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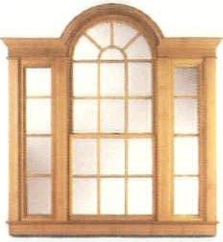
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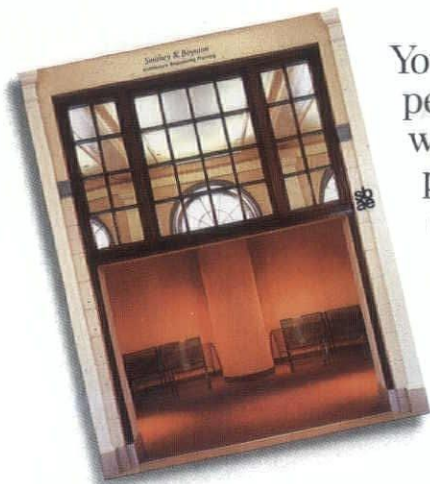
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inform

January/February 1991
volume two number one

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Whither Public Art?

Devastating cuts in federal, state and local budgets — combined with uncertainties in banking and real estate — have severely curtailed the major sources of sponsorship for art in public places. After gaining support for 25 years, what does the future hold for public art? *By Susan Tamulevich*

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Houses of Holiness

Like other building types, churches are influenced in their design by changes in modern life. Inform examines four religious buildings that have integrated the needs of today's congregations with the signs and forms of ecclesiastic tradition. Also included: uses of glass. *By Elena Marcheso Moreno and Vernon Mays*

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More Than Child's Play

While the kids are having fun, efforts to foster an awareness of architecture and design in elementary students are paying off in Virginia's public schools. *By Stephanie L. Riker*

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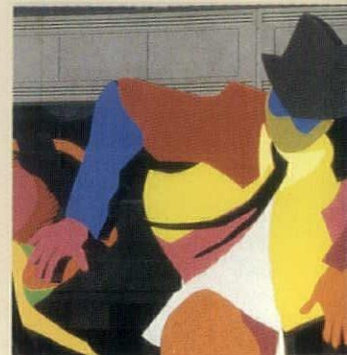
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the watchful eyes of Piedmont Environmental Council



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On the cover: Burke Presbyterian Church.
Photo by Al Whitley.



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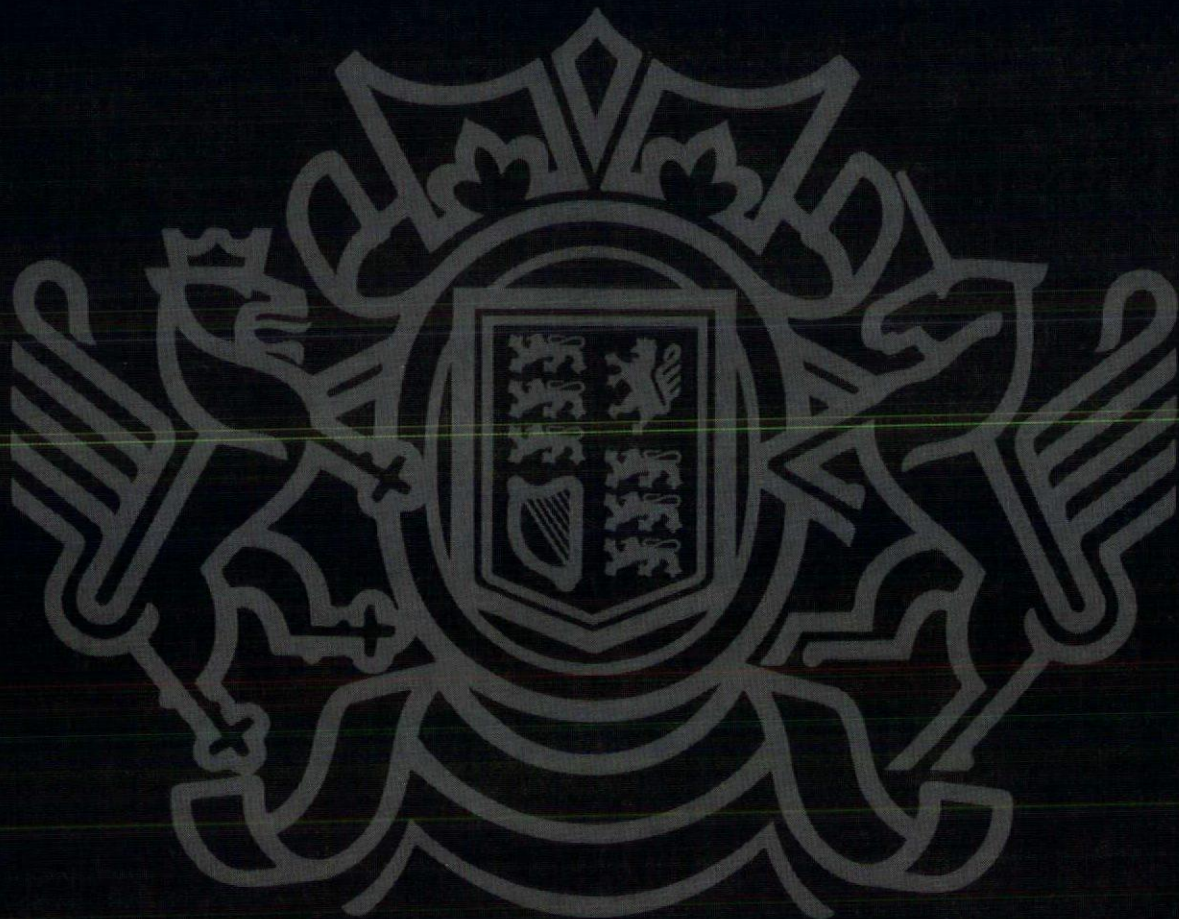
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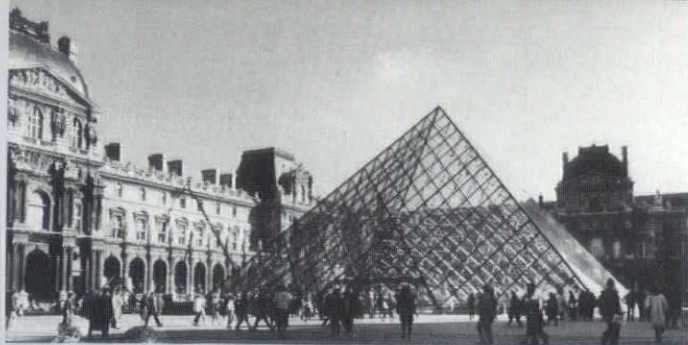


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The Louvre: A New Century

The Louvre's metamorphosis from fortified medieval castle to a great museum entered through a glass pyramid is examined. At the Octagon, Washington, D.C., through May 21. 202-626-7300.

The Art of Glass

From amphorae to 20th century art works, glass objects spanning 3500 years from the Corning Museum's comprehensive collection are displayed through March 17. At the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 202-737-4215.

Building a Heritage

Designs for 16 award-winning federal General Services Administration projects are displayed through August at the National Building Museum, Washington, D.C. 202-272-2448.

Automating the Aisles

Tour Safeway Stores' new automated warehouse in Landover, Maryland, on March 15. This demonstration of current warehousing technology sponsored by the National Building Museum. 202-272-2448.

Rising Interest

L.C. Pei of Pei, Cobb, Freed & Partners presents the firm's towering Bank of China on March 20 at Catholic University's Koubek Auditorium. 202-319-5188.

Construction Watch

A tour of a project underway to convert a turn-of-the-century apartment building into long-term, low-cost housing for the homeless is sponsored March 20 by the National Building Museum. 202-272-2448.

Gardeners' Special

Williamsburg's Garden Symposium April 7-10 includes workshops, talks, clinics, a bird walk and special tours to immerse gardeners in their chosen medium. 804-220-7255.

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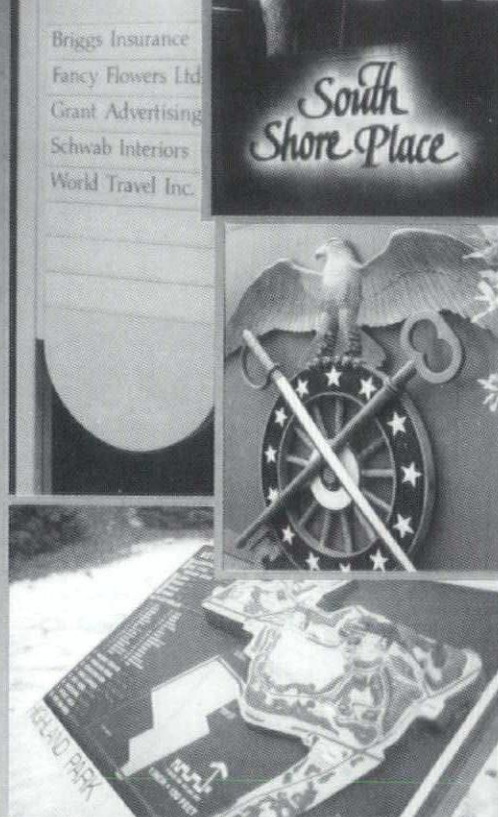
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Architecture and Film: "Worlds for Habitation"

The haunting vision of the city of the future in the film "Blade Runner" and the striking interiors of "Miami Vice" remind the videophile and architect alike of the influence that film and architecture have on one another. Last fall, the Department of Architecture and Planning at the Catholic University of America hosted a conference dedicated to exploring the connections, both obvious and obscure, between architecture's real world and film's fantasy one.

Although a handful of similar events have been held in Europe and, appropriately, Los Angeles, conference organizer Neal Payton intended this event to have an unprecedented breadth in subject matter. His inspiration for the theme of the conference was "the simple fact that both architects and filmmakers propose worlds for habitation."

The four-day event, entitled "Architecture and the Moving Image," brought together academicians, architects and filmmakers for a dense schedule of papers, lectures and presentations of feature films.

Exhibition space

in the department of architecture's new Crough Center was transformed into a "video cafe" with continuous showings of the best from film history and a steady supply of popcorn and snacks.

The most memorable of the presentations explored new connections between film and architecture. In a presentation titled "The Death of the Passive Image," Washington architect Greg Matty chronicled current advancements in computer graphics known as "virtual reality." First developed for the space program and primarily researched in the context of science and medicine, this technology allows viewers — or, more accurately, participants — to don special gloves and eyewear that allow them to enter a simulated environment. The possibilities for architects are exciting: Soon a client may be able to walk through a space or scale the stairs of his new house before it is even built.

Perhaps the conference's high point was the session with filmmaker Charles Guggenheim. Often considered an "architect's filmmaker" because of his frequent explorations of the subject, Guggenheim was careful to clarify his artistic intentions. In a modest and conversational manner, he reminded the audience that it is the human story in architecture that interests him,

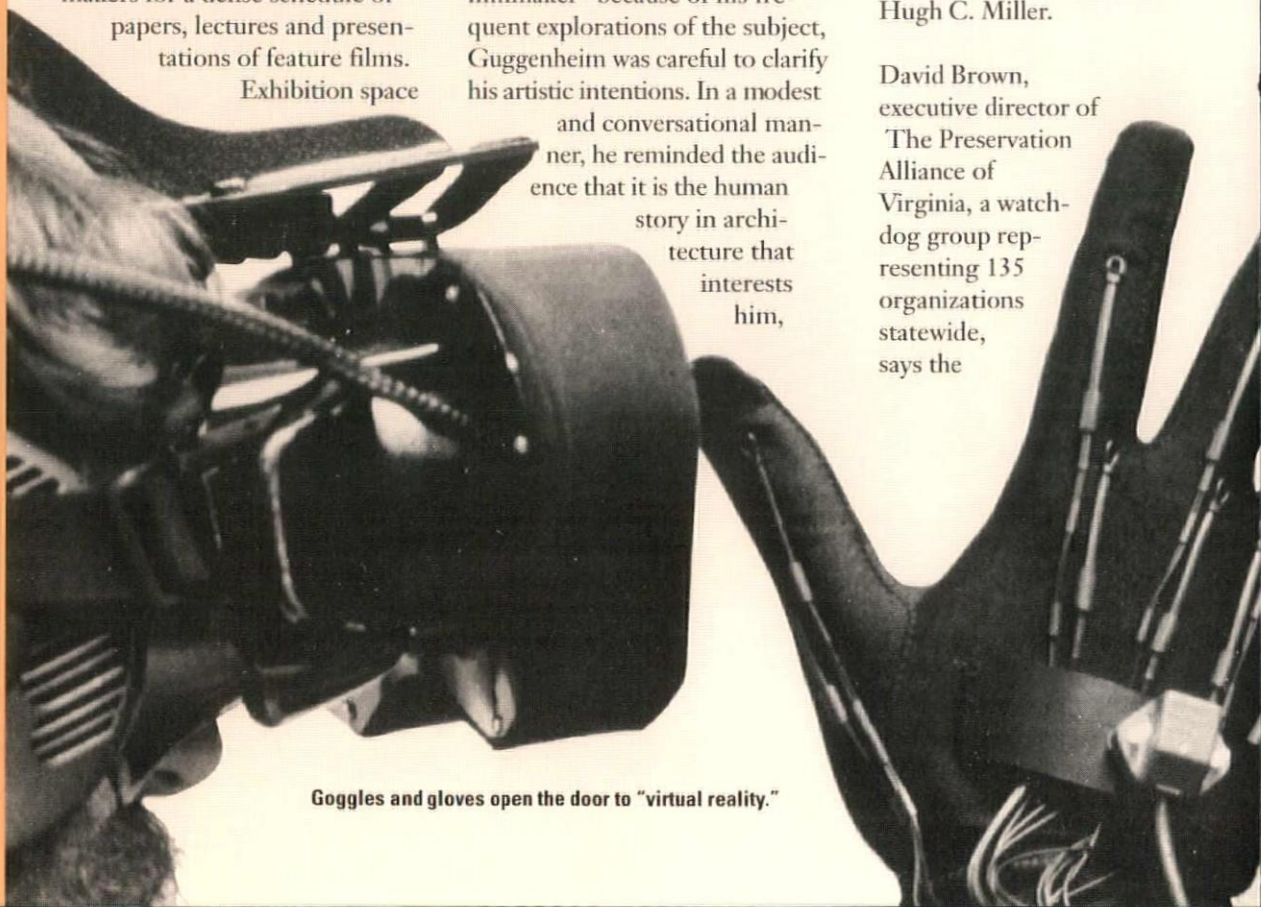
rather than the building itself. As primarily a student of human nature, Guggenheim uses architecture as the vehicle for exploring the ambition, struggle and conflict that surround all creative acts. In his acclaimed documentary on the design and construction of the National Gallery's East Building, for example, Guggenheim makes the viewer feel like a participant in the process. His documentary on the restoration of the Statue of Liberty, however, left a conference crowd of hundreds transfixed by the hypnotic musical score and extraordinary views.

