metropolis**, Wolfe Gerard (McGraw, paper, \$19.95).
7. **Great American Houses and Their Architectural Styles**, Virginia and Lee McAlester (Abbeville, cloth, \$60.00).
8. **Small Luxury Hotels of Europe**, Wendy Black (PBC, cloth, \$42.50).
9. **Adobe**, Orlando Romero and David Larkin (Houghton Mifflin, cloth, \$50.00).
10. **Gwathmey Siegel 1982-1992**, introduction by Peter Eisenman (Rizzoli, paper, \$35.00).



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# January/February 1995

## January

6

Friday  
LECTURE

I. D. Robbins. Sponsored by the City Club of New York. 12:00 pm. 33 W. 43rd St. 921-9870. \$20 (includes lunch).

7

Saturday  
LECTURE

Antoine Predock. Sponsored by Urban Center Books. 12:00 pm. The Urban Center, 457 Madison Ave. 935-3595. \$5.

TOUR

The National Museum of the American Indian/Custom House. Sponsored by the Municipal Art Society. Call 439-1049 to confirm date.

9

Monday  
AIA NEW YORK  
CHAPTER EVENT

Housing Committee. 6:00 pm. AIA New York Chapter, 200 Lexington Ave. Call to confirm time and location, 683-0023, ext. 17.

18

Wednesday  
EXHIBIT

Umbrellas. Sponsored by Parsons School of Design, 66 Fifth Ave. 229-8955. Closes February 10.



"Umbrellas," an exhibition at Parsons School of Design

21

Saturday  
WORKSHOP

Design for an Ecological City. Sponsored by Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum. 2 E. 91st St. 860-6909. Continues in March, April, and June.

23

Monday  
AIA NEW YORK  
CHAPTER EVENT

Claiming Places in the City. Sponsored by the AIA New York Chapter Women in

27

Friday  
LECTURE

Ray Horton. Sponsored by the City Club of New York. 12:00 pm. 33 W. 43rd St. 921-9870. \$20 (includes lunch).

28

Saturday  
TOUR

Soaring the Heights: The 100-Year-Old Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Sponsored by the 92nd Street Y. 415-5628. \$18.

## February

2

Thursday  
LECTURE

Headquarters City. First evening of a three-part series on architecture in New York City during the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. Sponsored by the Architectural League. 6:30 pm. Rockefeller University, 1230 York Ave. 753-1722. \$7.

3-4

Friday  
CONFERENCE

11

Saturday  
AIA NEW YORK  
CHAPTER EVENT

Tour of New Federal Courts Building, 40 Foley Square. Sponsored by the AIA New York Chapter Public Architects Committee. For reservations (space is limited to 30 people), contact Bill Andersen at 346-8890.

SYMPOSIUM

Warchitecture/Sarajevo. Cosponsored by Storefront for Art and Architecture and the National Institute for Architectural Education. 431-5795.

13

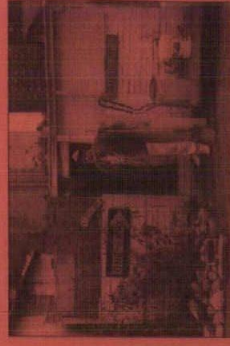
Monday  
AIA NEW YORK  
CHAPTER EVENT

Tour of Common Grounds Community House. Sponsored by AIA New York Chapter Housing Committee. Space is limited to 35 people. For more information, call 683-0023, ext. 17.

15

Wednesday  
EXHIBIT

Kid City. Municipal Art Society, Urban Center Galleries, 457 Madison Ave. 935-3960. Closes May 21.



Detail from "Transitory Gardens" at the Municipal Art Society, closes February 24

Good Offices and Beyond: The Evolution of the Workplace. The Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, 2 E. 91st St. 860-6868. Closes February 26.

Dublin: A Grand Tour. New York School of Interior Design, 170 E. 70th St. 472-1500. Closes March 17.

World War II and the American Dream: How Wartime Building Changed a Nation. National Building Museum, 401 F St. NW, Washington, D.C., 202-272-2448. Closes December 1995.

## Deadlines

JANUARY 31

Submission deadline for Envisioning East New York, a study project to propose design strategies for four areas in Brooklyn. Sponsored by the Architectural League. For more information or to request a study kit, call 753-1722.

FEBRUARY 10

Application deadline for AIA New York Chapter travel grants. Travel proposals must be for 1995 calendar year and must



## LECTURE

**Challenging Your Limits.** Sponsored by Society of Design Administration. 6:00 pm. Baer Marks & Upham, 805 Third Ave. For more information, contact Susan Appel, 237-3423. \$10.

# 13

**Friday**

## LECTURE

**Milt Mollen.** Sponsored by the City Club of New York. 12:00 pm. 33 W. 43rd St. 921-9870. \$20 (includes lunch).

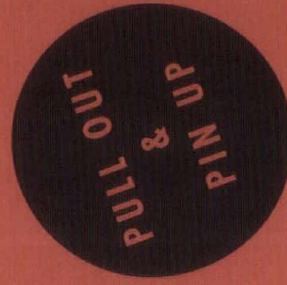
# 17

**Tuesday**

**AIA NEW YORK**

**CHAPTER EVENT**

**Health Facilities Committee.** 5:00 pm. AIA New York Chapter, 200 Lexington Ave. Call to confirm time and location, 683-0023, ext. 17.



## LECTURE

**What is Sacred and What is Space.**

Given by Roger Kennedy. Sponsored by New York Landmarks Conservancy. 6:00 p.m. St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Avenue at 50th Street. For reservations, contact Steven De Polo at 995-5260. \$35.

# 26

**Thursday**

**AIA NEW YORK**

**CHAPTER EVENT**

**Tour of New Federal Office building, 290 Broadway (at Duane Street).** Sponsored by the AIA New York Chapter Public Architects Committee. 5:30 pm. For reservations (space is limited to 30 people), contact Bill Andersen at 346-8890.

## SEMINAR

Grants for Artists and Architects. Given by representatives from several grant-making organizations, including the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts. Sponsored by the Architectural League of New York. The Urban Center, 457 Madison Ave. 753-1722.

# 4

**Saturday**

## EXHIBIT

**Warchitecture/Sarajevo: A Wounded City.** Storefront for Art and Architecture, 97 Kenmare St. 431-5795. Closes March 18.

# 6

**Monday**

## LECTURE

**Contested City.** Second evening of a three-part series on architecture in New York City during the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. Sponsored by the Architectural League. 6:30 pm. Rockefeller University, 1230 York Ave. 753-1722. \$7.

# 8

**Wednesday**

## LECTURE

**Conflict.** Sponsored by Society of Design Administration. 6:00 pm. Baer Marks & Upham, 805 Third Ave. For more information, contact Susan Appel, 237-3423. \$10.

# 9

**Thursday**

## LECTURE

**Fun City.** Third evening of a three-part series on architecture in New York City during the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. Sponsored by the Architectural League. 6:30 pm. Rockefeller University, 1230 York Ave. 753-1722. \$7.

# Continuing Exhibitions

**The Music Box Project.** The Equitable Gallery, 787 Seventh Ave., 554-4818. Closes January 7.

**Cy Twombly: A Retrospective.** Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. 708-9400. Closes January 10.

**Investigations into the Particular.** *Palau Architects: Selected Projects 1983-1993.* The Architectural League of New York, Urban Center Galleries, 457 Madison Ave. 753-1722. Closes January 14.

**The Italian Metamorphosis.** Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Ave. 423-3500. Closes January 29.

**Thresholds/O.M.A. at MoMA: Rem Koolhaas and the Place of Public Architecture.** Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. 708-9400. Closes January 31.

**Art for Learning.** Municipal Art Society, Urban Center Galleries, 457 Madison Ave. 935-3960. Closes January 31.

**The Structure of Style: Dutch Modernism and the Applied Arts.** The Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, 2 E. 91st St. 860-6868. Closes February 19.

**Transitory Gardens.** Municipal Art Society, Urban Center Galleries, 457 Madison Ave. 935-3960. Closes February 24.

annual Young Architects Competition. Sponsored by the Architectural League of New York. Call 753-1722 for more information and entry form.

## MARCH 1

Entry deadline for International Association of Lighting Designers twelfth annual awards program. Projects submitted must be permanent architectural lighting design solutions for which construction was completed after June 1, 1992. Contact IALD, 18 East 16th St., Suite 208, New York, NY 10003-3193.

