ARCADE

The Northwest Calendar for Architecture and Design

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December 1983/January 1984

Two Dollars

In the spirit of the armchair escapist, ARCADE has devoted this issue to stories from Nicaragua, one written by a member of CANTO (Cultural Workers and Artists for Nicaragua Today), and the other an interview with David Bloom by the founder of CANTO.

In July of this year, six artists and designers from Seattle visited Nicaragua to attend a conference on Central America hosted by the Association of Sandinista Cultural Workers (ASTC). Upon their return, they formed the group CANTO in order to build a popular culture in this country and promote social change.

Ann Hirschi, an architectural designer from Seattle and CANTO member, tells this story of her visit to Nicaragua and encounter with two Nicaraguan architects.

Alejandro comes out of the lobby of the Hotel Ticomo, and he's grinning. He has finally made contact with one of his compañeros in the ASTC (Association of Sandinista Cultural Workers), and I'm going to get a chance to talk with a Nicaraguan architect.

We hitch a ride with Mario who, with Alejandro, is one of the many Nicaraguan cultural workers who has been helping with our conference (see related story). He careers down the narrow dirt road that separates the intricately landscaped cottages of this hotel from the main drag that will take us into Managua. Mario has a copy of his recently published book of poems on the dashboard. When I ask if he has any extra copies for sale, he shakes his head. Alejandro explains that Mario is one of the hottest young poets in the country and that his book has sold out. Alejandro, too, has published both a book of poetry and one of short stories, although he is a lawyer by training and a printer by trade. My impressions tell me that these two young men are accomplished but not necessarily unusual.

There is a flowering underway in every art discipline.

Nicaragua is known throughout Latin America as a nation of poets. Since its establishment four years ago after the Triumph of the Popular Revolution, the Nicaraguan Government of National Reconstruction has made it a policy to encourage developing writers with available and affordable publishing. Poetry readings are common in every community and at political events as well. In fact, there is a flowering underway in every art discipline, and the popular cultural movement is considered an important gauge of the feelings of the Nicaraguan people and thus is carefully fostered.

David explains that many of the young architects work in various departments of the Government now, helping their country engage in full-scale reconstruction. The old ones, he smiles, for the most part have fled to Miami after the Triumph. The city of Managua, which was totally demolished by a massive earthquake in 1972, was left in various stages of decay while Somoza pocketed vast quantities of international aid that flowed into the country.

... continued on page four.
December/January Issue:

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“HOW FAR SHOULD THE CITY GO to legislate design?” The Seattle AIA announced at a public presentation on November 3 that the proposed draft downtown plan has gone too far. Computerized drawings of prototypical projects in the retail core, office core, and Denny Regrade illustrated criticisms of the Plan’s effects. In the retail core, Dorm Anderson predicted, the 400-foot height limit would combine with developers’ needs to maximize development in a plethora of “short, fat buildings almost without architectural input.” For the office core, Jerry Ernst described a need for “measurable performance standards” rather than the proposed “prescriptive standards.” Because of the proposed bonuses which would reward the mix of theaters with office projects, the audience was warned that the summary effect might be only a shift “from too many dead plazas to too many dead theaters.” Drawings of massive residential towers flanking the sidewalk illustrated Williamson’s concern. Robertson’s remark that “it will be possible to locate anywhere within these envelopes – the envelopes won’t effect whether the design is good.” Robertson’s group concluded that the Plan will reduce incentives to produce housing in the Regrade.

CITYSCAPE by Carl Smool, artist, and CANTO musicians.

The architects were disgruntled by their analysis: their creativity in future projects would be limited as would the volume of their work. According to a draft position paper, “The proposed planning policies . . . may in fact create a more static environment and place such severe limitations on the future development of Downtown Seattle so as to encourage major development to locate elsewhere, such as Bellevue.” (They seemed unaware of Bellevue’s recent efforts to locate elsewhere, such as Bellevue.) (They seemed unaware of Bellevue’s recent efforts to locate elsewhere, such as Bellevue.)

An Allied Arts representative asked the AIA “to remember where we came from . . . designers [have been] free to build anti-social buildings. Perhaps we can’t legislate against all bad design, but we can legislate against really anti-social design.” Mark Himshaw, Bellevue planner, called the AIA’s desire for flexibility and predictability “a classic dilemma . . . It’s not possible to have the best of both worlds. You can’t have ‘measurable performance standards’ without negotiation.”

The architects repeatedly expressed their interests in “doing a good building.” On the basis of their presentation, one would have to guess that a good building is one which is visibly different from its neighbors; no further definition was offered. The idea of building a good city was well explored. Perhaps, as one member of the audience suggested, the Plan’s drafters “want the similarity” among buildings, not unlike Paris, where consistency establishes rank and acts as a canvas for the delineation of small-scale individual differences.

