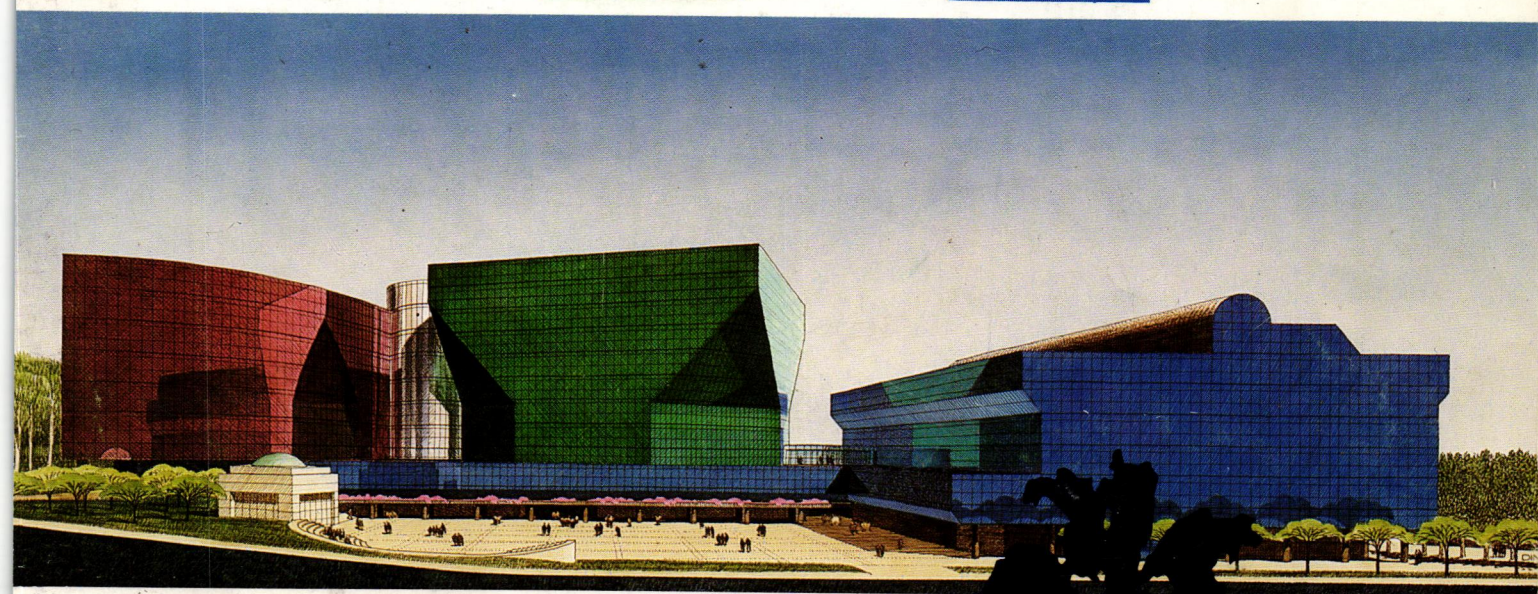


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Dialogue: SPIRO KOSTOF

Was Gropius right—is architectural history for adults only? On the eve of his television debut, Spiro Kostof considers the possibility.

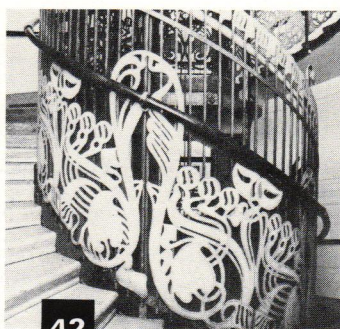
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AFTER ARCHITECTURE: THE PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER

The Blue Whale, beached in West Hollywood, engages the attention of Andrew Rabeneck and Aaron Betsky (architects), Robert Carey (developer), and its own historian John Pastier.



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The CHANGING FACE OF MODERNISM

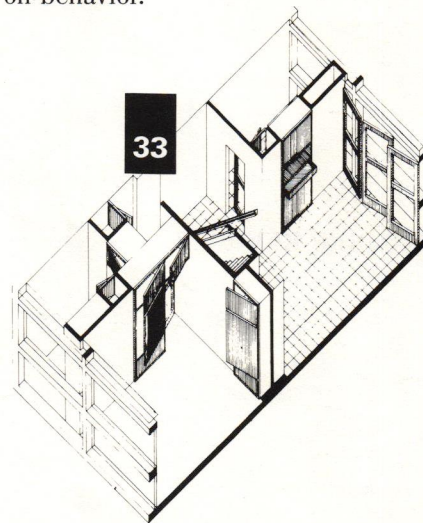
Stephen Toulmin

A nostalgic glance at the infant modernism in Vienna.

LETTER FROM LONDON

Andrew Saint

An influential new housing study offers powerful—and possibly erroneous—conclusions about the effect of design on behavior.

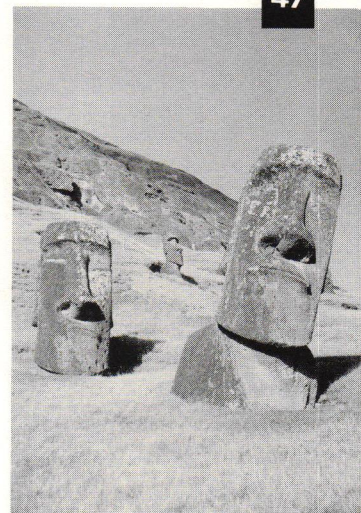


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THE PLACE OF SCULPTURE

Marc Treib

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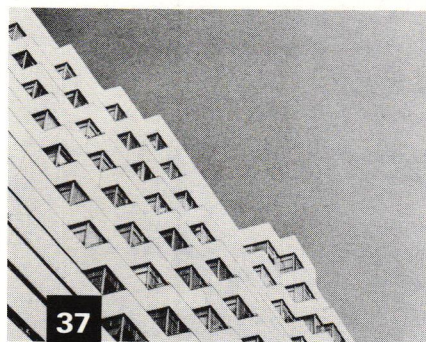


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THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE TIMELESS ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

Herbert Muschamp

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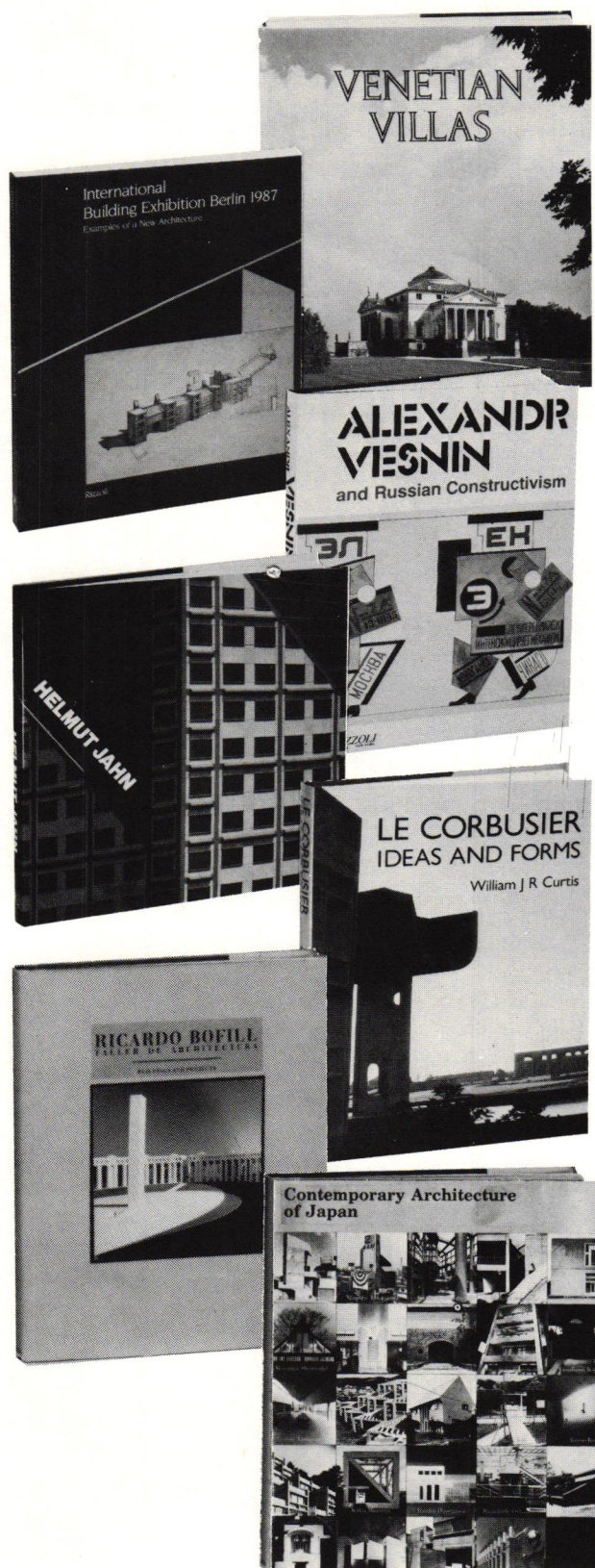
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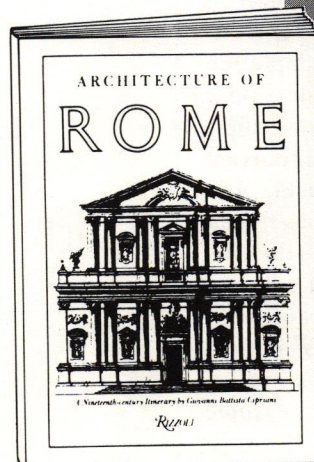
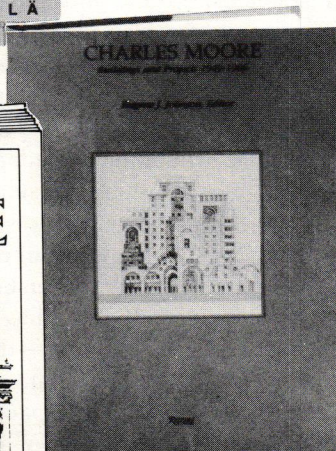
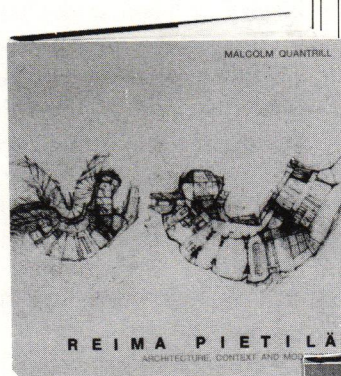
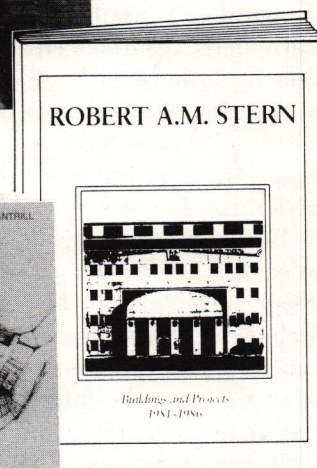
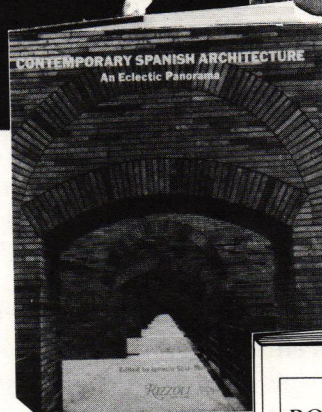
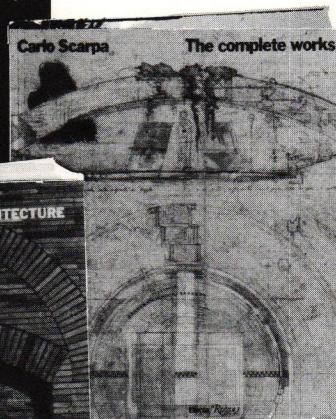
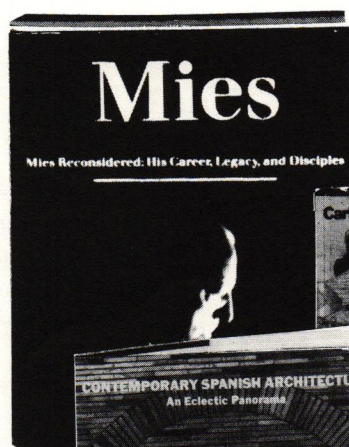
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SAVE THE (ARCHITECTURAL) WHALE

Throughout this issue of DBR one can sight a resurfacing interest in the biological analogy. By choosing the Pacific Design Center as the subject of criticism, we have isolated a somewhat endangered species: the decontextualized modernist figure. Cesar Pelli's building, known affectionately as the "Blue Whale," appeals both to the modernist love of rational response to program and the postmodernist fascination with multivalence. The true biological analogy should be found not in the marine metaphor pinned on the building but rather in its teleologically derived form. Pelli's design process could have easily descended from the biologically inspired functionalism of Louis Sullivan, whose polemical relationship to the history of modernism is reconsidered in this issue by Robert Bruegmann. Of the same genus, Adolf Loos is presented by Stephen Toulmin in his musings on architectural theory in early 20th-century Vienna. Toulmin finds that between the wars the interest in the life sciences was replaced by the more abstract concerns of the physical sciences, establishing an architectural taste for platonic universals.

The return to favor of the life sciences since the 1960s is marked by the ecological concern for context—in Darwinian terms, adaptation has the edge over natural selection. Thus Herbert Muschamp's verdict, after praising and blaming our current dean of architectural criticism, Ada Louise Huxtable, is that she has taught us more about what to save—the survival of the fittest—than what to make. Spiro Kostof, in his *Dialogue with DBR*, advocates the virtues of adaptation, of seeing a building as part of a larger work rather than as the whole work itself.

From England, Andrew Saint writes of the battle being waged against public housing by the darling of Conservative policy, Alice Coleman.

Statistically-grounded environmental determinism, stepchild of Darwinian selectivity, is her battering ram, and naturally the most effective opposition so far has been the alternative statistics, backed by an equally behavioralist strategy. The biological analogy is thus up for grabs, a challenge for the whale-chasing Ahabs of the world. It remains unresolved, perhaps because architecture becomes part of the natural world without actually having been produced by nature.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

DBR would like to thank its loyal readers for tolerating the occasional changes, errors, and delays. Each issue during our first three years has been somewhat of a transitional one. We are still working at refining the format and design of the publication, and promise that it will continue to be a unique source for the culture of design. Your response and criticism, as well as your support, are very much encouraged and welcomed.

Richard Ingersoll

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TO THE EDITORS: Martin Pawley, who busily recycles his review of my writings in various periodicals, much as he recycles his own books under different titles, has written an amusing yet misleading review of *Design for the Real World* headlined as "Victor Papanek, One-Man Messiah."

I know it to be both tedious and tiresome to descend to the trivial, nitpicking plane on which Mr. Pawley operates. Reluctantly I would like to correct a few of his small points, as there are no major ones in his review:

Tony Benn, part of whose review of my book appears on the back cover, will be surprised to hear that he doesn't exist, especially since my U.S. publisher lifted his quote from the British *Granada* edition's cover; one would assume that in the United Kingdom his veridical existence can be established.

Rather than having written that "Industrial designers like killing people," as Pawley claims, I suggested that neglecting ergonomics in automotive styling might put "murder on a mass-production basis." The word "like" flows directly from Mr. Pawley's dreadfully facile pen.

The last paragraph of my book is a plea for: "consuming less . . . recycling materials, and probably not wasting paper printing books such as this" (hardcover, 309 pages, paperback 387). Hardly the statement of someone "drowning in self-praise." (This sentence was deleted—without my knowledge—in the revised edition.)

"Editor-in-Chief" is common American usage for someone in Alastair Best's position. His magazine *Designer* owes its influence to being distributed to SIAD members in 63 countries and being read by designers in 40 more countries. . . .

In 1970, *Design for the Real World* was the first book to talk about design from a multidisciplinary view. The original Swedish publisher requested a broad, multidisciplinary bibliography of books dealing with subjects besides design: the results were 500 entries. The second edition has been expanded with recent titles. It is painstakingly explained that these books are listed

to help readers toward further study. Introducing the bibliography I especially recommend 12 excellent books on design, of which two have not yet appeared in English. This is far different from Pawley's statement that "Only two books measure up to my exacting standards . . . are not in English . . . and the Master is still alone."

At no point have I claimed to have "revolutionized car production at Volvo." This was done by Volvo's president, engineers and designers. I did assist in solving routine design problems arising from new production methods, and this again is explained in detail.

Obviously, in 1986, after 23 years, there are more Sony Walkman players and radios in use than Indonesian tin-can radios. Intermediate technology tends to get used as a bridge between pre- and post-literate technologies.

I don't "use pedal-driven trucks" to get to "those vital meetings at the ministry" since I work on a village level. There are Mercedes-driving politicians in Africa (Pawley's remark seems malicious or racist), but in countries where I worked (Tanzania, Chad, Papua, New Guinea, and Bali), this is rarely the case.

I have written about the dangers to oneself and others in letting oneself become a "Guru" or, to use Pawley's felicitous phrase, a "Messiah." He seems to conveniently have misread these statements.

Finally, Martin Pawley seems unduly concerned about some of my accomplishments, and especially disturbed by my work in developing countries, which led to my being nominated four times for the award of the Right Livelihood Foundation (known in the U.S. press as the Alternative Nobel Prize). "Distinguished Professor" is an academic title in American universities that has no European equivalent. I am sorry that Mr. Pawley's envy or resentment is discernible here again.

Someday, he and I may be able to put a balance sheet at the end of our lives. I expect to feel reassured, having saved lives and helped people on a small and human scale in several countries.

I feel certain that Mr. Pawley's "Garbage Housing" must be equally helpful to certain parties.

Victor Papanek, Professor
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas

I can understand Victor Papanek being dismayed by my review of the second edition of *Design for the Real World* and *Design for Human Scale*, but the overall impression both books give is of an author claiming vindication without cause and quite unnecessarily puffing his own achievements to the point where doubts—rather than belief—are aroused in the mind of the reader. The vast bibliographies have little connection with the contents of the books and serve really as a kind of insurance against the kind of critique I tried to develop. In the academic design world of America this may work well enough: with me it does not. Notwithstanding Papanek's subsequent modifications—the nonexistent man is "Sir Anthony Wedgwood Benn," not Tony Benn—all the quotes in the review were taken from the books and the one suggesting that designers "like killing people" is just as stupid as I made it sound.

A reply to a reply about a review is hardly the place to try to redefine "The Third World," but I would recommend readers interested in the shortcomings of Papanek's view to read Witold Rybczynski's *Paper Heroes: A Review of Appropriate Technology* (Anchor Books, 1980)—unsurprisingly not included in his own extensive bibliographies.

Martin Pawley
Devon, England

CORRECTION

In Lars Lerup's article, "Hejduk's Comet" (*DBR* 11), the reference to the "synthetic inferiority" of Libeskind's rhetoric (p. 22) was a typographical error. That sentence should have read: "Libeskind's Piranesian rhetoric, however, is in itself a feat of textual mastery that, seen apart from Hejduk, clearly displays its own synthetic interiority."

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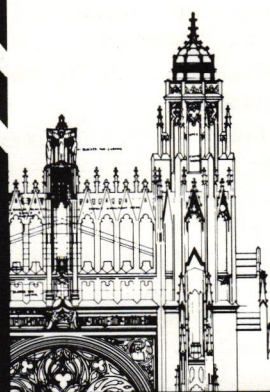
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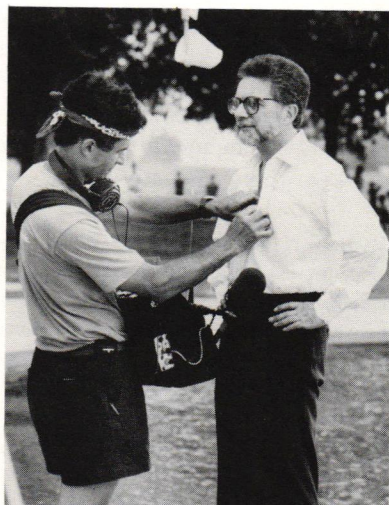
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The man who has done more than anyone else to engage the nonarchitect argues that history cannot be held responsible for the uses to which it is put.

SPIRO KOSTOF



Spiro Kostof, born in Istanbul in 1936, is no stranger to the pages of DBR. He is a charter member of the editorial board and a frequent contributor, and it may seem a little inbred for us to select him for this issue's dialogue. Two facts, however, make him a particularly ripe target of more than just parochial interest: his book *A History of Architecture, Settings and Rituals* (Oxford, 1985; reviewed in DBR 10), has become the most commonly used text in architectural history survey classes in the U.S., and his forthcoming television series, "America by Design" (to be aired September 1987, with a companion book) promises to be the long-awaited breakthrough in bringing architecture to the masses. That one person is currently so influential in guiding the architectural consciousness of both the producers and consumers of the built world not only merits attention but some accountability.

Kostof's scholarly interests were initially focused on the rarified periods between classical antiquity and the Renaissance and frequently diverged from the Western tradition. His dissertation completed at Yale, was turned into *The Orthodox Baptistry of Ravenna* (1965) and was followed by a book on the caves in Cappadocia, *Anatolia (Caves of God)*, (1972). For the past twenty years he has taught architectural history at UC Berkeley in increasingly inclusivist fashion. His multifaceted approach can be seen in publications such as *The Third Rome* (1973), a documentary examination of Mussolini's urbanism, and his editing of *The Architect, Chapters in the History of the Profession* (1977), for which he wrote the chapters on pre-Roman and medieval architects. In 1977, he was invited by Columbia University to deliver the Mathews Lectures in Medieval Architecture, whose subject, "The Medievalizing of Rome," constituted a pivotal moment in his research and thought: architecture and urban process became inseparable. His challenge to the canons of architectural history posits people in the foreground of buildings and physical and cultural contexts as the necessary background.

We interviewed Professor Kostof in mid-November 1986, at Rice University, Houston, where he was lecturing on two topics, "The Epic of Rome" and "The Modern Street," as recipient of the Cullinan Chair in Architecture.

DBR: In 1964, when you were embarking on your career, several leading authorities convened in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to discuss the new relevance of architectural history to design and education. Today the interdiction that Gropius issued on the teaching of architectural history at the Bauhaus seems hard to believe. Later at Harvard he was to allow architectural history for mature students only—a sort of adults only affair—to avoid the licentious raiding of the stylistic cupboard. Architectural history currently occupies a central position in most schools and indeed is often the most academically justifiable offering in an architecture curriculum. Yet, look at the proliferation of pastiche today—the cupboard raiding of the last decade. Was Gropius correct, is architectural history for adults only?

SK: I'm not an architect, I'm a historian, and so I've always claimed that history, done properly, has no responsibility whatsoever for the uses to which it is put. I don't see why the ills of postmodernism should be blamed on the current blooming of history. Even if history were not at this time going in new directions, maybe postmodernism would have appeared anyway; I don't see the close linkage. About the Gropius side: I think the fundamental error of that kind of dogmatism is to assume that if history were not offered as a course in architecture schools, students would remain unexposed to it. But how could you possibly walk from the school to your house and not walk through history—the history of architecture is out there. To put an interdiction on it is akin to saying that students cannot breathe between studios—it's stupid! So if you look in a very relaxed way about history being what is out there, and somebody trying to make sense of how it got to be out there, then it's an all-pervasive concern, not merely geared to a client-tele of architects or particularly geared to supporting some kind of effort in architecture. In the final analysis, history will simply prove anything you want it to prove. If you're a mannerist, you can go to history and find support for your kind of design; and the same for classicists or medi-evalists. So I'm not really interested in what architects do with our efforts. If they learn about history, it doesn't mean they're necessarily going to be better architects, but only that they might become wiser architects. Seeing your-self in a larger context than your own studio teachers, or the prejudices of some style, or the demands of your clients—seeing yourself in a continuous tradition where others like you a hundred or a thousand years ago had similar dilemmas, coped with similar difficulties, and, under certain enabling conditions, produced—that's what we should do for the profession. It doesn't bother me what they do with it afterward.

DBR: In 1976 you wrote "Architecture, You and Him, The Mark of Sigfried Giedion,"* in which you criticize the great historian of the Modern Movement for his willful blindness to such things as 19th-century architecture in the interests of promoting his preferred causes. Now you are the author of a book whose implications could be as important to a generation of architects as Giedion's *Space Time and Architecture* was to an earlier one. What are your motives, what do you stand for, and how might you stand up to the sort of test to which you put Giedion?

SK: I'm not sure that the two books are comparable. First, because it would be immodest to think that a book that has so strongly influenced people for forty years could be compared to one that just came out. Also I think both the scope and intention of the two books are quite different. I criticized Giedion because his book had a narrow agenda: this man was an activist, involved with a cause, and therefore he almost commissioned himself to prove the validity of this new program, or party line, for architecture, and he looked at history to find those things that would sustain him. As I said, you can use history to prove anything. I can't go to Giedion to find out what happened in the 19th century. In an arbitrary way he gives me a mythology of the metal and glass people and how all the other architects were blind and didn't see the progressive elements of that time. This is good propaganda for what you're proving about the Modern Movement, but it's not terribly good history. It doesn't give figures of the past credit for responding to their own historical agenda but sees them as predecessors to the Modern Movement. To make a statement like "The 19th century was wrong" is preposterous. How could a century be wrong? Wrong about what? About our 20th century concerns? In that sense, my own outlook, though obviously biased and very eclectic, is trying, without supporting any particular party line, to tell a story about the complicated record of the physical environment, its composition and rituals. However arbitrary this history may be, it's a kind of pageant of a very rich story that has not been told as fully. As a story, it is neither trying to prove a point nor is it based on the canonical tradition of architectural history that has made icons of a handful of things and now perpetuates them. If you open up this canon, broaden its range and enrich its context, the history of architecture has enormous potential. My book has been an effort to tell that story, and presumably in ten years, if I tell the story again, it will probably be quite different; and if someone else were telling it with the same method it would be something else again. I'm obviously biased in favor of the Mediterranean, somebody else might do Brussels, London, or Berlin, but whatever the emphasis, it is important that this be open as part of a flowing narrative without end, to be told in as rich detail as you can muster. This means going beyond teaching the literature of your own field and seeing connections across fields. So I see the difference in the two

books, if we had to compare them, as precisely this: Giedion seems to put barriers to the flow of history, to channel it narrowly, to dam it up so that he can have his river go where he wants it. On the contrary and perhaps foolishly, I am opening it up, saying "let the river run, let's see where it goes!"

DBR: In your work you nonetheless do seem to argue for a certain position; even the choice of topics, such as the medievalizing of Rome, calls to mind the emphasis you give to urban process and the value of a certain latitude between the existing and the new. Where do you situate yourself between the tabula rasa of modernism and the stasis of preservationism?

SK: I rarely stop and say "the moral of what I've just told you about medieval Rome is this for our time," but if there is a message to what I say, it is that somehow we must be conscious of what we design or build as part of a larger puzzle, and that it behooves us to be modest about adding a little piece to a very complicated artifact—we can either enhance that artifact in some way or screw it up. In the same line, we don't have to build a beautiful office building to make a contribution: those who mend, and insinuate, and fill in the gaps also contribute. If we got away from this notion that to be a significant architect means making great museums or great skyscrapers or changing the skyline—if we asked in the end who was it that designed Siena or the great cities that we love, we would find a lot of people whose names will never be known, but who did their little chunk, their little wall, their little connection to the palace, with sensitivity and pride. Every piece of form in the city has a story and something willful behind it, and whatever its scale, whether it be a little addition, infill, (bicycle shed), or whatever, could be conceived with a sense that this is going into a larger pattern. The thing about modernism that so many people long before me found themselves rebelling against was the arrogance with which one said, "No, what happened isn't important. It was a mistake and we're over it and this is a new era." How could that possibly be? It took us only weeks to destroy with urban renewal programs what was built up over centuries. How do you justify defacing that legacy for any program? A city might be partially erased by some disaster, a major earthquake or a World War II bombing, but how can you, in the name of good things, go into a downtown and within a week erase two hundred years of living record. If there's a message to what I present it would be that I look around and say, "sure, things change, you can't freeze cities, but you ought to be able to at least read the built record of urban life in what is left."

Total preservation to me is anathema. I grew up in Istanbul where they had never heard of the word preservation; there were no acts to preserve buildings. Buildings were preserved as power centers or as institutions, but



SAN FRANCISCO, THE NORTH SIDE OF BROADWAY IN THE TWENTIES. (PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SAN FRANCISCO ARCHIVES, SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY.)

through no legal obligation to safeguard the built heritage. Still, after two thousand years that city had enough evidence left that you could read its story: there was ancient stuff, Byzantine things of all periods, early Ottoman, middle Ottoman, and so on. What happened? Well, partly for economic and partly for political reasons, this *laissez-faire* attitude worked. There weren't the kind of forces that could have cleared out downtown to do something else. Maybe that's not so good, obviously there should be some restrictions about urban process, but my point is, you can't freeze a city at some ideal point in its history and think that this is what we now should perpetuate. Towns are in the process of becoming. The most you can do is make sure that you don't create such a *laissez-faire* attitude that you cannot know what it was like to be in this town fifty years ago. Total preservation transforms the town into a museum and if you have no other economic reason for the town, it in fact becomes a museum; people buy a ticket to come see what a freak it was. If preservationism was an effective weapon against the demolitions of urban renewal, it was a two-sided weapon, because at the same time that it brought us the National Preservation Act, it perpetuated a very special middle-class value system that was what was being saved. We've since learned to ask for whom and for what we're saving buildings. That's why I've never become a preservation activist. Partly this is because if you're a historian with my point of view, every building is a document. To go on and assert that one kind of building is worthy of being saved and another is not, leaves you with future dilemmas. For instance, Victorian buildings were once hated; now you can't get enough of them. Every building is a document, yet I'm perfectly willing to accept

that not everything is going to be saved. Preservation groups have their own agenda, sometimes conscious, often unwitting, which perpetuates and saves a very special, clinical picture of what should be remembered. I couldn't get involved with that because I'm not sure I know what is proper to remember, nor whether what we save now would be what people would want to remember thirty years from now.

DBR: *A History of Architecture* is a great challenge to the survey of architectural history, a groundbreaking adventure that conceives of a new history that is not dependent on the conventional parade of monuments and that attempts to include non-Western, vernacular, and urban aspects, allowing for human action to be just as important as form. The book has been universally praised for its promise of inclusiveness, but certain skeptics, in particular John E. Hancock, in the *Journal of Architectural Education* (Spring 1986), question whether the promise has really been fulfilled and indeed whether such a synthesis is possible. Meanwhile, traditional histories continue to appear, such as Trachtenberg and Hyman's and David Watkin's. How would you answer your critics, and what attempts at surveys should be made in the future?

SK: That the book doesn't completely deliver what it promises may be true. If I were writing a review of my book I would probably add some more criticisms. For example, for a book that sets out to write about the ritual use of architecture, there is precious little about the interior furnishings so essential to ritual. Likewise, though I tried to keep a more generous scale in the last section, including things such as the TVA projects, it's true that the treatment of the post-World War II period becomes much more restrictively "architectural historical"—certainly more could have been done along the scale or scope of the other chapters.

I'm sure there are many other criticisms that could be made, but a final one I would make is that the book is strangely conservative. We still get the standbys of architectural history—the Parthenon, Hagia Sophia, St. Peter's—and despite the breadth that it is advocating, there is a fair amount of canonical stuff. I think all of these criticisms are valid. My sole defense is that I began the book in 1973–1974, and if I were starting it now, I'd probably be able to liberate myself more from what I was taught in graduate school and really cut loose. So I'd like to make two points: One, almost by definition, a totally inclusive history is not possible, because it would be as voluminous as the Durants' history of civilization in 10 volumes. I don't have the energy, the knowledge, or the interest to undertake such a project. In a volume like mine, you're bound to be arbitrarily selective both about subject matter and component themes like structure, social history, and so on. Two, is this an argument for not doing general histories of architecture? Frankly no—as long as you're doing something interesting. The trouble with some of the

new histories is that they're not really doing anything new, it's a rehash of perfectly well-done stuff—a little more up-to-date and accurate, but really not appreciably different from traditional histories. The addition of a few nice color plates and a little more emphasis on England versus France doesn't make a new history of architecture. I have no problem with general histories if you can cut your own cloth, and do a very interesting, instructive book devoted to an economic history of architecture (for which we still don't have a good example), one that really told about the building industry, building production, etc. Or if one were really to do an update of social history of the kind begun by Hauser and others; nothing has been made of that effort except at the case study level. Now, if you had three or four such histories in ten years, we'd have something approaching the entire spectrum of architectural history. Instead, we have these histories that are at best updated Pevsners, usually worse, or we get another Talbot Hamlin, only done more gracefully. Even visual materials are re-treads, the same plans transmitted from one book to another. What is the benefit of these books, except that some people want to sell them and others want to assign them?

One of the critics of my book who mentions its limits ends by saying that, considering the secondary source materials we have at our disposal, how could we write a better, or different general history? But it's not quite fair to say that there's a lack of material to draw on. We can learn enormously if we only get out of our own field. Cultural geographers or transportation historians, for instance, have been telling us about the paving history of American streets, telegraph poles, light fixtures, or field patterns for decades. The material is there, but we as architectural historians have not digested it because we've always been taught that other people can do these things better, and that we should just stick to architecture itself—meaning a style and pedigree, and a bit of iconography here and there. Because we have not yet processed new fields of scholarly literature, we have not gone very far with an original, broadly based social history on matters such as English country houses, industrial towns, and byelaw streets. It's there if you dig for it. Mind you, we're vulnerable when we venture out of our narrow turf. Other historians might say, "How can this Kostof possibly know about the economic history of Bruges when I've spent my whole life studying it?" But this does not invalidate the effort to make an interdisciplinary study of architecture. We may not be respected as original economic historians, but our own field will benefit, so that we won't forever be saying "and Palladio took this from such a book, and this arcade comes from the Renaissance, and this from antiquity, and did he see Diocletian's villa at Spalato," and so on. I mean basta! Let's change the discourse a little, let's shift the questions, let's work at being more curious.

When I first came to Berkeley I gave my best lecture

on Palladio. I thought it was brilliant—it included everything I was taught at Yale, all about the music of the spheres and all of that stuff. At the end I asked if there were any questions; I expected none, but this being Berkeley in the 1960s a kid got up and said, "Tell me, this Villa Rotonda you've been raving about—how was it heated?" I thought to myself, "My God, I'm talking music of the spheres and this guy wants plumbing!" But there's a whole history of environmental controls; that's a perfectly legitimate field of architectural history (something that has been proven by Banham's book on the *Well-Tempered Environment*). We should not limit the questions we ask because they do not pertain to our field or because we don't know enough to ask such questions. Instead we should be open to the fact that anything about a piece of built fabric, any question at all, is perfectly valid. I may not have the answer, but it's perfectly valid to ask: "How was it heated? Who paid for it? How was the building material transported?"

DBR: Ruskin said something to the effect that a book reaches the best people, but a lecture reaches more people. We might add that today television reaches the most people. How will you manage an audience that is no longer the safe constituency of architects or art historians, but rather that unpredictable TV viewer—those people who may not see the way we see?

SK: The lecture is much more immediate; it allows me to talk a lot and show a lot of slides (something television does *not* allow me to do)—and I hope that I'll be lecturing for the rest of my life. Addressing a group of architects will always be valid for me, as will speaking to a group of nonarchitects. It's not either-or. What is important is that television is here to stay, and if we use the medium properly, and if we're given a chance, it is our only way to get out of our preciosity, out of talking only to each other, of thinking that we know what's a good building, but those people (who choose the most appalling things to put on their t-shirts to represent the skyline of the city) don't. We could get out of this and reach a broader audience of people who are genuinely interested in architecture, but up to now have not wanted—have not dared, perhaps—to get involved. Architecture after all is the most common experience. Perhaps we can engage the interest of nonarchitects by starting with the fact that you live in a house, work in an office building, perhaps have someone in jail that you visit; these are buildings you know personally. Everything we do happens in buildings. Perhaps I can tell you something about what makes our environment, what your house really represents in the history of things. Jefferson had a comment about your house, not about your house specifically, but about the American house, did you know that? Public television is supposed to be educational, and indeed it teaches you yoga and macramé and gourmet cooking; why not how to

read your street—why should we always have to go to the jungle, in those unending “natural life” documentaries, to learn about the sex life of the sparrow? Why can’t we take the viewer down some streets in Paris or in Dubuque and say “Look, there’s a story to this, did you know that this house is prototypical America, this single-family house on its own plot of land? And look at this town you live in, are you proud of the way it looks? Do you like working in the Seagram Building?” Then the issue isn’t how many people in the PBS audience can sit there and watch you talk about Frank Lloyd Wright, but of saying to these people, “Architecture is as fundamental a topic as food or sex, because it’s all-pervasive, it’s everywhere. Maybe I can give you some hints on how to look at the built environment, which could be anything from a Frank Lloyd Wright house to your own house addition.”