— Susan C. Piedmont-Palladino

State Scales Back on Preservation

During a year when Virginia's largest industry, tourism, got its biggest PR windfall ever with the popular documentary "The Civil War," state government decimated the budget of the Department of Historic Resources, which supports many of the historic attractions that tourists visit. All told, damage to the budget amounts to a loss of 36 percent in anticipated revenue, says department director Hugh C. Miller.

David Brown, executive director of The Preservation Alliance of Virginia, a watchdog group representing 135 organizations statewide, says the



Goggles and gloves open the door to "virtual reality."

original Department of Historic Resources



cuts will have a major impact on historic preservation activities. "The thing that's critical is the size of the cuts for historic preservation — it's not like it is 10 percent of \$50 million," says Brown. Rather, the cuts represent a drop from \$9.6 million to \$6.5 million over two years.

The proposed amendments represent a sliver of the broad cuts in state programs being made to counter an anticipated \$2.2 billion budget deficit and are, according to Gov. L. Douglas Wilder, the "most extensive changes ever proposed at mid-biennium." When Wilder wrote the legislature, he characterized the budget cuts as "paring" and "trimming" — generous words considering the extent of the reductions.

The round of cuts announced last September packed the greatest wallop — grants to the Historic Preservation Foundation Revolving Fund were eliminated by one-half million dollars, grants to historic landmarks and museums were cut by \$1.26 million, threatened property grants were reduced by \$720,000 and the underwater archaeology program was eliminated altogether, saving \$188,000. Some programs will continue, though — the revolving fund, which is used to buy threatened historic properties and hold them until private buyers can be found, will still be around. And while threatened property grants will be reduced, survey and protection programs (an important aid to localities for land use planning, architectural review and zoning decisions) will be maintained. Still, the land-

marks and museums cuts will hurt. Says Miller, "Virginia does not own historic properties, unlike many states" and the small grants to public attractions are generally the only support these properties request. A round of cuts in December included further reductions in anticipated grants and steps such as hiring freezes and wage reductions.

Brown says cutting the revolving fund now is "short-sighted." As property values go down and the economy slows, municipalities and preservation groups have more leverage with developers. Like a general pulling back his troops as soon as the enemy retreats, this cost-cutting strategy will prove to be an "opportunity missed," he says.

Spared from the recent wave of cuts are six grants totaling \$99,000 to conduct surveys of historic properties in Hanover, Powhatan, Roanoke and Warren counties, to develop a preservation plan for the City of Petersburg, and to carry out an archaeological survey in areas of Frederick County near Winchester. And, despite the bad news, Miller is not totally put off — he will take what he can get. In an *if you won't give me money perhaps you can at least pay attention to me* mode, Miller is encouraged by new review powers his department has gained over highway projects proposed by the state Department of Transportation. Says Miller: "They've had it their way a long time."

—J. Garland Pollard IV

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State-supported surveys of historic areas are the first step toward designation on the register of historic places. Already on the register is this round outbuilding in Powhatan County (above).

A slowing economy and tightening budgets have

severely curtailed the major

sources of sponsorship for

art in public places. Proponents of

public art, meanwhile,

keep searching

for ways to improve an

imperfect system.

By Susan

Tamulevich

trovery in the infamous style of "Tilted Arc," Richard Serra's curved steel sculpture that was removed from its New York City site after eight

years of public complaint. When Ballston Plaza tenants objected to the realism of a bronze sculpture depicting a male ballet dancer — a work entitled "Adam and Eve" commissioned from artist Ella Tulin by the Oliver Carr Company — the sculpture was removed. In another instance, two downtown Washington, D.C., lobbies were redesigned in a modern vein. When tenants immediately disapproved of the changes, someone else was brought in to "re-redesign" in a more traditional mode — and two nonrepresentational glass sculptures by artist Mary Shaffer were removed. In Shaffer's case, the removal had less to do with "offensive" content than with a simple lack of sympathy between the architecture and the art. "Site-specific art is well and good when the artist is working outside," says Shaffer. "But

if the artist buys into the architecture, she risks the chance that the interior architecture will be changed, and the piece of art won't work with the new design." The experience hasn't turned Shaffer away from architectural commissions, though. She recently embarked on a collaborative venture in Charlotte with architect Cesar Pelli. Still, most everyone who has been involved in public art programs seems to have had at least one disappointing experience. Well-intentioned architects, artists, administrators, builders and private citizens alike express a degree of confusion and frustration at the process. This

Whither
Public
Art?

Without a doubt, the remarkable growth of regional public art projects that occurred over the past two decades is now grinding to a halt. This year's devastating federal and municipal budget cuts, combined with the recent banking and real estate fiascos, have severely affected the two primary sponsors of public art: government arts organizations and private developers. Neither one has much money left for anything but their most critical needs. Last year, for example, the city of Richmond enacted a law requiring that one percent of the budget for all new public works projects be set aside for works of art. At the first of this year, however, the program was still "on hold." When Peggy Baggett, executive director of the Virginia Commission for the Arts, was asked how her public art programs were doing, she replied, "We're just spinning our wheels. With the latest budget cuts, we're worried if our own jobs will survive, let alone the projects we oversee." Among projects the commission has funded in the past is Fairfax County's Art in the Metro program. Even projects supposedly underway are in trouble. Last year, the city of Alexandria had expected to realize \$350,000 from private sources to fund construction of King Street Gardens, a small park near the King Street Metro station being designed by an artists' collaborative. Developers planning new construction in the same area had agreed to provide the money. By early this year, however, because of the slowdown in construction, it is estimated that only \$90,000 — about one-fourth of the project's total budget — would be realized anytime soon. As for the quality of the projects so far completed, people are simultaneously of two minds: some of the staunchest boosters of public art programs admit that, despite their potential, the tangible results of these programs to date have been, in large measure, less than successful. The ill-conceived and ill-proportioned projects in downtown Bethesda, Maryland, are the most-often cited examples of such failures. Virginia has had its own con-

does not mean, however, that people have given up on the validity of public art programs. Quite the contrary. Many individuals and communities appear to be excited by the prospect of creating richer and more meaningful public spaces and works of social value that will stand for generations to come. They believe that the experimental and improvisational character of collaborative public art ventures, in which architects, artists and other designers are all involved from the start, offer real opportunity to open up new directions in art. The problem appears to be exactly how to get the various players

to interact, and how to create the social climate that will allow this to happen. □ Although this way of enhancing public and private buildings in the U.S. is nothing new, America — unlike European countries — has no legacy of patronage, either by princes or by the state. Our puritanical forebears viewed the arts with suspicion and considered them holdovers from a decadent aristocracy. We had no National Gallery of Art until Andrew Mellon made a gift to the nation of his personal collection only 50 years ago. Except for two impressive New Deal programs sparked by the Depression,

we had no national program that supported the arts until 1965, when the National Endowment for the Arts was created.

□ By the 1960s, Americans were becoming better educated and traveling more. At the same time, people were growing more aware of the deadening effect of the cut-rate curtain wall architecture that was gradually transforming their hometowns into sterile environments. It was in response to these concerns that the NEA's first public art programs were initiated in 1966. By 1989, more than 135 communities had adopted percent-for-art programs, in an attempt to create municipal buildings that could restore some sense of civic pride. Such programs were usually structured to allow a specified percentage of the construction budget of a civic building to be dedicated to the purchase of art for the building. (Depending on the locality, the amount varied from one-half percent to one-and-a-half percent.) Today, three Virginia municipalities — Virginia Beach, Charlottesville and Richmond — have adopted such programs. Washington, D.C., and Montgomery and Baltimore counties in Maryland also have percent-for-art laws on the books. And then there are numerous individual programs. The General Services Administration has a voluntary one-half percent program that affects all federal construction; private developers, either in response to *quid pro quo* zoning concessions (as was the case in Bethesda) or in the realization that art helps sell their buildings, also have made public art a part of their efforts. □ With the great variety of independent sources providing support to these projects, it is not surprising that there is no single method for commissioning and incorporating art into these projects, and no simple definition of what that art should be. The earliest NEA public art projects, under the title "Art in Public Places," typically commissioned a work of monumental sculpture to sit in a prominent location — on a plaza, for example, or in a town square. This practice came to be known as "plop art," the implication being that the art was dropped onto the site as an afterthought. Despite the intended slight in the name, plop art continues to be the most common,

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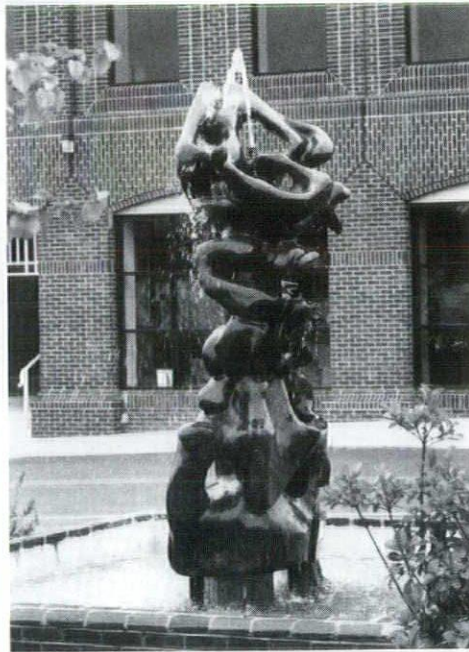
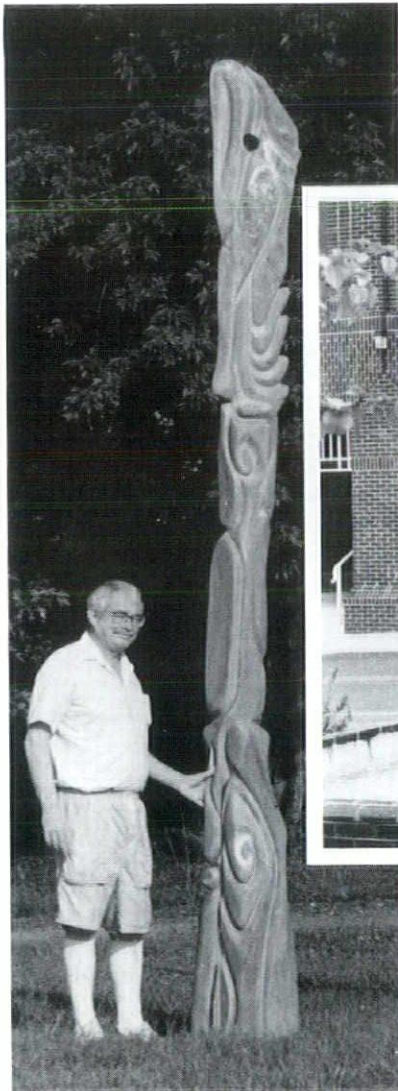


Albert Paley's "Aurora" at the Roanoke Regional Airport (left) was the result of a national competition.

