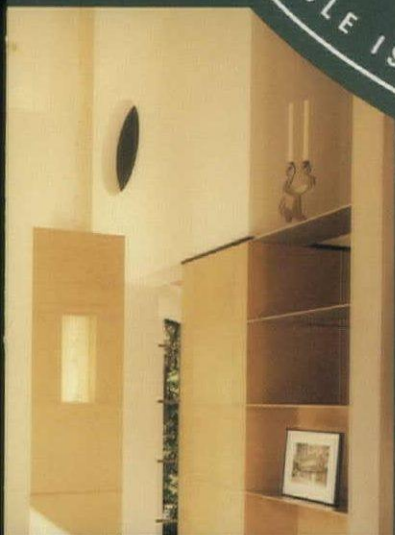


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SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE



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**Inform is published quarterly by
the Virginia Society of the
American Institute of Architects.**

Editorial offices and subscriptions:

The Barret House, 15 South Fifth Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219. Telephone: (804) 644-3041. Note to subscribers: When changing address, please send address label from recent issue and your new address. Subscription rate: \$16 for one year, \$4 for single copies. Second-Class postage paid at Richmond, Virginia, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to **Inform**, The Barret House, 15 South Fifth Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219. Printing by St. Croix Press. Copyright 1992 by **Inform** (ISSN 1047-8353).

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A Restoration of Pride at The Barret House

Finding the means to repair the 1844 Barret House and restore its former elegance has been a decade-long project for Virginia architects. Now, with the reopening of the Greek Revival landmark, the brilliant outcome rewards the long wait. *By Vernon Mays*

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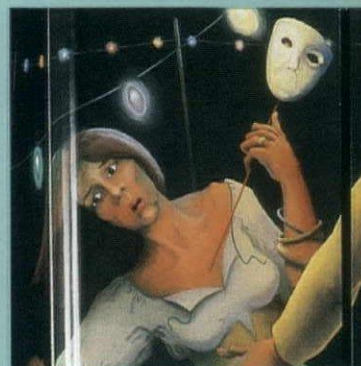
Inform Awards: The 1992 Winners

Twelve projects, representing entries that ranged from museum exhibits to clock designs, were selected as winners in the inaugural Inform Awards program. This year's roster of honored projects is featured with comments from the distinguished jury.

40

New Art Furniture

What sensibilities inform the work of today's crop of studio furniture designers? That all depends on whose studio you visit. Introducing the work of eleven Virginia artists who bring wide-ranging backgrounds and fresh attitudes about color and materials to their efforts at form-making. *By Vernon Mays*



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Charles Gillette: planting the garden fantastic

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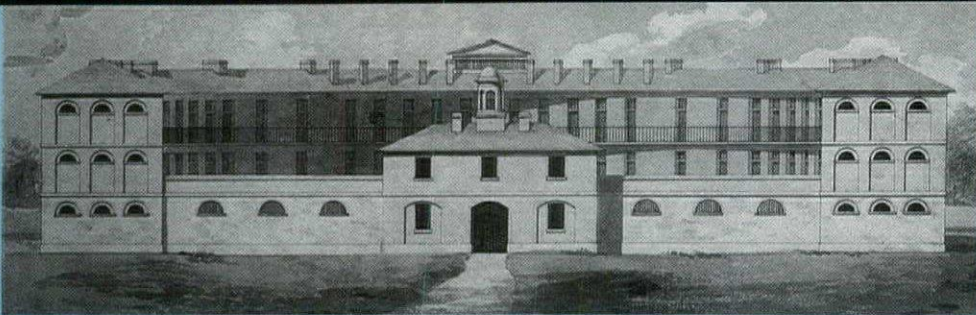
seeking out the best design museums

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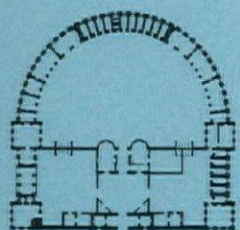
Books

an Arkansas original; telling history, Scully style

On the cover: The Barret House stairwell and the Denning Residence (inset).
Barret House photo by Prakash Patel. Denning photo by Julia Heine.



Latrobe's vision of the prison (above) and his plan before it was altered (left).



Archaeologist Probes Ruins of Latrobe Prison

For decades, an air of mystery has surrounded the historic facility that was the beginning of the Virginia State Penitentiary. Built from 1797-1800 in general accordance with a design by Benjamin Henry Latrobe – who is labeled by many as the father of the architectural profession in America – the grand horseshoe-shaped building served as the state's main penal institution from 1800 until 1928.

Parts of it were demolished then, as a series of large cellblock additions began at the prison. By the time plans were made to close the facility in 1991 and sell the land it occupied to Ethyl Corporation, no one knew what, if anything, remained of the original building. No sooner had the last prisoners been transferred than work on clearing the site began for an expansion of Ethyl's downtown Richmond headquarters. But before the demolition began in earnest, Ethyl called in archaeologist Katharine Beidleman to answer: Is there anything left of the original Latrobe structure?

As it turned out, there was. Beidleman and a team of assistants dug first in the open courtyard and located the original wall that closed off the horseshoe, including the outline of a set of rooms at the entrance gate. A good portion of the Latrobe structure had been flattened and built over, Beidleman says, with full sections of the building's footprint missing. Foundations also were located for a series of workshops that crowded the open courtyard planned by Latrobe. A second phase of field

work this year focused on the cells at the apex of the curve, which had been sealed under a concrete slab for decades. Those masses of brick have been measured and photographed, and the site examined for archaeological evidence such as buttons, ceramic fragments and nails that will tell something of the lives of the prisoners and the construction methods used in building the complex.

"One of the interesting things we are finding is the difference between what was planned and what was built," Beidleman says. Corrections philosophy at the time urged that each prisoner remain in solitary confinement, Beidleman explains. But the fact that the prison was state-run meant that it had to pay its own way. That required assembling prisoners in workshops where they could produce goods for sale.

From history's point of view, the prison is important because it reflects the evolution of penal reform. Latrobe's design stemmed from the idea that housing convicts in solitary confinement would bring about penitence, wrote architect Douglas Harnsberger in a historic report commissioned by Ethyl. Up until the late 1700s, the "Bloody Code" still prevailed in Virginia, often meaning that criminals were nailed to the stocks by their ears or, in the most severe cases, burned at the stake.

But the building's architect is a source of equal, if not greater, significance. While Latrobe is

well-known among architects, the general public has largely overlooked him. Even in Virginia, where he built his first buildings, few would know to place him on the same level of importance as Thomas Jefferson. "Latrobe and Jefferson are the first two giants of American architecture," says Charles Brownell, associate professor of art history at Virginia Commonwealth University. "Each one responded profoundly to the other. For instance, Jefferson requested Latrobe's help in designing the University of Virginia, and used it – we know that. Likewise, Latrobe is deeply indebted to Jefferson in his work on the U.S. Capitol."

In the end, Latrobe's scheme was watered down by the efforts of Major John Clarke, an amateur architect who took over supervision of the project, compromising the plan for central surveillance by moving the location of the keeper's house. Nevertheless, the building played an important role in the history of Virginia corrections and the architecture of the early Republic.

Those facts alone were enough to elicit a plea from national AIA Executive Vice President James P. Cramer that Ethyl take ample time to examine the valuable resource that concerned parties believed was slated for demolition. Now that the documentation is complete, some are lobbying Ethyl to incorporate a portion of the original prison into a park or plaza as the surrounding site is developed with a new research facility. Ethyl spokesman Rob Buford says any number of possibilities remain open for discussion; for now the company's plan is to cover the ruins again with earth. "I feel confident that in the entry plaza for the new six-story building, there will be some visual interpretive element acknowledging Latrobe's contribution. Just how it will be interpreted above ground remains to be seen," Buford says.

Urban Design Winners: Place or Image?

Is the historic role of a town center as the link of a community still valid? If so, how has this concept been adapted to 20th century needs? A rare opportunity to examine these issues in practice is provided by the Leesburg Municipal Government Center and Reston Town Center, two Virginia projects that received Urban Design Awards this year from the American Institute of Architects.

Leesburg, a marvelously preserved 18th century town with an eclectic mixture of delicately scaled brick, stone and wood structures, features a historic courthouse set on a town green, which still functions as the traditional meeting place. In 1987, the town sponsored a national design competition for a new town hall, municipal center and parking garage to be located on a block adjacent to the courthouse green. The winning scheme by Hanno Weber & Associates of Chicago, now completed, is a deft placement of elements that respects the historic streetscape, provides important connections for pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and develops a sense of place for the local government. By locating the parking garage in the heart of the block and placing the municipal building along one edge of it, the result is a new town green which runs through the block and gives prominence to the town hall.

The new civic complex at Leesburg is neither overtly historicist nor starkly modern, with the architecture alluding to historic elements, but interpreting them in contemporary ways with modern

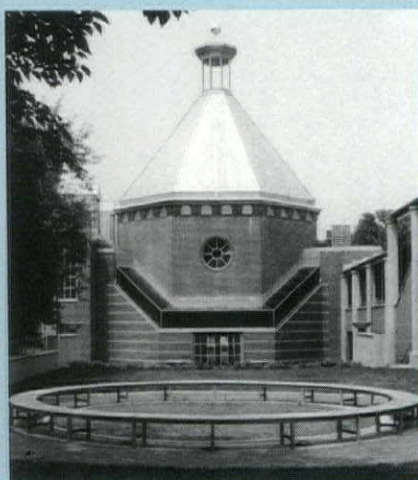
materials. These buildings are contextual in their urban responses, historic in scale. While the overall site plan of the development is excellent, the best aspect of Leesburg's new complex is the town green. Part formal paved space, part garden, the green is made all the more noble and appropriate by the octagonal town hall, which derives a strong presence from its towering roof and soaring cupola that recalls the historic courthouse nearby.

A different approach to urban design was taken some 20 miles away in the new town of Reston, which was begun from scratch in 1963. A town center for Reston was intended since its inception, but active planning for it did not begin until 1981. Amidst great fanfare, the first phase of Reston Town Center was completed in 1990. Developed privately and designed by RTKL Associates of Baltimore with Sasaki Associates of Watertown, Mass., this 20-acre project includes 60 shops, two office towers, a multiplex theater and a 14-story hotel surrounded by a multitude of parking lots and a parking garage.

On the surface, there is much to admire here. The buildings form a well-related ensemble created by a continuous two-story base that gives strong edges to the streets. The horizontal alignment of the buildings and repetition of architectural elements lend coherence to the façades. Shop fronts are pleasantly consistent, and the street amenities (lights, signs, benches and plants) benefit from



Courtesy RTKL Associates



Michael Bednar

In Reston, something is amiss: the feeling of the new town center is artificial.

The garden space of Leesburg's government center responds to the scale of the town.



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being designed as a package. The result is at once spacious yet humane, functional yet gracious, coherent yet lively. At the center of it all is Fountain Square, a paved and landscaped plaza that, to its credit, offers a comfortable place to stroll and sit beneath shade trees.

But something is amiss here. In spite of its initial pleasantness, there is an uneasiness about Reston Town Center which springs from its artificiality. Everything is new. It's all perfect, gleaming, somehow unreal. Is this really a town center, a gathering place for the community? Where is the traffic, the hustle and bustle, the activity of people? It looks more like some new form of shopping mall with an urban theme. Few residents can walk, ride a bicycle or take a bus to get here; the automobile is virtually mandatory. What's missing? There are no public uses or purposes, no civic presence, no poor people. Certainly the addition of planned housing will make this town center seem more genuine. New services for residents will add a variety of activity, and a cultural center will provide another boost.

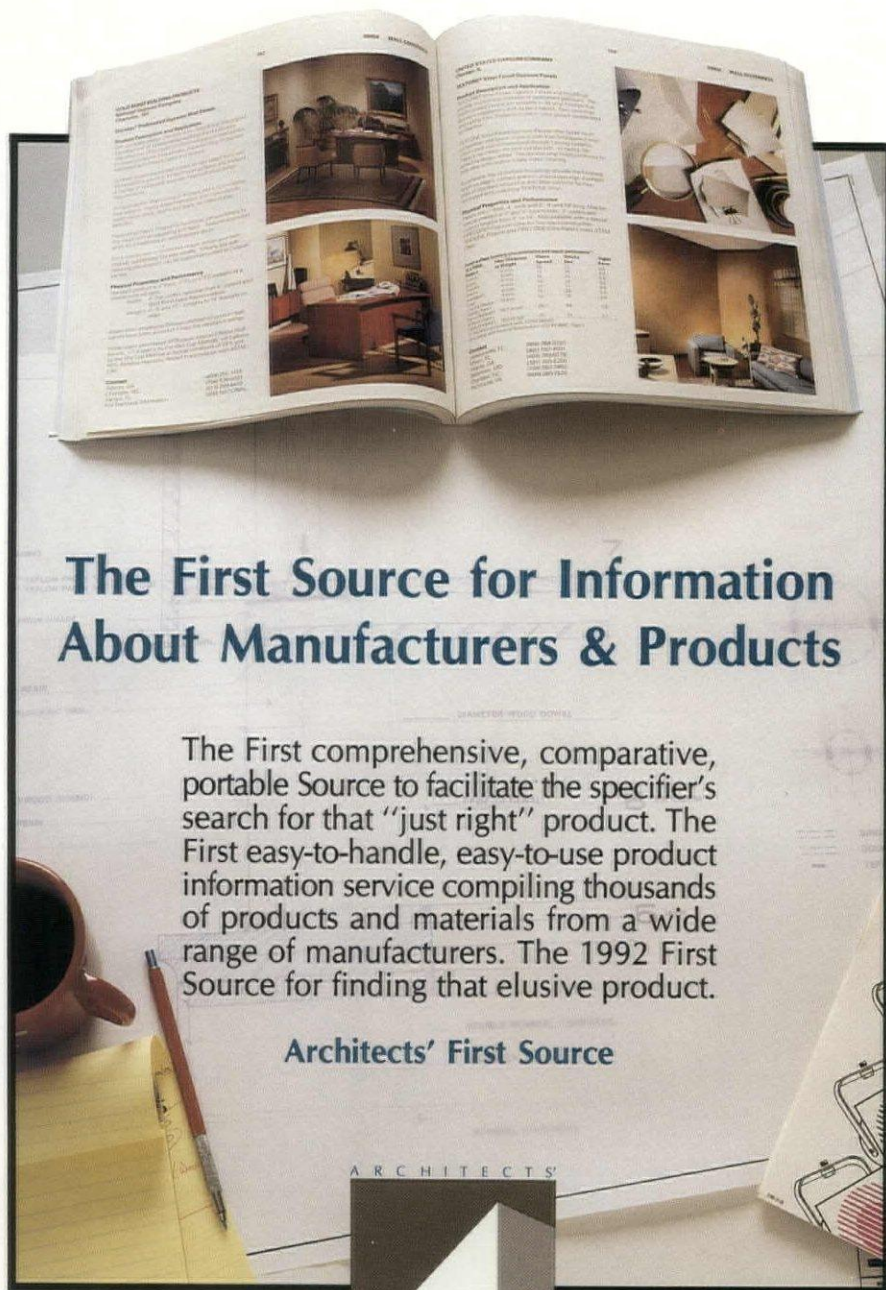
It is difficult, on one hand, to compare the projects at Leesburg and Reston because of their differences in age, scale and purpose. And yet, because they are both called town centers, they stand being scrutinized as such. If Leesburg fits our traditional definition of town center, then Reston does not and its name should be changed. But whatever it is called, Reston Town Center will be interesting to observe as it grows, for it is as much an experiment in urban design as was the original plan for the new town.

In contrast, one can already detect the significance of the renewed town center at Leesburg. This is more than an anachronism; this is a testament to the validity of the human need for a strong political, social and economic center with the continuity of tradition. Citizens need a strong sense of place to develop community spirit and loyalty. The lesson here is to value and support such genuine places not only for their historic example, but also for their contemporary validity.

Michael Bednar, FALA

The author is a professor of architecture at the University of Virginia.

The Taliesin Preservation Commission has selected **Joseph Dye Lahendro** of Lynchburg as historical architect for the Frank Lloyd Wright properties in Spring Green, Wisconsin, including Taliesin and the Hillside School. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has awarded a first prize for craftsmanship to **Don A. Swofford** of Charlottesville for his renovation of Farley, an antebellum plantation house in Brandy Station. Construction is underway on the Portsmouth Children's Museum, designed by **AP2 Architects** of Newport News. Work is in progress on the Henderson Hall Multipurpose Facility, a 23-acre project for the U.S. Marine Corps in Arlington incorporating parking, offices, a theater, and chapel, all designed by **Kerns Group Architects** of Washington, D.C. A planning study for the new Alleghany Highlands regional jail is being prepared by **Hayes Seay Mattern & Mattern** of Roanoke, which was recently commissioned to design a new 40,000-square-foot juvenile detention center for the City of Norfolk. The construction contract has been awarded for a 135,000-square-foot AMG Ford Dealership in Safat, Kuwait, designed by **Freeman & Morgan Architects** of Richmond. The National Park Service has commissioned **Carlton Abbott & Partners** of Williamsburg and **Dewberry & Davis** of Marion to design the Blue Ridge Music Center, an amphitheater and visitors center at Fancy Gap to highlight the region's music. **MMSS Architects** of Virginia Beach is designing the 320,000-square-foot Naval Sea Combat Systems Engineering Station in Suffolk, a research and development complex. **Harry McKinney** of Abingdon is designing the Community Health and Services Building for Southwest Virginia Community College in Richlands. **The DePasquale Gentilhomme Group** of Richmond has completed the design for additions and alterations to St. Bridget's Church and School in Richmond. **Ran-icorn Wildman Krause Brezinski** of Newport News has completed design of a 420,000-square-foot manufacturing and administration facility for Lucas Control Systems Products in Hampton.



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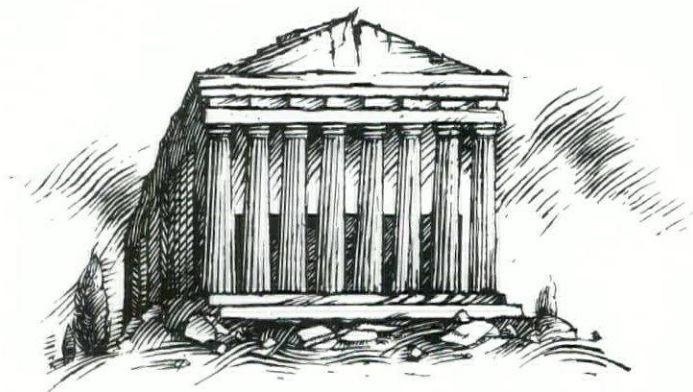
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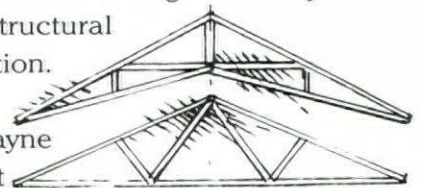
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Ten Years After

Maya Lin, designer of the Vietnam War Memorial, joins veterans and post-trauma experts to discuss the memorial's controversial beginnings and later success. Nov. 6 at the National Building Museum. Reservations required. 202-272-2448.

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Pennsylvania Avenue, the city's monuments and edge cities are considered by a blue-ribbon panel including Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk. Nov. 7-9. A Smithsonian Resident Associates Program. 202-357-3030.

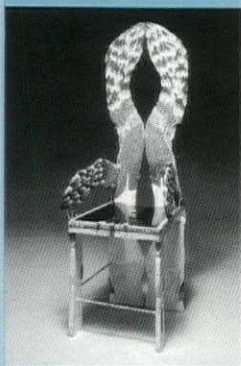
Finnish Exchange

Three architects featured in *The New Finnish Architecture*, a recent book by Virginia Tech professor Scott Poole, will present their work in Blacksburg this fall. Dates to be announced. Contact Clara Cox for details. 703-231-9934.

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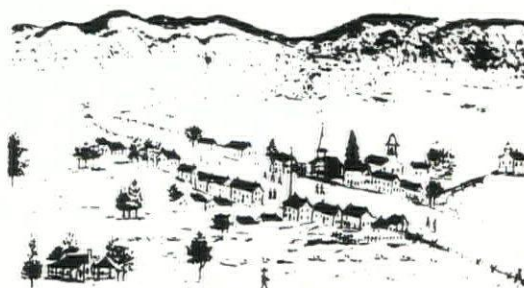
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Blacksburg in 1853, from the Lewis Miller sketchbook
(Courtesy of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, Williamsburg, VA)

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Gillette often incorporated fountains and ponds into his landscapes to mirror buildings, as he did here at Little Yatton in Orange County.

Charles F. Gillette

Planting the Garden Fantastic

By Edwin Slipek, Jr.

While an unlikely place to preserve a legacy, the real estate classifieds in the daily newspaper are the spot where, until recently, Richmonders have most frequently been reminded of Charles F. Gillette's special gifts as a landscape designer. There, listed along with the number of bedrooms and baths, would appear a line that the agent hoped would clinch the sale: "Original Charles Gillette garden."