Instead of wasting the precious time we are given on TV to say, “This building going up downtown is a terrible building, the seediest yet, and shouldn’t go up,” why not say, “Isn’t it curious, this building, would you like to know who commissioned it, why it has balconies, what kind of rules affected it? Do you like the building? Why do you think the Transamerica pyramid (San Francisco) is a nice building?” I’m saying let’s start a dialogue with people who live in cities, who live in suburbs. And you who supposedly have some kind of wisdom and specialized knowledge about the past could very lightly try to help people see that skinning your eyes to architecture might even be fun. In America people may not generally be interested in the history of architecture, but they are traditionally interested in building. The idea of building your own house, or adding to it, or tinkering around, is a great American habit. Once you’re interested in the built object, this means you are a potential fan of architectural history. Let’s tap our audience that way, rather than following the mode of Lord Clark: “And now I’m going to tell you about civilization. I’m going to tell you and you listen, because this is the way it is.” This is really a single man’s vision of culture, and you feel, what with that British accent and erudition, who are you to contest it. I maintain that you could take another tactic and say, “Now come with me, let’s go into this English mansion. What do you think of it? Why did this family feel they had to have this house?” I think you could intrigue more people, and that is the gift of television—something that couldn’t be done in a university lecture—since your viewing audience could be anyone from an economics professor to a construction worker. Why can’t we tap this audience? What is so suspicious about our field?

I have this rather sentimental notion that the way we use architecture, us common folk, is full of pathos and feeling. A family’s involvement with a trailer home (and we filmed this) is touching. They bought it from a factory in two pieces, sliced right down the middle, fully fur-

nished, and there it is. But they’re not done, they put a portico on the front, and make a yard, put some paper flowers in the window. I don’t think this is such a casual use of architecture. It is as moving as thinking of Mr. Seagram admiring his building. Television is not necessarily a vulgar medium—we make it that way, but it has an ability to touch us through intimacy—vulgarity comes with failed pretensions. If you have grand notions of what you’re going to tell these plebians, that’s vulgar, as would be a building that pulls out all the stops with Carrara marble, travertine, and mirrored glass, but really doesn’t do anything but flash—that’s vulgar. But vulgar in the sense of “vulgate” can be a very good thing. If you learn a kind of dialect to speak about architecture using television, I think there’s nothing wrong with that. In a way, it’s much harder to get somebody to read through a description of Hagia Sophia and its place in the context of Early Christian and Byzantine architecture than it is to be in Hagia Sophia as host and walk people through the building. Of course, if you began your presentation of a building by saying “The building behind me was designed between 1898 and the fall of 1900, and shows Ruskinian influences intercut by the new Art Nouveau tendencies,” I think somebody not already interested in architecture would probably flip the dial—as I would if I were given a clinical description of the liver without being told why I’m supposed to be looking at it. But if you were to start with an incident, some personalized way to engage the viewer intimately right away, then you can talk about things such as skyscraper construction. You’re there on the tenth story of a building under construction; you see the workers swinging the steel beams, and you have a great advantage over writing a book à la Carl Condit’s on the Chicago School. We shouldn’t minimize the power of television. We should learn to use it wisely, accessibly.

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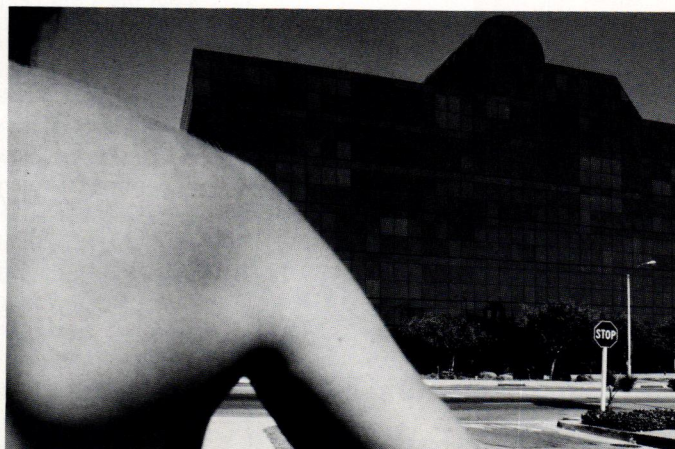
C E N T E R

To encounter the Pacific Design Center, with the intensity of its cobalt blue glazing and the shock of its scale, is like experiencing a mirage. Amid the nearly featureless conurbation, it offers a welcome reference point, a glass acropolis above a sea of stucco bungalows for the ritual orientation of the motorist.

A landmark both in its immediate surroundings and in the development of its building type, the Pacific Design Center begs for historical and critical attention.

We have invited two architects, a critic, and a developer to probe behind the PDC's illusory surface. Andrew Rabeneck, an architect with Kaplan McLaughlin Diaz in San Francisco, leads off by analyzing the architect's response to the program. John Pastier, an editor of *Arts + Architecture* and former architectural critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, who has probably written more on the PDC than anyone alive, here opens a new discussion on the urbanistic effect of the original building and the design merits of the expansion now under construction. Developers are usually anathema to design publications, but we have solicited a critique of the design and development strategy from Robert Carey, president of Urban Centre Development, responsible for the development of Embarcadero Center in San Francisco. Finally, Aaron Betsky, an architect with Gehry Associates in Venice, California, situates the work in the literature and theory of our times. Photographer Simo Neri has produced an original series of photos to capture the building's color and context. Many thanks are due to Executive Director Murray Feldman, who spent two afternoons with us, to his able staff, and to the offices of Pelli Associates in New Haven and Gruen & Gruen Associates in Los Angeles for their help in gathering information.

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U N D E R T H E S K I N

by Andrew Rabeneck

A perhaps supercilious yet common view of commercial architecture is that much of it results from the developer's timid tweaking of the variables that govern it. The architect dresses the resulting equation to appeal to the market, and the leasing agents and publicists sell it to the tenants. The process requires little imagination—respect for the tested formula dominates the attitudes of all involved, not least the lenders.

As long as the key variables of land availability, money supply, zoning laws, and demand for space remain stable, the intrinsic conservatism of the process guarantees an unremarkable outcome, at least from the architectural critic's point of view.

Occasionally a developer's act of imagination will spur the emergence of an exceptional building, even a new building type. And this is what can excite critical interest in commercial development. It might be a James Rouse with his thematic festival markets, a Gerald Hines with his avowed mission of promoting "quality architecture," the raw braggadocio of a Donald Trump, a small partnership anticipating the demand for artists/attorneys' housing in a warehouse district, or, in the case of the Pacific Design Center, a local realtor, Burt Friedman, who foresaw in 1970 the

potential for a wholesale mart serving the West Coast interior design industry from the Beverly-Robertson district of West Hollywood in Los Angeles.

The conditions were propitious. The area, characterized as "funky-chic" by John Pastier, was already home to many interiors wholesalers. What it lacked in convenience for shoppers, it made up in village charm, with the individuality of its showrooms, its cute restaurants and cafes, and an atmosphere that seemed to cock a snook at the big national manufacturers. Indeed, the Eastern perception of West Coast interior design culture was one of laid-back and offbeat behavior. Buttondown office furniture systems were being sold in the West, to be sure, but the magazines (published in the East) showed mostly outrageous residential interiors full of mirrors, cacti, and outsized pottery, reinforcing LA's already redoubtable reputation as *the city of illusion*. "Serious" Western designers, many working at outposts of Eastern design firms, eagerly trekked to Chicago's yearly NEOCON at the Merchandise Mart to hobnob with the purveyors of serious furniture. But the market was changing, and major growth of the Western interiors business could be anticipated with confidence in 1970.

Objective assessment of this opportunity largely escaped the Eastern oligarchy of manufacturers for whom, as PDC's director, Murray Feldman, recalls, "the Steinberg map of the U.S. was quite correct." Their posture was largely emotional, fueled by the pleasure they took in flying visits to the exotic casbah of Beverly-Robertson. Thus, the combination of genuine need for growth and emotional resistance to it defined the marketing objectives for the project.

The second vital component of the development equation was the availability of land, specifically a redundant 16-acre Southern Pacific switching yard framed by Melrose Avenue, San Vicente and Santa Monica Boulevards, an eyesore for the burgeoning wholesale area.

The rest is history. Burt Friedman was taken on as a consultant to Sequoia Pacific, SP's real-estate arm, and the project was born. Murray Feldman, still PDC's executive director, was hired away from a showroom complex he operated in the area, to lend industry savvy to the deal, and Victor Gruen Associates were hired as architects. A stolid firm enlivened by a young design partner, Cesar Pelli, Gruen had a reputation for shopping centers and merchandise marts.

The program for the building started at 350,000 square feet, but grew to 750,000



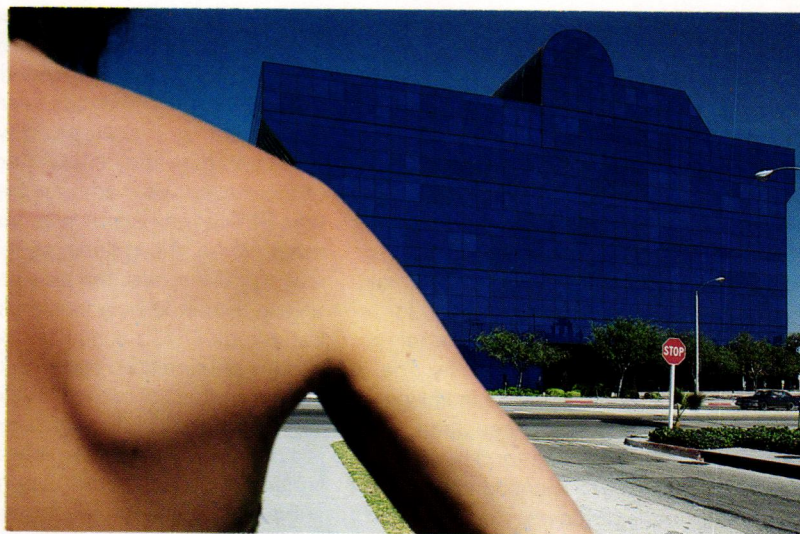
square feet as Pelli, Feldman, and Friedman's confidence in the concept grew. The idea of a single volume building came early in the process, driven principally by cost considerations. Although Pelli considered briefly a blending with the modest-scaled surroundings by terracing of spaces and use of earthy colors, the developer's arithmetic argued compellingly for a least-volume solution. Pelli defends the consequent contrast in scale between PDC and its surroundings with eloquence: "It is like some port city where, down a street, you see some huge boat, which is enormous in scale, but doesn't change the scale of the little buildings. It is a classical photographer's subject: the contra position of a transatlantic liner with small houses."

Pelli's talent for making a virtue of necessity was aggressively tested in the contemporary architectural press. Here was a manifestly willful building designed at a time when public suspicion of architectural will was at an all-time high. The novelty of the program and its lack of antecedents defused criticism at the level of function and operation. Early articles therefore dealt principally with the current preoccupations of context and scale, and what the building might mean for Los Angeles. Most could agree, however, that the building was an architectural success, that it had a strength, a presence, and a quality sorely missing in the recent history of Los Angeles architecture. It seemed to be a powerful vindication of Pelli's ideological posture as the inspired yet modest servant of commercial development. Pelli in 1976: "All of our projects are way below the level of people such as Stirling. We have made architecture out of buildings that had no intention of being such, and for clients that weren't looking for architecture."¹ And again in 1981, "Pacific Design Center belongs to a class of building that rarely becomes architecture. These are buildings in which the functional and economical constraints are so great that the results seldom go beyond providing for the basic building needs. During my years with DMJM and Gruen, my opportunities were usually limited to trying to make architecture out of this unpromising material. When the restrictions are so severe, the path open to the architect is to focus the design on the most basic issues and to trying to generate the architecture from them."²

At PDC those functional and economic constraints dictated a mid-rise (six stories plus mezzanine totaling 130 feet), single-volume building with very large floor plates that vary from 100,000 to 130,000 square feet. This configuration allowed surface parking for 1,150 cars (lack of

parking was a major inhibition to growth of the existing interior design community). Pelli argued successfully for a generous allocation of public space within the building, resulting in a 70 percent efficiency compared with the "normal" commercial rate of 85 percent. This public space is skillfully invested in a variety of circulation devices that balance clarity with confusion to the benefit of the user. If the exterior of the building is willfully simple, its interior is willfully complex, yet with reason. The main organizing concept is the diagonal opposition of two sets of escalators placed on the long sides of the 2:1 rectangular plan. The escalators on the southern, Melrose Avenue side, are expressed in a projecting semi-cylinder affording great views out and a dramatic animation of the façade, particularly when seen at night. Those on the north remain "inboard," lit by the skylight of an internal atrium shaft. Their difference in character helps orientation.

The main entrance from the parking lot is matter-of-fact and artless. Once inside, though, the broad public mall strikes off boldly on the diagonal, toward the escalator cylinder on the opposite side, punctuated by lighted kiosks and display cases. Although the diagonal contradicts the strict orthogonal volume of the building, it does not intimidate, and it promises clarity of circulation within the building as a whole. It excites and reassures. At the upper levels, two through four, the promise is denied. Each level becomes more fragmented and casbah-like; paths diverge, islands are circled, "I'm sure we saw that already." In short, the classic disciplines of retail mall design are invoked to ensure maximum benefit for



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each tenant's exposure and position. The visitor's odyssey may be interrupted by a visit to the third-floor terrace, a non-place resulting from a change in design. The building was to have had a basement, but discovery of a three-foot water table redistributed the space over the first three floors, increasing their width. Although the terrace improved the building's profile, the visitor is frustrated to find that this agreeable space cannot be used for its most obvious purpose, as a cafe terrace, because of a code technicality. The terrace will finally find purpose in linking PDC to its new extensions (see John Pastier's article). Today the terrace merely offers visual relief to the cacophony of all those showroom windows.

The fifth and sixth floors return to orthogonal calm with a spectacular two-story barrel-vaulted galleria, a space that at once explains the exterior profile of the building and reassures us that there must be a way out. It's a choreographed sequence, and one that works well. Unfortunately, apart from resolving the circulation pattern, the galleria remains a dull, inanimate space. The contrast it makes to the dynamic meanderings of the lower floors is inadequate to enliven the galleria's great size and remorselessly uniform cross section. The altar space of this cathedral is occupied by Brunschwig and Fils. The quality of space is aggravated in that one whole side of the principal level is taken up by Baker Knapp and Tubbs who, here as elsewhere, have turned their backs on the public space, giving us three hundred feet of sheetrock wall punctuated by a few small windows and

a hokey Doric entrance. Feldman ruefully explains that "BKT is an anchor.... It's hard to do a building and not have them.... It's 1974 and we're in the recession and we're negotiating, so there was no way we could tell them they couldn't do it.... Part of the reason we made our breakthrough was BKT ... but I agree with you." In other words, the galleria, as the building's major public space, remains pretty dead unless animated by a fashion show or Westweek, PDC's annual jamboree. It is a deadness reinforced by Pelli's choice of interior materials, bronze anodized aluminum, reddish brown carpet and dull red ceramic tile. At lower levels, where lighting of public spaces is purposefully subdued to enhance the showrooms, these choices are insignificant, but in the daylit galleria they seem unfortunate and cheap. The problem of the galleria's ambience is its isolation on the upper levels, not its tenants (BKT excepted), who were some of the first to sign up. In the new extension the lesson has been learned, and an attempt has been made to better integrate galleria space with the general circulation (it will extend through three levels).

Pelli's design disciplines of structure, circulation geometry, and material palette

count for little in the design of individual showrooms. No attitude could be correct. For every "sympathizer" or "enhancer" there can be found a "repudiator," for every amusing counterpoint, a ghastly clash. And that's OK. The high-style firms tend to be found on the second floor:

Knoll, Sunar Hauserman, Artemide, Bric- kel, Gunlocke—and many of their showroom designs are exceptional, whether respectful of the building or contradictory, like Michael Graves's ponderous Sunar showroom in opaque reds and greens (the brilliant Dan Flavin/Vignelli Hauserman exhibit has unfortunately been removed). On upper floors purveyors of kitschy residential furnishings and accessories dominate. These tend to accept the standard storefront, but by play of light and mirrors achieve an effect of infinite abundance that can unsettle and occasionally nauseate the casual visitor.

In short, Pelli's instinct has been correct. He and his collaborators have created an interesting yet neutral setting which can accept a wide range of expression in individual showrooms. The result makes up in vitality and excitement what it lacks in visual hygiene. It reminds us that the success of the building is based on three simple factors: recognition—the distinctive color and silhouette make the building a vast billboard; convenience—one-stop shopping and ease of parking are important; excitement—the possibility of adventitious discovery of some novelty or unforeseen solution to a design problem.

Far from killing the preexisting showroom community, as many had feared, PDC has reinforced it, acting as hub from which spokes radiate to surrounding businesses. "Success breeds success," crowns Murray Feldman, "for the Center and for the surrounding area." Some businesses for whom an air of exclusivity is important have stayed out, Donghia, for example, whose showroom remains across the street. Other firms with less fashionable or distinctive product lines have benefited from the prestige and identity conferred by a place within the center.

Most criticism of PDC has focused on what the building might mean for architecture. But what might its success tell us about the general condition of interior design? Is it perhaps one of those rare buildings that can shift our perception of the function it houses, much as Herman Hertzberger's Appeldorn insurance offices challenge the deadly banality of the office workplace? PDC is inclusive, a warehouse and a shopping mall, a style factory for an industry that previously defined itself by exclusivity, by the unique and differen-

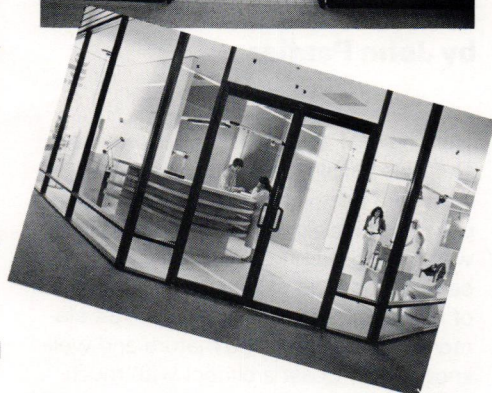
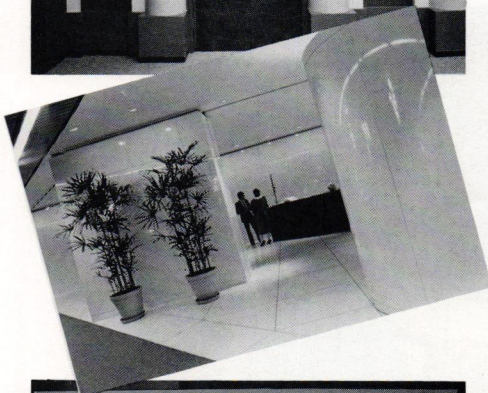
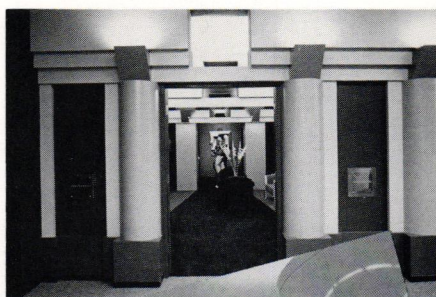


tiated assemblage of (preferably hard-to-find) objects and materials. PDC, and other design marts, are powerful vehicles of style diffusion, perhaps as much as the proliferating publishing on interior design. They conspire in the homogenization and commercialization of taste by making everything accessible in one place, and by displacing the role of design judgment. The PDC buyer's card authenticates today's designer, a passport to the endorsement of aggressively promoted interior design "concepts," and the products necessary to achieve them.

Pelli cannot be blamed as a co-conspirator in the degradation of interior design, any more than his old mentor Saarinen can be implicated in CBS's recent "trouble at Black Rock." Pelli's posture of sensible pragmatism protects him. His talent is to step into the stream of history and to wring a little poetry from the crude parameters of commercial development. There is, however, some irony in this. The mindless obedience of the designers who frequent PDC as a supermarket of style finds a parallel in Pelli's acquiescence to the imperatives of development. What distinguishes Pelli is his creative myth, his propensity for rationalizing what he does, in terms of a sentimental view of scientific method as "the most humble and effective road to truth yet devised." He admires this process for its self-correcting nature, objectivity and freedom from dogma, nonproprietary character, and innate ability to build up and refine a body of knowledge."³

Pelli's scientism distances him from the unattractive realities of many of his projects, an alibi in the guise of scientific detachment. This modest investigator, for whom the forces of nature, commerce, and art seem to have merged, can carry on quietly, bringing them in on time and on budget, while doffing his cap to the Stirlings of this world.

For many who admire Stirling and his like, Pelli's pragmatism marks him as the developer's hack. However, Pelli, the objective seeker after truth, became convincing enough with PDC to be named Dean of Architecture at Yale, and to receive prestigious commissions such as the MOMA expansion. Embraced at last by the East Coast establishment, Pelli has been liberated from his own creative myth. His 1984 Herring Hall, housing Rice University's Graduate School of Administration, his best building to date, shows what he can accomplish in a strongly defined setting (Ralph Adams Cram's 1910 masterplan), with a generous budget (\$110 per square foot), and with a program of some interest—novel condi-



tions for him. Freed of the need to rationalize his position vis-à-vis a developer's equation, he could get on and do what he had always been best at, bringing some poetry to the task of design (even if he would not admit it in the past).

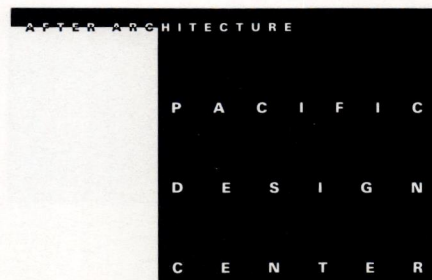
Let us hope that Pelli's experiences at Rice (where he is doing further work) give him the courage to abandon his posture of the modest, practical trencherman of big development. He may thus avoid the ethical antinomy whereby any virtue unqualified, given free rein, culminates in vice. His modesty may yet not turn to the self-disparagement hinted at in his 1976 remark about Stirling, nor his practicality turn to the stupefying banality of much commercial work in which he has had a hand.

Meanwhile, if PDC remains as the best legacy of the "old" Pelli's work, some credit must go to those who originally conceived it. As the team reassembles for the expansion, we may soon judge again.

1. *Progressive Architecture* (October 1976).

2. Project Description, Cesar Pelli and Associates, 1981.

3. John Pastier, *Cesar Pelli* (New York, 1981).





C O N T E X T A N D E X P A N S I O N

by John Pastier

The original Pacific Design Center, aka The Blue Whale, was the largest built work of a relatively young and highly promising Los Angeles architect who was certain that it never would need to be expanded. Its expansion, composed of not yet nicknamed green and red elements, is the work of a mature and well-known East Coast architect with much larger buildings to his credit, one who has departed from his current stylistic methods in deference to the younger man's work.

Both designers, of course, are Cesar Pelli, separated by about a dozen years and twenty-five hundred miles, and operating in two very different contexts. The PDC, brash and controversial when new, is now generally accepted as a landmark, and is a decade older than the new city of which it is a part, West Hollywood. Its

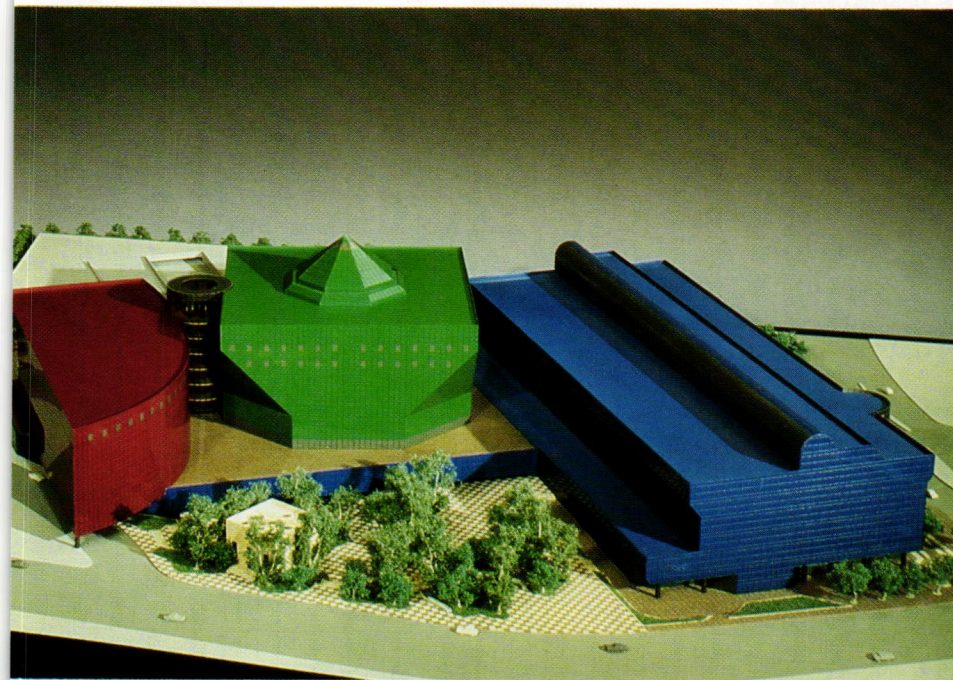
sharp differentiation from its surroundings no longer seems disturbing to many people—at least, they no longer shoot out its glass panels as they did in the early years. Pelli's strategy of breaking with ambient form and scale, similar to Hans Hollein's earlier photomontage of an aircraft carrier ensconced in a rolling countryside, now seems fully plausible when experienced in the urban landscape. Such surrealism, when built, eventually loses its prefix and becomes real; familiarity breeds acceptance, or, at any rate, adjustment. Since the PDC unveiling, Los Angeles has seen the work of Frank Gehry and the younger architects of the Venice school, as well as a lot of commercial-grade postmodernism. In comparison, the Blue Whale is rather sedate and classical.

Seen at a sharp angle down Melrose Avenue, it is exactly what its designer intended: a foreign but benign object of great scale coexisting but not integrating with its finer-grained setting, much like Pelli's analogue of a large ship docked in a small port city. Nearby buildings of similar bulk but more conventional form, such as the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and the Beverly Center shopping mall, have proven less successful in an urbanistic sense, and actually vindicate Pelli's design approach.

With the new phases of expansion, the PDC will no longer be a single pure object in the West Hollywood landscape. Including the new parking structure, it will grow to three times its original bulk, and will begin to take on spatial complexity and greater formal and chromatic variety. In the process, it will become simultaneously more and less an archetypal Los Angeles building. More, in that it will become even more horizontal and visually eccentric, with the older building, once formally self-sufficient, now treated as a fragment of a larger ensemble. Less, in that it will no longer be a freestanding object interposed between the parking lot and the street, with all the concomitant ambiguity about front and rear. Instead, the rear, which has always been the de facto front, will be more clearly the entrance, facing its offspring and a large plaza.

This attempt at traditional civic scale will be one of the critical tests of the built design. The removal of surface parking to a largely hidden structure represents one further step toward normal urban practice. The additions will diminish the clarity of the original figure and ground of the PDC, creating an L-shaped footprint plus a small freestanding exhibit building on the plaza. The long bar of the "L" will





PHOTOGRAPH ©ADRIAN VELICESCU. MODEL ORIGINALLY BY DIMENSIONAL PRESENTATIONS, LOS ANGELES, REVISED BY MODEL CONCEPTS, LOS ANGELES.

comprise a highly articulated series of sculptural forms and connecting links that will paradoxically function as a scenographic backdrop for the plaza as well as a grouping of three-dimensional objects. The rear of this element will parallel the side property line and will be essentially invisible to the public.

The new plaza will be in sharp contrast to the older, streamlined one fronting Melrose Avenue. The latter had a virtually uninterrupted horizontal sweep paralleling that of the building itself. (That, at least, was the design intent, but a holdout property in the middle of the space necessitated a thick bosque of trees to screen out the aboriginal squatter.) The new plaza will be more complex and eventful, with more finely scaled surface patterns and a more equal balance of paved and planted surfaces. One of the likely effects of this addition will be to shift the perceived front of the complex from Melrose Avenue, a level and built-up street, to San Vicente Boulevard, a sloping traffic connector with far less commercial and urban identity. If this does not occur, then the plaza and new building elements will appear to occupy the side or even rear of the complex.

The expansion is not a simple task. Initially, in 1983, the PDC attempted to do the job with Gruen Associates, the original architects, but without Pelli, who had been the partner in charge of design before leaving to set up his own practice in New Haven. In the seven years since his departure, Gruen had not sought a design chief of similar stature, a fact that was apparent in their first design for the expansion. The firm proposed three hexagonal towers, two containing showrooms and one a hotel, clad in silver mirrored glass and aligned on a diagonal grid to the old building.

When added to the disparity of cladding material, the verticality of the towers, an unresolved junction of old and new, and a basic suburban office park banality in the design, the skewed grid made the addition seem oddly oblivious to the existence of the Blue Whale. Not only did this design fail to address the nature and quality of the original building, but the PDC management seemed to forget that the PDC's remarkable success was largely due to Pelli's ability to provide a memorable and sophisticated image for a building that depended on the design industry for tenancy and patronage.

There were rumblings within the architectural community about the potential despoilation of a landmark, but the *Los Angeles Times's* urban design critic, chronically at a loss when dealing with architectural issues, resolutely ignored the situation. Finally, not long after Craig Hodgetts wrote a detailed critique of the proposed addition in the January 1984 issue of *LA Architect*, PDC manager Murray Feldman realized that Pelli's efforts were needed if the expansion was to uphold the quality of the original.

That task was not easy for the original designer, either. When he conceived of the PDC, Pelli says, "I was sure that it would never be expanded. And, had I known that it would need to be, I would never have designed it the way I did." He compared his task to that of a character in a Jorge Luis Borges story who set out to rewrite *Don Quixote*, using the identical words of the original, but in a way that would have an entirely different meaning.

In fact, however, the solution turned out to be deceptively simple. The whale was treated as an existing fragment to which new ones were added. Each element was given a distinct form and color, with the glass cladding system remaining a constant. At nine stories, the central green piece is taller than the whale, its external form simpler, and its floor plan more compact. The dark red element at the end is an elegant curve extruded vertically, and will decisively terminate the colorful procession of forms up the hill.

This expansion strategy is masterful in both outline and execution, with just one reservation: the green component is troublesome in its specifics. Looking at the model, it seems like a piece from a

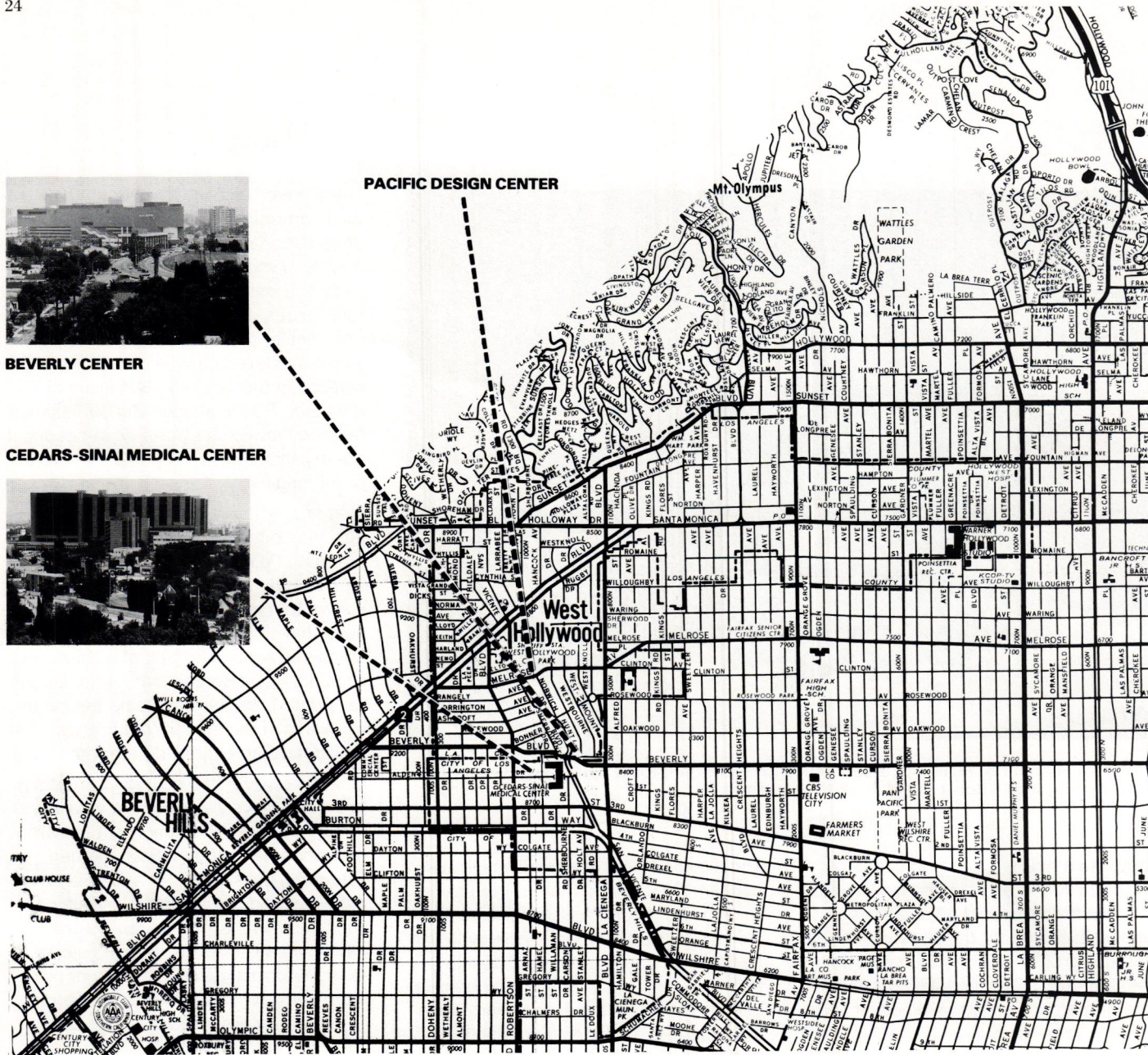
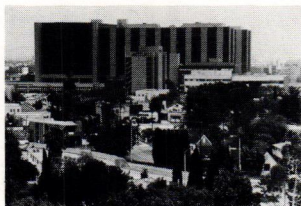
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child's educational toy, an oddly shaped object that is neither especially graceful nor endearingly awkward. The PDC's 1986 Christmas card features a whimsical Pelli sketch of a blue whale (whose form is remarkably faithful to the profile of the existing building) biting into a whale-sized green apple, but the new element is actually much too crystalline and angular to be taken for a piece of fruit. Its form seems too foursquare and symmetrical, and is neither as interesting as the whale nor as sculpturally elegant as the red

prow (perhaps part of a whaling vessel?). Likewise, its particular shade of green seems bland compared to the deep red and blue that flank it. Pelli explains that there was an objective reason for the choice of a paler color: a richer, darker green would have greatly reduced the possibilities of creating reflections of the old building in the new skin.

The PDC expansion repeats a primary characteristic of the original building: it jumps the scale of the Blue Whale just as that structure jumped the scale of its

neighborhood. The cobalt-colored artifact that once seemed so huge and intrusive will soon become a fragment of an even larger composition, and the most articulated and finely scaled fragment at that. Ten years ago it seemed that if the PDC were ever to be brought down to size, it would be due to surrounding urban intensification. Now, it is clear that the only force strong enough to bring that about is genetic. The Blue Whale will be domesticated not by the growth of the rest of Los Angeles, but by its own children.

THE DESIGNER'S MALL

by Robert Carey

The Pacific Design Center initially required architectural drama to enhance its marketability. As a speculative development, it called for a bold design to give the project an instant identity and support its financial feasibility. The eventual success of the project, both architectural and economic, seems as dependent on the quality of Cesar Pelli's design as on the organic management approach of Murray Feldman, the project's executive director.