## APRIL 15

Submission deadline for entries in the Royal Oak Foundation's architectural design competition. Open to students or recent graduates (no more than five years out of school). Contact the foundation at 966-6565.

## MARCH 1

Entry deadline for John Dinkeloo Bequests/American Academy in Rome traveling fellowships in architectural design and technology. Contact the National Institute for Architectural Education, 30 W. 22nd St., New York, NY 10010, 924-7000.

## MAY 12

Entry deadline for Lloyd Warren Fellowship/82nd Paris Prize. Participants must have received degrees between June 1990 and December 1994. Contact the National Institute for Architectural Education, 30 W. 22nd St., New York, NY 10010, 924-7000.

## JUNE 8

Entry deadline for Challenged Grounds Urban Housing and Community Outdoor Space competition. Open to students of accredited schools in the U.S. Contact the National Institute for Architectural Education, 30 W. 22nd St., New York, NY 10010, 924-7000.

Send *Oculus* calendar information to AIA New York Chapter, 200 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10016.

*Oculus* welcomes information for the calendar pertaining to public events about architecture and the other design professions. Information is due in writing six weeks before the month of the issue in which it will appear.

Because of the time lag between when information is received and when it is printed, final details of events are likely to change. We recommend that you check with sponsoring institutions before attending.



## Panel Discusses Affordable Housing

by Beth Greenberg, AIA

There were no grand answers offered at a panel held on September 13 entitled "How Can We Build New Affordable Housing?" However, the event — organized by the AIA New York Chapter Housing Committee and cosponsored by the Municipal Art Society, the Citizens Housing and Planning Council, the New York Metro Chapter of the American Planning Association, and Kreisler Borg Florman/Hannibal — generated lively discussion.

Panelists included Frederick Rose, chairman of Rose Associates; George McDonald, president of the Doe Foundation; Blake Chambliss, FAIA, direct sales coordinator of the affordable housing department of the Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC); and Marc Weiss, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The panel was moderated by Housing Committee chair, Elizabeth Muskat.

Rose called for a return to the kind of policies that produced projects such as Mitchell-Lama housing, constructed when the city was able to build 60,000 to 70,000 units of affordable housing per year. Major impediments to current productivity include the increasingly litigious nature of our society, the burden of new governmental regulations (disability regulations, environmental laws, landmarks preservation, rent control and stabilization), rigid and outdated zoning, and labor union requirements. Rose's plea was "Get out of my way and let me build."

Through the Doe Foundation, George McDonald has developed a program called "Ready, Willing, and Able," which provides people in emergency shelters with housing, support services, and job training. Participants are trained to repair and clean city-owned buildings (the terms "rehab" and "construction" can't be used, as they would invoke union wages and controls). The concept of repair refers both to teaching participants self-respect and self-reliance, and to repairing the damaged fabric of communities that do not adequately house their citizens. The direct costs of such pro-

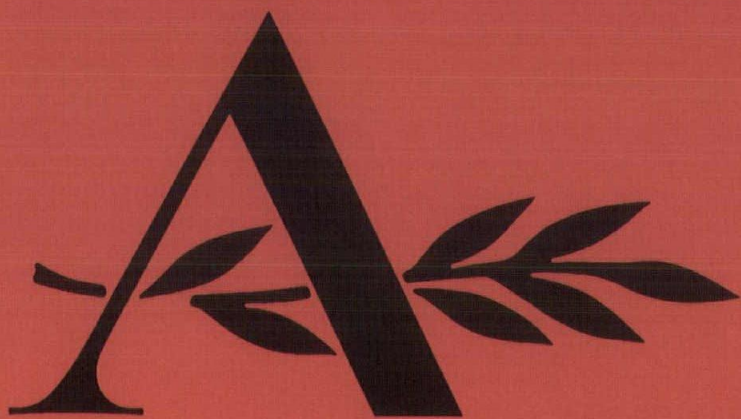
grams are significantly less than those of housing people in shelters, but NIMBY attitudes and a lack of public and private financing create impediments.

Speaking both as an architect concerned with the profession's social and civic responsibilities and as a representative of the RTC, Blake Chambliss discussed his organization's efforts to increase affordable housing stock. Through a combination of "ignorance, greed, and bad luck in the 1980s," Chambliss noted, there are currently over 24,000 homes and 60,000 multifamily units in foreclosure. The RTC is turning these into privately-owned and rental properties, converting half into affordable housing.

Chambliss pointed out that homeownership tax subsidies total five times the amount spent on subsidized housing, and that publicly-assisted housing makes up only three percent of the country's housing stock. He emphasized that affordable housing must become part of a larger societal commitment to build vital communities, which requires a partnership of private, public, and nonprofit entities.

Marc Weiss described HUD programs that focus on strengthening communities to encourage mixed-rather than segregated-income housing. Such programs provide counseling and training for residents to learn the skills required for home ownership. They also provide vouchers for home ownership, create permanent low-income housing credits, and act in concert with local government and neighborhood organizations. The current administration has quadrupled funding dedicated to housing the homelessness and has increased the budget for HUD; however, overall funding remains extremely tight.

A common thread that panelists returned to throughout the evening was the idea that a tight housing market drives up costs, making housing unaffordable for large segments of society, and that increasing both assisted and for-profit housing production would ease market conditions. The discussion also focused on the fact that New York City laws prohibit for-profit SRO operation (thereby reducing the availability of a housing type that has traditionally provided low-cost housing for singles and elderly people), while other cities have successfully reintroduced for-profit SRO housing. The Housing Committee will direct its efforts over the next year to studying this type of housing and finding ways to support its revival here.



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## In the Galleries: Rem Koolhaas

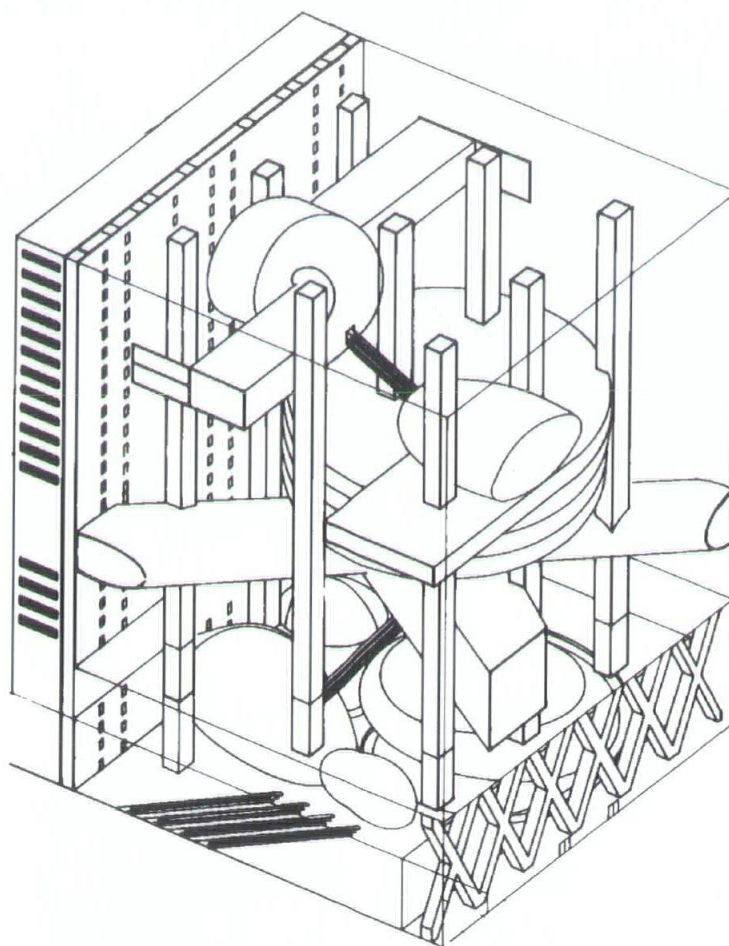
by Jayne Merkel

It's OMA at the MoMA this winter. Actually the exhibition of Rem Koolhaas's Office of Metropolitan Architecture reaches beyond the Museum of Modern Art's doors into a nearby store window, on to a telephone kiosk and a construction fence, and into the subway across the street at 666 Fifth Avenue. The brash modern imagery fits in just fine, and the out-reach extension makes sense for a show called "Rem Koolhaas and the Place of Public Architecture."

