

Oculus

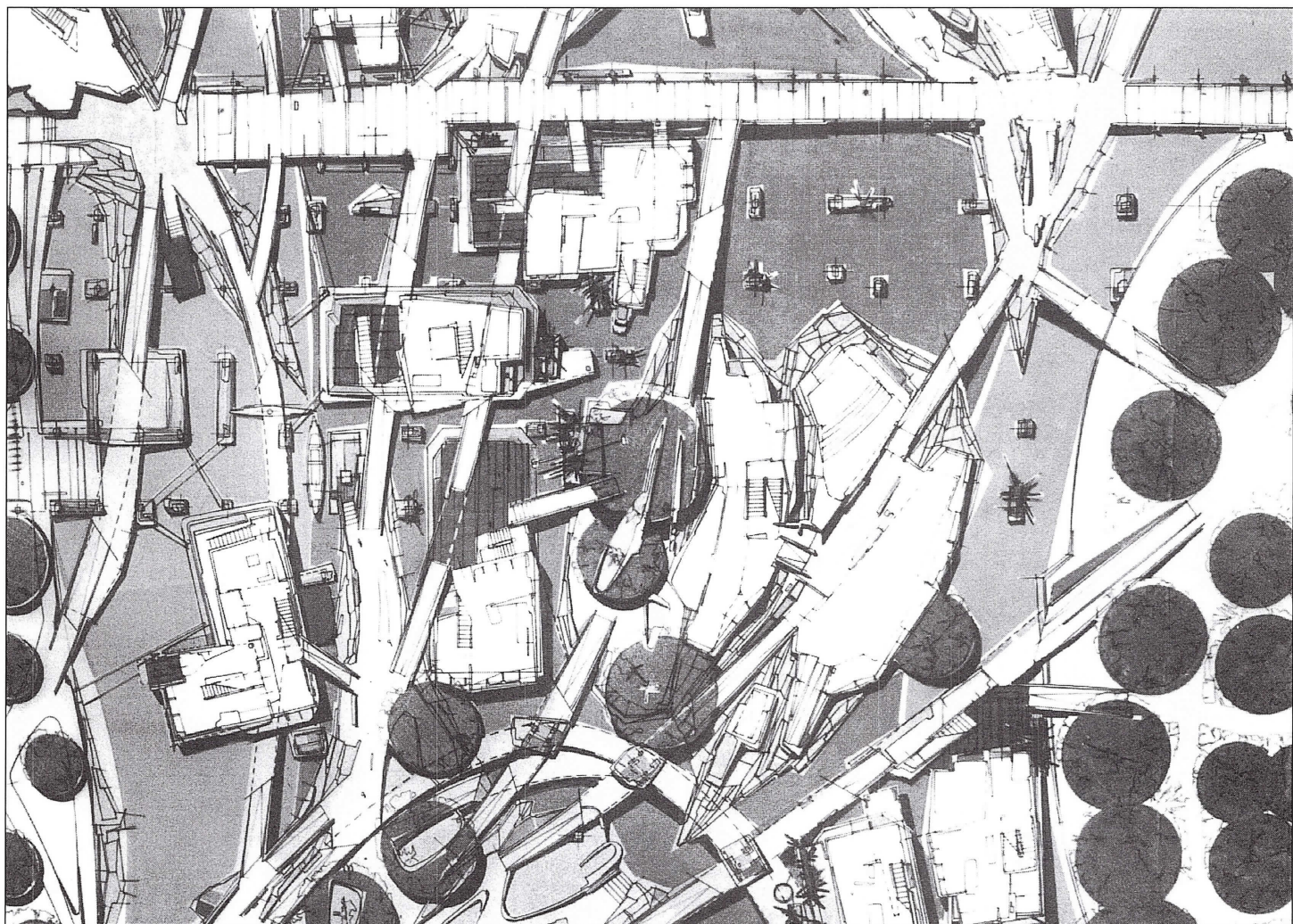
an eye on New York Architecture

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New York Chapter

vol. 57, no. 6, February 1995



Proposal for the Brooklyn waterfront by the Michael Sorkin Studio (detail of drawing)

Dorothy Alexander

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Keenen/Riley

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News from the Executive Director

by Carol Clark



Carol Clark,
executive director,
AIA New York
Chapter

This month,
the AIA New
York Chapter
launches a new
program, the
George S. Lewis
public policy
discussions.
The idea is to
focus on subjects
that concern
civic-minded

New Yorkers, examining the design
issues posed and their importance
to architects.

The first program will consider
Mayor Giuliani and the Lower
Manhattan Task Force's *Plan for the
Revitalization of Lower Manhattan*,
released December 16 and featured
on the front page of *The New York
Times*. Our look at the future of the
physical fabric of New York City's
financial district is scheduled to take
place on February 9 from 8:00 am
to 10 am at 200 Lexington Avenue,
sixteenth floor. Please be sure to call
the Chapter at 683-0023, ext. 16, to
RSVP if you plan to join us.

Airport access, proposed changes to
allow superstores in areas now zoned
for manufacturing, and an examina-
tion of how the city proposes to
decrease clutter on its streetscapes are
other topics that will be addressed by
this series. The program's intention
is to bring well-informed conversa-
tion to a larger audience, while
emphasizing the perspective of archi-
tects and other design professionals.
In the very best of the gifted tradi-
tion of George Lewis, former execu-
tive director of the AIA New York
Chapter, we hope not only to elicit
architects' points of view, but also to
apply this dialogue to positions the
AIA New York Chapter takes as it
moves forward with an agenda for
appropriate changes in policy and
procedures.

One of the highlights of 1995 will
be an exhibition, "Transformations
in the Public Realm: Public
Architecture in the New York

Metropolitan Area in the 1990s," in
the main waiting room of Grand
Central Terminal in June. The show
will display high-quality architectural
projects commissioned by 25 city,
state, federal, and quasi-public agen-
cies. Jurors Max Bond, Deborah
Dietsch, and Hugh Hardy will select
the material to be exhibited. On
January 31 at Grassroots, the AIA
National's annual leadership confer-
ence, the AIA New York Chapter
was scheduled to receive a grant
from the American Architectural
Foundation for a symposium in con-
junction with the exhibit. Credit the
Public Architects Committee with
launching this initiative; 1995 com-
mittee chair Robert Davidson of the
Port Authority of New York and
New Jersey welcomes additional par-
ticipation. Call him at 435-8515.

A major goal of the Chapter's Board
and staff in 1995 is to reinvigorate
membership services and to commu-
nicate with members regularly about
the benefits of membership in the
AIA. With this issue of *Oculus*, we
are instituting a new column,
"Member Services." This month's
column explains how readily mem-
bers may acquire affordable health
insurance coverage. Look for further
details on membership benefits, the
AIA New York Chapter's plans for
1995, and an update on the changes
at AIA National and AIA New York
State in the recent letter from
Marilyn Jordan Taylor, the
Chapter's 1995 president. Call,
write, or fax the Chapter with sug-
gestions of what you might like us to
provide. We look forward to hearing
from you directly.

AIA New York Chapter Presents 1994 Design Awards

by Wendy Moonan

"We must assert our civic responsi-
bility," Marilyn Taylor announced
at the December 6 meeting where
she was installed as the Chapter's
1995 president. "Our projects can
and should affect the public realm of
the city."

continued on page 13

Three Major Commissions for SOM

by Jayne Merkel

The San Francisco office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill is completing schematic designs for the **San Francisco State Office Building** on Civic Center Plaza. David Childs of New York won the commission in a limited competition from a field of 18 interviewed teams. Kohn Pedersen Fox and Roche/Dinkeloo & Partners were the other finalists.

Childs's design unfolds in increasingly tall and broad horizontal layers behind the six-story Renaissance Revival California State Building by Bliss & Faville of 1923. The 16-story, 800,000-square-foot, \$200 million addition will house the California Supreme Court, offices, administrative areas, and other state agencies. The layered high-rise block, resembling an urban skyline compressed with a telephoto lens, is linked to the smaller, more sculptural, white sierra granite historic building on the plaza by low-rise wings forming a pair of courtyards. Each layer in the granite addition has a different surface treatment. The second layer bows out slightly toward the plaza. The fourth and final layer, connected by a glass-walled third layer, anchors the composition with a rectangular grid of windows on the rear facade.

David Childs will also be making his mark — once again — on a prominent site closer to home. SOM has been commissioned to design the new **NYMEX (New York Mercantile Exchange) Building**. On New York Harbor in Battery Park City, the half-million-square-foot, 16-story building

with trading floors, a data center, and related offices will fill the waterfront parcel west of the Merrill Lynch offices.

And although New York (and New Jersey) lost the competition with Connecticut for the **Swiss Bank Corporation's major new trading and office building**, SOM's New York office won the architectural, interiors, and master planning commission. Public hearings are taking place now for more than two million square feet of facilities to be constructed in three phases on a twelve-acre campus-like site in Stamford, just off I-95 between Washington Boulevard and Atlantic Street.

The Swiss Bank complex will consist of three towers with office space, an arena for 600 to 900 traders, conference rooms, a data center, dining areas, and a health club, as well as corporate garages and accessory structures for public use.

RECESSION BREAKERS

by Matthew Barhydt

More Battery Park City Apartments

The recession really must be over if building is starting again at Battery Park City. The BPC Authority is negotiating long-term ground leases with three developers for the construction of the first residential sites in the "North Residential Neighborhood."

Four new apartment buildings will be clustered in the northwest corner. On sites 20A and 20C, immediately south of Stuyvesant High School between Chambers and Warren streets and east

of Hudson River Park, the **Related Companies** will construct two buildings with shared common facilities like garages. **The Gotham Organization** (and E. T. Marshall) will develop site 20B next door, facing east across North End Avenue. **The Rockrose Development Corporation** will build on site 21A, on the north side of Chambers Street between Stuyvesant High School and the northern edge of Hudson River Park.