The cachet that a Gillette garden has often lent a traditional Virginia residence is comparable to the prestige and pleasure of a river view in Manhattan — the most reassuring way to keep in touch with nature without leaving home. But Gillette (1886-1969) was more than a landscaper to high society — although the Wisconsin-born designer was embraced by Virginia's upper crust. As a convergence of recent

events confirms, he was "the father of Virginia gardens" and he set the highest standards. He was a romantic. He loved a sweeping vista, but was a master at defining more intimate outdoor spaces. He masterfully designed pieces of garden architecture. But, most importantly, he had a knack for mixing native and imported

plants and trees in an eclectic fashion. He used them simply, but effectively.

This past May, the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond sponsored a Gillette Forum which brought together leading landscape architects and historians to discuss Gillette's contributions and the "Country Place Era," a period from about 1890 to the Depression, when a number of large residential properties were developed. Featured among the symposium's speakers was George Longest, whose new book *Genius in the Garden: A Biography of Charles F. Gillette* (University Press of Virginia) provides the first comprehensive examination of the life of a man whose 55-year career and 2,500 projects have proven him as successful in shaping a modest townhouse garden as in planning rambling country estates or corporate campuses.



Charles Gillette early in his career.



An otherwise severe stone pool at the Parsons residence in Richmond is enlivened by the trickle of water and a sprite atop a dragonfly.

I have loved looking at places I have known [all my life] through the eyes of another man," says Longest, an avid gardener and professor of English at Virginia Commonwealth University. "I knew that all my favorite places in Virginia were designed by Gillette. No one has equaled the grounds at Virginia House." At the 10th century Virginia House, an English priory transplanted in Richmond's West End in the '20s, Gillette fashioned a series of gardens inspired by Renaissance design but tempered by the Arts and Crafts movement. He established a sweeping lawn which unfolds toward the James River, while creating a number of enclosed, small-scale gardens.

But to further appreciate the dozens of successful designs Gillette created – whether for grand estates or more modest domestic projects – one must examine the era in which he worked, the period between the World Wars. Virginia cities, like those nationwide, were amidst the first great wave of sub-

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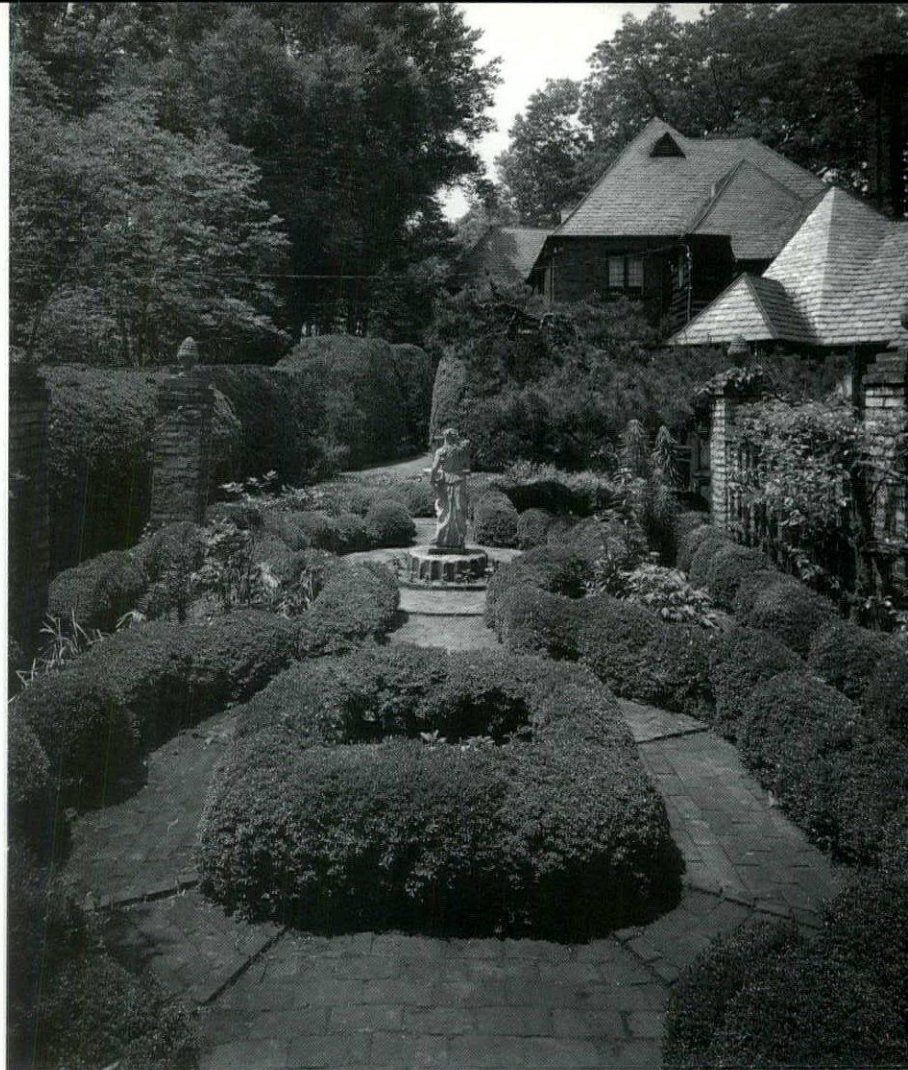
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urban development. Americans were seeking to establish a sense of permanence in newly hatched neighborhoods. Gillette assisted in the design of the Rothesay development in Richmond's West End and was much in demand by Richmond's suburban gentry in Ginter Park and Windsor Farms, who formed the core of a burgeoning country club and corporate culture. And labor was more readily available during this time than it would prove to be after 1945. In short, the times were right for a man of Gillette's talents and he was the right man for the times.

Gillette grew up in Wisconsin where he was close to his father, an herbalist who practiced the healing arts and had a knowledge of how to grow plants. The elder Gillette would reach his rural patients by horseback, often taking young Charles along for the ride. It was through his father that Gillette first developed an interest in horticulture. But, equally important, he developed a keen interest in man's relationship to nature.



At Belfield, in Lexington, Gillette wove a composition of plants and masonry to create architectural spaces. He developed great skill at creating discrete "rooms" within the context of a larger garden.

Gillette apparently never received any formal academic training. But during one of his first jobs as a counselor and caretaker for patients at the Wisconsin Institute for the Feeble Minded, Gillette is said to have observed the positive effect nature could have on patients who took walks and enjoyed outdoor activities. Around 1903, Gillette moved to Boston to apprentice in the landscape design firm of Warren H. Manning, one of the three or four top national firms of the day. Manning himself had entered the field years earlier as an apprentice to Frederick Law Olmsted, designer of New York City's Central Park and the grounds of the Biltmore estate near Asheville, North Carolina.

Among Gillette's first projects was the landscaping of Chelmsford, an estate in Greenwich, Connecticut, where he employed the "Country Place" style, emphasizing proportion and scale of outdoor spaces, harmonious relationships of plant form and landscaping materials, and lack of pretense. "At the time Gillette

was entering the practice, landscape architecture was a young field – mostly parks, parkways, exhibition grounds and larger scale projects," says Reuben Rainey, an associate professor of landscape architecture at the University of Virginia who is among the leading authorities on Gillette's work. "In 1913, there were fewer than 100 members of the ASLA [American Society of Landscape Architects], and most members were in the northeast and midwest. The growth of American landscape architecture was a response to urbanism and the industrial revolution."

In 1911, Gillette's star must have risen in the Manning firm because he was dispatched to Richmond to oversee landscaping of the new University of Richmond campus. He interrupted his work in Richmond temporarily to embark on his first and only trip abroad. He visited England, Ireland, France and Holland under the sponsorship of one of Manning's well-to-do clients, recording his impressions in a journal and through

photographs. He returned to Richmond in 1913 to establish his own office.

Throughout his career, Gillette tackled many public projects. He designed the garden of the Virginia Executive Mansion, the grounds of the Virginia Historical Society and, in a long and fruitful collaboration with the Garden Club of Virginia, the gardens of landmarks such as Kenmore in Fredericksburg and Woodrow Wilson's birthplace in Staunton. Gillette also designed the Davidson College grounds in North Carolina, and the corporate campuses of clients such as Ethyl Corporation and Reynolds Metals Company in Richmond.

It is the very image of an office development as one approaches it, in terms of its simplicity," Richmond landscape architect Ralph Higgins says of Gillette's work at Reynolds. "It is a strong space - so strong, it almost wouldn't matter what the architect had built there." Indeed, that architect Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill designed in 1957 was a classic International style office building. "That is one thing about Gillette: He was able to create spaces, no matter what the scale, that were proportional to the setting," Higgins observes.

As was in his country estates, however, where Gillette used his broadest vocabulary in tying the residences to the distant forests or nearby fields using sight lines derived from European Renaissance traditions and the more informal principles of 18th century English landscape design. But in his designs, Gillette did not resort to slavish copies or mimicry. "He interprets rather than replicates," says Longest. "Any moron can do an 18th century garden. But it takes a genius to interpret historical space for contemporary use."

He was a very talented person who was not an innovator by any means," says Mainey. "But he put certain spins on the fading aesthetic of the time. He loved plants and used a larger plant palette than most landscapers of the time. He used broad-leaved evergreens to strengthen his designs." According to Higgins, whose father apprenticed under Gillette, "a Gillette garden was a series of spaces which read together as a large space. It was usually organized around a formal house. There was a real sequence of



going from the inside to the outside." Today, when Higgins is asked on occasion to "update" a Gillette garden, he tries to reinforce the organization of the original garden, not monkey with it.

If Gillette gardens are being rediscovered by those who appreciate the recent past, Gillette himself not only learned from the past, but also put it to work for him. Gillette was a great recycler, moving garden ornaments around, shifting architectural elements and even moving tons of soil. He once claimed the dirt being excavated at a site in Richmond where a Sears & Roebuck store was being constructed. Gillette had the dirt hauled miles away and fashioned into terraces at a client's home near the Country Club of Virginia.

Gillette, literally, left no stone unturned.

Edwin Slipek, Jr. is the architecture columnist for Style Weekly in Richmond.

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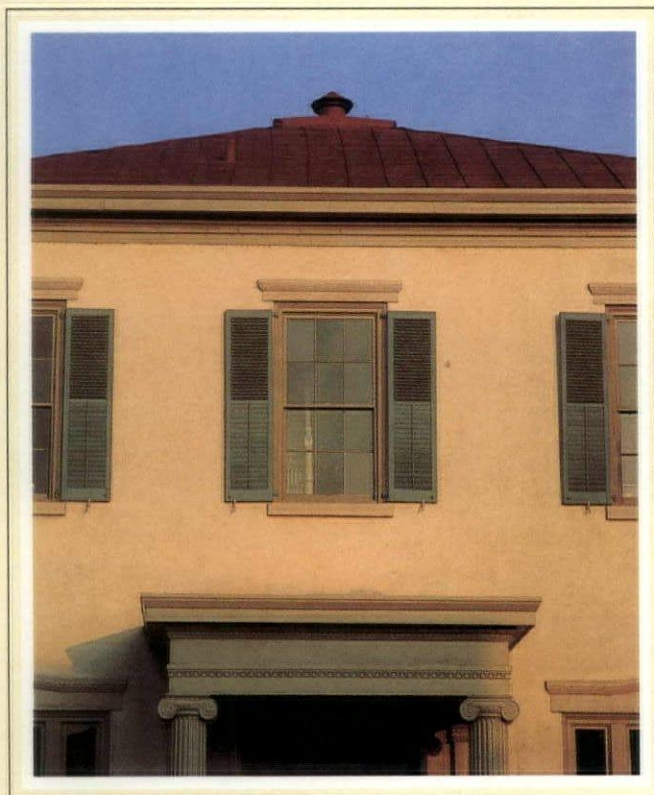
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A RESTORATION OF PRIDE AT THE BARRET HOUSE

BEING ENTRUSTED WITH THE CARE OF AN ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARK IS AN HONOR, INDEED. BUT FINDING THE MEANS TO REPAIR THE 1844 BARRET HOUSE AND RESTORE ITS FORMER ELEGANCE HAS BEEN A DECADE-LONG PROJECT FOR VIRGINIA ARCHITECTS. NOW, THE BRILLIANT OUTCOME REWARDS THE LONG WAIT.

Text by
VERNON MAYS

Photographs by
PRAKASH PATEL



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It strains the imagination today to stand at the corner of Richmond's Fifth and Cary streets and coax the mind's eye into transforming the raw mix of industrial buildings and parking lots into a picturesque residential streetscape with tree-shaded sidewalks and stately white porticos. Yet that was the setting along fashionable Fifth Street as recently as the turn of the century, before boom times rendered mere residences expendable in the context of downtown growth.

Only a fragment of that former scene has survived in the heart of what was once among Richmond's most desirable neighborhoods, located high on a bluff overlooking the James River. What remains today is a Greek Revival residence known as the Barret House – home in 1844 to a prosperous tobacconist, survivor in the 1920s of the wrecking ball, and now headquarters to the Virginia Society of the American Institute of Architects.

"The Barret House is a fine house in every way," notes Calder Loth, senior architectural historian at the Virginia Department

of Historic Resources. "It's not dazzling, but in that way it is typical of Richmond – reserved and refined, not showy." Refined proportions and subtle details were typical characteristics of Greek Revival buildings that popped up all over America in the early to middle 1800s, and the Barret House is a significant example of that style. But more important, the Barret House, as the benefactor of recent efforts to repair its frayed edges and restore its former elegance, serves as a textbook example of how historic buildings can be converted to new uses and how a partnership of interests can join forces to preserve valued pieces of our cultural history.

Ever since Virginia architects accepted the house in 1977 as a gift from preservationist Mary Wingfield Scott, the organization has struggled to find the means to maintain, much less restore, the three-story house. By the late 1980s, the signs of 100-plus years of city life were showing pitifully. Peeling paint and leaky gutters were the least of the concerns; more critical was the condition of the stately portico that rises the full height of the build-



FRONT AND REAR PARLORS IN THE BARRET HOUSE SERVE DOUBLE DUTY AS MEETING ROOMS AND EXHIBITION SPACES. THE ELABORATE MID-19TH CENTURY CHANDELIER WAS REMOVED FROM THE CEILING AND RESTORED.

ing's rear facade. Its wood deck and column covers were rotting; the piers at one end were beginning to twist and lean, threatening to separate the porch entirely from the main house. As usable space, it served only as a roost for pigeons.

The financial remedy for those ills was a product of happy circumstances linking the Virginia Foundation for Architecture and its sister organization, the Virginia Society of the AIA. The Foundation owned the building, warts and all, and needed a dependable tenant whose rents could help defray the cost of renovation. The Society, whose programs and staff had grown in recent years, needed adequate office and meeting space for its operations. Locating those functions in an historic building seemed all the more appropriate. The shared commitment of the two groups was basis enough to proceed with hiring an architect and making the necessary financial arrangements to get the job done.

The delicate repair and restoration of the house required an architect with particular skills, and the choice was narrowed to Joseph Dye Lahendro, AIA, a specialist in the restoration of historic landmarks. Prior to his being tabbed for the Barret House commission, Lahendro had completed, among other projects, the

architectural research and restoration of the Abingdon Episcopal Church (c. 1755) in Gloucester and the McIlwaine House (c. 1811) in Petersburg, both of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

As a recognized historic property at the city, state and national levels, the Barret House required a sympathetic touch. Noted for its pure and correct expression of Greek Revival tenets, the house has a characteristic simple and symmetrical layout, carefully aligned windows, and restrained detail. According to the nomination form which led to its placement on the National Register in 1971, the Barret House's proportions inside and out made it stand out among the other Greek Revival houses built in Richmond. Other details such as the marble paving at the front entrance, the elaborate double molding around the ceiling of the downstairs parlors, and the graceful mahogany railing leading to the second floor set this residence apart in great style.

But because of the house's adaptation for use as modern offices, the work was not conducted in the severe terms of a strict restoration. "We knew that we were not creating a house museum," Lahendro says. "We were making this into office space. The



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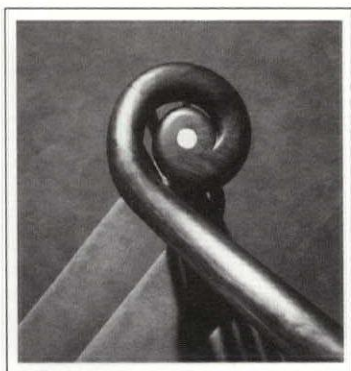
MARBLEIZED WALL FINISH SETS OFF THE CENTRAL HALL FROM THE REST OF THE HOUSE (ABOVE). HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS INvariably MAKE REFERENCE TO THE BEAUTIFUL MAHOGANY STAIR RAILING, DECORATED BY TRADITION WITH AN INLAID IVORY "MORTGAGE COIN" (BELOW).

new construction is compatible with the historic, but I went to great effort to separate the new construction from the historic building."

The hiring of Taylor and Parrish, Inc., of Richmond as the general contractor was a key element in the project's success, Lahendro says.

With a long track record of work on historic buildings, the firm was able to help formulate realistic budgets, offer technical advice, and establish appropriate procedures. They were simply equipped, for example, to answer Lahendro's questions about how to install large sheets of glass on the rear portico without damaging the mature magnolia tree behind the house. That job normally would have called for a large crane, but Taylor and Parrish showed up with smaller equipment that could maneuver between the tree and the house. "It was a matter of their anticipation," Lahendro says. "They knew what to expect, and so a lot of problems were avoided ahead of time."

Before the first hammer could be swung, of course, the house was studied thoroughly. Research of historic documents revealed the history of the house and its occupants, and an analy-



sis of the house's condition indicated where the most attention was needed. Despite the poor shape of the portico, the remainder of the house was in surprisingly good shape, Lahendro says. The movement and tilting of the masonry piers supporting the portico were caused by a combination of forces. First, they only extended

into the ground 7 inches, resting on bare earth. Second, a system of lead pipes inside the corner columns had failed years earlier, allowing rain water to collect beside the columns and soften the earth. "Builders of the Greek Revival period had a great belief in hidden gutters and hidden downspout systems – thinking that they would work forever," says Lahendro. "Unfortunately, they didn't."

Inside the house, while poking through little-used corners looking for evidence of old paint colors and wall treatments, Lahendro discovered an unusual cavity in the wall beneath a second-floor storage closet. The shaft may once have accommodated pipes, an intriguing possibility given the local legend that the Barret House was one of the first in Richmond to have indoor plumbing. But Lahendro will only speculate that the compartment



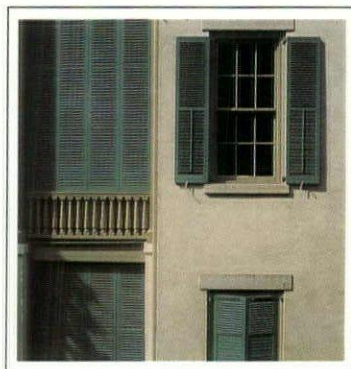
ARCHITECT JOSEPH DYE LAHENDRO'S PHILOSOPHY OF MAKING MODERN INTERVENTIONS THAT COMPLEMENT THE SPARE GREEK REVIVAL STYLE IS EVIDENT IN HIS CHOICE OF THE LIGHT FIXTURE ON THE SECOND FLOOR LANDING (ABOVE). NEW SHUTTERS FOR THE WINDOWS AND REAR PORTICO (BELOW) WERE FUNDED BY A GIFT EARMARKED FOR THAT PURPOSE.

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adjacent to the upstairs bedrooms was the renowned "water closet." Conclusive evidence of that fact has yet to be found.

More telling of the house's early history was Lahendro's paint analysis. Even though the woodwork had been stripped earlier in the 20th century, he still could find evidence in crevices and the deepest recesses of the molding that the baseboards were black and the moldings were buff-colored. "We can't say we restored the colors exactly. We restored the spirit of the colors," Lahendro says. It was commonplace in the mid-1800s to distinguish window sashes in color from window frames, so the sashes in the house are painted a deep burgundy, in contrast with the light gray frames.

Oral histories from Mary Wingfield Scott, a legendary Richmond preservationist who had donated the house to the architects in 1977, indicated that there had been a marbleized wall treatment in the house's central hall. While Lahendro couldn't find evidence to prove or disprove it, he thinks it most likely was a decorative wallpaper. For the renovation of the house, a *faux marbre* treatment



was painted on the walls to give a more permanent finish in the public spaces. "We never felt ourselves bound to the original," Lahendro says.

That philosophical approach to renovating the house generated other strategies that were used consistently throughout the house to separate the old and new. "I wanted

the new work to float within the historic context," Lahendro says. On the rear portico, in particular, a reveal or gap is left between the new walls and the old. Walls for the toilet rooms added on the back portico stop short of the ceiling, so that they are clearly identifiable as new elements inserted in the existing space. The circular stair linking the English basement and second floor is steel, a modern element. And the black frame of the new glass wall enclosing the portico contrasts with the old construction.