READERS OF SEATTLE’S Daily Journal of Commerce were treated to two doses of headily articulated design philosophy by two local landscape architects who were aroused by the Robert Irwin installation at the Public Safety Building at Fourth and Cherry. Immediately above the headline, “Design Awareness Month,” in a late September issue of the paper, was a letter from Richard Carothers, proclaiming, “In my opinion Prison Plaza is a gross misappropriation of art, architecture, and landscape architecture — let alone urban design and, be it so bold, reasonably good taste.” He concluded, “What really saddens and maddens me is that there are many architects, landscape architects, artists, urban designers, etc., etc., etc., who could and would have done a far superior job for Seattle — AND, they all live in Seattle!” Little more than a week later, Marcha Johnson came to the defense of, if not the work itself, at least the process by which it came to be. “For a landscape architect to imply that artists should not compete with the design professions for public open space work is to narrowly define the nature and function of public places from an ill-concealed self-serving viewpoint . . . Exposure to a variety of aesthetics, including the challenge of a confrontational, imperfectly understood avant-garde, enriches our professional backgrounds and contributes to an image of Seattle as a leader in support of public arts.” She concluded, “I applaud the involvement of artists with viewpoints and objectives that contrast with those of the design professions in creating spaces like the Public Safety Plaza sculpture. This new work adds to the essential variety of the cityscape and has stimulated a kind of broadening, passionate controversy that the present Northwest design community desperately lacks.”

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THE ALLIED ARTS COALITION TO save the Cobb Building is coordinating an economic evaluation of the Cobb and would welcome those with property development and management experience to help assess another report by the UW Regents. Those interested should call 624-0432.

Tiue the Season to put your architectural talents to work in the kitchen! This gingerbread house is typical of the entries in the annual Seattle Art Museum Gingerbread House Display and Raffle, and seems to exhibit some Rationalist motifs, now so popular everywhere. However, Expressionism will never die, as evidenced by the creepy-crawlies at the base.

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DE MEDICI/MING • A LOCAL CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL ARCHITECTS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY is being formed in Seattle. The basic philosophy of the group is to extend architectural professional ethics to include the premise that nuclear weapons pose an intolerable threat to our nation’s economic health and ultimately to world survival.

Acting on that premise, the local group has sponsored several recent projects and hosted several town meetings during November for Target Seattle/Soviet Realities. Future goals are to promote creative educational and political activities in the architectural community and related fields.

The business of architecture has suffered deeply from the long-term emphasis on arms race economics. Architects for Social Responsibility will be working toward alternatives to high deficit military spending, high interest rates, and inflation. Energies will be coordinated with other professional groups to influence public policy, to reach out to fellow architects in the Soviet Union, and to help clarify issues for further action. For more information, call Gary Sortun at 624-9100.

FOR THE DESIGN PROFESSIONAL, Christmas shopping can be an extension of one’s art. One is BIZAART: “The store that puts business before art and still makes money.” At 1st and Lenora. “Why be bi-coastal when you can buy local?”

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* DE MEDICI/MING • FINE PAPER

Orcas Bucher Building Gazebos, Portland. SOM, Architects.

DEAR ARCADE,

As a subscriber to your magazine, and as an artist - I look forward to your calendar of art activities and events. I was, therefore, extremely disappointed to see that my November 10 Show at Linda Farris was not listed! I did enjoy Susan Boyle’s article which talked about our house (Mark Millett).

I don’t know what happened — whether it’s a paid listing or what — just bringing it to your attention — unless it is an oversight on Linda’s part.

Sherry Markovitz

ARCADE RESPONDS:

The material which appears on the calendar is compiled from two sources: our mail, and from the collections (solicited and unsolicited) of a small loyal group called “calendar contributors” who hate “beats.” Because of our lead time — approximately three weeks — and our bimonthly format, timing of items can be a problem. (Ever notice that the calendar is usually dense with information at the top, and thin at the bottom, or “dark” and “light”?) We do, occasionally, make mistakes which cause us to lose an item somewhere between the mailbox and the printer. As it happened, we missed an interesting show, and we are sorry. Now, a suggestion: anyone who has a special interest in having a calendar item printed, address it directly to Calendar Editor or call it in to the appropriate beat. (See vital statistics, this page.) We can’t guarantee to print an item, but we try to, and we do it for free.

Sherry Markovitz

SEATTLE’S OWN HORATIO ALGER

story: Martin Selig, German refugee, whose first real estate transaction was a $25,000 down payment on a small U. District building when he was an undergraduate at U.W., was just named AGC’s 1983 Construction Person of the Year. No wonder. Columbia Center’s 76 stories will testify, in short order, to this man’s construction vision. According to the AGC news release, “Selig, in accepting (sic) the award, praised the construction industry in the Pacific Northwest and the U.S. system of free enterprise which made it all possible.” Nothing was said of the fact that all the steel used to structure this giant was purchased from South Korea.