Lease negotiations are expected to be complete some time in the spring. Architects for each of the projects will be selected by the developers, subject to the approval of the Authority. New design guidelines have been developed specifically for the North Residential Neighborhood by special consultants to the Authority, Alexander Gorlin, Architect, and Machado and Silvetti Associates, Inc.

(In upcoming issues, Oculus will take a critical look at these new design guidelines and the possible architectural impact of the new tax and zoning plans recently announced by the Mayor's Office for the Wall Street area.)

Hom + Goldman at SUNY Purchase

Kevin Hom + Andrew Goldman Architects was recently awarded the program study and preliminary schematic design for a new administration building at SUNY Purchase. The new 80,000-square-foot building will house administrative offices and student activity functions now split between two separate structures.

IN THE STREETSCAPE

by Jayne Merkel

First Avenue Face-lift

Lee Harris Pomeroy Associates' new entrance to Bellevue Hospital is one of those small pro bono projects that make a big difference. Every day more than 10,000 people pass through Bellevue's portals, many anxious and distressed. Until recently, they had to walk past a filthy, fume-filled, open-walled parking garage, enter what seemed to be a side door, and immedi-



Entrance to Bellevue Hospital on First Avenue



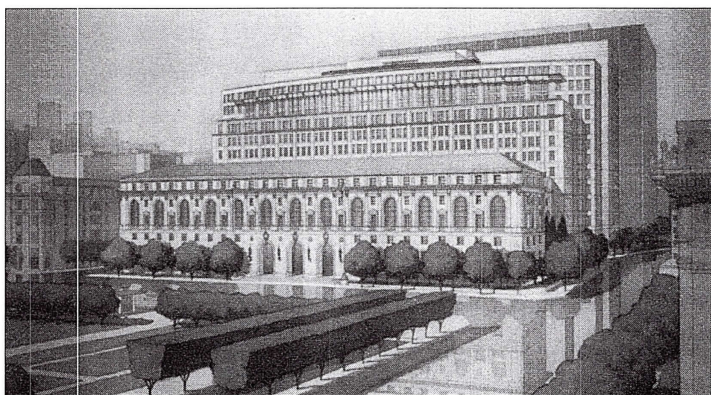
Canopy from entrance archway to Bellevue Hospital rotunda



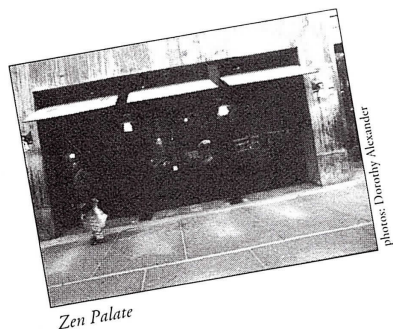
Bellevue Hospital rotunda murals by David Margolis

ately confront crowds, policemen, and the bustle of a Third World airport.

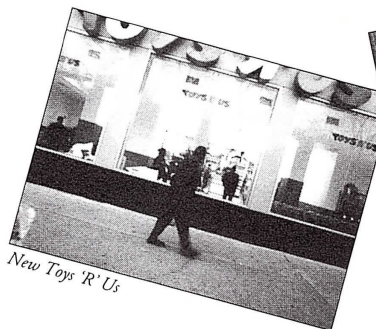
Now they encounter McKim, Mead & White's original arched entrance, which Pomeroy removed from the old, obstructed facade. They stroll through a little formal park under a glass canopy, and arrive in a bright, cheerful rotunda surrounded by colorful WPA murals. As likely as not, they will find the artist of the 1939 ensemble, David Margolis, at work on the restoration, full of stories about art, architecture, and life. The grand old archway, emblazoned with the seal of the City of New York, now dignifies



San Francisco State Office Building, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill



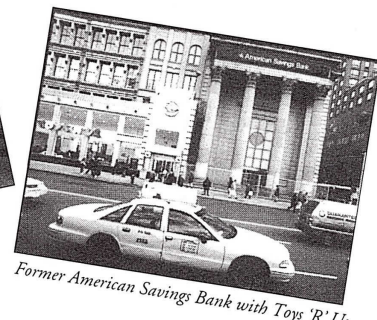
Zen Palate



New Toys 'R' Us



Fence around Union Square Savings Bank



Former American Savings Bank with Toys 'R' Us

the First Avenue streetscape and the oldest, busiest hospital in New York.

One Step Forward, One Step Back

Given the almost unprecedented success of public and private redevelopment efforts in the Union Square area, the sudden appearance of a prison-like chain-link fence around the Greek Revival Union Square Savings Bank is a shocker. The Greenmarket bustles four days a week. Shiny, new, and useful, tough not trendy, Toys R Us and Bradlees discount stores have just opened. And only a block from the horrific fence, one of the city's most original restaurant designs, the Zen Palate by architect Tony Che, offers the streetscape subtlety and elegance unusual even for the Flatiron gourmet enclave. Union Square East and the fine 1924 bank building by Henry Bacon deserve better. Any ideas for how to secure spaces like this awaiting development?

News Notes

by Matthew Barhydt

Changes to the City Charter over the last few years have led to changes in the Landmarks Preservation Commission and the entire landmarking process in New York City. A second edition of the *Preservation Manual: A Guide to Working on New York City Landmarks*, just issued by the Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, incorporates these revisions. Clear, concise, and only 26 pages long, the guide fully describes the workings of the Landmarks Law and its implications for the sizable number of New Yorkers who are affected by a designated building or

historic district. A useful glossary and directory are included at the back.

Due to the success of the first *Preservation Manual*, the second edition is also being distributed citywide by the Historic Districts Council. Copies are \$5 and may be obtained by writing or calling the Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts (20 East 69th Street, New York, NY 10021, 535-2526), or the Historic Districts Council (45 West 67th Street, New York, NY 10023, 799-5837).



Maya Lin

Architect-sculptor Maya Lin is back in the public eye. Along with the first ladies of our city, state, and coun-

try, she was the recipient of a "Star Award" from the New York Women's Agenda at its third annual Star Breakfast honoring outstanding women in business and the arts on November 30. *Art in America* published an overview of her architectural, landscape, and art projects over the last ten years in a December 1994 article by Judith E. Stein. Lin's most recent commission, an elliptical glass-and-metal clock, has been installed in Penn Station, of all places, on the ceiling of the new ticketing area for the Long Island Railroad.

It's a little late, but it's finally out. *Gran Sultan Associates' Design Manual for Service Enriched Single Room Occupancy Residences* (*Oculus*, March 1993, p. 4), was released in early November by its sponsors, the New York State Office of Mental

Health and the Corporation for Supportive Housing. This report demonstrates a practical method of designing and building SRO housing in New York City that meets both the budgetary and service goals of the OMH. To Gran Sultan's credit, the "kit of parts" matches sponsor preferences and program needs, but does not sacrifice aesthetic and contextual concerns for economy. The sections on construction systems and outline specifications are important tools for making this type of project achievable. Three prototypes based on this manual that are now under construction — in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan — will be the true test of the effort.

Joan Ockman, architectural scholar and writer, has been appointed to replace Richard Buford as director of the Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture at Columbia University. Ockman has been teaching architectural history and theory in the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation since 1985. The Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture was opened in 1982 in order to foster a greater awareness of American architecture, landscape, and planning. Robert A. M. Stern was its first director.

Underground Architecture

by Matthew Barhydt

Architecture in the subways? Straphangers who frequent the Fifth Avenue E and F train station were undoubtedly startled by the 20 light boxes of bold text and vivid images that the Museum of Modern Art included as part of its recent Rem

Koolhaas exhibition. However, they should not look forward to the next show any time soon.

According to Terrence Riley, curator of architecture and design at the museum, the backlit boxes were a way of expanding the exhibit's focus on public space, but they were "not the best way to communicate architecture to the public."

The light boxes unique to this station may soon be gone. Wendy Feuer of the MTA's Arts for Transit program explained in a recent interview that Arts for Transit has developed a plan with the graphic design firm of Drentil Doyle Partners to replace the boxes with permanent porcelain enamel panels. Designed by the now-defunct 53rd Street Block Association ten years ago, the light boxes were supposed to be used for frequently changing displays of area cultural events. It didn't work out that way. Arts for Transit has never had the time or money to use the boxes the way they were intended, and all the public has seen for several years, until recently, are the words, "New Exhibit in Creation."

Arts for Transit is now looking for \$150,000 to make the changeover. Six fortunate local cultural institutions will be allocated five display panels apiece. However, the unusual opportunity for spontaneity and contemporaneity that the light boxes presented has now been lost. And while Riley and Koolhaas are to be commended for taking advantage of a brief opportunity, the architectural avant-garde remains in the limited, stratified atmosphere of the galleries high atop the street. For now, much of New York City's real urban space remains bereft of any light from above.

Why Look Back on New York 1960 Now?

In Charles Moore's lively 1984 guide, *The City Observed, Los Angeles*, he admitted his bias at the start: "...a general preference for the 1920s over the 1930s, for the '30s over the '40s, the '40s over the '50s, and for just about anything over the 1960s." But with the publication of *New York 1960* and some young architects looking at the period with a certain fondness, *Oculus* asked New Yorkers who began their careers in the '60s (or a little later) if there was anything we could learn from what was done in New York around 1960.

Significantly, while most of them praised the planning initiatives of the time, no one had much to say about the architecture. The hero of the time is John Lindsay.

• • •

"My general image of the postwar period is of a time when there wasn't much sensitivity either to the context of the city or the people in the city. There were several big plans made, and I don't think any of them took much account of the physical character or human qualities."