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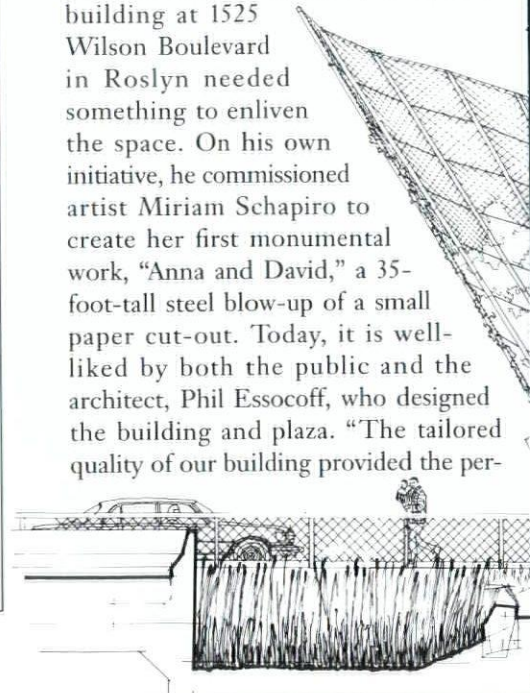
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and often best, option for many sites. Most practicing architects still are products of the Modern Movement; many continue to regard the idea of integrated art works (i.e., applied ornament) as just so much goop — the best analogy, in their minds, may be the idea of applying tatoos to the body. □ Still, not all the results are bad. While the Henry Moore bronze located outside the entrance to the National Gallery's East Building may be a bit too close to the front door, it is nevertheless a light-catching, organic presence, providing the needed counterpoint to architect I.M. Pei's strong geometry. □ Joey Kaempfer, a private developer who is also an art collector, decided that the plaza in front of his newly-completed building at 1525 Wilson Boulevard in Roslyn needed something to enliven the space. On his own initiative, he commissioned artist Miriam Schapiro to create her first monumental work, "Anna and David," a 35-foot-tall steel blow-up of a small paper cut-out. Today, it is well-liked by both the public and the architect, Phil Essocoff, who designed the building and plaza. "The tailored quality of our building provided the per-



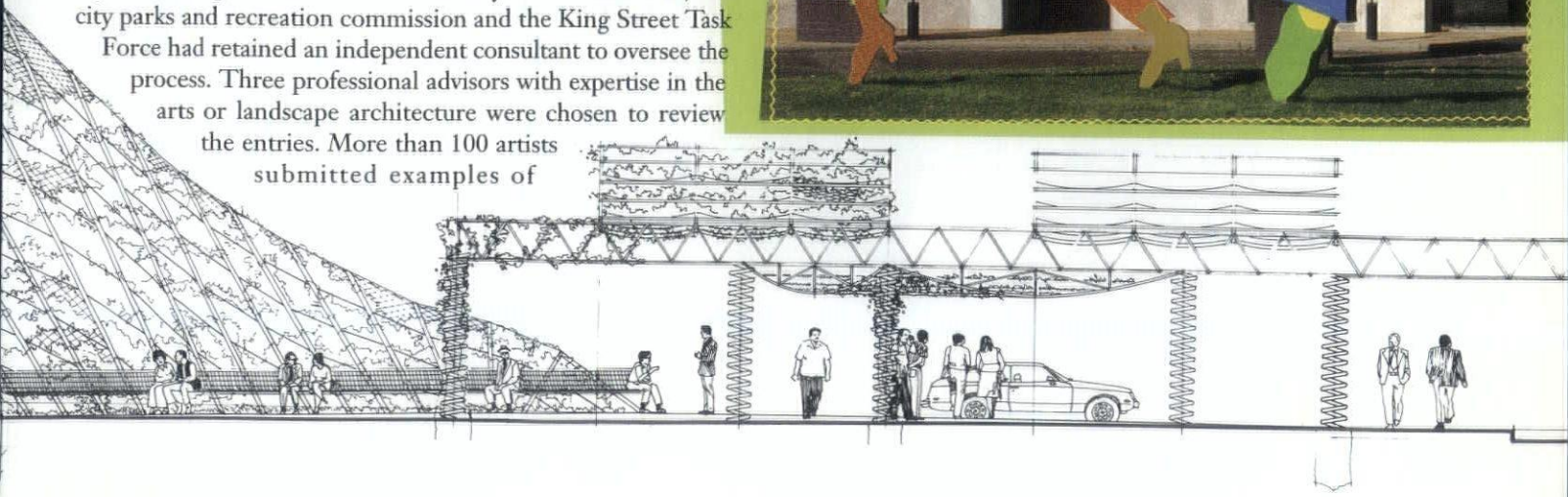
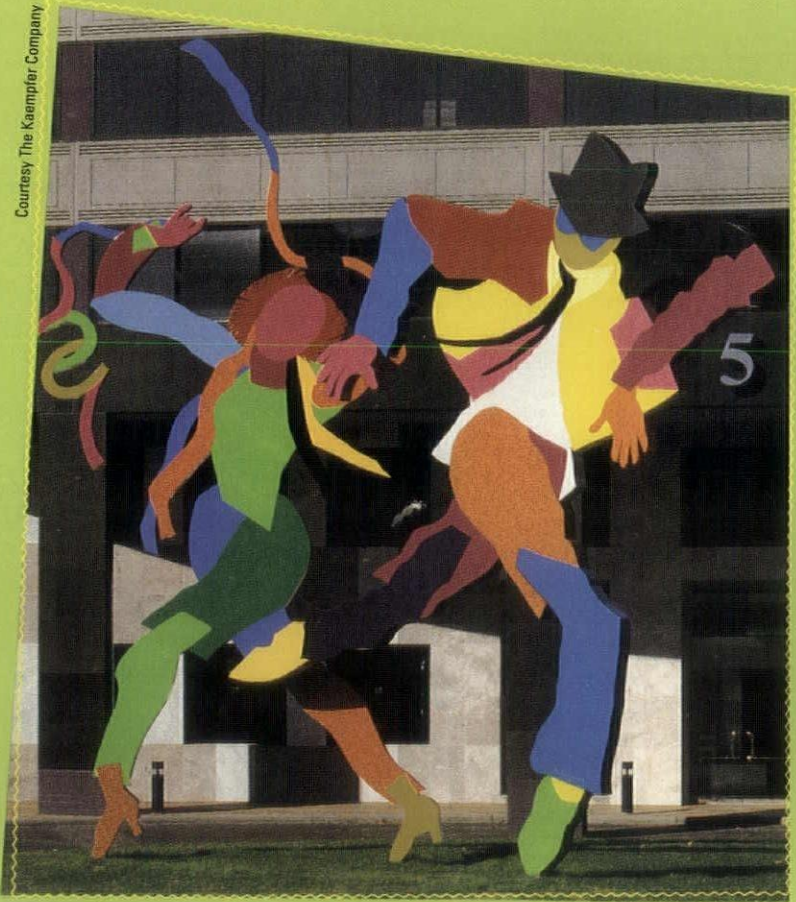
The proposal for King Street Gardens in Alexandria (bottom) calls for a sunken marsh, sweeping topiary and seating beneath a hanging garden. Miriam Schapiro's "Anna and David" (below) was commissioned for the plaza in front of a Roslyn office building.

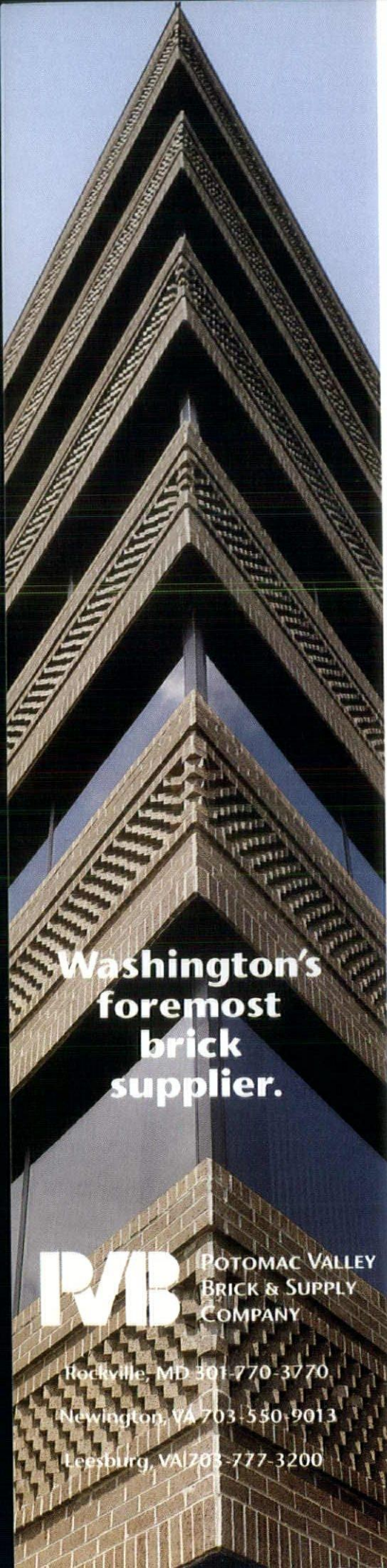
fect backdrop, like a piece of rice paper, for the sculpture," Essocoff says. However, he adds, had the architecture been bad, the addition of monumental sculpture would have been a detriment to both the building and the art. □ Just managing to get the architect and artist together can be a problem. In modern times, the process of design and construction often has precluded the artist's involvement. Artists often are heard to complain that architects are unwilling to relinquish control over any aspect of the projects; architects say that, very often, by the time an artist is even considered, the construction budget is already allocated and there is nothing left for art. "Until there is a way to get artists and architects together, so that they know and trust what each other can do, the ideal of creating rich organic environments, as in a Medieval cathedral or a Greek temple, just won't work," says Bethesda artist Stefan Saal. □ To create opportunities for pairing artists with architects and other designers, the NEA's Design Arts program in 1986 began making grants for collaborative projects. Last year it gave \$30,000, the largest grant of this sort given in 1990, to the King Street

project in Alexandria. The grant was preceded by a \$25,000 award from the Virginia Commission for the Arts. □ Regrettably, the proposed plan for the King Street project, as presented at a public meeting in December, appears less than inspiring. The design calls for the triangular site to be bisected by a huge, batlike topiary, said to represent the brim of George Washington's hat. A sunken garden will be planted at the front of the hat, a paved seating area with a hanging garden overhead of honeysuckle, climbing roses, wisteria and jasmine at its back. □ A Seattle, Washington, team of two artists, an architect and a landscape architect was chosen in a national competition to develop the scheme. Prior to their selection, a planning group composed of representatives from the city arts commission, the city parks and recreation commission and the King Street Task Force had retained an independent consultant to oversee the process. Three professional advisors with expertise in the arts or landscape architecture were chosen to review the entries. More than 100 artists submitted examples of

their work for review; nine of them were invited to assemble a team of collaborators and submit their credentials for review. From that group, four finalists were invited to visit the site and meet with community leaders before developing a proposal for the park. A winner was chosen from those schematic proposals, and now the project is being refined at the detail level. □ In the hope of avoiding public backlash, the city of Alexandria chose to open the process to its citizens through a series of open meetings, where the public was encouraged to offer criticism and suggest improvements to the winning team's design. One observer who had followed the project from the start blamed the "collaboration" of the city with

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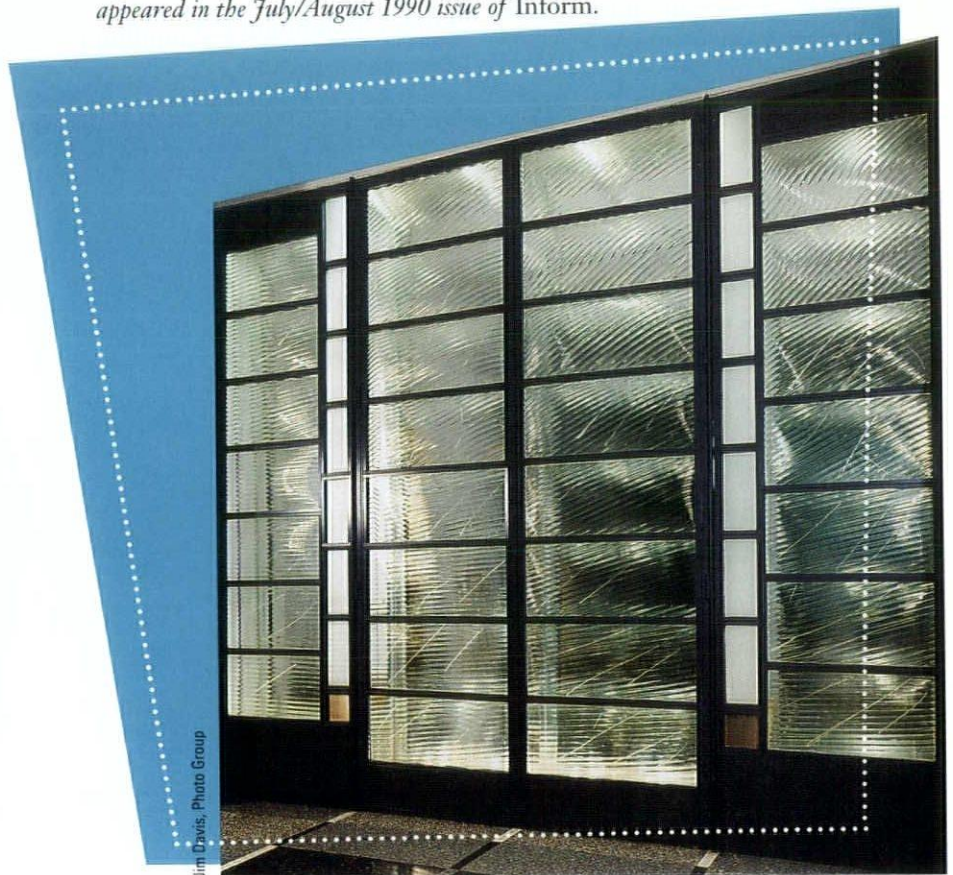
Perhaps by the time the money for the pro-

ject has been raised, the plan will have undergone further modifications that improve it. □ An example of the excellence that can

be achieved in public art is seen at the Roanoke Regional Airport.

When the airport authority decided to commission a work of art to place near the main entrance of the terminal, it sought help from The Arts Council of Roanoke Valley. The council organized a straightforward competition, publicizing the project nationwide and selecting a jury of experienced local and national individuals (including an airport representative, artists, art patrons and curators). The jury selected three finalists on the basis of their previous work and the finalists, in turn, were paid to develop detailed proposals. Local jurors then selected the winner. Once a design was accepted, there was no further interference with it. Dedicated in November, the result — "Aurora" by Albert Paley — is both a strong art work and a piece that meets with public approval. □ In retrospect, the quarter-century since the beginning of the first U.S. public art program has been a time of experimentation and evolution. In 1990, the Arts Extension Service, in cooperation with the NEA, updated its workbook for public art. And the Design Arts program of the NEA soon hopes to have an evaluation of the collaborative works it has funded since 1986. These publications will provide a nationwide overview of the public art scene and offer clarification that should, for the next 25 years, keep public art in a state of evolution, not extinction. □

Freelance writer Susan Tamulevich lives in Washington, D.C. Her article on IKEA appeared in the July/August 1990 issue of Inform.



Jim Davis, Photo Group

"Wind Wall" (above) by artist Mary Shaffer simply didn't fit in anymore when the lobby it was designed for was remodeled in a traditional style. The glass wall was removed.