A SILVER LINING HAS BEEN FOUND in the cloud of the slowed construction industry by the Portland Chapter AIA. Their recent awards program was redesigned to reflect the realities of architectural practice. There were two categories of built projects (construction costs under $200,000, and above), as well as a brand new unbuilt project category. Most eye-catching among the winners by virtue of the questions raised by its composition is SOM’s “Orbanco Building Gazebo” pictured here, a memorial of sorts to a former work of architecture, which consists of fragments of the past framing the entry to an underground restaurant.
ARCHITECTURA

Even today Managua is a city with no "There" there. One is struck by the wide open spaces that follow the fault line, areas that were previously a dense urban fabric. There are no plans to rebuild on the highly sensitive fault line, and David explains that the open spaces are being developed as public parks. As such, there is no downtown, and most of the new housing in the capital city is occurring in decentralised barrios surrounding the city. Concrete skeletal remains of earthquake-damaged buildings are still prominent features—buildings that had obviously never felt the strong embrace of a Dave Walton or a Building Department. The one prominent exception is the Bank of America Building. This single black office building is semi-nicely reinforced and resisted the shock. plains that the pen spaces are being developed as open spaces that follow the fault line, areas that were previously a dense urban fabric. The strong embrace of a Dave Walton or a Building Department. The one prominent exception is the Bank of America Building. This single highrise office building is semi-nicely reinforced and resisted the shock.

Regarding building codes in Managua, David remarked that all projects must be approved by the Office of Structural Security and codes in effect now are the inspiration of North American influence—vestiges of the U.S. corporations that played a major role in the Somoza dictatorship and are now supervising construction of a major new hospital—one of the many that the Sandinist government has provided in the last four years. Since the triumph, all medical care is free for every Nicaraguan citizen. She relates that the people who hired her first thought that she would have trouble supervising the predominantly male construction workers, but that was not the case. As traditional relationships between men and women change with the rebuilding of this country, so is the notorious machismo breaking down. It does, of course, take time. Carla tells me that there are many more women practicing architecture now than before 1979 and that it will soon be evenly divided between the sexes.

The more thought of life without a building department sent shivers down my spine, but the denseness of the language barrier and the questions raised by this statement were enough to end that particular line of discussion and relegate it to the "to do" list. Alejandro translates this conversation, although David speaks a little English and some Italian. He studied in Florence a few years ago. My Italian is being eroded with grade-school Spanish to further confuse the situation. I question Carla: "What is it like to be a woman practicing architecture in Nicaragua Libre?" Carla works for the Ministry of Health and is now supervising construction of a major new hospital—one of the many that the Sandinist government has provided in the last four years. Since the triumph, all medical care is free for every Nicaraguan citizen. She relates that the people who hired her first thought that she would have trouble supervising the predominantly male construction workers, but that was not the case. As traditional relationships between men and women change with the rebuilding of this country, so is the notorious machismo breaking down. It does, of course, take time. Carla tells me that there are many more women practicing architecture now than before 1979 and that it will soon be evenly divided between the sexes.

continued from front page...

In what other ways do they show their support for the Government that was won at such a high cost? David and Alejandro have recently returned from an ASTC-sponsored cultural brigade which toured the Front. They traveled along the Honduran border and entertained the troops, USO style, between attacks from the Somocistas or "contras," as they are also called. David made portraits of the heroes and the martyrs of this "undecorated war" and painted murals in the small border towns. Alejandro read and wrote poetry with the soldiers. Theater troops also accompanied them.

At the end of my visit with Carla and David, they each shook my hand and kissed my cheek. All of the Nicaraguans I met were friendly without exception. There is a sense of North American influence—vestiges of the U.S. corporations that played a major role in the Somoza dictatorship and are now supervising construction of a major new hospital—one of the many that the Sandinist government has provided in the last four years. Since the triumph, all medical care is free for every Nicaraguan citizen. She relates that the people who hired her first thought that she would have trouble supervising the predominantly male construction workers, but that was not the case. As traditional relationships between men and women change with the rebuilding of this country, so is the notorious machismo breaking down. It does, of course, take time. Carla tells me that there are many more women practicing architecture now than before 1979 and that it will soon be evenly divided between the sexes.

It is no longer simply jargon, but stands as a concrete reality in the lives of these people. This has been true since the Marines first occupied Nicaragua in 1909 to ensure that it would be safe for United States "interests." My emotions were wrung during my visit to this beautiful country. To know that my government could be responsible for such callous denial of the most basic human dignities for which the Nicaraguans are struggling, against such odds and with such determination, is almost too much to comprehend. The word that kept coming to my mind was "inspiration." It is inspiring to see the extent to which a truly democratic society can have meaning for its citizens. This meaning in their lives was evident in everything we saw from the determination to defend to the death their borders, to celebrating the Fourth Anniversary of the Revolution.