Even inside, this is one of the most accessible exhibitions at the MoMA in years. The drawings are legible. The models are easy to read. Big color photographs and computer projections — in New York bus-stop light boxes — show facades and interiors clearly. And wonder of wonders, even the architect's texts explain what he is trying to do in plain English. (It took a Dutchman to do that!)

What is he doing? Buildings reach out into the city (as the show tries to do), bridging boulevards (the Rotterdam Kunsthal), projecting messages onto their walls (the Karlsruhe Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie), or luring pedestrians inside with window walls that work both ways for a change (the Lille Congrexpo). If Euralille, the just-finished Centre d'Affaires in Lille at the station connecting the Chunnel trains with the rest of the TGV network, resembles what Sibil Moholy-Nagy once called "Wallace Harrison's Via Triumphalis in Albany," OMA can carve up space in the most amazing ways. All those Surrealist blobs and amoeboid volumes that showed up in Noguchi coffee tables and Aalto vases in the 1950s have grown to giant size and invaded interiors so people can actually walk around in bubbles or pass through them. They become art in Koolhaas's hands. He does the most astounding things with escalators, stairways, and ramps. Who needs roller coasters?

The only sad note in a delightfully upbeat show is the fact that OMA's Très Grande Bibliothèque lost out in the 1989 French Grands Projets com-



Rem Koolhaas, OMA, axonometric drawing of Très Grande Bibliothèque, competition entry

petition. This ultimate library was to have been a gigantic box — packed solidly with books — out of which eggs and tubes and cubes were carved for people. Some compensation will come from the exciting libraries for the University of Paris, Deux Bibliothèques de Jussieu, designed for another competition in 1992, and under way now. They may be less radically venturesome, and it is not quite clear from the images in the show how the big open-walled box with great, often sloping, expanses of floor and thrilling voids would meet the streets of Paris on the old Left Bank near the Seine. You cannot play the same game there that you can next to the wide Maas in Rotterdam, on the wrong side of the railroad tracks in Karlsruhe, or in a whole new city center in Lille. But this wild man, who has a cool head, a good eye, common sense, and as this show proves, a great deal of discipline, could pull it off if

anyone could. He makes it all look so easy. If only it were.

Koolhaas's work excites because he can not only invent forms, he also imagines wonderful scenarios for his buildings. For the Lille Congrexpo, an enormous, curved conference center with three big auditoriums and a 20,000-square-meter exhibition hall, he pictures "an event planned for 1996: All the Mazda dealers in Europe are in Zenith; the doors are closed. The new model is driven through Expo; the doors open, and it comes into the auditorium. The doors close; the dealers descend to the arena and throng around the car. In the meantime, the entire space of Expo is filled with 5,000 new Mazdas. The doors open; the dealers are guided to their own new Mazdas and drive out of the building. That event will take place in 30 minutes." Zoom!

## In the Bookstores: More Rem Koolhaas

The Rem Koolhaas show fills only two galleries (and some walls on the adjacent block), but the media blitz and assorted publications that accompany it are voluminous enough to stretch along the peripatetic architect's path as he commutes between Rotterdam, Lille and Karlsruhe, London, Harvard, Paris, New York, and occasionally Japan. Besides the MoMA tabloid with line drawings and the texts of the labels on the walls, there are three new books and an issue of *ANY* largely dedicated to his work. That's a lot of paper.

### Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan

Only someone from a dense and decent, but uncrowded and unexciting, place like the Netherlands could see the virtues of New York's crazy "culture of congestion," which Koolhaas celebrates in *Delirious New York* (New York: Monacelli Press, 320 pages, 180 illustrations, 30 in color, 7 1/4 x 9 3/8, \$35 paper), published in 1978 and long out of print until now. This hilarious, novelistic architectural, social, and cultural history of New York focuses on the creation of the grid plan, theme parks at Coney Island, Rockefeller Center, and the skyscraper phenomenon. The author combines weird facts he uncovered — such as the story of how the designers of Radio City Music Hall administered laughing gas to the audience — with equally strange imaginings and images to create this bizarre thriller-polemic and give the story of a city that destroys and recreates itself an appropriately apocalyptic ending.

### Rem Koolhaas/OMA

A more sober and straightforward but no less colorful and critical study, Jacques Lucan's *Rem Koolhaas/OMA* (Princeton Architectural Press, 175 pages, 300 illustrations, 50 in color, 8 5/8 x 9 1/2, \$42.50 paper) traces the firm's work from the publication of *Delirious* through the 1980s. Most of the projects in the MoMA show are included along with many earlier ones, some of the architect's writings, a variety of essays and analyses of the firm's work like the National Dance Theater in the Hague, the winning but unbuilt





Rem Koolhaas and MoMA architecture curator Terence Riley at OMA opening

(because the job was privatized, Richard Meier got the job anyway) competition scheme for the Hague City Hall, the entry to the Parc de la Villette competition, and the plans for the Universal Exposition of 1989 in Paris. Although it has a buildings-and-projects format, it focuses on a selection of works that showcase OMA's iconographic elements and "establish connections...that are constant across different programs and sites."

#### ANY magazine #9

What Lucan tries to clarify is complicated again in the latest, undated, redesigned, and reinvented issue of *ANY*, called "Urbanism vs. Architecture: The Bigness of Rem Koolhaas," in essays by Jonathan Crary, Sanford Kwinter, R. E. Somol, other scholars, Charles Jencks, and the architect himself. (*ANY* is edited by Cynthia Davidson, published six times a year by the Anyone Corporation out of the offices of Eisenman Architects, 40 West 25th Street, New York, NY 10010, and available in bookstores or by subscription for \$45 a year.) Jencks, as usual, entertains as he muses on the travels and travails of EC Man in "39 Steps to Surfing or the Trajectory of Rem Koolhaas." The issue also contains a favorable but parodistic review of *S,M,L,XL* by Anthony Vidler.

#### S,M,L,XL

As thick as the Paris telephone book and, at eight pounds, even heavier, Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau's *S,M,L,XL* (edited by Jennifer Sigler, New York: Monacelli Press, 1,376 pages, 1,250 illustrations, 480 in color, 7 x 9 1/8, \$65 cloth) epitomizes this year's big idea, Bigness. Like the earlier, more specific notion of the culture of congestion, Bigness describes not only New York, but an entire tendency in twentieth-century life that merely began and became most visible here. Koolhaas describes it at the exhibition

and in this book as a reflection "on the problem of the large....Bigness does not seem to deserve a manifesto; discredited as an intellectual problem, it is apparently on its way to extinction...through clumsiness, slowness, inflexibility, difficulty. But in fact, only Bigness instigates the regime of complexity that mobilizes the full intelligence of architecture and its related fields." Over time technological breakthroughs led to Bigness. The elevator, which contributed to Bigness, has the "potential to establish mechanical rather than architectural connections" and "render null and void the classical repertoire of architecture." Organized in an intentionally chaotic, layered way with text and images interspersed with a dictionary of words relevant to architectural and urban discourse, the book approximates the modern city, especially this one. The events celebrating its publication here in November (though copies will not be available until March) with hundreds of beautiful people in black — mostly architects — speaking at least a dozen different languages showed what a big, bustling, global city such as New York is like at the end of the twentieth century — and what Rem Koolhaas is talking about.