Max Bond, formerly dean of the CUNY School of Architecture, practices architecture as a partner in Davis Brody & Associates, a firm Stern mentions as improving upon earlier postwar housing prototypes.

• • •

"Then — in the '60s — planning began to be associated with what we now call quality of life issues — the tawdriness of our streetscape, the thinness of apartment and building design, the lack of attention to detail at both small and large scales. Design became an integral part of a planner's interest and initiative. It was exemplified by the creation and efforts of the Urban Design Group.

"What can we learn? We can start by reading the report to Mayor Lindsay, *The Threatened City*, and reconsider the reestablishment of a design entity which would not only focus on good urban design but also coordinate the disparate efforts of the many agencies

that affect the ultimate design of the built city."

Amanda Burden, whose stepfather was the author of the report, is a New York City Planning Commissioner.

• • •

"Bad things happened at the beginning of the '60s, but from the time John Lindsay became mayor, the city was quite proactive. People believed you could actually change things for the better. You had one of the most advanced and radical urban design initiatives ever. We essentially changed every building built in the central business district, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse.

"It's what everyone who has ever tried to make a city has done, but it's not very American. We dealt with problems of infrastructure, transportation, what was to go on the ground floor. We told developers what they had to do, things like all those covered pedestrian connections to the subway. I developed the mixed-use district for Fifth Avenue; we created theater district guidelines, air rights transfers. That's what saved Grand Central Station. It's very rare that you find a politician like Lindsay who is actually interested in design."

Jaquelin T. Robertson, a partner in Cooper, Robertson & Partners, was a member of the Mayor Lindsay's urban design group.

• • •

"The most positive thing was John Lindsay. He was the only mayor who, with the City Planning Commissioner, Donald Elliott, created an official advisory group, the Mayor's Task Force on Urban Design. It included Jaquelin Robertson, Jonathan Barnett, Giovanni Pasinelli, Myles Weintraub, Richard Weinstein, and myself — for about a week. I was young and impatient, and never very good at politics, and I decided I had to build instead. But it was a very sensitive and aware thing for Lindsay to have done, and I think all the zoning initiatives and sensibilities that they had were unique to any administration."

Charles Gwathmey, a partner at Gwathmey Siegel & Associates, became

well-known in 1969 for a soon-to-be-canonical little house he designed for his parents in Amagansett.

• • •

"I suppose we learn what people can do when they perceive almost unlimited opportunity in a period of national self-confidence and economic growth. Of course you can't apply the lessons of New York City everywhere, because New York City, as the public thinks about it in connection with architecture, is really Manhattan below 96th Street. New York has distinctive zoning regulations. Moreover, New York City, as an international commercial focal point, needs certain kinds of buildings in large numbers that may not be required elsewhere."

Carol Herselle Krinsky, professor of fine arts at New York University, is author of Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and other books of architectural history.

• • •

"The '60s were a decade of conflict and transition. Culture boomed while Vietnam burned. Some protested, others retreated into "art," the rest did business as usual. While the big architecture offices cloned corporate images along Sixth and Park Avenues and erected monuments like Lincoln Center, the vox populi struggled to make itself heard: Jane Jacobs in Greenwich Village, Bernard Rudofsky at MoMA, Columbia students in Morningside Heights. For a while the Lindsay administration made it possible to believe that there could be significant urban change in New York City. The collision between liberal idealism and bureaucratic cynicism became the ignition point for a critique of modern architecture that had been smoldering since World War II, although from the resulting postmodernism it's not apparent who the victors were."

Joan Ockman, author of Architecture Culture 1943–1968, directs the Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of Architecture at Columbia University.

Technically Speaking, Plastic Lumber?

By Jayne Merkel

A new, nameless, recycled thermoplastic product that ought to be called "plastic lumber" can be seen at the Volunteers of America Bronx Early Learning Center playground by Garrison Siegel Architects. Located in a midblock rear alley at 167th Street and River Avenue in the South Bronx, the colorful playground won a 1994 AIA New York Chapter project award for innovative synthesis of recycled materials and architectural form.

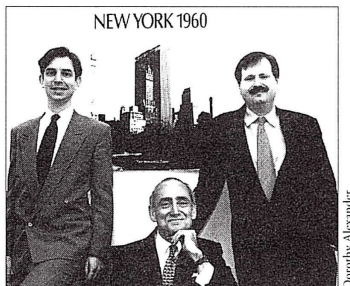
"How often do you have the opportunity to spatially experience over 20,000 discarded milk bottles in a positive way?" Siegel asked, explaining his choice of materials. The products make it possible to design a playground that receives extensive year-round use with a limited construction budget of \$75,000, while avoiding high maintenance costs. And since the material is easily cut, shaped, and fastened with standard woodworking hand tools, it was ideal for this narrow, steeply sloping site that was inaccessible to heavy equipment.

Plastic lumber is safe, sturdy, and inexpensive. It comes in bright primary colors that glow when wet and does not splinter or rot. This nontoxic material does not need to be painted, stained, or sealed with chemical preservatives, important factors in a handicapped-accessible playground for emotionally disturbed preschoolers. Recycled thermoplastic lumber has a higher kindling point than wood, softening at 180 degrees Fahrenheit and melting at 435 degrees F, and is self-extinguishing. Although it has a relatively high compressive strength of up to 38,000 psi, its modulus of elasticity is only 60 to 150 ksi (compared to 1,400 for wood and 29,000 for steel). It has a fairly high coefficient of expansion under varying thermal conditions; an eight-foot section may expand or contract one-eighth of an inch with a 50 degree temperature change. While slightly more expensive than standard untreated framing lumber, this colorful plastic decking material cost about 20 percent less than redwood or cedar. Plastic sheet products and solid stock components are manufactured at several locations throughout the United States and distributed by Yemm & Hart of Marquand, Missouri, 314-783-5434, and by Superwood of Selma, Alabama, 205-874-3781.

NEW YORK 1960

by Jayne Merkel

The Authors



David Fishman (left), Thomas Mellins (right), Robert A. M. Stern (sitting), authors of *New York 1960*

Robert A. M. Stern is the quintessential New York architect. Born and bred here, he has lived his entire life within a hundred miles of the city — Columbia B.A., Yale M.Arch., apartment on the Upper East Side, house in Easthampton, office on the Upper West Side, about to move to midtown. Despite, or because of, his New York orientation, he has achieved a national reputation. His practice has grown steadily, flourishing even in the lean early 1990s.

Still, he has made his mark on New York more as an author, teacher, and preservationist than as a builder. Most of his office's large-scale work is in California and Florida, on campuses, in suburbs or resorts. Projects are under way in France and Japan, but the Brooklyn Law School tower is his only contribution to the New York skyline. Stern has taught at Columbia since 1970, where he directs the historic preservation department.

Stern and his colleagues' histories of New York architecture, however, have changed the way its builders and residents see their city.

Thomas Mellins, an architectural historian and writer, has been active in preservation efforts in New York. A graduate of Columbia with an M.A. from the City University of New York, he collaborated with Stern on the television series and accompanying book, *Pride of Place: Building the American Dream*, and on *New York 1930*.

David Fishman, another Columbia graduate, also worked on *New York 1930* and *Pride of Place*.

The Series

Robert A. M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and David Fishman's *New York 1960* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1,376 pages, over 1,500 black-and-white illustrations, 8 1/2 x 11, \$125.00) is the third volume to be released in a projected five-part series on the architecture and urban design of New York.

The first volume, *New York 1900* (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), by Robert A. M. Stern, John Massengale, and Gregory Gilmartin, covered the period from 1890 to the First World War. The second, *New York 1930* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), by Robert A. M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and Gregory Gilmartin, concentrated on the years between the wars.

Stern began his career as an author with *New Directions in American Architecture* (New York: Braziller, 1969, revised edition 1977), a book that overlaps the period of *New York 1960*, so he is one of the contemporary sources his team can draw on as they try "not to impose a contemporary perspective." The whole series draws on primary sources whenever possible and includes "commentaries of the major architectural critics of the day, as well as architects, urban planners, and city officials who directly participated in the city's building and rebuilding."

Robert A. M. Stern is also the author of *George Howe: Toward a Modern American Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); the book and public-television series, *Pride of Place: Building the American Dream* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin; New York: American Heritage, 1986); and *Modern Classicism* (London: Thames & Hudson; New York: Rizzoli, 1988). His own architecture is the subject of numerous monographs.

The Book

Chronicling a period of enormous optimism, the book follows New York as it emerges from the Great

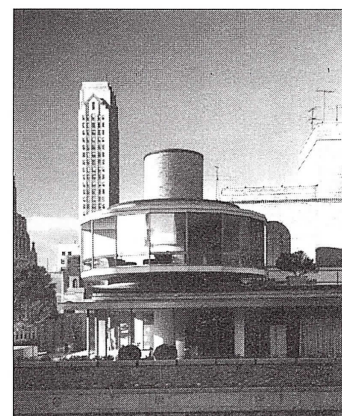
Depression, experiences the anxiety of the wartime years, the jubilation of victory, and in the wake of Europe's devastation, becomes the financial and cultural "capital of the world" in *New York 1960*. The book is more *War and Peace* than a typical architectural monograph. It records years of gradual decline as the suburbs absorbed much of the city's lifeblood and New York became, in the popular imagination, the symbol of all that was wrong with America. The city faced financial collapse but survived, and by the Bicentennial, began to glitter again and play a new, more precarious global role.

With over a thousand pages and more than a million words, the book is encyclopedic in scope, though it encompasses less than four decades in only one town. The epic tale has an anticlimactic end — New York is saved by the yuppies. But in the middle, everyday comedy and tragedy intertwine, most dramatically around the year that gives the book its name.

