John Hejduk on Broadway

Inherited Ideologies in Philadelphia

Hard Times for Housing

Paperless Studio at Columbia

Diller + Scofidio in Japan plus Flesh, “Feed,” Overexposed, and Indigestion
from Carol Clark, executive director. Welcome to the newly redesigned "Oculus." A year ago, the Board asked Michael Gerick of Pentagram to produce a bold, new graphic design for the Chapter’s publications, and the AIA New York City Directory of Architecture Firms and Annals were the first products to reflect the Chapter’s new look. Editor Jayne Merkel, along with members of the Oculus Committee, worked closely with the graphic designer, whose contribution of design services to the Chapter is very much appreciated. The goal of the redesign is to make Oculus more lively, readable, and graphically stimulating. Adding the red ink and expanding to a 24-page format adds to our production costs, and we plan to offset that with additional advertising pages that will appear in the September issue. Please send us a note to let us know what you think of Oculus’s new appearance.

"Coping with Capital Budget Cuts" will be the topic of the June 15 George S. Lewis public policy discussion. At the local, state, and federal levels of government, funding for necessary new construction, renovation, and maintenance is being reduced dramatically, and the net result will no doubt be a decline in New York City’s quality of life. It is clearly critical to architects as professionals that adequate resources be directed to public buildings and infrastructure. When one-third of those resources are being eliminated, as is happening now—despite intense lobbying by the Chapter and its members in Albany and at City Hall—a palpable deterioration in the cityscape will be visible. To seek alternatives to this bleak prospect, new and creative approaches to capital financing must be explored. Panelists will discuss capital funding mechanisms and the means of adopting a comprehensive approach to capital planning at the state and city levels. The session will take place on Thursday, June 15, from 8:00 to 10:00 am at 200 Lexington Avenue, sixteenth floor. Please be sure to call the Chapter at 683-0023, ext. 16, if you plan to attend.

Due to the slowdown in capital spending, many public building projects that have been designed will not be completed. The Chapter’s forthcoming exhibition, "Civic New York: Design Excellence in Recent Public Architecture," includes a significant number of noteworthy projects that are not likely to be constructed and others whose fates are undecided. Nearly 400 entries by public agencies and architects working in the public sector have been winnowed to a representative sample that best illustrates the design quality and breadth of public archtiecture in New York City during the last decade. The Chapter thanks J. Max Bond, Jr., FAIA, Davis, Brody & Associates; Hugh Hardy, FAIA, Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates; and Deborah Dietsch, editor of Architecture, for serving on the exhibition’s Selection Committee and choosing excellent projects from a strong field of submissions. A symposium will be held in conjunction with the exhibit, thanks to the generous support of the American Architectural Foundation and the McGraw-Hill Construction Information Group.
IN THE STREETS Caps

What a Difference a Building Can Make:
Dance Theatre of Harlem
by Wendy Moonan

Last October, when the Dance Theatre of Harlem opened the $7.5 million expansion of its headquarters and school at 466 West 152nd Street, the community and the press praised the jazzy design by Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates. What no one anticipated was the difference that a good building can make in Harlem.

The 13,000-square-foot renovation and addition, which has bold stripes of black-and-white glazed ceramic mosaic block and colorful synthetic shingles set into an African-style textile pattern, “makes it possible for the DTH to show itself off,” said the recently retired executive director, Charmaine Jefferson, who was once a dancer with the company. “On weekends, we can bring in more people — up to 500 three-to-five-year-olds for classes — in addition to our 1,400 regular students. After class, parents used to wait for their kids in their cars on the street; now we actually have a place where they can sit down. We have kitchen facilities. We have a library. And we can have a staff conference without going to someone’s house.”

Better yet, the new building seems to remove fears of coming to Harlem. The company had a street festival last fall and now holds popular open houses one Sunday a month, with performances by students and established artists. And the cheerful playground that the architects installed in the vacant lot next door is already a neighborhood hangout for future basketball stars. “It dispels the notion that nothing positive happens in Harlem,” Jefferson said.

Donors from New Jersey and Connecticut are visiting the school. The marketing offices have moved from Midtown to the headquarters. “Now we’re working on holding our fall fund-raising gala at the school instead of a hotel downtown,” she added.

And last March, executives from Disney Studios held auditions at the school for one of their shows — the first time the company has come to Harlem to do auditions. “That’s the capacity this building has given us,” Jefferson said.

“It does more than just be a building; it radiates out into the community,” said Hugh Hardy, who converted a garage for the school’s first building in 1971.

John Hejduk’s Conciliator on Madison Square
by Jayne Merkel

Just when idiosyncratic 23rd Street was about to become a Business Improvement District, a character from John Hejduk’s Berlin Masque turned up in the triangular traffic island across from the Flatiron Building to save the place from civic improvement. Powerful as the haunting presence of The Conciliator is, it is unlikely to prevail against the welcome forces of gentrification at work in the Flatiron district.

For one thing, the clothespin-like creature who arrived March 9 is likely to be dismantled early this month, just when it begins to become part of the scene. And when it first arrived to weave its eerie magic, it was upstaged by — of all things — a cluttering oil derrick on the edge of the park that slightly exceeded The Conciliator’s 18-foot height. But this busy mechanical appurtenance of about the same size did make the quiet, dark solidity of the strong, silent creature appear all the more mysterious by contrast.

Characters from Hejduk’s dreamy urban dramas have been cropping up in public squares around the world since members of the Architectural Association built Collapse of Time in London in 1986. This one, the first to appear in Hejduk’s hometown, was originally conceived in 1984. It was realized by two of his former students, Martin Finio and Kevin Fischer, graduates of the architecture school at Cooper Union where their mentor is now dean. They raised the money to build it from the New York State Council on the Arts. “21” International Holdings, Knoll International, Cabezon Design, Lee H. Skolnick and Paul Alter, Sidnum Petrone Architect, and Sweeney Walter Associates. It is dedicated to the memory of Deborah Norden.

Constructed of wood and painted a steely, almost purple, black, Finio and Fischer’s Conciliator has a pair of abstract spouts on the side like little ears and a long, detached, wedge-shaped structure in front, instead of the ramps that lead up to the original from both sides. At the creature’s core, a kind of open confessional where negotiations presumably take place, they have placed an I-beam-like wedge, a reference to the Flatiron Building, an early (1902) steel-framed skyscraper. The I-beam also bisects the faces of viewers who make contact through the core and pays homage to the founder of the Cooper Union, Peter Cooper, an inventor and industrialist who first manufactured rolled steel beams in this country.

Let us hope that even if The Conciliator moves to a permanent home in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, as expected, when 23rd Street is prepared for mass consumption the creature’s quixotic presence will remain along with the ghosts of London Terrace actors, Chelsea Hotel eccentrics, Toy Center teddy bears, Kenmore Hotel vagrants, and the other assorted characters who have given this place real character.
Field Reports
by Matthew Barkhydt

On May 10, the Parks and Recreation Department sought approval from the city’s Franchise and Concession Review Committee to sign a “sole-source agreement” with a German firm, Pomp Duck & Circumstance, to create a dinner theater-circus on a portion of DeWitt Clinton Park, a scrappy, poorly maintained piece of land between 52nd and 54th streets, and 11th Avenue and the West Side Highway. In exchange for substantial improvements to the park, the Parks Department will grant the company a one-time concession to set up a circus tent structure that will occupy approximately one-half of an existing ballfield between September 15, 1995, and April 17, 1996. Despite initial opposition to the proposal, Community Board 4 voted to approve the project in a close vote on April 5. Opposition members of the board issued a letter of objection to Joanne Imohiosen, assistant to the board, signed by Robert Kandel and two other members. Ballfield between September 15, 1995, and April 17, 1996. Despite initial opposition to the proposal, Community Board 4 voted to approve the project in a close vote on April 5. Opposition members of the board issued a letter of objection to Joanne Imohiosen, assistant to the board, signed by Robert Kandel and two other members.