It was often repeated by Nicaraguans we met, of all classes, that in the event of a U.S. invasion and overthrow of their country, the Yankees would be left only with a country of ashes. Herein lies the superior strength of the Nicaraguan people who, in their unwavering commitment to their hard-won freedom state unequivocally, "Patria Libre o Morir!"—Free Homeland or Death.

Ann Hirsch
CANTO: AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID BLOOM

David Bloom is the Urban Minister of the Church of the Nativity in Seattle. He recently returned from a trip to Nicaragua, sponsored by the Seattle-Managua Sister City Association, to interview a member of CANTO (Cultural Workers and Artists for Nicaragua Today), interviewed him shortly after his return.

C: could you talk a little about the history of Nicaragua and characterize some of the ways that the Sandinista Government has made?

D.B.: Nicaragua was ruled by a series of dictators from the Somoza family from the early 1930s until 1979. The first Somoza was put into power by the United States, which had occupied Nicaragua in the early part of this century. Under the Somozas, little had been done for the people. They were kept illiterate, their health deteriorated, and there was little or no sanitation in the rural areas. 60% of Managua's neighborhoods were without electricity, running water, sewers, curbs, gutters, or paved streets.

This is the capital city of a Central American country!

The Sandinistas appear to have a goal of rebuilding the infrastructure of their country and to mean providing the basic services that a city or city needs in order to enjoy some decent quality of life. They are undertaking a number of ambitious projects. The one that is most well known in the United States occurred immediately after the revolution. This was the literacy campaign when hundreds of thousands of people went out around the countryside and taught the peasants to read and write. The literacy rate has increased noticeably over a very short period of time.

The development of health clinics in rural areas has also been a priority of the Sandinistas. Infant mortality has dropped from 25% to 2% in just a few years because of the efforts in terms of providing health and sanitation. These are important strides. In汇率 in Managua we saw evidence of new sewer lines being put in, curbs being placed for the first time in neighborhoods, streets being paved, and running water being put in the houses. We talked with a woman in the Calderon barrio in Managua where some of this work has occurred and she was very happy that this has been happening. She said, "now my daughter doesn't need to walk five blocks to the community water supply just so that we can have water for cooking and cleaning in our house."

J.M: How has the earthquake in Managua affected the planning there?

D.B.: The earthquake in Managua in 1972 had a devastating effect on the central area of the city. It leveled whole blocks of houses, stores, and office buildings. If you travel in what was downtown Managua before the earthquake, it's amazing. It's just a huge open space with nothing but a few buildings and a church that are still standing. About 20,000 people lost their lives in Managua alone as their houses literally fell on top of them. A few office buildings had to be vacated because they were rendered uninhabitable by the earthquake damage, and you can see the damage against the sky. Six, eight, ten stories high. The only buildings that were able to survive in downtown were those that were of recent construction that had some seismic controls built into them.

The tragedy of the earthquake is that the country received many millions of dollars in relief assistance from around the world, and Somoza diverted most of that to his own use.

Many thousands of Managuans were displaced from the city and forced to live in camps. No attempt was made to rebuild neighborhoods for them so that they could move back, and the result is that those people now have to ride miles on their public transit system in order to get to work. The buses in Managua are overcrowded, wearing out, and dirty. It's another example of the situation they're having to deal with in order to survive from day to day.

J.M: I noticed when I was in Nicaragua a lot of parks are being rebuilt. This seemed to reflect a certain priority in their rebuilding by the Sandinistas.

D.B.: It's a marvelous thing to see what the Sandinistas' priorities are in terms of their rebuilding. They're not just rebuilding the buildings. One of the real priorities is "people places." Right in the heart of the city, on top of what had been one of the main boulevards of the city which was named after Roosevelt is a marvelous public open space that covers many blocks. It's on land that was devastated by the earthquake. Since the revolution the Sandinistas have built a beautiful park there, with basketball courts and tennis courts and restaurants and a children's library.

One of the things that the American people are not learning about is the genuine commitment that this revolution has to its children. Understanding the nurturing of children is a basic necessity of any society that thinks of itself as having any kind of a human future.

It is amazing how much the people there admire the values of our own American revolution and the ideas of people like Thomas Jefferson.

It isn't the Sandinista revolution that is being betrayed, even though the Americans often accuse the Sandinistas of doing that, but it is the American Revolution that is being betrayed in Central America, and that's the tragedy.

J.M: It sounds like the decisions on rebuilding and reconstruction had some input from the people. Are they an active part of the governing body? Did you speak to any of the people?

D.B.: There are a number of ministries that are charged with the responsibility of rebuilding their society. There is one ministry, for example, the Junta for the Reconstruction of the City of Managua. We met with the head of that Junta, Samuel Santos, who is responsible for all the programs to rebuild the city. He seems to have a mandate from the government to build houses and parks, provide sewers and sanitation and curbs and gutters in the neighborhoods. He said, "What we are trying to do is develop Managua into a city again," and that's what they are doing.