New interior lighting for the house (a necessity of its new use as offices) was designed to be unobtrusive—and readily removable without damaging the historic fabric. The sleek, modern lamp at the second-floor landing "responds to our approach to furnishing the house," Lahendro says. "I like the Greek Revival

THE HOUSE THAT BARRET BUILT

The noble Greek Revival residence at the corner of Fifth and Cary streets was owned by a member of the Barret family and built by one, too. Anderson Barret, a prominent and well-connected Richmond builder who was active in the construction of many city buildings between 1800 and 1850, served as the contractor, and probably design-

er, of the house for his cousin William Barret. His credentials included a number of fine residences and such inauspicious commissions as a chicken coop for the state Capitol grounds.

Richmond's Fifth Street was one of the first neighborhoods overlooking the river to be built with fashionable residences. Among the most visible and revered of these was Moldavia, a large mansion built around 1800 near the corner of Fifth and Main. For decades it dominated the area, with outbuildings and gardens that occupied the entire block. In 1839, a lowlying portion of the Moldavia grounds was sold and, three years afterward, half of that property was acquired by William Barret.

Barret, a prosperous tobacco merchant, was the owner of popular labels of chewing tobacco including "Negro Head" and "Lucky Strike." In 1844 he married Margaret Elizabeth Williams, a widow in chronic poor health. Barret had a new house built for his bride that same year, even though the couple spent much of their eight-year marriage traveling in Southern Europe and bringing home souvenirs that included grapes and roses for their garden and art for their house. After Margaret Barret died in 1852, William Barret spent the remainder of his years in relative seclusion occupying the house on Fifth Street.

At the time the house was built, Anderson Barret would have had access to the latest pattern books – particularly *The Practical House Carpenter* by Asher Benjamin, which influenced builders and Richmond's best craftsmen in the Greek Revival style. Those factors contributed to the rich features that qualified the house as a grand mansion: an important site, rich materials, a pair of brick outbuildings, marble paving, a mahogany stair rail, generous floor plan, and ornamental paint schemes. The use of restrained Greek Revival ornament only added to the house's distinction and signaled its owner as a man of wealth and sophistication.



THE BARRET HOUSE IN THE 1930S, WHEN A SIGN POSTED ON THE FRONT PORCH ADVERTISED ROOMS TO LET.

The Valentine Museum

Ironically Barret, who made his money from tobacco, died in his house in 1871 when his robe caught fire while he was either smoking his pipe or lighting it. Over the years – during which it was occupied at various times by a Civil War hero, a French consul, and the executive secretary of the Foreign Mission Board – the house survived several other calamities.

The original wood-shake roof was damaged by fire in 1896 when sparks flying from a burning church on nearby Grace Street ignited it. (Tin soon replaced the wood shakes.) In 1929, the house was sold to a company that planned to level it and erect a parking garage – a plan that was stalled by the Great Depression.

Seven years later, the owners sought to sell the house for its materials, but it was bought in 1936 and saved from certain demolition by Richmonders Mary Wingfield Scott and Elisabeth Bocock. During World War II, the house was loaned to the Navy League Club, which entertained thousands of sailors there. In 1975, the Virginia Chapter (later the Virginia Society) of the American Institute of Architects began leasing office space in the house from Scott. Two years later, she donated the Barret House to the architectural community by transferring ownership formally to the Virginia Foundation for Architecture.

Many happy coincidences connect the Barret House with the architectural community in Virginia. Among them is the fact that William C. Noland, who in 1914 founded the Virginia Chapter of the AIA, was William Barret's great nephew. In the 1970s, Mrs. Noland returned two bronze statues originally owned by Barret to their niches on the curved stair inside. Copied from statues of Lorenzo di Medici and Diana at the Hunt at the Borghese Gallery in Rome, they may have been purchased by the Barrets on one of their European excursions. The Medici statue still occupies a niche along the stair, a contemporary reminder of the man who built the house 148 years ago.



This story was drawn from a report by historian Sarah Shields Driggs.



THE NEWLY-ENCLOSED REAR PORTICO ACCOMMODATES A CUSTOM-BUILT SPIRAL EXIT STAIR AND OTHER AMENITIES, SUCH AS A WORK SPACE, KITCHENETTE AND RESTROOMS. THE DRAMATIC OVERHAUL OF THE PORTICO IS EVIDENCED BY THE SAME VIEW PRIOR TO RENOVATION (BELOW).

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because it is logical, rational, clear and masculine. So in our furnishing plan for the house, we wanted a clean look with clear, simple geometries that are compatible in style with the Greek Revival."

Lahendro's decisions about how to approach the work on the Barret House did not escape review by municipal and state agencies with a vested interest in the property, however. Scott had granted easements on the interior and exterior of the house, so all changes required approval of the state Department of Historic Resources. The city Commission of Architectural Review had to deliver its stamp of approval, as well. Both review boards focused their attention on the back of house, where the most significant changes were taking place. To satisfy their questions about shutters that were being added on the end bays of the rear facade, Lahendro provided evidence of a system of grooves on the handrail and the bottom of the entablature above that suggested shutters has existed earlier, at least on the top floor. In rebuilding the portico, as much of the original material was preserved as possible, though a new masonry structure (placed on sub-



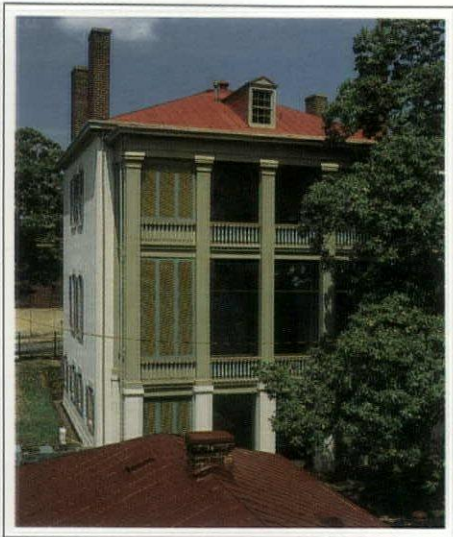
AIA files

stantial concrete footings) was built at the lower level and a number of replacement balusters were turned for use on the railings.

Even though much of the work was completed by modern-day contractors, Lahendro says a spirit of craftsmanship pre-

vailed. Cracked marble mantels in the basement were replaced with matching stone. Rotted column bases on the front porch were replaced with new bases that are indistinguishable from the old. Plaster cornices inside the house, and stucco walls on the outside were repaired and filled. And new hinges for the shutters were fabricated using traditional forging techniques. In addition, mechanical, electrical and structural work on the house was coordinated by Hanover Engineers, who functioned as a critical part of the renovation team, Lahendro says.

The biggest surprise of the whole undertaking occurred one morning when workmen were tearing out water-damaged floorboards in the basement toilet room. There, beneath the doorway, was a long-forgotten oval cellar lined in brick. Work was halted immediately until an archaeologist from the Department of Historic



MOST IMPORTANT TO DESIGN REVIEW BOARDS THAT OVERSAW THE PROJECT WAS PRESERVING THE HOUSE'S HISTORIC CHARACTER, IN SPITE OF THE NEW ENCLOSED SPACE ON THE REAR.

Resources could investigate the find and photograph it. Lahendro quickly designed an access hatch that was inserted into the replacement floor to allow for later inspection of what was assumed to be a root cellar.

Now that the work is completed, Lahendro says the biggest success of the project is that "the portico is now used." For occupants of the house, unobstructed views of the downtown skyline are enjoyed that were denied for years because of the structural uncertainty of the porch. "It was an experience that was lost until we replaced the portico."

One must assume that the earlier charm of the house has been regained, if not exceeded, by the contemporary interpretation of the old house. Its Greek Revival characteristics—balance, harmony, restraint, and noble proportions—still exist in all their glory, establishing the framework for a new architecture. "In the final analysis, the landmark wasn't imposing," Lahendro says. "It was a point of departure that allowed us to look ahead and not force us to look behind."

DONATIONS HELP TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

The successful completion of a project such as the Barret House renovation often depends on the generosity of many individuals, institutions or companies that share a commitment to the preservation of historic resources. In this particular case, the resources needed by the Virginia Foundation for Architecture to carry out the project have been lessened by a combination of grants, cash donations, and gifts-in-kind.

Grants to support specific portions of the work were instrumental in getting the project started. In 1989, the first funds earmarked specifically for the repair of the house were received in the form of a \$6,000 Threatened Properties Grant from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Since then, additional grants from the William Byrd Branch of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities and the T. David Fitz-Gibbon Charitable Trust also were received.

A number of individuals have pledged to support the work on the house. They are Edward E. Alvarado, Paul H. Barkley, H. Beckstoffer, Robert H. Boynton, John W. Braymer, Frederic H. Cox, Richard Ford, Jr., James E. Gehman, Wayne L. Hughes, Robert L. Mills, Kenneth L. Motley, Harry W. Porter, Mary E. Rider, James W. Ritter, Patrick N. Shaffner, Henry V. Shriver, John Spencer, John R. Strang, Charles W. Steger, R. Randall Vosbeck, William Vosbeck, G. Truman Ward, William K. Whidden and James Williams.

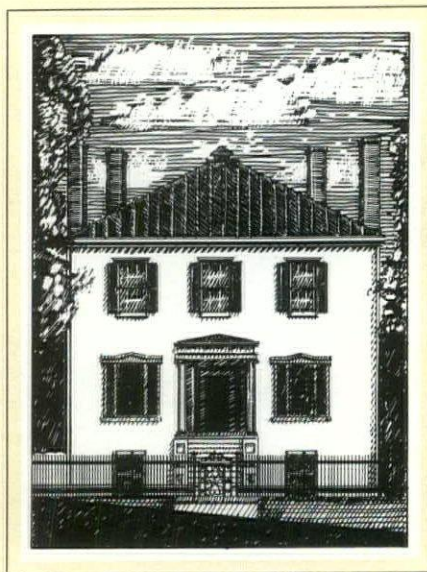
Companies, including many architectural firms, that have joined the effort are Browne, Eichman, Dalgliesh, Gilpin & Paxton; Bond, Comet, Westmoreland & Galusha; The Design Collaborative; Hanbury, Evans, Newill, Vlattas & Co.; Hargrove, Brockwell & Associates; Hoy Construction Company; Innova Architecture; Keystone Architecture; Pleasants Hardware; Rancorn, Wildman, Krause, Brezinski; and Wright, Robinson, McCammon, Osthimer, and Tatum.

Supplementing that pool of funds has been a number of invaluable in-kind contributions from area vendors. During the early stages of the project, Dewberry & Davis architects and engineers of Richmond provided the land survey. The landscape plan for the property was donated by Higgins Associates landscape architects: trees for the property were a gift of Watkins Nurseries. Legal services for the various transactions involved in the financing of the project were given by Thomas J. Hassell, Jr., Esq., and Edith Longest.

Enclosing the rear portico of the house was made possible by donation of the EFCO Corporation curtain wall system by The Snead Company. Masonry materials were provided by Southern Brick & Block Co., Inc., while the brick walks at the rear of the house were contributed by Capital Masonry Corporation. New metal railings added to the front stairs were a gift from Liphart Steel Co., Inc. Paving materials for the driveway and parking lot were donated by Luck Stone Corporation. Grading and paving of the parking lot were donated services from Shoosmith Brothers Inc. Decades of dirt buildup on the granite wall fronting Cary Street were removed in a cleaning operation provided by Dominion Restorations. Material for repairs to the house's standing seam roof was a gift of N.W. Martin & Bros., Inc. Replacement marble pavers for the front portico and walk were given by H.E. Satterwhite Inc.

Carpeting on all three floors of the house was a gift of Lees Commercial Carpet; carpet padding was provided by E.R. Carpenter & Co. Plumbing fixtures for the accessible bathroom in the English basement were a donation of Ferguson Enterprises.

THE VIRGINIA FOUNDATION FOR ARCHITECTURE: BUILDING A VISION



Ask an architect to tell you about architectural utopia and here are some of the things you'll hear: From early childhood, every citizen's education includes study of the environment, both the natural and the manmade environment, and the relationships between them. With this developed awareness, everyone who can influence decisions about altering the environment – from building an elementary school, to developing a transportation system, to establishing a "protected" historic district – knows that these decisions should be made in relation to immediate function as well as to vistas, green space, zoning issues, pedestrian access and a host of other concerns.

Although architects might add that Sir Winston Churchill was referring to "buildings" in their broadest contexts, they imagine a world that understands his aphorism: "We shape our buildings: thereafter they shape us."

Alas, most would agree that the real world is a far piece from this imagined ideal. But the nearly 40-year-old Virginia Foundation for Architecture has been working hard to embody the architecture profession's collective sense of obligation to work toward that ideal. From granting seed money for elementary school programs about architecture to accepting stewardship for a designated state landmark, the Virginia Foundation for Architecture is focusing on pieces of utopia. And in doing so, it has also accepted a big challenge: defining a vision that will find like-minded supporters in a fiercely competitive philanthropic world.

Confronting that challenge has meant building on, but also transcending, the original purposes for which the Foundation was established in 1954. In times when coordinated systems of financial aid did not exist for most university students, the Foundation set about to assist architecture students attending Virginia Tech and U.Va., and later at Hampton University's new program. Over the years, tens of thousands of dollars have helped dozens of students complete their professional educations. Since the mid-'80s, five students have traveled in Europe on an extended fellowship to help them integrate first-hand observation and study of buildings and places into their own professional development. Endowed scholarships that carry the names of some of the profession's founding fathers in Virginia – William C. Noland, O. Pendleton Wright, and Merrill C. Lee – were established as memorials by families and colleagues and, for the Foundation's first 20 years, scholarships were its defining interest.

In a way that was likely unanticipated by the Foundation's leaders at the time, the Foundation's biggest challenge came – if not exactly from Greek Revival architecture – through the gift in 1977 of the Barret House, a Greek Revival mansion in Richmond by noted Richmond preservationist Marjorie Wingfield Scott. The donation of the Barret House was intended to provide a local home for the American Institute of Architects. And the Foundation, established and governed principally by architects, was happy to have a permanent home for its affiliated professional society rooted in the cultural and architectural history of the capital city. The arrangement was a particularly fortunate one: assuming the stewardship of a historic building the Foundation was enabled – one is tempted to say "forced" by Scott – to lead by example; and in having a compatible tenant in the Virginia Society of the American Institute of Architects, the Foundation is developing the financial strength to reach beyond architects in crusading for an awareness about how the natural world, planning, historic preservation, adaptive reuse, new design, infrastructure, and affordable housing come together to shape thriving, nurturing communities.

This influence will develop in small pieces, but Foundation leaders are encouraged by new financial resources that will speed the effort. Late in 1991 the Foundation received the largest gift in its history – \$250,000 from the estate of architect T. David FitzGibbon. While windfalls of this sort are vital to establishing a sustaining endowment, they are also few and far between. A more important step in the Foundation's reaching toward the future is its current "Campaign for Building a Vision," the first major fund-raising initiative in its 38-year history, earmarked to retire construction debt on the Barret House.

With better than half of its \$500,000 goal already pledged, leaders of the Foundation admit that it's a rough time to be asking architects and others in the construction industry – its logical constituency – to reach deeper into their pockets. But the transformation of the Barret House provides an important example of what commitment can accomplish, and one likes to imagine that Marjorie Wingfield Scott – walking early some morning through this favorite of her Richmond acquisitions – would say, "The architects did it right. Ultimately, of course, the influence must spread as the forces of change intensify rapidly across the Old Dominion. Virginians are proud of their architectural past, and the Foundation must stimulate the thinking that helps maintain the state's legacy of livability.

John W. Brayme



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A W A R D S

1992 WINNERS

INTERIORS



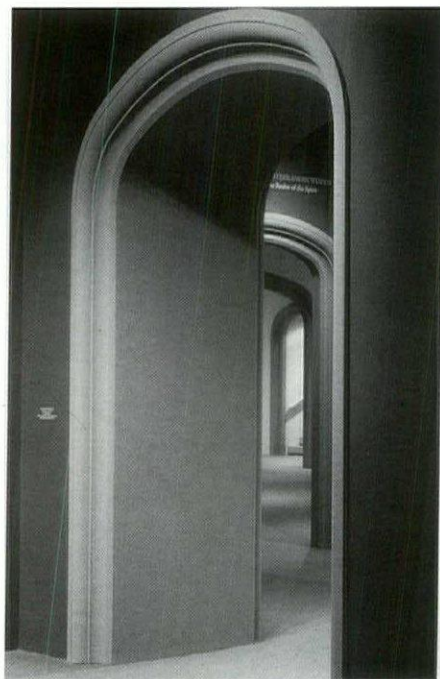
INSTALLATIONS



OBJECTS

26

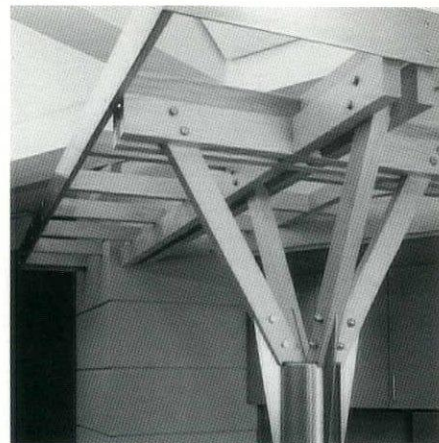
Twelve projects, representing entries that ranged from museum exhibits to clock designs, were selected as winners in the inaugural Inform Awards program. This year's roster of honored projects is featured with comments from the distinguished jury.



In this issue, we proudly announce the winners of the first Inform Awards program, a design competition that began as a casual suggestion late in 1991 and gained momentum fast. Here, apparently, was an idea waiting to happen, for the program's announcement generated a spirited response from architects, craftspeople and interior designers throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. Much of the credit for that should be directed to Inform's editorial advisory board, whose members agreed that a design awards program sponsored by the magazine should put its emphasis on being *inclusive*, rather than *exclusive*. The board's consensus was that a magazine intended to encourage good design across the region should be open to anyone in the region who practices design. Thus we invited participation from individuals and firms who practice throughout our primary circulation area, which – in addition to Virginia – includes Washington, D.C., Maryland, West Virginia, and North Carolina. Of the nearly 150 entries submitted, about one-third came from outside the state's borders.

While the magazine's advisory board enthusiastically received the suggestion for an awards program that focused on interiors, its members insisted that our definition of "interiors" be as broad as possible. On that basis, we encouraged our readers to submit designs for furniture, objects, exhibitions, retail displays, lighting, and informational signs, among other possibilities. The submitted objects, in particular, generated the most enthusiasm, and at times the most levity, from the jury.

Not that the jury didn't take its role seriously – quite the contrary. We assembled a distinguished panel of jurors who brought solid credentials and a broad vision to the selection process. They were Mark Simon, FAIA, principal of Centerbrook architects and planners in



sssex, Connecticut; W.G. Clark, AIA, principal of Clark and
lenefee Architects in Charlottesville and a professor of architecte-
re at the University of Virginia; and Frederick R. Brandt, cura-
or of 20th century art at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in
ichmond. Following accepted procedures for such juries, the
io reviewed submissions presented in notebook-sized binders that
ontained photographs of the projects and any drawings needed to
xplain them. The entrants' names were hidden in sealed envelopes,
nsuring that the identities of the designers remained secret until
l the award winners had been chosen. When the envelopes were
pened, it became apparent that one emerg-
ng young talent from Bethesda, Maryland,
ad captured the jury's eye an astounding
umber of times with his richly detailed res-
idential interiors (see next page).

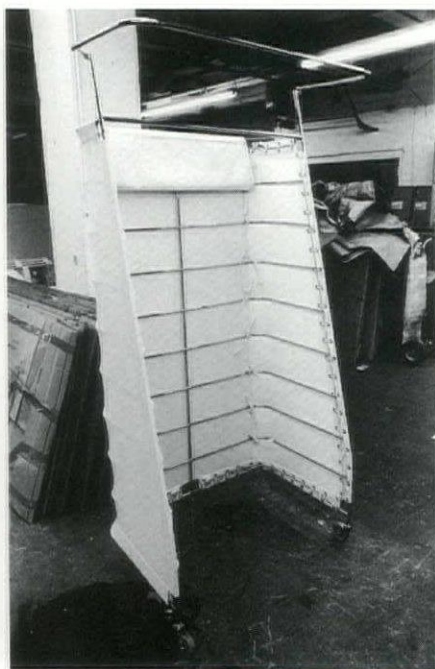
There also were awards recognizing insti-
tutional and office interiors. But the jury's
most pointed criticisms took aim at the
atter category of entries. "We saw an awful
lot of office interiors," said Simon. "A lot of
them showed great care [in the design],
and obviously a lot of money thrown at
them. But they were all formulas. They
were all very similar to each other, to the
point of being bland." Because people spend
more waking hours in an office than almost
anywhere else, Simon argued, office build-
ings deserve more thoughtful designs.
What happens in an office, it seems to me,
is that there is very little thinking up front

and a lot of thinking at the end of the project. Maybe it's that the
older people in the firms that do offices are kind of bored with what
they are doing. And the younger people, who are doing all the detail-
ing, are excited about the opportunities. And that's why you see a
lot of effort on the detailing."