### Off the Cuff: On Rem Koolhaas

*"The Koolhaas show is a long overdue look at this urban work. I think he's probably one of the few architects who is looking more broadly at urban issues in a nontraditional way — basically looking at new models for cities and actually acting on them with his design for new urban projects. I think that's very exciting. I think it opens up a critical discourse, pro or con, and I think he's very pro-city."*

Craig Konyk, architect and faculty member at Parsons School of Design

*"What I particularly like about Rem Koolhaas's work is his way of deconstructing interior space. As you notice, he ramps floors so you can start out on the sixth floor and end up on the seventh. You really don't know what floor you're on. His ability to deconstruct space is dependent on his ability to destroy the horizontal grid. He doesn't keep the columns in a regular sequence, so he can move you and spaces around."*

Beverly Willis, FAIA, Beverly Willis Architects

*"The show was, for me, a little schizophrenic in relation to what was written and the architecture that was shown. If I had just read the text, I would have been disappointed in the work. The writing was architectese — the architect's version of legalese. He talks about how architecture develops in chaos, yet there is a lot of order in the work, a lot of precision. He talks about Bigness, architecture for the masses, an overwhelming sense of scale, yet I found a lot of places for the individual. The architecture itself was very powerful and poetic. The theories were caricatures of the ideas in the work. I actually found the work to be very sublime."*

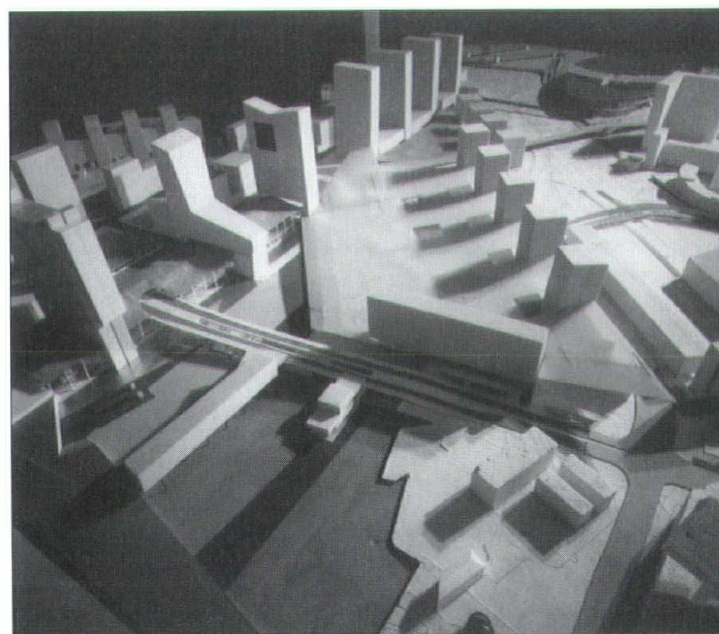
Harley Swedler, AIA, architect

*"There are three people who interest me in architecture today. One is Rem Koolhaas (the others are Danny Libeskind and John Hejduk). Rem is talking about the city again, and the whole question of scale, and a question of a new kind of section for architecture, in a sense an unfolding section....I would present Rem and myself as two poles of a kind of discourse today. I think Rem's work deals more with the idea of event and structure, and my work deals more with form. Rem is not interested in the formal resonances and consequences, but I think that his [work] is extremely interesting."*

Peter Eisenman, FAIA, Eisenman Architects, in a recent interview

*"He's obviously a master formalist who can weave colors and architectural elements in an extraordinarily facile way. However, I think this idea of celebrating chaos is an architectural conceit that in the end is kind of a fraud, because the building is obviously static and very deliberately planned. Worse is this modern tendency to invert values to make a virtue out of what we would normally see as negative, and then to use that as the kind of formal basis for your work. I thought the purpose of architecture was to try to rectify the conditions of chaos and randomness, not to raise it up to an aesthetic goal. The abstraction, the unrelenting, mechanistic quality is another problem. There is absolutely no sense of a human being represented in the buildings. That's why there's a kind of populist reaction to this kind of architecture. Also, all these buildings are object buildings, which is a curious kind of anti-urbanist position. It's so personalized and idiosyncratic. It becomes a problem when you leave a codified syntax such as classical architecture, except for the few geniuses who can create great buildings, the Seagram buildings. But for the rest of us mortals, it's very difficult. Do you wake up in the morning and invent an architectural system?"*

Donald Rattner, architect with Ferguson, Murray & Shamamian and director of the Institute for the Study of Classical Architecture



Rem Koolhaas, OMA, Euralille International Center



*"Rem Koolhaas demonstrates the liberating power that a creative reading of context can have on urban design and architecture. His context is the multiple layers of order that underlie urban life and city form, which he deftly reinterprets to structure surprising and engaging public space, such as the ever-changing volumes of the Deux Bibliothèques de Jussieu."*

*"The projects on exhibit at MoMA reminded me of public places in New York where designers tackled problems of urban architecture. The hall that stitches together MoMA's incremental expansions, Tiffany Plaza in the Bronx, even the complex of ramps and escalators at the Times Square subway station came to mind. Places like these, where the conflicts are real and the solutions never pure, speak of the processes of negotiation and compromise — which may be a truer barometer of urbanism than the order Koolhaas unearths."*

**Todd Bressi**, executive director of the design journal, *Places*, and faculty member of urban design and planning at Pratt Institute and Hunter College

## Architectural Tourist: Rotterdam, Modernist Mecca

by Aaron Betsky

If the triumph of a globalized neo-modernism — seen in the merger of post-Eisenmanian and SOM-ian styles into a generic slickness you zoom by along the way to the airport (or on the train to OMA's Eurolille) — has a capital, it must be Rotterdam. The largest port in the world, the home of the current king of Common Market architecture, Rem Koolhaas, and the heir to one of modernism's purest traditions, Rotterdam has become the site of monuments, office buildings, apartments, and hotels that celebrate all aspects of the idea that pared-down, abstracted, and artificial reality is preferable to the confusion of history and traditional theory. Rotterdam is a big and not very pretty city, but if you love architecture, it tells you about the future.

This is no mere happenstance. Though Koolhaas and colleagues have been toiling in the tulip fields for years, and though erstwhile State Architect Wim

Quist made corporate Miesianism into the official style in the 1970s, it was the passage last year of the "Stimulation Law," an omnibus law on architectural policy, that formalized years of state subsidies and commissions.

Bureaucrats explain the \$20 million a year in subsidies, grants, and support to young architects trying to open their own offices as part of Holland's efforts to compete in a world market while creating livable surroundings. Less charitable souls point out that this architectural gravy train has given many jobs to social democratic apparatchiks.

The centerpiece of these efforts, whether willful or wily, is the National Architecture Institute, opened last fall in the heart of Rotterdam's museum district and designed by Jo Coenen (not part of the Rotterdam or Amsterdam elite, and thus universally disliked by most top architects).

Rotterdam fought hard with Amsterdam for this building and gave it a home in an evolving flatland Parthenon just a five-minute walk from the central train station.

The building employs Stirlingesque complexity in circulation and hybrid structural systems to create a didactic composition about architecture. The NAI houses an extensive archive of Dutch architecture, a museum, and a magazine, and sponsors symposia, publications, and travel abroad. Unfortunately, inept leadership and squabbles over funding have made recent events there distinctly unmemorable. But as a monument to architecture itself, the building is a triumph.

The NAI is linked to Koolhaas's first built masterpiece, the Kunsthall, by a suitably minimalist sequence of gravel, grass, and water that recalls his designs for the Parc de la Villette. The Kunsthall itself outshines the NAI as an architectural achievement, though its very success makes it difficult to use for exhibitions. Moreover, the steep ramps that elide and accentuate the sectional complexity of the two-faced structure were evidently not designed for a leisurely promenade. Yet the sheer exuberance of structural inventiveness and extreme dissection of the site that the building accomplishes make it worth a few stumbles. Its café, hunkered down behind the sloping concrete auditorium-cum-entrance (a truly modernist

hybrid), offers the best food in the area.

Don't forget the first museum on the block, the Boymans-van Beuningen, which displays an amazing range of arts and crafts in a masterpiece of the kind of brick modernism that only the Dutch and a few Scandinavians seem able to do. It was designed by Adrianus van der Steur in 1932. Across the street, a de Stijl-inspired house by Bijvoet and Duiker (of Van Nelle Factory fame), one of a small collection by modern masters, has been turned into a cramped little museum for the artist Chabot.

You can stay in modernist style within this museum precinct at the Parkhotel, a snazzy collage of metal and stucco originally designed by the Delft firm Mecanoo, though they disclaim the final building. A nearby apartment block, still under construction, reflects their more rigorous current beliefs.

Those who are already moving beyond minimalism, however, may prefer the Hotel New York, a renovated harbor building that has given the ponderous forms of the 1940s and '50s a Starckian lease on life, though it is somewhat inaccessible from the main sights.

J. J. P. Oud's De Unie café, two blocks up the canal from the museums, was beautifully reconstructed several years ago, and now offers a chance to people-watch in style. Oud's famous housing project, De Kiefhoek of 1930, was also recently spruced up, but it is difficult to find among the ranks of second-rate housing blocks south of the Rhine river. Right next to the train station, where a bad Picasso sculpture vies for attention with Koolhaas's bus station — one of his earlier attempts to make his drawings real — and a landlocked section of tugboat, the tallest building in the country rises up in prismatic insouciance. Quist's home for the country's largest insurance company (Nationale Nederlanden, which is also underwriting Gehry's new building in Prague) is scaleless and absurd, but so much so that it sums up and outclasses a host of competitors that together create the soulless business center of the city.