Contrary to the impression created by recent news reports, the $21.5 million released by Congress for Penn Station is not for continued design work for the Eighth Avenue Post Office terminal development. This money is strictly for upgrading existing facilities at the Seventh Avenue complex, including ADA compliance and new retail. On a related note, RTKL Associates has replaced Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum as architect for this new retail work.

Ground was broken on April 4 for the controversial Soho Grand hotel, designed by Hellmuth Architects. Located on a formerly vacant lot at 310 West Broadway, between Grand and Canal streets, the 15-story, predominantly brick building will contain 370 mid-priced rooms and suites. Local residents have voiced concern that a project this size will alter the character of the area. Aero Studios is the interior design firm; construction is to be completed by the end of 1996.

Norman Rosenfeld Architects breaks ground this June for a 37,000-square-foot renovation that will double the size of the Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn. The first-floor emergency center will be divided into an acute-care area for trauma, cardiac, pediatric, orthopedic, and psychiatric patients and a separate fast-track treatment area for less serious cases, a concept developed by the firm in the 1980s, to provide care away from the frenzy.

Work also begins this month on renovation of language classrooms, a learning center, and science laboratories at the Hewitt School on East 75th Street in Manhattan, where the firm recently completed a $1.7 million addition linking the school’s two existing buildings. Both projects were part of a master plan Rosenfeld prepared for the school in 1983.

The United States Senate recently confirmed the appointment of Arthur Rosenblatt, FAIA, to the National Museum Services Board. Rosenblatt, who served as First Deputy Commissioner of Parks under Mayor John Lindsay and as vice director and vice president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art under Thomas Hoving, was nominated by President Clinton. A former New York Chapter AIA president, he served as director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., director of capital projects for the New York Public Library, and recently as vice president of the Grand Central Partnership and the 34th Street Partnership, and associate director of the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation. He is currently advising the Museo de Arte de Ponce in Ponce, Puerto Rico, and the government of Puerto Rico on a new museum in Santurce.

At Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, Buttrick White & Burtis has designed a contextual new wing for the Pub that subtly redefines the entrance to the building and strengthens the campus edge. The addition contains a new kitchen and 75-seat dining room for 24-hour-a-day service.

The 1995 Urban Design Award was presented to Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates at the National AIA convention the weekend of May 5. The firm’s Temple Israel in Dayton, Ohio, was dedicated the same weekend.

The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) has extended the time allocated for Division B: Site Design (Graphic) for the Architect Registration Examination. Beginning with the June 1995 test, candidates will have three hours and fifteen minutes to complete this section, rather than two hours and forty-five minutes. NCARB made the change because studies indicated candidates were having difficulty completing the six vignettes in the allotted time.

The Architectural Woodwork Institute (AWI) has begun a National Architectural Woodwork Quality Certification Program (QCP). For more information, contact the AWI, 13924 Braddock Rd., Suite 100, Centreville, Virginia 22020-1910, 703-222-1100.

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Six finalists have been chosen by the United States Department of State to participate in a design competition for the new United States Embassy in Berlin. Lead designers and other members of the firms — Bohlin Cywinski Jackson with Sverdrup Corporation; Einhorn Yaffee Prescott Architecture and Engineering with Venturi Scott Brown and Associates, Inc.; Kallman McKinnell & Wood Architects Inc.; Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates; Moore Ruble Yudell Architects & Planners with Gruen Associates; and Robert A. M. Stern Architects in association with Leo Jackson with Sverdrup Corporation; — attended a kickoff meeting on April 10 in Berlin, where they toured the city and met with local officials.

Selecting a winner will be the final step in a process that began last year when the Department of State Office of Foreign Buildings announced a national, open call for entrants. Interested architecture firms were required to submit a portfolio of the office’s and lead designer’s past work, as well as evidence of past performance (a process modeled on the GSA’s design excellence program). The firms that made the short-list had to submit Brooks Act Forms 254 and 255 for each prospective team member, including all consultants. The six finalists were picked after firms that made the short-list had toured the city and met with local officials.

A joint venture of Robert A. M. Stern Architects (New York) and Rosser International (Georgia) has been awarded the design of a new federal courthouse in Savannah, Georgia, by the General Services Administration. Robert A. M. Stern, FAIA, will be the lead designer on the project; Rosser International will provide architectural, engineering, and project management services. Savannah architect and chair of the Savannah Historic District Board of Review, Linda Ramsay, AIA, of Ramsay Sherrill Architects, will serve as a consultant to the design team.

"Inherited Ideologies: A Reexamination"

by Sharon Hoar and Claire Weiss

In March 31 and April 1, a crowd of young architects gathered to register for a conference held at the University of Pennsylvania. They came to see a large roster of eminent scholars and architects — women whose work ranged from cutting-edge critical theory, to primary research, to building practice — scrutinize the structures that dictate prevailing architectural ideology.

The initial idea for the conference came from a discussion group of New York practitioners organized by architect Beverly Willis, FAIA. The group envisioned "a dialogue, with half of the participants presenting a thesis or built work, and the other half extending that thesis, commenting on it, or shifting the perspective."

The diverse yet overlapping concerns of organizers and participants represented the wide range of work practiced by architects today. Patricia Conway (formerly of Kohn Pedersen Fox Conway, now professor of architecture at the University of Pennsylvania) chaired the event and secured its funding as part of the Annenberg Public Policy Center’s 1994–95 series of conferences on “Women and the Public Sphere.”

Joan Ockman, director of the Buell Center at Columbia, explored the representation of gender in post World War II architecture, comparing Lever House, the strong, silent type, to Levittown and its nostalgic imagery. She noted that gender stereotypes narrowed as men came to be seen as consumers, too, and technology moved out of a hard, mechanical age into a soft, electronic era.

Denise Scott Brown agreed, adding that changing patterns of work further blurred the distinction, but argued for a more nuanced reading of Levittown. Princeton professor Christine Boyer criticized current urbanists’ readings of Los Angeles as Femme Fatale, Beatriz Colomina, also of Princeton, ingeniously redressed Le Corbusier’s appropriation of the work of Eileen Grey. Columbia’s Mary McLeod dealt with issues in recent architectural ideology by looking at the mismatch between formal and political subversion. Susana Torre, director of Cranbrook Academy, and Zeynep Celik, professor at NJIT, discussed the "gender-based fragments of public life carved into the urban fabric" by examining political protests in urban spaces in Argentina and Algeria.

Some presenters described their ideas by showing actual or proposed projects. Diana Agrest presented a project for China Basin, San Francisco, “The Return of (the Repressed) Nature,” in the context of her ongoing reevaluation of the constructs of nature and culture in an effort to understand architecture and the city. Lynne Breslin showed recent work questioning the relationship between the viewer and the exhibit. Marian Weiss lucidly described the influence of politics, individual power, and the status quo on the design process for the National Women’s War Memorial, which she has been co-commissioned to design.

Notable among the respondents was Columbia professor Lauretta Vinciarelli, who responded to Yale professor Esther De Costa Meyer’s “La Donna E mobile?,” which addressed the fear of public spaces. Vinciarelli cited the case of Melrose Commons (see p. 12), where returning control to the women who use the building is paramount to their self-defense. Diane Lewis, professor at Cooper Union, responded to Catherine Ingraham by suggesting alternatives to the idea that “a picture is worth a thousand words” to describe the relationship between language and architecture.

Ghislaine Hermanus, professor at City College, described her work with community groups to encourage recognition of the household economy as a source of empowerment with the potential to create and change communities. In the final exchange of the two days, professors Leslie Kanes Weisman, of NJIT, and Sharon Sutton, of the University of Michigan, explored the “risks of education for social change.”

The “Inherited Ideologies” conference was historic in its use of recent scholarship on gender and feminism to present a comprehensive discussion of women’s influence on public space. One of the most immediately convincing results of the weekend was its demonstration of women’s importance in articulating critical discourse on architecture and the city. One can only hope that the texts will be published in book form posthaste.

Sharon Hoar, an architect, is acting chair of the department of architecture and environmental design at Parsons School of Design. Claire Weiss has an architectural practice in New York.
The snakelike models of a housing block Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio carry around in kind of flute case are not—like most of their work—destined for exhibition. They describe a real housing project that will be built by the prefectural government in Gifu, Japan, in the next three years.