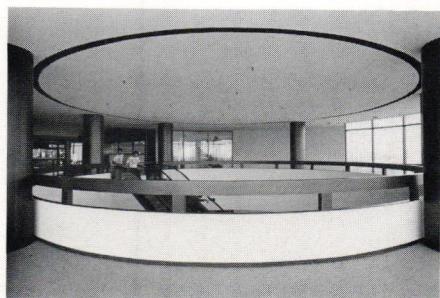
Rarely does anything new occur in architectural form. Creative vision, however, is necessary in the translation of form to product design: it will either exacerbate the development risk or provide the catalyst for a marketing breakthrough. Cesar Pelli adapted an old form with new skin material applied to a trademart product. His skillful translation of form to this function, along with project sponsor Southern Pacific's faith in its acceptability by the marketplace, created a financially successful project of landmark status.

There are basic retail development commandments, some of which were embraced fervently at PDC, while others were ignored or discarded. The decision to include a galleria was an acceptable translation, considering historical retail structure precedents. Galleria space is well suited to the tenants' desire for optimum exposure for their show windows, and one can only wonder why the galleria approach was only incorporated in a portion of Pelli's building. The Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan is usually cited as a precedent, but its single-level access makes it an inappropriate one. A more germane prototype would be the multilevel Cleveland Arcade, designed in 1890 by John Eisenman and George Smith. Although the PDC represented a new form for a wholesale mart, its tenants and circulation gave it a program that was strikingly similar to urban retail centers, such as the HOK-designed Houston Galleria, developed by Gerald Hines, which was nearing completion at the same time.

Specialty development projects like Pacific Design Center have inherent risks which do not burden more traditional retail developments. The financing of a pre-let building, or, in retail parlance, a

shopping center, usually involves two or three department store anchors and does not require sophisticated underwriting acumen. The PDC, on the other hand, had many unknowns. Although Southern Pacific controlled the land, and therefore could account for its value with some degree of flexibility in the development figures, it nevertheless had other land-use options. An obvious one was to incorporate existing businesses and expand the "trade" sector within the project. To pursue the wholesale mart concept was perhaps not such a risky option when one considers the low vacancies in the area, and it was safe to predict the demand for a design center complex. No one, however, could have predicted that it would absorb 750,000 square feet and need to expand by its tenth anniversary.

Excluding land costs, the construction and other development fees of this type of structure should not have cost more than any other urban galleria of the time. The construction costs were approximately \$40 per square foot and the initial rents were in the \$12-\$15 range—a satisfactory proforma return by any real estate definition. The biggest controversy in the planning process was the lack of maximum efficiency in Pelli's design concept. Perhaps this gave rise to a compromise, since only two floors of the project enjoy the galleria space. In retrospect, Pelli was correct to urge the project sponsor to create a less than traditionally efficient trademart building, not so much for the design bang as to acknowledge the inherent similarities between this project and the urban retail specialty centers, both of which deal with tenants



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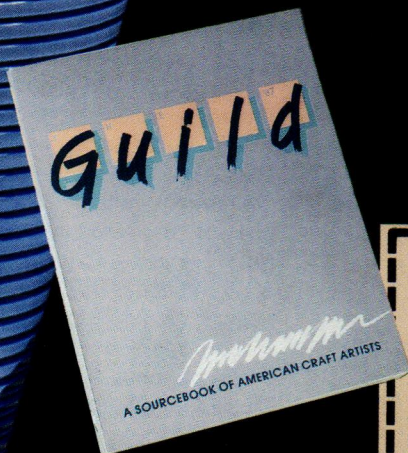
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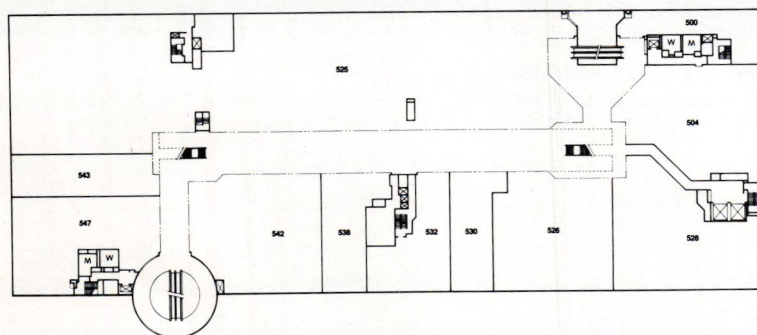
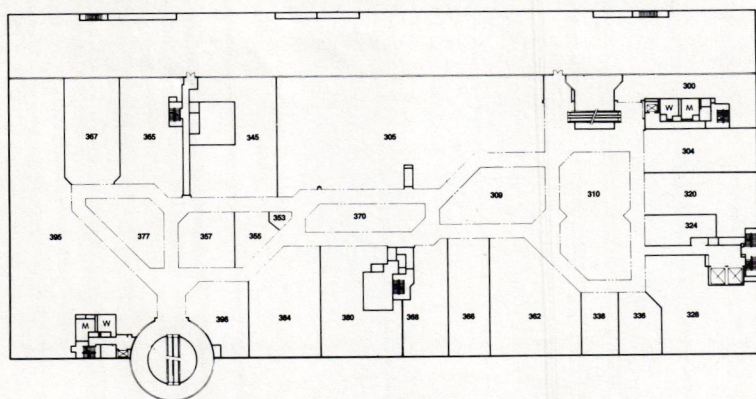
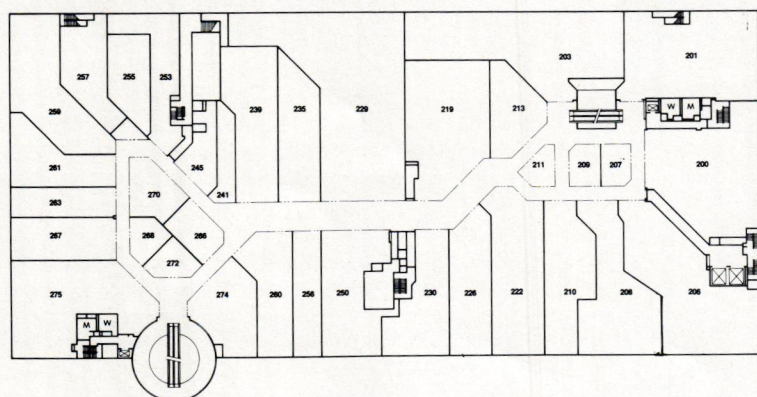
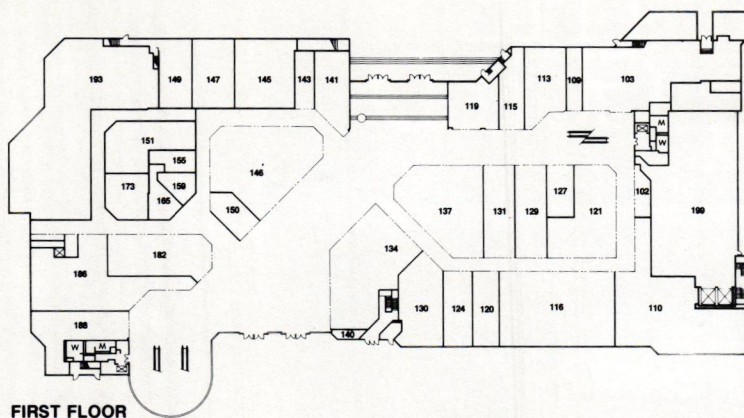
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needing less than two thousand square feet, and have a large percentage of locally based tenants. The Cleveland Arcade, the Houston Galleria, and most multifloor retail projects have an efficiency of 80 percent or less, and these urban retail centers are usually very profitable. Today the PDC is renting space from \$24 to \$30 per square foot and can easily justify its next phase construction costs with this rental level, in addition to the demand for new space and significant pre-letting activity. The project is obviously a financial success, having achieved and stabilized full occupancy for the last several years and having arrived at a 95 percent occupancy within the first three years of opening, despite some recessionary downturns.

My compliments must go to the project sponsor, and in particular to Murray Feldman and his colleagues, who were knocking on doors during the deep recession of 1974–1975. Having gone through a similar experience marketing an urban multifloor retail project during the same period, I have a high degree of respect for their marketing accomplishments. Feldman clearly understands every detail of this industry and his organic management has played a vital role in the success of the project. His office has been adept at developing programs, such as the popular “Westweek,” to supplement the trading activity of the building.

The following critical observations are not intended to detract from my admiration of the combined effort that created the PDC. Certain unsatisfactory aspects of the project, however, could have been foreseen and it seems timely to discuss them before the next phases of the construction get under way. Had Pelli designed the building as a major multifloor urban retail specialty project, he might have realized that the architectural grandeur of the galleria space would have been the first space in demand. As Rabeneck has explained, the allotment of much of the prime galleria frontage to the anchor store, Baker Knapp and Tubb, has greatly limited the social vitality of the space. One tenant, regardless of quality, cannot promote the same interest as a variety of quality tenants. To gain initial credibility it is often necessary to accommodate special retailers who take early positions in a project, and usually at lower than proforma rents. The management probably had no other choice. But what if the design of the project had been slightly different? The galleria, for instance, could have been cut through to at least two more floors, doubling the availability of optimum space. Approximate calculations

show that the upper two galleria floors were not that much less efficient than the scattered island plan of the lower three.

PDC's worst design flaw is its circulation. The location of the major escalators at either end of a diagonal axis severely compromises the fundamental precepts of "consumer" circulation patterns opposite tenant termination locations. While the architectural celebration of the escalator rotunda creates a delightful interior viewing platform and adds formal interest to the Melrose elevation, this isolated placement of vertical circulation almost never occurs in a successful multifloor project. While the nearby Beverly Center's borrowing of the external escalators of Pompidou Centre might appear an exception to this rule, in fact it proves it. The outside escalators only serve the lower parking floors, and once the consumer is brought into the main shopping space, the commercial outlets surround the circulation spines. In the case of the PDC, the tenants might have been better served if the two major circulation nodes had been placed more internally, let's say, in rotunda fashion with an atrium skylight, allowing major anchor tenants at each end of the circulation node for those businesses requiring ten to twenty thousand square feet. Smaller showrooms might have thus profited from mainline circulation locations.

The front entry on Melrose Avenue is a mere formality; the real entry faces the rear parking lot. The Melrose plaza is stark and has little landscaping or street furniture. On this public side of the PDC the storefronts, including an attempted sidewalk cafe, are poorly executed and fail to achieve the quality that the overall image of the building projects.

The ground-floor common area and circulation are generous and the feeling is excellent. The position of the display kiosks adds much to the visual enjoyment of the space. However, the double-height glazed storefronts lining the hall often detract from the quality of the space, since few of the showrooms know how to accommodate that much glass. In many cases the ceilings have been dropped below the upper transom.

Another disturbing feature of the project is the combination of standardized storefronts with individually designed, nonconforming showroom façades. The sponsor intended to have a general storefront solution and to maintain discretion over the departures from this design. Economic reality in specialty development, however, demands that major tenants be allowed privileges, such as breaking

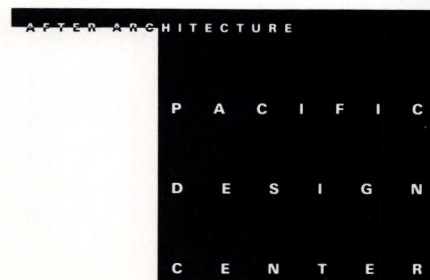
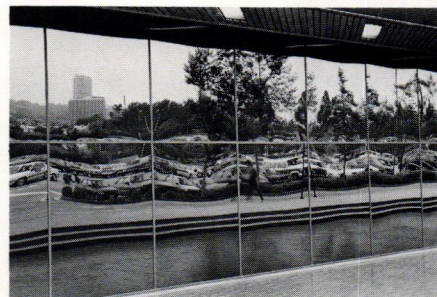
storefront design guidelines. Much of the incongruity at PDC could have been avoided by designing a stronger building interim unification system that would permit all showrooms to have design discretion. Once again, urban retail projects, such as the new Copley Place in Boston, have demonstrated that a wide range of individually designed façades can coexist within the unity of an architectural mainframe.

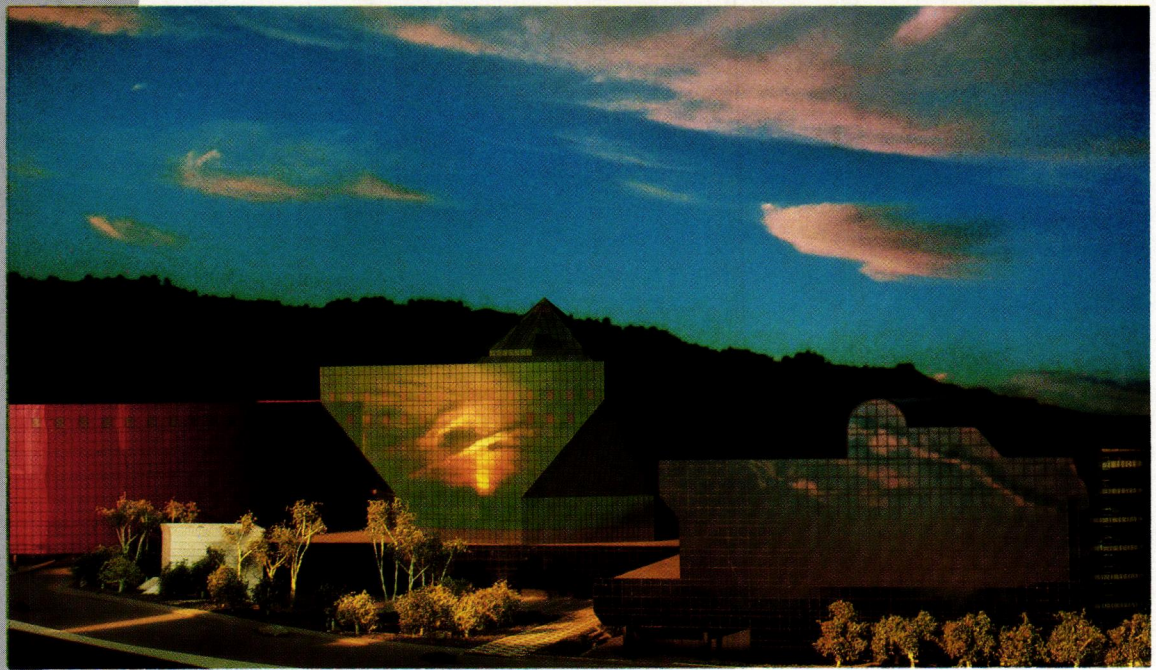
The design strategy for the common area is indeed correct: it should not be so monumental that it upstages the showrooms. This should not, however, excuse certain choices of fittings and materials. In particular, the exposed spine lighting following the diagonal slats of the ceiling would have been less offensive if it had been recessed. Admittedly, this was a speculative project, but perhaps if it had been conceived of as a public- or consumer-driven experience, the interior finishings would have been allowed to be of higher quality.

With the next phase of PDC, the rear plaza will become a major open space, framed by the "L" of the buildings. Including circulation, this is nearly an acre of space; it should be more than just a setting for buildings, more like a "living room" for them. The current scheme shows a small amphitheater and a free-standing gallery or multipurpose building, with a restaurant at one edge of the new building. There is a wonderful opportunity here to create a full amenity package for goods and services, including restaurants. Perhaps pavilion-like structures, delicate enough so as not to compete with the main buildings, could be added to enhance and activate this potentially important space. Currently 700–750 employees and an average of 2,000 daily visitors use the building. A projected daily population for the entire PDC in its finished phase would be approximately eight to ten thousand not counting market weeks, "Westweeks," and other galas. Urban retail and food service statistics indicate that forty to fifty thousand square feet of commercial space are needed to serve the needs of this captive population base. The plaza in its final design might achieve a private, lively town square for the PDC audience by combining rich landscaping, open space, and seating opportunities with ample retail and food service outlets. The space should allow for the open-air lifestyle of Southern California without contradicting the bold architectural statement it serves.

The first phase of the PDC is an outstanding example of the marriage between bold architecture, good programming,

and hands-on management. Although it initially gave the immediate neighborhood indigestion, the functional uses in the district have been recycled to house such businesses as bistros, fashion forward boutiques, and design center service operations. One could argue that, because the PDC has reached its deserved level of success, it could in its next phase relax the demand for architectural heroics and fall back on the more efficient, showroom factory floor plans of traditional mart buildings. Fortunately, the sponsors have stuck with their original philosophy. The sacrifice of a 10–12 percent efficiency factor has been more than satisfactorily returned and this should remain true in future phases.





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F R E E Z E F R A M E



by Aaron Betsky

Since its appearance on the low-slung Los Angeles landscape in 1973, the PDC has meant many things to many people. An imposing structure, rendered in a bold color with a strange shape, it reminded people of "an aircraft hangar ... an extrusion or architectural molding ... a station or terminal building ... a model ... a warehouse ... a blue iceberg ... a prison ... a child's building blocks."¹ It was evocative without being imitative or traditional, and as such helped to redefine the parameters of acceptable mainstream architecture. Despite its meaningfulness, it has not, since its first year, been treated as a serious building, and is commonly ignored in the standard histories of architecture.

Though the PDC was innovative, it was certainly not an isolated experiment in form. Cesar Pelli, one of the most deliberate corporate designers of this period, made his mark by producing structures whose hallmarks were an almost fetishistic concentration on circulation and a continued experimentation with the skin of the building. Between circulation and skin, the actual program was thought to have an almost inevitable solution, dictated by economic and technological forces. These façades and circulation provided an updated and perceptive application of the zeitgeist: our society is one of continuous technological, social, and economic transformation, thus buildings should reflect this amorphous world of continual change and movement. Pelli succeeded in making a building that appeared to be the pure structuring of movement plus pure skin, which in its reflective surfaces captured the sense of movement from one anonymous place and function to another. It posed provocatively as the convergence of all the money and energy of the country's most powerful city, a structure expected to stand only as long as that society's commitment to it lasted.

Pelli, and others such as Anthony Lumsden of the so-called "silver" movement, placed themselves outside the debate between the "white" revival of modern forms with classical meanings and the "grey" rebellious use of older forms with ironic modern meanings. Perhaps because of this external and practical position he was able to create what John Pastier perceptively heralded as the resolution, or better, synthesis of

this debate that would allow architecture to once again take its place as the form-giver to the corporate and institutional monuments of America.

Pastier was at this time the architecture critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, and wrote extensively about the project for both local and national publications. He saw the PDC as emerging unscathed from a battle between the "progressives," makers of precise, clean, and industrial forms, and the "revisionists," whose historicist and vernacular-inspired buildings countermanded the modern canons their antagonists were trying to reform. The PDC was certainly a modern form, the realization of Bruno Taut's dream of "a carved crystal blown up to skyscraper form." Pastier singled out aspects, however, that belied its pristine quality: its disturbing scale, color, and shape, and the fact that the very blankness of its huge bulk "houses, quite accidentally, some vivid examples of revisionist interior design."² Inside, the circulation might bear comparison with "the measured grandeur of ancient Rome," while, outside, the building was "an unintended metaphor for a place long known as a city of illusion."³ The exterior of the building is modern; it is part and parcel of the contradictions, ephemeral character, and hard-edged demands of everyday life, but its spiritual core is of another time and place. The amalgamation of styles and artifacts in the showrooms, combined with classical spatial progressions, creates a hidden world of collected references, the kind of urban environment that is not possible in the harsh modern sunshine of Los Angeles. This is consistent with Pastier's description of Pelli in his 1980 monograph as a pragmatist builder housing a poetic soul, who "loves internal order and external ambiguity."⁴

AFTER ARCHITECTURE

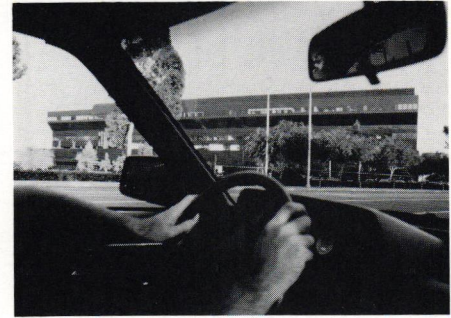
P A C I F I C
D E S I G N
C E N T E R

The fascination of PDC is that its image appears to have emerged unselfconsciously and has resulted in a form that is evocative without having a specific meaning. The encoding effort was probably initiated by Pastier, who early on quipped that trying to obscure the size of the building in its two-story context would have been like trying to "hide a whale in a backyard swimming pool."⁵ The "blue whale" became a popular epithet, one of many catalogued by Charles Jencks in *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*. Perhaps the most significant was Pelli's oft-cited metaphor of a large ocean liner in a small port town—one wonders whether this was derived from the consciously nautical tradition of Villa Savoye or the local vernacular of the Coca-Cola Bottling Plant. The wealth of meanings inspired by the PDC enabled Jencks to use the building as proof of his revision of the ultimate revisionist, Robert Venturi. The PDC was a duck, and a good one at that. Unlike the decorated shed, sign was no longer divorced from structure, but was synonymous with it.

The PDC is not an agreed-upon metaphor for the same reason it is not a decorated shed: it embodies a technologically conceived poetics of communication. In McLuhan's terms, the medium was the message; still, it remained a mecca for meanings. For Esther McCoy, the building evoked Giedion's tale of the skyscraper city seen only in bits and pieces; she also found it analogous to Christo's curtains, a village street (on the interior), an industrial focus, the Crystal Palace, and even Pelli's earlier work. To Sam Hall Kaplan, the building represented a medieval guild hall and a magnet. To others it was a blimp, a festival hall, and an endless assortment of architectural elements, community icons, sculptural shapes, and various forms of transportation marooned a dozen miles from the ocean, the freeway, and the airport. The PDC could either reflect its function in the manner that other great buildings had reflected the institutions they housed, or it could stand for an abstract idea to be manipulated by whomever controlled the design; or it could absorb meaning without comment, standing as an iconic receptor of all our hopes and fears. Because it was polyvalent, the PDC promised to provide the modern equivalent of a classical canon.

To Pelli, the building seems to function best as an enigmatic object. He has since turned away from such potent form-making to the creation of corporate and civic monuments that draw more directly on physical and historical context. He has externalized the private dreams and ordered the chance reflections of his buildings into the image of the skyscraper as corporate manifest, destiny or the community building as centralized place of political or cultural organization. In this movement, he has been joined by almost all the "whites" and "greys" alike. He has made form and image respectable, yet he has layered in a cultural signification which was originally absent. The poetically modern play of forms at the PDC are frozen and potent: "pure geometry, leaving nothing to evocation of function, occupants or observers—the traditional sources of the morally sincere architectural statement. They reveal nothing, either. People, activities, building elements are all invisible behind a literal mirror held up to man and nature. The corporation feels secure behind its shades...."⁶ The iconic qualities of PDC were therefore perhaps no more than the result of a tradition of deliberate dissimulation on the part of corporate clients. One could suggest that these forms allowed Cesar Pelli to mask the overwhelming but isolated bulk of his program in a container whose form followed an equally abstract set of economic equations. The language of the PDC is the masked mark of mass advertising and abstract calculation, presented in a form which was arrived at by finding elemental common denominators for all of the economic, social, and contextual functions of the building. As Pelli himself has pointed out, such a strategy of abstract intimation without direct references could only succeed on the tabula rasa of Los Angeles, conditioned by its relative absence of history, its devotion to mass media and technology, and its stripped-down landscape. Other architects working in the area (Lumsden, Gehry, even Yamasaki at Century City) have certainly picked up this sculptural tradition.

The PDC represents the crucial transformation of a communication-based strategy, developed into an iconic architecture, an architecture of the mute sign. As such it has had limited appeal to recent historians—including Kostof, Stern, Curtis,



even Frampton and Tafuri—crowded out by the architecture of referential forms engaged in the more traditional game of reaffirming, or even reinventing, conventional images and institutionalized relationships. The PDC proposed a mute and modern form to simultaneously reflect society, house and hide memory, and advance the future. Most buildings since then have split these functions according to the strength or dissimulation of the influence of the client, the architect, or the community, and few critics demand such simultaneous representation of any architecture.

1. Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (New York, 1977): 50.

2. John Pastier, "The Pacific Design Center: A Blue Whale Borne Upon the Shifting Currents of Modern Architecture," *Decade* (May 1979): 52–60.

3. John Pastier, "Evaluation: Utility and Fantasy in Los Angeles' 'Blue Whale'," *AIA Journal* (May 1978): 38–45.

4. John Pastier, *Cesar Pelli* (New York, 1981): 9.

5. Pastier, "Evaluation": 43.

6. Andrew Rabeneck and Christopher Arnold, "Styles: Mirror Buildings," *Architectural Design* (February 1977): 80–84.

In England, as in America, the initiative in public housing is currently in the hands of its worst enemies.

BLOWING YOUR HOUSE DOWN

Andrew Saint

There can be no doubt that the sharpest and toughest "design book" to appear in London recently is Alice Coleman's *Utopia on Trial: Vision and Reality in Planned Housing* (Hilary Shipman, 1985). Housing, or at any rate "planned housing" in the full social signification of the term, isn't something that smart British architects care to think about much nowadays; it makes them feel small, impotent, and a touch sheepish. So the debate over *Utopia on Trial* has been rumbling on at the back of the journals and in their correspondence columns, not on the front pages where it deserves to be. But the thunder keeps returning. Present politics here being as they are, it is unlikely to go away. Alice Coleman has the ear of the government and is raring to translate her ideas into action. If the current "Colemanization" of a pair of problematic London housing estates proves a demonstrable success (it is certain to be claimed as such), *Utopia on Trial* may turn into one of those texts that have a decisive impact upon policy and thus upon many people's lives.

When America sneezes, the saying goes, the rest of the world catches a cold. It may be added that the severity of the chill will depend upon the patient's susceptibility; and in the case of public housing, Britain is exceptionally susceptible. In the United States, public housing on the municipal model never enjoyed political consensus. So when Pruitt-Igoe was blown up, when Oscar Newman linked

design and crime rates on inner-city estates, when the 1974 Federal Housing Act abolished the subsidy system for public housing, there was some professional but scant political trauma. But in England the building by local authorities of public or "council" housing has been going on since the 1890s and has been a limited obligation since 1919. In the thirty years after the Second World War, public housing has expanded so much that in some areas in Scotland and in the blitzed and redeveloped sections of London's East End, it has amounted to three-quarters of local tenure. Now, in the wake of the world economic crisis of the mid-1970s, the old confidence in elected public officials to design, deliver, and manage a fair and decent standard of subsidized housing has quickly and devastatingly evaporated. Much of this collapse in confidence expresses real and long-suppressed social grievances against the design and, more significantly, the management of British public housing. But it has been shamelessly exploited by a government eager to escape socialized commitments and bent on breaking the power of those Labour local authorities responsible and accountable for most of the country's public housing.

Alice Coleman is among those eager to knock a nail in the coffin of the British public-housing business. A sage political axiom states that if you keep saying the same thing in different ways for long enough, sooner or

later the wheel will turn and you will be believed and acclaimed. Perseverance in politics, in other words, counts for more than perspicacity or subtlety, and Coleman is an instance of this. A social geographer at King's College, London, she emerged a decade ago with a sweeping study of British land-use planning since the Second World War which savaged every principle of the British postwar town-planning system. This report touched upon the philosophical issue of environmental determinism which underlies *Utopia on Trial*, paid homage to the urban thinking of Jane Jacobs and Oscar Newman, called for fewer planning controls as a means of reducing government spending, and demanded that there should be "no more council housing, since there is already more than enough to house all the really penurious." The Royal Town Planning Institute charged to the rescue, accusing Coleman of ignorance of the planning system, naiveté, and misleading statistics. They need not have bothered; no one much was listening.

But now things are different. *Utopia on Trial* advances similar arguments on a narrower front, in a context of rising social anxieties, new fears about crime and riot, increasing talk about discipline and control, falling investment in the public sector, and a sapping of the morale and independence of British local authorities. Even on the political left here, a sentiment is now abroad that subsidized housing is best off in the hands of co-ops and housing associations rather than remote, gargantuan, local-authority housing departments. In Liverpool, which has a tough left-Labour council and grim housing conditions, there have been bitter rows between the politicians, who cling forlornly to the doctrine that decent funding must be restored to public housing and have set their face against queue-jumping, and a newly vigorous group of working-class co-ops, who resent what they see as an attempt by the corporation to frustrate their legitimate, long-delayed

aspirations to get rehoused and to control the housing themselves. This resentment is graphically conveyed in Alan McDonald's *The Weller Way* (Faber and Faber, 1986), the story of the first of the new-wave Liverpool co-ops, on whose behalf Prince Charles was persuaded to take up the cudgels. In another part of the field, Colin Ward, a wise old William Morris-type anarchist, columnist for *New Society* and longtime advocate of self-built housing, has come up with a powerful invective against the old way of doing things, *When We Build Again, Let's Have Housing That Works* (Pinto Press, 1985). Meanwhile systems-built high-rise blocks, often in fairly good structural condition, are being blown up almost weekly by jittery local authorities who cannot persuade even desperate families to live in them anymore.

Into this setting comes *Utopia on Trial*. What exactly does it say, and why have its recommendations acquired such force? Coleman's text has the unusual virtue of exceptional directness combined with a battery of at-first-sight awesome tables and projections. It bears every mark of a scientific study, which is what Coleman claims for it. Public housing, she says, has suffered grievously in the postwar years from sloppy sociology, amateurism, and irresponsible utopianism. As a result it was built without understanding when inner-city housing broke away from traditional British types of plan and construction. So much is common ground with Coleman's mentor Oscar Newman and the territorial ethology popularized in the 1960s by writers like Robert Ardrey. But Coleman goes on to test this hypothesis on a scale sufficient to be claimed as scientific. And she is bold enough to reach beyond even this and to advocate practical and precise countermeasures which, if carried out, can (she believes) reduce the sundry "disadvantages" endured by the tenants of postwar housing estates and make their lives more

tolerable. Not that she views these measures of improvement as ideal. Given the chance, Coleman would bequeath the whole of housing to the private house-builder and market forces. But acknowledging this as impractical, she commends certain specified remedies: the demolition of bridges, decks, and walkways; the elimination of "confused space" which is neither private nor public; and the controlling of access to individual dwellings.

This edifice of commandments rests upon a broad and elaborate set of studies (Coleman claims that "up to" six people worked for five years and investigated 4,000 blocks of flats containing 100,000 dwellings). On this basis she awards "design disadvantage" or "abuse" scores to housing of different date, size, and type. Coleman and her team take six basic categories of abuse and apply them throughout their work: litter, graffiti, damage, children in care, urine, and feces. Correlating these in various ways with the statistics of the housing, she arrives at powerful conclusions about the effect of design upon behavior. Some are predictable, others less so. Houses are better than flats; we all knew that. Tower blocks are less abused than "deck-access" housing; that is more interesting. The walk-up flats of the 1930s have a better record than most flats of the 1960s; that is surprising, perhaps, and valuable if true.

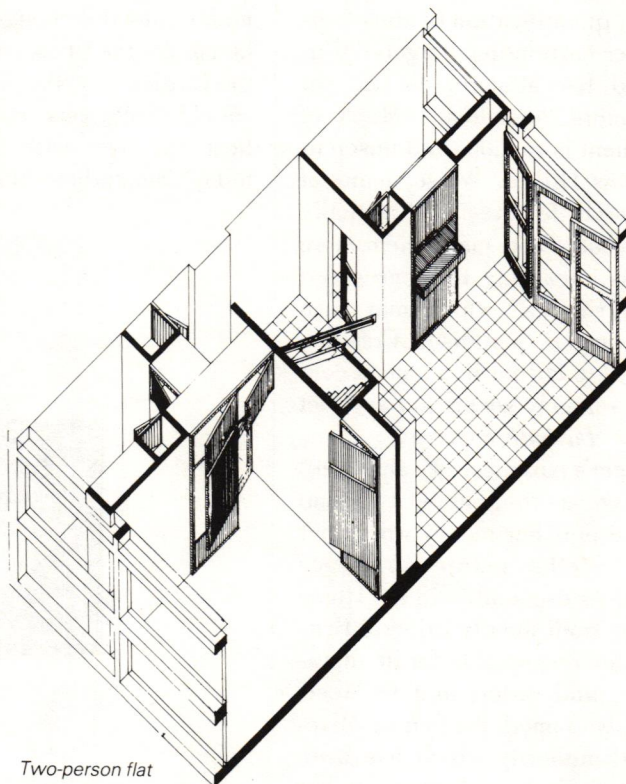
And so it goes on. But what differentiates *Utopia on Trial* from a normal sociological study is the stridency with which these results are presented. Coleman would excuse her tone on the grounds that people's lives are being destroyed by crime and vandalism, so that action is urgently needed. Her opponents respond that it covers up the superficiality and determinism of her conclusions. Some examples will convey an impression. As the title implies, the book is couched as a judicial process, in which the presumptuous utopianism of postwar plan-

ners, architects, and sociologists is arraigned on scientific trial and convicted. There is a "case for the prosecution," a brief "cross-examination" (not, be it noted, a "case for the defense") and a summing-up. At one extraordinary point in the cross-examination, when she considers whether social conditions rather than design may not lie at the root of much housing abuse, Coleman suggests that unemployment may be *caused* by bad housing: "Badly designed blocks of flats make children less easy to bring up and more likely to become anti-social and uncontrollable," she argues. "When they go to school, they may well resist educative control and be unwilling to learn, giving the school a reputation as a blackboard jungle and reducing its ability to compete for good teachers. The combination of a high proportion of resistant pupils and a low proportion of gifted teachers leads to poor educational standards and low employability. This is not an improbable sequence of events, so that even if it had been proved that unemployment was a proximate cause of vandalism, it would not rule out design as an ultimate cause." So much for science!

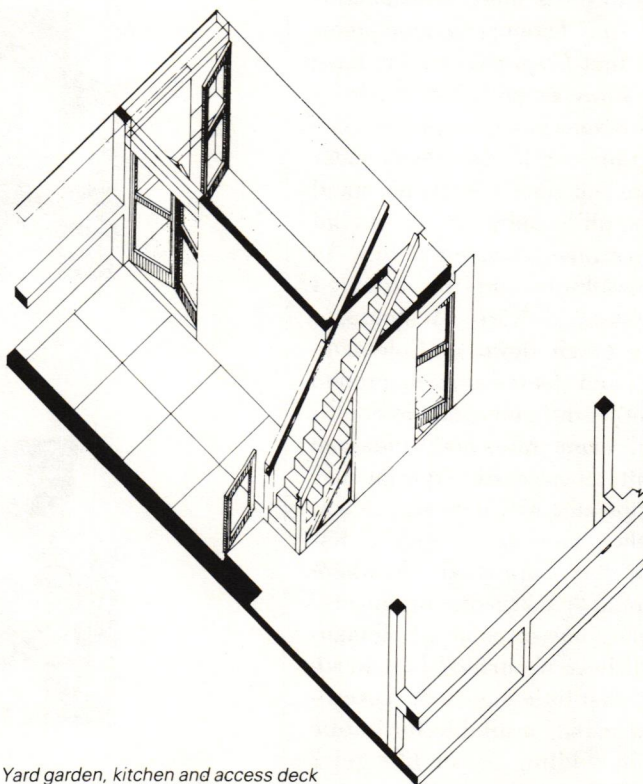
It is upon this issue of design's effect on behavior that most professional criticism of *Utopia on Trial* has turned. No architect or planner wants to deny the thesis absolutely, for why would anyone make any social effort at all if there were no better or worse environments? On the other hand there is a strong sense of anger that Coleman has trivialized and obscured the social aspects of the issue, twisted or ignored the problems of housing management, and entirely failed to take account of factors like housing costs, the pressure of numbers, the stop-go economic cycle and the unending political vulnerability of British housing. A doughty opponent, Coleman replies to most criticism, invariably taking refuge in the riposte that her study is scientific and not to be gainsaid. Whatever the history of housing (and

her history of housing is outrageously skewed), features of certain types of estate are objectively bad; she asserts, remove these in exactly the ways I recommend, and abuse will drop dramatically. In the nature of things, most of her critics have not studied four thousand blocks of flats and are in a poor position to do more than splutter a few hundred words of protest against the Colemanic simplifications; while those who do know the field expertly remain remote in the cautious fastnesses of the technical housing journals. Britain today lacks the good old Victorian tradition of widely circulated, intellectual magazines (like the old *Quarterly Review*), which attracted long, expert, controversial articles on crucial topics. That is what *Utopia on Trial* needs, for in the end the validity of its conclusions rests not upon Coleman's tendentious prose but upon the precision of its tables and studies.