Clark laid the blame for the sameness of office interiors at the feet
of corporations, who he says "seek out themselves" in their choic-
es of design firms. "Corporations are looking to be bland and unin-
teresting," Simon added. "They are afraid of overstating themselves.

I think they are afraid of looking foolish
more than they are interested in doing well
or making progress."

Nearly all the office interiors lacked what
Clark called an "architectural idea," prompt-
ing the designers to compensate by substi-
tuting lavish woods, expensive stone, or
excessive decoration. "The things that we
picked seemed to have a freshness, and the
designers we recognized have no fear of try-
ing to do with fewer materials or design
moves," said Clark. In the end, what won this
jury's endorsement most readily was evi-
dence that an interior or object was designed
in the spirit of making art. Whether the con-
text happened to be a skillful renovation of
the Governor's office suite or a whimsical
proposal for a closet-on-wheels, the single
thread linking these projects is an absolute
commitment to excellence.



Maple Columns and Paper Screens

McInturff Architects

McInturff Scores a Clean Sweep

Mark McInturff, who founded his own architectural practice just six years ago, is the undisputed darling of this year's Inform Awards program, walking away with one Honor Award and three Merit Awards for his residential interiors. Working in a multi-level hillside studio crowded with building photos and study models, he and three associates quietly toil over the elements of an architecture characterized by craftsmanship and fine detail.

A hands-on practitioner who modifies his buildings as they take shape, McInturff acknowledges that a staff of four "is about as big as I can manage." He believes also that quality work is just as likely to come from small offices as from large ones. McInturff left the University of Maryland in 1972 with the first graduating class of architects; now he teaches there part-time. He continues to draw inspiration from his mentor Charles Moore and 20th century architects such as Louis I. Kahn, Carlo Scarpa and Otto Wagner. While his commissions sometimes extend into small office interiors, McInturff focuses on residences, because "the greatest emotional commitment comes from residential clients." Most of his work involves renovation of existing buildings, which goes with the turf of his locale. "Being an architect in Washington is kind of like being an architect in Hong Kong," says McInturff. "There are very few undeveloped lots to work on."



"A very tightly woven composition"

PROJECT: Denning Residence

PROGRAM: Renovation of a 1970s multi-level house.

SOLUTION: A new architecture of wood, aluminum, stone and fiber was inserted into the original house, with special attention paid to the relationships between warm and cool, hard and soft, reflective and translucent surfaces. Triangular maple columns, lighted internally and topped by tubes of fiberglass paper, define the entry and set off the living room. Linking the kitchen, dining room, and living room is an aluminum ceiling light fixture. Large windows on the front of the house are shaded by fiberglass paper panels on rolling steel frames.

ARCHITECTS: McInturff Architects, Bethesda, Maryland (Mark McInturff, AIA, principal).

CLIENT: Jacqueline Denning.

CONTRACTOR: Shorieh Talaat Design Associates.

CONSULTANTS: A. E. Boland, kitchen cabinetry; Chuck Andrade, custom paint finishes.

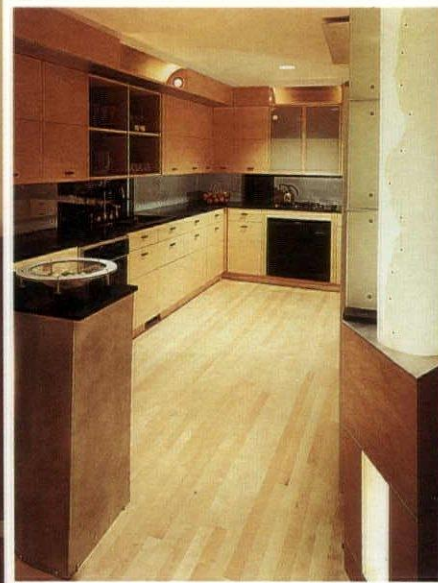
JURY COMMENTS:

Clark: "It is a very tightly woven composition supported by a level of detail that is convincing, but not distracting."

Simon: "It is simple, but rich. It looks very livable in its lightness."

Clark: "The detailing and design seems to respond to conditions of the place, the building, without relying unnecessarily on a predetermined style. And so it doesn't have all the [Postmodern] tricks, or dots, or four squares, or whatever. We should mention also that the craftsmanship is beautiful."

Brandt: "And the use of light. I also like the detailing of the rolling screen that covers the window. It seems to work without being obtrusive."



Residential Trio

McInturff Architects



Photos: Julia Heine

"They have bounced light around marvelously."

PROJECT: A House in Northwest Washington, D.C.

PROGRAM: Renovation of a split-level house to improve the primary living areas.

SOLUTION: A conventional street-oriented living room was converted to a kitchen, and a new living room was oriented to a rear garden and pool, emphasizing the client's privacy and marrying house and garden as an extended space. Spare detailing in mahogany, granite, aluminum and glass unites the open floor plan. Space is interrupted, but not entirely divided, by screens and sliding panels. Custom cabinetry, built-ins, light fixtures and a living room rug designed to accommodate the furniture contribute to an interior design that is fully integrated.

ARCHITECTS: McInturff Architects (Mark McInturff, AIA, principal; Miche Booz, associate).

Name withheld by request.

CONTRACTOR: Hodgson Builders, Inc.

JURY COMMENTS:

Simon: "The house is turned around so that it can enjoy its back yard. The architects have taken the kitchen and put it towards the front of the house and turned the living room toward the outside. The kitchen is beautifully detailed."

Simon: "They have bounced light around marvelously."

Clark: "I think they are using light off the pool and then off..."

Simon: "... that shiny ceiling, reflective ceiling. Yes, that's very clever. On a sunny day, that must give a wonderful kind of dapple effect on the ceiling."



PROJECT: Garcia Residence

PROGRAM: Renovation of a 1920s wood frame house of Arts and Crafts inspiration.

SOLUTION: The first floor plan was reconfigured to improve circulation patterns and room proportions. Ash doors and panels line the hall to a height of seven feet., creating a uniform wall pattern and concealing storage and service doors. Throughout the first floor a high dado line, ash paneling, copper leaf accents and overhead beams are used to realize more fully the Arts and Crafts intent of the original house.

ARCHITECTS: McInturff Architects (Mark McInturff, AIA, principal; Miche Booz, associate).

CLIENT: Kenneth and Patricia Golding.

CONTRACTOR: Hodgson Builders, Inc.

JURY COMMENTS:

Clark: "First of all, this merit award is given with primary interest to the first floor of the project. The second floor changes character radically."

Brandt: "The first floor tends to respect the Arts and Crafts elements of the house by mimicking some of the elements you would find in Arts and Crafts furniture and interiors."

Simon: "It has a datum line at about three-quarters of the way up the wall, with darker elements like wood and dark paint below the datum and white paint above, so that you have light to live by, but wood and dark colors to give you comfort."

Clark: "This technique also serves to hold together an interior that has right much going on in it. So it seems like a simple, sure move imposed on the house that unites everything."

Simon: "And the rigor of it. From my experience in working on houses, clients and contractors are always after you to break the rigor that has been established and maintained here. This interior is busy enough so that if the architect broke the rules, then it would all fall apart."



PROJECT: Taylor Residence

PROGRAM: Renovation of a three-story late-19th century Washington, D.C., rowhouse.

SOLUTION: A fourth floor of living space was added by excavating the former basement mechanical room, which was converted to a kitchen. The design and layout of the existing floors were developed with respect to their tradition, while the former basement was designed in a more contemporary mode using metal, stone and stucco.

ARCHITECTS: McInturff Architects (Mark McInturff, AIA, principal; Miche Booz, associate).

CLIENT: David and Bonnie Taylor.

CONTRACTOR: Heirman Renovations.

JURY COMMENTS:

Simon: "This gets a special mention for its kitchen, which takes a low and dreary space and makes it very livable. It is beautifully detailed."

Clark: "It alludes to old basement kitchens, but is elegantly detailed within a reasonably simple palette."

Brandt: "It tends to respect the age of the house, while still being contemporary."

Simon: "Refrigerators and wall ovens always present a problem, and they are handled very gracefully. They always end up feeling like sore thumbs and here they are dealt with as part of the overall composition."

Clark: "They have gotten rid of the standard kitchen cabinets and replaced them with shelves, which is another thing that makes it seem older. For my money, I'd like to see a photograph of it working, because if it had glasses and ketchup bottles and tomatoes sitting around, I think it would be even better."

MERIT AWARD

Deco Delight

Weinstein Associates Architects



Maxwell Mackenzie

PROJECT: Office Lobby, 666 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, Washington, D.C.

PROGRAM: A lobby providing access to new office floors added on top of a 1930s retail building made in the Art Deco style.

SOLUTION: The office lobby is designed in the same spirit as the addition to and renovation of the original building. A bas-relief panel designed for the exterior is repeated as a horizontal band on the interior, concealing an indirect light source that washes the wood-toned faux finish plaster walls. An undulating plaster wall acts as a counterpoint to the linear, horizontal-banded walls. Marble floors, designed in a counterchange pattern, help to draw visitors into the space and toward the elevators.

ARCHITECTS: Weinstein Associates Architects, Washington, D.C. (Amy Weinstein, AIA, principal; Christena Kirwan, Lincoln Gureckas, project architects).

CLIENT: Stanton Development Corp.

CONTRACTOR: American Property Construction Co.

CONSULTANTS: Malcolm Robson, decorative finishes; C.M. Kling & Associates, lighting; Giannetti Studios, bas-relief panel fabrication; Ehlert/Bryan Inc., structural; R. Petrossian & Associates, mechanical.

"It's not formula-bound."

JURY COMMENTS:

Simon: "The interior here is, at once, reminiscent of the Art Deco era that the original building was from and very much a part of our own time. It's something new. It's a hybrid – very much its own thing – but it recalls a past era without being simply a reproduction. At the same time, it also has a tremendous amount of invention to it, whether it's the floor pattern or the pattern of the light tracks. All that is put together very skillfully."

Clark: "You can see the light track as being an analog to the floor in a sense. Even the selection, in this case, of the mirrored elevator door is brilliant. A lesser person would have had a normal elevator door there and the place would have gone dead."

Simon: "It's inventive. There are elements here that these designers have invented on their own."

Brandt: "It's not formula-bound."

Simon: "There's nothing formula-bound about it. There are a lot of pieces here that are brand new, that you've never seen anywhere on the one hand. On the other hand, almost all of them evoke something from other place in time, so that you've got the best of both worlds."

Clark: "One of the qualities that surprises me about it is that I keep thinking a European did this. There is enough nerve to go in here and introduce these new patterns, rather than simply respect what is already there. It is nice to see."

Simon: "At the same time, we have seen other projects where people have invented like mad, and it hasn't held together. What is astonishing about this is that it all holds together as a composition. That is the real magic."

Executive Privilege

Hanbury Evans Newill Vlattas



Photos: Tamara Mischenko

PROJECT: Office of the Governor, Virginia State Capitol, Richmond.

PROGRAM: To preserve what remained of the original 1785 construction and design office suites for the Governor.

SOLUTION: Research revealed information about the building's original construction, particularly evidence of a cream-colored paint used on the wood trim. Colors known to have been used by Thomas Jefferson, the original architect, inspired paint selections for the walls. Fabrics of the type and style popular in 1790-1800 were used for upholstery and window treatments. The Governor's office was reoriented to face a marble fireplace and entry doorway.

ARCHITECTS: Hanbury Evans Newill Vlattas & Co., Norfolk
John Paul C. Hanbury, AIA, principal in charge; Barbara Strickland Page, interior designer; Wayne B. Anderson, intern architect).

CLIENT: Commonwealth of Virginia.

CONTRACTOR: Heyward Construction Co.

JURY COMMENTS:

Simon: "This takes spaces which suffered from bureaucratic tiredness and renders them in semihistorical correctness, at the same time making them light and livable and friendly again. It shows off the richest parts to their best effect, specifically the moldings and trimwork, which previously were painted dark. Here they are painted lighter than the walls so that they stand out, a little prouder of themselves."

Clark: "But it's really a very good demonstration of the power of interior design to project a building – it really did lift the spirit of the building from that tiredness to a very fresh and crisp place."

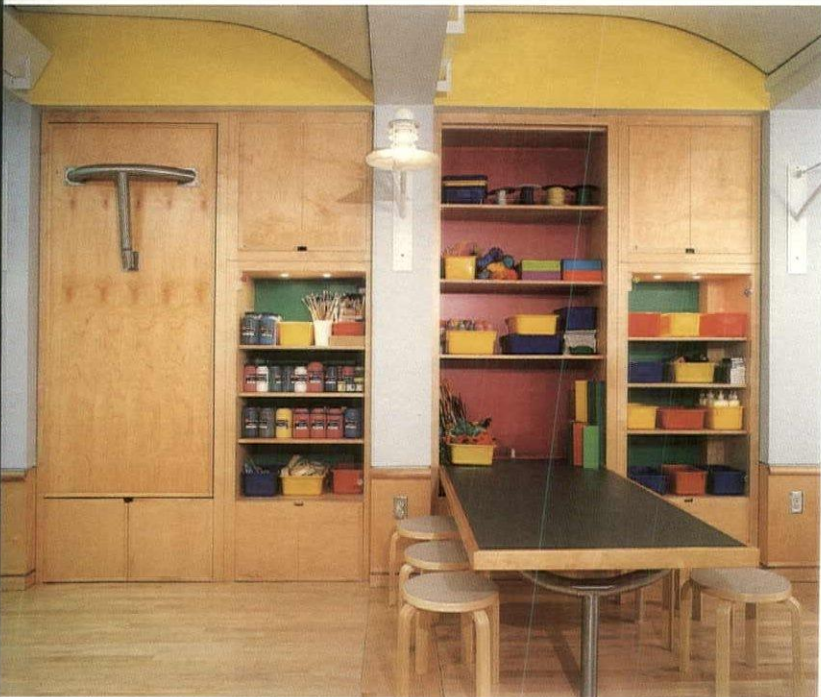
Simon: "It is very hard to bring light to a pre-Victorian, mid-19th century type of space – to make it livable without ripping the existing architecture apart. And here the three-dimensional aspects of the space are still historically correct."



"It shows off the richest parts to their best effect."

Kid's Stuff

VMDO Architects



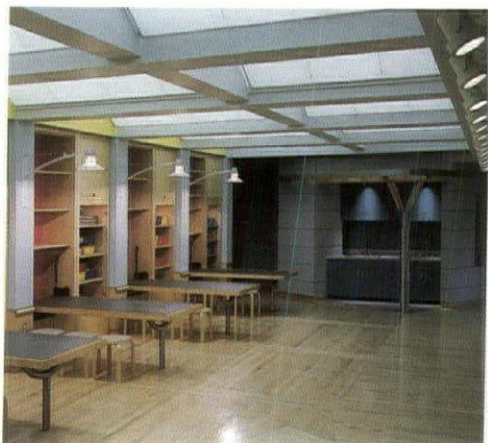
Charles Shoffner

ARCHITECTS: VMDO Architects, Charlottesville (Daniel Simpson, AIA, G. Lawson Drinkard, AIA, Richard Ford, AIA, Henry Ayon, AIA, design team).

CLIENT: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

CONTRACTOR: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

CONSULTANTS: Lanna, Dunlap & Spriggs, mechanical/electrical; Amy Brook Snider, Jack Glover, Debby Frazier, Mary Wayne Fritzsche, Sandy Rusack, design.



Prakash Patel

PROJECT: Children's Art Resource Center, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond.

PROGRAM: Conversion of a 1,000-square-foot room into a center for children's studio art workshops and exhibits.

SOLUTION: The design intent was to achieve a stimulating environment which grows out of a series of oppositions, such as the conflict between the ideas of instruction and invention. The ability to transform the room gives it an animated quality that is intended to excite and interest children.

"The lighting, ceiling, furniture and storage are thoughtfully integrated."

JURY COMMENTS:

Simon: "This kind of project does not normally receive the level of attention it got here."

Clark: "This comes very close to designing a day-care center. And generally, what one does for a day-care center is to design the best room you can and then run for the hills, because all that furniture and all that stuff gets imposed on it. This designer was clever enough to control that, and clever enough to control it under the guise of making space. The panels can fold up, and the kids can have a dance in there. I think that is incredibly impressive. And the lighting, ceiling shape, furniture and storage are thoughtfully integrated. Here the scale is really achieved through an understanding of an operation, and providing for it through very thoughtful design."

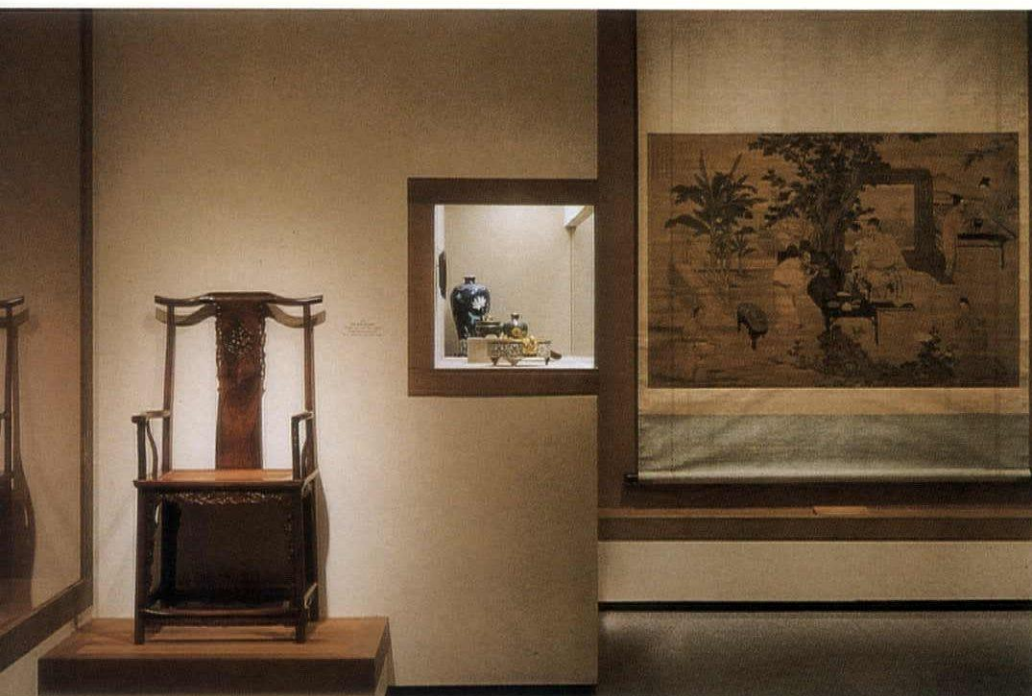
Brandt: "The ceiling panels, the way they appear to be full arcs but are not full arcs, are worth mentioning."

Clark: "It explains a lot to children. It looks like a didactic exercise, in that there are beams and vaults and all these things going on, while in fact it is interior design."

Simon: "It's playful too – the table legs that swing up and become these strange moose heads. It's ornamental, and the lighting becomes ornamental and patterned, and the whole becomes a little friendlier for that."

No Clash of Cultures

National Gallery of Art



35

PROJECT: Exhibit design for Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

PROGRAM: An installation of 569 art objects representing European, African, American and Oriental cultures.

SOLUTION: The exhibition was divided into three sections, with the cultural theme of each being enhanced by the design. Mediterranean galleries featured framed views and arched openings, and included spaces such as a Moorish tower. Oriental galleries featured simpler lines, wall panels of rough cedar, and asymmetrical arrangements. In the Americas section, wall finishes and pyramidal forms were designed to evoke monumental Aztec and Incan architecture.

DESIGNERS: Office of Design and Installation, National Gallery of Art (Gaillard Ravenal, chief curator of design; Mark Leithuser, deputy chief of design; Gordon Anson, lighting designer; Linda Heinrich, Donna Kwederis, William Bowser, John Olson, Jane Rodgers, Barbara Keyes, Floyd Everly, Thomas Piddington, Frank Figgins, project design and construction team).

CLIENT: National Gallery of Art.

JURY COMMENTS:

Brandt: "I liked it because of its respect for the objects, its implying of the various cultures that it dealt with, because this was a cross-cultural exhibition, with simple but effective doorways, pedestals, wall coverings. This went a step farther than the standard installation."

Simon: "It shadows the culture that it is presenting. You have the gentlest kind of memory of the culture there without it intruding on your relationship with the object. There is a differentiation in the detailing from culture to culture."

Brandt: "Also, you can see in the plan where each segment is given its own set of spaces, but they are tied together architecturally. There are a tremendous number of objects from disparate cultures in disparate media, and they are brought together so you flow from room to room."