If you board the train at the station, you can visit either all the old monuments or some new ones, including Koolhaas's Netherlands Dance Theatre

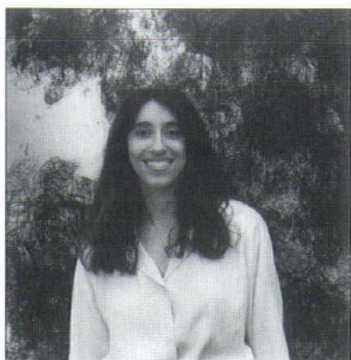
and Richard Meier's massive new town hall, both in the Hague, 20 minutes away. The American's building, though perhaps too familiar to our eyes to seem progressively modern, easily stands out among a labyrinth of bland office buildings. There are many new treats spread further out among the cows. My favorite is the architectural free-for-all Kattenwijk neighborhood in centrally located Amersfoort. The real pilgrimage destinations, though, are at opposite ends of the country. In the far south, Aldo Rossi has just built the new Bonifatius Museum hard by an art school that marks Wiel Aaret's pretension to the modernist crown. In the far north, Alessandro Mendini orchestrated the "candy bar in the canal," a hodgepodge art museum plunked down squarely in the middle of the waterway that separates the station of Groningen from its downtown. This Memphis-mess is colorful, but inside is a sensuous labyrinth where Philippe Starck seduces you with provincial dress and furniture, always confronting you with a circular wall of crockery. At the opposite end, Coop Himmelblau used ship technology to create its first truly public building: a singular, fractured, exploding space that finally realizes the firm's frustrated Viennese dreams of modernist expression. Step onto the glass floor as steel beams threaten to slice off your head, and you will finally know what open space means.

It is back in Rotterdam, though, that you will find the heart of the modernist vision. There, after the Second World War, Van Broek and Bakema rebuilt the devastated downtown shopping area into the Lijnbaan. Neither detailing nor materials, neither composition nor sequence, marks this as great architecture, but the sensitive arrangement of blocks in small parks, pedestrian shopping streets connected by broad overhangs, small public buildings, and living quarters over the stores, all woven together in brick and wood, makes this the only truly successful modern city ever built. Look at the prices of the goods and the modish shoppers picking them up, and you will see the real economic logic of Rotterdam. A modern port city, it floats on a sea of imported wealth to create an artifice not of romantic theatricality or old-world charm, but of startlingly stark beauty.



# PULSE

## Madeline Schwartzman



Madeline Schwartzman in front of one of her computer-generated drawings

by Wendy Moonan

One day last February, Madeline Schwartzman, an architect who is a filmmaker, artist, and professor, in that order, was at home listening to the radio. Suddenly, a Balkan brass band came on with trumpets, horns, and tuba at full tilt. Schwartzman found the music so infectious that she called the station for the group's name, only to be told she had just won tickets to their Valentine's Day concert. She went to the Zlatne Uste ("Golden Lips") performance and, within days, had convinced them to play in her next film — gratis.

"There are moments when research and resources come together," said Schwartzman, 32, who finances her films by charging thousands of dollars to her credit cards. Like other artist-architects, she manages by working out of a fourth-floor walk-up above a hardware store on Third Avenue and subsisting on fellowships, grants, and teaching.

After earning an undergraduate degree in architecture from Barnard and a master's of architecture at Yale, she went to work for Page and Jackson in Guilford, Connecticut. "She's a reinventor of the wheel," said her employer, Peter Jackson. "She's always coming up with a new way to see and do things."

"There is an essential spark about her which is irrepressible. She's tremen-

dously creative," said a former employer, James Simon of Essex, Connecticut.

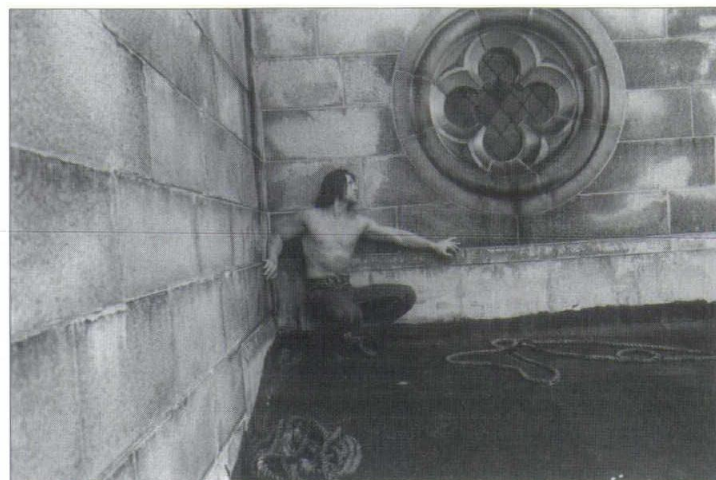
The same quality characterizes her teaching. "She has a pedagogical imagination. She's a person who can design exercises that are both original and interesting. Her method is very loaded — in the sense that there are many layers to the problem — and very rigorous," said Susana Torre, the chair at Parsons, who hired her after seeing her in action at Columbia, where she coordinates the undergraduate drawing studios in the graduate school of architecture.

Models made of key chain, wood, cardboard, pushpins, and rubber, along with life-size drawings and a nomadic shelter big enough to house a man, were strewn around her Parsons studio where she asked sophomore students to design a Pandora's box. "My main thing is to help students find out who they are, because I lacked that in my own education," Schwartzman explained. "The projects I assign make students rely on themselves."

Like her Yale classmates, sculptor Maya Lin, who designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., and fresco artist Julie Shurtz, Schwartzman is exploring alternative ways to practice architecture. Her elegant, computer-generated drawings were exhibited last year at Parsons, at the Computer Museum in Boston, and in a one-woman show at John Jay College in 1993.

In the back of her mind, she is always thinking about her next film; she tries to make one every summer. Her first two short films were shown at the 1992 New School Invitational Film Festival and the 1994 Millennium Film Workshop in New York, as well as on public television. The films, reminiscent of Federico Fellini, are surreal fantasies with a comic feminist twist — the polar opposite of gritty, violent movies like *Pulp Fiction* that are so popular today. "I tend to be influenced by music, film, myth, and space," Schwartzman said. "But first comes the space."

Her first film was inspired by her faculty office at Columbia in the old Physics Building next to a domed observatory, steeply stepped lecture



Actor Anthony Jones at St. John the Divine in *The Begat*, a film by Madeline Schwartzman

hall, and locked storeroom full of outdated scientific equipment. "When I saw these two worlds separated by a third, suddenly I saw Orpheus," Schwartzman explained. In the film, Orpheus's descent into Hades, return with Eurydice, and dismemberment take place in the labs, classroom, and observatory. An old family friend, Ann Hampton Calloway, sings the Orpheus part; a beautiful young man plays Eurydice.

Schwartzman's *The Begat* was inspired by a class outing to study St. John the Divine, which has the longest nave in the world. The cathedral's peacock garden and the roof of the dome became the setting for this contemporary look at the Adam and Eve story in which Adam's first wife, Lilith, is supplanted by Eve and becomes an evil spirit, while the raucous Balkan band plays at a fever pitch.

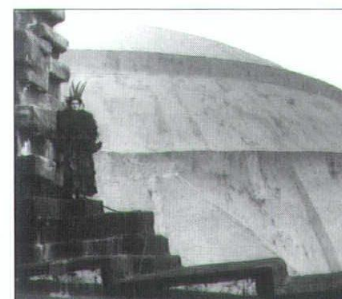
With help from her boyfriend, Jeff Miles, an architect with Carrington Macrae-Gibson, she plans her films for months and then shoots in a couple of days, doing most of the writing, casting, directing, filming, and editing herself. "I'm both producer and seamstress," laughed this native New Yorker whose father worked on Seventh Avenue. "I even make the costumes."

"What I like about film is that you are inhabiting spaces, making a fantasy out of what takes place in them. You design how people move through space. When you are editing, you put bits of film together like you would two bricks," she said. "When you put

two pieces of film together, you have two worlds. In second you can make a juxtaposition of spaces that would take ages in architecture."