Diller is one of four women selected by Arata Isozaki to build 430 units of social housing in the modern city of half a million an hour or so west of Tokyo. The others are Christine Halley of England, and Kazuyo Sejima and Akiko Takahashi, both of Japan. Scofidio and Peter Cook, Halley’s partner, are allowed to come along for the ride.

“It was an attempt to bring Western feminism into Japan,” Diller explained. But the housing regulations, earthquake codes, and budget left little room for gendered expression. “In the end, the question became, How do you make livable space that is also controllable when the space allotments are poor?”

The units in the Gifu Kitagata apartments, with a dining room–kitchen and a big subdividable room, average about 800 square feet. “The whole project is caught between Japanese and Western housing norms (introduced in the postwar housing nearby). It’s caught between generations and cultures,” Diller said.

“A lot of the families don’t have furniture. They sleep on a futon folded up in a closet and eat on a mat,” Scofidio explained. But the younger families tend to have furniture. So Diller + Scofidio designed rooms with pivoting walls that can be arranged either way. Even the kitchen cabinets pivot to separate the kitchen from the dining space or move against the wall to join them.

The architectural innovations come in the arrangement of their 107 units on the site. Fifteen vertical stacks, with seven units each, interlock at a 1.5 degree angle, so each stack has its own identity. The complex as a whole
The concrete-framed structures wear diaphanous overlapping scales, made of perforated metal screening, which hang flat on the north facade, shielding the ramps from weather, and fold open in sections on the south to admit air and sunlight or close to screen direct sun.

Tiny models of Diller + Scofidio's Gifu Kitagata apartments fit into a long, thin case with drawings that roll out like a window shade. Bigger cases for large study models were designed to fit into the overhead compartment of a 747.
The book's preface, Alan Colquhoun shows how the introduction of phenomenology and structuralism into architectural discourse called into question the modernist idea that "we are in an absolutely new situation in which all practices and institutions inherited from the past are at best irrelevant." He says Machado and Silvetti's work belongs to a conflicting tradition that maintains "the transition to modernity should be evolutionary rather than revolutionary, so as to preserve cultural values." In other essays, Rodolphe el-Khoury discusses "technique" in the work of the two Harvard professors, George Baird considers its "Publicness and Monumentality," Fares el-Dahdah analyzes "affect," and Michael Hays investigates "meaning."

The architects themselves conclude with an argument for architecture as built work, "contrary to what is broadly proposed today." They write, "to insist on the erosion of disciplinary boundaries is to foreclose on the more radical difference of architecture as one in a field of social practices." So Machado's emphasis on built work in the talk was consistent with the book's purpose. He discussed the firm's Seaside mixed-use complex in Florida, designed in 1990 and finally under construction, the ongoing master plan for Princeton University, and the viewing platform at the closest point to the Statue of Liberty in Lower Manhattan.

At Princeton the architects established an axis behind Nassau Hall to order the growth of the campus to the south and tie it to the original center. They also created a new oval down by the fields and reinforced it, not with curved buildings, but with straight walls, more or less aligned around it.

Machado's presentation of the South Park Pavilion showed the many evolutions of the scheme from a gateway with colossal columns, to a wall with colossal pilasters, to a colossal brick wall, "like a Roman wall with its revetment peeled off." The final solution, under construction now, acknowledges the gigantic scale of the Statue and the nearby World Trade Center and ironically refers to the impossible archaeology of the artificial landfill site.

At the stage in life when most world-famous architects are exercising on their laurels, Tigerman is concentrating his efforts in this city. He showed slides of himself holed up in a neighborhood where guns were going off with Maddox, a socially active interior designer, a handful of idealistic Archeworks students, and teachers from a day-care center, designing a rooftop day-care center playground. "In this neighborhood it is too dangerous for kids to go outside," he explained. A conga line of two-dimensional beasties — part lizard, part snake, part dragon — danced around the edge of the play area, forming a fence. They exuded the menacing wit and imagistic power Tigerman can command, but he disparaged the design. At Archeworks, even design is suspect.

Although its agenda is pragmatic and social, rather than theoretical and esoteric, Archeworks is as given to questioning every...
assumption as any academic ivory tower. It may inspire students to devote their work to social change, but unless its founders are willing to compromise their political correctness long enough to show them how, the students may never be able to give their clients an environment that evens the score the way Tigerman’s lively Library for the Blind does.

Dolores Hayden at Columbia
The architect and revisionist historian Dolores Hayden has also taken to the streets. In the final lecture of the Buell Center’s “Collective Criticism” series on April 7, she showed projects she has been working on since the early 1980s, when she was teaching at UCLA. She is now professor of architecture at Yale.

The Los Angeles projects, described in The Power of Place, Urban Landscapes as Public History (Cambridge: MIT Press, 280 pages, 112 illustrations, 7 x 10, $25.00 paper), represent a logical step in Hayden’s progression, by bringing history directly into the city by creating monuments. “No one has yet written a new history of Los Angeles, but traditional histories have been augmented. I was looking for ways for students to take something back into their communities,” she said.

Hayden’s The Grand Domestic Revolution (MIT, 1981) told of utopian and feminist contributions to the history of the American home; her Redesigning the American Dream (Norton, 1984) suggested how earlier ideas might liberate houses in our time. The recent projects attempt to resurrect histories of Native Americans, Mexicans, African Americans, Japanese, and women, who have been left out of standard accounts in the places where they made their contributions.

On the site of the home of Biddy Mason—a slave who came West with her masters, sued for her freedom, became a midwife, and raised a family—in what is now downtown L.A., Hayden and a team of women created a commemorative wall where people come to take pictures of themselves in front of pictures of Biddy and her progeny.

In Little Tokyo, being redeveloped now, one of her students projected images from the American internment camps for Japanese citizens onto the walls of a new building. “One of the things we wanted to do was redevelop redevelopment,” she said, referring to the American tendency to erase the past with each new wave of building.

Frank Gehry at the American Academy of Rome
At the ceremony for the Rome Prize on April 21, architect Henry Cobb presented the Academy’s highest honor, the Centennial Medal, not to a classical scholar, art historian, or even classicizing artist, but to Frank Gehry, who lectured on three of his recent projects in the Metropolitan Club’s neo-Baroque halls.

As usual, Gehry simply showed slides of work in progress, explaining that he was disappointed to learn, when he worked with energy experts on the campus-like Bad Oyenhausen Energy Center in Germany, “that there really isn’t much we know.”

The main idea for the unbelievably complicated Guggenheim Museum in Bilboa, Spain, was developed in ten days for a competition. “I love ten-day competitions, because you don’t have to blow your brains out on presentation,” he said. Almost rectangular galleries surround a central space composed of twisted vaults and cavernous nodes like those in Fritz Lang’s Metropolis. The clients, daunted by the challenge of the Frank Lloyd Wright interiors in New York, wanted simpler spaces in the exhibition areas. One is longer than a football field and rather boat-shaped, but the galleries will be almost square when subdivided.

The clients also wanted a tower. “I thought the tower should be designed by an artist, but they wanted me to do it. I had a bad time, because there was no function for it, and as artsy as I may seem, I’m still very conventional about that,” he confessed. He explained that he works “like a tailor, cutting out two or three models at once at various scales. That thing in my office that looks like a dentist’s drill hooks up to a computer and makes drawings from the biggest model. I don’t like the computer drawings very much—this one is for the metal skin—but the computer allows us to control costs. With this software (designed for the Mirage fighter jets) we are able to order the materials in the exact quantities, in the exact shape. The steel came out 18 percent below budget.” The museum will be sheathed in titanium, copper, and plaster.