And here only one critic so far has made a dent: a fellow "number-cruncher," Bill Hillier, from the Bartlett School of Architecture. Hillier has made a name for himself (and attracted derision in some quarters) by inventing something called "space syntax," which claims to be able to predict the efficiency and value of different environments according to their organization and layout (Bill Hillier and Juliet Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space*, Cambridge University Press, 1984). Hillier made an egregious appearance at the planning inquiry two years ago over Mies's and Peter Palumbo's Mansion House Square scheme for London, when he used his space syntax to propose "objectively" that the suggested public space would function well; and his methods have since been available (for a consideration) to planners and architects. One might have thought that Hillier and Coleman, both believers in the effect of design upon behavior, would sing in unison. But no: an article by Hillier in a recent *Architects' Journal* (9 July 1986) savaged Coleman bit-



Two-person flat



Yard garden, kitchen and access deck

terly, arguing in careful detail that her method of quantification of abuse was flawed, her correlations largely "illusory" and her attempts to test for social factors "desultory." Much of her argument is vacuous and unscientific, claims Hillier. Worse, many of her remedial features will actually damage estates and make them more dangerous, leading to segregated "block territories" which may turn into a "mugger's paradise." Coleman has replied to Hillier in a tone of cold fury, but scarcely seems to have met his points. *La lotta continua...*

A mugger's paradise? We shall see. The courageous thing about Coleman is that she puts her money where her mouth is. She has political influence in two places especially: in the Home Office, the traditionally illiberal British ministry responsible for immigration, law, and order; and in Westminster City Council, the Conservative-controlled authority which has been Mrs. Thatcher's staunchest ally in her campaign to press down local spending and destroy Labour's London power bases. At first *Utopia* seemed to have fallen on stony ground. But at a conference this year on crime prevention, a junior minister in the Department of Environment semiformaly accepted Coleman's philosophy as an official part of government housing policy. As I write, walkways on the troubled Mozart Estate in North Westminster are being taken down at Coleman's command, and sleeves are being rolled up on another difficult estate in Southward. Will crime rates and vandalism go down after these costly experiments? More important, will they *stay* down, or will they rise again after a few years, as has happened elsewhere where similar "package improvements" and security measures of a Colemanizing kind have occurred? Is it worth spending what little money the government now makes available for public housing in fiddling about like this? Or shouldn't we be building new housing? Are we really at the end of the road for public housing in Britain,

a country which has expended so much splendid thought and effort to housing—the Georgian terrace house, the Garden city, the New Towns? How should architects and planners be best involved with public housing today? Somewhere behind all the got-

up fuss about the National Gallery, Charles Jencks's house, Richard Rogers's new Lloyds Building, and the latest troubles at the RIBA, sane and sober people are worrying still about these things. The thunder keeps rumbling.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALLSTATE DEMOLITION, RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA

Directing our attention to economic and political factors, Ada Louise Huxtable brought a new pragmatism to the architectural debate, besides attracting an unprecedented readership.

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE TIMELESS ADA LOUISE

Herbert Muschamp

The job of the newspaper art critic is to keep the general reader absolutely up-to-date on everything that is slightly stale. Most newspaper critics perform this task faithfully; our eyes glide through their opinions with the same bemused, nostalgic state of inattention with which we drive past used car lots, their lightbulbs twinkling off the burnished hoods of "previously owned" sedans. Ada Louise Huxtable took on a bigger job. From the moment she began writing about architecture for the *New York Times* in 1963, Huxtable gave us a far greater criticism than we had reason to expect. As the first architecture critic of an American newspaper, Huxtable could easily have satisfied her editors by pouring architecture into the standard mold from Culture Gulch: sensible, pietistic appraisals of new works punctuated by tasteful appreciations of the classics. She did not do so. She greeted most new buildings with a swift kick in the I-beam, and when she wrote about great buildings of the past, it wasn't to the sound of tinkling teacups but

to the clarion call of a new movement aroused to protect our architectural heritage.

Huxtable not only focused our attention on architectural monuments; she also shifted our eyes from the individual building to the overlooked urban context. Her greatest power, perhaps, lay in her ability to convey the evolution of New York City as an architectural monument itself, the great cathedral of the secular age. More than Lewis Mumford, whose brilliant rantings oozed a perpetual state of loathing for the city in its greatest modern manifestation, Huxtable carried on a flagrant, public, and intensely jealous romance. The consequence of her passion was not merely the elevation of awareness of the general reader on the subjects of architecture, preservation, and urban design, though this alone was an achievement that more than qualifies Huxtable for the esteem in which she is widely held. It was also the nurturing of a more specialized kind of reader, a reader who shared her pas-

sion for the city and found in her articulation of it a stimulant to demand of architecture a comparable desire to communicate. As one of those readers, I remember well when I set off for a few years of architectural study abroad, my friends asking what they could send me from home. My reply was instinctive and immediate: Ada Louise Huxtable's columns.

Later I became disenchanted with Huxtable's criticism and eventually came to dislike it strongly, though for a long time I couldn't put my finger on the reason or decide whether it was a change in her outlook or in mine that was responsible. Distance had not lent enchantment; in London, I grew less interested in the local issues Huxtable wrote about and more conscious of the unfortunate way in which these issues shaped her thinking. For a time it seemed to me that Huxtable had simply been overtaken by the events she herself had set in motion, that her most provocative subject had been the revival of our appreciation for styles of building discredited by the Modern Movement, and that, having succeeded in stimulating this revival, Huxtable had failed to find a new subject equally capable of focusing her, and our, attention. Preservation had become institutionalized; her voice no longer carried the force of singularity.

I also had the feeling that, over time, Huxtable's voice had itself become institutionalized; that, following her appointment to the editorial board of the *Times* in 1973, the inevitably political nature of that position had coarsened the grain of her thinking. Editorial writing, after all, is an exercise in political conviction, while criticism, or so I believe, arises from an inner dialectic between conviction and doubt. In the introduction to an earlier collection of columns, Huxtable wrote that "When, in the past, we of the critical press have pointed out the price of wasting our natural and technological resources and sabotaging our skills, we have been dis-



THE ROOKERY LOBBY, CHICAGO. © CERVIN ROBINSON. FROM HUXTABLE, *KICKED A BUILDING LATELY?*

missed as idealists. We are the realists now." Yet that change in self-image, from idealist to realist, suggested to me a regrettable turn in the road, a confusion of perception with reality, a sacrifice of the subjectivity that distinguishes the voice of the critic from the pronouncements of established institutions.

That earlier introduction is reprinted in this "new" collection of previously published essays, and the book has given me an occasion to reconsider

Huxtable's criticism and the change in my attitude toward it. This change did not arise from any fundamental shift in our respective outlooks, but in the nature of architecture as (in Emerson's phrase) "a mixed art whose end is sometimes beauty and sometimes use," and in the way that mixture began to be reformulated during Huxtable's tenure and my education.

For Huxtable, the values of art are "timeless," an adjective she often uses as a term of high praise. These values

exist on a high plane far above the mundane concerns of everyday life, above the concerns of those real estate developers, for instance, whose gaze remains fixed on the bottom line. Huxtable's is an art historian's view of art, a view dominated by individual works (or masterpieces) created by gifted individuals (or geniuses) whose values have been pronounced timeless and eternal and whose achievements soar above the shifting sands of taste.

One problem with this exalted view of art is that it places Huxtable at odds with what leading contemporary artists were actually doing and saying in the course of her active career, in works that openly challenged our notions of "timelessness" and exposed the degree to which ideas like timelessness are implicated in the mundane, transient values which Huxtable thinks art must transcend.

In one of those credos with which she periodically studs her writing, Huxtable says, "I believe in the present, partly because, like Mount Everest, it is here, and partly because, as a historian, I see it . . . as one of the greatest and most challenging periods in history." But anyone who goes looking for something as big as Mount Everest risks overlooking the present entirely, particularly in a field like architecture where the lag between ideas and their realization is notoriously long. And anyone who looks at the present with a historian's outlook may risk constant disappointment with work that appears to fall short of the 19th-century values with which art history is saturated.

Like other liberal commentators of her generation, Huxtable clearly regarded the cultural shifts of the 1960s as a threat to civilized values everywhere, a threat to be opposed as fervently as she opposed the wrecker's ball that demolished Penn Station. Yet the tools of her resistance were weak. If "timeless" is Huxtable's highest term of praise, her two favorite epithets are "revisionist," with its political overtones of Soviet-style sub-

ordination of truth to ideology, and "fashionable," a word she often applies to theoretical projects which contradict her view of architecture as a field to which only the tough-minded pragmatist need apply. Yet when it comes to actually describing the standards she is attempting to protect from the revisionists and the fashionable, her own mental equipment goes to mush.

"The new architecture," Huxtable writes, "is a humanistic equation for which creative and qualitative standards are absolutely essential. I part company with those who find it intellectually fashionable to jettison these standards for a kind of cosmic sociology." But keep company with those who find it intellectually fashionable not to? "Humanistic equation" sounds pretty chic to me. In any case, it's nowhere stated in the essay in which this credo appears who the proponents of this "cosmic sociology" might be. The year was 1971, so perhaps she is referring to Fuller, perhaps to Soleri, perhaps to some advocacy architect, but nowhere in the essay does Huxtable name her opponents or give any clues to their thinking so we could guess their identities for ourselves. No effort is made to engage these unnamed anarchists on the level of ideas. "The results of the lack of qualitative standards," Huxtable continues, "are all too clear in the junk around us." Well, there does seem to be a lot of junk around, and it's reassuring to learn there must be a reason for it. But many artists during Huxtable's years at the *Times*, from pop to conceptual and beyond, saw a different reason for the junk: in precisely the kind of separation of art from life which Huxtable's 19th-century notion of standards perpetuated.

In the essay in which she proclaims herself a "realist," Huxtable comments, "The architecture critic cannot be enamored of fashionable polemics. It may be tempting to make a small, rarefied splash in the upper intel-



McKIM, MEAD AND WHITE: CONCOURSE INSIDE PENNSYLVANIA STATION, NEW YORK CITY. FROM DAVID WATKIN, *A HISTORY OF WESTERN ARCHITECTURE* (THAMES & HUDSON, 1986). PHOTO © JAMES AUSTIN, CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND.

lectual stratosphere, but it will not matter. In the long run, what he has to say must matter or he might as well not say it." Huxtable's blanket dismissal of "the upper intellectual stratosphere" makes a joke of her professed interest in the art of the present. Where does she think ideas in art come from—the culture pages of the *New York Times*? Where does she think the values embodied in the modernist works she most admires originated—in the meeting of an editorial board? Huxtable, it appears, is running a little fast-food enterprise of her own, making hamburger of the tradition of artistic ideals she claims to uphold.

Edmund Wilson once said of the literary philistinism of Somerset Maugham, "there is something going on, on the higher ground, that halfway compels his respect, but he does not understand what it is, and in any case he can never get up there." You couldn't

paraphrase this to describe Huxtable, however, because there doesn't seem to be anything going on up there that compels even a tiny fraction of her respect. "Most of this," she wrote of the theoretical critiques of the Modern Movement advanced in the 1970s, "has been a tempest in an eye-dropper, based on self-indulgent *épater la bourgeoisie* aesthetics. The one real contribution has been the heretically perceptive work of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown. . . ." I take it she means that Venturi is the one theorist whose ideas she has taken the trouble to consider, though in truth she was rather late in giving her endorsement to Venturi, whose ideas by the 1970s could have seemed "heretical" only to an observer whose finger was not exactly, shall we say, on the pulse (and who failed to see that Venturi's "heresy" was no more than an inversion of the hi-lo hierarchy of Huxtable's own "qualitative



PHOTO © GARTH HUXTABLE. FROM HUXTABLE,
KICKED A BUILDING LATELY?

standards”).

The problem with the wholesale rejection of everything that takes place on the theoretical level is, of course, that it renders you incapable of distinguishing between the good and bad ideas that originate there, ideas which only much later emerge in the physical form of urban real estate. Thus Huxtable was powerless to deal with, or even to recognize, the emerging conflict between the post-modern historicism of Robert Stern, Charles Moore, and Charles Jencks, and the ideas of John Hejduk, Peter Eisenman, and James Wines, who were working to realize a contemporary vision on the spirit of the modernists whose work Huxtable admires. By the time she began castigating the “costume party” architecture of the historicists, it was too late. At the critical moment, Huxtable had failed to single out and lend support to those struggling against the cynicism and intellectual bankruptcy of the historicists. But how can you fend off intellectual bankruptcy if you have disarmed yourself in advance by holding all ideology in contempt? To do so is to give the green light to an ideologically vapid movement. Since Huxtable rejected theoretical projects not only for herself but also on behalf of her many readers, what right did she then have to complain about the public’s acceptance of postmodern pastiche?

I think it is fair to say that Huxtable’s limitations as a critic are the defects of her virtues. Her abiding concern was to direct the reader’s attention to the economic and political factors that determine the way our cities are built. Her readers are in her debt for performing this task, and her fellow writers can only stand in awe of the courage, intelligence, and humor with which she accomplished it.

But this accomplishment came with a price. Huxtable gave architecture a big boost in public visibility by equating it with urban real estate. It

is a testament to Huxtable's strength as a writer that we now assume that architecture and real estate are the same. Tell a new acquaintance you write about architecture, and right away they want to know what you think of the new tower at 65th and Third. We were all enlightened as well as entertained by Huxtable's campaigns against developers insensitive to any factors other than politics or economics; the problem was that Huxtable began to develop a similar insensitivity of her own. In the political atmosphere of a major metropolitan newspaper, no doubt the civic crusade seemed to possess greater weight and significance than the "tempest in an eye-dropper" of artistic controversy. But, artistically, "did it matter?" Is the role of urban watchdog the most useful model for the architecture critic? Should the strength of criticism be measured by the determination of a critic to stand up against the developer's power?

This is not to suggest that Huxtable has no eye for architecture as a visual art. She can be masterful in communicating architecture's sensuousness, particularly when writing about the wealth of ornamental detail in buildings predating the Modern Movement. She can conjure up architectural form brilliantly without ever resorting to formalism; her descriptions of buildings are everywhere marked by curiosity about the social context that produced them.

Yet this ability to convey the sensory wealth of our architectural past, coupled with a passionate disinterest in interpreting the ideological issues of the present, made Huxtable an unwitting midwife to the historicist movement she only belatedly deplored. For a generation of architects seeking to develop architectural and urban models to meet contemporary ways of thinking, Huxtable offered only models from the past—the distant past and the more recent past of the deceased modern masters. She made no sustained effort to make room for



PHOTO © GARTH HUXTABLE. FROM HUXTABLE, *KICKED A BUILDING LATELY?*

architects seeking to give contemporary substance to 20th-century ideals.

So we are left, half a decade after Huxtable's retirement, still waiting for the flowering of architecture worthy of this "greatest and most challenging" period, wondering how long we will have to endure the historicist escapade and wondering at the stamina of the few genuine visionaries to carry on without a more appreciative critical reception. We are the idealists now.

Goodbye History, Hello Hamburger: An Anthology of Architectural Delights and Disasters, Ada Louise Huxtable, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1986, 208 pp., illus., \$14.95 pb.

Kicked a Building Lately? Ada Louise Huxtable, Quadrangle/New York Times Books, 1976, 304 pp., illus., cloth \$12.50; paper \$5.95 (currently out of print).

*In the beginning, modernism was simple and well-defined:
a functional beauty, marked by a new lightness of form and texture.*

THE CHANGING FACE OF MODERNISM

Stephen Toulmin

Those of us who were born in Europe in the 1920s entered a world in which art, architecture, and design were all unselfconsciously *modern*. We learned to think of modernism as something unitary and well defined: the revolt against a late 19th-century taste for lumpish decoration, in favor of more functional kinds of beauty, marked by a new lightness of form and texture. So struck were we by the historical break that created modernism at the turn of the century that we overlooked the changes that were affecting the Modern Movement itself. Our teachers (e.g., Maxwell Fry in architecture, and Nikolaus Pevsner more generally) showed us the areas in which the "masters of modern design" agreed, but not where they disagreed.

Only now do we have the perspective to draw a picture of modernism as an *evolving* movement. Only in the last few years have we had the documents required to show how the style and strategy, practical technique and intellectual agenda of the Modern Movement evolved, from its origins in the late 1890s to its final disintegration in the 1960s. So it has only

recently become clear how the ambitions of the modernists changed from generation to generation: notably, between those whose program of work was established before 1914, those who were active between the world wars, and those who came to dominate the professional scene after 1945. In retrospect, some changes *within* modernism now appear more radical than those involved in launching the movement originally. One index of these changes is the current interest in Josef Hoffmann, Kolo Moser, and their associates in the Wiener Werkstätte of the 1900s. Thanks to the lively flow of new books about late Hapsburg Vienna, a substantial literature of reliable works on these architects and designers is now available, and we can add to our libraries an excellent translation, by the author, of Eduard Sekler's classic monograph/catalogue of Hoffmann's architecture.

Tracing Hoffmann's development from 1899 to the mid-1930s with Sekler's help, we can now see how much Hoffmann shared, not just with his mentor and immediate predecessor in Vienna, Otto Wagner, but also with the broader tendencies like *Jugendstil*

and art nouveau. The current revival of interest in Hoffmann is in some ways a conservative, even reactionary, development. Josef Hoffmann's designs went out of fashion in the austere aesthetic and intellectual climate of the 1930s and 1940s, along with Gustav Mahler's song cycles and symphonies, and the paintings of Gustav Klimt. Like Mahler's luscious harmonies and Klimt's metallic surfaces, they were too rich and decorative for aficionados of the Bauhaus and Mondrian, Anton Webern and Mies van der Rohe. Early silver tableware from the Werkstätte, with its severe geometrical meshwork, might retain its esteem in the age of Mies and the Bauhaus, but the Werkstätte's more colorful (and typical) products lost favor. So, although Hoffmann, Moser, and their colleagues thought of themselves as rebels, and allied with the Secession painters, their reputations as avant-garde craftsmen barely survived the 1920s. To that extent, our interest in them represents a true revival, like the parallel revivals of Klimt and Kokoschka, Bruckner and Mahler.

The five books reviewed have some merits in common. Writers like Fry and Pevsner emphasized the continuity of modernism; the present authors are ready to stand back and present a straightforward historical account. All of them provide material that will be helpful to us in analyzing the changing face of 20th-century modernism, both in the field of design, and in cultural history more generally. In the last respect, the most intriguing of the books is the study by Siegfried Wichmann (chief curator at the Munich Pinakothek before becoming professor of art history at Karlsruhe) on Austrian *Jugendstil* as a variant of art nouveau.

Wichmann shows how closely the *Jugendstil* followed the contemporary concern with biological forms and functions. Charles Darwin and Ernst Haeckel provided intellectual justification for the use of organic motifs characteristic of many art nouveau

architects and designers, not least Louis Sullivan and Louis Tiffany in the United States. Nor was this influence only one way. Wichmann depicts a tulip-shaped wineglass from 1898, whose form reappears in a plate depicting an amphibian in the 1904 edition of Haeckel's book, *Kunstformen der Natur*. More important for our purpose, Wichmann reproduces a striking 1898 engraving done by Kolo Moser for *Ver Sacrum*, of a nude growing from an iris blossom, which accompanies a poem by Arno Holz celebrating the evolutionary links between human beings and the rest of nature. Thus, on the broadest cultural level, the founders of Viennese modernist design lived in a world whose fundamental cosmological vision was inspired by biology rather than physics.

This point is confirmed by the account and illustrations that Eduard Sekler gives us of the Bergerhöhe house, above Hohenberg in Lower Austria. It was remodeled by Josef Hoffmann in 1898 for the steel magnate Paul Wittgenstein, uncle of Ludwig, the philosopher and architect. In May 1986, I visited this modest country house—or, more exactly, shooting lodge—which is still in the Wittgenstein family. The affinities of Hoffmann's earliest style to Victor Horta's are plain at first glance, both in points of construction, notably archways, and in the decoration. None of the engineering motifs that Hoffmann later adopted from Charles Rennie Mackintosh are yet in evidence. Sekler remarks how reminiscent the Bergerhöhe house is of Belgian art nouveau: in Wichmann's helpful phrase, its inspiration is of "floral and functional forms."

The geometrical and mechanical themes that eventually appeared in Hoffmann's work in 1904–1905 served no structural purpose; they entered his technical repertory as one more set of decorative motifs. In this respect, Hoffmann's work was even more conservative than Otto Wagner's.



O. WAGNER, MAJOLIKAHAUS, 40 LINKE WIENZEILE, VIENNA IV, 1898–1899. DECORATED HANDRAIL. FROM BORSI AND GODOLI, *VIENNA 1900* (RIZZOLI, 1986).

When Wagner first revealed the girders of his *Postsparkasse* building to public gaze, he set aside the late 19th-century habit of using surface decoration to conceal a building's physical structure, and opened a way toward the authentically functional architecture of Adolf Loos. By contrast, Loos, in his alliance with Karl Kraus, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Egon Schiele, saw Hoffmann's modernism as deceptive. The decorative style of the Wiener Werkstätte designers has a deliberate simplicity. But this plain style was not a new principle of structure or design: it was still essentially decorative. When Viennese architecture was subjected to the same basic critique that Arnold Schoenberg had given to Viennese music, it was

at the hands not of Hoffmann, but of Loos.

In their actual buildings, Loos and Hoffmann were not too far apart. If we take as our template Loos's most notorious building, the Goldman and Salatsch store on the Michaelerplatz, and compare this with Hoffmann's Klosehof and Winarskyhof buildings of 1924, or the Laxenburgstrasse public housing project of 1930–1932, we cannot argue that Hoffmann is at fault. By the 1920s, he had learned to use his decorative vocabulary sparingly. Still, "decoration" was never the issue for Hoffmann and Moser that it was for Loos or Kraus. In the mid-twenties, the nearest thing we can find to Mies or the later Bauhaus came not from Hoffmann or his pupils,

but from Loos's austere follower, Ludwig Wittgenstein—the house on the Kundmannsgasse that Wittgenstein designed for his elder sister, Margarete Stonborough, the subject of Klimt's well-known portrait.

Even so, Loos and Wittgenstein parted with the later Bauhaus in their fidelity to a program of "strong functionality." They shared a theory about *Lebensformen* (forms of living) according to which the forms, and even the meanings, of human artifacts depended on the form of living within which they played their normal roles. The proper form of a chair, for Loos, was the form of the sitting done in it; and for Wittgenstein the meaning of a linguistic item depended on the specific human situation and conduct within which it typically functioned. (These dicta call to mind the familiar Le Corbusier lounge chair. One might even say, Corbu, through his design, fixed the contemporary form of human activity we refer to as lounging!) According to Loos, one should be able to tell a building's function by looking at it—corporate headquarters or private house, prison or fast-food restaurant.

This view is far stronger than the sloppy account of functionality current in the 1930s and 1940s. By that reasoning, all modernist design was "functional" because it rejected late 19th-century decoration, and this needlessly diluted the critical force of Loos's position. The absence of merely decorative (and so nonfunctional) features does not by itself make a building functional: there are other requirements. As Martin Filler recently reminded us, for example, Mies's architectural program was rooted in a Platonist commitment to forms that are "eternal and universal," and his design principles were not functional, but structural. This Platonism led Mies to pursue a geometrical ideal, in which any building lent itself to any function. As with Descartes's geometrical coordinate system (x, y, z), Mies used the shell of a building to

define an empty space, which could then be used in any of a hundred ways. That is why we can so rarely tell at a glance what any particular Miesian building is meant for: whether it will be used as a museum or as offices, as a theater or as an apartment block.

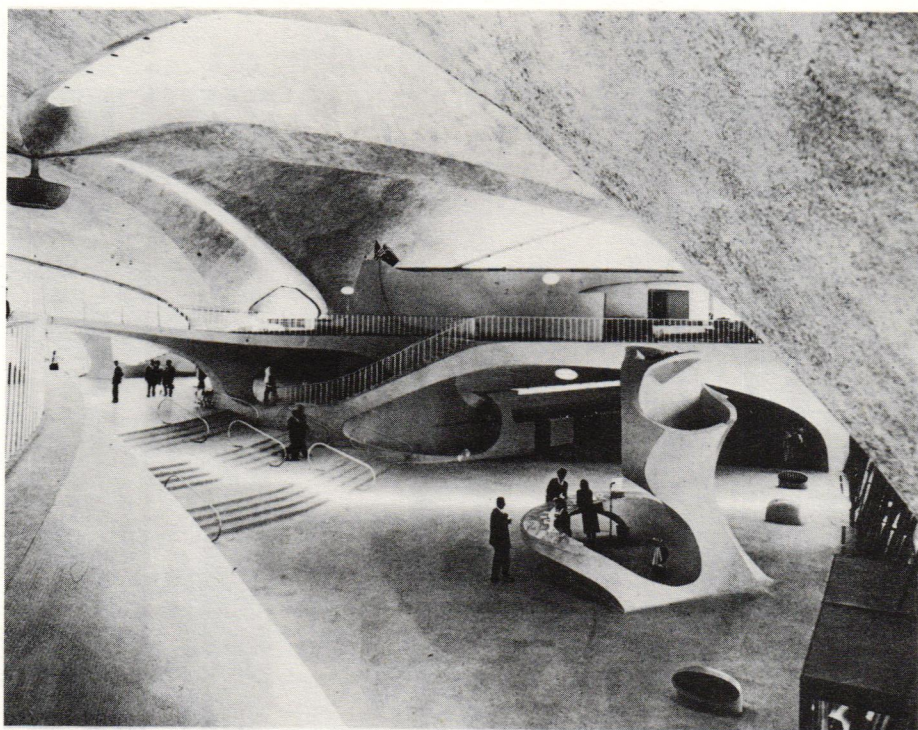
In this, Mies was at the opposite extreme from Loos, for whom the shell of a building could not be chosen without first analyzing its specific functions. The ultimate Loosian building is Eero Saarinen's TWA terminal at Kennedy Airport: there, every space serves a specific, local function in moving passengers and baggage between airplanes and street, and is shaped accordingly. (This was one of the first buildings to embody the now-familiar jetway.) So it was no accident that Saarinen broke with the abstract geometrical principles of the all-purpose Miesian "living space" to revive more biological conceptions. The TWA building recalls a living cell, with the flow of passengers following the same paths as the flow of cellular fluids. But this changeover from a universal all-purpose space to an organized system of particular spaces involved a trade-off. The elements of Saarinen's building were designed to serve those particular purposes that were foreseen at the time the building was commissioned. Unlike a Miesian building, which can always be put to new uses (the hotel becoming a prison, the art gallery a bank), the TWA terminal can not easily be adapted for any other purpose.

It is no accident, either, that the Miesian ideal was challenged in the sixties at a time when abstractions that had, on a broad cultural level, dominated the European avant-garde since the end of the First World War were yielding to more concrete, historical, and ecological conceptions. This was a time when the dream of finding techniques that could provide universal solutions to the problems of all places and times was being aban-

doned in favor of conceptions which allowed every cultural milieu to pose its own specific problems, to be dealt with in its own particular ways. In the mid-sixties, for instance, we at last heard the complaint that all cities are becoming architecturally indistinguishable; and that the urban panorama from Anchorage to Lagos and Santiago to Singapore now comprises the same rectangular, glass-screened towers and surfaces.

These parallels between architectural style and the larger culture are no accident. The First World War not only had drastic effects on the political map of Europe: it also generated a major break within the modernist tradition. The dismemberment of the Hapsburg Dual Monarchy and the establishment of the Austrian Republic as a vestige of its former self naturally affected Vienna more than most other European capitals. Taken together with the fall of the Hohenzollerns in Germany and the Romanovs in Russia, this transition ended the system of dynastic monarchies that had ruled Europe since the 17th century; and it prompted a reconsideration of fundamental principles of life, society, and culture.

Seen from the 1980s, the years between the two world wars may look like a period of frivolity, confusion, and economic disaster. But survivors of the First World War thought it was "the Great War," "the war to end all wars," or "the war to make the world safe for democracy," and they faced the 1920s with optimism. Now that the antiquated social, political, and cultural system of dynastic Europe had been swept away, it was time to build something more modern and more rational. So, in thought and the arts, as in political and social affairs, the order of the day was "new foundations," and those foundations, it was assumed, were to be emancipated from the legacies of history and tradition. (Even Einstein's critique of Newtonian physics, which had played



INTERIOR OF THE TWA TERMINAL, KENNEDY AIRPORT, NEW YORK CITY (1956–1962), EERO SAARINEN. FROM WATKIN, *A HISTORY OF WESTERN ARCHITECTURE*. PHOTO © EDWIN SMITH, SAFFRON WALDEN.

a crucial role in modern philosophy, was seen as clearing the underbrush in preparation for a “new instauration.”)

In this situation, it was not paradoxical that Otto Neurath could be both a leading philosopher in the *Wiener Kreis*, and also a minister in the Austrian Socialist government. One way or another, all these disruptions gave rise to demands for new intellectual or artistic principles that could be applied universally, and the door was opened to a new formalism. Hence the Vienna Circle attempt to ground philosophy in mathematical logic; the impulse toward musical systems freed from the tyranny of tonality; and finally, the intellectual power of the Bauhaus reformation in architecture and design, culminating in the explicitly Platonist ideals of Mies van der Rohe. So, when we discuss 20th-century modernism, we must always make it clear whether we have in mind the architects, artists, and thinkers who were at work before 1914 (Klimt and Hoffmann, Freud

and Mahler, Wittgenstein and Kraus), whether we mean the generation between the two world wars (twelve-tone music, nonrepresentational painters, and positivist philosophers), or whether we are referring to those who tried to revive modernism after 1945.

Eduard Sekler's splendid book leaves no doubt that Josef Hoffmann belongs to the first of these phases. As an *oeuvre*, Hoffmann's architecture appears old fashioned. He finished hardly any commissions after 1939, and even his works from the thirties show little advance on his earlier period; the few exceptions are his collaborations on competitive designs for international expositions. Nor does Giuliano Gresleri's survey of Hoffmann architecture alter the broad picture. The Italian edition of this book appeared before Sekler's magisterial work was published, and its critical perspective is somewhat oversimplified: for example, the introductory essay takes too seriously the professed unity of the Modern

Movement, and does not sufficiently address the issues that separated Hoffmann from Olbrich and Loos. Though not fully updated, the English version is still useful, especially as a pocketbook for those who plan to visit Hoffmann's buildings.

Werner Schweiger's survey of Wiener Werkstätte design is also less comprehensive than Sekler's treatment, but it is highly discriminating, and tells the same story. Designs from the Wiener Werkstätte have great charm today, but that charm is dated. The vogue for Fledermaus chairs and Stoclet frescoes has an antiquarian tone. (The clothes, especially the hats, are the giveaway: they are just the thing for a revival of *The Boy Friend*.) So, if we want to understand the second phase of Viennese modernism, we shall do better to study Astrid Gmeiner and Gottfried Pirhofer's account of *Der Österreichische Werkbund*. This book goes beyond the boundaries of post-1919 Austria, and shows us how modernism evolved in the new nations that were carved from the Hapsburg lands, notably Czechoslovakia and Hungary. It also helpfully pursues the links between Austrian designers and their colleagues in Germany and France; for example, Le Corbusier's designs for the Stuttgart Weissenhofsiedlung of 1927. As a result, we can watch the International Style of Mies and the later Bauhaus developing out of the work of architects in half a dozen countries.

As for the fate of the Modern Movement during the first twenty years after the Second World War, its story—in some ways one of triumph—has yet to be told. Only after 1950 was Mies securely ensconced at the Illinois Institute of Technology, and free to embark on his great series of structures dreamed up in Plato's Cave, the most impressive product of late modernist architecture. As Lorenzo Papi describes it, Mies's art is “*un'arte oggettiva*” and the leading features of his style are “*puro essenziale a semplice*.” But the story also has a darker

side. This purity and objectivity were bought only at a price: after 1945, modernist architecture acquired an anonymity which, since the mid-1960s, younger and more creative architects have found increasingly irksome.

The question whether what we know as postmodernism in architecture really represents a truly new "movement" therefore remains to be confronted. Certainly, it is hard for any architect today to develop a style as unlike Mies as Mies's style was unlike Hoffmann's and his contemporaries. Perhaps we should see postmodernism rather as one further phase in a story that began in the 1890s, and is still incomplete: the continuing evolution of 20th-century modernism.

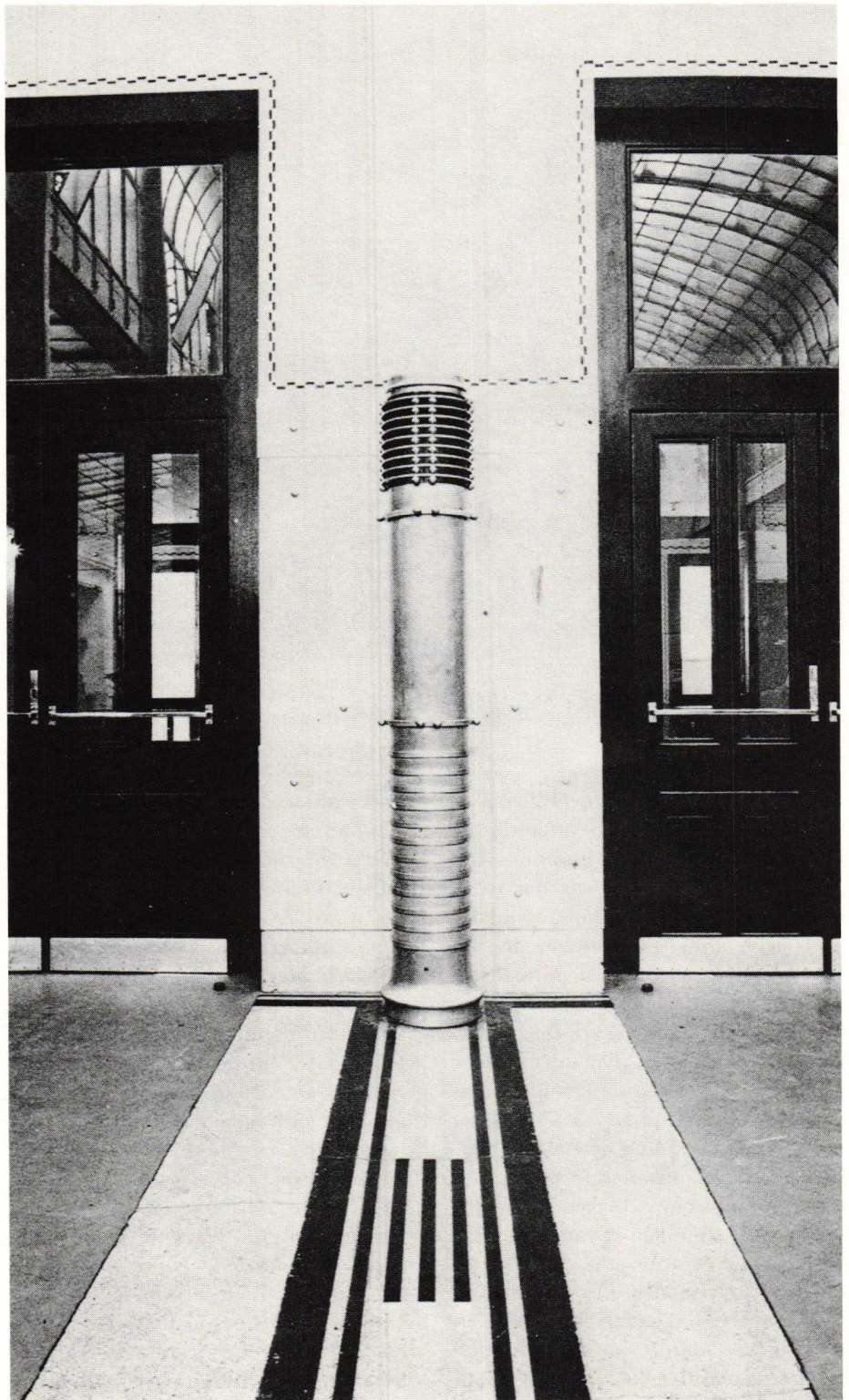
Josef Hoffmann: The Architectural Work, Eduard F. Sekler, translated by the author, Princeton University Press, 1985, 543 pp., illus., \$130.00.