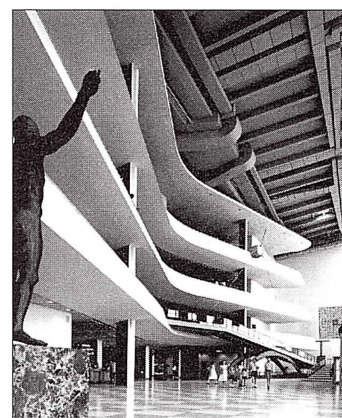
"1960" is not just a round number that goes with others in the series, nor a convenient date in the middle of the period surveyed. It was a year crucial to every one of the events and movements the book discusses.

By 1960, the International Style had triumphed over the other distinct phase of "Corporate Modernism" the authors identify: "the streamlined, horizontally banded, strip-windowed aesthetic" derived from Erich Mendelsohn's Schocken department stores of the 1920s and exemplified by William Lescaze's 711 Third Avenue office building of 1954–56. Most new corporate towers, like the Corning Glass Building by Harrison & Abramovitz of 1956–59, the dainty Pepsi-Cola Building (now the Walt Disney Company), the Union Carbide Building, and One Chase Plaza, all designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and completed in 1960, followed the more austere model established, initially at least, in New York by the United Nations Headquarters, Lever House, and the Seagram Building.

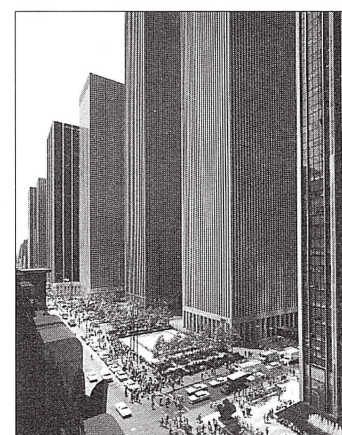
One Chase Plaza also marked the first organized attempt to revive the financial district, an effort echoed today and covered in this book, which is orga-



Penthouse office suite for William Zeckendorf, Webb+Knapp, 383 Madison Avenue, I. M. Pei in association with William Lescaze, 1952



General Assembly Building, United Nations Headquarters, 1947–1952



View southwest of Sixth Avenue from West 51st Street



International Arrivals Building, Idlewild Airport, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill

nized geographically and thematically rather than by building type, as in the earlier volumes.

By 1960, the International Style was so firmly established that the first zoning regulations since 1916 had been written to counter restrictions that had frustrated efforts to construct the Seagram Building and its progeny. The passage of the zoning law of 1960–61, which added incentives for plazas and allowed greater bulk in the central business district, “was postwar New York’s pivotal architectural event, irrevocably changing the relationship between buildings and streets that had prevailed for over three hundred years,” according to the authors. Intended as a corrective to constraints, it ended up prescribing a corridor of barren plazas on Sixth Avenue and obliterating Park Avenue in midtown, demonstrating, as the 1916 zoning code had, the ability of zoning to dictate architectural form.

The International Style became so ubiquitous that reactions were inevitable. The authors identify two already evident in 1960. At Lincoln Center, where ground had been broken the year before but the architectural imagery was still being developed, what they call a “Historicist Modernism,” promoted by Philip Johnson, would prevail. The other, dubbed “Expressive or Thematic Modernism,” was exemplified by Eero Saarinen’s TWA Terminal at Idlewild (now Kennedy) Airport, commissioned in 1956, published in 1960, completed in 1962, and related to, if not inspired by, Frank Lloyd Wright’s Guggenheim Museum, which opened in 1959.

Saarinen’s masterpiece was one of numerous terminals under construction at the time, as air travel was coming into its own in 1960, too. Since LaGuardia Airport reached its capacity almost as soon as it opened in 1940, land for Idlewild Airport was acquired in 1942 and limited service offered a few years later. But it became a major portal to the city only in 1957 with the opening of the International Arrivals Building, designed by SOM and currently being redesigned by the same firm. Eastern Airlines’ terminal by Chester I. Churchill opened two years later; American Airlines’ terminal

by Kahn & Jacobs and Pan American’s terminal by Tippets-Abbott-McCarthy-Stratton followed in 1960; and United’s, also by SOM, opened the next year. Despite various innovations in airport planning and design, access to the city by public transportation was left to our time.

When the airports were under construction, the automobile and the city still seemed compatible to the New Yorkers in control, though efforts to accommodate the car eventually led to the downfall of the most powerful of them all. Stern calls 1960 “a watershed year in architectural politics,” characterizing it as a battle between Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs — and the forces they represented. Moses, committed to the highways and large-scale planning, was defeated by a group of Central Park West mothers in 1956 and tarnished by the Title I scandal in 1959. Jacobs struck a nascent chord in society with the publication of *The Death and Life of American Cities* in 1961, championing old-fashioned city streets and grassroots neighborhood organization.

The tide turned firmly against the massive scale and perpetual change of the postwar years when the historic preservation movement gathered storm after the demolition of McKim, Mead & White’s Pennsylvania Station in 1963. Although William Zeckendorf had secretly agreed to build a new station five years earlier, it was in 1960 that the owners of Madison Square Garden “announced plans to demolish their facility and erect a \$38 million sports and entertainment complex” at an unspecified site, which turned out to be Pennsylvania Station.

The desire to preserve New York as it had been coincided with the moment when its continuous ascent ended. Businesses began to follow middle-class workers to the suburbs in 1960, when Eero Saarinen’s IBM Research Center in Yorktown Heights was completed. Four years later the company’s corporate headquarters by SOM moved to Westchester County, and the Endo Laboratories by Paul Rudolph opened on Long Island.

The trend had already been recognized in studies by the Regional Plan Association of 1959 and 1960. The

next year, when the French geographer, Jean Gottmann, published *Megalopolis: The Urbanized Northeastern Seaboard of the United States*, New Yorkers realized that their city was no longer the heart of a region, merely the geographic center of urban sprawl stretching from Washington, D.C., to Boston. Uncertain of these implications, they made a number of attempts described throughout the book to hold on to what they had and define a new role for the city’s future. *New York 1960* is a thorough, entertaining, and surprisingly evenhanded record of those attempts.

Michael Sorkin

by Jayne Merkel



Michael Sorkin, Andrei Vovk, Peter Kormer

Eloquent, angry, engaged, and visionary, Michael Sorkin invents cities where “greenways flow through decaying blocks, creating an atmosphere of public quietude,” a strange but lively world of pod houses amidst shops, restaurants, recreational lakes, and allotment gardens.

If Robert A. M. Stern epitomizes one kind of New York architect — native, uptown, traditional, connected to the city’s most established institutions — Sorkin embodies the opposite. Though he grew up in a modern house in the Washington, D.C., suburbs, studied English at Chicago and Columbia (M.A.) and architecture at Harvard and MIT (M.Arch.), he was drawn to the city by its energy, agony, and optimism. He lives in a Greenwich Village walk-up, works in a Tribeca studio, and operates on an avant-garde edge, lecturing, exhibiting, and teaching concurrently at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, Cooper Union, and the Southern

California Institute of Architecture in Los Angeles.

As architecture critic of *The Village Voice* (after a debut in *Skyline*), his elegant and outrageous prose created the one consistent outcry against the post-modern excesses of the 1980s. Though he gave up his column in 1989 to design, his books keep coming: *Exquisite Corpse* in 1991 (London and New York: Verso), *Variations on a Theme Park* later that year (New York: Hill & Wang), and *Local Code, Constitution of a City at 42° N. Latitude* in 1993 (New York: Princeton Architectural Press). More are in the works: *Origin of Species* (on his own work), *The City After Now*, *Civil Cities*, and *Urbanagrams* (a collection of urban narratives).

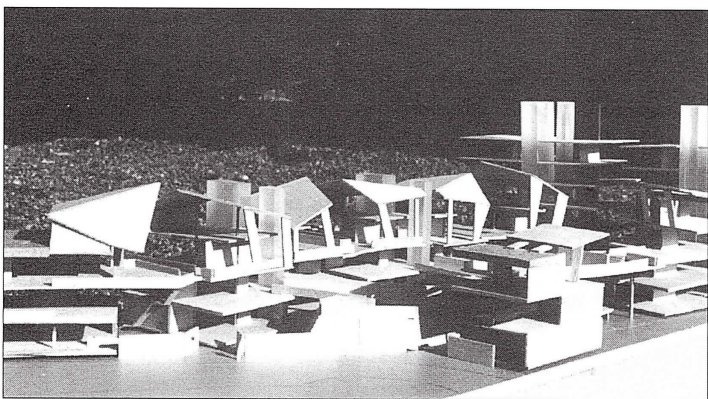
This fall, Sorkin and his wife, sociologist Joan Copjec, exhibited a collaboration in “House Rules” at Ohio State (*Oculus*, January 1995, p. 15). The Michael Sorkin Studio (Sorkin, Andrei Vovk, and Peter Kormer) had work in “Urban Revisions: Current Projects for the Public Realm” at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal and a one-studio show at the Storefront for Art and Architecture in Soho. Their installation design for the “World War II and the American Dream” exhibition is on view at the National Building Museum through the end of this year.

The Storefront was a maze of complicated, colorful, curvaceous drawings hung in heavy plastic sheets from plastic tubes like clothes on a line. Lit with glowing beehive lanterns, the galleries seemed a primordial cave. The studio’s designs for central cities, small new towns, and “shrooms” (urbanized suburbs) were composed of fluid organic shapes, piled on top and flowing into one another. They all had a variety of scales, a lively mix of uses, a lot of greenery intertwined with man-made forms, and a certain loft-like malleability.