One of the tragedies of his efforts and the efforts of the government is that because of the harassment from the American government through the counter-revolutionaries and the Honduran Army, they are having to divert their limited resources from the reconstruction of the nation to the defense of the nation, and our government's role in terms of that harassment is, in my opinion, criminal.

What they need is economic and technical expertise. Nicaragua is having to turn to other nations for aid in these areas, and they are receiving assistance from countries from both the Eastern and Western blocs of nations. They will accept help from anyone who is willing to give it, but they will not accept any strings attached to that aid. "This is our nation; this is our revolution, and we intend to be in control." I think the charges of Nicaragua becoming a Marxist or Communist-dominated nation are erroneous. Certainly, there are Eastern bloc nations giving technical assistance and possibly military assistance, but at the same time we have refused to provide that assistance. They have had to turn to whoever will give them the help. They have also said that they are not about to trade domination by the U.S. for domination by the Soviet Union. They are intending to be independent.

"This is our nation; this is our revolution, and we intend to be in control."

J.M: In the United States there are various cultural arts: painting, architecture, sculpture. All very removed from political decisions or any significant aspect of our society. This seems not to be the case in Nicaragua. That seems to be a very significant gain since the revolution.

D.B.: It is very difficult for me to respond to that, except to say that it is clear that the Revolutionary Government has given a new appreciation for the creative instinct of humanity. There is a strong recognition of the importance of the arts in the Nicaraguan people that was pretty well suppressed under Somoza, and most of that indigenous artistic expression has been allowed to flourish under the revolution. The result is that art is thriving in the country now.

J.M: What did you see as the position of the Church in the new Nicaraguan Government?

D.B.: There are a number of Christian people in leadership positions in the Nicaraguan government. There are two priests in the Parliament. There are also priests and Protestant ministers at lower levels in the bureaucracy, so there's a heavy involvement in the part of clergy people in the leadership of the government. I think that's a significant point, and many people say that the values of the revolution are consonant with the values of Christianity; that is, they are particularly concerned about people who are very poor. They are concerned about rebuilding their society, and they are trying to develop a system that is known for its kindness and forgiveness rather than retaliation.

In an official sense, I'd say that there is strong freedom of religion. I talked to people who come from what are known as the Evangelical Churches, primarily the Baptist Churches. I talked to the head of the Nicaraguan Baptist Convention, and he was very outspoken in his support for the Sandinista revolution. He said that the Baptists have no problem practicing their religion under this government. There is conflict between the government and the Roman Catholic Church, and our country is accusing the Sandinistas of religious repression, but I think you need to look at what is actually happening in order to understand this. First, it's important to remember that Nicaragua sees itself as being in a state of war. They are convinced that the American Government is going to invade their country. So they are in a state of siege. Any time a country is in a state of siege, there is greater control than might be exercised at other times.
December

Comments due on East Police Station SE5.

Design Center Northwest: An open two-hour session on Tuesday night, 7 to 9:30: Dec. 6. Mike Hersch, Bob Vanhuss, and Jan Neufeldt.

European Anarch-Far East Film Series ends tonight at 9:30. NOA.

Donatty Hayes Showcase Gallery will feature photos by David Metzger, through 1/10.

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Open discussion on the Art of Collecting and Maintaining Photographs will be held at the Olympic Gym, Olympic Gym, 12/25.

An Annual Arts Show will be held tonight at 9:00. NOA.
January

New Year's Day

A Meeting of Architects for Social Responsibility tonight for prose and time. call 624-1400.

Designated application forms "Successful San Francisco" dedicated over two weeks of work on financial and cultural aspects of preservation of habitat, properties, must be must by 9:5. For more information, call 202 673-4092, or write to: Emergency Preservation, National Trust for Historic Preservation - 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004, through 1/76.

January 8th

Date Event Place

Three Short films on marcas ceramic firing and glazing techniques will be shown at 6:30 p.m. at Volunteer Park Community Center, 1301 Broadway, Seattle.

Allied Arts Annual Membership Meeting. Call 624-1400 for specifics. Coming up, Allied Arts Annual Fundraising Auction will be 3/7, let them know if you have items to donate.

Ribbons Unlimited, 1984, the third annual bequeath establishing the works of fiber arts from trimmers, designed by: Susan, Iran, and northern Depicts of the Whitney Museum of American Art (not full), through 1/28.

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Date Event Place

Open: 108 (8) at the Seattle Art Museum, University of Washington, the Tiger's Eye, Seattle Art of the
derington, at the Seattle Art Museum's center for China's young artists.

Banding away the larger-than-life director pictures will be shown at the Blue Cat's Gallery from 2/2 through 2/3. Opening is 8-8pm.

Design Center Northwestmension presents a showing of jewelry and works of art, 3/9 through 4/2. Opening is 9-9:30 p.m. All design and product exhibit will continue through 4/2.