Josef Hoffmann, Giuliano Gresleri, Rizzoli, 1985, 199 pp., illus., \$12.50 pb.

Wiener Werkstätte: Design in Vienna, 1903-1932, Werner J. Schweiger, Abbeville, 1984, 272 pp., illus., \$65.00.

Jugendstil Art Nouveau: Floral and Functional Forms, Siegfried Wichmann, New York Graphic Society with Little Brown, 1985, 238 pp., illus., \$45.00.

Der Österreichische Werkbund, Astrid Gmeiner and Gottfried Pirhofer, Residenz Verlag, 1985, 264 pp., illus., DM 120,00 (approx. \$70.00; text in German).



O. WAGNER, DETAIL OF AN ALUMINUM REGISTER FOR WARM-AIR HEATING. FROM BORSI AND GODOLI, *VIENNA 1900* (RIZZOLI, 1986).

When sculpture is removed from the museum to the country, a different relationship develops between the work and the viewer.

THE PLACE OF SCULPTURE

Marc Treib

Although today architecture and sculpture are respected as independent provinces, in the past their areas of overlap were considerable. Only in this century has sculpture assumed an identity free from its iconographic role in architecture, a distinction allowing the creation of works specifically for the private collection or the museum. As art critic Brian O'Dougherty explained in a series of articles in *Artforum* ten years ago, the exhibition *setting* became crucial to reading much modernist art: as the mark on the canvas was the figure on the ground, so the canvas itself served as the figure to the ground of the wall that supported it visually and physically.¹ From the sixties onward the publication of "installation photos" accompanied essays and reviews in art journals, illustrating the importance of the spatial configuration to the meaning of these works. Ultimately, artist Robert Irwin proposes, one could create works that merge figure and ground and use the setting as their basic armature and content.

But what of the setting for sculpture or the sculpture that derives from its setting? If only obliquely, these questions are addressed in two recent books, *Music in Stone: Great Sculpture Gardens of the World*, by Sidney Lawrence and George Foy, and *A*

Landscape for Modern Sculpture: Storm King Art Center, with text by John Beardsley and photographs by David Finn. *Music in Stone* is the more diluted of the two since it covers outdoor sculpture environments ranging from historical to contemporary times. It is also the more muddled of the two, lacking any clear and coherent argument. In fact, there is little argument at all, since the book is more a collection of examples than an examination of sculpture and its surrounding space.

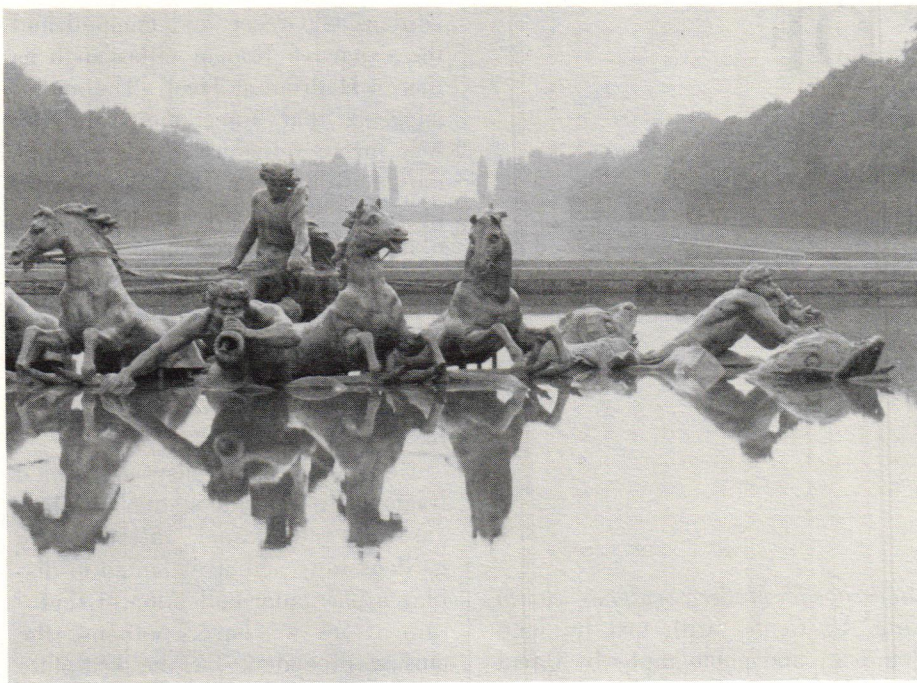
An introduction by landscape historian Elisabeth B. MacDougall traces the place of sculpture in the outdoors and outlines its three uses and (in some ways) historical stages: religious, pleasure, and museum. The first category includes monumental Egyptian complexes such as the temple of Hatshepsut (though seemingly more architectural than sculptural) and the heroic stone images of Abu Simbel, but it is broadened to include the Sacred Mountains of Italy and even the picturesque cemetery landscapes of the 19th-century United States. The important distinction here is that sculpture served a symbolic and/or narrative function, as a directive caption to the environmental design.

The second category is secular rather than sacred and, in MacDougall's essay, traces back to the residential

gardens of Greece and Pompeii and the extensive Roman villas such as that of Hadrian at Tivoli. The author suggests that since their function was rarely religious, these gardens must have been primarily for sensual pleasure, and thus generated particular sculptural programs: "Certain statue types, of Greek invention, were repeated over and over again [in the gardens of Pompeii], much as today's garden statuary seems limited to a few popular types, gnomes, frogs, and so forth."

Renaissance humanists assembled fragments of antique statuary in their gardens, and in some instances the gardens were actually created to display a particular collection of sculpture. Here we have, perhaps, the closest precedent for the sculpture parks of our own times, a quasi-sacred reading of art: less religious than objects of the church, but more sacred than a piece of the quotidian world (in sum, art should be revered). The Vatican Belvedere, MacDougall writes, "started a tradition that survived for many years with its display of the statues in an ornamental and regularized setting. The intention was to revive the ways in which statues had been shown in antiquity; the emphasis was on their importance as works of art."

Sculptural programs of mythical origin could be interpreted allegorically, however, as exemplified by the 16th century garden for Cosimo de' Medici's Villa Castello west of Florence. "Individual parts of the garden decorations alluded to familiar themes, such as poetry, the contrast of art and nature, the four parts of the world or the four seasons." In France the baroque garden extended the Italian tradition linearly in space, but retained the tradition of allegorical reference. At Louis XIV's Versailles, the most obvious of examples, the metaphor of the Sun King pervaded the iconographic program of the complex. In the statue and basin of Apollo fronting the great water parterre that



"BASSIN D'APOLLON," VERSAILLES. FROM LAWRENCE AND FOY, *MUSIC IN STONE*.

extends the principal axis, the God of the Sun rises from the surface of the pool to traverse the skies, bringing light to the world, as Louis would to his people.

The English gardens of Bridgeman, Kent, and other 18th-century landscape gardeners adopted a vocabulary in keeping with the forms and vegetation of the natural landscape, with sculpture and buildings and pavilions acquiring symbolic dimensions traditionally assigned to statues. The temples and grottoes that punctuate the meandering paths and carefully positioned clumps of vegetation bore meaning and intention far beyond the purely architectural. While they were primarily references to classical antiquity, and thus civilized fragments amidst the wilderness, they also carried more specific semantic programs. The Temples of Ancient and Modern Virtue and Temple of British Worthies at Stowe well illustrate how gardens seemingly for pure pleasure could bear a developed ideological program as well. A circular structure based on the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli—built

intact—represents ancient virtue; modern virtue, on the other hand, is portrayed by a ruin. The busts of the worthies included respected figures from British history such as Francis Bacon, William Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth; as forms they enlivened the curving wall of its architectural enclosures.

The MacDougall introduction is the most informative and coherent portion of the book, though it presents a very brief overview of a complex subject. The remainder of the book is broken into four major sections: open-air collections, museum gardens, aristocratic gardens, and ancient sculpture sites. In other words, we move back in time. Neither the organization nor the writings are convincing, however, and we are left principally with a book of photographs.

Music in Stone suffers from an absence of a clearly stated message: is the authors' concern sculpture per se? its setting? or the interrelationship between sculpture and setting? For the most part the book addresses only the first topic, focusing on individual works

while providing a brief history of a particular collection. The level of writing is aimed at a general audience (no parental guidance needed) and reads mostly as extended captions. There are no plans to the gardens and no sense of the relationships between the various sculptures. More troublesome and frustrating is the absence of illustrations for some pieces mentioned in the text, and several misspellings and errors. Thrown together are corporate collections such as the Pepsico, museum gardens such as the Billy Rose Art Garden, a part of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, and the "California Scenario" court in Costa Mesa, California. What these three places have in common is not made clear, other than that the last two are the work of Isamu Noguchi.

Naturally a reviewer can take issue with the selections of any survey and perhaps it is a bit too picky to question the choices here. Since the criteria for selection are not stated, however, one can only wonder about the inclusion of certain places, historical and contemporary. Surely the Louisiana Museum in Humlebaek, Denmark is a worthy example, but the few sculptural pieces that surround the Moderna Museet in Stockholm—even if by such luminaries as Calder and Picasso—hardly constitute a true sculpture court. They are simply sculpture outside the museum. This may be the reason the generic and bland category "open-air" collections has been used, instead of a more precise term. The section on "Museum Gardens" concludes with "Art in School Campuses," again comprised of fragments from diverse places thrown together with little coherent discussion.

The section on "Aristocratic Gardens" is better written and more to the point, primarily because the discussion concerns gardens and the sculpture within them, rather than individual pieces. There are few surprises here and the list of gardens seems to follow that classic line from the film *Casablanca*: "Round up the

usual suspects." Almost as a litany we read Villa d'Este, Bomarzo, Isola Bella, Boboli, Caserta, Versailles, Stourhead. Villa Giulia and Casino Pio IV in Rome are notable omissions, but the appearance of the Peterhof estate outside Leningrad is particularly welcome. This section is unfortunately brief.

The book closes with a rambling chapter on ancient sites around the world, traipsing from Easter Island to Stonehenge to the Totem Park in Vancouver to the dry garden at Ryoan-ji. This chapter appears to be just short of a desperation move, the last-minute answer to the question: "What can we do with *these*?" Categorizing Stonehenge and Ryoan-ji as primarily sculpture is rather wide of the mark, though one can certainly appreciate their sculptural aspects. Such places raise other questions never answered by the book: what is sculpture, and what is the relation between aesthetic pleasure and symbolic content? The inclusion of this handful of ancient works evidences a Western appropriation of exotic forms, stripping them of their cultural content and looking at them strictly for their aesthetic properties, as might the formalist connoisseur.

The text of *Music in Stone* is a hodgepodge achieving little beyond work and garden captions. Even the book's title is curious, as many of the sculptures are made of bronze, steel, or materials other than stone. If one buys *Music in Stone*, it will be either compulsively, to have every book on the subject, or for the excellent photographs, mostly by Nicolas Sapiéha. The layout shows the pictures to advantage and the printing is of good quality. One wishes the full addresses of the collections shown were provided, because, once provoked, one is left with nowhere to go.

A *Landscape for Modern Sculpture* is a different sort of book. John Beardsley, who curated the "Probing the Earth" land art exhibition in 1978, and wrote *Earthworks and Beyond: Contemporary Art in the Landscape*



MONOLITHS ON THE SLOPES OF THE VOLCANO RANO RARAKU, EASTER ISLAND. FROM LAWRENCE AND FOY, *MUSIC IN STONE*.

(1984), a sequel to his catalogue, is more ambitious. Beardsley tries to locate these works not only in the landscape but also within the history of modern sculpture, and wisely distinguishes between those pieces displayed outdoors and those works created with a specific outdoor site in mind. In *Being and Circumstance* (1985), Robert Irwin has provided us with a useful structure for analyzing sculptural types.² "Site dominant" comprises works made in the studio and then positioned outdoors (this would include most of the sculpture published in both books); "site adjusted" takes the location into consid-

eration, though the sculpture remains identifiable as a piece of the sculptor's total oeuvre. For example, a di Suvero is a di Suvero first and foremost. "Site specific" sculpture exploits the structure of the site to determine the work, though the identity of the artist is manifest through a specific formal vocabulary. (Irwin uses Richard Serra as his example here.) And finally, proposed by Irwin as his own manner, are the "site conditioned/determined," where sculpture in some way elucidates the properties of the site rather than displacing or overlaying them.

Though it raises broader issues, *A Landscape for Sculpture* is a book

about one collection, the Storm King Art Center in Mountainville, New York, which grew from the collection and munificence of Richard Ogden. Ogden began his collection in a quarry in Austria, where he found pieces by Karl Pfann, Josef Pillhofer, and Erich Thorn. Though he had some inklings about their display, he was influenced by photos of Henry Moore's works in the sheep farm landscape of Scotland. A visit to Bolton Landing, the studio/farm of David Smith, confirmed his instincts about how his collection should be displayed. First putting pieces outdoors due to lack of space in his studio, Smith in time realized the aesthetic potential of outdoor siting and began to conceive of the farm as an ongoing testing ground for form.

Beardsley opens his essay with a discussion of sculpture's move outdoors. Scale was one of the principal reasons: as artists worked larger, space was required to exhibit the pieces, prompting their display outside the museum building. Sculpture has different light requirements than those typically assigned to painting—classical painting seeks an even, north light, while three-dimensional works benefit from strong directional light that renders and heightens the sense of volume.

The book spotlights the work of David Smith; the author's discussion of Smith's contributions to contemporary sculpture and of the thirteen works in the Storm King collection are succinct and clearly written. The remainder of the book, however, is less illuminating and offers only limited information on the artists and their works, as if taken from a *Who's Who in Modern Sculpture*. Beardsley does raise the greater issues, but the book is more an annotated catalogue than a text which grapples with problems greater than the maintenance requirements for outdoor sculpture.

The relationship between the "typical" visitor and the sculpture in art parks such as Storm King remains unspecified. For one group it is clearly

a question of entertainment: sculpture is to be enjoyed. The second group still believes that art retains its sacred content as it did in the religious complexes discussed in Elisabeth MacDougall's essay in *Music in Stone*. Perhaps a more general description might term the experience quasi-sacred: the art museum—with its white walls, silence, and protocol for viewing—positioned somewhere between the church and the cinema. When art works are removed from the museum to the country a new relationship could develop between work and viewer, and indeed elements of Mark di Suvero's heroic constructions, such as fragments to climb or swing on, utilize that possibility. Isamu Noguchi's "Momo Taro" (1977), one of the most compelling sculptures in either book, is composed of a collection of boulders, split and crafted for sitting. The piece falls between Irwin's site adjusted and site specific categories, easily recognizable as a Noguchi, but conceived for a specific site and purpose. The interaction fostered by considerations for human use in these works grounds them in social purpose, which is only one possible way to extend significance beyond the visual.

If one eliminates the creation of true site works in these various parks (and here the parks included are different from collections such as the Laumeier Sculpture Park outside St. Louis, which has commissioned site specific works), the fundamental question remains: are these spaces created to display sculpture or is sculpture sited in existing landscape? Storm King landscape architect William Rutherford appears to be quite sensitive to the problems of siting and landscape, but one can still question the backgrounding of more open pieces against visually active branch structures. In several ways the typical sculpture park continues the English garden tradition, using sculpture instead of temples or mock ruins, seemingly chosen from a small group of

artists (Arnaldo Pomodoro, Mark di Suvero, Alexander Calder, Alexander Liberman, and Isamu Noguchi appear in many of the collections). This is a good time to question the dominance of the meandering aesthetic as the best way to plan an outdoor setting for sculpture. Perhaps we should look more carefully at the potentialities of the defined court or the garden as well as the forest and the glade—or all four in combination.

The layout and printing of *A Landscape for Modern Sculpture* can hardly be faulted. David Finn's photographs of the works and grounds are superb and the use of multiple views and details of the same work is well conceived. Though there is no plan to the garden, aerial photographs offer us a faceted picture of pieces in relation to each other. The color printing is of the highest quality and the matte coated stock brings out the best in the images without glare. This is a handsome volume.

Outdoor sculpture is not a new phenomenon. We know of the Trojan Horse (welcomed into the city, one assumes, for its beauty as well as its act of homage), the Colossus of Rhodes, or even the central figure (now gone for restoration) of Marcus Aurelius on the Capitoline. These were all works rooted in cities and given to purpose beyond the aesthetic. Claes Oldenburg's series of colossal monuments of the sixties and seventies illustrated that the outdoor situation creates not only a need for a different attitude toward scale, but that scale and outdoor siting can affect or become the primary content of the art.³ In many of Oldenburg's works the properties of common objects are magnified to such an extent that they assume sculptural quality while focusing on the overlooked furnishings of everyday life, as if viewed through the enlarging lens. *Music in Stone* and *Landscape for Modern Sculpture* provide us with a view into what has been done in the past, but do little to ask what can be done in the future.

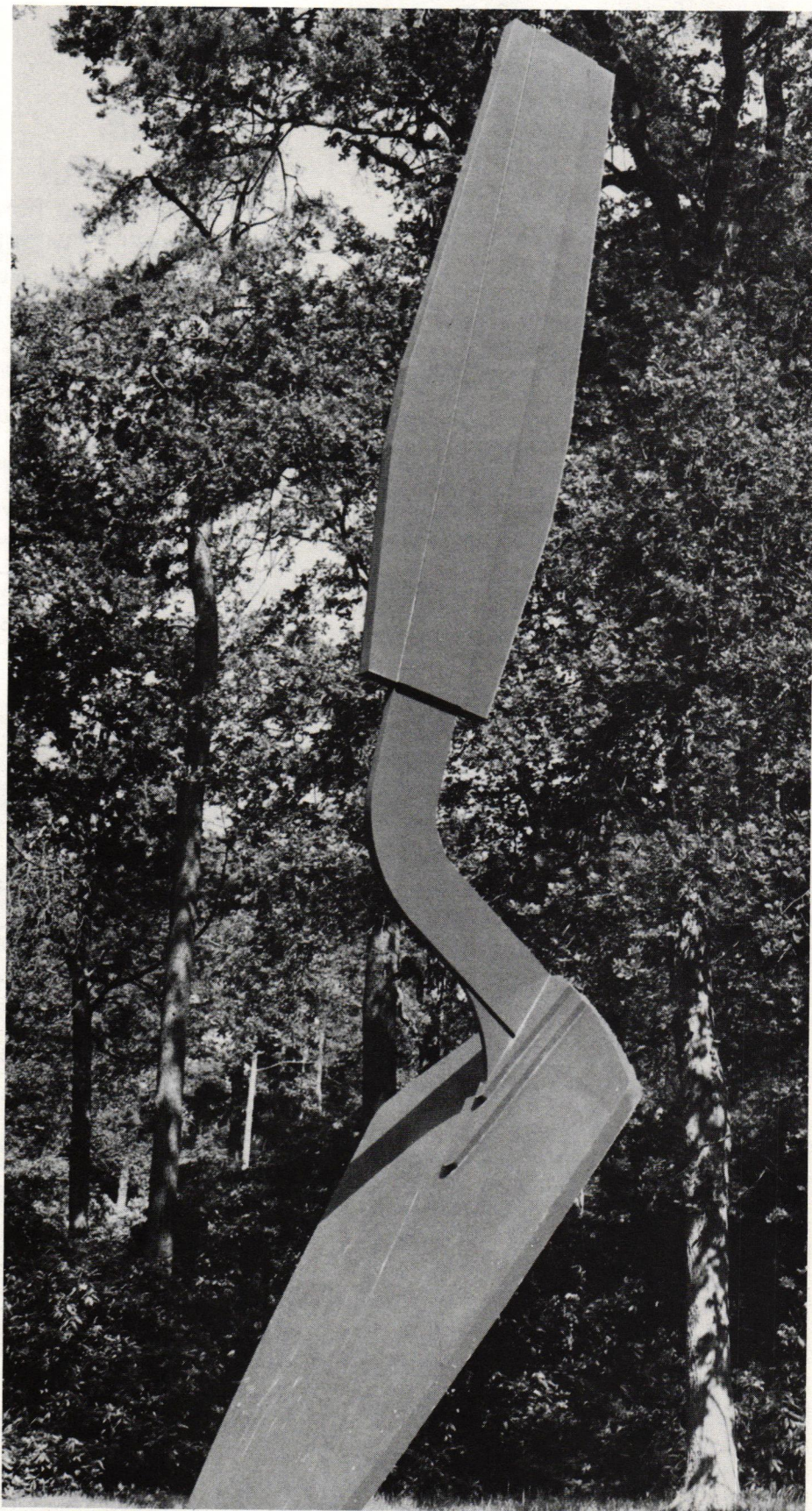
1. Brian O'Dougherty, "Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space," *Artforum*, March and April, 1976.

2. Robert Irwin, *Being and Circumstance: Notes Towards a Conditional Art*, Robert Irwin (Larkspur Landing: Lapis Press, 1985): 26-27.

3. See Claes Oldenburg, *Proposals for Monuments and Buildings, 1965-69* (Chicago: Big Table Publishing Company, 1969); Bar-bara Haskell, *Claes Oldenburg: Object Into Monument* (Pasadena Art Museum, 1971); and Coosje van Bruggen and Claes Oldenburg, *Claes Oldenburg: Large-Scale Projects, 1977-1980* (New York, Rizzoli, 1980).

Music in Stone: Great Sculpture Gardens of the World, Sidney Lawrence and George Foy, Scala Books, 1984, 207 pp., illus., \$45.00.

A Landscape for Modern Sculpture: Storm King Art Center, John Beardsley, photos by David Finn, Abbeville, 1985, 112 pp., illus., \$35.00.



TROWEL, BY CLAES OLDENBURG—STEEL SPRAYED BLUE. KRÖLLER-MÜLLER MUSEUM, GELDERLAND, HOLLAND.



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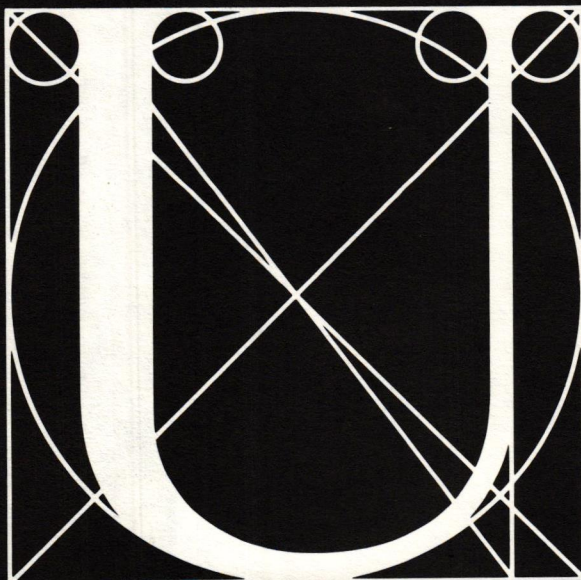
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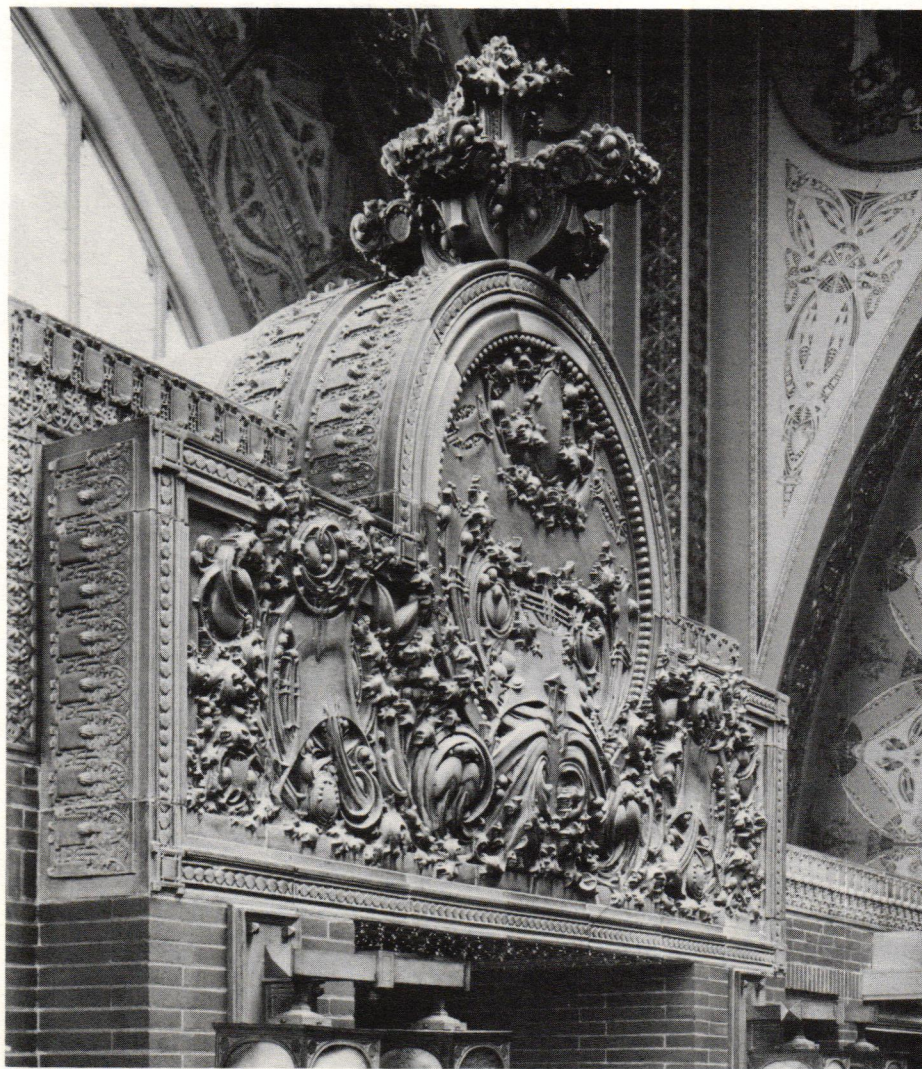
Robert Brueggemann:

LOUIS SULLIVAN RECONSIDERED

Louis Sullivan seems to be on the minds of a great many people now. The two books under review here are only part of a flood of recent work on this intriguing American architect. During the last few years, research done for dissertations, exhibitions, books, and articles has illuminated hitherto murky aspects of Sullivan's life and work. Despite all of this effort, however, Sullivan the man and Sullivan the architect still do not quite come into focus and will probably remain subjects of intense scrutiny for the foreseeable future.

Of all the books on Sullivan, one of the most curious is David Andrew's volume, *Louis Sullivan and the Polemics of Modern Architecture: the Present against the Past*. Andrew argues that Sullivan, in his life and work, embodied many of the most pernicious aspects of modernism: a denial of history; a displacement of traditional institutions, such as the church, state, and family; and the elevation of personal self-expression and aesthetics over the development of common beliefs and languages. It is clear that the book has been heavily influenced by the work of Norris Kelly Smith, a former professor at Washington University in St. Louis. One of the most redoubtable figures on the recent architectural scene, Smith produced an important study on the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and occasional jeremiads on the sins of modern life and architecture. (See his review of McKim, Mead and White, *DBR* 3.)

By adopting this perspective, Andrew places himself in opposition to almost everything that has been written about Sullivan. This does give Andrew an interesting slant on the Sullivan oeuvre, and there are some enlightening pages on Sullivan's ideas about history and on several striking



LOUIS H. SULLIVAN, NATIONAL FARMERS' BANK, OWATONNA, MINNESOTA, 1907-1908. COURTESY OF THE CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND THE ST. LOUIS ART MUSEUM.

contradictions in Sullivan's thought. Andrew's argument that the late works, especially the Holy Trinity church, are Sullivan's most successful pieces of architecture, is also provocative.

In the end, however, the advantage of the outsider's perspective was not exploited. The antimodern, anticapitalist biases of this book are so strident, the indictments so indiscriminate, the tone so churlish, that they wear out the patience of any but the true believer. We are told that the modern architect completely ignores the client and gives him what he needs rather than what he wants, that those who came to Chicago in the late 19th century sought salvation in quick money, that the ordinary capitalist

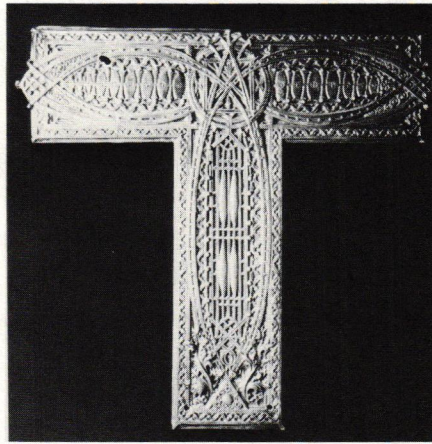
was shrewd, ambitious, socially ostentatious, with propensities toward the unethical. Some of the criticism is gratuitous in the extreme, such as the comment that Methodism jettisoned the traditional Christian ritual and replaced it with "social programs (athletics, Sunday School, Square dancing and pot luck dinners)," or the indictment of the activities of Ellis Wainright after he commissioned his famous office building in St. Louis.

For many readers this kind of rhetoric will instantly recall the work in the 1960s and 1970s of antimodernist crusaders such as Christopher Lasch, Philip Rieff, and Ivan Illich, as well as the "modernism bashing" that had a vogue in architecture circles in the

mid-1970s and which can be seen in books such as Peter Blake's *Form Follows Fiasco*. In fact Andrew's book seems to be a product of the years that preceded its first incarnation as a dissertation in 1977. Although there are a few items postdating 1977 in the bibliography, it is apparent that the voluminous work on American architectural history from the last few years has not greatly influenced Andrew. This is especially critical in the case of Narciso Menocal's book, *Architecture as Nature* (University of Wisconsin, 1981), which treats many of the same themes contained in Andrew's book in a more extended and satisfactory fashion.

The real problem with this book is not that it is a product of another era, but the subject itself. If the focus was to be the sins of modernism, why didn't Andrew go after Hannes Meyer, Walter Gropius, or Ludwig Hilbersheimer? To make his indictment of modernism Andrew has used Sullivan as a straw man, a disembodied symbol for all that is wrong with the world today. He was obliged to caricature him, squeezing the work of this untidy, disorganized genius into the straitjacket of utilitarian functionalism and cheerless determinism. Unfortunately for this argument, Sullivan is completely inappropriate for the role. Andrew utterly fails to prove his contention that Sullivan was a modernist in most of the meanings of that term that have been current since the 1920s. What he is really tilting against is the reputation of Sullivan as it was established by modernist historians such as Hugh Morrison, Sigfried Giedion, and Condit.

The irony, of course, is that most of the research devoted to the history of architecture since the mid-1970s has been of a completely different type. Recent historians are interested in Sullivan precisely because he was not a European modernist, because he embodied many of the most cherished ideals of the Ecole des Beaux-arts and of the 19th century. This



LOUIS H. SULLIVAN, T-PLATE, ORNAMENT FROM STOCK EXCHANGE ELEVATOR GRILLE, 1893.

interest was already evident in the mid-1970s, in the perceptive essay by William Jordy in his fourth volume in the *American Buildings and Their Architects* series. This same impulse has led to the spectacular rehabilitation of figures like McKim, Mead and White, and Daniel Burnham, whom Andrew apparently still believes to be "anti-heroes."

This book would have been much better if Andrew had attempted to illustrate his thesis positively rather than negatively. Why couldn't he have concentrated on architects, buildings, or cities he admired? He gives few indications what these might be. The Athens of Pericles, Florence of the early Renaissance, and, of all things, the Paris Opera, come in for positive words. It would have been interesting to hear Andrew's explanation of how the citizens of these golden ages managed to avoid the problems that have befallen our own tawdry, monotonous, industrial-capitalist society.

Robert Twombly's *Louis Sullivan, His Life and Work*, is a completely different kind of book. Essentially a biography, it follows in the path of Sullivan's own *Autobiography of an Idea* (1924) and Willard Connelly's *Louis Sullivan: The Shaping of American Architecture* (1960). While it cannot match the earlier works in fluency and style, it is more reliable. Twombly has read carefully and checked extensively all known sources on Sullivan's

life, and has produced a judicious appraisal from an evenhanded, non-polemical stance. His book will be a standard reference on Sullivan for years to come.

Twombly provides copious amounts of new information on topics ranging from the addresses of Sullivan's parents in Boston to the extent of damage caused during the Paris Commune. On the crucial issues of why Sullivan went to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, how he got his job with Furness in Philadelphia, how he was treated by the national architectural press after his break with Adler, Twombly offers excellent new conclusions.

The one area where this book seems less than convincing is in the arguments for the suggestion that Sullivan was homosexual. Many readers undoubtedly would have been more comfortable if this whole issue had been sidestepped. But Sullivan's writings clearly indicate that he was intensely interested in sexuality, and it does seem to be central to his architectural thinking. Twombly's thesis has much to recommend it and could explain Sullivan's fascination with male anatomy, his legendary Don Juan stories, the fiasco of his marriage, his long downhill slide at the end of his life, perhaps even part of his attraction to the works of Michelangelo and Walt Whitman.

The problem lies not with the thesis but with the argument supporting it, based in part on the writings of Sullivan himself, such as his descriptions of the physique of William Curtis at the Lotus Club. But it is hard to believe that Sullivan would betray his hand in such a public way. The other argument, based on the observation that Sullivan's earlier buildings, with their masculine rectilinear forms, were overwhelmed in the end by female curvilinear elements, is highly problematic and depends on dubious stereotypical notions about homosexuality.

In addition to providing new insight on Sullivan's life, this book provides

a wealth of new documentation on Sullivan's buildings. The text and the notes supply the most up-to-date and accurate list available of buildings done by Sullivan. Why the author or the publisher felt a separate catalogue necessary at the end of the book is perplexing, since it repeats in a less complete way what can be found in the text.

There are too few illustrations, and some of the choices are peculiar. The Babson House, for example, described in the text as the most handsome residence designed by Sullivan, is not illustrated. Also, the quality of the reproductions is inexcusable in a book dealing with architecture. They are so bad that new photographs taken by the author look just as muddy as photos taken from turn-of-the-century architectural periodicals.

For a book of this scope there are only a few lapses in factual matters. Twombly at one point refers to a short-lived height limit for Chicago buildings. In fact, once the height limit was passed in the early 1890s, it was never rescinded, only raised and lowered, modified by the 1923 zoning law and largely gutted after World War II. At another point he refers to William Boyington as a "prolific if undistinguished local architect known mostly for railroad stations." This is a surprising description of Chicago's most important architect until the 1880s, the designer of the Chicago Water Tower, the old Board of Trade, and dozens of other major Chicago buildings. A final problem is that Twombly does not deal systematically with the major address changes instituted about 1910 affecting almost all addresses on Chicago's west and north sides. When he describes the residence of William Curtis in 1878, at 475 North Franklin Street, for example, his comments show that he thought this was a current address, putting it in or near the Loop. In fact North Franklin Street was subsequently renamed North Park Street and 475 would put it a mile and a half north



LOUIS H. SULLIVAN, AUDITORIUM THEATRE, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, 1886-1889. COURTESY OF THE CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND THE ST. LOUIS ART MUSEUM.

of the Loop in the area now called Old Town. Perhaps the addresses can be corrected in a subsequent edition to maintain the book's otherwise high degree of reliability.

Twombly's analysis occasionally seems weaker when he moves from the biographical sphere into more purely architectural matters. This is not surprising in a book that is primarily a biography, written by a scholar trained in history rather than the history of architecture. For example, although he generally does a laudable job of making Sullivan's career at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts come to life, he does not really get to the core of what the Beaux-Arts was about, why the students were obliged to stick to the *esquisse*, why the orders were a fundamental basis for architecture, why the plan was the generating element of the whole design.

The decision to concentrate on the "artistic" aspects of the designs, especially the façades and the interior decorations, also makes it difficult to get a sense of the buildings as a whole, especially the crucial relationships of plan, structure, and decoration. Little is said about how Sullivan's decorative programs were coordinated. In the discussion of the auditorium,

one looks in vain for an explanation of how the various decorations on the interior fit into a unified scheme. Twombly does not even mention the names of the artists who executed the paintings around the proscenium or the large murals in the auditorium. Perhaps most surprising is the nearly complete absence of any discussion of the role of Elmslie and others in the creation of Sullivan's own ornament.