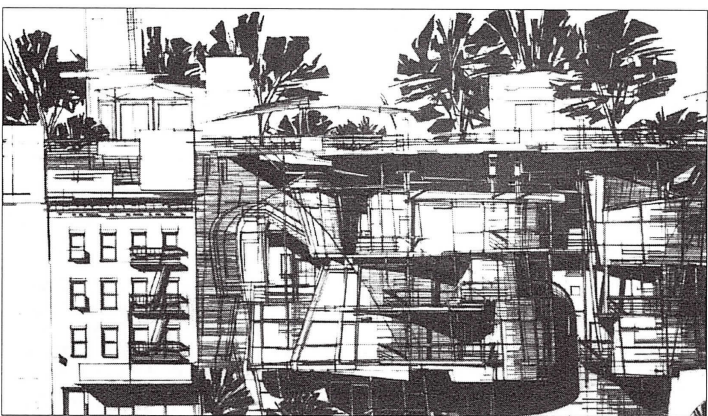
All these imagined places look extraterrestrial, but they are inspired by the streetscape of New York, as Sorkin’s December 8 lecture at the Architectural League showed. While Stern, in the same room the week before, had painted a picture of the entire architectural history of New York, only occasionally giving a



An urbanagram



Proposed housing for Vienna



Proposal for East New York

glimpse of his own increasingly important role in it, Sorkin invited the audience to take a walk with him on his daily trek from home to work, describing his utopian communities along the way.

"The trip begins with a descent downstairs from...the top of the building...past the plastic bags left by my neighbors...past Jeff, disordered and unsociable, with aggressive heaps of unbound newspaper and dripping sacks of God-knows-what; past Margot, whose clean landing repeated-

ly confirms her residence elsewhere and whose empty rent-controlled apartment tips my blood pressure over the red line" and leads to "thoughts of the landlord, that parasite, instrument of this unfairness...[who] doesn't clean the hall because his grasping ethics are pure product of the system.

"On the front landing, I meet Jane, frail and beautiful, asthmatic, and looking very old today,...sorting through the recycling bin, taking seriously this pusillanimous retrofit of sustainability in a city consecrated to

waste....From her vantage point, atop the front stoop, Jane keeps tabs on the...block...recognizes people, children, dogs,...criminals,...tends the blooms in the concrete urn chained to the railing out front....On weekends, she works in the community garden around the corner."

Today Sorkin decides "to follow a sort of green line. It isn't all together easy. Downtown Manhattan is staggeringly ill-equipped with green areas." He turns left, diagonally, through Washington Square, "the overtaxed main park in the neighborhood, dog run, drug market, performance space, beach, lung, university quadrangle, edge condition."

Entering "the territory of NYU, two almost universally reviled buildings from the '60s, NYU faculty and staff housing by S. J. Kessler, form a green space of civic dimension. Although this kind of modernist urban precinct is justly repudiated as a general rule, these buildings in this setting are — fine. Radiating the canonical virtues: light, air, space, greenery, a fairly free ground plane, a bit of a dance of roof structures, these buildings and the three later I. M. Pei towers in the next block offer a humane and decent vision of urbanity....Although I would not want to live in a neighborhood made up of them, I am happy to live in a neighborhood which includes them."

Here, he describes "Godzilla," a theoretical project he designed for Tokyo before "my delirious vision of the place was contaminated with...actual observation." A tall treelike structure "in which the tangled skein of that city...erupts in form, a verticalization of...the fundamental disorder of the city," Godzilla is a "fantasy of a building as a neighborhood. The proposal is to disseminate green, blue, and car-free vectors from the building,...to insinuate fresh tendrils of form and materiality throughout the city."

Describing his walk down Wooster Street, he discusses the studio's schemes for the Spreebogen and Spree Insel competitions in Berlin. Most of the proposals for the Spreebogen, shown at Goethe House here last year, were grandiose, but Sorkin noted, "Since the site is within the scale of a neighborhood, it seemed appropriate that it be no less."

Sorkin's agenda is moral and political as well as formal: "The small building strategy is meant to provide both an intimate scale...[and] to suggest an attitude toward governance." Believing "that the basis for a pluralistic parliamentary democracy is coalition and consensus, we have proposed that the spaces for the parliamentary groups be obtained by the aggregation of diverse buildings rather than through the subdivision of larger ones."

As committed to the present as he was in the heyday of postmodernism, Sorkin believes "the project of inventing the forms of the city is not yet dead, that...[it] need not simply be drawn from the inventory of the past, although high-class skinheads now in the saddle in Berlin seem to think otherwise."

But modernity does not mean dull functionalism: "The new forms of the city should be the genuine products of artistry...fully answerable to all the tests of meaning and pleasure to which...city dwellers ought to be entitled." He wants "the moods of the spaces...to invoke, though not ape, moods we already know...the big trees and paths of Lincoln's Inn Fields or Harvard Yard," the grandeur of the Washington Mall, the spontaneity of the Piazza Navona. Dreamer and pragmatist, Sorkin mentions the unmentionable: In Berlin, the "range of spaces is also intended to support gathering and demonstration by crowds of different sizes and to frustrate their ready surveillance and control."

Strolling down West Broadway in Soho, he sees "a hole in the wall of European currency exchange, unusual for New York," and notes the irony of Europeans changing money since "the American Express or Eurocard is undoubtedly more convenient at d'Agostino's or the Odeon. Cash is actually only required for street vendors and the kinds of little shops and restaurants" imitative of old Europe.

He likes the scale and sidewalk café atmosphere, but deplors "the simulacrum." Still, he relishes the memory of the fake luncheonette Hollywood set designers built farther down West Broadway in Tribeca because location scouts couldn't find one that looked authentic enough.

photos: Dorothy Alexander

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**AIA New York Chapter
Committee Meetings**

FEBRUARY

1

6:00 PM

Public Architects

9

6:00 PM

Minority Resources

6:00 PM

Foreign Visitors

14

8:00 AM

Architecture for Justice

15

12:30 PM

Architecture for Education

16

10:00 AM

Public Sector Contracts

21

4:30 PM

Health Facilities

27

6:30 PM

Learning by Design:NY

**Please confirm meeting
times and locations by calling
AIA New York Chapter
headquarters at 683-0023.**

February/March 1995

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

Friday
CONFERENCE

New York City Preservation Conference. Sponsored by Historic District Council. New York School of Interior Design, 170 E. 70th St. Contact Franny Eberhart, 799-5837. Continues on February 4.

4

Saturday
EXHIBITION

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

6

Monday

9

Thursday
AIA NEW YORK
CHAPTER EVENT

George Lewis Public Policy Discussion on Mayor Giuliani's Plan for the Revitalization of Lower Manhattan. Sponsored by the AIA New York Chapter, 200 Lexington Ave. 683-0023, ext. 16.

TOUR

Indoor New York: Part I — Inside Manhattan. Sponsored by the Municipal Art Society. 12:30 pm. Reservations 935-3960. \$10.

LECTURE SERIES

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.

10

Friday
LECTURE

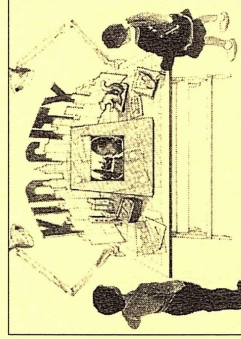
Zaha Hadid: Recent Work. 6:30 pm. Wood Auditorium, Avery Hall, Columbia University. 854-3473.

11

15

Wednesday
EXHIBITION

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



"Kid City," Urban Center Galleries. Closes May 21.

EVENT

Gala dinner and party to benefit the beginning of the design collection and the 60th anniversary of Philip Johnson's 1935 "Machine Art" exhibition. The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. 7:00 pm. 708-9750.

16

Thursday
TOUR

Art in Transit. Sponsored by the Municipal Art Society. 12:30 pm. Reservations 935-3960. \$10.

23

Thursday
TOURS

Soho's Sights. Sponsored by the 92nd Street Y. 1:00 pm. Contact Melissa Golub, 415-5628.

Indoor New York: Part II — Inside Downtown. Sponsored by the Municipal Art Society. 12:30 pm. Reservations 935-3960. \$10.

24

Friday
TOUR

57th Street: Culture and Kitsch. Sponsored by the Municipal Art Society. 12:30 pm. Reservations 935-3960. \$10.

26

Sunday
EXHIBITION

Outside the Frame: Performance and the Object. Snug Harbor Cultural Center, 1000 Richmond Terrace, Staten Island. 718-442-8534. Closes June 18.

March

1

Wednesday
LECTURE

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

Good Offices and Beyond: The Evolution of the Workplace. The Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, 2 E. 91st St. 860-6868. Closes March 19.

Kandinsky: Compositions. Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. 708-9400. Closes April 25.

The Structure of Style: Dutch Modernism and the Applied Arts. The Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, 2 E. 91st St. 860-6868. Closes August 20.

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

FEBRUARY 10

Application deadline for AIA New York Chapter Travel Grants. Travel proposals must be for 1995 calendar year and must further applicants' architectural education and professional development. Contact Marcy Stanley at 683-0023, ext. 15.

FEBRUARY 21

Entry deadline for Time, the fourteenth annual Young Architects Competition. Contact the Architectural League of New York, 753-1722.

MARCH 1

Entry deadline for International Association of Lighting Designers twelfth annual awards program. Contact IALD, annual awards program. Contact IALD,

'70s. Sponsored by the Architectural League. 6:30 pm. Rockefeller University, 1230 York Ave. 753-1722. \$7.

EXHIBITION

In the Night-City: Photographs by Lynn Saville. Columbia University, Avery Hall, 400-level. 854-3473. Closes February 25.

7

Tuesday

EXHIBITION

Elaine Lustig Cohen: Modern Graphic Designer. Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, 2 E. 91st St. 860-6868. Closes May 23.

LECTURE AND BOOK-SIGNING

Civil Architecture. Given by Richard Dattner. Sponsored by the Art Commission of the City of New York, the New York City Department of General Services, and the Municipal Engineers of the City of New York. 5:30 pm. City Hall. 788-3071.