Traditional Japanese porcelain getting technique will be demonstrated by Dr. Hiroshi Aka's Denver Pottery Museum from 4-9 p.m. today.

Jonet Sempere at the Seattle Art Museum, University of Washington, the Tiger's Eye, Seattle Art of the
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The view from our kitchen in suburban Kirribilli is enlivened by ships and ferries and sailboats in Port Jackson and The blandness of the skyline gives no clue to the fascinating action below. While parking provides problems equal to those of most major cities, life for the pedestrians is delightful.

The view from our kitchen in suburban Kirribilli is enlivened by ships and ferries and sailboats in Port Jackson and Sydney Cove, but the city skyline beyond is mostly boxes. With the obvious exceptions of the Opera House and Sydney Tower (Australia’s answer to the Space Needle), the last twenty years have not brought architectural distinction to downtown Sydney. An arguable case might be made for the QANTAS building. Its strong vertical corner elements, oversized concrete trusses, and hexagonal rooftop space-frame soar above neighboring buildings, a symbol of technological power and reliability. In general, however, Basic Boring is the urban stylistic rule.

The many large and small nineteenth century buildings in downtown Sydney make it painfully obvious that many more have been demolished. Like the U.S., Australia has only recently come to appreciate its heritage of existing buildings, this enlightenment certainly assisted by recession. Redevelopment of existing nineteenth century blocks tends to take the form of popping up facades and thoroughly gutting insides. According to the New South Wales Heritage Council, the 1893 Queen Victoria Market Block (an elaborately detailed sandstone building with a central dome and lantern) will be dealt with more carefully. Meanwhile, it hangs in empty limbo as the developers and city council renegotiate contract terms.

In Sydney “suburb” refers to any place that is neither the CBD nor the Bush, but somewhere in between.

Although the city railway stations also are in the midst of renovation that seems to have gotten stranded on a bureaucrat’s desk, the railway system is fast and efficient. Sydney’s trains plunge underground at the edge of the CBD and stop at closely spaced stations throughout, connecting with little underwear ferries and buses at strategic points. Some of the rail cars still have blackout screens from World War II; others are more modern. They all run frequently to and from the inner and outer suburbs: school children, commuters, shoppers, and even surfers on their way to one of Sydney’s thirty-four surf beaches with their boards, travel on the trains.

In Sydney, “suburb” refers to any place that is neither the CBD nor the Bush, but somewhere in between. From short acquaintance, the outer suburbs seem to be featureless collections of red tile roofs, but the inner suburbs that look across various waterways to the city are rather dense and distinctive little neighborhoods with their own shopping centers and community centers. Among the several types of domestic architecture typical of Sydney the terrace house is certainly the most appealing, reminiscent of New Orleans and San Francisco with a South Pacific romance of its own. These two- or three-story row houses are generally twenty to thirty feet wide with balconies and terraces at the front and perhaps a courtyard or small garden in back. Usually of pastel painted or stuccoed masonry, the terrace houses have slate, red tile, or corrugated metal roofs, and often

Plan of downtown Sydney, Australia.

FAIR DINKUM
NOTES FROM OZ

Terrace Housing, Sydney.

We received this letter from Kristine Bak, an architectural historian and designer who recently moved to Sydney, Australia with her husband John Knapp (of the same profession) and their new daughter Anna.

The view from our kitchen in suburban Kirribilli is enlivened by ships and ferries and sailboats in Port Jackson and Sydney Cove, but the city skyline beyond is mostly boxes. With the obvious exceptions of the Opera House and Sydney Tower (Australia’s answer to the Space Needle), the last twenty years have not brought architectural distinction to downtown Sydney. An arguable case might be made for the QANTAS building. Its strong vertical corner elements, oversized concrete trusses, and hexagonal rooftop space-frame soar above neighboring buildings, a symbol of technological power and reliability. In general, however, Basic Boring is the urban stylistic rule.

The blandness of the skyline gives no clue to the fascinating action below. While parking provides problems equal to those of most major cities, life for the pedestrians is delightful.

The blandness of the skyline gives no clue to the fascinating action below. Guides to Sydney bemoan the disorder and narrowness of streets in the CBD, the cutting streets of terrace houses and other less subtle tactics are occurring. The parks are in the midst of a renovation that seems to have gotten stranded on a bureaucrat’s desk, the railway system is fast and efficient. Sydney’s trains plunge underground at the edge of the CBD and stop at closely spaced stations throughout, connecting with little underwear ferries and buses at strategic points. Some of the rail cars still have blackout screens from World War II; others are more modern. They all run frequently to and from the inner and outer suburbs: school children, commuters, shoppers, and even surfers on their way to one of Sydney’s thirty-four surf beaches with their boards, travel on the trains.