Actress Sarah Takesh playing Lilith in *The Begat* with band on Low Library steps



Sarah Takesh in *The Begat*



Singer Ann Hampton Calloway as Orpheus in *Soma Sema* (film still)



## In the Schools: "House Rules"

by Robert Benson

How do people of different sociological groups inhabit the suburban tract house? Mark Robbins, architecture curator for the Wexner Center for the Arts at the Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, conceived and organized "House Rules" to investigate the suburban house and its social construction. He asked ten teams of social critics and architects to consider how life is lived in the typical builder home and then to redesign it critically. Each of the resulting installations, on view between September 10 and December 11, included an architectural model and a wall display. Photographic studies of tract housing along with a laser disc video about suburbia completed the exhibit.

Such impressive social theorists as Margaret Crawford, bell hooks, Michael Moon, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Heidi Nast, and Ellen Lupton gave the exhibit an unexpected intellectual twist. They presented the voices of Latinos, blacks, gays, lesbians, feminists, and other groups whose needs ostensibly remain suppressed in the tract house. Their views were articulated in provocative essays in the exhibition catalogue, produced as an issue of *Asemblage*, the architecture and design journal of the MIT Press. The architects paired with them were selected at least partly for their interest in marginalized groups.

Invited design teams were bell hooks with Koning Eizenberg Architecture; Silvia Kolbowski with Smith-Miller + Hawkinson Architects; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Michael Moon with Benjamin Gianni and Scott Wier; Margaret Crawford with Ignacio Fernandez and Gustavo Leclerc of ADOBE LA; Allucqu re Rosanne Stone with Suzan Sel uk and Steven Fong; Ellen Lupton with Jane Murphy; Jonathan Crary with Joel Sanders; Henry Urbach with John Randolph and Bruce Tomb of the Interim Office of Architecture; Joan Copjec with Michael Sorkin; and Heidi Nast with Mabel Wilson.

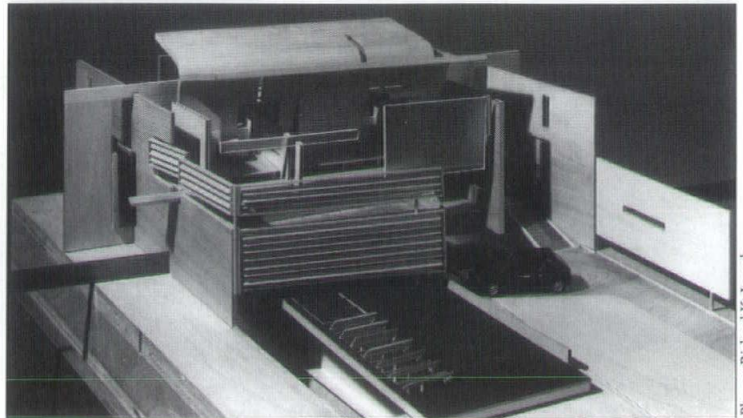
The show also included works by New York artists on Dan Graham, Camilo

Jose Vergara, James Casebere, Allan Wexler, Mel Ziegler and Kate Ericson on housing themes as well as an interactive laser disc on attempts to reform the American home, *Call It Home*, by Keller Easterling and Richard Prelinger.

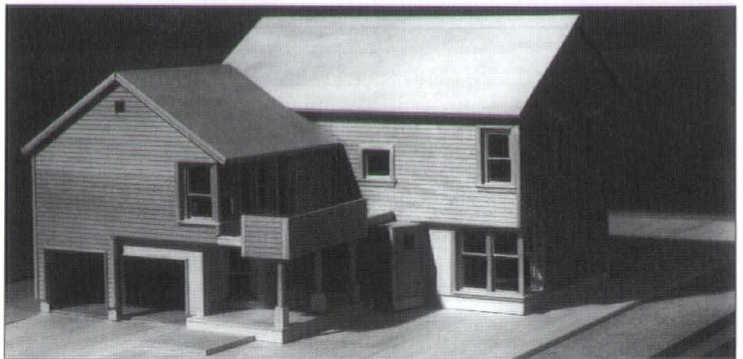
Benjamin Gianni and Scott Wier of Ottawa considered the notion of designing a house for a gay teenager. Wisely, they viewed this solution — *Queers in (Single-Family) Space* — as merely the accommodation of one solution in a larger set of possibilities. Their presentation revealed that subtle rather than radical shifts in design may offer adequate support to some of the groups considered in the exhibit.

Several of the designs had philosophical and aesthetic interest without addressing marginalization directly. John Randolph and Bruce Tomb, both of San Francisco, and Henry Urbach of New York explored the house as a closet for the unwanted and the shameful in *in medias res*, while Joel Sanders and Jonathan Crary of New York examined boundaries and visual domain in suburban houses, interpreted in an exquisite basswood model, *Sight Specific*. Both designs were introspective reactions to existing or perceived conditions, but their explorations bordered on voyeurism.

The premise of "House Rules" — that tract houses are cookie-cutter versions of marketable function and imagery — was a misguided indictment of the housing industry. It treated the tract house as an identifiable and universal type invented at Levittown, rather than one rooted in nineteenth-century sources. Because each team was left on



*Sight Specific*, Joel Sanders and Jonathan Crary, "House Rules," Wexner Center for the Arts, 1994



*Queers in (Single-Family) Space*, Benjamin Gianni and Scott Wier, "House Rules," Wexner Center for the Arts, 1994

its own to define a typical tract house and its problems, the ten collaborations had a weak common thread. The exhibit also ignored the obvious: If tract houses are repetitive and unresponsive to differences of lifestyle, what about apartments and condominiums? New Yorkers and other urban dwellers must find such a discussion ironic, yet little irony found its way into the exhibit. Only Michael Sorkin of New York, who sought to draw suburban spatial fluidity out of

an urban building, offered any irony.

"House Rules" was an interesting but inadequate attempt to question the architecture of detached dwellings. Most of the theoretical insights lacked connection with the realities of the tract house — real estate practices, bank financing, and builder-controlled development. Many of the collaborative viewpoints represented could be the theme of an entire exhibit, one with more cohesion and food for thought.

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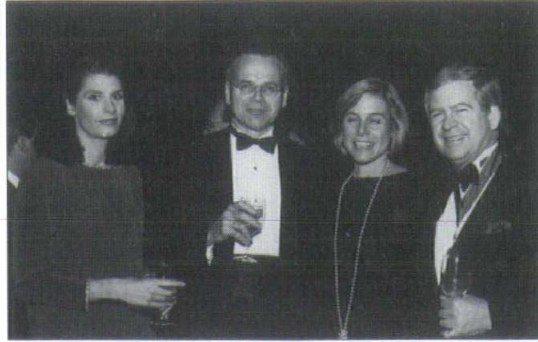
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*Marilyn Jordan Taylor*

Photos: John Ashworth



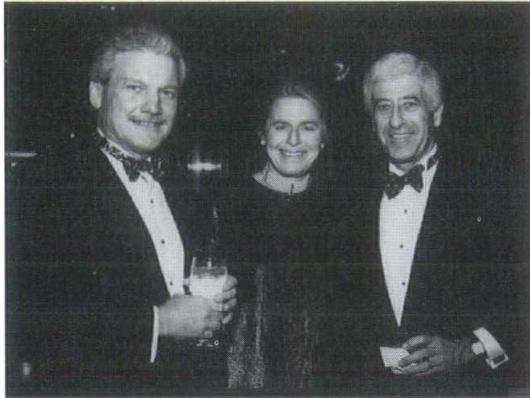
*Kitty Croxton, Randy Croxton, Carol Chapin, Bill Chapin*



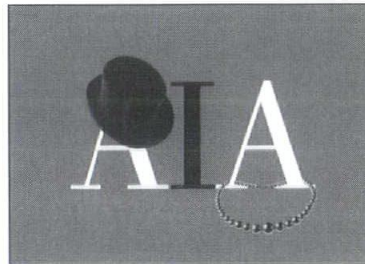
*Nat Hoyt, Susan Davis, Steve Davis, Shirley Dugdale*



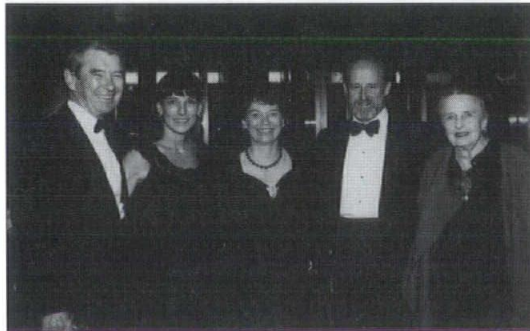
*Ellen Polshek, Joseph Fleischer, Caroline Fleischer, James Stewart Polshek*