8

Wednesday

LECTURE

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

Tour of New Federal Courts Building at 40 Foley Square. Sponsored by the AIA New York Chapter Public Architects Committee. 663-0023, ext. 17.

SYMPOSIUM

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

13

Monday

LECTURE

Artificial Ecologies. Given by Michael Speaks. Sponsored by Parsons School of Design, 25 E. 13th St., Room 206. 229-8955.

EXHIBITION

Two Photographic Promenades: The Villa La Roche-Jeanerret and the Villa Savoye. Photographs by Elizabeth Donoff. Columbia University, Avery Hall, 100-level. 854-3473. Closes March 11.

457 Madison Ave. 753-1722. \$7.

Victims II. Given by John Hejduk. Sponsored by Pratt Institute. 6:00 pm. Higgins Hall, 61 St. James Pl. 718-636-3600.

17

Friday

LECTURE

Peter Stangl. Sponsored by the City Club of New York. 12:00 pm. 33 W. 42nd St. 921-9870. \$20 (includes lunch).

21

Tuesday

EVENT

Dazzling Design Showrooms in the D&D Building. Sponsored by the 92nd Street Y. 2:00 pm. Contact Melissa Golub, 415-5628.

22

Wednesday

LECTURE

Ambivalence as a Productive Emotion. Given by Neil Denari. 6:30 pm. Wood Auditorium, Avery Hall, Columbia University. 854-3473.

3

Friday

COLLOQUIUM

Beyond the Open Road: Reinventing Transportation Policy for the Twenty-first Century. Presented by New York University Law School's Environmental Law Journal. Speakers include James Florio, former Governor of New Jersey, James T. B. Tripp, Environmental Defense Fund, and Charles DiLeva, World Bank. 8:30 am. New York University School of Law, 40 Washington Sq. S. \$20. 998-6560.

Continuing Exhibitions

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

Zaha Hadid: Projects. Architectural League of New York, Grand Central Terminal, main waiting room. 753-1722. Closes February 15.

Cycles of Expression: The SCI-Arc Bicycle Workshop. Architectural League of New York, Grand Central Terminal, main waiting room. 753-1722. Closes February 15.

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

Coscurrants of Modernism. Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, 18 W. 86th St. 501-3000. Closes February 26.

traveling fellowships in architectural design and technology. Contact the National Institute for Architectural Education, 30 W. 22nd St., New York, NY 10010, 924-7000.

MARCH 15

Entry deadline for Philip N. Winslow Landscape Design Awards for built or unbuilt projects completed after January 1990. Contact the Parks Council, 838-9410, ext. 233.

APRIL 15

Submission deadline for the Royal Oak Foundation's architectural design competition for students or graduates no more than five years out of school. Contact the Foundation at 966-6565.

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 Challenge Grounds: Urban Housing and Community Outdoor Space competition for students of accredited schools in the US. Contact the National Institute for Architectural Education, 30 W. 22nd St., New York, NY 10010, 924-7000.

PULL OUT
&
PIN UP

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.

Crossing Canal Street, as he does every day, "breathing diesel fumes and dodging for my life," he warns, "another truth becomes clear....The only solution...is the elimination of the cars....The disgorging tunnel must simply be closed." But he acknowledges, "There is no politician or citizen...with the nerve."

Seeing the city with Sorkin's eyes, it is obvious why he imagines places like his project "for that wonderful site along the Brooklyn waterfront, recently relinquished by the Port Authority, opposite Lower Manhattan and below the Brooklyn Heights Promenade." Like all of his work, the Brooklyn waterfront, which appears on this *Oculus* cover, is part invention, part critique of the order of the day.

"It seems the only current models for the urban waterfront, revealed in virtually every plan proposed to date for locations along New York's 600 miles of coastline, are either parks or development on the Battery Park City model. Neither of these models is deficient in itself. It's simply that the Olmstedian paradigm and a residential promenade do not seem to embrace the full range of possibilities," he explains.

"Our proposal is...to ratchet up the mix." The studio keeps the proposed conference center on the north, "augmented by a hotel on a deconsecrated cruise ship. Below it, a large amphitheater faces the fabulous view of Manhattan. At the south end — a barge building yard," he declares.

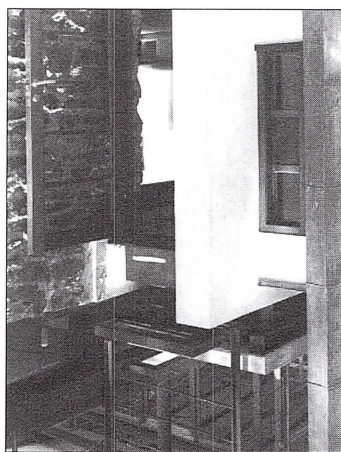
"These projects would be marketed and fitted out as gardens, as sports grounds, as restaurants, as community facilities for use as constituents in the rest of the project. They might also be floated up to other parts of the city to seed development of other stretches of the waterfront.

"The other side is...a kind of park bazaar suitable for use by very large numbers pursuing a very large number of pleasures.

"The water's edge is treated amphibiously. Dissolving into an archipelago of pier fragments, islands, walkways, barges, and marshes, the constituents of this portion of the park would be ever in flux, responding to tides, seasons, and the shifting desires of its users."

Keenen/Riley at Parsons

by Jayne Merkel



Mill House, detail, Keenen/Riley

As curator of architecture and design at the Museum of Modern Art, Terrence Riley is a visible figure on the New York architectural scene, but the architecture he produces with his partner, John Keenen, studiously avoids adopting a commanding presence. The three projects for country retreats they showed November 30 through December 14 at Parsons School of Design, where Keenen teaches, were intended to defer to the feeling of the rural sites.

The exhibition title — "(land) (mill) (field)" — implied that theirs is an architecture of leaving well enough alone, which is exactly what the Swiss-born owners of *(land)* asked them to do. The clients bought 18 rolling acres in Dutchess County that reminded them of Alpine meadows. They currently camp on the property in a big platform tent, but wanted something "more than a tent, but not quite a house."

The three-room, bi-level structure, just below the crest of a ridge, is high enough to afford views of the Catskills but nestled enough to leave the landscape undisturbed. With board-and-batten siding inside and out, it will feel like a camp. Without an access road (they will continue to hike in), it will be like one. But it will be a civilized, well-ordered camp with gently sloping shed roofs pitched towards landscapes in both directions.

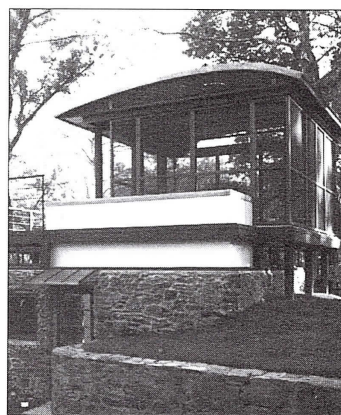
The *(mill)*, which has been completed,

was reduced to its eighteenth-century stone walls when the owners bought it along with a larger house nearby, in an old village on the Delaware River. Now the mill is a little casino where the owners can get away from their getaway to read, listen to music, or play pool. The architects left the old two-foot-thick masonry walls intact, "but conscientiously avoided a sentimental approach." They created a collage out of old and new elements, as in Carlo Scarpa's Castelvecchio project, and treated railings and other details in the straightforward craftsmanlike manner of Scarpa. Above the cozy stone-walled reading room, a terrace is divided into an uncovered area and an elegant, screened outdoor room with a vaulted truss roof. The elements in the composition reappear on the facade where a gently curved concrete wall, steel frame, white stucco slab, and rough masonry compress into bas-relief, as a colored drawing of the elements pulled apart shows.

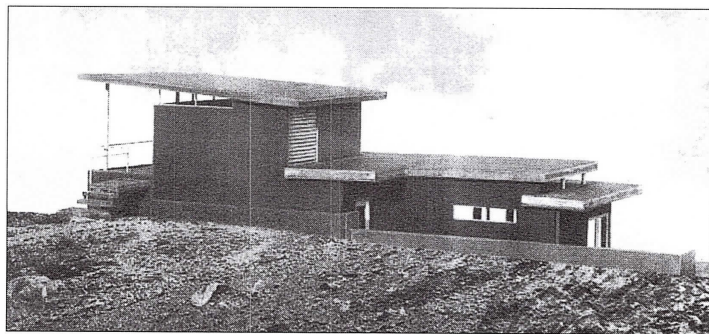
These three versions of country retreats in three different states of completion explain Keenen/Riley's intentions and evolution. *(Land)* is designed but not built; *(field)* is still in design. However, the lack of explanatory text on *(field)* and the fact that it was depicted in the same format as *(land)*

made it difficult to distinguish between the different stages of progression.

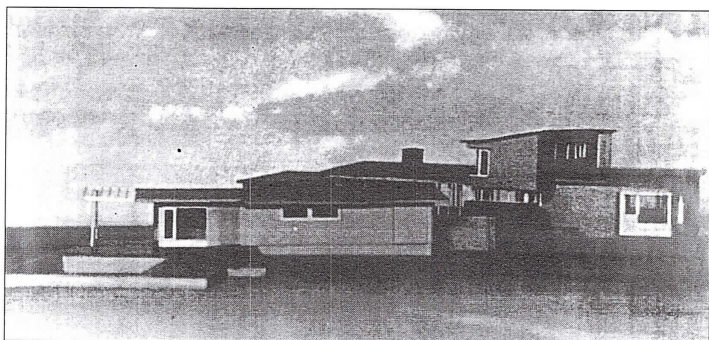
(Field), a sprawling house with separate pool house and garage buildings, is strewn across a corner of a ten-acre field surrounded by farms. Each room is expressed on the exterior as a separate entity with its own view, orientation, and roofline. Though the materials have not yet been selected, Marcel Breuer seems to meet Cliff May here. But the detailing of *(mill)* suggests that something very different and more refined will emerge as the unfinished retreats evolve — almost surreptitiously.