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Less appealing than the terrace house, but also typical, is the Australian bungalow; a low, square house with a wide sheltering verandah, usually of a depressingly dark-colored brick and white wood trim. Its origins lie in nineteenth century industrial England where specifications were produced for the developers in the early part of this century. Many houses built around the turn-of-the-century period of Australian Federation (and called, appropriately, Federation Houses) employ similar materials to a much more pleasant effect. Attention to detail is shown in stained glass, windows, ornamental tiles, graceful verandah design, and rich red or green trim. Recognizing the various forms of Federation Houses requires a practiced eye, but appears to be well worth the effort.

Evaluating a house in Sydney means abandoning some of a Northwest architect's preconceptions. For one thing, Sydneysiders, like Romans, consider winter to be an interruption of normal conditions that comes around with annoying regularity and is best ignored until it goes away. Consequently, residential central heating in this subtropical climate is nearly nonexistent. Fireplaces and small portable gas or electric heaters are brought into service when absolutely necessary. Residential buildings large and small have grilled vents high in the walls of each room that remain open to the outdoors winter and summer, discouraging mildew and condensation inside the double wythe masonry walls. In our house, the wind blows freely around casually fitted and caulked windows. Add to this lack of interest in "weatherization" the fact that north facades are sunny and southern ones are in the shade (not to mention that the Pacific Ocean is to the East, and the storms come from the heartland to the West) and the disorientation is pretty thorough.

An expatriate New Zealand architect contends that the indifferent interior design here is largely a result of the exuberant outdoor-oriented lifestyle in a climate with 342 days of sunshine each year. The high cost of wood on this practically unforested continent makes extensive wood detailing rare, but the ubiquitous sandstone and clay provide well for masonry construction. Unfortunately, the possibilities of austere Mediterranean beauty in masonry design have remained undeveloped in Australia, probably due to a persistent British colonial influence. Despite the exotic climate and vegetation, the architecture is pretty staid. Recently a few architects have begun to investigate the hybridization of Southwestern Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean influences with a flavor of the South Pacific. This has produced some attractive results and may prove to be a productive new trend in Australian domestic architecture.

There is an exciting sense of exploration in this country full of new immigrants from all over the world.
Granville Island, Vancouver, B.C.'s contemporary answer to Seattle's historic Pike Place Market (after which it was modeled), is the studied consequence of putting principles into practice. Originally just a ripple in the middle of False Creek, the "island" was dredged up from the creek bottom for new life as a pioneering early-1900s version of an urban industrial park. It is now a successful urban park where recreation for tourists and locals alike consists of shopping for foods, arts, crafts, and marine supplies, going to the theater, a restaurant, a hotel or a park on the waterfront, and strolling in a special place. Granville Island is, as well, a place where Vancouverites go to work, and it is a case study of attitudes toward urbanism practiced by Vancouver, B.C. architect, Norman Hotson, and his associates. Hotson presented his thought processes as the designer of the renewed Granville Island environment, and as its continuing design coordinator in a lecture November 3 at the UW School of Architecture. Unlike rationales presented by architects, in which spoken words and illustrating slide images seem to address separate issues, Hotson's words and the images of Granville Island on the screen expressed a single, coherent design stance.

Granville Island and the City of Vancouver beyond.

Given life by a campaigning national politician, the Granville Island project became Hotson's after a preliminary study's five alternative plans generated a sense of realism about the project. At the University of Toronto, Hotson's thesis project had been a study for a new community in that city's inner harbor. In Vancouver, he had completed studies of waterfront re-use. This history helped him secure the Granville Island commission in 1976, as a one-man firm. He had been accurate in his assumption that the West Coast (of Canada) would be a good place for a young architect to begin.

Rarely does an architect credit the government with constructive assistance, but Hotson reported that the Federal ownership of the 38-acre property "made it easier to bring the project into being. If we needed to, we even controlled the zoning. It did involve public participation, but it did achieve certain things not otherwise possible without these special conditions."

A simple land-use plan and a well-defined set of development principles allowed Hotson and other architects to design buildings in support of planned objectives. The design and development of the public domain, or open space, involved a special effort on the part of the architect to accomplish the client's goal, "a place of public attraction, not just passive recreation."

Every entrance crosses a bridge over water, although the place is not technically an island.

Hotson told his clients, "If you really want people to come here, there has to be something singular about it. And the thing that is singular about it is that it is industrial."

At least in its visual theme, Granville Island is industrial; its land-use plan consists of a market area at the north end, a park area...
Waterfront Park(ing) as a Rational Art

at the south (oriented toward the False Creek residential development across the water), an area for artisans and industries centrally located without expensive waterfront access, a "New Realm" on the north­east waterfront (an art school now resides here) and recreational uses along the resi­dential-oriented South Shore.