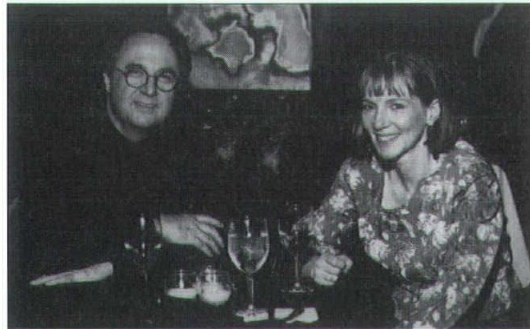
*Jerry Davis, Honey Kurtz, Norman Kurtz of Flack & Kurtz*



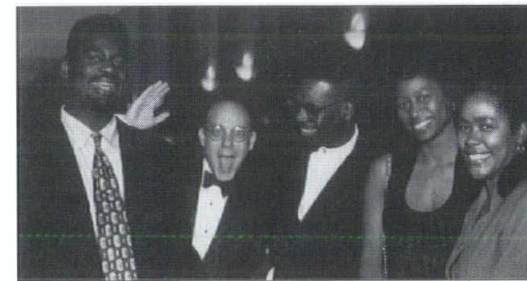
# 1994 Heritage Ball



*Ed Barnes, Marcy Stanley, Carol Clark, Bruce Fowle, Mary Barnes*



*Ed Mills and Mary Jean Eastman*



*Patrick Holder, Michael Wyetzner, Mark Warrol, Alethea Brown, Carole Richards*



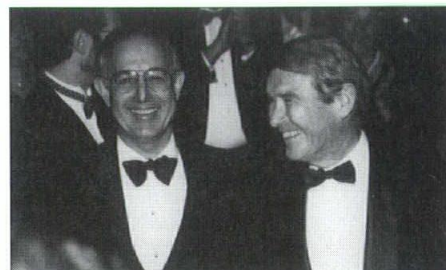
*Bart Vooranger, Gail Raab, Martin Raab*



*Marcia Fowle, Mitchell Silver, Sylvia Smith, Carl Lewis, Bob Fox*



*Shaioline Chang, Kate Hennenberg, Mary Barnes, Toshiko Mori, Ed Barnes, Henry Myerling*



*Bart Vooranger and Ed Barnes*



*Carol Clark and Roberta Washington*



## Notes from the Executive Director

by Carol Clark

The pictures speak for themselves. A good time was had by all at the Chapter's annual Heritage Ball on November 17 in the Equitable Building atrium. This year's ball, chaired by president-elect Marilyn Taylor, AIA, was a tremendous success: 300 tickets were sold for dinner, and another 150 for dessert and dancing. During dinner,

Bartholomew Voorsanger, FAIA, conferred the New York Chapter President's Award on Edward Larrabee Barnes, FAIA, and Peter Blake, the acclaimed architectural writer and critic, reminisced about Barnes and praised his many accomplishments. Bruce Fowle, FAIA, served as master of ceremonies for the evening.

The success of this year's ball was due to the generosity of many companies and firms. Structure Tone was the major sponsor. Patrons included Davis Brody & Associates, Park Tower Realty, Severud Associates, and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. Sponsors were Boston Properties, the Durst Foundation, Inc., Fox & Fowle, Architects, Louis Frey Co., Inc., Haines Lundberg Waehler, Jaros Baum & Bolles, Lehrer McGovern Bovis, Inc., McGraw-Hill Construction Information Group, Robert A. M. Stern Architects, Syska & Hennessy, Inc., and Tishman Realty & Construction Co., Inc./Tishman Interiors Corporation.

Shortly after invitations to the ball were mailed last fall, one Chapter member returned a guest card

scrawled: "You must be out of your minds!" No doubt that sentiment was shared by other Chapter members, but the resounding success of the event demonstrates the diversity in the Chapter and proves that, for many, the Heritage Ball is one of the highlights of the year.

• • •

The AIA New York Chapter joined the New York Building Congress, Inc., in hosting Fran Reiter, New York City Deputy Mayor for Planning and Community Relations, at a Presidents Council luncheon on November 10. Deputy Mayor Reiter discussed the Giuliani administration's plan for the future of Lower Manhattan, its efforts to launch a comprehensive retail strategy, and its commitment to eliminating clutter along New York City's streetscapes. Reiter also described the administration's quality of life initiative, which seeks to restrict so-called "triple x," adult entertainment uses to certain districts of the city and open up manufacturing zones to community facilities.

## Excerpts from Remarks on "My Mentor"

by Bruce Fowle

It is our pleasure tonight to honor one of the world's great architects — Edward Larrabee Barnes.

To me, Ed is a former boss (for over eight years), a mentor, an occasional competitor (when I'm lucky enough to be on the same list), and a good friend. To the profession, through 45

remarkable years of practice, Ed has been known as a real innovator, an unbending modernist-minimalist, an owner of one of the most envied practices in the business, and one of the best of an endangered species — a gentlemanly and honorable architect.

To his former employees, Ed is someone who ran a spirited, exciting, and lively office with wonderful projects and clients, a sense of the cutting edge, and a total commitment to design. The real test in his office was whether you could take an Ed Barnes weekend scribble (usually on yellow trace or a napkin) and translate it into plan, section, and elevation. If you matched what was in his head, you could run the whole job. You then had to spend the next five years making joints line up — and convincing him *not* to change his mind.

To his clients, Ed continues to be a man of great dignity, charm, integrity, talent, and leaky roofs. Ah, but the form was always right. Who needed gravel stops, flashing, and all that stuff? They were just not pretty (and besides, the joints wouldn't line up).

How many of you can guess who the first architect was to break the sacred rule and take a notch — an actual notch — out of a flat-top, high-rise building? Ed Barnes, of course, in the New England Merchants Bank in Boston of the late 1960s.

How many can guess who the first architect was to take a notch out of the bottom of a high-rise building — and then have the nerve to slice it diagonally in half? You got it — [the architect of] New York's own IBM Building. (Let's hope Sony doesn't get that one, too).

No recognition of Ed would be complete without a tribute to his supportive and talented wife, Mary, who has long been the stalwart of the office, the glue that held it together and the quiet voice whispering in Ed's ear. They are a terrific team.

Our keynote speaker, Peter Blake, is the man who really knows Ed Barnes. He is currently writing a book on Ed's work. As many of you will remember, Peter Blake started his career as curator of architecture and industrial design at MoMA, became an editor, architect, educator, and author of many articles and books, the most recent of which is his memoir, *No Place Like Home*.

*Bruce Fowle is a partner in Fox & Fowle Architects in New York.*

## Edward Larrabee Barnes Receives First New York Chapter Award

by Peter Blake



Peter Blake

Early in 1951 — long before any of you, except Ed and myself, were born — I was a very junior writer for a magazine called *The*

*Architectural Forum*. One day, the magazine's editor asked me to put together a special issue entirely devoted to the work of a new generation of young American architects whose work had never been published and who were virtually unknown at the time.

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These young people, most of them, had emerged after the end of World War II. The editor-in-chief, Douglas Haskell, said I should pick the ones I thought were likely to change the world over the next 50 years or so. I swallowed hard and said, "Yes, sir!" (I had been in the Army, too.) I went out to the nearest bar with a couple of my associates, and we sat down and drew up a list.

The resulting special issue came out in June 1951, and the people whose work I included were, among others, Paul Rudolph, Paolo Soleri, John Johansen, Eliot Noyes, Ralph Rapson, Jack Warnecke, Vincent Scully, Harry Weese — and Edward Larrabee Barnes. I confess I included one or two others, or three or four, who vanished without a trace. (Philip Johnson and I. M. Pei didn't qualify because they had already been published.) But by and large I don't think I was too far off in my selection. These people were struggling young professionals, some of them operating out of a single room, some working out of their homes. Most of their clients were young couples daring enough to go to an architect — a *modern* architect — to have their first little house designed.

We were a very small group, very idealistic, absolutely sure of ourselves and absolutely sure that the world needed changing — socially, politically, aesthetically — and that we knew how to do it. I had the feeling from the start that Ed Barnes was a very special member of this crew. His work was as good as anything being done in those days, and better than anything done since. We tend to forget how difficult it was to do a lovely village like Haystack, constructed of local material and placed on platforms and along walkways designed to frame views; or to design a museum like the Walker Art Center where the works of art and the people who came to see them were considered more important than the names of the donor or architect.