Twombly apparently decided what to discuss and what to omit based on a perception of Sullivan as primarily a single, romantic creator. This approach leaves much unexplained. Since there is little discussion of building types, it is, for example, difficult for the reader to assess the importance of the decision at the McVicker's theater to remove the traditional chandelier, a decision which Twombly calls a major innovation. Nor are the clients given much attention in this book. We find out almost nothing about Martin Ryerson despite the fact that his name appears many times throughout the book, nor about Carrie Eliza Getty, whose magnificent tomb ought to arouse some curiosity. Nor is there much discussion of the cost of land, leasing, construction, the schedules of archi-

itects' fees, the developers, the construction companies—in other words, the business of architecture, which was being transformed during this period. In fact Twombly credits Sullivan for numerous innovations that were probably made by clients, consultants, and contractors.

The author probably felt on the shakiest ground assessing the work itself. He has avoided putting forward his own conclusions and instead has gone to reviews of the time and the standard histories of Sullivan's work. The newspaper reviews that are often cited in this book are unreliable as guides to how a building was received. The majority were nothing more than reprints of notices sent out by the architects or developers. Of more consequence are assessments by critics such as Montgomery Schuyler, Barr Ferree, and later scholars such as Hugh Morrison, but Twombly makes little attempt to present these personalities and the divergent viewpoints. When Twombly ventures his own opinion, as he does in the case of the Troescher Building, vestigial modernism comes to the fore. In the case of the cottage at Ocean Springs, which he calls an overlooked masterpiece of environmental design, it is difficult to get any sense of his critical stance.

To criticize a biography on these grounds, however, is hardly fair. That the book can bear close scrutiny throughout, even when it leaves the realm of biography and ventures into extended discussions of architecture, structure and theory, is a testament to the time and care expended on this volume. This is a sound piece of work and a major contribution to our knowledge of one of the most perplexing characters in architectural history.

Louis Sullivan and the Polemics of Modern Architecture: the Present against the Past, David S. Andrew, University of Illinois Press, 1985, 199 pp., illus., \$19.95.

Louis Sullivan: His Life and Work, Robert Twombly, Viking, 1985, 528 pp., illus., \$29.95.

David Gebhard:

C. R. ASHBEЕ

ALAN CRAWFORD

Charles R. Ashbee enjoyed a widespread reputation in England, Europe, and the United States at the turn of the century. Almost any serious discussion of the English Arts and Crafts movement of the time mentioned his many writings, his designs in the decorative arts, his architectural designs, his founding of the Guild of Handicraft, and his concerns for historic preservation and city planning. And yet, it has always been difficult to sense his personality and see what his contributions were to these diverse fields. Alan Crawford's 499-page biography on Ashbee not only presents in rich detail the salient aspects of his life and work, it also provides us with an excellent, even-handed critical approach to each aspect of Ashbee's activities. Crawford's volume is a joy to read, and the quality of his writing is matched by the quality of the black-and-white and color illustrations accompanying the text. The first section is a biography; the second, a discussion of Ashbee as an architect and designer; the third looks at his reputation and influence.

Crawford always presents Ashbee and his accomplishments objectively and conveys the personalities of Ashbee and his associates perceptively. There are, however, a few quirks. For instance, he continually mentions Ashbee's homosexuality but withdraws from any discussion of its possible relationship to Ashbee's professional activities. In fact, throughout the book Crawford deals separately with Ashbee's professional activities and his private life. In addition, the areas of design activities—architecture, furniture and interior design, metalwork, jewelry, and design for the printed page—are also segregated from one another, throwing the burden on the

reader to integrate this material into a unified biography of the man.

The weakest chapter is that devoted to Ashbee as architect. How often over the years, in the writings of Nikolaus Pevsner and others, have we encountered illustrations of Ashbee's architecture, especially his townhouses on Cheyne Walk in Chelsea, and wished to know more about them. While a few of Ashbee's original drawings are reproduced in this volume, only one house (his remodeling of the Norman Chapel at Broad Campden, 1905–1907), is presented via floor plans; and only a few interior views are shown of any of the houses. Neither the text nor the limited number of photographs helps the reader to understand Ashbee's buildings. Crawford is enthusiastic about Ashbee's work as an architect (at least up to the mid-1900s), but his case for Ashbee's significance as an Arts and Crafts architect is not substantiated. We need to know much more about these buildings before any judgment can be made.

The author does far better in the sections devoted to Ashbee as a designer of furniture, metalwork, jewelry, and the printed page. In his day, Ashbee's designs for metalwork firmly established his reputation, but, as Crawford points out, the attribution of many of these designs to him is not established. Many of the metalwork designs were published or exhibited under the names of his co-workers in the Guild of Handicraft. Notwithstanding problems of this sort, it is apparent that Ashbee was a gifted designer in his own right, and he was unquestionably a highly influential one.

Ashbee was an accomplished architect and designer, but not of the stature of Charles F. A. Voysey or of M. H. Bailie Scott. In certain ways he could be compared to the American exponent of the Arts and Crafts, Gustav Stickley (though Ashbee was by far the more talented). Both Ashbee and Stickley carried the Arts and Crafts Movement into the 20th cen-



CABINETMAKERS OF THE GUILD OF HANDICRAFT, ca. 1901

tury, both were mild socialists, both tried to play a game between their versions of the medieval guild and the needs of a free-enterprise marketplace, and both witnessed the end of the Arts and Craft Movement in the mid-teens.

Perhaps Ashbee's principal contribution to the international Arts and Crafts Movement, to architecture, preservation, and planning was through his writings. His significance here is not as an influential theoretician akin to Ruskin and Morris, but rather as a chronicler and advocate. The series of articles he wrote for *House Beautiful* in 1909–1910 on the history of the English Arts and Crafts Movement, and on “Man and the Machine,” are key documents. His visits to America provided material not only for his introduction to Wasmuth's famous 1911 publication on the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, but for his perceptive article, “American Architecture,” published in 1901 in *Munsey's Magazine*. His later involvement with city planning led to his activities in Jerusalem after the First World War, and to such planning classics as his

Where the Great City Stands: A Study of the New Civics (1917).

Closely tied to his views on planning were his attitudes toward historic preservation, which were apparent in his *Report of Mr. C. R. Ashbee to the Council of the National Trust ... on his Visit to the United States* (1901), in the design approach that he took to old and new buildings in Chipping Campden from 1902 on, and then in his post-1919 proposals for Jerusalem. His approach was contextual, a careful blending of the old with the new.

In his concluding chapter, Crawford provides us with a series of critical appraisals of Ashbee's activities, concluding, “The range and variety of his activities were one of the most impressive things about him. Simply from the point of view of the historian, it is remarkable how he touched on so many different sides of British culture and intellectual life at the turn of the century.”

C. R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist, Alan Crawford, Yale University Press, 1985, 500 pp., illus., \$40.00.

Joel Sanders:

LEARNING FROM LEDOUX

In 1793, during the Reign of Terror, the architect Claude Nicholas Ledoux was imprisoned. His crime was designing the infamous *barrières*, the tollgates encircling Paris, symbols of the *ancien régime*. Bereft of wife, children, freedom, fortune, and reputation, Ledoux undertook the completion of his final project, not a built work, but a book of architectural plates entitled *Architecture Considered in Relation to Art, Mores, and Legislation*.

Conceived as an encyclopedia, this collection, Ledoux wrote, “brings together all kinds of building used in the social order.” In 1804 the first of five intended volumes appeared, which contained his best-remembered work, the designs for the community of Chaux. The remaining plates, documenting Ledoux's many built and unbuilt commissions, remained unpublished at the time of his death. In 1847, Daniel Ramée compiled all 300 plates into two volumes which became the definitive collection of Ledoux's designs.

Well over a century later, Princeton Architectural Press, in conjunction with the Avery Library of Columbia University, has reissued Ledoux's work in one volume, one of a series of facsimile editions which include Letarouilly's *Edifices de Rome Moderne* and Alphand's *Promenades de Paris*. Although the images are reduced in size and sometimes lack the crispness of the originals, this is an attractive and affordable edition of a work of immense contemporary and historical significance.

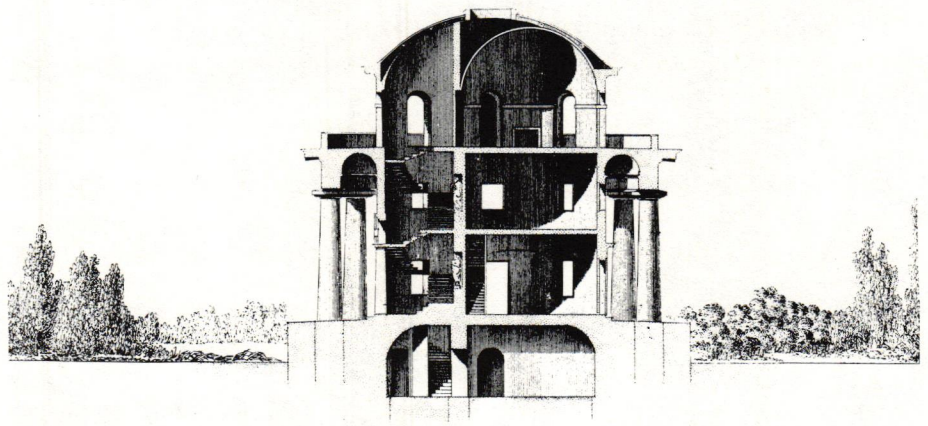
This republication reflects the revival of interest in Ledoux's work over the past decade—not the first time Ledoux has found an enthusiastic audience among architects and historians. He was as revered by the creators of modernism as by their postmodern detractors today. His work is so rich, complex, and many-layered that it re-

sists the vicissitudes of architectural fashion. It is instead reappraised according to changing architectural ideology. Understanding these shifting approaches to Ledoux's work reveals as much about the state of 20th-century architectural thought as about one of the most profound and complex minds of the late 18th century. Modernists considered Ledoux their precursor. Edgar Kaufmann, in *From Ledoux to Le Corbusier*, and Sigfried Giedion, in *Space, Time and Architecture*, focused on Ledoux's utopian proposals, ignoring his built work, and maintaining that he rejected tradition. His use of pure geometric volumes and unadorned surfaces was seen as foreshadowing the International Style.

Today this appraisal seems limited. Ledoux's strongest link to modernist tradition is his conception of urbanism and of the role of the architect in society, both embodied in the magnificent plates describing the utopian community of Chaux.

Ledoux shared the anti-urban sentiment of his contemporaries, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the English picturesque designers, who believed the city to be both morally and physically corrupt. Only by living in nature, according to natural principles, could mankind be redeemed. Ledoux placed his self-sufficient community in the countryside, rejecting, however, the intensely private character of the asymmetrical picturesque garden. Affirming the importance of the public realm, he synthesized "natural philosophy" with the French garden tradition of Le Nôtre, ordering both man and nature according to a radial plan. Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin, the paradigm of modern urbanism, owes much to Chaux; in both plans object buildings are ordered within the natural landscape by a Cartesian grid. Even Ledoux's famous bird's-eye view of Chaux anticipates the aerial perspectives of Le Corbusier.

In his poetic but fragmentary text, Ledoux portrays the architect as an autonomous creator who, through his



Coupe.

LEDOUX, PROPYLEEA DE PARIS

powers of imagination, can reform humanity by re-forming the built environment—thus anticipating the modernist ideal of the socially committed architect.

Anthony Vidler, in a fascinating introduction, discusses the social and philosophical forces that shaped the design of Chaux. He maintains that Ledoux, recognizing the "emerging role of the industrial order," produced the "first attempt to form the factory community of modern capitalism." Ledoux's comprehensive designs for workers' dwellings, factories, and communal facilities anticipate the preoccupation of many modern architects who, like Tony Garnier, Le Corbusier, Mies, and Gropius, were concerned with satisfying the functional and rhetorical requirements of production.

Today Ledoux's work is appreciated for reasons completely different from those of the modernists. Ironically, rather than viewing him as a revolutionary creator of abstract forms, contemporary architects seem drawn to Ledoux for his use of classical forms. Michael Graves's Fargo-Moorhead Cultural Center, Mario Botta's Casa Rotunda, Leon Krier's scheme for La Villette, Aldo Rossi's secondary school in Broni, Italy, and Robert Stern's Point West Place, a suburban office

building in Framingham, Massachusetts, have, despite their formal and methodological differences, been inspired by Ledoux. His elemental classicism coincides with their common interest in using classical vocabulary in a more abstract and less literal way. Ledoux's brand of elemental classicism satisfies the aesthetics of simplicity, and is economical as well, considering the current high cost of reproducing literal classical details.

Ledoux's urban architecture is also a source of inspiration for contemporary architects. Critics interested in urban design, like Colin Rowe in *Collage City* and Michael Dennis in the yet unpublished *French Hotel*, look not to the utopian proposals that inspired their modernist predecessors but rather to the designs of *hôtels particuliers*. These buildings, executed for a bourgeois and aristocratic clientele, established Ledoux's reputation in his lifetime. Today they reveal him as a master urban contextualist. The complex diagonal planning of the Hôtel de Montmorency brilliantly adapts this building type's components—forecourt, cours de logis, and garden—to a restricted corner lot. Similarly, the Maison D'Evry rivals Le Pautre's Hôtel de Beauvais as an ingenious solution to an awkward Parisian site.

Beyond the attraction of his style, Ledoux is perhaps most relevant today because of a reemerging dilemma, the crisis of architectural signification. Like many late 18th-century contemporaries, Ledoux realized that the received vocabulary of Western classicism was no longer a valid medium of cultural expression. Focusing on the issue of how architecture speaks, historians and critics such as Anthony Vidler and Alan Colquhoun have written extensively about the struggle of Enlightenment designers to discover the basic principles of a communicating architecture. Surely this recent interest in the work of the French Enlightenment is prompted by the parallel of modernism's limited ability to speak, and the search for a valid vocabulary of forms to replace it.

Eighteenth-century architects followed two main approaches to the problem of signification. The first was to revitalize a discredited classicism by reinterpreting its conventional elements. This view is represented by Piranesi's work, including the architectural fantasies of the *Parere*, and his inventive designs for chimneypieces, the Campo Marzio, and S. Maria del Priorato—as well as the personalized classicism of his English followers, Robert Adam and John Soane. The second strategy was best articulated by Etienne-Louis Boullée, who rejected the idea of classicism as a system of conventional elements subject to re-manipulation. In visionary proposals like the "Cenotaph to Newton," Boullée reduced the classical grammar to its underlying primary forms, which he believed capable of speaking directly to the viewer.

Ledoux was a sensitive architectural barometer of cultural change, masterfully assimilating both approaches in his work. His designs for the *barrières* are almost mannerist in their exercise of artistic license. Conventional elements—pediments, columns, rustication—are radically reinterpreted so that each conveys the unique character of the region to which it was

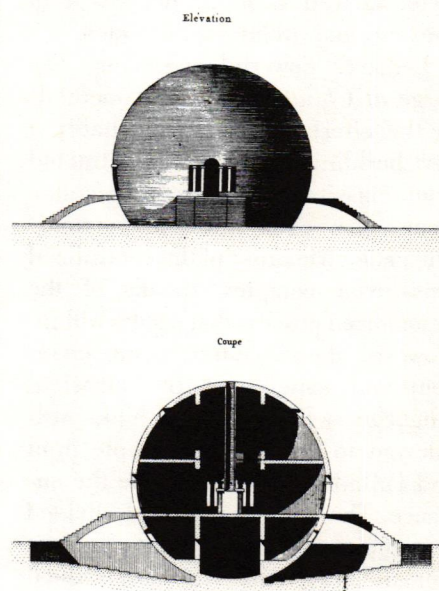
the gateway.

Ledoux also relied on the evocative power of universal forms to make his buildings speak. In the prison at Aix, the purely architectonic qualities of simple geometric masses and severe unadorned surfaces denote the forbidding character of the building type.

These strategies of the late 18th century have counterparts in contemporary practice. Based on their conviction that the classical vocabulary can still serve as a relevant medium of discourse, some architects, including Michael Graves, Hans Hollein, Charles Jencks, and Arata Isozaki, reinvest with new meanings conventional classical forms. Krier and Aldo Rossi are concerned not with classicism as a grammar of ornament, but with the recovery of its essential forms, which transcend style. These forms, they believe, are engraved in cultural memory and are still meaningful today. Beyond a general sympathy with Ledoux's elemental classicism, these architects' attitudes to the problem of architectural signification have conditioned the way each borrows from Ledoux.

Michael Graves, whose work has come to strongly resemble Ledoux's, is attracted to Ledoux's idiosyncratic reinterpretation of classical motifs. His recent city hall and master plan for Stamford, Connecticut, and his Phoenix Governmental Center recall Ledoux not only in their simple, massive forms, but in their unconventional proportions and classical details, many directly inspired by the *barrières*. The exaggerated columns and rustication found in Isozaki's Tsukuba Center building and Robert Stern's Cohen poolhouse are also reminiscent of Ledoux's mannerist tendencies. Ricardo Bofill articulates this approach in his description of Les Espaces d'Abraxas, a public housing project which he says was inspired in part by Ledoux: "Familiar classical forms, rooted in French culture, are subverted and made strange."

Aldo Rossi, on the other hand, exemplifies those architects who are



attracted to Ledoux's use of archetypal forms. In the cemetery of San Cataldo in Modena, classical typological elements such as the entry arch and the colonnade are reduced to simple geometric masses, axially and symmetrically disposed. The program itself recalls Ledoux's many projects commemorating the dead. Similarly, the primary geometry of Mario Botta's Casa Rotunda in Stabia, Switzerland, a cylindrical house bisected by an abstracted column, recalls Ledoux's sphere-shaped *Maison des Gardes Agricoles*. Botta seems to share Ledoux's obsession with reconciling function and the evocative power of pure geometric form.

In their effort to create a viable architectural language, many of today's designers limit themselves to one of the two approaches to architectural discourse explored by Ledoux. Thus they overlook his most valuable lesson, the need to synthesize. Ledoux's book is a testament to his conviction that a meaningful architecture must represent mankind's enduring needs as well as the values of a particular culture. To accomplish this it is necessary for the designer to use primary architectural forms that transcend

style, as well as forms derived from conventional architectural codes.

Ledoux's powerful engraving, *The Forge at Chaux*, reveals his method. In the effort to represent suitably a new building type, Ledoux extracted from classicism essential articulate forms—the cube and the pyramid. The geometric order of the centralized cross-axial complex speaks of the rationalized process that occurs within. However, the *Forge* incorporates conventional aspects of the classical language, which Ledoux thinks still relevant to his culture. Temple front and Palladian motifs indicate the entrance. The walled compound, divided into four quadrants, recalls ancient Roman city plans. His most radical transformation, the pyramids spewing smoke, are monuments not to the dead but to the living, productive forces within. Both conventional and universal forms have been condensed by Ledoux's synthetic mind into one resonant image.

When architects look to the past for inspiration, they are often conditioned by their prejudices; they already know what they will find. Modernists and postmodernists, each claiming Ledoux as their forerunner, have looked to him to reinforce their preexisting beliefs. Such bias does a disservice to Ledoux and to ourselves. Ledoux was not exclusively a modernist or traditionalist, but both. He tried to create an architecture that would meet the challenge of present and future while maintaining ties with the greater cultural continuum. The seductiveness of his brilliant stylistic reinterpretation of the classical language should be made to reason with the issues of architectural meaning embodied in his work, which are his greatest achievement. To this end, the Princeton Architectural Press facsimile volume can be an excellent catalyst.

L'Architecture de C. N. Ledoux, Claude Nicolas Ledoux, facsimile edition by Princeton Architectural Press, reissued 1986, 322 pp., \$55.00.

P. A. Morton:

CHINESE TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE

NANCY SHATZMAN STEINHARDT

MINKA

CHUJI KAWASHIMA

These books are about the traditional architecture of China and Japan—architecture no longer a part of current building practice and, therefore, “dead.” The greatest difference between these traditions is the degree of distance with which they are viewed: It might be said that for the Chinese, traditional architecture is foreign, a part of an alien past. This is not surprising given the postwar break with the past that the Communist Liberation and Revolution produced.

Japan has never had such a break with the past, even during its recent embrace of Western technology and culture. As has been described elsewhere (see Chie Nakane's *Japanese Society* [University of California, 1970]), contradictory modes of behavior are balanced in Japan, kept separate within the same society or person's life without causing schizophrenia or moral anguish. Thus, the traditional and modern coexist as separate but equal entities just as Buddhism and Shinto, Japan's native religion, have coexisted for centuries. Furthermore, Japan's traditional social structure was ideal for transformation into an industrial society. The head of the household became the president of the company. The hired hand became the “salary-man.” The transition from a feudal society to an industrial one simply added another way of being Japanese without superseding those that already existed.

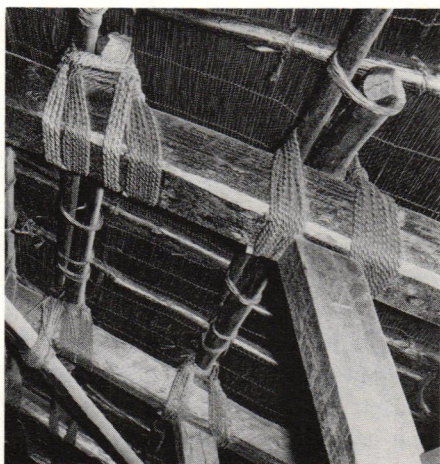
Chinese Traditional Architecture is a collection of essays published in conjunction with an exhibition at the China House Gallery under the

auspices of the China Institute in America. These essays are not a catalogue, however, but rather complementary treatments of buildings or styles featured in the exhibition. An enormous period of time is covered by these articles, as indicated by Fu Xinian's introductory survey, which begins with the Neolithic Age (10,000 to 4,000 years ago) and ends with the Qing Dynasty (1271–1848).

This survey provides an overview of Chinese traditional architecture and attempts to generalize about its character. Mr. Fu begins with the “principal characteristics of traditional Chinese architecture,” which range from bracketing systems to city planning techniques. Because the essay is brief, it is often difficult to understand and retain the technical Chinese terms and their English equivalents, a criticism which holds for all the articles in this book. In this case, the brevity of the article is balanced by the concise descriptions and analysis of these constants which the author sees throughout the history of Chinese architecture.

He views the development of style in traditional Chinese architecture as a movement from “archaic simplicity and strength” in the early period to “fullness and expansiveness” in the middle periods and to “meticulousness, finesse and richness of decoration” in the later periods. His conclusions regarding the use of modular systems, for example, include the impact they had on the transference of skills from generation to generation of carpenters, as well as the standardization of materials and methods they encouraged. While none of his insights are earth-shaking, they are good background.

The essays which follow the introduction tend to be scholarly but not in-depth analyses. Some enlarge upon tantalizing references in the survey, although the information is often highly specific to the fields of archaeology and architectural history. For example, Robert Thorp's essay on Bronze Age



BINDING THE GASSHO, NESO, AND KINAWA, LATE 18TH CENTURY

architecture describes in detail the rammed earth platform building which Mr. Fu only mentions. The writing is often dry and references to other scholarly works could have been omitted from a book meant for the general public. The article on Neolithic buildings is among the best, discussing the buildings without delving too deeply into the existing scholarship on the subject, and with enough illustrations to describe the text. As a whole, these essays adequately, if unspectacularly, fill out the chronology which Mr. Fu's survey outlined.

Chuji Kawashima's *Minka* is the best book in English on the traditional Japanese farmhouse. Unlike most previously published books, *Minka* has a clear organization, excellent illustrations (both photographs and line drawings), a good text with a point of view and a rare lack of sentimentality about its subject. Mr. Kawashima has synthesized the material into an easily read and informative volume without recourse to overgeneralization or lapses into hyperbole.

The material progresses from the general to the specific, but a pedantic adherence to this form is avoided by the inclusion of smaller details throughout the book. The Japanese names are given for every part of the *minka*—from river stones (*āma-ishi*) to the single-cross beam structural system (*ujibari-gumi*)—and listed in a good

glossary at the back of the book.

The level of detail in all parts of the book is astounding. For example, in the section on basic features, the method for sewing together a thatched roof is shown in diagrams down to the knot for binding the reeds to laths. By separating this type of information into diagrams and drawings, Mr. Kawashima has avoided boring the general reader, but the wealth of material makes this book a superb reference as well as a good general text.

Mr. Kawashima integrates descriptions of the way of life associated with the *minka* with an analysis of their form, without nostalgia or sermonizing, by describing the ways various *minka* elements were used. For example, he describes the benefits derived from the veranda during the monsoon season in terms of the activities that went on there as the rain came down. He explains the origins and use of the cooking hearth (*ka-mado* or *kudo*) with anthropological as well as graphic documentation. These references enrich his discussions without dissolving into nostalgia.

Minka lacks the level of speculative thought found in Fu Xinian's survey. Kawashima gives us the facts, but no explanation or overview of what *minka* are in formal or historical terms. There are no delineations of formal characteristics of the kind Fu Xinian so poetically outlines. This lack of analysis is characteristic of books on Japanese architecture by Japanese authors. They seem to prefer a wealth of information to the creation of theoretical constructs. This book leaves the reader to draw his or her own conclusions.

Chinese Traditional Architecture, Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, editor, introduction by Fu Xinian, China Institute in America, China House Gallery (125 East 65th St., New York, NY 10021), 1984, 168 pp., illus., \$18.50 (+ \$2.00 shipping).

Minka: Traditional Houses of Rural Japan, Chuji Kawashima, Kodansha, 1986, 260 pp., illus., \$60.00.

Margaret Crawford:

ARCADES

JOHANN FRIEDRICH GEIST

Johann Friedrich Geist, faced with the task of designing an arcade for the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin, began to explore the history of the arcade with the hope of clarifying some of the ambiguities that seemed to characterize the type: Is the arcade a street or a building? Is it public space or private? Inside or outside? A place or a passage? The result was his monumental volume *Arcades: The History of a Building Type*, certainly the most complete study of a modern building type yet written. First published in German in 1979 and translated into English in 1983, this fascinating work is now available in a paperback edition.

Wisely, Geist recognized that the arcade's ambiguous nature was also the source of its architectural flexibility and its rich layers of social and urban meaning. Geist convincingly demonstrates the arcade's ties to a broad range of predecessors, based on its definition as a symmetrical street space, a system of access, a place to organize trade, or a skylit space. Thus, covered sidewalks, colonnaded or arcaded streets, medieval bridges lined with commercial structures, market halls, and exchanges all contributed to its genesis.

More important than the arcade's historical sources are its links with other 19th-century building types. Dependence on iron and glass construction and a social role as a "space of transition" relate arcades to railway stations, exhibition halls, and department stores. Fourier's Phalanstery expanded the concept of the arcade to include a utopian community system while John Haviland's prisons reduced it to an efficient method for organizing and patrolling prisoners' cells. These connections highlight Geist's portrayal of the arcade as a quintessentially

19th-century type, encapsulating the economic, social, and architectural changes of the century. This interpretive approach follows the lead of Walter Benjamin, who, in the fragments of his projected work, *Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century*, recognized these glass-covered shopping passages as an allegorical key that could unlock the mythological space of the century. "The history and situation of the Parisian arcades will become for this century the under-world into which Paris descended."

Geist acknowledges that Benjamin's evocative pages contain "all the elements which I struggled to compile in this book" and, although the book does not add to Benjamin's insights, it thoroughly documents the phenomenon that he outlined. In place of Benjamin's intuitive method, Geist offers exhaustive research and almost obsessive taxonomy. This allows him to present a huge amount of information on every possible aspect of the arcade in a coherent and readable form, rigorously organized. Four introductory chapters outline the architectural and social history of the arcade, provide a detailed typological analysis, and briefly survey its literature. Finally, a descriptive catalogue lists 300 arcades from Paris to Peru; the discussion of individual arcades brings all Geist's themes together. Factual information is juxtaposed with literary texts by writers ranging from Balzac to André Breton. A wonderful selection of illustrations, including photographs, analytical drawings, and contemporary watercolors, illuminates the nature and the poetics of these spaces.

The arcade was born with the French Revolution, which opened up urban land previously under aristocratic and religious control to speculative development. Although the prototypical arcade, the Galerie de Bois, had a royal sponsor (the Duc d'Orleans, who subdivided the Palais Royal into commercial space to pay off gambling debts), its success de-

pended on a newly emancipated bourgeoisie, avid to consume the products of fashion and luxury industries. In 1792, three rows of ramshackle wooden arcades were covered by the first glass roof ever built (which leaked, a technical problem not solved until late in the century). These arcades housed a variety of establishments: shops, restaurants, reading rooms, art galleries, gambling rooms, brothels, and apartments.

The first public space in Paris protected from traffic and weather, the Galerie was a place of fascination and

Fourier expanded the concept of the arcade to include a utopian community system; John Haviland's prisons reduced it to a method for organizing and patrolling prisoners' cells.

danger. Hordes of Parisians and tourists flocked to experience its delights. During the day its narrow aisles were jammed by ladies shopping for hats, students and intellectuals haunting the booksellers, and bankers and merchants from nearby exchanges. In the evening prostitution and gambling took over. Robbers and pickpockets were a constant problem, and the arcade was nicknamed the "Champs des Tartares" for its outrageously overpriced merchandise. An analagous social type, the flaneur, appeared. Loitering in the arcades, at home only in crowds, he transformed the street into an interior.

The Galerie des Bois's importance was mainly social and economic; its enormous commercial success led to an explosion of arcade building in Paris. The Passage des Panoramas, opened in 1800, initiated its architectural evolution. A single line of shops cut through the middle of a

block off the Boulevard Montmartre, it established the arcade's primary urban function—to open up the interior of densely built-up blocks to pedestrians. Although quickly surpassed by more elaborate arcades, it remained the favorite promenade of Heinrich Heine, who strolled its gaslit corridor every evening, observing Parisian life.

By 1860 the right bank between the Palais Royal and the boulevards contained an independent network of pedestrian spaces. In these arcades, iron and glass skylights spanned increasingly wider vaults and adopted a wide variety of forms (rotundas, rectangular inserts, continuous vaults). The simple linear passage turned into a complex spatial sequence. Interior façades, however, never lost their formal and psychological character as an extension of the anonymous street, an element Geist considers central to the arcade's identity as a transition space. The last Parisian arcade was built in 1860. After this, Haussmann's straight new streets eliminated the spatial and speculative underpinnings of the arcades. "The hour of the boulevards had arrived."

By this time, the Parisian arcade had been adopted all over Europe. London's Burlington Arcade, built as early as 1817, became the point of departure for the spread of arcades to Anglo-Saxon countries. Adapting to different settings, the general and typological nature of the arcade acquired national and regional specificity. The most spectacular example of the arcade as a space framing and focusing the social, cultural, and political life of a city was the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan, the apotheosis of the arcade form. For the first time, its construction was not the result of private speculation, but a municipal enterprise, won in open competition by the Bolognese architect, Giuseppe Mengoni. His plan created a monumental new civic center connecting and regularizing the two most important urban spaces in Milan, the Piazza del Duomo and the

Piazza della Scala.

Although its enormous size and richly decorated Palladian forms make an impressive statement in themselves, Mengoni also intended them to carry a significant symbolic message. The Galleria can be considered a secular cathedral celebrating both the commercial and civic successes of the urban bourgeoisie and its central role in the unification of Italy. The cruciform plan, the dome at the crossing (which exactly duplicates the dimensions of St. Peters), and the triumphal arch entrance (the same height as the nave of the Duomo) not only recall, but intentionally challenge the power of the church, whose territorial interests had impeded unification. Geist points out that the cruciform plan turned the Galleria into more than a passage; the domed crossing created a central spatial focus for the public, symbolically equivalent to those of the adjacent Duomo and royal palace. The inscription on the triumphal arch at the Piazza del Duomo entrance reads "A Vittorio Emmanuele II—I Milanese," a statement of justifiable urban hubris. Ironically, Mengoni fell to his death from the scaffolding of this arch shortly before its unveiling.

Milan provided the model for an impressive series of enormous arcades, including the Burton Arcade in Manchester and the Kaisergalerie in Berlin, built with similar political motives. Geist, however, identifies the tendency toward increasing size as the beginning of the arcade's decline. Closed off from the city, gigantic arcades became theatrical experiences, creating their own world rather than connecting with the streets outside. This culminated in the New Trade Halls in Moscow (now GUM department store), the largest arcade complex ever built. One thousand rooms inwardly focused around three levels of continuous galleries connected by stairs and multi-leveled bridges, it was a city in itself. After 1900, the conditions that produced the arcade disappeared. More specialized and efficient building



GALERIE COLBERT,
ROTUNDA.
LITHOGRAPH BY
BILLAUD, 1828.

types, such as department stores and office buildings, replaced them. Open space and air became new urban ideals, enforced by zoning and building laws that eliminated closely packed arcade structures. Modern materials, such as reinforced concrete, destroyed the ambiguous character of its spaces. By the First World War, the arcade was dead.

Geist's book is important on many levels. A definitive documentation and analysis of a critical urban building type, it presents a rich history and provides important information, identifying many of these buildings for the first time (even so, an unfortunate number of the entries are listed as "demolished"). The book ends by briefly noting the reappearance of interest in the arcade form. This has resulted in the preservation and renovation of such splendid examples as the Galerie Vivienne in Paris (1823), Providence's Greek revival arcade (built in 1828, restored in 1982) and the Ferstel Passage, Vienna's only arcade (built in 1856, restored in 1983).

Less positively, a new generation of American shopping malls are now reproducing the forms of the 19th-century arcade, often in an attempt

to duplicate their urban and social functions. Geist's conclusions point out the futility of this and the necessity of examining the shopping mall not as a successor to the arcade, but as a new building type, the result of a vastly different set of social, economic, and architectural circumstances. Geist's method also offers an implicit corrective to much current thinking about typology. Theoretical and architectural interest in typology has recently focused on urban types as a means for recovering the city and its history, based on isolating the type as a purely formal concept. Geist's insistence that building types are inextricably embedded in specific economic and social contexts constitutes an argument against the typological usages that architects such as Aldo Rossi and Leon Krier have proposed, and suggests that, without due consideration of the particular conditions of its history, the use or adaptation of a type can become functionally useless, architecturally empty, and socially meaningless.

Arcades: The History of a Building Type,
Johann Friedrich Geist, MIT, 1985, 596 pp.,
\$25.00 pb.

Michael Mostoller:

THE TALL BUILDING ARTISTICALLY RECONSIDERED

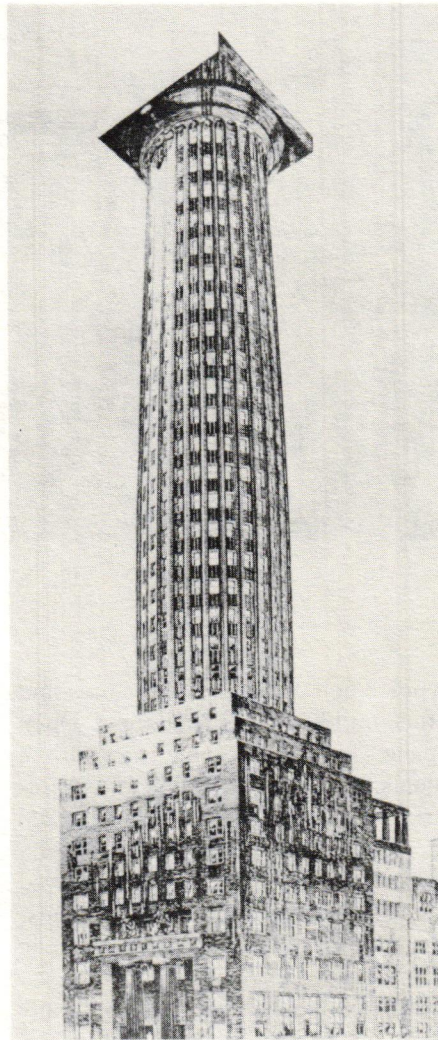
ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

Architects beware. As Ms. Huxtable says, her story is a "cautionary tale." On one level it can be read as an attempt to portray the history of the skyscraper, on another, as a chronicle of current events in skyscraper building. Still another reading can be inferred from its sharply critical attack on the "shallow and narrow" thinking of a "profession and public more addicted to publicity and novelty than to reason and reality." Finally, its subtitle, *The Search for a Skyscraper Style*, implies a quest for the meaning of style in architectural design, theory, and criticism.

The first half of the book outlines four historical phases in the (apparent) search for a skyscraper style. The second half is a potpourri of criticism, reportage, and philosophical opining, often resembling Aunt Polly's lectures to young Tom, on the current fall from sense of a frivolous and scandalously willful generation of architects.