17

C A R L T O N A B B O T T

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HOUSES OF HOLINESS

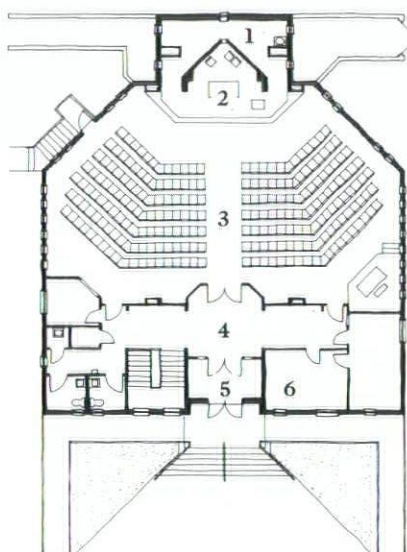
Religious architecture in the late 20th century has come to mean a variety of things, among them the accommodation of the more secular activities that have become a part of church-going today. In this issue, *Inform* examines four recent examples of churches that have integrated the needs of modern congregations with the signs and forms of ecclesiastic tradition.

BY ELENA MARCHESO MORENO AND
VERNON MAYS

18

- 1 ROBBING AREA
- 2 CHANCEL
- 3 SANCTUARY
- 4 NARTHEX
- 5 VESTIBULE
- 6 PASTOR'S OFFICE

5 10 20



Elena Marcheso Moreno is a freelance writer based in McLean. Her stories on design topics have appeared frequently in Architecture magazine.



The imagery of the farm finds a fitting outlet in a rural Fredericksburg church by Abernathy/Gehley Architects.

THE STRIKING CONTEMPORARY PROFILE OF REDEEMER Lutheran Church seems, at first glance, an anomaly—particularly in history-rich Fredericksburg, which prides itself on its Colonial heritage. But the church, set square in the middle of a cow pasture, evokes barnlike images that, on further examination, seem perfectly at home in the pastoral setting.

“OUR INTENT WAS TO MERGE THE SYMBOLISM OF BOTH BARN AND church as shelter,” says Vienna architect Douglas Gehley, who designed the church in collaboration with architect Lane Abernathy, his wife. “Isolated as it is, we meant for the building to invite any and all ‘wayward sheep,’ many of them traveling past quickly on Interstate 95,” he says.

BOTH COLOR AND FORM DRAW THE ATTENTION OF PASSERSBY TO the church. Its red metal roof contrasts sharply with the white

Is it a barn or a church? The ambiguity of Redeemer Lutheran’s exterior (facing page, top) belies the resolution of the interior space as an uncluttered house of worship (above). The architects also designed furniture to complement the church’s character, including a baptismal font (facing page, bottom).



Douglas Gehlley

masonry walls that emerge from the pasture—creating the sense of strength and tradition that should well please the congregation. An abstracted silo replaces the customary bell tower, and when lighted at night it acts as a beacon of faith, calling out to those who have lost their way. With its vertical thrust and crosses, the silo is a powerful design element that symbolically unifies God and nature.

THE FORM OF THE CROSS REAPPEARS IN SUBTLE ways throughout the building, from the framing of the tower skylight and diamond windows at each end of the church to the pattern created by the glass block windows in the sanctuary. Sunlight pours from the tower to illuminate the altar and emphasize its prominence. At midday, rays of light passing through the diamond window cast a cruciform shadow in the center aisle. Joined within the shadow is a second crosshatch from the altar cross, like a

SHELTER FOR THE WAYWARD SHEEP

branch of the Jerusalem cross — a joyous event that is more the result of divine inspiration than design inspiration, says Abernathy.

LIKE THE BUILDING EXTERIOR, THE sanctuary was designed to invite participation in religious services and church society. With only 30 feet separating the

altar and rear pew, the sanctuary for 300 people is short and wide, rather than long and narrow. “We didn’t want a stereotyped church where the people sitting in the back need binoculars to see what is happening up front,” says church building chairman Gary Parker. “We love the design the architects came up with because it created a place for us to truly worship together and strengthen our sense of community.” And, he gratefully adds, because it so successfully provides a place for the shepherd to bring his flock.



Henry Eastwood

— E.M.M.

A laundry list of specific needs, including a meditation room for round-the-clock use, generates a richly detailed church addition in Burke by Lawrence Cook Associates.

CLAPBOARD SIDING AND A PURITY OF FORM RECALL IMAGES OF A New England meeting house in the recent addition to Burke Presbyterian Church in Burke, Virginia. And, like its historic precursors, in which both ecclesiastical and secular meetings took place, this modern-day meeting place serves the needs of both religious and civic assembly. What differs here is that a young and growing congregation's multiplicity of needs led to a modern interpretation of an architecture rooted in American tradition.

"THE DESIRE FOR A MEETING HOUSE look and the sense of a church tower are there as references in a very contemporary building," says architect Lawrence Cook, principal of Lawrence Cook Associates in Falls Church, designers of the much-praised original that was completed 10 years ago. Little distinction is made between the original church and the addition; the new wing is celebrated most obviously where the two elements meet. There, a skylight opens to a view of the pre-existing church tower from the new gathering space adjacent to the sanctuary. Outside, a stepped façade accents the transition from old to new and draws worshippers toward the new entry.

SENIOR PASTOR ELIZABETH Braxton delights in the way the spaces inside the building communicate what the church is all about. "They provide a sense of openness, warmth and light, and a place for spiritual renewal," she says. A meditation room that stays

open around the clock occupies the spiritual heart of the new wing. The austere chamber, its dimensions a perfect square, is almost monastic in its feel. Finished in a simple palette of materials, the room is adorned only by a brass Jerusalem cross set into the thick slate floor and a mirror image on the ceiling

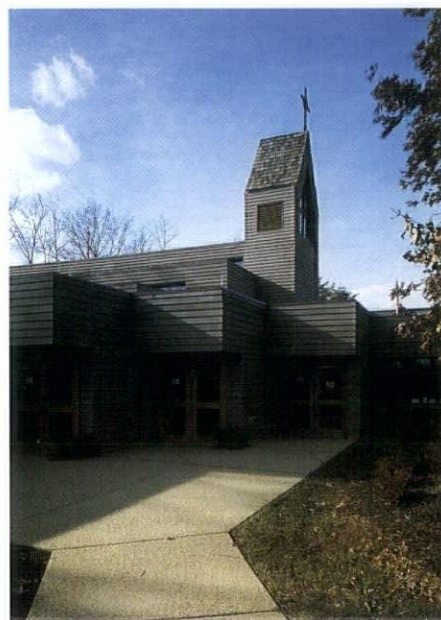
inlaid in poplar. Allusions to earth, fire and air enrich the experience of the room. Custom-made oak benches ring the periphery, where narrow skylights allow light to wash down across monochromatic walls. Candles burn in steel lanterns that are recessed into the concrete block walls.

BECAUSE IT IS INTENDED AS A SANCTUM for privacy and personal reflection, the meditation room contains no other windows. At Braxton's request, the room is graced with one object—the massive stump of a tree lifted from the site during construction. Her intent: to symbolize the scripture "a shoot will sprout from the stump of Jesse."

IT WAS COOK WHO ENVISIONED THE combination library/conference room, which embodies the founding belief of the Presbyterian faith that the enlightenment of education is the fundamental approach to religion. Cook has emphasized the importance of learning in the church by giving prominence to the bookcases lining the walls in the conference room, where church leaders meet. The possibility also remains that the building may inspire members of the community—who use the facility regularly for neighborhood meetings and scout functions—to return to the church for its spiritual offerings, as well.

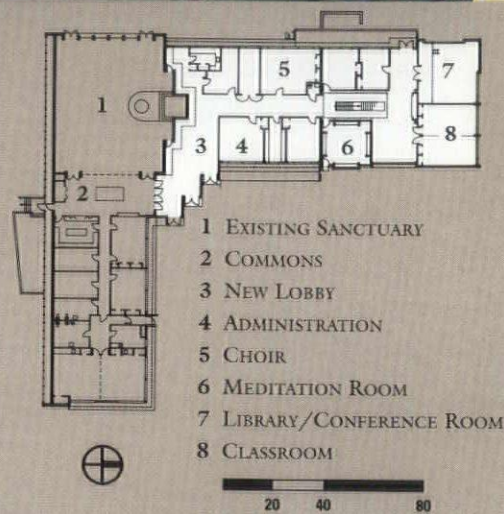
— E.M.M.

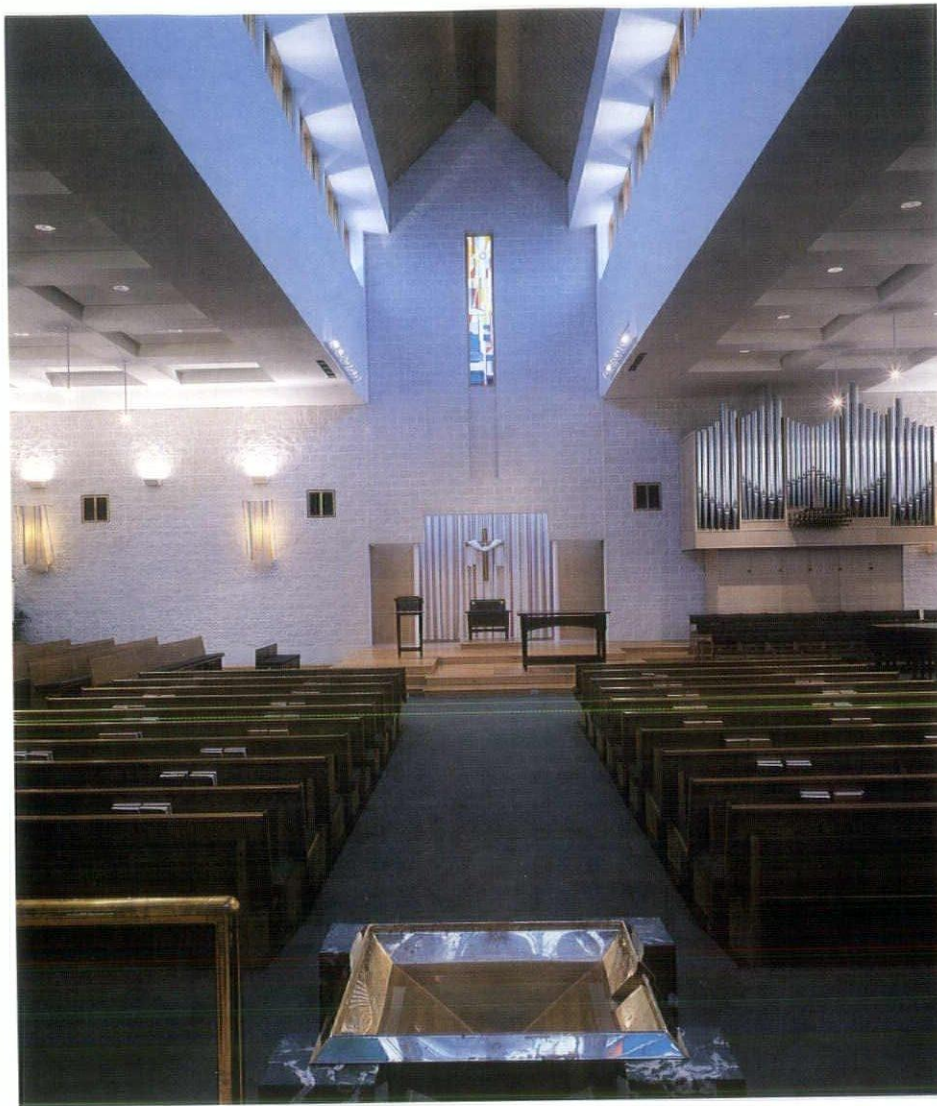
MEETING HOUSE MANNERS



Photos: Al Whitley

Bookcases in the conference room symbolize the church's emphasis on learning (top). A stepped facade at the seam between old and new announces the entry (above). The simplicity of materials and surfaces lends a monastic quality to the new meditation chapel (facing page).



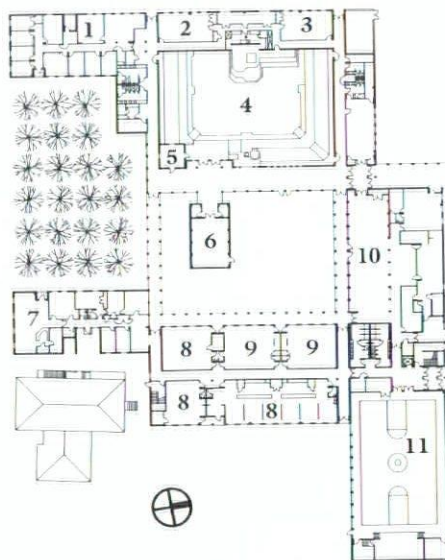


A MISSION FOR MODERN TIMES

Architectural precedents dating to the Middle Ages provide the inspiration for a modern-day church and school in Alexandria by Kerns Group Architects.

THE REQUIREMENT OF BLESSED Sacrament Catholic Church for a quiet place of contemplation and escape from the hectic pace of booming Alexandria may have seemed to be in conflict with the church's other practical needs. But neither the demand for a massive building nor a request by parish priests for their church to be a visible symbol detracted, in the end, from the building's spiritual qualities.

Photos: Richard Johnson



- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 CHURCH ADMINISTRATION | 7 SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION |
| 2 MEETING ROOM | 8 EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER |
| 3 MUSIC ROOM | 9 CLASSROOM |
| 4 MAIN SANCTUARY | 10 CAFETERIA |
| 5 RESERVATION CHAPEL | 11 GYMNASIUM |
| 6 CHAPEL | |

20 40 80

ARCHITECT THOMAS KERNS, OF KERNS GROUP ARCHITECTS IN Washington, D.C., likens the church to a medieval monastery built around an open cloister garden. "We looked for a historic model to help us organize a very complex building program," says Kerns, noting that roughly half of the 58,000-square-foot project was dedicated to a church school that includes large elements such as a gymnasium and cafeteria. Organizing the complex of buildings around an exterior courtyard helped diminish the overall mass of the building while providing a clear way of orienting the users of the building. "Also, the courtyard doesn't get diluted by the simplicity of the plan," Kerns says. "The simplicity actually gives it strength."