An office building in Prague next door to Vaclav Havel’s house is to be made largely of prefabricated panels. Designing two towers on one corner, Gehry realized a neighbor’s window had been obstructed, so he pinched the tall, thin cylinder in the middle to clear the view. The shapely tower with a little waistline soon became known locally as Ginger, the straight, plainer one called Fred. But the joke led to resentment about the design. “They accused me of bringing Hollywood glitz to Prague,” Gehry said. “Soon there was a hearing with four people for it and four against. It happened to coincide with the Pritzker Prize ceremony, and Ada Louise Huxtable and Irving Lavin and his wife were there. I said I had nothing of the sort in mind. Irving Lavin’s hand went up, and he said, ‘Architects don’t know what they are talking about. Of course it’s Fred and Ginger, and they’re making love on the banks of the river.’ Two people from the con side went over to the pro.”
"I think we really know what we have to do, and we’re just not getting the public support to do it,” Herbert Oppenheimer acknowledged in a lunchtime conversation with a group of architects. Architects have known what to do—or at least what not to do—for more than 20 years. In 1973 the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies and the Urban Development Corporation studied low-rise, high-density alternatives to the prevailing Corbusian tower-in-the-park, showed them at the Museum of Modern Art, published them, and built prototypes at the Marcus Garvey Park Village in Brownsville, Brooklyn. Ted Liebman, an author of that study, is still building good housing on that model. The low-rise, high-density concept has been fine-tuned over the years. More attention is paid to context now. More “new” housing is carved out of old. More social services are added.

Ironically, government support began to erode at just about the time architects figured out what to do. With the deceptively-named Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, the Nixon administration legalized its attempts to dismantle federal housing programs established in the 1930s. Since that time, as information about how to build good low-cost housing has accumulated, governmental resistance to providing it has increased. Recent budget cuts merely accelerate a trend.

Giving Up

Although there is little evidence that a majority of Americans favor complete retreat, even in normally
liberal, resilient New York people began to give up a couple of years ago. Pete Hamill captured the mood of the hour in a New York magazine feature, “How to Save the Homeless and Ourselves.” He wrote: “New Yorkers don’t want to hear much about the homeless anymore. They don’t want to hear the sad and terrible tales of Jimmy G., 37, or Sherone P., 29. They don’t want to read interviews with men who live in cardboard boxes. They don’t want to hear any more prison-yard raps. They don’t want to listen to any more sad songs.” Whether it was because they had their own sad songs to sing, had heard too many tales that didn’t ring true, were tired of being accosted by beggars, or were just overwhelmed by their numbers, by the fall of 1993 when Hamill’s piece appeared, homelessness had ceased to be defined as a housing problem. The visible homeless were assumed to be mentally ill, drug dependent, or both, and in need of medical treatment. Their problem — the problem all around us — no longer seemed to require architectural solutions. The main innovation in housing was provision for social services.

Although students in the schools still design some housing, the sense of urgency that accompanied the homeless crisis in the 1980s gradually died down, along with the exhibitions, competitions, and housing activities it had generated. With the real estate market depressed, the cost of housing even ceased to dominate New York dinner conversation.

The politicians who swept into power last November interpreted the 1994 election results as a mandate for massive cuts in housing, education, and welfare. Growing concern with deficit spending tightened budgets further. And slow economic recovery in New York made the situation here even worse. However, as federal support has fallen and the number of housing units created in New York has declined from a high of 60,031 in 1963 to a low of 5,510 in 1993 (the last year for which figures are available), whole areas of the devastated South Bronx and northern Brooklyn have been rebuilt. New funding mechanisms have been invented. And successful means of creating community-based low-income housing have been devised.

### New York as Housing Laboratory

his city has become the “world’s largest and most diverse laboratory for testing innovative strategies in housing development and finance,” according to the New York City Housing Partnership’s Building in Partnership: A Blueprint for Urban Housing Programs. The report by the partnership’s president, Kathryn Wylde, notes that the city has spent $3.6 million on low-income housing during the last eight years, while the number of units has continued to decline. But most of the money has gone into restoration of properties taken over for nonpayment of taxes, and the City Planning Department’s figures on unit creation only count new construction (subsidized and market rate). Since 1986, New York has produced 50,000 apartments — more than all other cities in the country combined.

The city’s Department of Housing Preservation and Development is trying to transfer the 30,000 housing units it has acquired to nonprofit organizations, private developers, or tenants. But a trip through many city neighborhoods reveals the almost incredible difference rehabilitation efforts have made. What the Twin Parks projects of the 1970s were not able to accomplish with the architectural talent of Richard Meier and Giovanni Pasanella, modest renovations of ordinary, mid-rise, vaguely Deco, street-hugging apartment buildings have done throughout the South Bronx. They dramatically turned the ravaged area around.

### The New Contextualism

The best new housing in the neighborhood, like the Liebman Melting Partnership’s simply-handled, eight-story Crotona Terrace, fits in among its older neighbors almost imperceptibly, lining the western edge of Crotona Park, maintaining the streetline, and opening to a protected garden and play area in the rear. Only the lighter brick, obvious newness, and crisp Moderne detailing, providing a little more sense of facade, sets apart the 52-unit building, which the National Association of Home Builders selected as the “Best Affordable Multifamily Project” in 1995.

Liebman and Melting have designed more innovative new housing elsewhere in New York, with individualized units grouped around usable interior courtyards...
with separate entrances and underground parking, but Crotona Terrace is noteworthy for drawing on an established type in the neighborhood and modernizing it economically.

**Suburbanization**

Although Liebman deplores the fact that “a lot of the housing that is getting built is under – built — two- and three-story town houses in places with urban infrastructure where higher densities would be more appropriate,” the contextual approach would not have made sense 20 years ago when many older buildings were in ruins. He recognizes that “in the 1970s there was a need to demonstrate that something could be built in burned-out areas,” but finds it unfortunate that “Charlotte Gardens became the example. I think the trend is getting back to building urban housing, but a lot of the good urban land has been used up.”

It does seem wasteful for the little aluminum-sided houses at Charlotte Gardens of 1983 to 1987 to sprawl over urban land. But these well-kept houses, which their owners see as “a little bit of Long Island in the Bronx,” were vital important when they were built, for they represented a new beginning. The buildings that have grown up around them have become increasingly more dense. Coupled with rehab, they create a mixed urban fabric not unlike that of continuously valued older neighborhoods.

**Reurbanization**

The next step in the reurbanization of the South Bronx was Beyer Blinder Belle’s Crotona Mapes Renewal Project of 1985, 200 simple, brick-clad infill row houses distributed on vacant sites over seven separate blocks around 182nd Street and Prospect Avenue. Perhaps a testament to their success is the fact that the houses don’t look as if they were designed by architects. The owners have added florid Latino decoration. And while the houses – or buildings like them – served as inspiration for the seas of church-sponsored Nehemiah Houses in Brooklyn, by subtly improving their blocks they made possible increasingly dense development in their own neighborhoods.

Now, farther south, near the Bronx Center, where some vacant lots and abandoned buildings still exist, Magnusson Architects is soliciting bids from developers for Melrose Commons, a 100-unit complex with “four-story town houses, two-family homes along a midblock mews, cooperative housing for single mothers above a day-care center, a six- to eight-story mixed-use building, existing residential buildings, parking, and open space.” The project, which has already won numerous awards, was planned in collaboration with the Comité Nos Quedamos (We Stay Community), the Bronx Planning Office, the Office of Bronx Borough President Ferrer, and the city’s Department of Housing Preservation and Development. The Melrose Commons housing is part of an urban design plan, with commercial space and community facilities, developed with the people from the neighborhood, Jonathan Barnett, and the Regional Plan Association.

Magnusson’s role in the creation of this town-within-a-town began with a less dense project a few blocks away, which his firm designed for the New York Housing Partnership. Melrose Houses, 52 crisp and colorful units, ranging from two-family row houses to twelve-family buildings, was completed in 1989. The evolution toward increased surface coverage, community involvement, and integrated urban design at Melrose Commons is sought throughout New York now.

**Reconsidering the Tower in the Park**

Every aspect of current housing practice represents a reaction to the typical high-rise public housing project of the immediate post-war period. But even anonymous, isolated modern towers have been more successful in New York than in other places, partly because high-rise living has been the housing of choice here since the 1920s and partly because of the unusually successful management record of the New York City Housing Authority, which houses 450,000 registered tenants and an estimated actual population of 600,000, because families in public housing often double up.