Mill House, Keenen/Riley



Land House, Keenen/Riley



Field House, Keenen/Riley

In the Galleries: Allan Wexler at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

by Bill Burk

In *Another Roadside Attraction*, Tom Robbins said, "Human beings were invented by water as a device for transporting itself from one place to another." Allan Wexler's exhibition, "Buckets, Sinks, Gutters," at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts from November 19 through December 23 seemed to agree. Function was married to absurdity in a deluge of sculptures and architectural models that explored possibilities for the collection, transport, and storage of rainwater. Wexler, an architect and artist who teaches at Parsons School of Design, used rubber buckets, umbrellas, aqueducts, water towers, bottles, and houses in eccentric, low-tech combinations to examine rituals and processes. The results were sometimes elegant, sometimes clumsy, nearly always peculiar.

Hat/Roof, a roof mounted on a baseball cap, sat on a mannequin who

wore an adjustable wooden backpack frame with a waist-high bucket beneath a spout extending from the roof. This creation allowed rainwater, which would have fallen on the wearer's head, to be collected in the bucket. When the bucket filled, an overflow spout directed the water behind the wearer.

There were bucket transformations in which rubber buckets were lengthened, shortened, halved, and quartered. There were expanded pails with inserts to extend their dimensions and change their proportions and capacities. There were buckets that had been constructed by stacking layers of plywood or casting cement in a hole in the ground. In these pieces, Wexler examined forms, functions, and methods of construction, while stretching the identity but still maintaining the idea of a bucket.

In a series of architectural maquettes, the artist explored imaginative methods for the collection and distribution of rainwater. The most interesting work in this vein was also the most absurd. In a series of five *Houses for*

Painting, straightforward function was perfectly matched to ludicrous purpose. Each tiny brass house sat in the middle of a sheet of paper. Depending on the shape of the roof and whether there were gutters extending from it, each house yielded a different pattern when ink was poured on the roof. The house with four gutters extending from the roof made a painting of four black puddles beyond the house on each side. The paintings created this way were shown with the houses.

Like an intense brainstorming session, the show contained a wide range of entertaining ideas, but not all of them were equally interesting. The more complex ideas were diluted by the volume of work; the best of the simple ideas were inundated by it.

When extensive exploration of an idea is a central premise of an exhibition, it may be necessary to have numerous examples. The danger is that the show can seem like a list. In this case, the list may have been too long.

Bill Burk is a sculptor in Hartford, Connecticut.

monograph is questioned. This book is a "duograph," states the introduction by Anthony Vidler, "a product of the collaboration of two distinct and equally powerful intellects," that proposes "a new and complex relationship between theory and practice, book and building, in such a way as to implicate the 'monograph' in the process of design itself."

But apart from the rambling double interview, in which the partners question one another, their answers printed side by side in two different typefaces, the book is remarkably traditional, both in its presentation and in its goals.

Like any good monograph, it is a handsomely presented coffee-table volume of lively sketches, striking renderings, and meticulously composed color photographs designed to showcase the firm's work. That work is sleek, sophisticated, and witty, but hardly reflects the sort of revolutionary practice the architects, who spoke at the Urban Center on December 13, say they intend.

Without abstruse allusions to semiotics, psychoanalysis, and feminist film theory, the architecture is notable for its ability to break out of the limitations of functional modernism without resorting to historical pastiche.

The most avant-garde aspect of the practice is Agrest and Gandelsonas's thorough grasp of the importance of choreographing what critic Michael Speaks has called "the production of the reception" of their work.

Ellen K. Popper writes frequently for The New York Times about architecture on Long Island and is enrolled in the master of arts in architecture and design criticism program at Parsons School of Design.

In the Bookstores — Agrest and Gandelsonas: Works

by Ellen K. Popper

The cover photograph sets the tone: A weathered wooden footbridge on slender stilts spans a close-cropped lawn; at the end, an outdoor room of horizontal slats overlooks a cornfield burnished green and gold against an ominously overcast sky. A chair is discernible in the room, but no one is sitting in it.

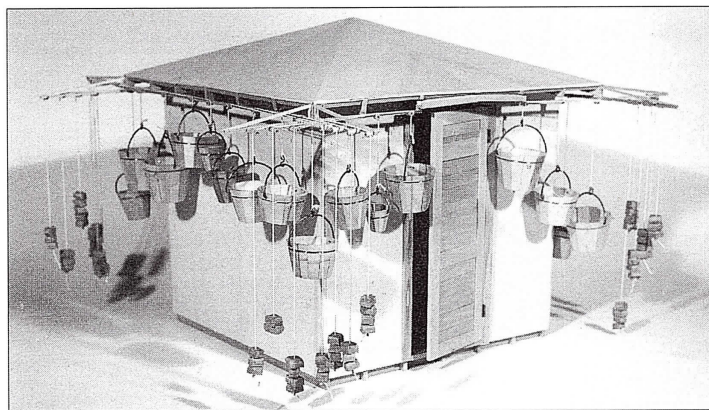
The newly-published volume of work by the Argentinean-born team of Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelsonas, *Agrest and Gandelsonas: Works* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 300 pages, 9 x 12, 69 color illustrations, 221 black-and-white illustrations, cloth \$60.00, paper \$40.00), presents the projects, both built and unbuilt, of two architects best known for their theoretical and pedagogical contributions.

In keeping with their reflective approach, the conventional concept of

Counterpoint

By Daniel Dolan, AIA

Although construction is not yet complete, the design of our federal office building on Foley Square has attracted several early critiques. While many personal observations offered have been complimentary, I have been learning that it is difficult for architectural journalists to praise the efforts of the federal government in print.



Building for Water Collection with Buckets, Allan Wexler



Expanded Pails, Allan Wexler

photos courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts Inc.

You correctly identified the image that the building projects as reflecting the character preferred by the GSA for high-rise buildings situated in a particular context within the Civic Center of Lower Manhattan. They would say that "dignity, stability, and orderliness" are the qualities they wish the public to associate with the presence of federal architecture. However, they alone did not instruct their architects in these defining characteristics. In addition to the GSA staff architects, the urban designers and planners they assigned to this project, the GSA also invited a diverse profile of professional architects, city planning officials, and other urban experts to shape the criteria for the design competition. This group also graded the competition results and participated in "on-board" reviews of several redesign efforts before awarding the commission.

My purpose in describing this process is to make you more aware of how large public projects are brought into being today. Public institutions or private enterprises initiate them, yet none proceed very far without intensive interaction with their communities. This was certainly the case with Foley Square.

The professionals and other citizens who allowed our design to be built are not "fans of Eastern Bloc architecture," which in their view is better represented by the Jacob Javits Building next door at 26 Federal Plaza. They are fans of Democratic Bloc architecture, which they feel is very successfully rendered at Foley Square.

When you see the building next, you might try to appreciate, if nothing else, the feeling of openness on the ground floor, its visual connection to nature, the quality and craftsmanship of the construction, and finally, the contrastingly modern assembly of details in the exterior wall, storefronts, lobby, and skylights. These are the elements that best represent this architect's personal struggle with the overwhelming public preference for Western Bloc classicism in federal architecture.

David Dolan of HOK is the architect of the new Federal Office Building discussed in "Around the Town," December 1994, page 3.

Correction

Ooops! We slipped, and it's not surprising since the floor under Thornton-Tomasetti Engineers' entry to the CANstruction competition was warped. That's why their towers "ironically" seemed to tilt. It was no fault of theirs. Also, the name of the Society of Architectural Administrators was omitted from our article (*Oculus*, January 1995, p. 3) on the second annual CANstruction. The SAA organized and cosponsored the event at the D&D Building with the AIA.

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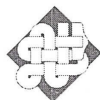
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URBAN CENTER BOOKS' TOP 10

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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. **The Architecture of Good Intentions: Towards a Possible Retrospect**, Colin Rowe (Academy, paper, \$35.00).
4. **Historical Atlas of New York City**, Eric Homberger (Henry Holt, cloth, \$45.00).
5. **Patkau Architects: Selected Projects 1983-1993**, ed. Brian Carter (Tuns Press, paper, \$25.00).


6. **Transparent Cities**, Brian McGrath (Sites Books, boxed, \$29.00).
7. **Invisible Gardens: The Search for Modernism in the American Landscape**, Peter Walker and Melanie Simo (MIT Press, cloth, \$50.00).
8. **Architecture: In Fashion**, ed. Zvi Efrat, Rodolph el-Khoury, Deborah Fausch, Paulette Singley (Princeton Architectural Press, paper, \$17.95).
9. **Culture on the Brink**, Gretchen Bender (Bay Press, paper, \$18.95).
10. **Presence of Mies**, ed. Detlef Mertins (Princeton Architectural Press, paper, \$19.95).

RIZZOLI BOOKSTORES' TOP 10

As of December 28, 1994

1. **Havana la Habana**, George Rigau and Nancy Stout (Rizzoli, paper, \$45.00).
2. **Philip Johnson: The Architect in His Own Words**, Hilary Lewis and John O'Connor (Rizzoli, cloth, \$50.00).
3. **Mexico Houses of the Pacific**, Marie Colle (Alti, cloth, \$65.00).
4. **Villas of Tuscany**, Carlo Cresti (Vendome, cloth, \$85.00).
5. **Antoine Predock**, Brad Collins and Juliette Robbins (Rizzoli, cloth, \$60.00).
6. **New York 1930**, Robert A. M. Stern (Rizzoli, paper, \$49.50).