JUST AS CONSPICUOUS TO THE ONLOOKER IS THE CHURCH'S resemblance to Spanish colonial architecture common to America's southwest. Its prominent tower, basic proportions and compound arrangement all have clear precedents in mission architecture.



A LARGE CHAPEL, BELL TOWER AND SANCTUARY, WHICH together comprise the religious precinct of the building, are rendered in pristine-white, rough-faced concrete block that contrasts sharply with the red brick walls of the complex's support buildings. Except for variations in window shapes, the buildings are largely unornamented. Only the chapel, whose walls are peppered with a delicate pattern of red brick, is decorated.

INSIDE, THE 750-SEAT SANCTUARY IS LARGE, OPEN AND full of light. Despite its size, the sanctuary promotes each parishioner's sense of belonging through a community seating arrangement, in which side rows of pews skirt the central rows at right angles. This allows parish members to see one another's faces and also focus, in turn, on the priest, presider and lectern of the gospel.

EARLY IN THE DESIGN PROCESS, A RADICAL DECISION WAS MADE

to move the blessed sacrament and tabernacle from their customary location near the altar to a small reservation chapel, a departure from liturgical convention that was made to strengthen the reflective nature of the tiny chapel. To pay proper respect to the tabernacle (the vessel where the Holy Eucharist is kept), Kerns placed it directly beneath the open steeple tower, where it is bathed in natural light. By employing a clerestory colonnade, Kerns sought further to create in the main sanctuary a quality of light he describes as "almost Scandinavian in nature."

ALL TOLD, BLESSED SACRAMENT CATHOLIC CHURCH IS A FOCAL point that welcomes the broad community, yet serves the intimate needs of the individual. Through the use of light, color and a strong but simple form, Kerns delivered to the parish priests the landmark they had sought.

— E.M.M.

Architect Thomas Kerns sought to create in the main sanctuary (facing page) a quality of light he refers to as "almost Scandinavian." A custom-made baptismal font sits in the foreground. The layout of sprawling church and school is organized around a central courtyard, where the parish chapel was placed (above).



Robert P. Winthrop

A Lynchburg congregation's desire for a church that defers to tradition—but doesn't fade into the background—leads to a subtle reworking of conventional forms by Aquino & Winthrop Architects.

FASHIONED IN FAMILIAR WAYS

THE CONGREGATION OF HERITAGE

United Methodist Church approached architect Robert P. Winthrop looking for a church that felt traditional, “but not one that looked like all the other churches in town—the four columns in front with the steeple in the middle,” says Winthrop. Blessed with 27 acres on a commanding hilltop, the members wanted to build a church that, on the outside, would be monumental enough to announce its presence to the surrounding community and, on the inside, be grand enough so that “everybody would want to get married in it.”

IN THE FIRST SCORE, WINTHROP DELIVERED A MASSIVE sanctuary that is complemented by a 107-foot-tall tower, made all the more dramatic by the fact that it sits apart from the mass of the building. Otherwise-unadorned wall surfaces of the classroom wings and gable ends of the sanctuary have benefited from patterns of brick laid in contrasting colors. “We thought that using bold little bits of color would help to articulate the big masses of the church,” says Winthrop, of

Aquino & Winthrop Architects in Richmond. “You can see those stripes and the little black dots at the corners of the windows, even while driving by at 55 mph. It gives the sense that there is more elaboration on those surfaces than there really is.”

THE GRANDEUR OF THE INTERIOR reinforces the members’ agreement that the focus of their religious life is the sanctuary. A large interior volume was required for acoustical reasons to accommodate frequent musical programs, yet the space had to be subdivided somehow to keep it from being too reverberant. Winthrop abandoned strictly ornamental options when he discovered that a series of load-bearing trusses would aid the acoustics, support the roof and provide a rhythmic order for both the lighting and loudspeaker systems. The curved steel

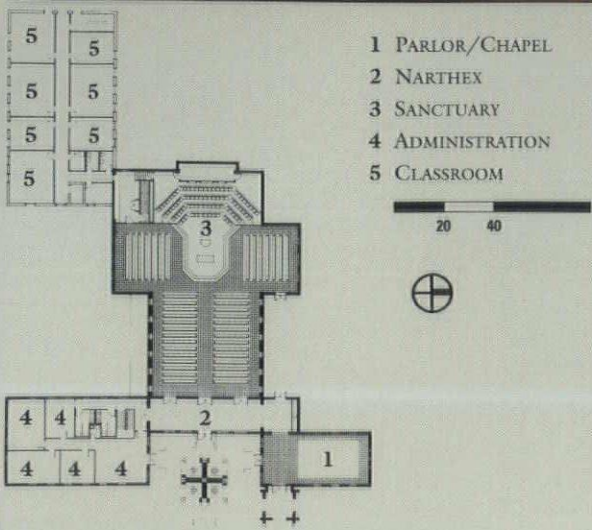
trusses, wrapped in drywall casings, recall the graceful forms of wooden hammer beams in the Gothic Revival church that formerly was the religious home to a segment of Heritage’s new congregation. The older church was destroyed by fire.

WINTHROP CONFIGURED THE FLOOR PLAN TO CREATE A SMALL courtyard outside the narthex, which is enclosed in clear glass to afford views of the surrounding hills. Activities held in the courtyard are visible to passersby—a bit of ecclesiastical public relations for a church that built a sanctuary to seat double its membership. Almost three years after its completion, the sanctuary fills close to capacity each Sunday.

WINTHROP SAYS THE MEMBERS HAVE BEEN ENTHUSIASTIC OVER the results: a church that looks like a church. “Curiously,” he adds, “other clients looking at it have commented that it was too radical, bold and modern, which left me taken aback. I consider it a very conservative design.”

—V.M.

Brick details in contrasting colors articulate the large masses of the church (above) and promote “the sense that there is more elaboration on those surfaces than there really is.” Highlighting the interior (facing page) are a series of curved trusses recalling the forms of an earlier church destroyed by fire.

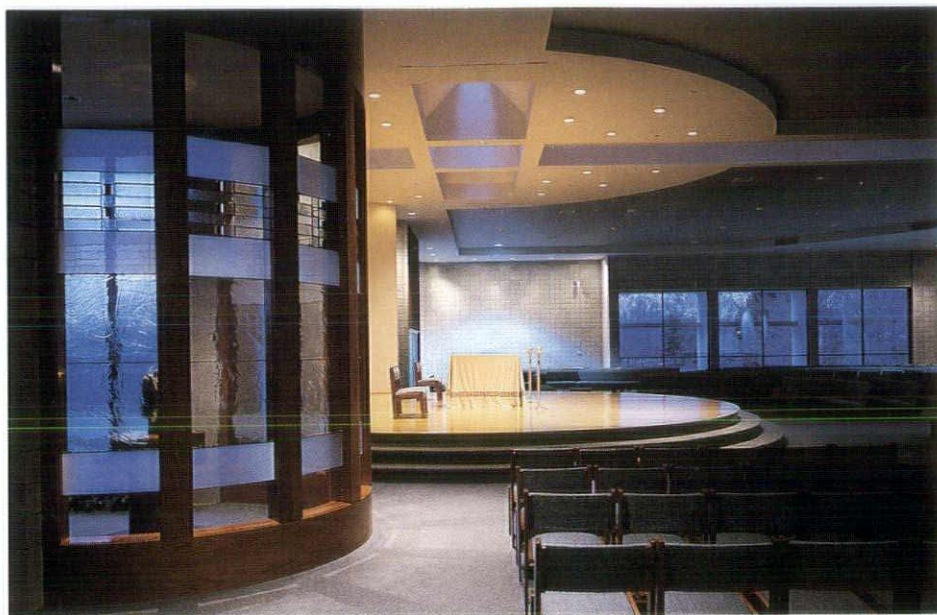


THE GLORY OF GLASS

For centuries, churches have been the source of patronage for glorious expressions of stained glass artistry. Yet, in recent work on churches, three Virginia architects have explored contemporary ways in which glass can be used to complement the religious experience.

CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION
BURTONSVILLE, MARYLAND
LEMAY ASSOCIATES

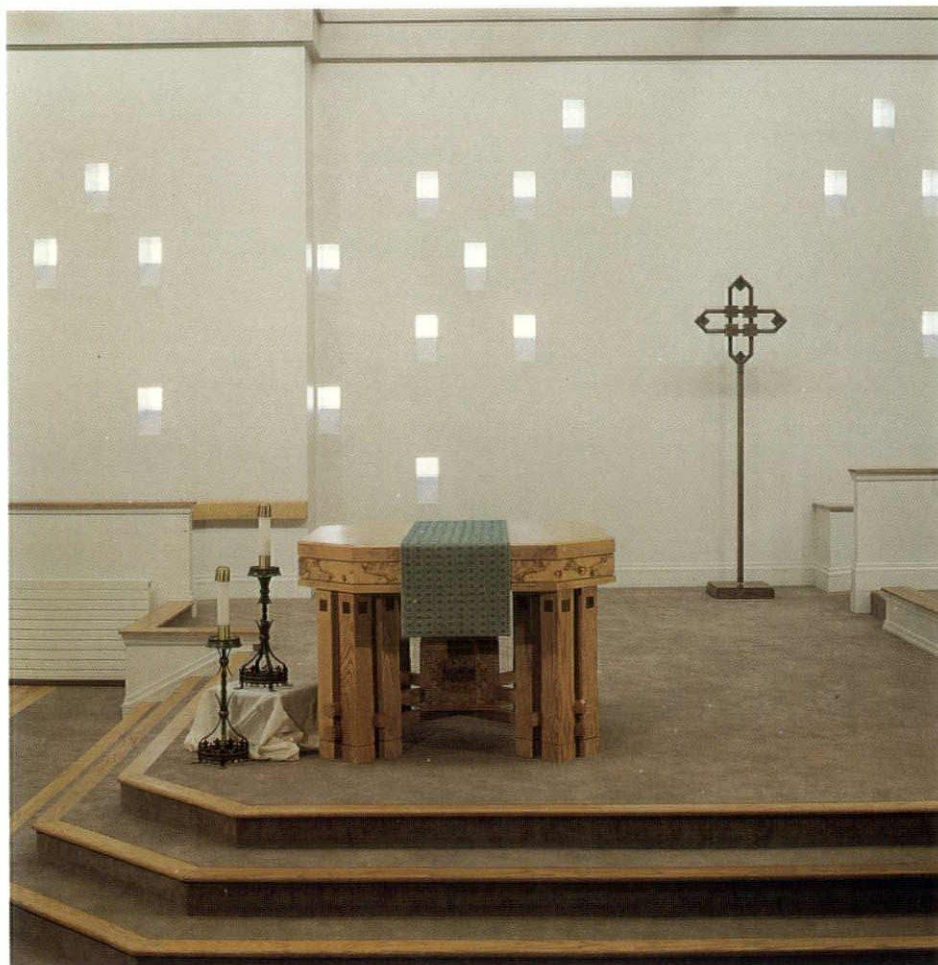
The simple requirement of the Catholic diocese that the tabernacle be visible from all parts of the church gave inspiration to a curved wall of glass that separates the main sanctuary from the parish chapel. "By projecting the chapel into the main space, we were able to make the tabernacle [inside the chapel] visible from all seats of the sanctuary," says architect Paul Erickson. "The curve also reinforces the vocabulary of the round forms used elsewhere in the building." Stained glass artist Brenda Belfield was brought in to collaborate on the window, which is framed in stained oak and built from large panels of water glass, sections of opaque glass and strips of beveled glass that sometimes act as prisms, tossing swatches of color on the walls and floors. Sunlight entering the chapel renders it much brighter than the main sanctuary, Erickson says, "and that helps to set it apart as a special place."