The Authority is now building or upgrading community centers at the projects to compensate for earlier omissions in services and even some architectural errors of the 1950s or 1960s. “We did a survey of the 102 centers the NYCHA operates and found that some just needed air-conditioning and ADA improvements, some needed expansion, and finally there were those developments where there wasn’t any space at all,” explained architect David Burney, director of design at the Authority. “Every year we apply to HUD for funding for physical improvements. Last year we had $435 million. This year we got more than that, but some may be recaptured by Congress.”

For this year’s program he selected three respected New York firms – Agrest and Gandelosnas Architects; Herbert Beckhard Frank Richlan & Associates; and Prentice & Chan, Ohlhausen – to design centers at projects in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Brooklyn at the Melrose Houses, Willie Mays Center, and Van Dyke Houses. Each new youth recreation center will be used by residents in surrounding areas until all eight of the proposed centers are open. Every center, mainly for young people, will have a gymnasium, arts-and-crafts room, and audiovisual and computer room.

“Ours is in the middle of Brownsville, at the Van Dyke Houses, a classic Housing Authority project of that period, where all the buildings have extrusions. The context is a superblock on a massive scale, so we made an enormous frame and tried to
reestablish a center,” Rolf Olshausen said. “Every firm’s problem and response was very different.”

Oppenheimer, Brady & Vogelstein is working on several classic postwar projects, restoring the late 1940s Rangel Houses on the old Polo Grounds, adding a light-filled lobby with ceramic tiles decorated by children and senior citizens to SOM’s Abraham Lincoln Houses in Harlem, and in Jersey City, where some towers were torn down, adding infill town houses and helping the Housing Authority convert properties to tenant management.

The Return of the SRO

As if to bring housing history full circle, single room occupancy hotels are on the rise, since homelessness mushroomed after the old ones were torn down. The new ones, of course, provide safe, sanitary rooms with supportive social services. Some have been created in historic buildings like the Times Square Hotel, remodeled by Becker & Becker for Common Ground, and the old Gouverneur Hospital, redesigned by Peter Wolf with Beth Cooper for Community Access. Others are new buildings that draw on current ideas in hotel design.

As architect of the St. Regis renovation and the prototype for Sheraton’s all-suite hotels, Brennan Beer Gorman brought an extensive knowledge of hotel planning to the Webster Avenue Houses, a 200-room single room occupancy hotel for women the firm recently completed in the Bronx as a prototype for the city’s Department of General Services. But as Henry Brennan explained, “Because the project developed just after some other SROs had opened, we were able to learn from their mistakes.” They arranged the rooms in clusters of eight with their own entrances and lounges to create a sense of family, and they placed bathrooms between every pair of rooms, so that residents did not have to share them with eight neighbors. They also increased the number of meeting rooms, workrooms, and social service facilities – and did all this below the budget of $155 per square foot, because of York-Hunter’s efficient design-build construction management.

On East Fourth Street on the Lower East Side, Amie Gross Architect designed a handsome, cream-colored brick and patterned ceramic tile, six-story apartment building that combines 22 single rooms for formerly homeless, mentally ill men with 22 apartments for families, which met with surprising social success when it opened last year.

Housing as Critique

All exemplary recent housing has grown out of earlier errors. Whether this progress can be sustained despite cuts is anybody’s guess, but funding innovations have developed almost as continuously as architectural ones.

“In the future there will be significantly less money available from the federal government for housing,” according to the Department of City Planning’s director of housing, economic, and infrastructure planning, Eric Kober. But some new HUD proposals allow tenants more control and relax regulations that have caused problems for the city, like the one that requires the Housing Authority to give preference to the poorest of the poor, imposing financial strain and upsetting the balance of tenants.

“Because the city has very limited resources to compensate for the lost federal aid, it will try to minimize the impact by insuring that unnecessary rules that increase costs are eliminated,” Kober said.

The Commissioner of the city’s Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Deborah Wright, said at a recent City Club forum: “We’re getting leaner and trying to get more efficient.” One way they want to do that is to stop being a landlord.

“Ten years ago Mayor Koch appropriated $5 billion to build housing in the most devastated areas. The results are visible in over 50 neighborhoods. But the bad news is that our property management costs take up two-thirds of our operating budget and almost a third of our capital.” They will have to develop some very creative strategies to make much of this unprofitable property attractive to private or nonprofit owners. Mayor Giuliani has allocated $4.2 billion to continue construction over the next decade, with decreases over the next three years from $370 million to $314 million in 1997, and increases later, assuming economic recovery.

New incentives are also needed to encourage private investment in low-income housing. The best new is the FHA loan guarantee for renting 20 percent of the units in new market-rate buildings to low-income tenants, according to Stan Brodsky, the largest private developer in the city. But he said the FHA rules are so restrictive, with maximum and minimum limits, that of the 10,000 applications he received for Manhattan West, “we’ll be lucky if 250 qualify.”

Streamlining Regulations

As New York magazine suggested on April 24, New York real estate is rebounding, at least at the upper levels, there may be hope for private sector housing creation to offset public curtailments. But if the rebound is merely a sign of the growing income disparity here, even that hope will be dashed. In either event, a serious critique of the regulations governing building practice is long overdue.

As the executive director of the Community Housing Improvement Program, Dan Margulies, pointed out at the City Club forum: “The Resource Guide to the Land Use and Development Approval Process in New York, the 652-page book the state puts out to help people build here, begins: ‘Building in New York requires the persistence of Sisyphus, the patience of Job, and the strength of Zeus. The development process is contentious, occasionally combative, and usually unpredictable. It takes a toll on all those involved in it, including regulators and affected neighborhoods or communities, as well as builders.’ Need we say more?
HARD TIMES FOR HOUSING

How Not To Design Housing by Tracie Rozhon

A
rchitects who design subsidized housing had better know what to expect: Pitfalls include lavishing too many details on buildings with meager budgets and disregarding the people who live there. So say architects who make at least part of their reputations by working with government, and executives at not-for-profit housing groups who spend most of their time with architects.

R
ichard Dame, now designing innovative clusters of cottages for troubled youths at the Leake and Watts Children's Home in Yonkers, said he tells architects to lead with "one grand yet simple gesture, rather than frittering away too much money on details: too bold a form, imprecise detailing, expensive materials - any one will absorb your budget." When dealing with bureaucracies, he added, "Approvals may go on for years; get other work."

A
rchitects want to be brilliant and get their work published, he said, "but you're not going to do a Richard Meier building for a 202 (federally subsidized elderly housing)."

K
athy Wylde, who heads the New York City Housing Partnership, said architects seeking not-for-profit housing work must "never develop a budget without a contractor; my experience is that architects can't count." Things have already gotten tighter; increasingly nonprofits are asking architects to guarantee their cost figures.

O
ccupants are more vocal than ever, Wylde continued. And architects must key their plans to the market: "Residents value a parking pad in front of the house right under their noses; architects don't want to break the

streetline. Residents may want brightly colored houses appealing to the Caribbean markets; architects want the more contextual dark brick."

R
obert Pincus of Phipps Houses, a not-for-profit organization that has developed 3,500 housing units in New York City, said architects must assess the client's sophistication. If it is the group's first project, beware. One of Phipps's first projects had an elevator opening "facing a blank wall around the corner from the guard." Now, elevators face the entrance; laundry rooms are sited not in windowless basements but on first floors, where parents can watch their children outside in the playground.

K
aren Ansio, of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, said architects may not understand the "need to respect the client; they have to be patient and knowledgeable, and should respond to questions even if the questions are dumb." Young architects working under principals may find themselves out on a limb: They can't reach the principal "so they just don't call [the client] back. It would be better if they were honest. Return the phone call and tell them you're still finding out."