Simon: "It's very hard to give just the hint of culture through the doorway motifs and the colors and the shapes of the bases beneath the objects. It can get hokey very fast, and they avoid being hokey. It is barely there. It's that same method of judging good design – if you took anything away it wouldn't work as well and if you added anything, it wouldn't work as well. It's just the right level of intervention."

On Display

Bushman/Dreyfus Architects

PROJECT: Retail display for Linda van der Linde, Inc.

PROGRAM: A display system for hand-crafted jewelry.

SOLUTION: To offset the curvilinear nature of the jewelry, the choice was made to develop a simple, muted background for its display. Metal components fabricated at a local welding shop support sheets of tempered glass that add a glistening layer in front of the hand-rubbed wall finish.

DESIGNERS: Bushman/Dreyfus Architects, Charlottesville (Jeff Bushman, AIA, principal; Jim Powell, associate).

CLIENT: Linda van der Linde, Inc.

CONTRACTOR: C&C Ornamental Ironworks.

CONSULTANTS: Linda van der Linde, color selection.

JURY COMMENTS:

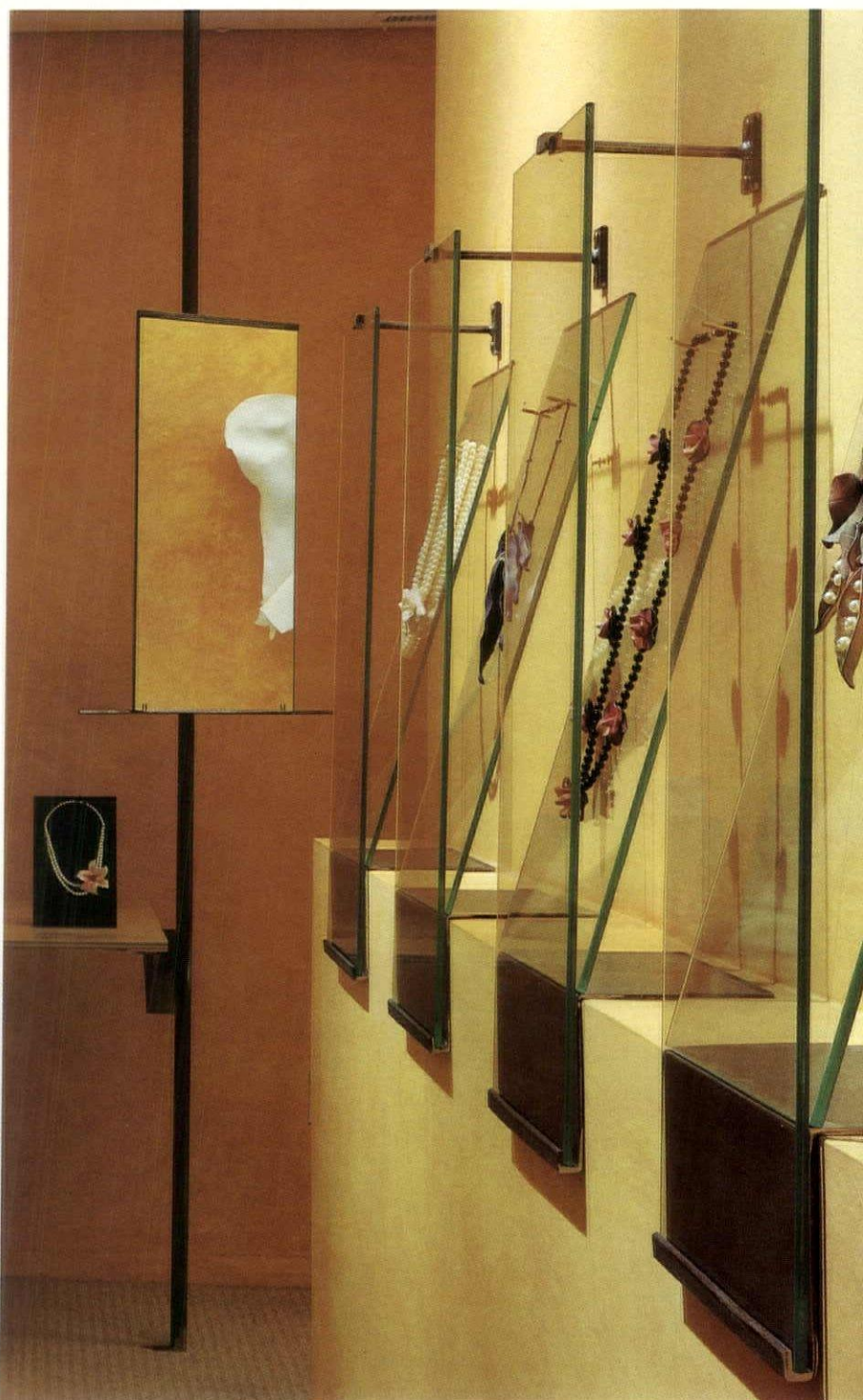
Clark: "What's nice about this is that it is not just reducing something to a minimum, because you could have done that with just one sheet of glass and one back."

Simon: "It makes the object precious with the second sheet of glass."

Clark: "I admire the redundancy of materials, or the scale of it actually – specifically the glass that is sliding down in front of an opaque piece. There is no need for glass beyond that point. He could have rested the glass on this counter."

Simon: "That gives you the base."

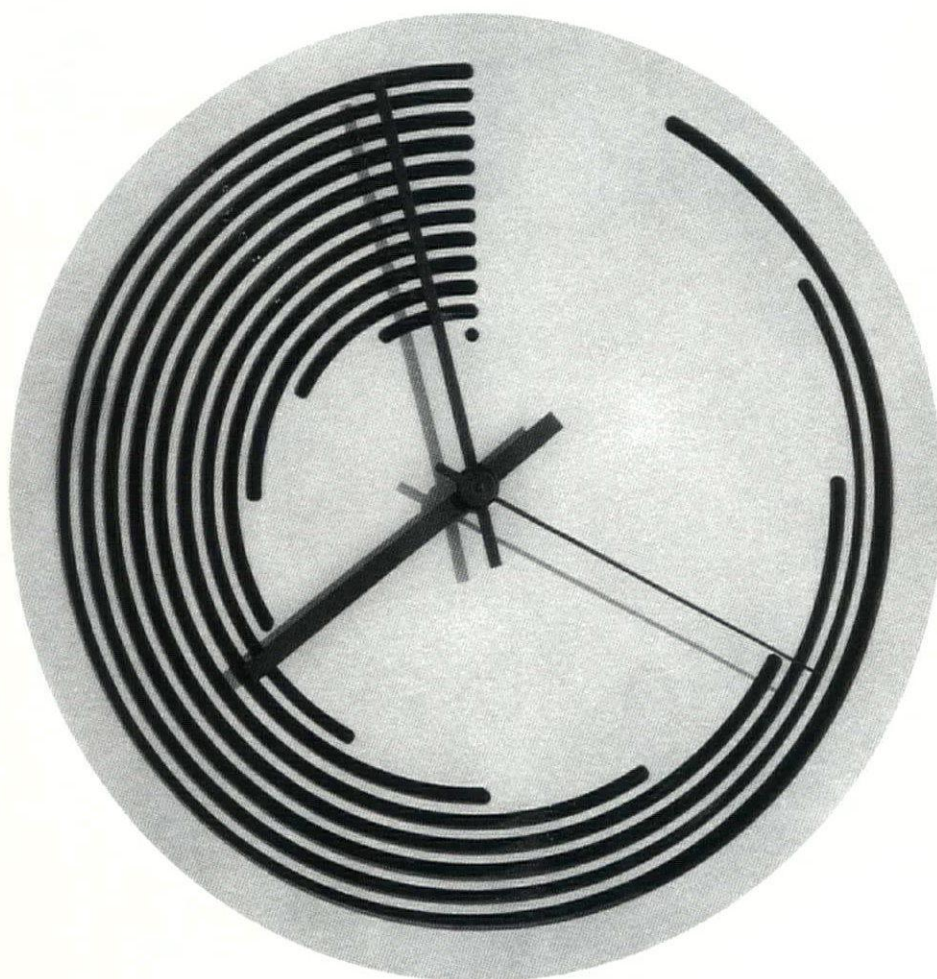
"I admire the redundancy of materials."



Beaurline Photography

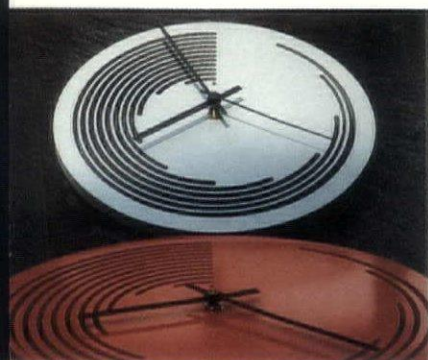
Timely Matters

Dunay Architects



37

*“Why haven’t
I thought about
doing that?”*



PROJECT: A Homogeneous Clock.

SOLUTION: The clock face is designed by articulating a structure based on the principal numbers. Each number gathers momentum as it proceeds toward 12 o’clock. The lines produce a form analog which is literal, tangible and real – and needs no recourse to abstract references.

MATERIALS: Aluminum plate (milled with a fine sandblasted anodized finish) or painted plexiglas.

DESIGNERS: Dunay Architects, Blacksburg (Donna W. Dunay and Robert J. Dunay, AIA).

FABRICATOR: Emory Shaver.

JURY COMMENTS:

Simon: “This is one of those 1960s-revival objects.”

Clark: “It’s very clever the way the clock hand gathers the hours and deposits them all at a single point. It’s quite nice. It’s one of these things that you see somebody else do and you say, ‘Oh, why haven’t I thought about doing that?’ It’s great. The architect went out and got the parts, the workings, and put them in a different kind of surround. These are beautiful, beautiful objects.”

Light at any Height

Robert P. Tierney

PROJECT: Height Adjustable Lamp.

SOLUTION: The lamp consists of two perforated aluminum squares connected with threaded rods and aluminum tubing to form a cube. A long strip of cotton muslin is threaded through the cube on both sides to enclose the bulb and socket. The cotton strip, weighted at the bottom, holds the cube in place by friction. The cube slides up and down the strip to any desired height.

MATERIALS: Perforated aluminum, frosted acetate aluminum tubing, threaded rod, nuts and washers, light bulb, standard socket, cotton muslin.

DESIGNER: Robert P. Tierney, Architects Dayton & Thompson, Richmond.

FABRICATOR: Robert P. Tierney.

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"It's one of the most wonderfully inventive things we have seen."

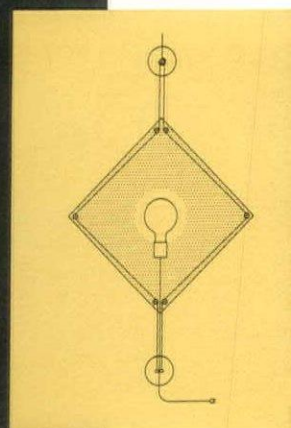
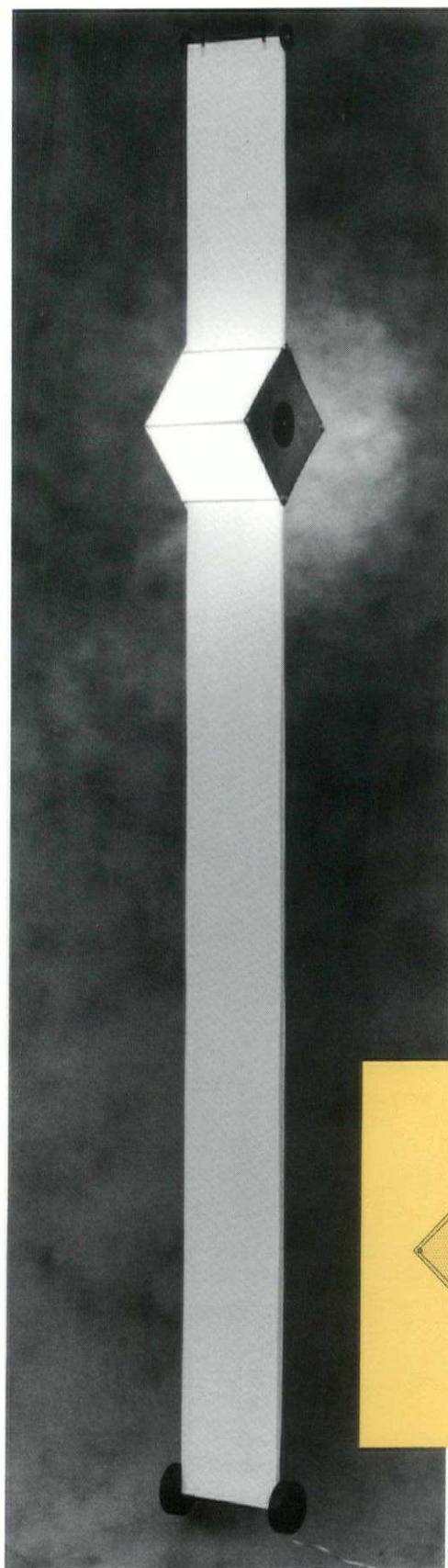
JURY COMMENTS:

Simon: "It's a clever design. It uses few parts very effectively."

Brandt: "We're assuming it's a prototype. It needs some refining."

Clark: "It's one of the most wonderfully inventive things we have seen today. It's nice how it blurs the distinction between what is normally thought of as 'hardware' and what is normally thought of as 'light fixture,' in that the suspension of it is the muslin cloth that becomes the light lens."

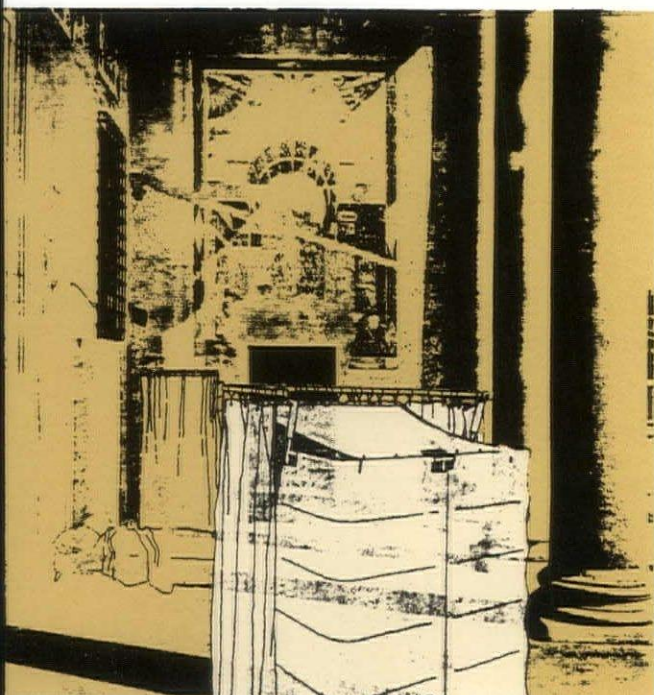
Simon: "The light comes through the muslin, but also reflects off it. Because you have the two layers, the light leaks down between the two layers of muslin a little and then reflects onto them so that you get a multitude of light sources. That makes it very spooky and special."



Mark Mitchell

Variations on a Theme

Starling Keene and W. Jude LeBlanc



"It's an empty thing that is completely self-assured."

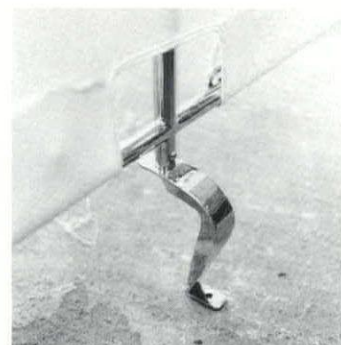
PROJECT: Clothes-hanger, or Armoire Revisited.

SOLUTION: By the year 2001, ecological concerns and higher energy costs will mean that existing buildings will not be so readily demolished. Buildings will be reused more often than is now customary, and one facet of this design challenge will be to invent adaptive insertions for existing spaces – changes at the scale of furniture rather than building. Hence, the clothes-hanger, a storage unit with open-ended spatial implications made from a simple frame and skin. (Note: This object was prototyped as a result of its selection for the exhibition "Design Explorations: 2001," sponsored by Metropolis magazine and the Parsons School of Design in New York.)

DESIGNERS: Starling Keene and W. Jude LeBlanc, Charlottesville.

FABRICATOR: Brueton.

MATERIALS: Stainless steel framing, cotton duck, and leather-cased wheels.



JURY COMMENTS:

Simon: "This has many different uses. It can be used as a portable closet. And an armoire. A dressing room. A cabana. It's mysterious – that is what is most special about it. You're not quite sure what it's for or what it is, but you know it's something."

Clark: "But it makes you look at all of the things it possibly could be in a new light. That's what's so nice about it. I'll never be able to look a closet in the eye again. And, even if it were nothing, its appeal to me has to do with the qualities of its materials – the metal frame covered by this piece of cloth."

Simon: "It has a sense of completeness to it."

Clark: "It's an empty thing that is completely self-assured, even in its posture. I mean it is just standing there, reared back ..."

Simon: "... asking to be filled with something."

Clark: "Also, being translucent, any of the suggested uses for it would be very interesting."

Simon: "And they are all plausible – absolutely plausible."

Clark: "You could just sit in there and be mean. There's just no stopping the thing. It just wants to be everything."

Simon: "You could get some privacy in your office."

Clark: "What I was curious about was this thing which is like a tail. But I also wondered if it was a handle, as if you could tip this thing over."

Brandt: "It's pretty clean joinery."

Clark: "And it looks like it has been rechromed. I think that we could call it the vertical gurney. That we have found the vertical gurney."

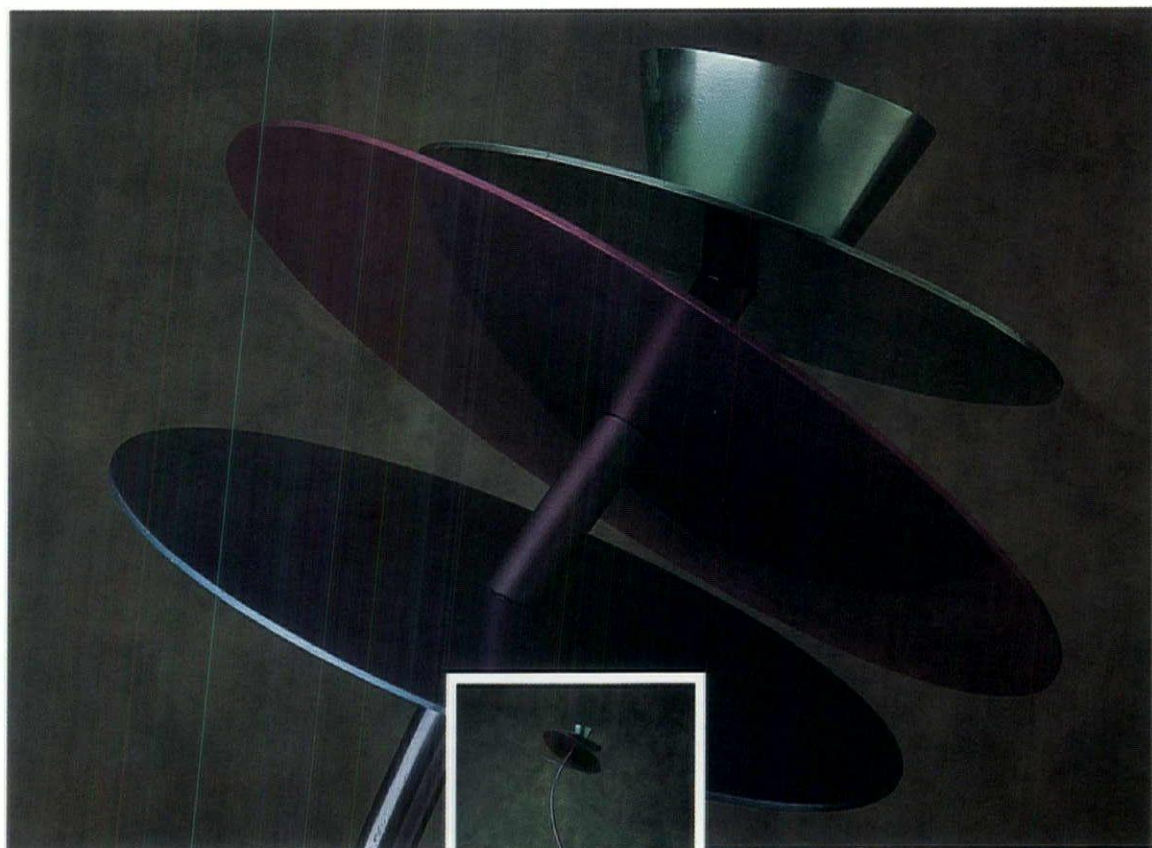
Simon: "...it obsessed the jury for an hour."