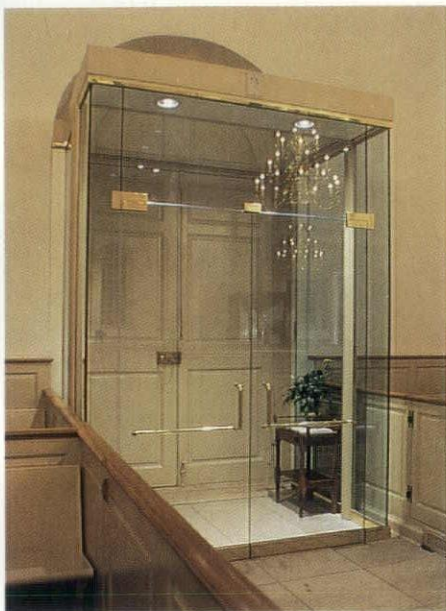
Maxwell MacKenzie

ST. ANNE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
BRISTOL, VIRGINIA
PEYTON BOYD, ARCHITECT

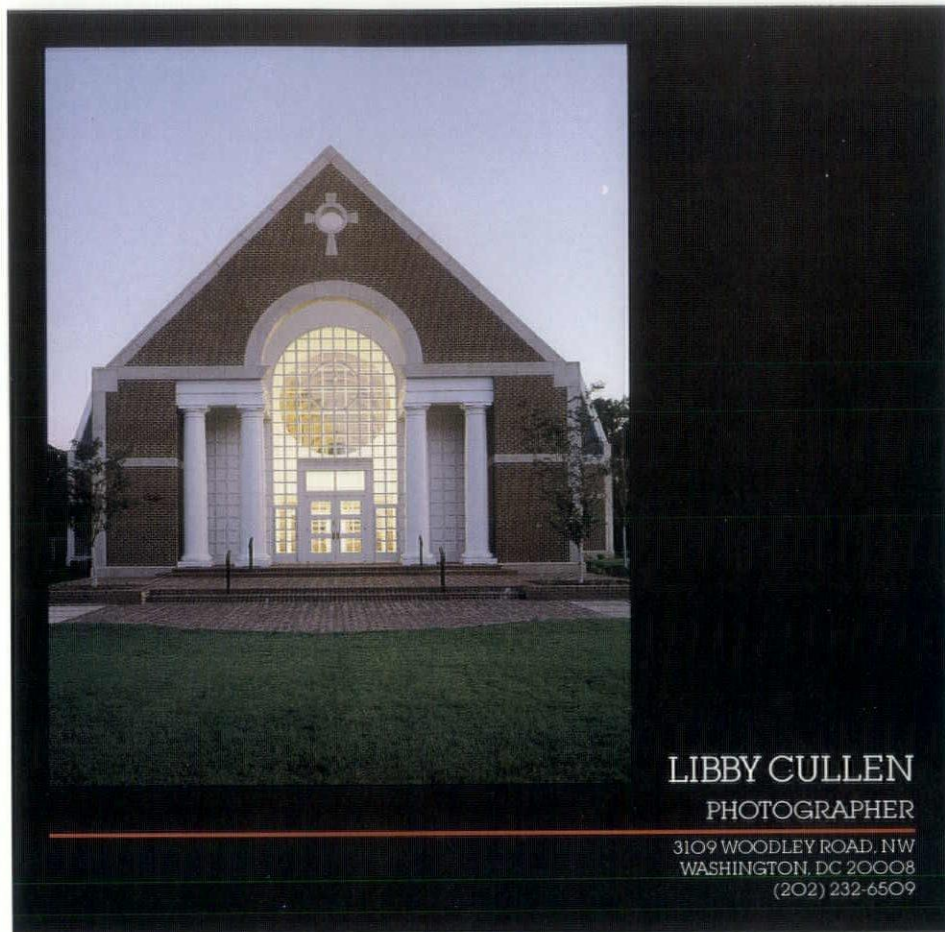
Afanciful pattern of luminous windows grew out of the architect's initial concern with the overpowering scale of a new sanctuary's façade. Thoughts of the interior came second. "I was looking for a way to enliven the wall," says Boyd. His sketches yielded a pattern that appears random, yet frames a processional cross at a place of honor. Trends in ecclesiastical architecture to break down the physical — hence, psychological — barriers between the congregation and the clergy prompted liturgical consultant John Buscemi to suggest that Boyd extend the pattern of square glass blocks beyond the recession in the wall that defines the sacred zone of the church. And Boyd agreed. Any resemblance between the sculpted window openings to the windows at Le Corbusier's chapel at Ronchamps, is purely coincidental, Boyd humbly notes. "But the idea of a pinpoint of light penetrating an otherwise massive structure was certainly my inspiration."



Woody's House of Portraits



Courtesy Taylor & Parrish Inc.



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PHOTOGRAPHER

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(202) 232-6509

ABINGDON CHURCH
GLOUCESTER COUNTY, VIRGINIA
JOSEPH DYE LAHENDRO, ARCHITECT

The architect's task was to restore the interior of the church (built about 1755), which had been greatly altered in the 19th century with the addition of vestibules at each of the three entries and a new floor raised more than two feet above the rotted original. Lahendro's intent was to recapture the feeling of entering the high-ceilinged, historic space. He removed the dark, tiny vestibules and lowered the floor to its original height. At the main entry, Lahendro placed a simple glass vestibule (with a clear ceiling, as well) that stabilizes the temperature in the old church while allowing the feeling that one is entering a large room. "The idea was to do something that was obviously modern, instead of something that was of the period — a mullioned bird cage," the architect says. "I didn't want to define the box, but to have the corners be glass instead of steel."



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Gari Melchers gained worldwide notoriety for his realist paintings. Pictured are "The Sermon" (1886, above) and "The Fencer" (c. 1895, facing page).

Photos: Courtesy Mary Washington College

A Refuge for the Muse

By Joseph G. Dreiss

On top of a hill overlooking the Rappahannock River near Fredericksburg sits Belmont, an 18th century manor house and fieldstone studio that once was home to an internationally renowned American painter. His name: Gari Melchers, son of a German immigrant.

Melchers' art has, until recently, been largely overlooked by scholars and critics. But, in his day, he was widely known for his large-scale paintings of Dutch peasants and his brilliantly colored domestic interiors done in an American Impressionist style. Today his Virginia estate—operated by Mary Washington College as Belmont: The Gari Melchers Memorial Art Gallery—functions as a house museum that displays Melchers' art as well as the rich and varied collection of decorative objects and fine art he amassed during his lifetime.

When Melchers purchased Belmont in 1915, he already had established himself as one of the best known and most highly respected American painters in the world. He was born in Detroit in 1860, and his first art teacher and role model was his father, Julius Theodore Melchers, a sculptor who was probably best known for his precise carvings of wooden cigar store Indians.

The younger Melchers sailed for Europe in 1877 to further his art education at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art and later at the Académie Julian and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. The sound workmanship which many consider the hallmark of his art resulted from the rigorous academic training Melchers received in the European academies.

In 1884, Melchers traveled to Holland to join George Hitchcock, another expatriate American painter, and together they established a studio in Egmond aan Zee, a small Dutch fishing village on the North Sea. The peasantry of this rural area

became the main subjects of Melchers' paintings of the 1880s. The artist depicted the Egmonders attending church, relaxing in their homes, and resting or working on the Egmond dunes. Large-scale genre paintings of the peasants of Egmond, such as "The Sermon" and "The Communion," won Melchers prominence at many international exhibitions. He was awarded the Grand Prize for American painting at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889, an honor which he shared with no less a figure than John Singer Sargent. Melchers' credo of artistic realism was succinctly expressed by a sign the artist hung above the door of his Egmond studio that read "Waar en Klaar," meaning true and clear.

Melchers' success at the annual salons and world fairs of the 1880s led to a number of important mural commissions during the following decade. Although the artist lived and worked primarily in Europe until 1915, he did return to America intermittently during the 1890s to work on these commissions. Two large semicircular murals entitled "Arts of Peace" and "Arts of War" were executed by the artist for George B. Post's gigantic Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building built for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago. These works anticipated in format, style and subject his 1895 murals "War" and "Peace" done for the new Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Architect Cass Gilbert would later commission Melchers to do a series of murals for the Detroit Public Library, which Gilbert designed. Thus, despite his expatriate status, Melchers contributed significantly to the so-called American Renaissance.

Melchers' life and art changed drastically after the turn of the century. In 1903, he married a young art student named Corrine Lawton Mackall in a small ceremony on the isle of Jersey. During the next decade Melchers cele-



of the social and professional opportunities that abounded in New York, while also enjoying the rustic simplicity of rural Virginia. Many of the local people and picturesque sights of the Fredericksburg area are lovingly portrayed in the artist's late canvasses.

Melchers' oeuvre as a whole is characterized by a great deal of variety in style and subject matter. His monumental genre scenes of the Egmond period are much admired for their precisely realistic techniques and unsentimental honesty. And his later Impressionist works are his most colorful and visually pleasing. Though the overall quality of his art is high, he had weaknesses too. Perhaps his least satisfactory works are his later murals and some of his paintings of the '20s and early '30s, in which a stylistic eclecticism led the artist to a peculiarly idiosyncratic approach that is not entirely convincing.

During the past decade there has been increasing scholarly and conservation activity surrounding the figure of Gari Melchers and the Belmont estate. A half-million-dollar renovation of the house at Belmont, including new climate control systems, was recently completed. Perhaps most importantly, a large retrospective exhibition of the art of Gari Melchers now touring the country is scheduled to open at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond on April 8. No doubt the exposure will serve to open more eyes to the talent and accomplishments of this artist.

Getting There

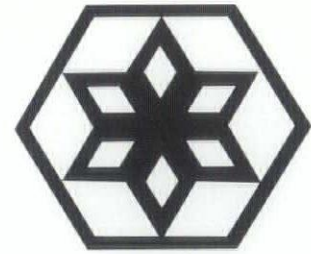
Belmont: The Gari Melchers Memorial Art Gallery is located near Fredericksburg in Falmouth, Virginia. From Interstate 95, take Exit 45 at U.S. 17 and follow signs to Belmont.

Getting In

Winter hours (October through March) are 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday-Saturday, and 1-4 p.m. Sunday. Gallery hours are extended one hour during the summer. Admission: \$3 for adults; \$1 for ages 6-18. Group rates available. For information, call 703-373-3634.



Joseph G. Dreiss is associate professor of art at Mary Washington College and the author of Gari Melchers: His Works in the Belmont Collection.



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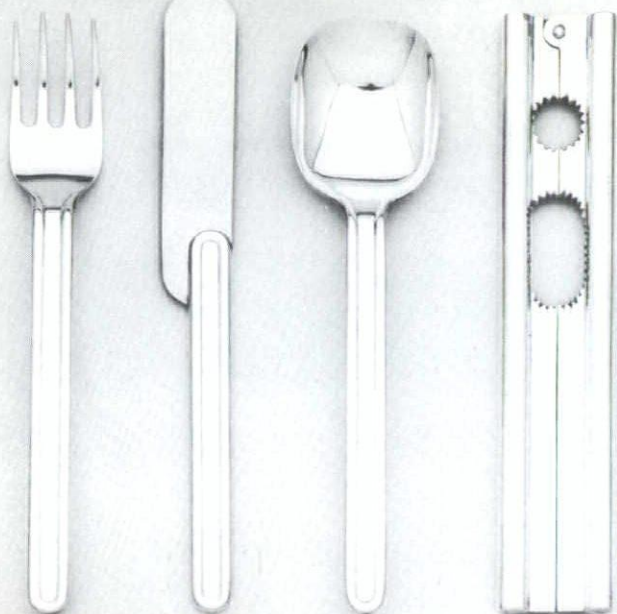
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Clients include: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; Coca-Cola International; Cameron Hall, Virginia Military Institute; The Chrysler Museum; Charleston Naval Base; The Commonwealth Club; and the residences of John Kluge, John Barber and over 1,800 other elegant homes annually.

brated the happiness he experienced in his marriage in a series of rich Impressionist canvasses depicting well-to-do women at ease amid lavish domestic interiors.

In 1909, Melchers accepted a teaching position in Weimar, a position that came with numerous perks, including a studio on the town square opposite a house once occupied by Franz Liszt. The American artist made many important contacts in Germany at this time, including art collector Hugh Reisinger and Belgian painter and architect Henry van de Velde. The privileged lifestyle and generous governmental patronage that Melchers enjoyed during this German interlude came to an end after the outbreak of World War I. The German attitude towards Americans deteriorated even before the United States officially joined the war, and Melchers felt compelled to return to America.

After his arrival in the U.S., the artist set up a studio in New York and also purchased Belmont. For the last 17 years of his life, he traveled between these two locations, spending the winter art season in New York and living at Belmont during the summer. Thus, he took advantage



Eames and Vignelli: Profiles in Diversity

Eames Design

By John Neuhart, Marilyn Neuhart and Ray Eames.
Illustrated. 456 pp. New York: Harry N. Abrams.
\$95.00 cloth.

design: Vignelli

Essays by Germano Celant, Mildred Constantine, David Revere McFadden and Joseph Rykwert.
292 pp. New York: Rizzoli.
\$50.00 cloth.

By Vernon Mays

At the beginning of *Eames Design*, the question is put to Charles Eames: What is your definition of design? His reply is as stripped of the nonessentials as were

his chairs, films, graphics and furniture showrooms. Design, he said, is "a plan for arranging elements in such a way as to best accomplish a particular purpose."

Eames's response, while not the stuff of literary prizes, gets at the core of a philosophy that powered him through almost four decades of constant and varied productivity. Design, he once wrote, is conducted with greatest conviction and enthusiasm when it manages simultaneously to address the interests of the client, the designer and the whole of society. That broad sense of commitment to his own causes and the society's greater good — in addition to the desires of the patrons who afforded paychecks to him and his staff — is perhaps what separated Eames, who died in 1978, from the legion of other designers who followed in his considerable wake.

Eames's approach to design established a standard against which the work of other designers can be assessed. One example of the contrast that such comparisons can yield is illuminated by the stories — illustrated catalogs, really — of two leading design offices in the books *Eames Design* and *design: Vignelli*. For, while the two firms whose work is documented in these books — the California office of Charles and Ray Eames and the New York office of Massimo and Lella Vignelli — pursued a similar range of interests and commissions, through their completed work they are revealed as models of diversity.

Take Charles Eames. Though he began his

architectural training in 1925 at Washington University in St. Louis, he left after two years to study independently. By 1930, he had opened an architectural office and within a few years began revealing talent not only in building design, but in the doors, windows and light fixtures that complemented the overall building. Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen noticed Eames's work and invited him in 1938 to study at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan.

Eames took Saarinen up on the opportunity and benefited from the diversity of experiences and talent at Cranbrook. But it was after he left the academic nest, moving to California in 1941, that his own great influence began to be felt. Eames's work blossomed during a period of optimism following World War II. As authors John and Marilyn Neuhart write, "The wholehearted belief that if people had the right information they would make the right decisions and choices was the cornerstone of many designers' work in the postwar period. Anything was possible, 'good design' was going to save us, and we would have not only a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage, but good pots to put chickens in and cars and houses that were honestly and beautifully made (and honestly priced)."

From 1941 to 1978 Eames, often in collaboration with his wife Ray (an artist who studied under painter Hans Hofmann and briefly attended Cranbrook), generated a body of work that is painstakingly documented in *Eames Design*. Beginning with accounts of Eames's experiments in molded plywood — first as seating, then as splints, sculpture, and airplane fuselages — the book's dry, chronological presentation builds a slow momentum as each spread details yet another facet of his inquisitiveness.