The four historical periods cited are functional, eclectic, modern, and, somewhat reluctantly, postmodern. These categories are so broad as to mean little more than early, middle, late, and future. Indeed, the text reverts to first period, second period, and so on. In the first period, the functional, the architects had little to say, according to Ms. Huxtable, compared to builders, engineers, and developers. Yet somehow a strong and powerful architectonic statement resulted. In the last period, the post-modern, the same set of professional relations produces bad architecture. It is not easy to grasp the logic at work here.

In the "modern" period section, one must question the taxonomy and



INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION FOR CHICAGO TRIBUNE TOWER, 1922. ENTRY BY ADOLF LOOS, AUSTRIA.

the historical exegesis. "Modernistic" was, in her words, just as important as "modern," and "International Style" has to be squeezed in somewhere else as it doesn't fit either category. The account of the development of the skyscraper is standard stuff; the author repeatedly states that the whole story hasn't been written but never says what exactly is missing.

These sixty pages are amply illustrated in a coffee-table book manner, but without plans, sections, elevations, perspectives, or diagrams. The historical overview is adequate, although her successor at the *Times*, Paul Goldberger, has written a book (*The Skyscraper*) with more depth in this

particular regard. Ms. Huxtable consistently states, *ex cathedra*, that the fusion of expression with function and/or the synthesis of structure and symbol is the great goal of architecture, but rarely deals with any specific description or analysis of these characteristics in a work of architecture. She expostulates at a high level of abstraction which is the cause for her dilemma.

Yet Ms. Huxtable's insights are often provocative. The chronicle and critique of contemporary events in the kingdom of skyscrapers is a good one. In the sections "The New Eclecticism" (Johnson-Burgee; Kohn, Pederson, Fox; Jahn, Roch); "Neo Modernism" (Meier?, Eisenman?, Pelli, Foster); "The State of the Skyscraper Art" (reviews of the Humana and Southwest Center competitions); and "Beyond the Façades," Ms. Huxtable is at her best. She goes toe-to-toe with Philip Johnson in ringing critiques of his work in Houston and New York—about time the horrid work of our "greatest living" architect, tastemaker, and power broker was taken to task by a major critic, and Ms. Huxtable does it superbly. The rest of her reportage and criticism does not always match this effort but is always cogent and informative.

Although she does discuss for the first time the architectural articulation of some of the recent projects, her analysis all too often remains descriptive and vague in architectonic terms. We get a vision of an exasperated Ada Louise—shocked, chagrined, and dismayed by a world run on one hand by greedy speculators, and on the other by a bunch of artsy architects (with their semioticized intellectual cohorts). This critical insight or fear leads sometimes to a telling remark but too often to the "going to hell in a handbasket" mode of argument. It also yields a curious paradox: Ms. Huxtable's own values seem to emerge from the verities of "modern" thought: architecture as a synthesis of factors, in which for example, structure is critical, yet she

admits that structure means little in her skyscraper story—"it's all in the façades."

However, this particular problem pales beside her treatment of the entire affair as a search for STYLE. Talbot F. Hamlin in 1916 defined style as "a manner of building that is different from some other manner of building. It includes in its scope not only ornament, but methods of construction and planning as well."* Ms. Huxtable seems at times to adhere to this definition, which sees

When Faust received the potential of fantastic power, he used it to seduce a little shopgirl. We have used the fantastic powers of the 20th century in pursuit of another little shopgirl—style.

architecture as a synthesis—in her words "[giving] appropriate form to structure, plan, purpose and place." Yet on other occasions style becomes a quality that some buildings possess and others do not. Early on she discusses style as an aesthetic, an "art form," not a synthesis expressing time and culture. Later, when a building by Emery Roth lamentably has no style, the meaning of the word changes completely. It becomes a *quality* in which there are superiors and inferiors, not a *character* that has unified all architectural forces and which all buildings possess for better or worse. In short, it has become fashion.

It was this interpretation and use of style by his contemporaries that led Le Corbusier in *Towards an Architecture* to state in 1922: "Architecture has nothing to do with the various styles. The styles of Louis XIV, XV, XVI, or Gothic, are to architecture

what a feather is on a woman's head; it is something pretty, though not always, and never anything more." Ms. Huxtable admits that essential structural, mechanical, and planning issues have changed little since the first period. Has the "search for a skyscraper style" therefore been the search for feathers? If so, it has been frivolous; if not, Ms. Huxtable has got it wrong.

Perhaps an architecture of the skyscraper is an oxymoron, and the search for style was the goal of all these crazily frenetic years and untold billions. What might we think of someone whose single goal was to find a "style"? While this may have been expected of, say, the late Duchess of Windsor, it is a ludicrous objective in general human terms. Camus wryly pointed out that, when Faust received the potential of fantastic power from Mephistopheles, he used it to seduce a little shopgirl. We have used the fantastic powers of the 20th century in the pursuit of another little shopgirl—style.

Ms. Huxtable senses this at the book's end. Her understanding of architecture as a mission of some value to the world and in human affairs is undercut in this book by her own development of this architectural period as a search for style. Yet she does hint—and I believe—that a society that spends so much on so little is potentially dangerous and also rather boring. Of all the buildings that have been billed as "sky-scrapers" since the last century, only three truly approach the status of a work of architecture: The Guaranty Building, Price Tower, and the Seagram Building. They were certainly not the result of a search for style.

*Talbot Hamlin, *The Enjoyment of Architecture* (Duffield and Co., New York, 1916).

The Tall Building Artistically Reconsidered: The Search for a Skyscraper Style, Ada Louise Huxtable, Pantheon, 1984, 128 pp., illus., \$21.95.

Christopher L. Yip:

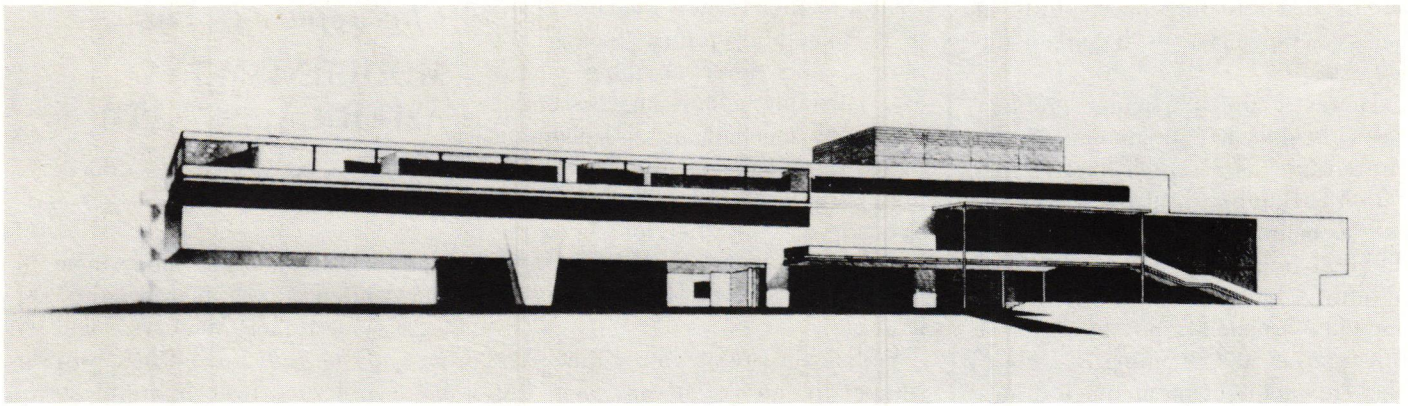
MODERNISM IN AMERICA, 1937–1941

JAMES D. KORNWOLF, editor

The reassessment of modernism in the United States marches on. At least since Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction* (1966), postwar canons of good taste in architectural design have been under attack, with exploration in an increasing variety of directions characterizing both buildings and theoretical productions. The rock-throwing phase is drawing to a close and examination of the carcass has begun. In that spirit, *Modernism in America* presents four architectural competitions held in the 1930s. Wheaton College and the College of William and Mary deal with art centers, the Smithsonian with an art gallery, and Goucher College with a campus plan and library.

In the introduction Kornwolf notes that the competitions were widely publicized, making them important vehicles for the promotion of the new design attitudes being championed by the Museum of Modern Art and Harvard's Graduate School of Design. The conspicuously high percentage of modernist designs among the surviving competition projects offers an opportunity to identify and examine in some depth the attitudes and themes favored by the new avant-garde. Rather than seek the underlying reasons for the design approaches of the late 1930s, the catalogue authors establish two categories, modernists and the traditionalists, and proceed to place the competition organizers, jurors, and projects within them.

The authors are as concerned with the contemporary architectural scene as they are with the four competitions. As Walter L. Creese notes in his preface, "Since we do not honestly know what Post-Modernism is, it may be even more necessary to understand



AN ART CENTER, WHEATON COLLEGE, 1938. GEORGE FRED KECK AND WILLIAM KECK, ARCHITECTS.

what Modernism once was in America." Kornwolf in the introduction continues this preoccupation, moving from the 1930s competitions to a discussion of recent events in architecture and concluding that "Post-Modernism is, therefore, an almost inevitable consequence of the unresolved conflict of the thirties." Unfortunately, the task of critically examining the ideas and intentions embodied in the competitions is confused with the desire to comment upon the contemporary scene, a confusion which pervades the catalogue. Postmodernism demands an earlier struggle between two opposing camps, and a struggle between modernists and traditionalists during the late 1930s calls for a synthesis in postmodernism. Voilà!

The authors become trapped in their categories. The modernists tend to be judged in terms of "functionalism" while the traditionalists tend to be described as less "functional" and discussed in terms of style. Categorization replaces analysis, forestalling many interesting questions. What were the reigning canons in the late 1930s to which the modernists reacted, and the traditionalists adhered? What did the various positions taken by organizers, jurors, and entrants mean? What was at stake?

A part of the catalogue is devoted to each of the competitions. While Kornwolf deals with the Goucher College and the College of William and Mary competitions, Thomas J. McCormick writes on the Wheaton College

competition, and Travis C. McDonald, Jr., writes on the Smithsonian Institution competition for a gallery of art. Each part begins with a précis, followed by a brief architectural history of the institution up to the time of the competition. The next sections give a history of the competition and discuss the surviving designs. A final section describes what happened after the competition. Illustrations of selected competition projects follow the text.

The catalogue raises the reader's hope of seeing the full range of designs submitted, but the survival of less than one-tenth of the projects dampens such hopes. Even the names of 535 of the 824 entries are unknown. Of the 824 designs submitted to the four competitions, the researchers located only 74 in whole or in part, and 50 are illustrated and discussed in the catalogue. Since all 35 entries to the Goucher College competition survive, it is a pity that all the projects are not shown, to give the complete range of designs for at least one of the four competitions.

Deciphering the illustrated projects is not easy. The context and site characteristics are not clearly presented in most of them, and without legible site plans and orientation diagrams, it is often difficult and sometimes impossible to relate the projects to their sites. Only a few of the reproduced projects have north arrows, a legible scale, contour lines, or reference features. Even when a small topographical map is reproduced (as

in figure 76), there is no way to relate it to the competition projects presented. For orientation one is continually flipping to the few aerial photographs and even fewer maps. The reversed aerial photograph of the mall in Washington, D.C., on page 176, does not help. To these difficulties add the unavoidable problem of small, illegible text in the illustrations due to the quality of the surviving drawings, and the need to reduce the drawings for the catalogue.

These problems do not negate the good work that has been done. The brief architectural histories of the four institutions and the histories of the competitions are thoughtfully done. Appendix 1, containing the full texts of each competition program, and Appendix 3, containing resumé, are particularly helpful references. The catalogue is also a useful resource for competition designs of the late 1930s avant-garde—Eero Saarinen, Percival Goodman, Hugh Stubbins, Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, and William Lescaze, to name a few. Ultimately, the reader is left to decide what it all means.

Modernism in America 1937–1941: A Catalog and Exhibition on Four Architectural Competitions, Wheaton College, Goucher College, College of William and Mary, Smithsonian Institution, James D. Kornwolf, editor, Joseph and Margaret Muscarelle Museum of Art, Williamsburg, VA, 1985, 271 pp., illus., \$10.95.

Bruce Thomas:

INDUSTRIAL ARCHITECTURE IN BRITAIN 1750–1939

EDGAR JONES

The recent blossoming of interest in manufacturing and commercial buildings has begun to produce a more complete picture of our built environment. Edgar Jones's *Industrial Architecture in Britain 1750–1939* presents a large amount of social and technical material in a clear, entertaining style. Those who find the scholarship of industrial archaeology (where much of the work on industrial building has been done) too narrowly focused on flywheels and railroad ties, or too regional in scope, will enjoy the breadth of vision in this survey. Hundreds of diverse industrial works are assembled here, spanning all important phases of the Industrial Revolution. Jones provides glimpses (all in black and white) of splendid and unfamiliar buildings, such as the Duke's Grain Warehouse in Liverpool, with its two great barrel vaults through which canal boats entered, or the Hour-Glass Brewery on the Thames in London, a crazy jumble of residence, brewery, warehouse, and quay built and rebuilt over a period of three centuries.

Jones has unfortunately adopted the debatable premise that aesthetic considerations were a primary determinant of, as he puts it, "the shape of industrial architecture in Britain." The problem is compounded by his emphasis on the gradual acceptance of industrial building by polite British architectural society, a circle of respectability well acquainted with aesthetic pretense. Martin J. Wiener, in his *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850–1890*, has demonstrated that the absorption of vigorous aspects of British industry by an effete social system is a story of great



RIBS SUPPORTING ONE OF THE NAVES AT PADDINGTON STATION, 1852–1854.

importance; in an architectural survey—even one with social and technical aspirations—that tale of seduction seems beside the point. After all, architectural details, which to Jones usually mean ornament, do not matter much in industrial buildings where the manufacturing process must be contained in the most efficient manner. To concentrate on aspects of the building other than the industry it houses is to miss the point. Does the fact that the great gasworks and refineries of the late 19th century "did not generally present great opportunities for architects" make them less significant than their earlier tiny Palladian counterparts? Jones would have us believe only the earliest, smallest works mattered. Surely the strongest impressions and the most lasting effects of most buildings of the Industrial Revolution had little to do with their architectural detailing.

In an admirable attempt to address broader "nonarchitectural" social aspects of the Industrial Revolution (and so place the buildings in their proper context), Jones reveals some

of those "other" impressions of the industrial environment. An 18th-century visitor saw the Cromford Mills as a "first-rate man of war; and when they are lighted up on a dark night they look most luminously beautiful." At Manchester one "saw the forest of chimneys pouring forth volumes of steam and smoke, forming an inky canopy which seemed to embrace and involve the entire place." At Cromford, Jones tells us, the five-story mill "possessed immensely strong walls and high windows to make it impenetrable to rioting hand-loom weavers." One yearns for more details. Example after example hints at larger issues that either reflect the built environment or are accountable to it, but that have almost nothing to do with architectural stylistic convention.

Important references to the manufacturing process and its effect on building design are regularly interrupted by digressions into the "eye's upward drift . . . arrested by the cornice and plain parapet." Perhaps the author should not be criticized for adopting the usual methods of scholar-



VOYSEY, SANDERSON'S WALLPAPER FACTORY AT TURNHAM GREEN (1902-1903)

ship, but they get in the way of more important issues. Aesthetic analysis and a chronology based on the well-worn cavalcade of styles simply do not fit the development of industrial building, and give us chapters and sub-headings—"The Gothic Revival" or "The Arts and Crafts Movement"—that tell us only that they are irrelevant to most examples. At worst it leads to such silly categorizations as "The Italianate Tradition: mills and chimneys."

Aware of this, Jones writes:

The authors of these glasshouses, exhibition- or market-halls and train-sheds, mostly engineers and builders, were simply exploiting the new materials that industrialization had made available in an attempt to cover sites as cheaply and effectively as possible. Questions of decoration, often entrusted to aspiring architects, remained subsidiary to the central engineering problem.

The core of industrial building was practical men solving practical problems. Here they are only a passing thought.

A fine description of Smethwick, including groups of factories and mills forming a complex of streets, canals, and raceways, hints at a larger scale. But, as is too often the case, the focus quickly contracts to the individual

building and its "architecture." We miss an appreciation of the importance of the industrial *landscape*; we miss detailed views of regions transformed by the buildings of industry—of the Potteries (where glass and china were made in hundreds of smoking bottle-shaped kilns three stories high), of the Black Country, of St. Katherine's Docks in London, of the acres of warehouse (not the individual buildings) in Manchester. The most important aspects of the buildings of the Industrial Revolution were not Palladian window details or classical pediments, but the sheer size and number of new structures, the nature of the industries they housed, and the districts, towns, and regions they transformed.

The reliance on conventional standards of architectural history that skim polite architecture off the built environment and leave all the rest as merely so many bicycle sheds is unfortunate, and completely inappropriate. The men who made the Industrial Revolution in Britain were practical and unpretentious; the buildings and the landscapes they wrought deserve some straight talk.

Industrial Architecture in Britain 1750-1939, Edgar Jones, Facts on File, 1985, 223 pp., illus., \$29.95.

Mark Girouard:

THE LITERATURE OF BRITISH DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE 1715-1842

JOHN ARCHER

This complex volume is, to begin with, a bibliography of publications on domestic architecture issued in Great Britain and Ireland from the early 18th to the mid-19th century. It lists 493 books, together with their various editions. Going further, it gives a synopsis of the contents of each, and in the case of the more seminal books expands to a full history of their publication and discussion of their importance. The well-written introduction covers such relevant topics as the architectural book trade, changes in types of illustrations, and various aspects of theory and design of the period. It also raises the interesting question of why domestic architecture in general, and rural domestic architecture in particular, dominate architectural literature of the period.

Archer repeats the claim (which he has made elsewhere) that Colen Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus* "indicated that the modern country house, despite its remote and rustic location, would be the principal vehicle for Britain's return to 'Ancient' principles of design." Archer first calls this "implicit," but by the time we reach the entry on Ware's *Complete Body of Architecture*, it is one of the "principal components of Colen Campbell's program of architectural reform." Campbell, as Archer is well aware, says nothing to this effect in *Vitruvius Britannicus*; it must be deduced from the fact that the majority of the designs published by Campbell are for country houses.

Surely this reads more into *Vitruvius Britannicus* than is justified. If Campbell felt that way, he could have said so in his introduction. He did not,

and in fact divided his first volume according to the conventional hierarchy; four designs for churches are followed by three for royal buildings, and then by a miscellany of town and country houses, with Greenwich Hospital rather illogically interposed toward the end. Volume 2 follows a similar arrangement. The preponderance of country houses seems more likely to reflect an actual situation (and not a new one) rather than a program of reform. The only curious omission is that of the churches built as a result of the Fifty New Churches Act of 1711. Since Campbell excluded neither churches (seven in *Vitruvius Britannicus*) nor the more important baroque houses, one might argue that they were left out, as were all buildings by James Gibbs, for political reasons; they were Tory products.

If, with this exception, Campbell's selection is unsurprising, it is still remarkable that public buildings and town housing were such a minor feature of late 18th- and early 19th-century architectural books. In this period public buildings of all types were built in increasing quantities in towns all over the British Isles, and town housing proliferated, both in the form of one-off houses and terraces of integrated design. Public buildings, however, do not make a noticeable showing till George Richardson's *New Vitruvius Britannicus* of 1802-1808. Terrace housing features even less, as Archer points out. His reasoning, that "most row and terrace houses were erected by speculative builders" and "terrace houses were not accorded the same respect as other dwelling types within the building hierarchy" is not entirely convincing. One-off houses, especially in the west end of London, were designed by most architects of any reputation of the period, and integrated terraces were designed by Campbell, Chambers, Taylor, Adam, Carr, Wyatt, and Nash. And what about the terraces designed by respected architects at Bath, Brighton, and Edinburgh? Few

18th-century buildings were more admired or visited than the Circus and Royal Crescent in Bath. Such buildings featured frequently in topographical books and engravings, but scarcely at all in purely architectural books.

One possible explanation is in the different sources of commissions. An attractive book of country-house designs might bring an architect commissions; certainly their authors hoped so, to judge from the numbers produced. But the world of terrace housing was more like the world of property development today, and commissions seem to have come through contracts, or, often, because the architect had a financial stake in the project. This still does not explain the neglect of one-off town houses. Why, for instance, was Kent's staircase in Berkeley Square, or Chambers's in Gower House, never published? Did town houses have less prestige than country ones because life in the country was seen as superior to life in the town? This literary convention did indeed date back to classical days, but it was nevertheless a convention, adopted when mood or circumstances suggested it as an alternative to the opposite convention, which contrasted the crudity of country society to the amenities of urban life. Architectural literature prior to the late 18th century shows no sign of such an attitude affecting the status of town and country houses. One of the functions of the country house (in potential conflict with its role as a "seat" of territorial influence) was as a place of retreat and renewal after the strains of active political or commercial life in the city. But this was a complementary, not a superior role.

Only in the late 18th century can the massive outcrop of books of villa and cottage designs be linked to a movement in favor of the "innocence" of rural life that was more than a convention. Corresponding references to the "foetid joys" of the town as opposed to the "pure and tranquil retirement" of the countryside appear

RUTGERS

John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture

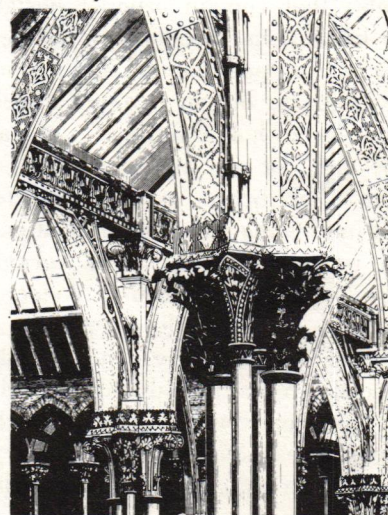
Michael Brooks

374 pp. 100 black and white illustrations.
Cloth, \$28.00

"A unique book, revealing an astonishing scholarly mastery both of Ruskin's writing about architecture ...and the history of 19th-century architecture."

—George Levine

"Well-written, engaging, modest, the book is a real triumph."—George L. Hersey



Brooks shows the influence of the early 19th-century architectural world on John Ruskin, explores *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice*, and describes Ruskin's impact on Victorian architecture in England and the U.S. He looks at the differing forms of Ruskinism created by leading English and American architects, and drawing from 19th-century periodicals, depicts the "Ruskinian" buildings these architects created.

Rutgers University Press
109 Church Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

in architectural literature. The first suburban estates were built as an attempt to bring countryside amenities to townspeople. One could argue, however, that the whole movement was essentially middle class; certainly the London houses of the great were never more splendid than in the period of the first villa suburbs.

Archer is very much on home ground here, and has interesting sections in his introduction on "The Ideal of Retirement" and on cottage and villa designs and the picturesque ethic behind them. His most basic and difficult decision was, obviously, what to put in the book. His criteria led him to include only books and periodicals "that contain original designs for habitations," a definition later expanded to "publications that include at least one design in three dimensions for a whole dwelling ... at least one view, or one elevation plus one plan." This brings in an unexpected but interesting group of publications, the reports of the Board of Agriculture. Archer has previously pioneered research into the relevant aspects of the board and its president, Sir John Sinclair, revealing valuable material for the architectural historian in the reports, especially in the form of plans of farms, cottages, and Scottish new towns.

The criteria have also been interpreted, much more debatably, to include general encyclopedias and books on perspective. On the other hand, "builder's handbooks, artisan's manuals and collections of ornaments" are excluded, even though the author admits them to be "an important source of motifs for dwellings throughout Britain and North America." Works by the most prolific authors of such books (e.g., Batty Langley, George Richardson) are listed in an appendix. One appendix contains a checklist of books illustrating schemes for complete room interiors. Another short but rather haphazard appendix lists books that fell outside the criteria but are significant "in the history of do-

The massive outcrop of books of villa and cottage designs in the late 18th century can be linked to a movement in favor of the "innocence" of rural life.

mestic design." These include a number of topographical works, including all contemporary publications on Font-hill. Topographical books are specifically excluded from the main catalogue, although Archer realizes the difficulties of definition involved.*

The various appendices form a cumbersome two-hundred-page tail to the books, and suggest that the original criteria were wrong, or wrongly applied. The index, on the other hand, is perhaps not cumbersome enough, for it indexes names but not subjects. Indexing subjects in a manageable way would not have been easy, but, as it is, the only way of finding, for instance, publications with designs for farmhouses is to thumb through the whole book.

Contemplating this formidable but unsatisfactory volume, one is left wondering whether it would not have done better as two books: a more manageable bibliography and an expanded monograph on the ideas and theories behind domestic architecture in the period.

*It seems odd that neither Malton's set of plans and illustrations of buildings by Sir Robert Taylor (1790-92) nor Britton and Pugin's *Public Buildings of London* (1825) are included (though it may be arguable whether or not Malton's views were technically "published"). Both contain plans, views, or elevations of private houses, and seem no more topographical than *Vitruvius Britannicus*.

The Literature of British Domestic Architecture 1715-1842, John Archer, MIT, 1985, 1,078 pp., illus., \$125.00.

Lionello Puppi:

FESTSPIELHAUS UND WAHNFRIED

H. HABEL

Among the scientific contributions to the centennial of the Bayreuth Festival Theater was H. Habel's monumental work on the architecture of composer Richard Wagner. An exploit of exceptional value, it entered into the most fascinating aspects of a complex adventure that engaged nearly half a century of the cultural life of 19th-century Germany. Using a vast, for the most part unpublished, and certainly indisputable corps of documents, the author reveals the stimulus offered by Richard Wagner to the theory and practice of the architecture of his times.

In the introduction, Habel identifies the concrete thoughts expressed by the musician in reference to the structure of the theatrical space of the *Festspielhaus* in Bayreuth during the years 1837 to 1863. The underlying optic is obviously that of *Gesamtkunstwerk*—a unifying work of art that follows a desire to achieve a fusion of the arts, reciprocally enabling the expressive potential of each art. More to the point, the intention is to orient a theatrical space to respond in the most efficient, communicative, and complete way to the staging demands of *Wort-Ton-Drama*, (a drama in which music and words maintain their individual authority despite their inseparable connection). The goal was transmission of a mythical past, guarantor of an identity and national destiny capable of competing with the present to found a program for the future.

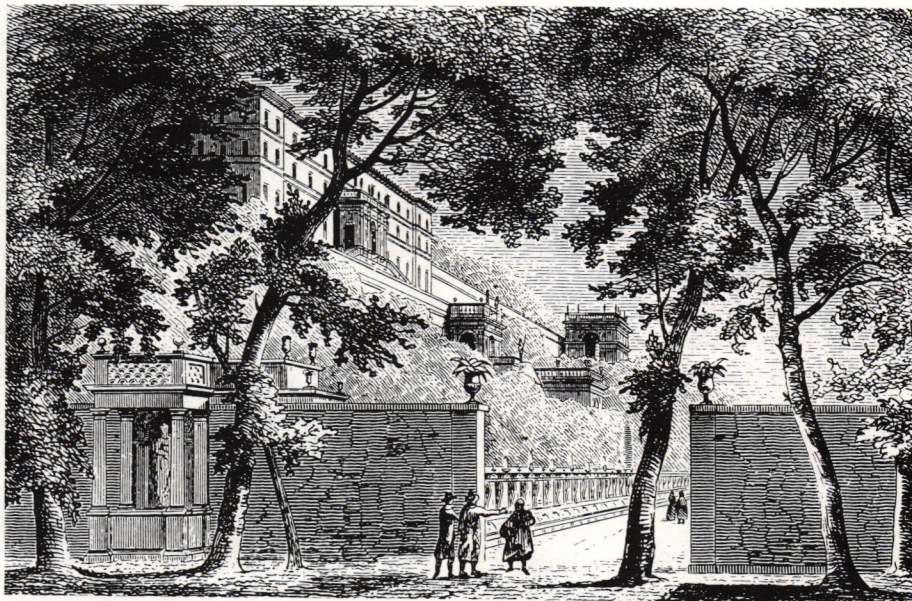
Habel then considers the complex work guiding the efforts of Semper for the Opera Theater of Munich (1864-1868). His tortuous graphic research led to the elaboration of an articulated and definitive proposal for plans, elevations, and even wooden models.

Although none of this was realized, the research was none the less utilized in the successive designs for the Opera of Dresden and the Burgtheater in Vienna. In the midst of this complex examination, and always in the perspective of Wagner's concrete and explicit contribution, Habel does not miss the extraordinary case of the temporary theater, the Glass Palace of Munich.

The third and fourth parts of this notable monograph collect and analyze an immense pile of data and documentation regarding the genesis and the formal and functional arrangement of the *Festspielhaus* of Bayreuth and Villa Wahnfried. To art historians it opens a convincing invitation to a conclusive and critical synthesis asking them to consider the role of Wagner as an architect (*Bauherr*) not merely auxiliary but of singular importance at a particular historical conjunction. Habel enlists an eloquent dossier of textual references, from a selection of important writings explaining Wagner's theoretical attitude on the "art of the future" to his most reserved thoughts and reflections, extrapolated from his correspondence; from the documentation of the cornerstone saying at Bayreuth to the opinions of the scenographer Adolphe Appia on the theater's space. The author also reproduces, in its unpublished entirety, the report on the *Königlicher Festbau* of Munich, written by Semper for Ludwig II of Bavaria.

To this rather schematic description of an ample, profound, and responsible inquiry, we might add that the work is all the more valuable for its complex and coherent methodological base, capable of developing in impressive and stimulating terms a difficult but fertile interdisciplinary discussion.

Festspielhaus und Wahnfried, Geplante und ausgeführte Bauten Richard Wagners, H. Habel, Prestel Verlag, 1985, 686 pp., illus., DM 265,00 (approximately \$140.00).



TIVOLI, VILLA D'ESTE

Loren Partridge:

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

JACOB BURCKHARDT

This is a curious book. The title promises a comprehensive survey of Italian Renaissance architecture, and to this extent the reader will not be disappointed. Burckhardt indeed touches on almost every conceivable facet of the subject. In book 1 on architecture proper he considers patronage, style, the classical revival, theory, architectural practice, characteristic forms, materials, construction, design principles, urbanism, as well as the various types of buildings, including churches, monasteries, confraternities, palaces, hospitals, fortifications, bridges, gateways, villas, and gardens. In book 2 Burckhardt deals with the decoration of churches (altars, altarpieces, fresco and stucco work, choir stalls, pulpits, holy water fonts, tombs, liturgical vessels) palaces (painted façades, carved ceilings, fresco and stucco work, sculpted chimneypieces and door frames, furniture, utensils, pottery), and cities

(fountains, temporary festival decoration). But what is so curious is that the book is almost unreadable.

If the brief description above reads like a list, so does the book. Within the 24 chapters there are 195 titled subsections, each dealing with a specific topic. Most are short and, after an introductory sentence or paragraph, trail off into various kinds of telegraphically written lists and bibliographical citations about as exciting to read as a stack of index cards. There is the further difficulty that in the more than one hundred years since the book first appeared in 1867, our knowledge of Renaissance architecture has expanded to such an extent that there is not a single section that is not out of date. But in spite of these limitations it is a book that should be in the library of anyone interested in the Italian Renaissance.

For a book published so long ago it contains remarkably little misinformation. Burckhardt was a pioneer in the study of Renaissance architecture and, therefore, depended almost entirely on primary sources, which are as reliable in our day as in Burckhardt's. In the few cases where modern research has proved Burckhardt wrong, the editor, Peter Murray, has also provided a series of bibliograph-

ical notes which guide the reader to the modern studies of many of the topics covered. Thus both the general reader and the specialist can profit from this book. For the general reader prepared to study the illustrations (mostly the original woodcuts, but with a generous number of good quality photographs), to read the essayistic parts, and to skim the lists, there is no better introduction to the full range of Italian Renaissance architectural types and designs. The sources cited and the sheer comprehensiveness of material covered will make the book important as a reference tool for specialists.

It is also useful to have in English (and the translation by James Palmes, revised by Peter Murray, is excellent) any work by a scholar of the stature and influence of Jacob Burckhardt, author of the famous *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. And as a document of art historical method within the context of its period, this work is a tour de force. Burckhardt broke with the stylistic and chronological methods of his day and attempted, within the limits of his resources, a typological approach. While such an approach tends to gloss over the particular circumstances of patronage, function, and meaning of any individual work, it has proven to be very effective in a more evolved and sophisticated form (one thinks especially of the work of Christof Frommel). All in all, one can only be grateful to Professor Murray and the University of Chicago Press for making this pioneering work of architectural history available in such an excellently produced edition.

The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance, Jacob Burckhardt, translated by James Palmes, revised and edited by Peter Murray, University of Chicago Press, 1985, 283 pp., illus., \$50.00.



BERNINI, HEAD OF
THE FIGURE OF
JUSTICE

John Pinto:

BERNINI

FRANCO BORSI

DIARY OF THE CAVALIER BERNINI'S VISIT TO FRANCE

PAUL FREART DE CHANTELOU

The six years since the three hundredth anniversary of Gian Lorenzo Bernini's death have, understandably, seen a proliferation of publications devoted to the undisputed master of the Roman baroque. Several of these, like Irving Lavin's magisterial *Bernini and the Unity of the Visual Arts* and the papers of the International Congress on Bernini's architecture, have added significantly to our understanding of the artist. The translation of Chantelou's *Diary*, and Franco Borsi's useful monograph on Bernini's architecture each has its merits, though neither really opens new vistas in Bernini scholarship. The French text of Chantelou's diary, after all, was published in its entirety a century ago, and Borsi's volume largely summarizes the results of numerous specialized studies that have appeared

since the publication of the last monograph on Bernini's architecture, by Roberto Pane in 1953.

Borsi's monograph, somewhat misleadingly titled *Bernini*, in fact focuses on Bernini's architectural designs, and is a translation of his *Bernini architetto*, which appeared in 1980. The text provides some novel interpretative insights, but Bernini's buildings are presented as complex abstractions rather than tangible, emotive forms that directly engage the observer. The analysis is therefore not always easy to follow, a problem compounded by the translation, which transposes the author's often baroque sentence structure into English syntax.

The virtue of Borsi's monograph is the wealth of illustrative and documentary material—407 high-quality reproductions, 17 in color. As a visual record of Bernini's architecture the volume is invaluable, the more so because it illustrates drawings and prints relating to each design. Borsi's text is accompanied by a *catalogue raisonné* of 75 architectural works by Bernini, compiled by Francesco Quinterio. The catalogue entries provide a useful summary of the building history of each design, with references to the most important documentary sources and secondary literature.

There are some minor errors—the views of the Trevi Fountain by Falda and Cruyl mentioned on page 311, for example, date from 1665, not 1655 as stated—but on the whole the catalogue provides a reliable starting point for research on Bernini's architectural projects.

Borsi's monograph is further enriched by a collection of unpublished documents relating to Bernini's architecture, also edited by Francesco Quinterio. With the exception of some payments and letters connected with two of Bernini's churches, S. Andrea al Quirinale and S. Tommaso di Villanova, these all concern his work in the Vatican. While the documents do not radically alter our understanding of the conception and evolution of Bernini's designs, in some cases they provide revealing insights into their execution. It is fascinating, for example, to learn, from a 1660 account, that nearly thirty thousand cartloads of travertine destined for the portico of St. Peter's had been quarried at Tivoli, but that the limited number of barges available to transport this mass of stone to the work site caused vexing delays in its delivery. The interpretation of primary documents often hinges on subtle nuances of wording and context, and for this reason their translation into English strikes this reviewer as a dubious enterprise; the reader would do well to consult the original transcriptions published in the Italian edition.

The translation of Paul Fréart de Chantelou's *Diary* recording Bernini's visit to France in 1665 is another matter. In publishing this excellent translation by Margery Corbett, replete with illustrations, explanatory notes, and informative appendices by Anthony Blunt and George C. Bauer, Princeton University Press has made one of the most important primary sources on baroque art accessible to an English-speaking audience. Chantelou's *Diary* provides an incisive account of the mature Bernini's per-

sonality, opinions, artistic theory, and working methods, and thus gives an essential key to understanding his art and architecture.

Bernini, at the height of his powers, was called to Paris by Louis XIV to complete the Palace of the Louvre in a manner appropriate to the majesty of the most powerful monarch in Europe. The encounter of Bernini and Louis XIV surely ranks as the most memorable meeting of architect and patron since Deinokrates presented himself, attired as Hercules, to Alexander the Great. The king's minister, Colbert, took a dim view of his master's enthusiasm for Italian architecture in general and for Bernini in particular. This, together with Bernini's often undiplomatic pronouncements on French art and architecture, ultimately led to his designs being shelved in favor of those furnished by an *équipe* of French architects. The intrigue that enveloped the principals in this grand project makes for lively reading, the more so because of Chantelou's directness, ironic sense of humor, and revealing anecdotes.