Clark: "You could also mention its potentials for eroticism, voyeurism, and cruelty."

Art Furniture

What sensibilities inform the work of today's crop of furniture designers? That all depends on whose studio you visit. Introducing the work of eleven Virginia artists who bring varied backgrounds and fresh attitudes about color, form and materials to their interpretations of domestic objects.

By Vernon Mays



**Anodized aluminum
disks bloom atop a six-foot
floor lamp. Design by
Robert Chase of Richmond.
Phone: 804-355-7160**

Photos: Tony Sylvestro

ifty years from now, one has to wonder, what will art historians say about furniture-making in the late 20th century? Did it represent the zenith of civilization? A way station on the path to daring new forms of expression? Or a world gone mad?

If nothing else, the scholars will have their hands full joining an "ism" that can adequately contain the broad spectrum of work that has emerged from the experiments in furniture design being conducted by artists today. Certainly there is an attitude reflected here. Sacred cows are a thing of the past; the old rules no longer apply. But it would be inaccurate at the same time to say that "anything goes." That approach is a bit too casual to apply to this collection of artists, who are earnest, rigorous, thoughtful – dare we say intellectual? – in their pursuit of artistic purity.

For the most part, these studio furniture makers operate freely within a framework that acknowledges, if not always respects, the historical precedents of furniture design. Their reference points from the past hundred years include figures such as Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Frank Lloyd Wright, Eileen Gray, Le Corbusier and Charles Eames, and movements ranging from Arts and Crafts to the Bauhaus. One can argue that the pervasive influence of the Bauhaus, with its emphasis on industrial methods and manmade materials such as steel, chrome and glass also created a impersonal climate of manufacturing *against which* the studio furniture makers of the mid-1900s were reacting. Now some of those same manufactured objects – or the materials they glorified – are being incorporated into the current generation's work.

To assemble this article, Inform surveyed the state late last year to identify furniture makers working in a variety of modes. Using a knowledge of design history as a foundation, each artist represented here applies his or her own set of concerns and interests – which seems, given the examples we are publishing, to have almost unlimited possibilities. "I don't think there's a particular aesthetic at work, it's very heterogeneous," says Edward S. Cooke, the curator at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts who assembled the exhibition "New American Furniture" that appeared in 1990 at the Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C. Apart from traditional forms of furniture and the more assembly-oriented designs of architects, the groundswell of studio furniture represents a maturation of the organic approaches to furniture design that were popular in the '50s and '60s. Perhaps most responsible for this increase in production is the blossoming of university-based training programs in the past decade, Cooke says. That notion certainly bears up under scrutiny. Of the eleven artists featured here, most have a strong connection to the School of the Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, which has a crafts department offering specialized instruction in furniture design.

"The whole craft thing has exploded in recent years on a national basis," observes Frederick R. Brandt, curator of 20th century art at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Brandt identifies sev-

eral sources of new age furniture. "One group came out of the Memphis mentality, with that sort of flamboyant, faux materials, breaking-all-the-rules, idiosyncratic approach. And by doing that, I think they made people aware that a chair can look like something other than Mr. Chippendale." Artists of this sort, he says, are generally not high-touch craftsmen but, rather, designers who pass off the fabrication duties to someone else.

A second group, Brandt says, are studio artists who operate in the more traditional sense. They design the piece. They build it. Often they rebuild it until the thing is right. Last, Brandt identifies a third group that relies heavily on high-technology in their design and production methods. Many of these individuals come from sculpture backgrounds and their furniture tends strongly toward the sculptural as well.

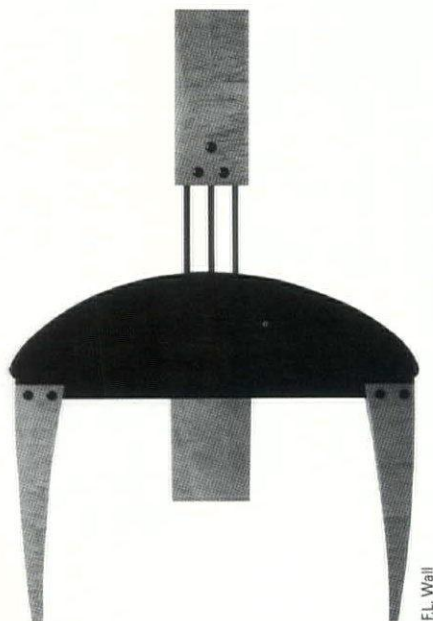
No movement with its roots in the '80s would be typical of the decade without some link to commerce, and the explosion in studio furniture-making undeniably had such a link. "Marketability was a decided factor," says Stuart Downs, director of the Sawhill Gallery at James Madison University. "Many artists make a distinction between their fine art and their furniture art." Encouraging that approach to art is the existence of high-profile events such as the annual International Contemporary Furniture Fair in New York, cosponsored by *Metropolis* magazine. Local talents including Catherine Roseberry, Rob Womack, Robert Thomas and Erik Fiks have exhibited at this fair, the proverbial media event, and reaped the considerable benefits of magazine exposure and dealers' interest.

By any measure, studio furniture is getting more respect. Interest in the field has extended to the state's art institutions, as evidenced by the exhibition called "Dream House" scheduled for this summer at the Peninsula Fine Arts Center in Newport News. Curator Deborah McLeod says the delight of much of the furniture selected for the show is its blending of the design-

er's functional concerns and the artist's desire for meaning. "In this show, the work generally has a psychological edge to it."

From the demand point of view, explaining the popularity of studio furniture among collectors may be as simple as this: "It's an increased appreciation for the handmade in a very technological world," asserts Paula Owen, director of the Hand Workshop in Richmond. It's likely, of course, that the desire to own one of these pieces – or an entire roomful of them – is embedded in reasons as complex as the furniture itself. "The general spread of wealth and the one-upmanship that is encouraged by decorating magazines enable the consumer to step out onto the precipices of taste and style, too," says McLeod. "This is healthy for the creative process, because it creates a demand for things that don't necessarily match."

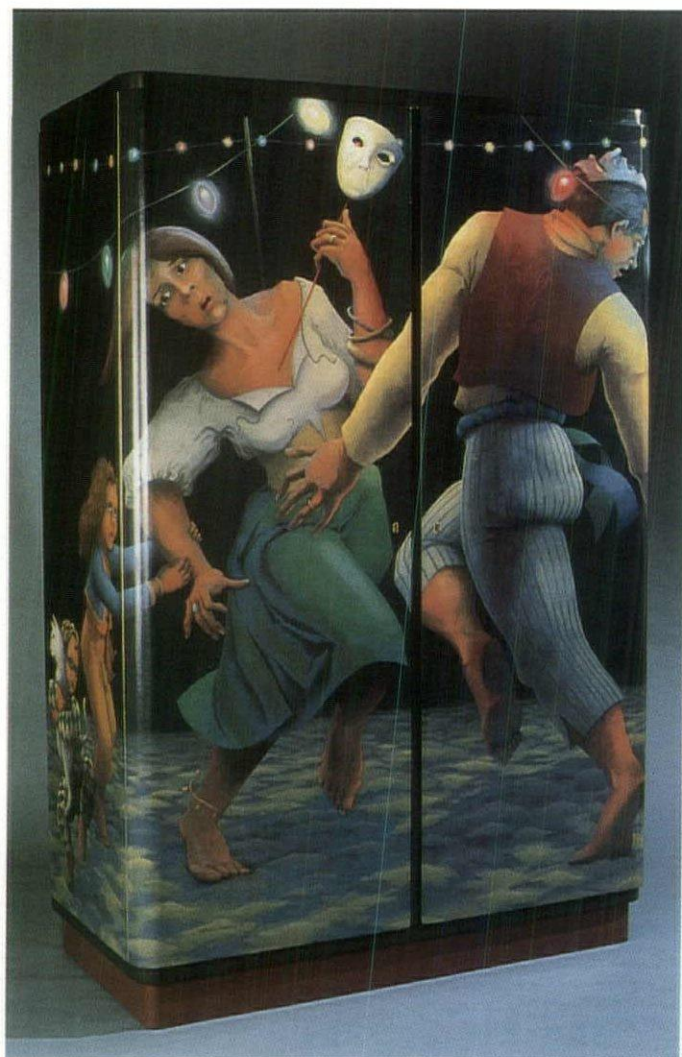
Research for this article also was contributed by Stephanie L. Riker.



"Smith's Chair," made of maple, steel, and upholstered seat. Design by F.L. Wall of Arlington.

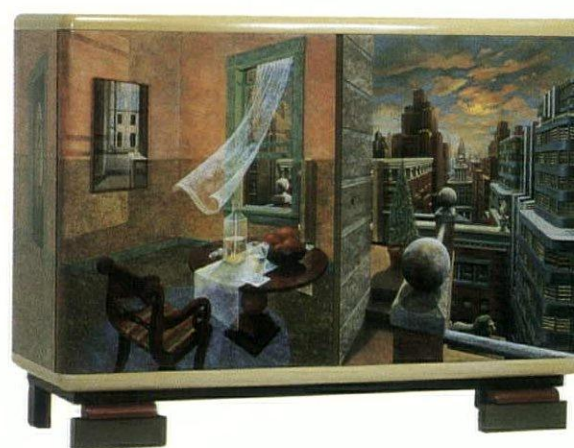
Phone: 703-533-3220

F.L. Wall



"Dance to the Music of Time."

Photos: Dennis McWaters



"Untitled sideboard."

COLORATURA

Looking for Art in All the Right Places

Trying to categorize the diverse creations of Catherine Roseberry and Rob Womack – and the artists themselves – is an exercise in frustration. "We don't feel like we fit into any category, because we don't actually make the furniture," Roseberry says. Content to call themselves painters, the husband-and-wife team, trading under the name Coloratura, starts with existing pieces of furniture and then adds a layer of interpretation. Womack was first to experiment with the technique, combining a long-held interest in antiques with a fine arts degree in painting from VCU. His initial piece was a folk-art chair onto which he applied a crazy quilt pattern. Those were the days when he shopped at flea markets; now he is so discriminating that the pieces he paints often are legitimate collector's items themselves. "I always look for the sculptural properties of furniture," says Womack, who favors pieces from the Empire and Art Deco periods and the 1950s.

Both artists gravitate toward furniture that is a pure statement of its era, letting the piece suggest a direction for the painting. Roseberry, also a VCU graduate, prefers furniture with large blank surfaces that accommodate her narrative paintings. Some of her works explore feminist themes; others draw on events in her personal life. A wardrobe she painted called "Dance to the Music of Time," deals with her own conflicts about having reached middle age. In the painting, a couple

in their mid-30s are dancing in step, but being pulled out of sync by the demands of young children and an aged parent. "It's a comment on marriage – and things we conceal and things we reveal about ourselves." Womack's paintings often incorporate perspectives of interior spaces. His "Untitled Sideboard" contains simultaneous views of the interior of an apartment and an imaginary cityscape outside. "Twentieth century architecture shows up in a great deal of my pieces. I am also very interested in the drawings of Hugh Ferriss, though a more important influence would be the Polish painter Balthus." Coloratura debuted publicly at the Richmond Craft Fair in 1984, but their big leap in popularity followed an appearance at the 1989 International Contemporary Furniture Fair in New York. Suddenly Italian magazines were writing about them. The exposure attracted clients nationwide – and invitations to put a line of furniture into production. That possibility was explored, but eventually put to rest. "Each one is an individual painting," reasons Womack. "I can't see them being reproduced."

Coloratura
3810 Thimble Lane
Richmond, Virginia 23222
Phone: 804-321-0022

RON PUCKETT

Relishing Pattern and Detail

Architecture was the calling that Ron Puckett answered at the ripe old age of 18. But architecture school, as he quickly found out, wasn't really to his liking. Intent on becoming a potter, he transferred to art school. Lucky for him that the fine arts curriculum required classes in woodworking. That's where Puckett thrived and, for more than 15 years, that's where he has stuck. Now a much-published maker of richly patterned and detailed wood furniture, he is renowned in East Coast galleries. "The marketplace is better in Richmond now than it was in the past, but it's not what's keeping me going," he says.

Ironically, Puckett still finds architecture to be a rich source of inspiration in his work. The exotic Egyptian Building on the Medical College of Virginia campus, for example, inspired a series of "temple cabinets." Earlier in his career, soon after graduating from VCU and the Rhode Island School of Design, Puckett had a love affair with Art Nouveau furniture. But he quickly discovered that working in a similar style required more handwork (and more time) than the fees justified. That realization pushed him toward less elaborate styling—more along the lines of Art Deco and Biedermeier. His role models in furniture-making include mile-Jacques Ruhlmann and architect Frank Lloyd Wright—"not necessarily his furniture as much as the details of his buildings, the way things go together." Puckett started small, but now his business has grown to the point that he needs two full-time assistants to keep up with demand. Most of the work comes through gallery connections or word of mouth, because he is not a persistent marketer. In the best of years, his studio produces upwards of 75 pieces, the majority of them being one-of-a-kind creations. This year the tally won't be that high, because the studio received a big bookcase commission and some large kitchens and domestic jobs that help fill the gaps when furniture-making slows down. While the demand for studio furniture seems to have dwindled along with everything else during the recession, Puckett says over the past decade he has ridden the wave of increased popularity for the medium. "As a trend, I think people are taking more notice of studio furniture. It is getting more respect as an art than a craft."

Photos: Richard Larimer



"Curly Cabinet."



"Cocktail Table."

Ronald C. Puckett
P.O. Box 9549
Richmond, Virginia 23228
Phone: 804-752-2126

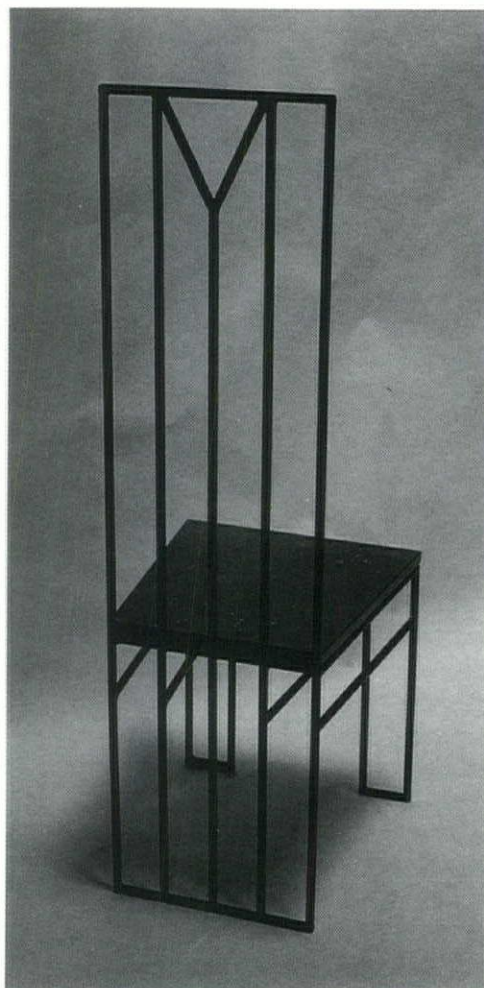
MAURICE BEANE

More Than Sticks and Stone

It all started with a cocktail table. Maurice Beane had moved in with his sister, and needed a table — *not just any table* — to spice up the apartment. Rummaging through an antiques shop, Beane spotted a piece of broken marble. He took it home, cut it down to size, and placed it atop two chimney flues. *Voila!* A cocktail table. That act of spontaneity opened a new universe to a young man who had studied graphic design at VCU. Since then, he has devoted himself to furniture, working primarily in steel, glass and marble to create tables, chairs and lamps that fit comfortably in a variety of settings.

In 1986, when Beane was invited to show his work for the first time at a Richmond street festival, most of his pieces were built from found objects. By then, however, he also had made his first "Retromac" chair, designed and fabricated from scratch. That showing, and another at the Hand Workshop in Richmond, were turning points for Beane: people started buying his work. Since 1987, he has sold enough to make a full-time living at it. That was the year a friend introduced him around the showrooms at the Washington Design Center. Two of them offered to represent him on the spot. "That gave me a lot of confidence," he says. Soon Beane was commissioned to design a line of occasional pieces for a Richmond retailer. Then he was courted by the Harold Zimmerman Collection, which premiered Beane's Escalier series at the High Point furnishings market in 1989. Now he is negotiating with a Los Angeles company to produce yet another line.

Of the work he has in limited production, Beane is perhaps most identified with the "Dalla" collection, characterized by its wavy legs and disk-and-triangle motif. Its proportions are reminiscent of chairs and tables by Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Frank Lloyd Wright, both acknowledged influences on Beane. With outside fabricators, he produces from 15 to 40 of his best-selling pieces each year, and isn't too proud to admit that he pays attention to what sells. "When I was younger, I thought that I was avant garde, setting the trends. Now I find that to do a little more than just pay the bills, I have to look at the marketplace." To gauge the trends, he studies the furniture coming out of Milan, Paris and Barcelona. His conclusion? "It's getting back to a more minimal style."



"Retromac" chair.



"Dalla" table.

Maurice Beane
4025 Crutchfield Street
Richmond, Virginia 23225
Phone: 804-233-6257

Photos: Maurice Beane

ROBERT BRUCE THOMAS

Full Metal Jacket

Robert Thomas is taking his show on the road again. Already represented by galleries from Atlanta to New York, Thomas recently set out on a cross-country tour of America's heartland and West Coast to find new outlets for his trademark aluminum "cloud" furniture. Raised in the Midwest, Thomas acquired his training in sculpture and metal casting at the University of Nebraska. In 1976, he graduated in industrial design from Pratt Institute, which channeled his thinking toward mass production. For years afterward, he pioneered design applications for computers. It wasn't until 1989 that he bought a welding torch and began toying with the cloud-form tables in his backyard shed. "I'm interested in the design process, but I'm also interested in the process of becoming a designer," says Thomas, who admires industrial designer Raymond Loewy and the businesslike methods that Loewy introduced to design practice. Drawing on his own blend of inspiration and aggressiveness, Thomas has found an investor to back his marketing and production efforts. A Japanese company recently signed on to distribute his furniture in the Far East. His next step: a new machine process guided by computerized data to stamp shapes out of metal.

Robert Bruce Thomas
804 Air Park Road, Suite 15
Ashland, Virginia 23005
Phone: 804-740-5349



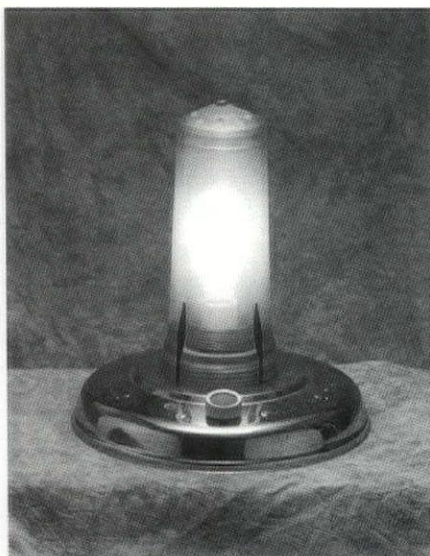
Bob Jones

"Cloud Cocktail Table."

ERIK FIKS

Finder's Keepers

Junk doesn't exist in Erik Fiks's world. The discards of others are the formative necessities of the wide range of lamps that he creates. "The past history of an object interests me," he says. "I try to convey the rebirth of it, the recycling of it, something that has a specific use — but I give it a fresh image and a fresh use." Fiks is blazing his own trail in the art world, looking internally for inspiration. He says an idea for a light will come to mind and he feels compelled to give it three-dimensional form. His goal: "To make it lasting and entertaining and original." Fiks's training in sculpture at VCU kindled an interest in welding and soldering, giving him the technical skills to produce such a wide array of lamps. He is attracted to Art Deco design, even though many of his pieces are so wildly eclectic as to defy labeling. Recently a Richmond gallery commissioned him to produce a light box for their stained glass sign, but mostly he is engaged in producing one-of-a-kind objects suggested by his scavenged treasures.



Eric Norbom

"Water Filter" lamp.

Erik Fiks
P.O. Box 12415
Richmond, Virginia 23241
Phone: 804-225-8675



Doug Hayes

"Flo" table lamp.

JAMES DeMUTH

Tufts and Tassels

Grandma's house was full of upholstered furniture, but never in her wildest dreams would she have imagined the products of James DeMuth. "I like to exaggerate things in my work – to take an idea and pump up the volume," DeMuth says. "I want to make sure my work can't be construed as conservative, even though I am using traditional techniques and stylistic elements." DeMuth, a VCU fine arts graduate, relies on his knowledge of art history as he develops each new piece. The references in his work may reach back 20 years – or 200. Constant throughout is the language of upholstery: button tufting, tassels, trimmings, gold leaf, and decorative nail heads. His "Winged Ottoman" is typical DeMuth. While browsing through an antiques book, he came upon an elaborate Empire chair with dramatic wings flanking each side. He incorporated the idea into a footstool that was in the works, and indulged his penchant for including clock faces, too. In 1990, DeMuth moved to New York to make contacts in the studio furniture world. After a SoHo gallery spotlighted him, national magazines featured his work. Now, even though the slow economy ushered him back to more-livable Richmond, he still keeps the New York burners warm.