L
ew Davis of Davis, Brody & Associates, whose Riverbend and Waterside housing won awards in the late 1960s and 1970s, tells young architects not to be daunted by skinflint bureaucrats and wary occupants. "Pull out all the stops, be as imaginative as you can be - without reinventing the wheel and breaking the budget." His firm invented a new brick size, varied the sizes and layouts of individual apartments, and played games with traditional levels and proportions. "Be as daring as you want to be and as cunning as you can be," he said. "That's the fun in this game."


Melrose Commons, designed by Magnusson Architects for the New York Housing Partnership, opened in 1989

Melrose Commons, being bid now, will contain commercial space and community facilities, including a day-care center
Paperless Studio
by Matthew Barlydt

Take away an architect's roll of bunwad and he's lost. However, in three third-year architecture studios at Columbia University last fall, students lost their tracing paper — to computers. Is the CAD revolution over? CAD drives production in most offices; design software is becoming versatile and easier to learn. However, the computer is still little more than a sophisticated tool used to supplement the ways architects traditionally work.

Last year, the Graduate School of Architecture and Planning established a new paperless design studio with $1.4 million from the university. In studies taught by adjunct assistant professors Scott Marble, Greg Lynn, and Hani Rashid, there were signs of a breaking second wave in the revolution — a challenge to the very way architects think.

Recognizing the enormous data-handling capabilities of the computer, Marble used JFK Airport as "an information intensive site to document and analyze numerous aspects of the existing conditions to find appropriate areas to intervene." After a comprehensive survey, students "defined their own [architectural] problems," Marble said, but they were encouraged to "accept certain conditions the way they are." The most successful projects were those that "very carefully inter-vened[ed] in a modest way, hopefully with larger implications."

"What I proposed," explained Lynn, "was instead of thinking of conditions the way they are." Problems," Marble said, but they might be helpful, but they're not the most useful modes of representation."

All three professors believe architects must explore this emerging computer technology.

Marble said, "It's a tool that redefines the whole discipline. If we don't somehow take advantage of this, somebody else will." Rashid sees the computer as a way for architecture to remain viable in the new "media culture," although he recognizes that his students found "there was no direct correlation between theoretical space and a practice of building. What it told us is that there are latent possibilities for conceiving of new architectures in a computer that might have an effect sooner or later on practice."

There may be other effects as well. "There is an aesthetic with this software," Lynn pointed out. "Everything gets deformed. Design shifts a little bit — you're kind of breeding design rather than designing." Rashid warns that the tempting efficiency, speed, and power of the computer could lead to "a revised pattern-book architecture, a lessening of the labor that goes into the creative processes of architecture."

As Marble discovered, those students without much experience on the computer "were paralyzed by the whole process. They had a hard time establishing criteria as to how to make decisions, because there are so many possibilities." And yet, Rashid said, "just seeing the excitement...the real desire and drive to probe electronic and digital realms, to look for new space," he's sure that his students caught a glimpse of the future.
Does Design Fit into a Retail Strategy?
by Kira Gould

In the mind of Joseph B. Rose, director of the Department of City Planning, the city has missed the last wave of retail development because of a "bizarre set of land-use regulations" such as Soho zoning that prohibits as-of-right street-level retail. "We shouldn't have a system that rewards people for breaking the rules," Rose said at the AIA New York Chapter's George S. Lewis public policy discussion, "The Changing Retail Environment of New York City," on April 13. "Our land-use policies haven't kept pace with the shift from an industry-based economy to a service-based one, and if we don't make changes now, we will continue to pay a steep price that we cannot afford."

According to Rose and the city's comprehensive retail strategy, New York's high concentration of disposable income is grossly underserved by retail sources when compared to the rest of the country. "It's the most important and least served retail market in the country," he said. "We're losing millions each year in tax revenues, and it's going to Nassau County and New Jersey." The city's aim is to create a welcoming environment for retail opportunities: "The retailers want to be here," Rose said. "They need incentives to create a level playing field."

What Retailers Want
It is obvious that big-box retail sources, such as Bed Bath & Beyond and TJ Maxx, want to come and are coming to the city. But why? According to Robert Pauls, of Robert B. Pauls Real Estate and Planning Consultants, "As suburban development has become more problematic over time, the aggravation gap between city and suburban operation has narrowed substantially." He caution that a learning curve exists for most such retailers, like Bradlee's, whose six-floor Union Square site is the retailer's first store with more than one level. "Learning to understand advertising, layout, and design of the multilevel stores is a challenge to managers, not to mention the task of understanding the urban market."

But Pauls said that big-box retailers are willing to adapt if they want a location badly enough: "These are large-scale users, and there are limited urban opportunities for them."

Cynthia Ryan, manager of retail consulting for Planned Expansion Group, the architecture and design firm in White Plains that designed the successful Bed Bath & Beyond (as well as TJ Maxx and Filene's Basement stores) in the 1895 Siegel-Cooper Dry Goods Store at 620 Sixth Avenue, spoke about the importance of visual merchandising. "Carefully planned visual merchandising can help a downtown," she said. "This is more than just traffic studies and parking." Ryan emphasized the importance of a street presence. "These are not vertical malls," she insisted, "but stacked centers with storefronts and a contribution to the neighborhood streetscape."

Bed Bath & Beyond, as Rose pointed out, is "illegal, according to current zoning laws. We had to bend the rules to get a retail store into a building that was originally built for retail," Rose said.

Maximal use of existing building stock is usually a priority for a city, and according to Walter A. Hunt, Jr., of Gensler and Associates, Architects, whose clients range from the Gap to Ann Taylor, retailers are starting to get it. "Retailers will go for an adaptive reuse situation if other factors are right," he said. "But understanding the nature of retail and visual merchandising is crucial to making it work. The big-box retailers really are assemblages of boutiques."

Effect on the City
But what about the little boutiques — and hardware stores, bodegas, and bookstores — already in the neighborhood? According to City Planning's strategy and research, the influence of superstores on small businesses will be nominal. Their statistics, which deal only with small foodstores in areas where large supermarkets were introduced, show the effect was slight. Critics say that the figures might differ for other types of merchandise, such as clothing, toys, books, or hardware. But Rose insists that although some small businesses will have to adapt to the competition, small and large stores offer such different services that both will still be profitable. "Right now we have the lowest level of retail employment in New York City's history; our shoppers and workers can support both types of stores. The big stores might in some cases help the smaller ones because they will prevent the exodus of people who previously went to the suburbs for a whole range of shopping and will now stay in the city to shop at large discounters and smaller specialty stores."

Neighborhood Fabric
Design guidelines remained unresolved in the zoning text at present. They are not addressed at all in the comprehensive retail strategy outline, although at the public policy discussion, Rose said, "Design controls and issues such as parking and pedestrian-handling are important. We are concerned about the streetscape and don't intend to overlook its significance."

Many feel that careful attention needs to be paid to the development of two distinct sets of guidelines: one for the dense fabric of downtown stores and another for outer-borough sites. City Planning's intention to encourage retail development suffers from its reticence to place restrictions on potential tenants. "We need to get retailers to adapt to the urban fabric, but not take their willingness to do so for

continued on page 18
Is There Hope for Housing?

I’m an optimist, so I always think there’s hope, but probably for affordable housing this is the most depressing time in 50 years. The Governor’s proposed cutoffs of public assistance will affect the new SROs, because many of the tenants depend on home-relief benefits to pay their rents. With those benefits, New York State’s annual housing costs are $3,900 per person, half of the total (the city pays the other half). Without the benefits, the state and city would each have to pay $10,000 per person in the current New York City shelter system. And we would lose the investment in some of the really wonderful buildings that have already been renovated, such as the Common Ground project on West 43rd Street (Oculus, April 1995, p. 16). The voucher system isn’t going to cover the cost of housing. Politics seems to be totally dominating policy issues.

Mark Ginsberg, AIA, a partner in Curtis + Ginsberg Architects, chairs the AIA’s Housing Committee.

Right now is as bleak a time for affordable housing as we have seen for many years, and the problems are coming from every direction. It’s unclear whether the powers that be really understand the cumulative effects of the actions being taken. The federal government is about to embark on an unprecedented retreatment from involvement in housing that began with the New Deal and continued, with greater or lesser support, until the last elections. And similar budget cuts are being made at the city and state levels.