I think I sensed from the start that Ed Barnes was determined to make architecture "as if people mattered." Every one of his buildings could be *read* as you walked through it. There was never anything condescending

about them. Each was elegant in its composition, detailing, use of materials, and spatial arrangements, even the way it related to its neighbors and the street at large.

Today, as more and more buildings are shaped by considerations of marketing, as we see more signature buildings by name architects, the qualities that characterize Ed Barnes's work seem extraordinarily precious. I think his work has stood the test of time more successfully than most, and I predict he will be rediscovered every 50 or 100 years.

But I think you are all quite familiar with it, so I want to talk about something at least as important, the great tradition of apprenticeship. The very best architects used to come out of apprenticeships: Frank Lloyd Wright, who worked for Louis Sullivan, and Mies, who was apprenticed to his father and then to Peter Behrens where he met Le Corbusier. Apprenticeship — not academic double-talk by professors who have never built anything at all — has been the tradition of architectural education for centuries and continues to be in countries like Japan.

But in this country, you will find only two significant architects in the last 50 years who produced a number of brilliant young disciples. The first of these, of course, was Eero Saarinen, whose relatively small office trained Kevin Roche, Gunnar Birkerts, Cesar Pelli, and many more. The other would be Ed Barnes, whose office was the basic training ground for so many people that when I asked Ed for a list, he came up with close to 500. I'd like to mention just a few, in absolutely no order: Charles Gwathmey, Robert Siegel, Jaquelin Robertson, Alex Cooper, Ivan Chermayeff, Myles Weintraub, Bruce Fowle and his partners and successors John Lee, Percy Keck, Alistair Bevington, Daniel Casey, Gajinder Singh, Steven Jay Fisher, and, of course, Mary Barnes. They stayed for an awfully long time, many of them, and when they left, Ed would steer a job or two their way.

Around 1970, when I was looking for a space for my own practice, Ed

was kind enough to sublet some space to me on the floor he occupied in the East 60s. I would see him and the many people busy working in his studio quite often then. It was not a very good time for architects, but his office was an island of civilized and cheerful discourse.

I gather the American Institute of Architects, at this moment, is fighting the tradition of apprenticeship, trying to prevent applicants for professional registration from getting credit for apprenticeship rather than academic double-talk. I don't know why. But until that happens, let us celebrate Ed Barnes and the great creative studio that he has run all these years. He has set an extraordinary example for all of us.

## Design and the Public Realm

by Marilyn Jordan Taylor, AIA

I have selected "Design and the Public Realm" as the Chapter's theme for 1995 because I believe that each of us has a responsibility to contribute to the public space of the city in which we live and work. As architects, we do that in many ways — through our attention to the way our buildings address and support public space, through our leadership in large-scale planning and urban design projects, and through our involvement in civic and pro bono activities. We also fulfill this responsibility through education, by teaching others about how essential civic and public spaces are to the city, and about the roles architects can and do play in constructing those spaces. The theme for 1995 builds on last year's theme, "Design in the Public Sector," by extending its focus to architects' activities that contribute to the public realm of the city.

I should admit that I believe in committees. I have found that involvement in committee activity, whether at the local or national level, is perhaps the most rewarding aspect of AIA membership. It is an opportunity to take a broader view of what it means to be an architect. It offers us a chance to learn, to interact with each other, and to help meet the

challenges of achieving and maintaining a high quality of life in New York City. With this in mind, I propose three specific initiatives in support of this year's theme.

### Membership Outreach

The New York Chapter should be inclusive rather than exclusive.

In recent years we have failed to reach out to new members, such as students, young architects, architects in academia, and architects in non-traditional practices. We also need to strengthen our relationship with affiliated members, such as those in engineering disciplines. By working together, we can do much more than we are doing now.

### Public Outreach

Over the course of the past year, we have begun to make progress in increasing our communication with the public. Several panel presentations have been very successful in attracting public notice and attendance, and a lecture series with broad appeal would continue to attract the public to the Chapter regularly. We should also explore the idea of reinvigorating the category of public members who would participate in Chapter events and committees.

### Public Voice

We are beginning to speak out as a Chapter on issues that affect our city and our practice, positioning ourselves as an important professional community in New York. Our choice of Carol Clarke as executive director reinforces this intention, and voicing our opinion will continue to be an important part of our activities during the coming year. Among the projects and issues in which we should become involved are the West Side waterfront, the *Plan for Lower Manhattan*, airport access, the potential Enterprise Zone for Harlem and the South Bronx, and the use of ISTEA monies for transportation and related projects across the city.

An important corollary of outreach, however, is information. I hope to see the Chapter move more decisively into the information age and offer our members more chances to use technological advances in their practices and in their service to the community.



## Details

by Marcy Stanley



Deputy  
Commissioner  
Patricia J.  
Lancaster, AIA

New York City's Department of General Services (DGS) recently created the Division of Design and Construction Services, a new agency that will coordinate accountability for

schedule, quality, and cost of DGS projects. An AIA New York Chapter task force has been working with DGS on issues that affect architects working on city facilities, such as increasing the participation of private-sector architectural consultants during the construction phase. DGS is also planning to reduce in-house architectural work and review milestones for consultant work. This newly-formed division is headed by New York Chapter member Deputy Commissioner Patricia J. Lancaster, AIA.

**New York Chapter Travel Grants.** A call for entries has been announced for AIA New York Chapter travel grants. Up to five \$3,000 travel grants will be awarded this year, funded by the consolidated Stewardson, Keefe, and LeBrun bequests. These grants will provide stipends for travel, either in North America or overseas, to further the architectural education and professional development of grant recipients.

To qualify, applicants must be young architectural professionals, registered or non-registered, with a travel program for the 1995 calendar year. Applicants must also prepare a brief report for the Chapter upon completion of the travel assignment.

Applicants must submit a resume with a brief, written description of professional experience; a statement of purpose with a brief description of where travel will take place and why it is important to the applicant's professional development; and three letters of recommendation in support of the

travel proposal. One must be from a member of the New York Chapter.

Application materials must be submitted to the AIA New York Chapter, Scholarship Committee, 200 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10016, by Friday, February 10. Selections will be announced by Wednesday, March 1. For further information, call Marcy Stanley at 683-0023, ext. 15.

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### Claiming Places in the City.

In keeping with the Chapter's 1995 theme, "Design in the Public Realm," the Women in Architecture Committee will present a panel discussion entitled "Claiming Places in the City," on January 23 at 6:00 pm at the New York Chapter. Panelists are Jan Frankina, director of design and planning for the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corp. in Washington, D.C.; Jeanne Giordano, director, Grand Central Terminal Development Office; and Janet Marie Smith, until recently vice president of planning and development for the Baltimore Orioles and now vice president of sports facilities for TBS Properties, a division of Turner Broadcasting in Atlanta. The panelists will discuss elements that contribute to vital urban spaces. For further information, call Judy Rowe at 683-0023, ext. 17.

## Diversity and Design

by Terrence O'Neal, AIA  
Chair, Minority Resources Committee

The Minority Resources Committee's lecture series on "Diverse Perspectives" ended with two events that addressed the effect diversity and identity have on design. The second in a series of three presentations, each of which paired an architect-designer with a critic, featured Carlos Zapata, who discussed the unconventional forms in his work with architectural critic Joseph Giovannini. The discussion ranged from the importance of gesture and light in Zapata's projects to the way he pulls apart normally closed forms. Giovannini questioned him about his design process, in which he uses drawings, computer imaging, and models.

The third evening of the series featured Toshiko Mori, AIA, who described the connections between her work and her Japanese heritage, and the importance of detail and the expression of the human spirit. Mori was later joined by Diane Lewis, with whom she discussed their 25-year personal and professional friendship and the way the profession marginalizes architects by dividing them into categories such as design architects, production architects, and construction administrators.

The Minority Resources Committee wishes to thank the following committee members for their time and effort in organizing this lecture series: Lawrence Adjah, Francis Assaf, Eric Daniels, Thomas Doremus, and Nelida Quintero. We would also like

to thank the sponsors, C. F. Rutherford & Associates, G. F. Office Furniture, and Richport Development Construction Corporation.

### Correction

The article printed in December on the "Diverse Perspectives Lecture" was written by Terrence O'Neal, AIA.

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