The range of projects that came from the office is stupefying:



Flatware and nutcracker (top) by Vignelli. Lounge chair and ottoman (right) by Eames.

magazine covers, proposals for prefabricated housing, chairs of molded plywood, fiberglass and, later, aluminum, corporate graphics, architecture, photography, showrooms, toys, short films and exhibition designs.

Besides the famous chairs and ubiquitous tandem sling seats that grace airport lobbies across the country, one of the most enduring designs to come from the studio was the 1500-square-foot Eames House, occupied from 1949 until Ray's death in 1988. Long noted among architects for its success at creating a rich and varied environment using nothing but off-the shelf components, the house today remains one of the touchstones of modern design.

Also worth mentioning is Eames's film, "The Information Machine," his first commission for IBM and, according to the authors, a pivotal point in the direction the office would take. From then on, according to the Neumans, "the ordering of information in film, exhibition and books became the Eameses' major preoccupation."

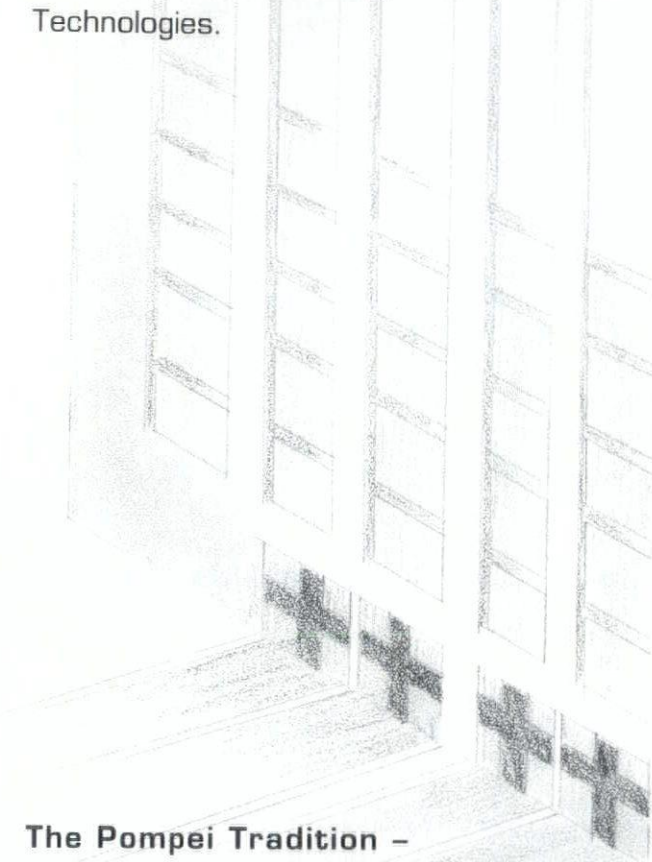
While selections from Eames's portfolio have been deemed important enough to be placed in the design collection of the Museum of Modern Art, so too have objects from the office of Vignelli Associates. Both Massimo and Lella Vignelli were born in Italy and primarily educated there. They each had fellowships in the late 1950s at prestigious American institutions — Massimo at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, Lella at MIT. In 1965, they established offices in New York and Milan for Unimark International Corporation, a Chicago-based firm with offices worldwide. In 1971, they hung out their own shingle in New York.

Their story, *design: Vignelli*, picks up at that point with a running account of the firm's work neatly organized into categories: graphic programs, books, magazines, transportation design, packaging, products, furniture, interiors and exhibition design. The elegance of the layouts are reflective of Massimo Vignelli's patent style. (No mystery there — he designed the book.) No two images are used when just one will do.

Here, too, are familiar examples of our graphic culture: corporate logos for

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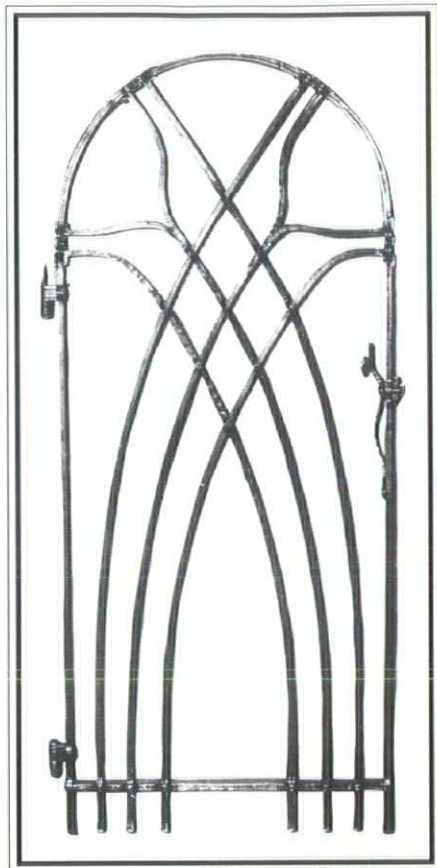
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Bloomington's and American Airlines, transportation graphics for the Washington Metro ("The whole system was so well-designed that there was very little need for graphics," says the book. "However, someone finally found a way to clutter it with redundant signs.") and the information program for the National Park Service. Anyone who has ever received a site map and information brochure at a national park has sampled the clarity of Vignelli design.

Austerity of form characterizes the Vignelli work, whether it is their publication layouts governed by a strict typographic grid or their three-dimensional objects that draw their essence from pure Euclidean forms. Writes critic Joseph Rykwert: "The Vignellis propose the stringency of a formal fast: they limit themselves to elementary geometrical bodies — the sphere, the cube, and the pyramid — and to primary colors in all they design, whether interiors, domestic objects, or furniture. Objects are assumed to be composed of the simplest shapes, and any departure from them, any sophistication, has to be justified."

Less readily identifiable with the Vignelli name are some of those same products and interiors to which Rykwert refers. Cool and ascetic, the metal-paneled rooms and chairs, tables and lamps on these pages betray a slick commercialism that separates the Vignellis' portfolio from the Eameses'.

That may say more about the current wave in design than about any fundamental conflict between style and substance in the work of these esteemed form-givers. For the warm colors, subtle textures and seductive lighting of the Vignelli interiors are often captivating and always carefully controlled. Perhaps their motivation, above all else, distinguishes these firms from each other. Eames, one senses, was guided by a vision that had great implications for society and set him on a personal course from which he never strayed. Vignelli, on the other hand, rejects outright the notion of being wedded to a central idea. As proclaimed boldly in the introduction to *design: Vignelli*, "where there are dogmas, there is no more design."

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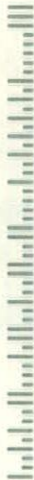
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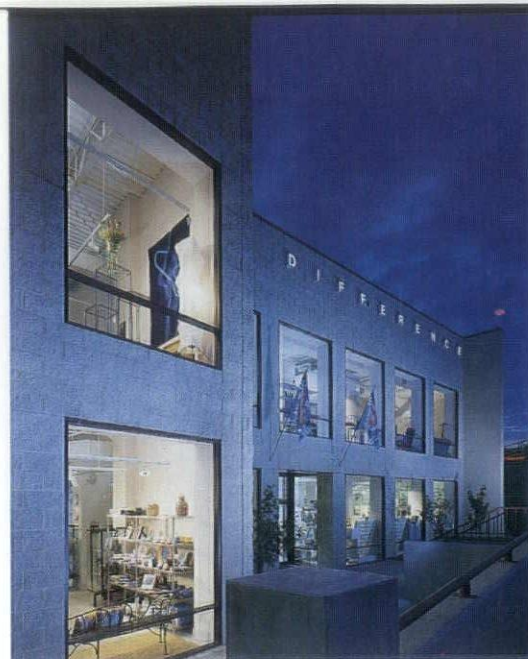
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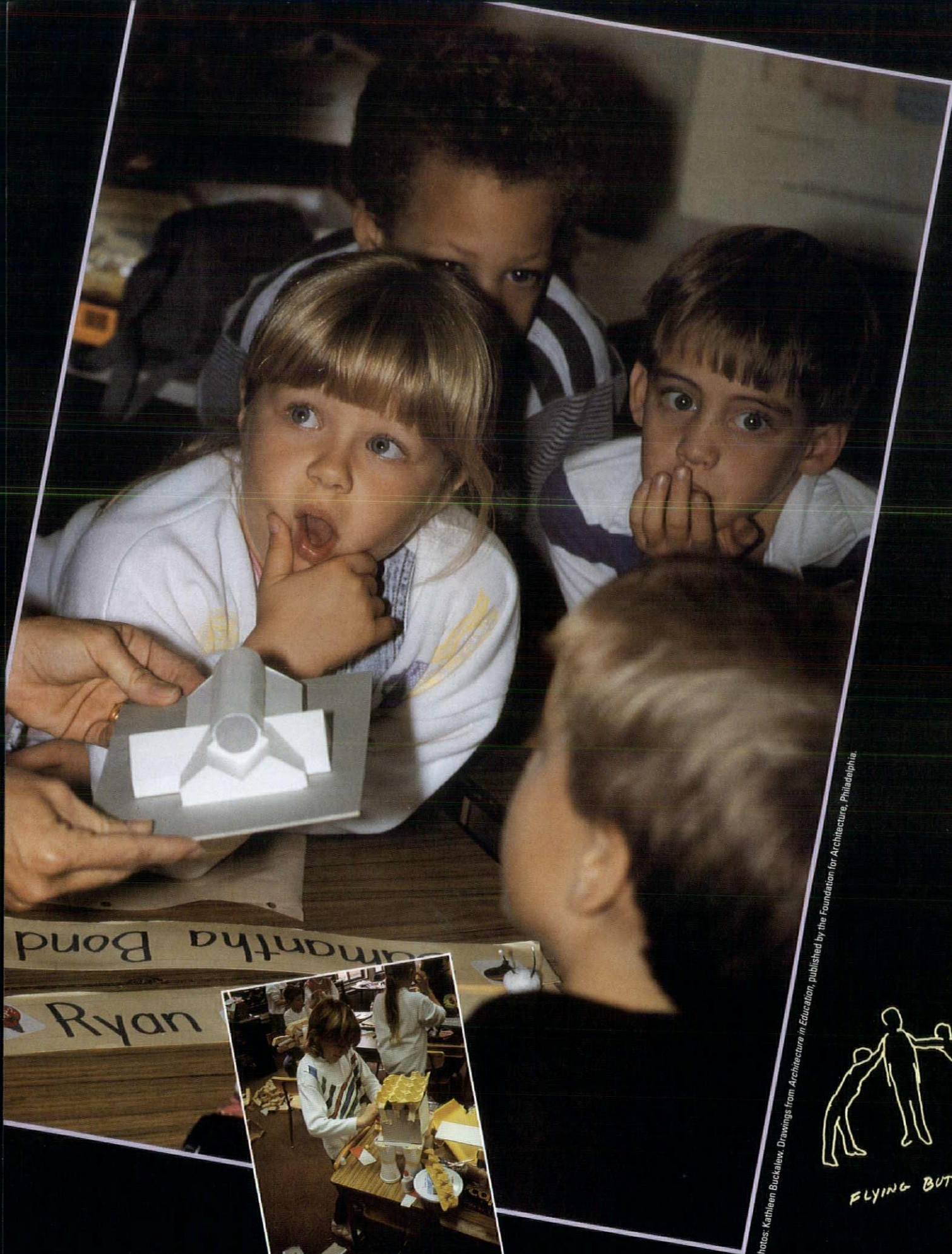
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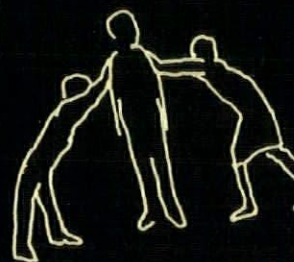
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FLYING BUTTRESS

MORE THAN CHILD'S PLAY

While the kids are having fun, efforts to bring an appreciation of architecture and design to elementary students are paying off in two Virginia public school districts.

By Stephanie L. Riker

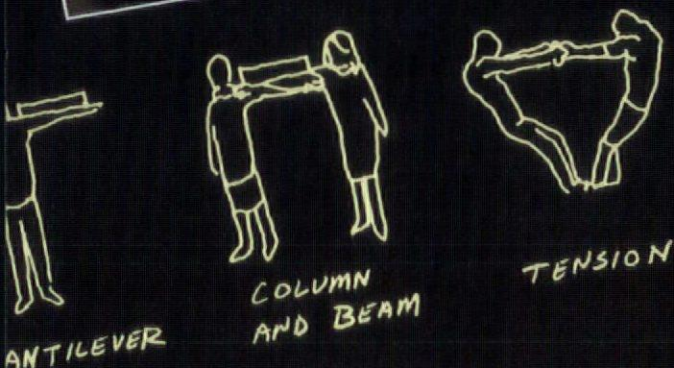
Amid chaotic piles of cereal boxes, oatmeal canisters, and soft drink cans, 20 third-graders are cutting and gluing scraps into elaborate structures. The class is building clubhouses replete with water supplies, lookout towers, trap doors and hidden stairways. And it isn't just for fun: These kids are learning new ways of thinking about their built surroundings through a program conducted by architects at Sunrise Valley Elementary School in Fairfax County.

Like another at Waller Mill Elementary School in York County, the architecture-in-education program is designed to raise children's awareness of the churches, houses, classrooms and offices where they will spend most of their waking hours. "We're relating all aspects of architecture and construction to the children at a level they can understand, that they can have fun with," says architect Marvin B. Kagan, guardian of today's cereal-box operation. "It's a matter of opening up their eyes to the built environment."