7. **Architecture of Phillipe Starck**, Franco Bertoni (Academy, cloth, \$60.00).
8. **Roomscapes**, Renzo Mongiardino (Rizzoli, cloth, \$60.00).
9. **Small Luxury Hotels of Europe**, Wendy Black (PBC, cloth, \$42.50).
10. **New York Great Metropolis**, Gerard Wolfe (McGraw, paper, \$19.95).



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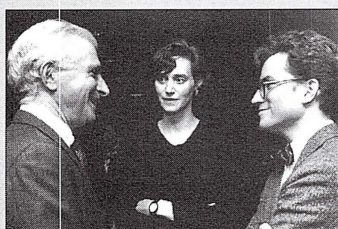
continued from page 2



Marvin Mass and Robert Geddes



Patricia Conway



Robert Klimment, Karen Fairbanks, Mark Wright

The Chapter, as evidenced by the most recent Design Awards program, seems to agree with her. A majority of the awards given were for modest, small-scale projects done in the five boroughs of New York City. "The number of entries doubled this year," said Design Awards chairman Mark Wright of Robert Lamb Hart Architects. "Maybe the word got out that we chose as jurors architects who know cities, work in cities, and know how to work with the infrastructure of cities." Jurors this year included Merrill Elam, Robert Geddes, Craig Hodgetts, and Sheila Kennedy.

Twelve awards went to works in the city, nine of them either commissioned or sponsored by public sector clients. They included the new Stuyvesant High School (Cooper, Robertson & Partners with Gruzen Samton Steinglass), the New York City Transit Authority's R.T.O. Control Center in Queens (Urbahn Associates), and the New York City Parks and Recreation Department's Hamilton Fish Recreation Center (John Ciardullo).

"I was very encouraged by the civic nature of the winners compared to ten years ago," said Robert Geddes, a Princeton architect and professor at New York University. "There's a sea change going on. What's striking is the tender loving care being lavished on the city."

Only one honor award was given in 1994, to John Loomis, AIA, of Kiss Cathcart Anders, for a research study entitled "Manufacturing Communities: Primer for an Empowerment Zone." The study, sponsored in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, analyzes the successful neighborhood of north Williamsburg, Brooklyn, where residential blocks are interspersed with light manufacturing, furniture-making, metal-stamping, water-tank construction, and food distribution.

"The project breaks new ground on several fronts," said Craig Hodgetts. "It begins to look at the reality of where people live and work. Rather than rewriting that area, it attempts to discover what about it is valuable. It's a very thorough inventory of the attributes of a genuine neighborhood."

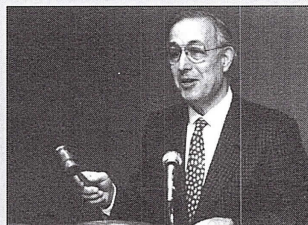
In the interior architecture category, one award went to Smith-Miller + Hawkinson for the 18,000-square-foot Hetrick-Martin Institute, designed for less than \$40 per square foot. The institute, a nonprofit agency serving gay and lesbian youths, combines on one floor the Harvey Milk public school, after-school programs, and emergency counseling services for homeless and HIV-positive teens.

"Our idea, since this was a place for young people on the edge, was to deinstitutionalize the institution, to make it light and transparent. We used clear Lexan plastic to make the walls disappear. The moment you walk in, you should be able to see that the place is accessible. We took the point of view of the visitor, not the administrator," said Henry Smith-Miller.

The 1994 Design Awards are covered more fully in *Annals*, a new Chapter publication that will include photographs and jury deliberations. It is available for \$10 from the Chapter office at 200 Lexington Avenue. For more information, call Judy Rowe at 683-0023, ext. 17.

Departing Remarks

by Bartholomew Voorsanger, FAIA



Bartholomew Voorsanger

What will be remembered about 1994? Several things in my year as Chapter president have been of paramount importance to me. Foremost among them certainly is the choice of Carol Clark as the Chapter's new executive director, following seven years of Lenore Lucey's exemplary service. A long and comprehensive search process, lead by Bruce Fowle,

brought us someone with an extensive background in the architecture and planning of the city who is an ideal candidate to guide the Chapter at this critical point in the economic recovery of the profession. The Board of Directors is looking to Carol to help us increase the Chapter's voice in issues relating to city government, urban planning, the construction industry, and the public sector, areas in which architects must become more vocal and involved.

Another new face at the Chapter this year is Jayne Merkel, former architecture critic of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, who is replacing the talented Suzanne Stephens as editor of *Oculus*. Jayne will carry on *Oculus's* high standards of architectural and journalistic excellence, which will surely be enhanced by Pentagram's vibrant new design for the publication.

I wish Marilyn Taylor the best as she steps into the position of Chapter president.

Inaugural Remarks

by Marilyn Jordan Taylor, AIA



Marilyn Taylor

The past few years have been a difficult time for architects, and I am very glad to see them slipping by.

I believe they are being replaced by a more optimistic spirit, with a dazzling (if easily deceiving) range of architectural commissions abroad

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and solid and challenging work here at home.

We are still a profession, though, whose services are undervalued. We practice in a city that is severely challenged by its very size and by a growing gap between the education of the city's residents and the highly technological marketplace they inhabit. We have lived through decades of significant disinvestment in the city's physical realm. It is up to us to do something about these challenges.

"Design and the Public Realm," the Chapter's theme for 1995, is intended to evoke the sense of responsibility we share for the daily care of the physical and social environment of this city. Regardless of how large or small our projects are, they can and should affect the public realm of the city, the space we all share and from which we can reach out to the rest of the world to welcome immigrants, tourists, investors, and aspiring leaders.

We stand in awe as the French government continues to rebuild Paris, understanding how the spirit of culture and civility represented by the streets, parks, and spaces of its city are of immeasurable value to the commerce of its nation. We, as architects and residents, must be a voice for our own cities, calling for the constant redefinition and regeneration that all cities need. At the Chapter's "The Next New York" conference in October, we asked whether architects are at the table when important decisions are being made about the city. The answer is, not often enough.

We can get there more often though, through our attention to the ways our buildings address and support public space, through our leadership in large-scale planning and urban design projects, and through our involvement in civic activities. I am convinced of the limitations of a one-year term, but I'm very pleased that Bart Voorsanger worked with me to create not only a sense of continuity but also a longer span of time to accomplish our goals. I look forward to the same kind of collaboration with Jerry Davis, the 1996 president, to continue the efforts of the

last year and to represent you in the year to come.

Membership Services

by Barbara Nadel, AIA
Chair, Health Facilities Committee

One of the most valuable benefits of AIA membership is access to an affordable health insurance plan through AIA New York State. In addition to lobbying Albany on behalf of AIA members on a variety of policy issues, AIA New York State offers an excellent plan with GHI through the New York State Business Group, an umbrella organization of professional associations and chambers of commerce in New York State. Unlike other insurance policies, which won't even consider covering small businesses, this plan is an appropriate choice for AIA members who either run small firms or are sole practitioners. And although insurance companies are allowed to ask for rate increases every six months, GHI does not usually do that; its last increase was in July 1994, after 18 months without a rate change.

Some Chapter members have been working with insurance brokers to investigate affordable policies. Those seeking insurance should look around for the plans that best suit their needs. Policies with \$5,000 or \$10,000 deductibles often have lower monthly premiums. The GHI plan, which has reasonable premiums and deductibles, often proves to be a good alternative.

For more information on the GHI plan, call the membership department of the New York State Business Group at 800-456-9724, ext. 117. Be sure to mention you are an AIA member.

Chapter Notes

The Historic District Council's preservation conference will take place Saturday, February 4, at 9:00 am, at the New York School of Interior Design, 170 East 70th Street. Keynote speakers are W. Brown Morton, chair of the depart-

ment of preservation, Mary Washington College, and Donovan D. Rypkema, author of *The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leader's Guide*. For more information, contact Franny Eberhart at 799-5837.

• • •

Grants of up to \$10,000 will be available for architects, designers, and scholars through the architecture, planning, and design program of the New York State Council on the Arts. The grants are awarded for specific projects that advance the field and contribute to the public's understanding of the designed environment. For more information, contact Anne Van Ingen at 387-7013. The application deadline is March 1.

• • •

Bronx borough president Fernando Ferrer was the guest of honor at a Presidents Advisory Committee breakfast on December 13. Ferrer provided some candid observations on both the Bronx and the future of New York City. He said that in 15 years the city will end up in the same state that the Bronx was in ten years ago if key lessons are not learned. He urged investment in the building stock as the means to a strong sense of community, and noted that a commitment to the built environment is a crucial element to the future of the Bronx.

• • •

East Harlem provides a dynamic focus for the lecture and workshop series, "A City of Neighborhoods: Bridging School and Community," cosponsored by the AIA New York Chapter's Learning by Design: NY Committee and the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum. The series, intended for architects, educators, and community activists, is organized into three weekend sessions, which include Friday keynote lectures and Saturday workshops held at neighborhood sites. For more information, call 860-6321.

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Obituary

Christopher Paul Kovach

The young and beloved controller and senior associate of Castro-Blanco, Piscioneri and Associates, Christopher Paul Kovach, died of AIDS on December 12. Kovach, 35, joined the firm in 1982 as an assistant bookkeeper and brought the firm into the computer age with financial management systems that were the envy of the profession. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Kovach received a B.A. in business administration from Case Western University and a B.A. in environmental design from Parsons. He was an associate member of the AIA and a member of the Financial Managers Group.—J.M.

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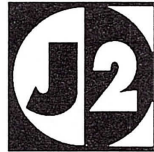
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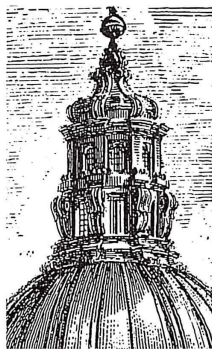
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