While welfare reform is good, it is going to have a tremendous effect on the low-income housing stock that is already distressed. If you think about the quintessential welfare recipient — the woman who keeps on having children and lives irresponsibly, she is sharing housing with a lot of families who are playing by the rules, working at McDonald’s or whatever. If you pull the support from the welfare families, their buildings, which are on the brink as it is, may be abandoned. You will be punishing the working poor who are being held up as models. You’re punching leaks in the boat, and they are all going to sink.

Frank Bracovi is an economist and planner with the Citizens Housing and Planning Council.

Very little. There is a very serious situation, and it did not originate with the Republicans. It started with Vice President Gore’s “Reinventing Government.” It’s like the corporations, we’re downsizing. You can consolidate. You can integrate. You shank them very radically, too fast. Section 8 was one of the most successful programs, but a costly one, because it had an inflation factor built in.

What the federal government did over the last few years, given the homeless crisis, was institute a preference for the homeless, the disabled, and people who were paying more than 50 percent of their incomes in rent. They did a lot of this in public housing, making it the housing of last resort. When public housing started, it was for the working poor, as it is in other countries. We’ve always lagged behind Europe, and now Asia. Even in parts of the Third World you have a viable network of public housing. It’s dim here right now.

Clara Fox, of the Settlement Housing Fund, chairs the New York Housing Conference.

There is always hope. Something always comes up, but there is never enough money, never enough planning, never enough units to meet the demand. I think there has been enough research — or at least enough mistakes that we have been able to learn from. But now there is even less funding. One reason the situation today is serious is that the SRO housing of today is going to be the elderly housing of tomorrow. I don’t know what the cure rates are, but I suspect lots of the people in that housing will be dependent for a long time.

Housing policy in this country has always been designed to solve an immediate problem. If we could look at housing in a more long-range and comprehensive way, there is certainly enough talent in the city of New York. If you compared the cost of not doing housing per family with the cost of all other social programs, I bet it would be cheaper. That is what architects always say, but they never listen to us.

Warren Gran, FAIA, a partner in Granoff Associates, has been designing housing for 25 years and recently produced a guide to SRO design.

If there isn’t any hope for housing there are going to be a lot of cold people in this world. In the short term, we’re going to have to be awfully creative and perform magic feats patching together programs to provide a safety net. In the long term, solutions that work will sustain themselves. I truly believe that this is not a society that will tolerate large numbers of people being destitute. The economic and social costs of not providing housing in New York are just too severe. To keep a person in a state institution costs $113,000 a year.

Julie Sandorl presides over the Corporation for Supportive Housing.

The fascinating thing about housing, for us, is that the whole modern movement started with housing. The wicked part of this retreatment is that the federal government is still pouring billions into subsidies to house the least needy through mortgage and property tax deductions.

Herbert Oppenheimer, FAIA, designs housing at Oppenheimer, Brady & Vogelstein.
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granted,” Rose said. But what kind of big-box retail sources are we inviting if some basic design guidelines might scare them away?
Sandy Hornick, deputy executive director for strategic planning at City Planning, said, “The design guidelines in the zoning text will be relatively straightforward, and are not set in stone. There will be a lot of discussion of this during the public review."
The New York Chapter’s Zoning and Urban Design Committee recently designated a sub-committee to give this matter attention, and it needs volunteers. (If you are interested, contact committee chair Bruce Fowler, FAIA, at 627-1700.)

Healthy Perspective
by Kira Gould

Duncan Hazard, AIA, of Polshek and Partners, and Vance Hosford, AIA, of Payette Associates, led a tour of the Skirball Institute of Molecular Medicine, a 550,000-square-foot addition to the New York University Medical Center’s East Side campus by their firms, at the Health Facilities Committee’s meeting on March 31. The 23-story structure contains research facilities, faculty offices, apartments for hospital staff, and a new street-level entry concourse that serves the entire medical center. “It’s a complex arrangement,” Hazard said. “It was tough to find a structural system to accommodate the diverse needs of a truly multiuse building.” The solution layers functions from the bottom up: the entry level; four floors containing 125,000 square feet of medical research labs; space for mechanical needs; four floors of doctors’ offices; residential floors; and a final layer of additional mechanical equipment including the venting of fume ducts that run up 19 floors from the labs. A tower, which serves as the hinge between the addition and the existing hospital labs, is open — with bookcase cabinetry and floor-to-ceiling glass serving as walls that admit light and provide a view for most workers — and contains administration space, conference rooms, lecture rooms, computer space, and lounges.

Designing for Justice
Ken Ricci, AIA, of Ricci Associates, said the courtroom is “the final crucible for disputes in our society” when the AIA New York Chapter Committee on Architecture for Justice, which he chairs, kicked off its 1995 lecture series on April 6 at Lehrer McGovern Bovis. Jonathan Stark, AIA, of Perkins Eastman, and Prakash Yerawadekar, chief architect for the New York State Unified Court System, led a discussion of comparative court types, emphasizing the most important issues: clear sightlines between all parties involved; height of the judge’s box; the entry of the defendant; witness proximity to the judge and to the defendant at the table; consistent light levels; and ADA requirements.

Sustaining the Built Future
by Kira Gould

The message of Susan Maxman, of Susan Maxman Architects in Philadelphia, and Sherri W. Goodman, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Environmental Safety, was that environmental efforts of all kinds are important and can work. The AIA New York Chapter Women in Architecture Committee organized the two-woman panel to discuss “Environmental Attitude: The Global and the Mundane” on April 13. “With the downsizing of the military, we have become experts in adaptive reuse,” said Goodman, who is responsible for more than 15,000 buildings. Conservation and sustainability are her edicts, as she oversees the closing of more than 80 bases nationwide and cleans up more than 10,000 contaminated sites at 826 bases. “Many military bases have become islands of endangered species. Our approach includes prevention of future contamination, conservation, cleanup, and compliance with environmental regulations,” she explained.

Part of the job for Maxman, former AIA National president, is also to encourage, even beg, clients to take the sustainable path. “It’s rarely easy,” she said. Sustainability is not an all-or-nothing pursuit. “We can never become a sustainable society unless we revitalize our cities. All that infrastructure is already there,” she said. “We must educate our clients as much as we can.”

Membership Services: Professional Practice Issues
by Michael Plottel

In keeping with the Chapter’s goal of enhancing services to members, the Professional Practice Committee is striving this year to be more inclusive of the membership at large, and is discussing architectural practice issues for senior staff, as well as young and midlevel architects. It will offer a series of public roundtable meetings and establish an informational resource center at Chapter offices. On an ongoing basis, committee members are screening a wide range of professional services offered to the Chapter.

The committee’s roundtable forum is a series of three programs taking place this spring, moderated by James Frankel, counsel to the AIA New York Chapter and partner at Baer Marks & Upman. “Intellectual Property Rights of Design Professionals,” held on May 23, examined ownership of design ideas, CAD projects, and existing and unbuilt buildings. The fall roundtable, “Regaining Lost Territory,” will consider how architects can assume a great role in the construction process while managing risk. The winter forum, “Getting Invested,” will explore how a practice can be structured to maximize involvement, responsibility, rewards, and satisfaction for continued on page 20
DEADLINES

June 8
Entry deadline for Challenge Grounds: Urban Housing and Community Outdoor Space competition for students of accredited schools in the U.S. Contact the National Institute for Architectural Education, 30 W. 22nd St., New York, New York 10010, 924-7000.

June 30
Entry deadline for the International Small Home Design competition for architects and designers. Contact Tremblay/Bamford International Small Home design competition, Colorado State University, 156 Aylesworth Hall, SE, Fort Collins, Colorado 80523-1575, or fax 970-491-4855.

July 10
Entry deadline for the ninth international Waterfront Competition. Contact Susan Kirk or Ginny Murphy at the Waterfront Center, 1536 44th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20007, call 202-337-0356, or fax 202-625-1654.

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"The leader in architectural recruiting and staffing"
continued from page 18
all members of the firm.