The Fairfax County project began during the 1989-90 school year with matching funds from an Artists-in-Education grant awarded by the Virginia Commission for the Arts. Selected to launch the project was architect Wayne Hughes, who now advises the program. "Many teachers are looking for ways to make subject matter relevant in today's world," says Hughes, principal of Hughes Group Architects in Sterling. "Architecture is an ideal vehicle for that."

Sunrise Valley Principal Mary Ann Chung says the teachers have been able to integrate the lessons of architecture into the curriculum in a meaningful way. "It's made the whole of [the children's] experiences more alive." Arts commission staffer Sharon Wilson calls the program an excellent example of a successful partnership between government, business and education. "It demonstrates that the arts truly are a part of our everyday lives," Wilson says.

This year, the school received a second state arts grant and hired Kagan (of Kagan-Sims Architects) and architects Dorothea Scott (of Hughes Group) and Richard A. Eckhardt (of Eddy & Eckhardt Architects). They work with students in the third and sixth grades, where the program blends naturally with units of study that include geometry, math, world geography, community understanding and the history of civilization. Each architect spends eight days during the year teaching about site plans, models, tools and structures. A field trip to Reston Town Center, the local mega-mall, included a scavenger hunt



Third-graders at Fairfax County's Sunrise Valley Elementary School seem transfixed by the discussion of a small study model (facing page).

Another student joins the fun with a construction of egg crates (inset).

Architect Dorothea Scott (above) says the students have surprised her with "the freshness that they have, and the quickness of their minds."

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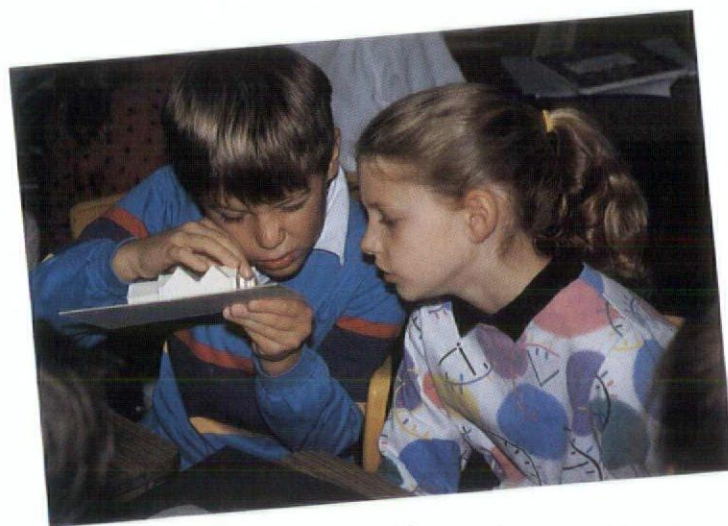
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for door knockers, light fixtures and other details. The students found each piece and answered questions about its use and materials.

Architectural principles are finding their way into other classes, as well. Several sixth-graders showed Chung a news article they wrote for language arts about their day at the mall. She asks rhetorically: "Would kids have been talking to me about architecture three years ago, four years ago?" Hardly.

Volunteer coordinator Melody Lewis-Kane praises the educational good sense of connecting the principles of design to the rest of the elementary curriculum. "If it's isolated, it doesn't stick with the kids. If it doesn't relate to anything else in their life, it's forgotten," she says.



Kathleen Bucklelew

At Waller Mill Elementary School in York County, the program is different but the goal is the same: increased awareness of architecture and the man-made environment (though structures from nature, such as beehives and beaver dams, are used to illustrate how man has learned to build). The catalyst behind that effort is Robert A. Magoon, Jr., of Williams, Tazewell and Associates in Norfolk. "It's an interesting thing to ask an architect to come in and bring models and drawings," says Magoon. "It's a fun thing to do for an hour. But what happens [with a one-shot approach] is that there's no lasting impact on the kids. Our goal is to reach more young people and to have more long-term impact." York County's program draws inspiration

from *Architecture in Education*, a textbook of imaginative classroom projects that are tailored to each grade level and academic subject. Students in art class understand two-point perspective by drawing buildings; in language arts, they learn the vocabulary of buildings and write stories about imagined homes in outer space; in science, they see what kinds of structures stand up to natural disasters and why.

Magoon taught a lesson on cantilevers by piling books on a child's outstretched hand. He picked the toughest-looking kid in the class for this one — the boy who acted like he could stand up to anything. What the class learned along the way is how a load can exceed the capacity of support. "It's a nice avenue to take, away from actual book work," says teacher Jane Allen.

Magoon began pushing the program at Waller Mill three years ago, after a Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce program called Business in Education Partnerships piqued his interest. He no longer wanted to go into classrooms and do what he calls "a tap dance in front of the kids."

"My ambition became to get schools interested in just talking about this possibility of architecture in education, and downplaying the word 'architecture,'" says Magoon, noting that promoting a general awareness of their surroundings was more important than spoon-feeding the kids rote facts about construction. Magoon sat down with teachers and administrators and picked the best lessons from the text, which opens by

School officials say the new program gets kids talking about architecture on their own.

introducing basic two-dimensional concepts and builds gradually on that foundation. "There are a lot of participatory types of things," he says, "and the kids become part of the learning process. That's how it's fun." With the schedule planned, Magoon retreated into primarily an advisory role and let the teachers carry the ball.

Programs like these in Fairfax and York counties are springing up throughout the country, says Alan Sandler, senior director of education for the American Institute of Architects national staff. The long-term payoff, Sandler says, is better clients with better appreciation. Having the endorsement of the AIA gives Magoon, for example, the clout to recruit architects for additional schools. Hughes, on the other hand, received more than moral support. A national AIA grant is underwriting production of a videotape on the Sunrise Valley program that will be used to interest other architects in starting something similar. Both Magoon and Hughes hope to serve as a clearinghouse of interested architects and schools, matching them with each other and providing teaching materials and guidance.

Hughes sees in these programs the power to influence design over the long haul. "We're looking at clients square in the eye in these third-graders," he says. "These are people who will sit on city councils and county boards of commissioners, who are going to make decisions whether to hire architects or not." From the spark in the eyes of today's children, Hughes senses their enthusiasm and knows that he is nurturing a new generation of thinkers.

Yet, for these elementary students, the infrequent brushes with architects are mostly days of fun and excitement. "It can energize and excite and get those learning juices flowing in a kid who maybe hasn't been challenged," Magoon says. And if a certain third-grade class has its way, the future of our cities may include a fantastic array of well-guarded forts, hideouts, underground passageways and clubhouses with pink plastic antennae.

Stephanie L. Riker is a Richmond freelance writer.

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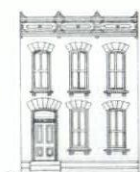


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Piedmont Environmental Council

Stewards of a Way of Life

By Lisa Goff

As a teenager in the 1950s, Bob Dennis, flannel-clad president of the Piedmont Environmental Council, planted scores of pine trees to stop the erosion on his family's 235-acre parcel in Rappahannock County. He recently harvested the forest those trees had become, and takes a landowner's pleasure in striding across the recreated empty mountaintop of his youth.

Barreling across gutted lanes in his blue pickup truck, he calls attention to a view of the mountains, hardwood saplings pushing up through the debris of felled pines, and underbrush where quails nest. But he points with the most pride to his neighbors' land in Rappahannock and surrounding counties — land that has been permanently committed, like his family's 235 acres, to rural use. "It's not a financial decision," says Dennis. "It's a matter of values. I find more value in looking at the deer and knowing they're going to be here forever than I do knowing I've got a lot of money in the bank."

Since 1981, Dennis has led the group's efforts to preserve rural land in nine counties of the Virginia Piedmont stretching from Loudoun south to Albemarle. Frightened witless by the inexorable sprawl of Washington, D.C., the council was formed in 1972 to foster the creation of county land use plans that direct growth in and around towns, and preserve the rural character of the surrounding landscape. PEC, headquartered in Warrenton, also takes on related environmental issues, from uranium mining to groundwater, and spends a lot of time convincing landowners to sign away development rights to their estates.

"What makes them unique to this region is that their focus encompasses the nine counties," says Genevieve P. Keller, co-author of *Saving America's Countryside* and principal in Land and Community Associates, a Charlottesville firm. "They're a model in this state, and even nationally, for adjacent areas to come together on shared issues."

The council was founded by members of the horse set with ancestral homes in central Virginia and by Fortune 500 CEO-types who had settled in the region because of its unspoiled nature. "Some of these people have more invested in their fences than I have in my house," Dennis says, gesturing to the homes of landowners along rural Route 709. This core of a couple hundred pedigreed landowners provides the bulk of PEC's annual budget, which totaled more than \$720,000 last year. A glance down the contributors list reveals a lot of blue blood — Arthur Arundel, Paul Mellon, Alice du Pont Mills — as well as evidence of the elite pursuits of PEC's contributor base. Contributing organizations include the Civil War Round Table and National Beagle Club.

But membership in PEC has burgeoned to almost 3,000, which suggests a grass roots appeal to the organization's cause. Indeed, PEC commissioned Mason Dixon Opinion Research in 1990 to

conduct a statewide poll, which showed Virginians agreeing six to one that local governments should have more authority over growth management.

While the group's emphasis is decidedly environmental, it also takes an economic stance: Counter to the arguments of real estate developers who boast of the construction jobs created by the housing developments they'd like to build, PEC points out that converting an area to residential use often drives out the forestry and agricultural businesses — and the jobs they provide — while imposing the huge costs of roads, schools and other urban infrastructure.

"I call it the impermanence syndrome," Dennis says. "As an urban area spreads, the support community for agriculture — feed stores, sawmills, farm equipment suppliers — see an erosion of their economic base. They stop making investments for the future. When the tractor repairman quits, they don't hire another one. Or they stop stocking agricultural equipment. The economic structures that make farming and forestry possible start to disappear. We want to let people know that there will be a future for the agricultural and forest economy."

Given the increasing tendency of Washington, D.C., to behave like Los Angeles, that's getting more and more difficult to do. Commuters, once tied to the beltway, are fleeing the city and even the suburbs for the rolling hills of the Piedmont. If the much-debated western bypass gets built around Washington, the metropolitan area would spread from the Chesapeake to the Blue Ridge. And PEC doesn't want that to happen. "I've always said the best way to preserve the countryside is to build better cities, so people want to live in them," says Dennis. PEC's strategy is not to do public battle with the real



PEC's Dennis: "The best way to preserve the countryside is build better cities."

estate developers. Instead, the council takes a much more gentlemanly approach, lobbying lawmakers in the General Assembly to enact land use laws friendly to preservation efforts, and using moral suasion to coax landowners into voluntary granting of so-called conservation easements or agreeing to designate their land as an agricultural district, a less binding alternative. Landowners, in turn, receive various forms of tax relief in exchange for handing over the development rights to their land.

So far, PEC has convinced landowners to commit 380,000 acres to a rural future. Of that, some 64,000 acres are protected by permanent easements and another 35,000 is owned by state conservation-minded agencies. The balance rests in agricultural districts. PEC's ultimate goal is to protect one million acres in its area of concentration, roughly half the total acreage.

PEC also has racked up a few victories in the state legislature. In 1990, the General Assembly extended for five years the Commission on Population Growth and Development, a move recommended by the Virginia Growth Management Forum, of which

PEC was a key organizer. And PEC director Carroll Shackelford was appointed to the commission, which will draft a plan for statewide growth management. PEC recently hired a Richmond law firm to lobby on its behalf in the General Assembly, acknowledging that the pressures on lawmakers from well-organized and well-funded developers demand something more than the part-time, hit-or-miss lobbying efforts that PEC mounted in the past.

Last year also delivered setbacks: In the General Assembly, the so-called transferable development rights legislation that PEC helped draft was banished to committee. The bill would have given local governments the power to offer new incentives to developers to build in high-density areas rather than rural ones.

And then there was Brandy Station. PEC helped organize the Brandy Station Foundation, which succeeded in having the site of a major Civil War battle made a state historic district. Nevertheless, in September the Culpeper County Board of Supervisors overruled its own planning commission and voted to rezone the battlefield to permit construction of a commercial

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complex the size of downtown Richmond. While the worsening economy may delay actual construction, the rezoning decision was a critical blow to PEC supporters.

Yet, despite its fate in Culpeper, the council enjoys growing influence with the counties in its jurisdiction. "That's where PEC has been most effective," says David Brown, executive director of the Preservation Alliance of Virginia, a statewide watchdog group. In Albemarle, which Dennis places on his Most Threatened Counties list, PEC has opened a satellite office. That operation is run by attorney Timothy Lindstrom, a 12-year veteran of the Albemarle County board and a registered state lobbyist who sits on Charlottesville's architectural review committee. Lindstrom, no longer a county supervisor, and his staff are working with Albemarle on a mountainside protection ordinance, a water protection ordinance, and an "entrance corridor" zoning district that would, according to PEC's annual report, "protect visually the approaches to historic Charlottesville."

ville." Translation: We've got to do something about all those shopping centers on Route 29.

The council also bolstered the Albemarle supervisors in their opposition to U.Va.'s plans to build an office building at the foot of Monticello. "The university didn't have to comply [with the county's wishes], but PEC's involvement gave them credibility," says Brown. U.Va. dropped its plans, and PEC is now helping the county devise a preservation plan for the "viewshed" of Monticello.

Elsewhere, PEC has proven a valuable resource and ally for counties trying to muster the intestinal fortitude to control real estate development in their boundaries. "People ask me if we're making progress, and I'm never sure what to say, because every decision to preserve land is vulnerable to change," says Lindstrom. "All we can do is to protect what there is for a little longer."

Lisa Goff is a Charlottesville freelancer and former editor at Crain's Chicago Business.

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Coming Up

In our next issue, look for the latest in interior architecture, advances in the archaeology of historic garden landscapes, and highlights of the premiere collection of Southern decorative arts. Our departments will explore the history of a Virginia mill town and indulge the musings of a writer who finds joy in the surroundings his peers take for granted.

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