Basic to the development of the Island was Hotson's commitment to incremental development. "We don't want to commit ourselves to doing something now that we want to develop over time. We want to recognize that as time goes by, people's attitudes change, conditions change." The intended result is an otherwise elusive qual­ity of reality to the physical environment. Hotson worked hard to convince his clients of this; he managed to stop the Govern­ment from buying out successful existing industries and thus kept a cement plant, a major tenant, operating on the Island. Bat­tles were waged on behalf of another key design principle, that "to the greatest extent possible, new uses should make use of the spatial integrity of existing buildings. Frankly, that's been one of the hardest to follow."

If we needed to, we even con­trolled the zoning.

The design of the public domain draws visitors' attention because of its appearance: the ground plane is paved with unit pavers without traditional definitions of pedes­trian and vehicular zones — there are no sidewalks. Cars and people mix without danger; Hotson designed for flexible use of the open spaces by both. "What is a park­ing lot one day can be anything the next. We tend to overdesign for a single use." Exceptions to that rule take the form of a playground in the middle of a parking area, a parking lot painted as a backgammon board, cafes on the streets. Subtle defini­tion of pedestrian areas exists in the form of a "pipe lintel" system of stocky red cedar posts carrying colorfully painted steel pipe above head height, along the boundaries of parking areas, and parallel to building fronts. The pipes carry lights and electrical power for outdoor uses. They tend to artic­ulate entries and in some locations carry awnings.

What is a parking lot one day can be anything the next.

Simple ideas contribute to the singular­ity of the environment and create the effect which is identifiable and memorably Gran­ville Island. Strong colors are coordinated to create sympathetic effects among neigh­boring buildings. Red maples define out­door spaces. Every entrance crosses a bridge over water, although the place is not techni­cally an island. Pools were created to build an impression of land surrounded by water, a special and somewhat remote place. Hot­son's message was appealing, in part be­cause of the obvious care with which he'd implemented his ideas, and in part because of his thoroughness in explaining the proc­ess and the criteria by which he worked.

Rebecca Barnes

Rebecca Barnes is an urban designer for the City of Seattle.

Drawings by Jenzina Boughton.
The Aga Khan competition, from its very inception, parts company with the gallery-of.pretty faces approach to architectural awards.

Editor Holod's introduction presents the chronology and summarizes the root issues of the competition. Nearly 200 projects from the Atlantic Ocean to Indonesia were considered. They were nominated confidently rather than by open solicitation. Seminars were held to help generate..."a body of thought about the nature of built environment that is culturally and economically responsive to the present and future societies of the Islamic world." Ten essays based on the seminars follow the introduction and lay groundwork, as they did in the competition, for the ultimate project awards arrayed for the reader in the final major portion of the book. The essays, written by academics, design professionals, an economist, and a lawyer, vary considerably in style and content: lucid, dense, polemic, arcane. Most informative and thought-provoking are those which discuss public institutions. All raise far more questions than they attempt to answer. This fact seems appropriate to the spirit of search and dialogue which the competition itself encourages. The award recipients range geographically across Africa to the Middle East, India, and Indonesia. Their scale ranges from single-family dwellings to complete urban infrastructures. The level of technological sophistication ranges from hand-pressed, sun-dried brick enclosures to Frei Otto-designed tensile pavilions evoking Bedouin tents. The desire to chart new paths of human interaction and to find seminal, replicable solutions is common to all the award winners. The financial and institutional barriers described are often formidable, but the goal has been achieved: appropriate fit of life and architecture. In this country architecture insulates themselves from global issues with superficial concerns about aesthetics and finance. Our profession may continue to function with this selective vision of our responsibilities, but in third world countries pressures are too intense and too immediate for architects to avoid the political, social, and moral dimensions of environmental design. "In the Arab world it is being built. Architecture and Community reveals the strength of design based on the fundamentals of spiritual humanism rather than Western materialism."

The book closes with a tribute to Egyptian architect, artist, and poet Hassan Fathy, recipient of a special Chairman's Award and lifelong champion of vernacular design and community-based construction. These concepts possess more currency now than ever, and are given a renewed prestige by the Aga Khan Award. Among Fathy's stirring words I found the following particularly apt: "We know that architecture, in all its styles, is one of the most important elements of culture, and that culture may be defined as the results of the interaction between the intelligence of man and his environment in satisfying both his spiritual and physical needs." What sets this book, and the Islamic world, apart is a non-sectarian approach to life and architecture. In this country architects insulate themselves from global issues with superficial concerns about aesthetics and finance. Our profession may continue to function with this selective vision of our responsibilities, but in third world countries pressures are too intense and too immediate for architects to avoid the political, social, and moral dimensions of environmental design. "In the Arab world it is being built. Architecture and Community reveals the strength of design based on the fundamentals of spiritual humanism rather than Western materialism, and thus heralds great hope for an entire world in the process of learning to heal itself."

REFERENCES

Eliza Davidson
Eliza Davidson is an architectural designer working in Seattle.

Halayna House, Agamy, Egypt, completed in April, 1975.