This spring, the committee
began gathering a list of books
and publications necessary to
upgrade the members' resource
library at the Chapter headquar-
ters: key reference books and
monographs of the work of member
firms, to show the breadth and
scope of Chapter work. Those
who wish to make contributions
should contact William Gray at
683-0023, ext. 18.

The Professional Practice
Committee meets at 8:30 am
on the first Thursday of every
month at Chapter headquarters.
Members interested in joining the
committee should call Judy Rowe
at 683-0023, ext. 17.

Learning from East Harlem
by Matthew Barhydt

East Harlem was the focus of a recent lecture
and workshop series, “A City of Neighborhoods:
Bridging School and Community,” cosponsored by the Learning by
Design Committee and the National Design Museum. The three
Friday evening lectures, fol-
lowed by daylong Saturday work-
shops, were designed to allow
local teachers and architects to
“share strategies for understand-
ing the architecture and urban
design” of East Harlem. Catherine
Teegarden, the Learning by
Design Committee member who
organized the series, explained
that the committee and the muse-
um collaborated to provide teach-
ers tools to educate their students on
issues that affect their own
physical environments – and to
suggest ways that architects might
assist them.

Luis Aponte-Pares, associate
professor at the College of Public
and Community Service at the
University of Massachusetts, and
architectural educator Hettie
Jordan-Vilanova spoke on March
10 about what the experience of
place means for East Harlem.
According to Jerry Maltz, AIA,
a member of the Learning by
Design Committee, they described
“how the Puerto Rican community
has transplanted Puerto Rico to
East Harlem.” For example,
“casitas,” community or social
centers traditionally used by
Puerto Ricans to teach their
children about their cultural
heritage, can be found throughout
East Harlem.

At the first workshop, teams of
teachers and architects took a
walking tour of the neighborhood
in the morning and presented
observations in the afternoon.
Individual sites were chosen by
teams for research that would con-
tinue over the next few weeks.
Several teachers began working a
few months ago on similar projects
with their classes with the assis-
tance of the National Design
Museum.

Raymond Plume, AIA, associ-
ate adjunct professor of architect-
ure at City College and a practic-
ing East Harlem architect, talked
about the history of the area from
the 1840s to the present. His
main emphasis was on “the influ-
ence architecture and social pro-
grams have had on the communi-
ty, and vice versa.” The following
Saturday’s workshop explored the
relationship between architectural
types and the context of the physi-
cal environment.

A panel of local community
activists – including Eddie Baca,
chairperson of Community Board
11; Yolanda Sanchez, executive
director of the Puerto Rican
Association for Community Affairs
and representative for La
Marqueta; Sally Yarmolinsky,
director of special projects, El
Sitio Feliz Community Garden,
Union Settlement Association; and
Dr. Ernest Drucker, professor of
epidemiology and social medicine
– discussed projects planned for
East Harlem at the April 7 session.

*AIA New York Chapter
Annual Meeting*

The Chapter’s 128th annual
meeting will be held on Thursday,
June 29, from 5:30 to 8:30 pm in
the auditorium at Stuyvesant
High School, 345 Chambers
Street. Please join us for the elec-
tion of the 1996 Slate of Officers
and the presentation of the
Chapter Honor Awards.

Recipients of the AIA New York
Chapter Travel Awards and
Eleanor Allwork Scholarship
Program Grants will also be rec-
ognized. A reception for all hon-
orees, members, and guests will
follow. Admission is $10 for mem-
ers and $5 for students and
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"Architects/Engineers vs.
Engineers/Architects
(1960s vs. 1990s)"

The New Synthesis? The Renewed
Synthesis? Or the New Schism?
A panel discussion on the evolu-
tion of this ongoing professional
relationship will take place at
6:00 pm on Wednesday, June 14,
at the Chemists’ Club, 40 West
45th Street. Bartholomew of
Voorsanger, FAIA, Voorsanger &
Associates, will act as moderat-
or. Panelists include Eugene Fassulo,
Port Authority of New York & New
Jersey; Matthys Levy, Waldinger
Associates; Marvin Mass,
Cosentini Associates; Guy
Nordensen, Ove Arup & Partners;
Les Robertson, Leslie E.
Roberton Associates; and Ysrael
Seinuk, Ysrael A. Seinuk, P.C.
Call for reservations at 683-0023,
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Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 88th St. 423-3500. Closes June 2.


Heter Brothers: Furniture and Interiors for a Gilded Age. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 535-7710. Closes July 30.


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Instead of popping champagne corks, the panel that gathered on April 11 at Cooper Union's Great Hall to celebrate the 30th birthday of New York City's seminal Landmarks Law issued words of caution. “Trust nothing. We lose buildings all the time,” claimed Kent L. Barwick, president of the Municipal Art Society. But the diverse panelists at the event sponsored by the New York Landmarks Preservation Foundation and Cooper Union agreed that the law has had an enormous, positive impact.

Moderator Barbara Lee Diamondstein-Spielvogel, chair of the New York Landmarks Preservation Foundation, noted that since the law's inception in 1965, 1,023 individual buildings have been landmarked, 66 historic districts have been created, and 63 interiors and 9 scenic areas receive landmark status in New York City. “The law broke new ground,” contended Richard M. Thomas, New York Observer columnist, added that from a cultural point of view, “there is a larger dimension at work here – landmarks preservation is the only remaining legal obstacle to the destruction of our historical memory.” However, as M. Christine Boyer, from the Princeton University school of architecture, pointed out, there are inherent contradictions in public policy that are perhaps unreconcilable. “How do we have a city of the future, and how do we preserve the past?,” she asked. While modernism may have died as an architectural style, modernist notions of progress are still firmly ensconced in our public consciousness.

Bernadette Castro, Commissioner of the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, said the Landmarks Law has the full support of Governor Pataki. However, the state is in no position financially to offer any more economic incentives than it already does. But she expects that her office will be able to help by streamlining regulations and reducing the amount of time needed for relevant approvals.

Correction

Oculus regrets that an April "Field Report" incorrectly identified the architects for the new $16 million addition to the Brooklyn House of Detention for Men. SBLM Architects deserves the credit, not the fictitious SUBLIME Architects (although we do think it is a good name for an architecture firm!).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td><strong>1 Thursday</strong></td>
<td>AIA New York Chapter Event: The Family Court Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td><strong>22 Thursday</strong></td>
<td>AIA New York Chapter Event: Kitsch to Corbusier: Wallpaper from the 1950s: Given by assistant curator Joanne Warner. Sponsored by the National Design Museum. 2:00 pm. 2 E. 91st St. 860-6321. Free with advance registration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>23 Friday</strong></td>
<td>Tour: Dragon Rock at Manitoga. Given by Russell Flinchum. Sponsored by the National Design Museum. 10:00 am—4:00 pm. Advance registration. 860-6321. $10 (includes lunch).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>29 Thursday</strong></td>
<td>AIA New York Chapter Event: Annual Meeting. 5:30 pm. Stadtman High School, 345 Chambers St $10 ($15 members $15 students, and Emeritus members).</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>11 Tuesday</strong></td>
<td>Lecture: El Yunque Caribbean Rain Forest: Revolutionary Design for the Upper East Side. Given by graphic designer and activist Fernando Salazar. Sponsored by the National Design Museum. 6:00 pm. 2 E. 91st St. 860-6321.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>25 Tuesday</strong></td>
<td>Lecture: Kitsch to Corbusier: Wallpaper from the 1950s: Given by assistant curator Joanne Warner. Sponsored by the National Design Museum. 2:00 pm. 2 E. 91st St. 860-6321. Free with advance registration.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>26 Wednesday</strong></td>
<td>Tour: 1950s Suburbia. Given by John Krickiewicz. Sponsored by the National Design Museum. 6:00—7:30 pm. Advance registration. 860-6321. $15.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td><strong>5 Saturday</strong></td>
<td>Tour: 1950s Suburbia. Given by Dr. Barbara M. Kelly. Sponsored by the National Design Museum. 10:00 am—4:00 pm. Advance registration. 860-6321. $15 (includes lunch).</td>
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