James DeMuth
208 East Grace Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
Phone: 804-644-5626



"Pavlina Loveseat."

MICHAEL CREED

A Touch of Whimsy

Unlike many of the current crop of studio furniture makers, Michael Creed came into his craft the old-fashioned way—through apprenticeship. Trained first as a carpenter and later a restorer of old buildings, he opened his own studio 12 years ago to repair antiques and dabble in art furniture. Now the dabbling is over for Creed, whose skills in architectural carving, traditional joinery, and inlay techniques have found new expression in a collection of whimsical chairs, desks, and ladders. After getting his start with furniture commissions that tended toward the conventional, Creed says the gap is closing between the character of the creative work he does for himself and what he designs for clients. His "Kattmose II," a small table and writing desk that plays on cat imagery, is typical of the results when a client gives Creed a basic idea and lets him run with it. His latest project, a series of walking sticks, has been featured in three gallery shows this year. And while some of his works carry philosophical themes, Creed says what he is "really trying to convey in these pieces is delight."



"18th Dynasty Desk."

Bill Spidell



"Kattmose II."

Michael Creed
2129 Broadway Street
Lynchburg, Virginia 24501
Phone: 804-845-6452

TOM WESSELS

Mind Over Matter

For years, Tom Wessels kept furniture making separated entirely from his "day job" as a psychotherapist. "I conceived of them largely as independent interests," he says. "I was somewhat reticent to share 'furniture talk' with my psychotherapy colleagues and 'therapy talk' with my art friends for fear each group would see me as less committed." In time, Wessels came to realize how each interest sustains the other. As he entered his mid-40s, Wessels developed an interest in the writings of Carl Jung, and began to access dream images that provided useful symbols for his two careers. He began a new series of pieces in which he explored the questions: What if furniture could begin to serve us spiritually and psychologically as well as functionally? What if furniture could help us remain focused in our daily lives? So Wessels struck off in search of symbolic content, exploring opposites such as masculine and feminine, black and white, good and evil. A symbol such as wings represents transcendence, the ability to forgive and accept the dark side in us all. "Some elements in these pieces," he says, "remain a mystery to me."

Tom Wessels

4 Graham Drive

Newport News, Virginia 23606


Phone: 804-930-3925



Photo Reflections

"Clothes Tree Chair."

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William James

M

Seeking Out the Best Design Museums

By Douglas McCreary Greenwood

The idea of the museum as repository for the very best objects has traditionally been the domain of the well-to-do. But that has changed – perhaps as an inevitable byproduct of the democratization of culture. While the result is often an unfortunate lack of decorum, a more palatable aspect of this democratization is that, as intrepid museum-goers know, there are now museums to satisfy every taste: wax museums, glass museums, train museums, doll museums, and even a museum dedicated to garbage.

Like everything else, they run the gamut from being exceptional to an absolute waste of time. And while there are museums whose buildings alone make them meccas for architecture buffs – Louis I. Kahn's incomparable Kimball Art Museum in Fort Worth, Charles Moore's Hood Museum at Dartmouth, the Guggenheim in New York City, and (for other reasons) Peter Eisenman's little disaster at Ohio State – there are several museums in North America whose collections reflect a serious commitment to design. Although there are others that fit this category, four that require something less than a transcontinental journey to visit spring to mind at once: The Cooper-Hewitt Museum, National Building Museum, Walker Art Center and Canadian Centre for Architecture.

Cooper-Hewitt Museum

The Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York, with a pedigree that stretches back to the late 19th century, is officially The Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Design. Originally established as an adjunct of The Cooper Union school, it has an extraordinarily varied collection in fields as diverse as architecture, urban planning, industrial design, landscape design and textiles. Yet as a museum mandated to reflect "the shifts in taste and thinking" over the decades, the Cooper-Hewitt has had its ups and downs. One aspect that sets it apart from others in North America is a direct result of its international perspective. Just as matters of style and design know no national boundaries, so too the objects in the Cooper-Hewitt's collections suffer no such limitations.

After focusing on European decorative styles from the 16th through the 19th century for the first three decades of its existence, the Cooper-Hewitt shifted gears in the '40s and '50s when it began to concentrate on contemporary design. There were those who felt very strongly about this change, and their views seemed to be borne out by Cooper Union's announcement in 1963 that the school could no longer afford to run the museum. For a period of

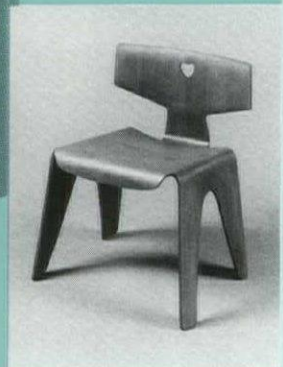
time, it appeared that the museum would permanently close its doors because of a lack of financial support. Fortunately, its holdings were not dispersed across the country, as had been contemplated. With its reorganization in the mid-'70s as a branch of the Smithsonian, the Cooper-Hewitt redirected its energies on the design process itself. "The future of the environment, the quality of life, and the way in which design affects everyday living" became its new mandate.

Its current exhibition, "The Cooper-Hewitt Collections: A Design Resource," reveals the depth of the museum's holdings and suggests the ways the collection has departed from solely one-of-a-kind objects to include mass-produced ones. In addition to its collection in the decorative arts, its departments of wallcoverings and textiles are preeminent worldwide. The museum's drawings and prints department, which contains one of the world's largest collections in architecture ornament, the decorative arts and theater design, is unrivaled in 18th and early 19th century Italian design and 20th century architecture.

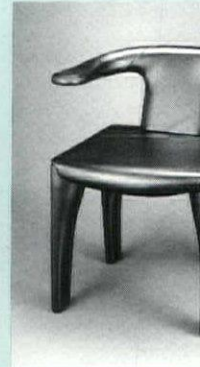
"A Design Resource" reflects the rich variety of these disparate areas, including not only objects from the original collection that Sarah, Eleanor and Amy Hewitt

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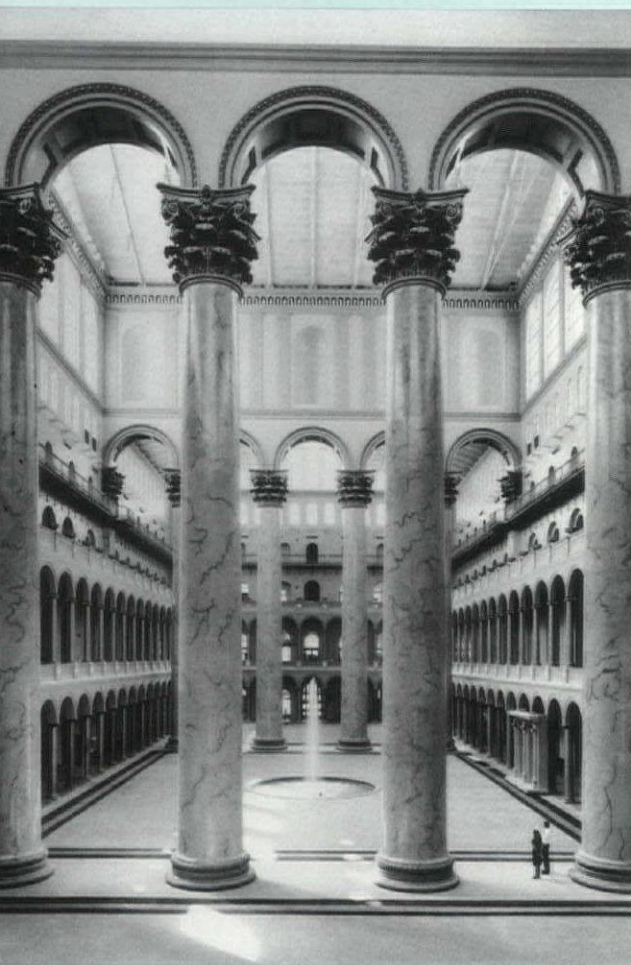
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Chair photos courtesy The Cooper-Hewitt Museum



The Cooper-Hewitt Museum's "Design Resource" exhibition includes a display wall that traces the evolution of chair design.



National Building Museum

Simply walking into the awe-inspiring Great Hall of the National Building Museum is enough to get anyone excited about design.

displayed on opening day in 1897 – including buttons, bird cages, handboxes, lace and wallpaper – but also items such as Charles Eames's late-'40s "Rocking Chair," a 1917 silver-footed bowl designed by Josef Hoffman, and a portable Olivetti typewriter designed in 1969 by Ettore Sottsass and Perry King. All these items are accorded greater value by virtue of the Cooper Hewitt's superb library.

National Building Museum

Another museum with even deeper Washington connections, the National Building Museum, is located in Washington, D.C., just a few blocks off the Mall. Built some 20 years after the Civil War to house the Pension Bureau, the building was first used for President Grover Cleveland's inaugural ball in 1885. It was also the site in 1990 for the AIA's premier Accent on Architecture gala, where Britain's Prince Charles admonished architects to practice more humane architecture.

Anyone who has seen the spectacular interior space of the Building Museum will not soon forget it. The Great Hall measures 316-by-116 feet and features a central fountain and eight Corinthian columns 75 feet high (each of which is built of 75,000 bricks). Since its opening in this location in 1985, the National Building Museum has mounted exhibitions that focused on building materials (such as terra cotta), building types (including apartment buildings), pressing design issues (such as affordable housing), and design competitions.

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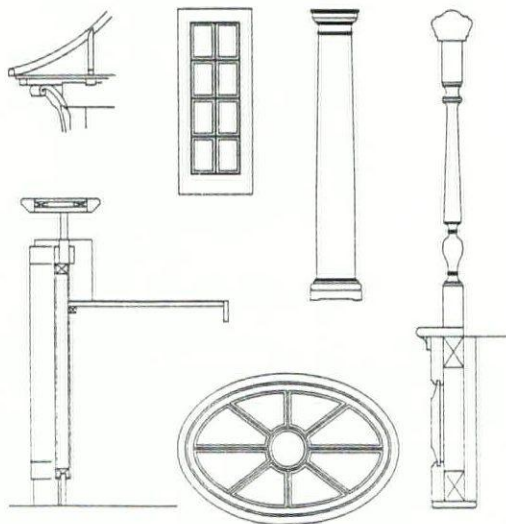
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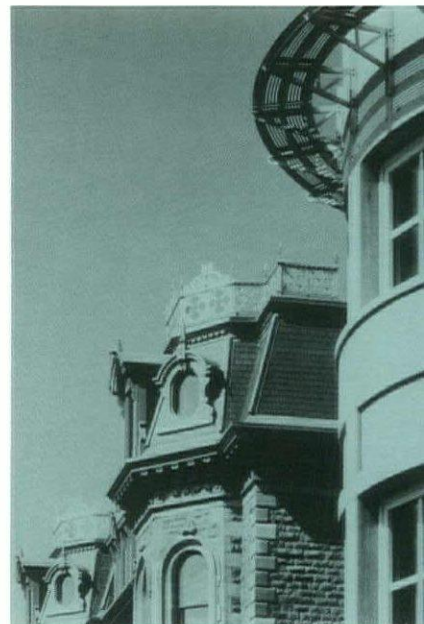
Permanent exhibitions on the origins of Washington and the Pension Building itself make a powerful case for the museum's very existence. Its collection is growing slowly, but already includes gems such as a fine interior design collection of drawings, watercolors, hardware and fabric samples from Ernest Brothers' firm, some 60,000 working drawings of early 20th century terra cotta building ornaments from the Northwestern Terra Cotta Collection, and the Stewart Construction Company's photo albums documenting in extraordinary detail the making of its buildings. The National Building Museum's library is open to scholars by appointment, but not to the general public.

Walker Art Center

In Minneapolis, the Walker Art Center is renowned not only for its splendid facility and wide-ranging collection of 19th and 20th century European and American art, but also for its voice in the design world and its role as publisher of *Design*

Quarterly. The Walker's current facility, designed by architect Edward Larrabee Barnes, is itself a monument to contemporary design and has come to be recognized as one of the most successful spaces for viewing contemporary art. With large interior spaces free from long corridors and distracting detail, the Walker provides an inviting milieu for displaying everything from small prints to huge contemporary constructions. In recent years, however, the show-stopper at the Walker has been its sculpture garden, which was substantially enlarged in 1989 and features a large conservatory, a giant-scale spoon and cherry by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, and a lyrical pedestrian bridge spanning the adjacent highway.

Of the many outstanding exhibitions the Walker has mounted, its recent shows titled "Graphic Design in America: A Visual Language History" and "Architecture Tomorrow" underscore the center's continuing interest in design. And, despite the departure of longtime editor Mildred Friedman, *Design Quarterly* continues to make its mark. Beginning with the Spring 1992 issue, which featured Surrealist eyes rather ominously peering out from its cover, *DQ* is running a series of covers designed by artists and architects. Current editor Martin Filler's intent is to make a contemporary statement equivalent to covers of important modern art magazines such as *Verve* and *Cahiers d'Art*, which commissioned origi-



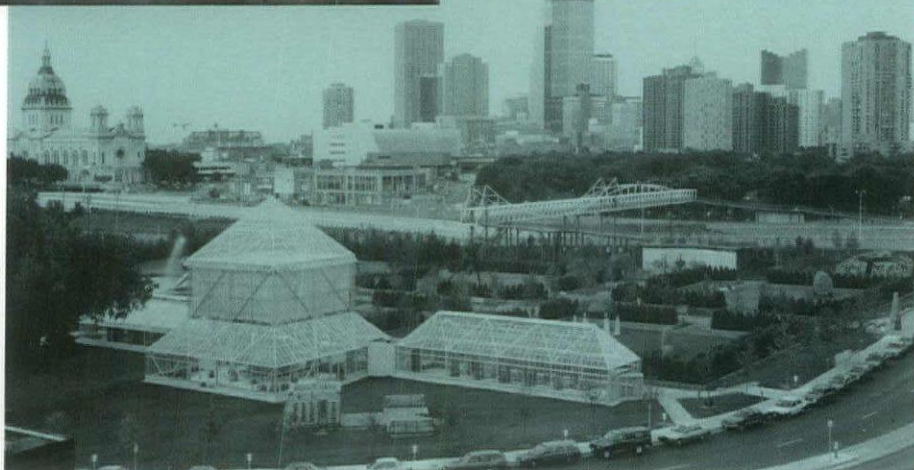
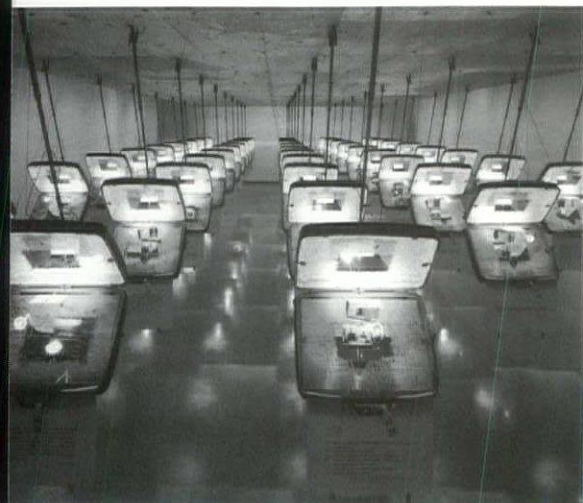
Old meets new at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, which recently received a national Honor Award for the design of its addition.

nal covers by masters including Matisse and Picasso. What's between the covers is equally compelling: Frank Gehry's account of how he came to design the new basket-weave furniture splashed across the pages of national magazines; a report on what works (and what doesn't) in book design; and an acrimonious essay on the shameless reselling of bits and pieces of America's most famous architect's work, "Dismembering Frank Lloyd Wright."

Canadian Centre for Architecture

Just above the U.S. border, in Montreal, is one of the newcomers on the block, the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA). But the institution's relative youth is by no means a handicap. For starters, its recently enlarged home, designed by architect Peter Rose, is a five-star attraction that was hailed by *New York Times* critic Paul Goldberger for its memorable integration of classicism and modernism. With 6,000 square feet of exhibition space, a reference library, a 217-seat theater and a special wing reserved for scholars, the CCA does all the right things to facilitate the serious study of architecture. It is an incarnation of a museum that aspires to be more than a mere repository of artifacts.

The CCA was designed that way from the beginning. Its purpose – to be both a center for the study of architecture and a



The latest attraction at the Walker Art Center is its sculpture garden, which is accessible from downtown Minneapolis by an artful footbridge. The Walker's explorations of architectural themes often take an unconventional twist, as in the "suitCase Studies" installation (inset) shown last year.

Photos: Walker Art Center

museum – shaped its course as one of the world's great architectural libraries. Its collections have the added dimension of fitting into a comprehensive approach that reflects how architects think and work. For example, since architects trained in the Beaux Arts tradition acquired their craft by drawing existing buildings, the CCA library boasts a wealth of architectural drawings that exist in unique sketchbooks and notebooks, supplemented by all sorts of reference works, topographical publications, engineering and construction journals, city guides, field notes, and individual drawings portfolios.

The CCA contains much more, of course, with entire departments dedicated to prints and drawings, archival records and photography. It is not exaggerating to say that the CCA's photographic materials collection represents one of its most stunning and celebrated aspects, containing as it does not merely photographic renderings, but a virtual history of photography from its beginnings. Their display in Rose's exceptional new building only adds to the pleasure of viewing them.

The CCA's schedule of recent and forthcoming exhibitions suggests that it is as much interested in the present as in the past. John Hejduk: *The Lancaster-Hanover Masque*, a series of 49 drawings created in 1983, describes a drama intended to be performed over a 12-hour period. In commenting on the nature and quality of the architects' intervention in the landscape, the masque blurs the distinction between architecture, drawing and performance. Shows opening in late summer include "The Geometry of Defence: Fortification Treatises and Manuals, 1500-1800," and "Opening the Gates of 18th Century Montreal," both of which consider subjects somewhat out of the mainstream of most museums.

A visit to any of these museums, each located in a city whose streets are lined with good architecture, will enrich any trip while offering provocative evidence – as these institutions demonstrate in very different ways – that design matters.

Getting In

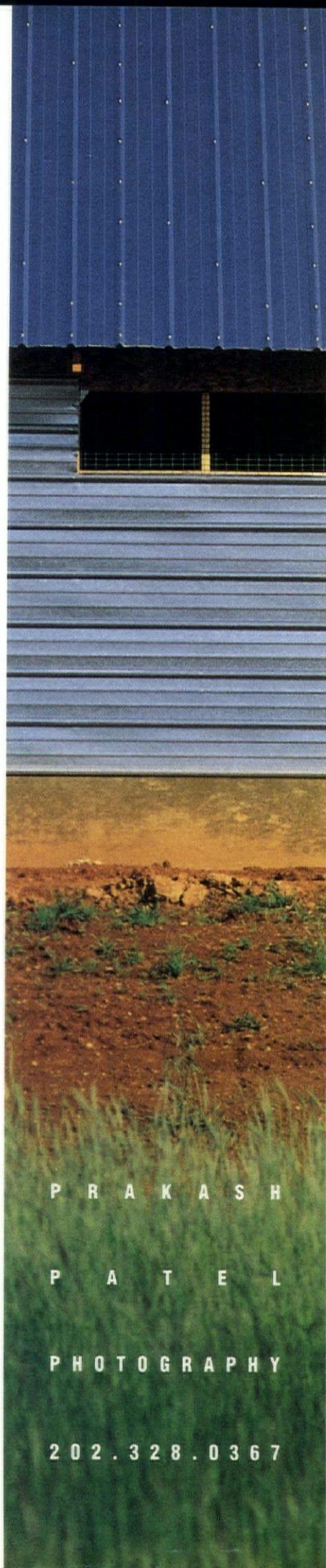
Cooper-Hewitt Museum is located at 2 East 91st Street, New York, NY 10128. Hours are Tues. 10am-9pm; Wed.-Sat. 10am-5pm; Sun. 12-5pm. Closed Monday. Phone: 212-860-6868.

The National Building Museum is located in the Pension Building, Judiciary Square NW, Washington, DC 20001. Hours are Mon.-Sat. 10am-4pm; Sun. 12-4pm. Phone: 202-272-2448.

Walker Art Center is located at Lyndale Ave. and Vineland Place, Minneapolis, MN 55403. Hours are Tues.-Sat. 10am-8pm; Sun. 11am-5pm. Closed Monday. Phone: 612-375-7622.

The Canadian Centre for Architecture is located at 1920 Baile St., Montreal, Quebec H3H 2S6, Canada. Hours are Tues.-Sat. 11am-6pm. Closed Monday in summer; closed Monday and Tuesday in winter. Phone: 514-939-7000.

Douglas McCreary Greenwood is editor of *The Environmental Resource Guide*, published by the American Institute of Architects.

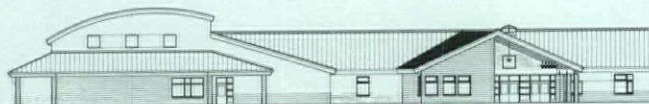


P R A K A S H

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Architect: Bond, Comet, Westmoreland + Galusha, Richmond
Project: Shady Grove Elementary School

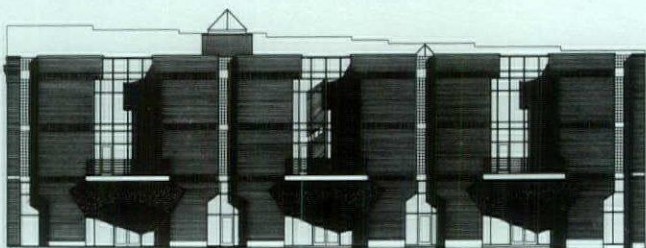
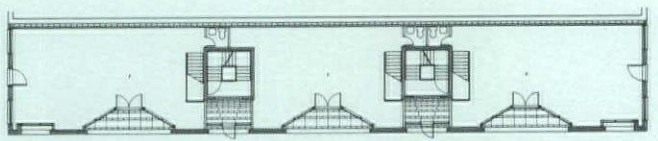
This 750-pupil school, a prototype of three schools to be built by Henrico County, is scheduled to be completed in September. In addition to providing primary instructional spaces, parts of the building are designed to function as community facilities after school hours. 804-788-4774.



Architect: Odell Associates, Richmond
Project: McAllen-Miller International Airport

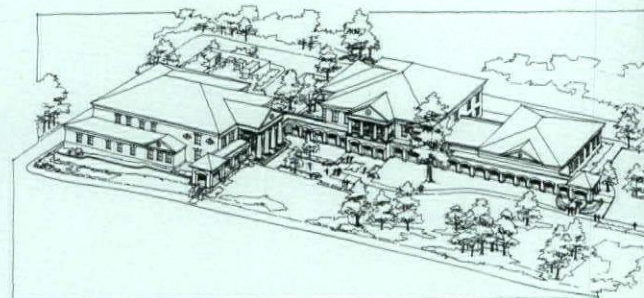
This 110,000-square-foot replacement terminal for McAllen, Texas, is planned to accommodate jet, commuter, and general aviation aircraft with U.S. Customs availability for each. Designed to reflect the area's Mexican flavor, the stone, stucco and tile facility is expected to be completed next fall. 804-644-5941.

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Architect: WHA Architecture and Planning, Falls Church
Project: Washburn Apartments and Retail

An old cotton warehouse in Memphis will be rehabilitated to yield apartment units, retail spaces and a pedestrian street. The building will be differentiated along the alley facade to develop retail entrances, light apertures for apartment units, apartment balconies and a pedestrian streetscape. 703-998-5100.



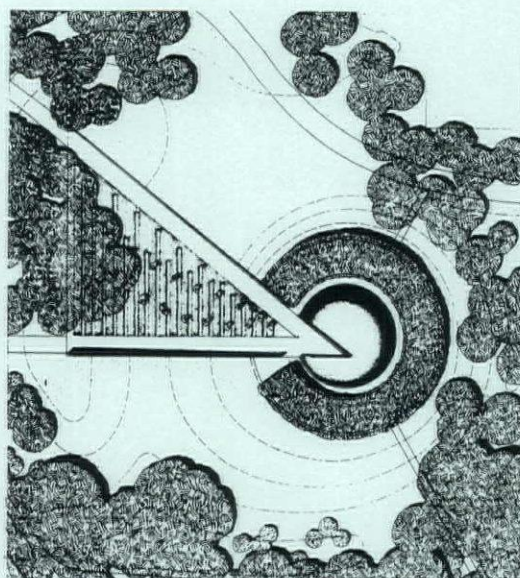
Architect: The Moseley McClintock Group, Richmond
Project: Spotsylvania County Courthouse

This 60,000-square-foot facility will have the appearance of three separate buildings connected by an arcade. The resulting smaller building scale and traditional design vocabulary responds to the adjacent 19th century historic courthouse and the special character of the surrounding village. 804-794-7555.



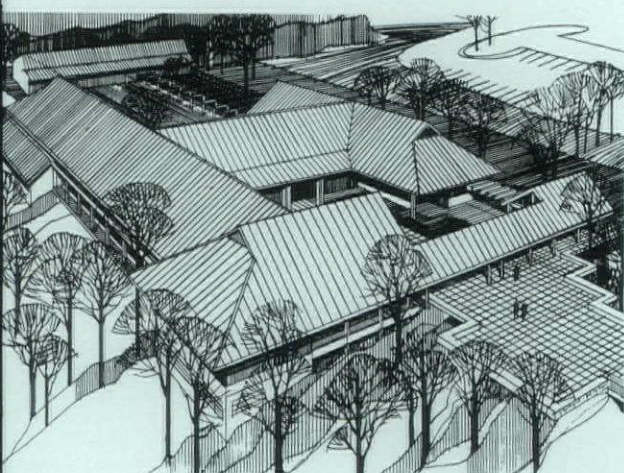
Architect: Ward/Hall Associates AIA, Fairfax
Project: First Baptist Church of Waldorf

New 26,000-square-foot worship and educational facilities are arranged on a rural 10-acre site in Charles County, Maryland, in campuslike fashion about a central meditation garden. The Phase One program includes a 400-seat sanctuary, fellowship hall, classrooms, and an 85-foot tower. 703-385-5800.



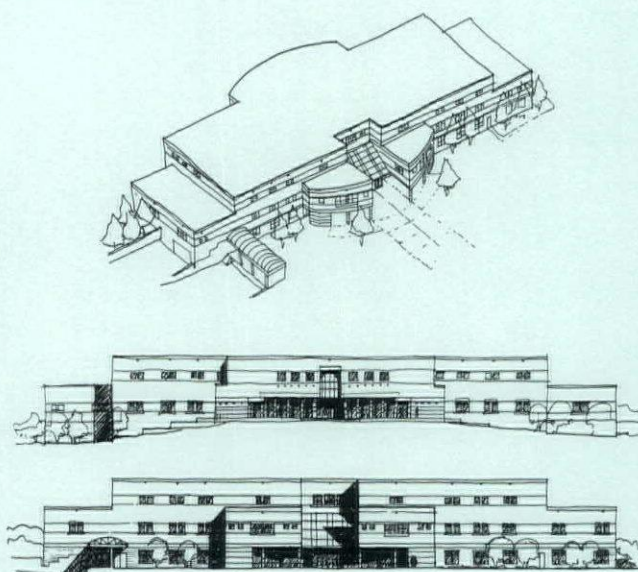
Architect: Cooper-Lecky Architects, Washington, D.C.
Project: Korean War Veterans Memorial

The design features a sweeping column of soldiers on an inclined field marching towards the American flag. An etched wall depicting the support forces flanks the troopers and culminates within a contemplative pool. 202-333-2310.



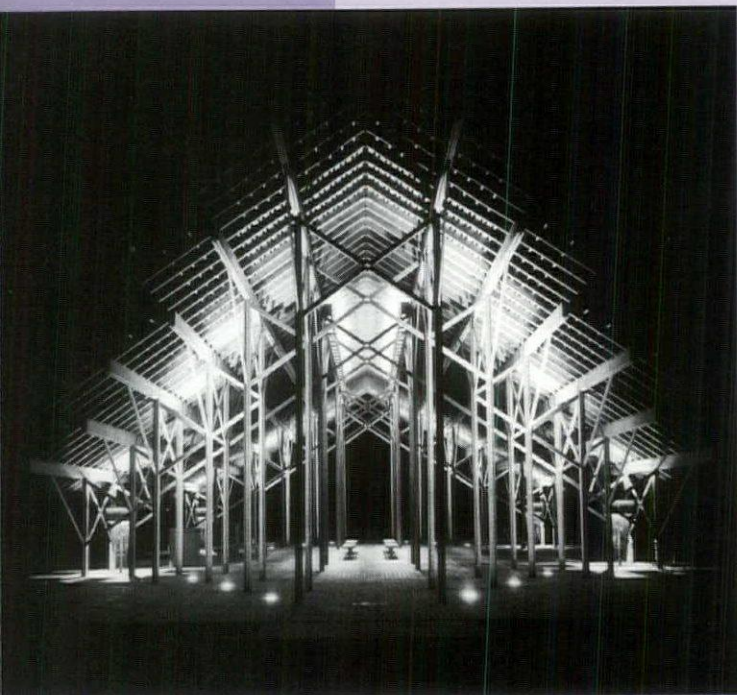
Architect: Carlton Abbott & Partners, Williamsburg
Project: Blue Ridge Parkway headquarters

This drawing depicts the proposed headquarters for the Blue Ridge Parkway near Asheville, North Carolina. Located along the parkway at Hemphill Knob, it will become the first permanent headquarters since the scenic route's inception in 1933. 804-220-1095.



Architect: Motley + Associates, Richmond
Project: Germanna Community College, Fredericksburg Campus

This 65,000-square-foot academic building will give birth to a second Germanna campus to accommodate the rapid growth of the Fredericksburg area. It will house classrooms, labs, faculty offices, and a media center, lecture space, and food service facility. 804-643-1212.



Fay Jones's Pinecote Pavilion.

An Arkansas Original

Fay Jones

By Robert Adams Ivy, Jr. Illustrated. 224 pp. Washington, D.C.: The AIA Press. \$60.00 cloth.

Fay Jones took the high road to fame. While other architects were making names for themselves during the excessive '80s by clamoring for ink and shifting to the style that suited the moment, Arkansas native Jones was quietly completing a series of remarkable buildings that, by the end of the decade, would earn him the highest honor of his peers. Those buildings—Thorncrown Chapel, Cooper Chapel and Pinecote Pavilion—are so well known within the culture of architects that they have become signatures for Jones, now 71, who has threatened to give modesty, directness and adherence to principles a good name.

Jones is known through these works and more for having achieved a rare integration with nature. Little wonder, then, that a reading of the new book *Fay Jones*

feels like an exhilarating stroll through the forest in spring. It is comfort to the eyes—rich in texture, impressive in its scale and full of small surprises.

According to the biographical sketch that opens the book, the teenage Jones was inspired toward architecture by a newsreel on the Johnson's Wax headquarters, one of Frank Lloyd Wright's master works. Jones began college in engineering, but returned from World War II to sign up as the first student of architecture at the University of Arkansas. He graduated in a class of five. While teaching later at the University of Oklahoma, Jones met Wright at a faculty dinner and was soon invited to visit Taliesin West, winter residence of the Wright fellows. That visit prompted Jones to join Wright for the summer of 1953 at the master's studio in Spring Green, Wisconsin. Jones was forever influenced by that summer, even though he returned to Arkansas that fall to join the architecture faculty at his alma mater. He has remained there since, continuing to live in the house he designed and built for his family in 1955.

A portfolio of Jones's best work, beginning with that first house, makes up the bulk of the book. It is varied in its focus, probing the buildings at every scale from site plan to the details of custom light fixtures. From the seminal Thorncrown Chapel, which set the tone for Jones's work in the 1980s, to the less-publicized but no less spectacular Pinecote Pavilion, Jones's sacred spaces will define him for posterity. Not only are they his most original creations, but they distill into purest form his interest in manipulating space, emphasizing craft, revealing structure and designing in the "organic" tradition of Wright's proteges. At its best, concludes author Robert Ivy, Jones's architecture goes about "transforming the world one place and one building at a time."

Telling History, Scully Style

Architecture: The Natural and the Manmade

By Vincent Scully. Illustrated. New York: St. Martin's Press. 388 pp. \$40.00 cloth.

By Susan C. Piedmont-Palladino

Vincent Scully is so often described as "the dean of architectural historians" that the phrase has become virtually synonymous with the distinguished professor from Yale. Given Scully's vast reputation, one can hardly be faulted for having high expectations of his new book, *Architecture: The Natural and the Manmade*. Unfortunately, the lack of a clear audience and the careless production of the book itself are ultimately disappointing.

From the start, the book seems to promise a radical new look at history, compressing the architecture of the Americas into a simultaneous discussion of New York City and the Taos Pueblo in New Mexico. Too bad that it remains an uncritical examination which never substantively assesses the theme proclaimed by the book's title. Most interesting are the early chapters concerning the Classical world, a time in history when the relationship between art and science received its first systematic expression in architecture. Scully's narrative on the temples at Paestum in southern Italy, for example, gradually brings the reader to an appreciation of the subtle evolution of the Doric order from its first appearance there to its more refined use at the Parthenon hundreds of years later.

Where time has blurred the details and original written evidence is lacking, Scully's conjectures acquire a mythic quality appropriate to the era. Scully's treatment of the Gothic era, how

ever, is redundant and somewhat confusing. Dividing the subject into a chapter on structure and another on meaning reinforces an unfortunate division between two elements of architecture that should be integral. It is, in fact, the integration of structure and meaning which makes the Gothic cathedrals at Chartres and Reims such compelling architecture.

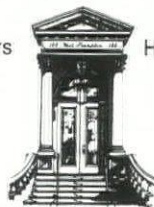
One of the most unusual sections of the book concerns the design and construction of urban fortifications and their relationship to garden design. Scully contends that both endeavors "begin with geometry and go on to scale," sharing an attitude toward shaping the earth that characterized 17th century France. The connection seems more intuitive than material – but thought-provoking nonetheless.

One recurring theme throughout the book is a search for the ultimate origin of architectural form in the cultural meaning of natural features. Scully's repeated references to sacred mountains and persistent influences on the forms used in architecture are one of the most puzzling aspects of the book. While such a connection seems convincing for the architecture of animist cultures, its plausibility diminishes considerably when attributed to St. Peter's Basilica in Rome or Le Corbusier's government complex at Chandigarh, India. On the other hand, more direct influences on form are often not mentioned at all. Scully describes the end pavilions at Andrea Palladio's mid-16th century Villa Barbaro as undulating "like the hills behind them," yet he makes no mention of their long evolution from the church facade designs of Leon Battista Alberti or the linkage to Palladio's own contemporary, Giacomo da Vignola.

Scully's rhetorical writing style will be familiar and enjoyable to many readers. He writes often in the first person, which fosters the appealing readability of a memoir. His role as a teacher of some of the most recognized names in architectural practice today is evident throughout, and he is quite generous to his former students. Robert Venturi and Maya Lin each get almost as much coverage as Le Corbusier and more than Frank Lloyd Wright. Scully is, however,

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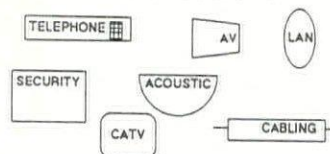
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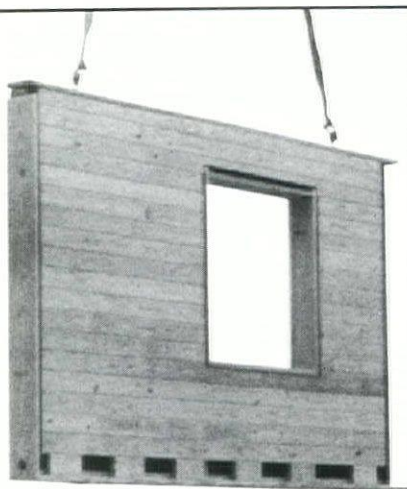


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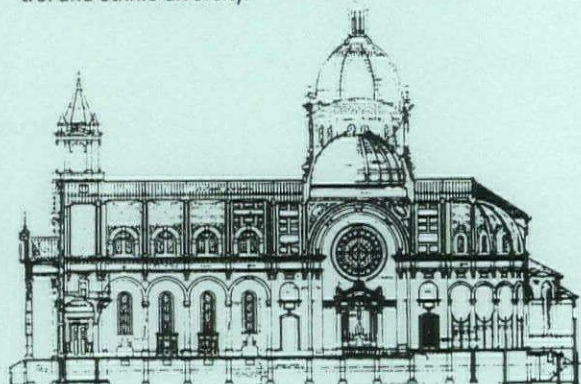
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inform

Coming Up

In our next issue, we'll include a feature on buildings with a civic purpose and a sneak preview of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts exhibit on "The Making of Virginia Architecture." Also, we'll explore the power of maps and travel to a western Virginia mining town that bears the marks of coal company control and ethnic diversity.



Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Richmond
from "The Making of Virginia Architecture"

inappropriately ferocious to some of his predecessors. Gratuitous blasts at other scholars – he calls one "a truly blind archaeologist" and another "one of history's consummate idiots" – are hardly consistent with current trends of cultural and historical relativism. It is one of many instances where the book would have benefited from stronger editing.

Scully's reliance on his personal slide collection for the book's illustrations and his insistence on writing only about places he has visited makes for an intriguing strategy – and one that gives a certain coherence and integrity to the book. One wishes, however, that he had taken a professional photographer as a travel companion, for the quality of the images is bound to disappoint any reader. Ultimately, the book's many shortcomings in photographic quality can be attributed to the publisher, who should have insisted on better images. Compounding the problem of quality are the numerous out-of-sequence illustrations. Most maddening are the references to illustrations that don't exist. For the reader already familiar with the subject, this is a persistent nuisance. But it is a serious liability for the novice. There are very few drawings, and unless the reader is familiar with a place, a purely narrative description of it can be frustrating to follow.

Despite its ambitious title, the book offers little new insight into the natural and manmade complexities which shape our environment. In general, the "natural" part of the title is given surprisingly Romantic treatment: aesthetically useful as idealized wilderness, field of domination, or spectacle. Likewise the "man-made" part also receives a similar 19th century treatment, where form and style arise from the vague forces of historical and nationalistic determinism. Nowhere does the reader sense the dynamic relationship between the two. In the end, *Architecture: The Natural and the Manmade* offers up a predictable Western European chronology of stylistic highlights, leaving the reader in awe of Scully's encyclopedic knowledge and breadth of experience, but fundamentally unchallenged.

Susan C. Piedmont-Palladino is an associate professor at Virginia Tech's Washington/Alexandria Center for Architecture.

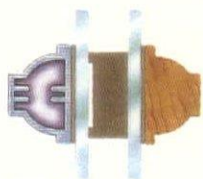
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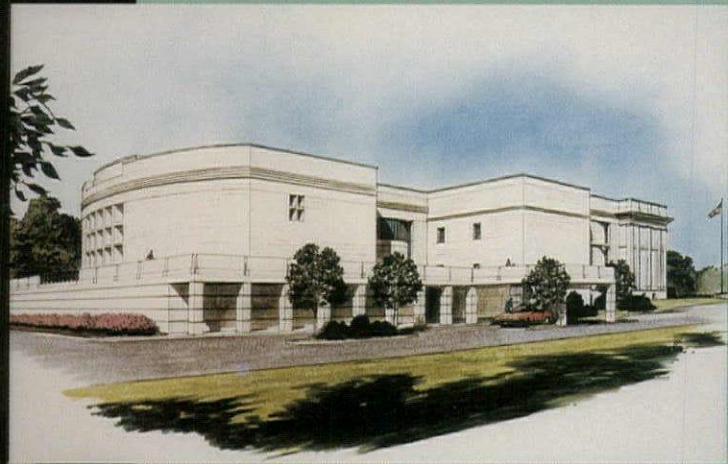
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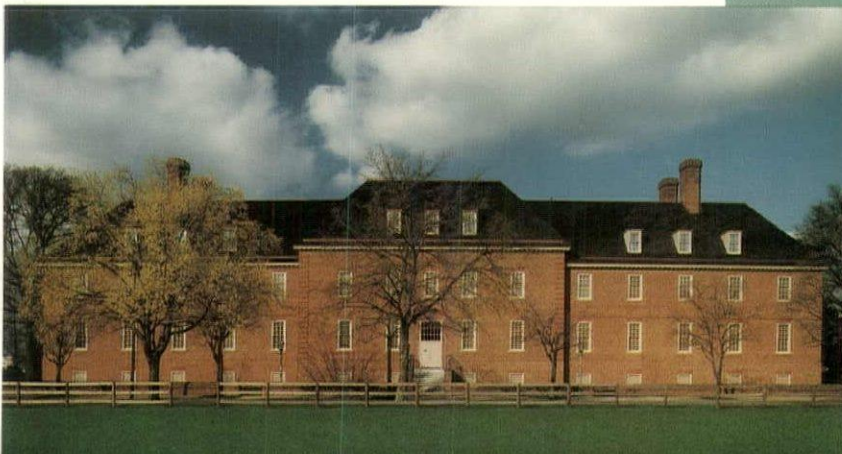
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Taylor & Parrish renovated the historic Barret House (on cover) in Richmond, headquarters of the Virginia Society of the American Institute of Architects and the Virginia Foundation for Architecture. Joseph Dye Lahendro AIA, architect.