While Bernini's project for the Louvre occupies center stage, Chantelou records a wealth of information about other projects, including designs for a royal mausoleum at Saint-Denis and the high altar at the Val de Grâce. Thanks to Chantelou's account, we know the particular circumstances surrounding the fashioning of the greatest state portrait of the 17th century, the marble bust of Louis XIV. Most important of all, Chantelou brings us close to Bernini himself, and captures, in equal measure, Bernini's artistic genius and his compelling personality.

Bernini, Franco Borsi, translated by Robert Erich Wolf, Rizzoli, 1985, 382 pp., illus., \$75.00.

Diary of the Cavalier Bernini's Visit to France, Paul Fréart de Chantelou, Princeton University Press, 1985, 366 pp., illus., \$49.00.

Derek A. R. Moore:

ITALIAN BAROQUE

JOHN VARRIANO

The writer of a new survey of Italian architecture of the period 1600–1750 might wish for the scholarly and critical equivalents of Borromini's capacity for invention, Bernini's charm and virtuosity, and Guarini's command of a geometry that gives coherence to the whole while allowing many intricate parts to tantalize us. He might covet Raguzzini's artful hand, to dress up tired, old structures until new ones can be built. Such a writer faces high expectations from a growing and diverse readership of students, design professionals, and other enthusiasts who seek not conversion, but instruction. Moreover, the scholarship of the period is among the best in architectural history, and its proliferation makes an adequate synthesis difficult.

As a handbook, however, Professor John Varriano's presentation is far too hesitant. For example, he would like to replace the "Classic/Baroque dialectic" with a "progressive/conservative" one. Buildings cannot be analyzed with such neutral terms that leave unclear the connections between buildings, architects, and trends. Varriano grudgingly accepts the division of the period into Early, High and Late phases, but does not adequately delineate them. Thus, while championing 17th and 18th-century rococo, Varriano leaves the reader confused about what he calls "academic classicism" and its relation to the "true Neo-Classicism" that would succeed the baroque and rococo. Indeed, the book has no summary or conclusion.

In all fairness, Varriano's presentation does have some notable strengths. He is an enthusiastic partisan of the rococo, and presents many little-known buildings in Lombardy, Emilia, Sicily, and Apulia. The photos are numerous, large, and well printed. However, the bias for the rococo, as recorded

above, confuses the evaluation of the 18th century. While giving the provinces their due, Varriano omits such key buildings as Juvarra's palace at Stupinigi. The wealth of photos and ground plans (the plans are somehow confusing in their simplicity) is accumulated at the expense of other necessary kinds of illustrations. There are no true city plans, no diagrams, a single axonometric, only four building sections, and six drawings by baroque architects. We are thus kept at a disturbing distance from both the building fabric and the drawing table. The six or so contemporary views only underscore the absence of an extended discussion of streets, squares, towns, and city planning. However one chooses to define the "urbanism" of the period,

readers today will expect a more sustained treatment of the issue.

Varriano's information is, on the whole, up-to-date and reliable (with a few lapses—for example, the chapels of the *sacro monte* of Varese contain sculptural tableaux representing the *Mysteries of the Rosary*, not merely the *Stations of the Cross*), but not copious enough to make the book really useful, either as a study guide or a handy reference. There is no separate bibliography.

In sum, the reader misses Wittkower's magisterial yet flexible critical-historical scheme, Blunt's succinct descriptions and penetrating characterizations, and the profusion and variety of illustrations in Norberg-Schulz's books—just to mention those

of comparable length, price, and scope. With such well-established competition, Varriano should either have perfected and pitched the traditional format of the art historical narrative for today's readers, or written a different sort of book. Certainly there is room for one that focuses on the themes and issues of the period, correlating its different moments and places, and synthesizing the diverse advances of recent scholarship to extend, or at least define, the boundaries of our understanding of the baroque.

Italian Baroque and Rococo Architecture, John Varriano, Oxford University Press, 1986, 329 pp., illus., cloth \$27.95; paper \$16.95.

Richard J. Tuttle:

RENAISSANCE ARCHITECTURE

PETER MURRAY

This is by no means a new book and you may well have read or at least seen it before; it first appeared in 1971 as *Architecture of the Renaissance*, one of 18 hefty, abundantly illustrated hardbound volumes in the History of World Architecture series edited by Pier Luigi Nervi for Electa Editrice in Italy and Harry N. Abrams in the United States. Rizzoli is now reissuing the series in redesigned paperback editions, compact and glossy, an enterprise whose merit is in this particular instance highly questionable.

Questionable because Murray's unrevised essay—close cousin to his *Architecture of the Italian Renaissance* of 1963, still in print—is hopelessly out of date. In the last fifteen years many of the buildings discussed have been restudied, with the result that numerous factual points about authorship, patronage, dating, and the like have changed. It will no longer do, for example, to assign Lorenzetto's Palazzo Vidoni-Caffarelli to Raphael,

nor can it still be said that none of Leon Battista Alberti's architectural drawings survives. Similarly, the Palazzo Farnese in Rome was begun in 1515, not 1517, and the Faceted Palace in Moscow of 1487 cannot have been "copied" from the Palazzo dei Diamanti in Ferrara of 1492.

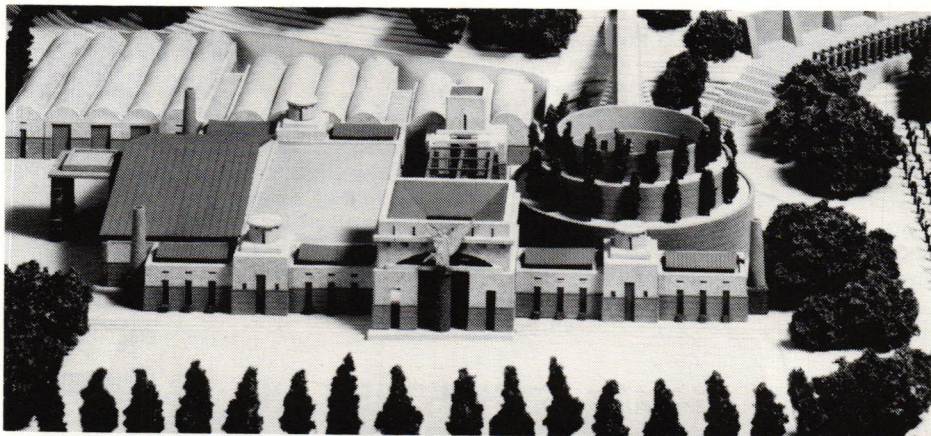
Such inaccuracies might be forgiven in a book founded on a compelling critical outlook or method. Most advanced research on 15th- and 16th-century architecture strives to comprehend and to explicate the monuments afresh in terms of building practice or patronage, theory or ideology. Less meaningful today is the descriptive runthrough of personal styles engaged in by Murray, who treats the works chiefly as artistic events in which formal problems are either solved brilliantly or left in confusion. Just how enlightening is it to say that Antonio da Sangallo the Younger's large wooden model for St. Peter's "must be judged an aesthetic failure" because it lacks "that sense of the stupendous, of more-than-Roman grandeur, which marked Julius and Bramante"? Pronouncements on artis-

tic value are not confined to single buildings but extend to the organization of the whole book. The putative subject is Renaissance architecture throughout Europe, but Murray is inclined to view the Italians as the only true practitioners, with French, German, Spanish, Netherlandish, and English architects as lame disciples. Less than a sixth of the book is given over to the poor *oltramontani*.

Popular and academic interest in Renaissance architecture has never been greater and we have at present a real need for an introductory survey in English that is both reliable and affordable. This is not it, but *Renaissance Architecture* provides something which no other paperback on the market does: a generous and sometimes enthralling complement of good quality illustrations. There are over 350 black-and-white plates and, while this represents only two-thirds of the total in the first edition, twenty-four are now in color. The book's beauty is illustration-deep.

Renaissance Architecture, Peter Murray, Electa/Rizzoli, 1985, 196 pp., illus., \$18.50 pb.

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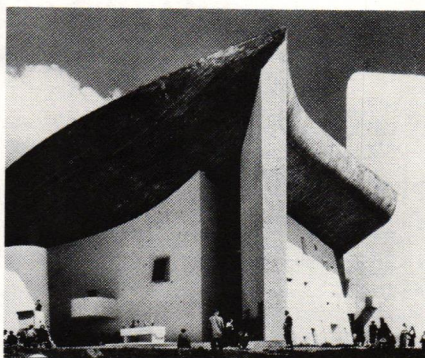
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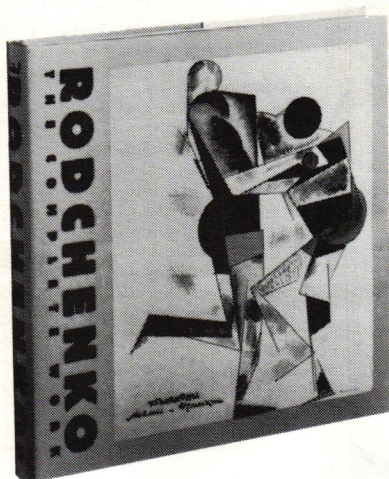
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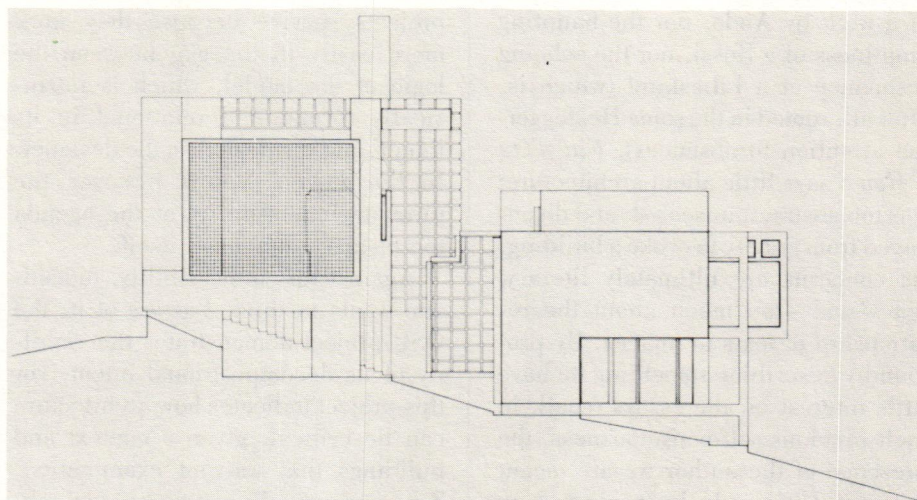
PETER EISENMAN

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COMPETITION

PETER ARNELL and TED BICKFORD, editors

In these publications—*Fin d'Ou T Hou S*, an Architectural Association folio of Peter Eisenman's most recent theoretical "decompositional" project, and *A Center for the Visual Arts: The Ohio State University Competition*, a documentation and discussion of the five OSU competition entries, including (and especially) Eisenman's winning one—we see Eisenman in two distinct guises. The first is the familiar iconoclastic theoretician insisting on the creation of highly abstracted buildings that refuse to merely respond to the "circumstantial" criteria of program, site, and cultural context; the other is the practicing architect and master-manipulator of a local history, site development, and programmatic need. The similarity of formal devices in these two projects—the juxtaposition of spatial grid with solid volumes, the manipulation of the ground plane, the emphasis on an unfinished, "in-process" construction—lead one to assume that the OSU project is the "real" application of *Fin d'Ou T Hou S*'s Platonic ideal, an application that we assume will be a "shadow" of the abstract paradigm. But the vacuousness of this particular "ideal" and the intelligent and subtle power of the "real" project suggest that the Visual Arts Center should be seen instead as a critique of *Fin d'Ou T Hou S*, a work which, if it is an ideal at all, is one that maps the self-destruction of the abstract agenda.

To a certain extent, the emptiness of *Fin d'Ou T Hou S* is envisioned by Eisenman himself, for his work can



HOUSE X, SCHEME H, EAST ELEVATION. FROM EISENMAN, *HOUSE X* (RIZZOLI, 1982).

be seen as the history of the gradual dismissal, first of the architect/designer and then of the building/object. In Houses I-IV, drawing on the structuralist model of "transformation" and applying Noam Chomsky's linguistic theory of deep structure, Eisenman replaced the architect's traditional reliance on "composition" with a self-generated unfolding of the object's own essential formal logic. Realizing that these houses, in their emphasis on process, raised the question of their status as object, Eisenman, with House VI, claimed that its "objecthood" could be sustained if the house acted as a sort of palimpsest recording the history of its coming into being. But here the fallacy of proposing an object that was disengaged from its complementary subject as well as the naiveté of assuming the existence of a building's formal "essences" became evident. Eisenman replaced the transformational model with that of "decomposition" which, following the directive of Jacques Derrida's critical method of deconstruction, assumed a preexistent object designed by a "vanished subject" and subsequently "decomposed" by the architect/archaeologist. Houses X-El Even Odd both examined the formal "absences" which these partial cubes were destined to confront. They witness their escalating dematerialization as their two- and

three-dimensional representations became of primary concern.

Fin d'Ou T Hou S, the last in the line of these decompositional projects, furthers this trend by documenting the maneuverings of two "el" shapes as they try but fail to join into a single object. Once again we are presented with a design in which objects float in a gridded arena of formal irresolution, in which "absences" dominate over "presences." Its singular status as "design" is challenged by the fact that its drawings—the four stages of the decomposition, as well as the plans, sections, and elevations of its final fourth stage—are produced twice, once as pure white embossments, once as full-color prints. Then, to guarantee that we don't take these artifacts of process too "objectively," Eisenman suggests that the two accompanying introductory texts—both of which, significantly, deny him the role and privilege of "author"—be given equal status with the visual works. The whole piece is a tribute to absentee subjects and objects.

But, unless Eisenman is anxious to have us spend money on a folio whose contents we are meant to dislike (a serious possibility), the hollowness manifested here is more profound than his notion of the vanished author and the nonobjective object admits. Having neither the profound "silence"

of a work by Ando, nor the haunting emptiness of a Rossi, nor the echoing resonance of a Libeskind (which is, after all, rooted in the same Heideggerian attention to absences), *Fin d'Ou T Hou S* says little about architecture; it is too abstract, unscaled, and disengaged from gravity to evoke a building. Its concerns are ultimately literary, not visual—too much about the relationship of texts to images. By profoundly describing something we have little interest in, the essays recall, in their precious self-consciousness, the presence of the author we are meant to forget. Ultimately, by trying to deny us all the components of the creative process, *Fin d'Ou T Hou S* points out how desperately we need the original and real author/creator.

The source of the tautology lies in Eisenman's insistent use of critical models for generative, creative use. Decomposition, explicitly addressing the concerns of the reader of the text and not its author, neither wants nor is able to provide the method for its application to an original act of creation. While Eisenman, who is aware of this, tries to escape the dilemma by suggesting that the pieces he is working with—the “el” shapes—have already been aesthetically, symbolically, and culturally prepared, there is no way to escape the fact that both the forms he uses and the method of their manipulation begin and end in the self-contained vacuum of his formalism. A similar problem exists with the transformational work; here even the recognized impossibility of a “neutral” operator of transformational rules ignores that Eisenman's application of Chomsky is misconceived, for the linguist's ultimate concern is not the structure of objects, but of the subjective mind. Earlier decomposition projects warrant attention because, within this vacuum, the objects (created under the guise of decomposition) were of true visual interest, particularly in the controlled ambiguity of their three-dimensional representation. And the transformational

projects survive because they work more easily in the gap between the logic of the model, which is intrinsically formal and relational in its intent, and the desires of the designer. In *Fin d'Ou T Hou S*, however, the ultimate impossibility of the agenda too clearly announced itself.

Against this impossibility, indeed, one wants to think *because* of it, the OSU project demonstrates the viability of its decompositional intent. For this project indicates how architecture can be critical, given a context and buildings that warrant examination. Zeroing in on the not-so-hidden subversive aspects of the competition program, which asked contestants to recognize the increasingly ephemeral standing of the visual arts as well as the ambiguous relationship between a reifying museum and an iconoclastic educational center (the two main components of the program) and reveling in the loaded situation of a site at the major point of interchange between campus and city, Eisenman draws on the formal strategies utilized by his theoretical work, but now as the tool, not the object, of his critique. He exploits the difference between the campus and the city grids, challenging the general relationship of university to city as well as the more specific relationship of university-sponsored art to both student life and civic culture. Likewise, he manipulates the ground plane (the majority of the programmed spaces are underground) to allude not only to the archaeological history of the campus, but to the unrelenting flatness of the Ohio landscape. And most significantly, because it is implicit in the abstract work but impossible in its empty context, he makes a non-object, in-fill building; one that, as matrix to the existing campus buildings around which it must work, brings into question the nature of a visual-arts museum. The building's steadfast refusal to take on the iconic quality of these other buildings, and its resistance to clearly circumscribing the precinct

wherein “art” distinguishes itself from non-art make the desired critical point clear.

All of these formal strategies, it should be noted, were employed by Eisenman in his prizewinning Berlin competition project, and they were equally poignant in their deconstructive aim. What makes *this* project significant is that at Ohio State University, unlike Berlin, the site and the program have comparatively little general cultural significance, and hence the critique, to work at the mundane level of everyday building, has to be more precise and specific. Indeed, Eisenman's triumph here is in demonstrating that consistent and rigorous strategies of design—strategies rooted in the most profound and philosophic critical positions—can be applied to ordinary building conditions, and can also be understood by intellectual initiates, practicing architects, popular critics, and potential users alike. Every essay, from those of Alan Colquhoun, Kurt Forster, and Douglas Davis to those of nonarchitecture faculty members involved in the selection, demonstrates the appreciation for a project whose critical aim is both appropriate and perceptible. As the essay written by the jury members indicates, Eisenman's entry guaranteed that the evaluation of the various projects transcended tedious debates about style, and acknowledged the conceptual difference between a project like Eisenman's and others, like Michael Graves's, which systematically drew on buildings of the past. No one, it seems, when faced with the choice of Eisenman's disturbing queries into the value of institutionalized culture and Graves's tribute to a cultural status quo, could ignore that one was real and the other a fantasy.

Fin d'Ou T Hou S, Peter Eisenman, Architectural Association, London, 1985, £33.00.

A Center for the Visual Arts: The Ohio State University Competition, Peter Arnell and Ted Bickford, editors, Rizzoli, 1984, 152 pp., illus., \$17.50 pb.

William C. Miller:

SVERRE FEHN

PER OLAF FJELD

THE POSTMODERNISTS JAN & JON

THOMAS THIS-EVENSEN

In a period that embraces architectural production grounded in the techniques of modern industrial processes and, simultaneously, the nostalgic historicism of postmodernism, Sverre Fehn practices an architecture of resistance. His practice critically examines the role architecture plays in reclaiming the essentials of human existence for the alienated individual in modern mass society. To resist the ubiquitous placelessness and abstract nature of space promulgated by the modernist focus on universal technique, Fehn proposes revitalizing the poetics of place and construction.

Though his early work, as seen in the Økern Home for the Elderly (1955), was influenced by Mies van der Rohe and Jean Prouvé, Fehn has transformed their technical sensibility into a more timeless, basic notion of building. His best works—the Larvik Crematorium project (1950), North Cape Church project (1962), Nordic Pavilion for the Venice Biennale (1962), Norrkøping House (1964), A. Bødtker House (1965), Hamar Bispegard Museum (1970), and Trondheim Library competition (1978)—cultivate their sites and are powerfully subtle. Fehn creates place by inscribing human presence on the earth's surface. In conceiving building form, he inflects according to the peculiarities of topography, context, light, and climate, creating compositions that embrace building, earth, landscape, horizon, and sky. Rooms are tangible, bounded domains, composed of tactile and articulate elements—roof, floor, wall, column, and opening.

Equally instructive, and poignantly

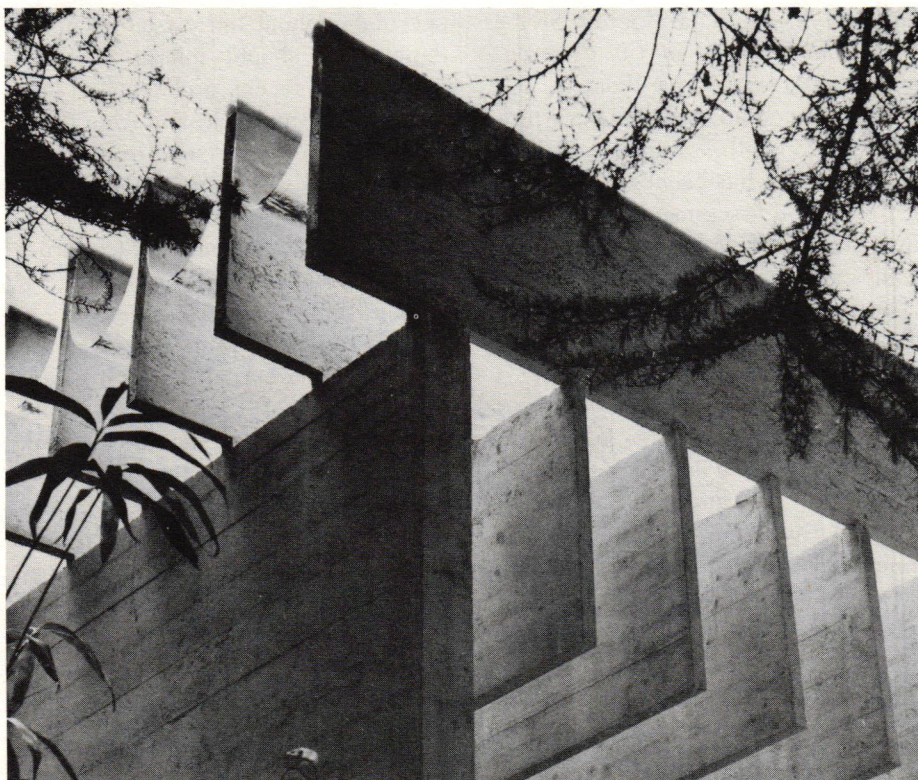
captured in Per Olaf Fjeld's *Sverre Fehn: The Thought of Construction*, are Fehn's "constructive thoughts" on architecture. With critical insight provided by Kenneth Frampton and John Hejduk, Fjeld has eschewed the normal historical assessment, concentrating instead on Fehn's poetic thinking. Fehn speculates—under rubrics like "The Fall of Horizon," "The Precision of Place," "Heaven and Earth," "The Unit," "The Language of Construction," and "Disappearance"—upon architecture's fall from grace. This fall means our lost understanding of the earth's tangible realities, and of the archetypal themes forming the human condition. From these Fehn posits a revitalized tectonic can be developed to mediate between setting and inhabitant. Fehn does not overlook the individual; he

speculates about the existential foundation that should inform our life-world. Few recent architects—Louis Kahn, Aldo van Eyck, and Aldo Rossi among them—have so provocatively and personally examined the architectural condition as Fehn. Per Olaf Fjeld's *Sverre Fehn: The Thought of Construction*, is not only a well-produced volume, but an essential one.

In contrast to Fehn, Jan Digerud and Jon Lundberg (known by their office name of "Jan & Jon") are avowed postmodernists, whose work is grounded in three principles: order (geometry and symmetry), ambiguity (contrast achieved through collision and distortion), and recognition (images based upon historical and local sources). These principles, though currently espoused by numer-



FROM JAN AND JON,
STAIRCASE IN THE
TOWER SUITE,
GRAND HOTEL, OSLO



FROM SVERRE FEHN, DETAIL FROM THE NORDIC PAVILION AT THE VENICE BIENNALE

ous American and European architects, have explicit roots for Jan and Jon—Kahn, Robert Venturi, and Charles Moore (via Vincent Scully) influenced Digerud, while Lundberg worked for Jørn Utzon. But regional tradition plays a role, too, for local norms of craft and expression actively modify the principles to suit Norwegian notions of acceptability. The Øveraas cabin (1970), S. Digerud house (1972), the tower suite for the Grand Hotel (1975), Normann house (1979), and the Akersveien 12-14 town-house remodel (1979), for instance, exemplify the creative dialogue Jan and Jon fashioned from the interaction between local circumstance and generalized principle. A spirited playfulness also imbues these works with a quality reminiscent of Moore and Venturi's witty mannerings of elements.

In recent projects, a lessening of the resonance that characterized their earlier work can be observed. Jan and Jon's Universitetsforlaget addition (1981), for instance, seems a pastiche

of hybrid elements and orders. This is symptomatic, too, of the designs for the administrative complexes at Stavanger (1982) and Lysaker (1983), the Rozenkrantz tower project (1981), and the Rådhusgaten 23B office tower addition (1983). In these works the critical, and instrumental, potency of regional inflection is being relinquished in favor of a prosaic appropriation of fashionable images derived from current sources. This acquiescence may trivialize the creativeness in their earlier work, while reducing its playful spirit to glib historicism.

Thomas Thiis-Evensen, in *The Postmodernists Jan & Jon*, thematically examines Digerud and Lundberg's designs within the matrix provided by the principles of order, ambiguity, and recognition. He outlines the grounding of these principles in history and their application in Jan and Jon's design process, focusing on the explicit sources of expression and historical references they draw upon. Given the architects' corpus of work,

the author devotes a special section to discussing "house" and its potentialities as a vehicle for architectural exploration—in Jan and Jon's case, house as interior, as dwelling, as city, and as history. Complemented by Donlyn Lyndon's introduction, Thiis-Evensen's competent text is essentially descriptive, as he seldom ventures into critical interpretation. He enthusiastically endorses postmodernism's agenda, and posits Digerud and Lundberg's production as exemplary.

These two volumes present markedly different attitudes about architectural production and practice. Digerud and Lundberg embody a practice of currency, while Fehn argues one of resistance. Jan and Jon's procedures and values are rooted within the norms of the contemporary; a practice defined by the realm of actions, competencies, and attitudes held by their numerous American and European peers. Fehn's resistance is grounded in a critical practice that looks to the archetypal and archaic to counteract modern technique and prevailing fashion. These differences inform their respective actions regarding the influence accorded regional environment, tradition, and custom. Jan and Jon use regional influences in a direct, referential way; they are source-specific and based on allusion. Fehn, like Asplund, Aalto, and Utzon, crafts an architecture in which the essential qualities are derived indirectly from the exigencies of a particular place. Fehn is not bound by source in the same sense Jan and Jon are; he proffers instead a strategy to recapture architecture's role in everyday life by returning to the tangible realities of place and construction.

Sverre Fehn: The Thought of Construction, Per Olaf Fjeld, Rizzoli, 1983, 192 pp., illus., \$25.00 pb.

The Postmodernists Jan & Jon, Thomas Thiis-Evensen, Universitetsforlaget (Oslo, distributed by Columbia University Press), 1984, 127 pp., illus., \$27.00 pb.

Panos Koulermos:

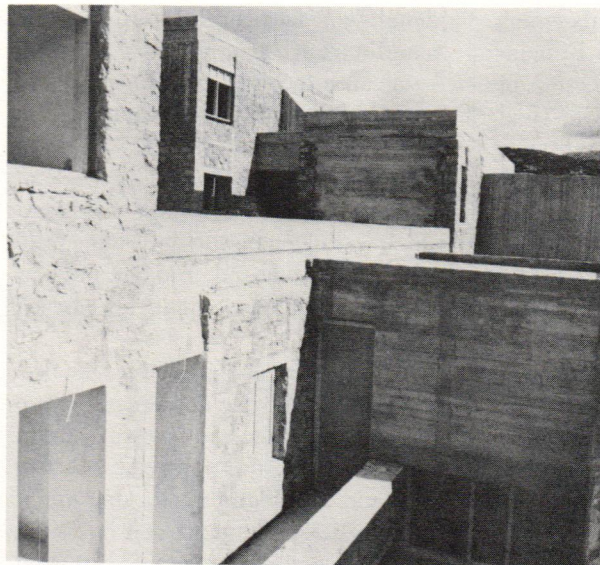
ATELIER 66

KENNETH FRAMPTON, editor

Modern Greek architectural history is not well known in the rest of Europe. This book owes its very existence to the interest and sensitivity of Kenneth Frampton, who, as technical editor of *Architectural Design*, published the work of Aris Konstandinides, an important modern Greek architect, and has over the years provided constant critical commentary and discussion of Greek architecture. He was a stimulating personality for those of us practicing in Greece in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Greece has known two significant architectural cultures since its War of Independence (1821–1832): the neo-classical and the modern. Both have their origins in the Greek architecture developed in other European nations and imported as “appropriate cultural packages” back to Greece. The neo-classical architecture was introduced by Bavarian, Danish, and affluent Greek architects residing abroad. Modernism, on the other hand, as in other European countries, was only gradually accepted in Greece. At the same time, Greek architects came to appreciate their own vernacular and popular tradition. The influence of European and American culture was, needless to say, inescapable because so many Greek architects study abroad.

Frampton's overview of Antonakakis's work, “Greek Regionalism and the Modern Project: A Collective Endeavour,” places Greece in the Modern Movement. He points out how similar the avant-garde architecture of the twenties and thirties was to the whitewashed traditional architecture of the Cycladic Islands, and that “certain modernist manifestations, above all Le Corbusier's purism, had been partially inspired by these very same prototypes.” This spatial syntax and form came easily to the Greek



HOUSING AT
DISTOMON,
EXTERIOR DETAIL

modernist.

When Frampton says that “Athens is one of the few cities in the world where a normative modern international architecture accounts for a large part of the inner urban fabric,” I do not think he is referring to the architectural quality of the buildings. Antonakakis's urban buildings—mainly apartment blocks—are remarkable for their capacity to develop an architectural vocabulary that gives variety to an otherwise extremely bland speculative cityscape. Frampton sees in Antonakakis the influence of the Greek regionalists, Dimitris Pikionis and Aris Konstandinides—architects distinctly different in their work, yet philosophically close. Their differences have become more pronounced, because Pikionis's work owes its inspiration and his late stylistic predilections to the vernacular architectural language of middle and northern Greece. Konstandinides's work, on the other hand, is a sensitive interpretation of vernacular typologies and scale, and also rationalist in syntax and vocabulary.

The work of Atelier 66, which

Frampton classifies as “Greek Modernist,” at “a subliminal level remains subtly structured by rationalistic planning principles derived in the main from Mies and Aldo Van Eyck and the Dutch structuralists.” I find this true of many architects in Greece, not only Atelier 66. Spatial order and structure are appealing synthetic principles to Greek architects. At the same time, these influences have been commercially exploited and have become an easy answer to speculative ventures—it seems conceptual clarity has always lent itself to easy and cheap imitation.

Atelier 66's “collectivity,” cultivated over twenty years, is an encouraging phenomenon; many offices in Athens have operated on similar lines, although to a lesser degree. Atelier 66 is perhaps unique in this respect, and their modus operandi shows in their work in an even design that responds sensitively to Greece's wealth of tradition, with a bias toward the vernacular. The office has developed a collective architectural vocabulary not unlike the evolution of vernacular architecture itself.

Lefaire and Tzonis discuss the

evolution of regionalism and its emergence toward the end of the Renaissance as "the conscious rejection of Vitruvian, eoplatic and Classical formulas." Regionalism "stood as a critique of the *ancien régime*." They stress that regionalism, like neoclassicism and functionalism, grew out of the "bourgeois mentality," which was apparently capable of generating such diverse and conflicting concepts in architecture. In addition, "the new world order of the nineteenth century depended as much on the mentality of nationalism, liberalism, empiricism and individualism—all of which received expression in regionalism—as it did on the spirit of internationalism and the belief in abstract universal values. . . ." That a desire to be simple, to relate a building to its place of origin, has had such a complex evolution seems extraordinary. One wonders whether those involved with the design of such buildings were in fact preoccupied with issues of this kind or whether historical and critical analysis is, as so often, *a posteriori*. Can we really attribute epithets to such complex and uneven trends? Have political and social movements ever produced architecture of any significance beyond ephemeral styles or dogmas? To add even more drama, Lefaivre and Tzonis point out that regionalism was in the second phase associated with "movements of reform and liberation," at the same time "it also proved to be a powerful tool of repression and chauvinism."

Regionalism continued its convoluted evolution and toward the end "was closely associated with the political conservatism of the 1930s. It conceived architecture too narrowly, too nostalgically, and as a result it was unable to develop a truly critical statement. By the end of the decade it was already on the decline."

Nevertheless, in the third phase, according to Lefaivre and Tzonis, regionalism emerges as "a critical movement," free of the "nationalist racist connotations of conservative re-

gionalism." They cite the work of the Scandinavian "empiricists," the Bay Area architects of California, and "even the early work of Giancarlo De Carlo and James Stirling." In spite of profound differences, the work of Atelier 66 belongs to this category, which indicates how widely and subtly the term can be used, and how unclear this "critical movement or phase" still is.

Atelier 66 is considered regionalist by Lefaivre and Tzonis because "two major architectural patterns appear in their work in the mid-sixties: The Grid and The Pathway. . . . One might say that these elements can be found in the work of any architect. But what gives these elements their distinction in the Antonakakis work is the formal foregrounding of the patterns and their implicit content as icons which derive from the social and cultural context of the history of regionalism of Greece."

Greek regionalism, Lefaivre and Tzonis state, evolved after the Greek war of independence against the Ottoman Empire (1821–1832). "The Greek case is paradoxical. . . . Regionalist movements in other countries . . . grew in opposition to Neoclassicism and to the idea of arbitrary, external authority—juridical, colonial, military and financial."

The few examples of the "Neoclassical" period—small or palatial houses and public buildings—to survive the ruthless speculative takeover of the 1950s and 1960s, are today restored and cherished as great examples of the recent Hellenic heritage. In Athens, a city with few variations on the theme of the speculative apartment building, they are a blessing. "The grid pattern," Lefaivre and Tzonis argue, was used by the Greeks as an act of faith in the 19th century, and, together with other architectural types such as stoa and pedimented portico, is "seen as the means with which to restore the true order of things." Many projects by Lysandros Kaftantzoglou and by German, Danish, and other architects working in Greece at that

time attest to this. Aris Konstantinides's architecture from the mid-20th century reveals "the presence of these patterns in reduced non-stylistic form, and the influence that he had on the generation of architects practising in Greece in the 50s and later." What is less clear is Lefaivre and Tzonis's reference to the "warm reception given to Mies van der Rohe's work by the same generation." This might be true for a few Greek architects, but functional empiricism and a rather free interpretation of the International Style was the rule.

The "pathway" which appears in the work of Atelier 66 makes reference to the pathway designed by Dimitris Pikionis, a "pioneer of regionalism," for the hills of Philopappou and Acropolis, a major pedestrian circulation network meandering through the two hills and landscaped areas. The pathway denotes linear movement, but "urban spaces" might be a more appropriate metaphor for interrelated nonlinearly sequential tectonic spaces. Pikionis's path remains one of the best projects of his career—and, not being a building, it is free from the stylistic and folklore references of his later work.

Atelier 66 epitomizes the work of many lesser-known Greek architects over the last twenty years. The few examples presented and discussed in this book show that architecture of quality knows no boundaries and does not always depend on the wealth and technological status of a nation. The striving for an architecture rooted in its place of origin, but with a critical attitude toward international developments, is vital, and is manifested in many small-scale projects and apartment blocks by Atelier 66. However, the greatest challenge to the regionalist awareness still remains the design of large and complex buildings.

Atelier 66: The Architecture of Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis, Kenneth Frampton, editor, Rizzoli, 1985, 144 pp., illus., \$19.95 pb.

Leland M. Roth:

COMMON PLACES

DELL UPTON and
JOHN MICHAEL VLACH, editors

A minor flap erupted last year in the pages of that distinguished organ of the College Art Association of America, *The Art Bulletin*. At issue was the distinction made by Professor Brunhilde Ridgway of Bryn Mawr College between art history, as she defined it, and her own discipline of archaeology.¹ Art history, she wrote, is "the study of the history of aesthetically pleasing objects, in a scale ranging from the beautiful artifact to the masterpiece. By contrast, archaeology is concerned with *any* object from the ancient past, regardless of its aesthetic value and artistic importance, as a clue to cultural reconstruction."

Exception was taken in a letter to *The Art Bulletin* from Professor William Hood of Oberlin College. Yet all too often, courses in the visual arts and architecture do concentrate on "beautiful" publicly and socially prominent objects. This reviewer must admit *mea culpa* in this respect, partly because of the shortness of the academic quarter, but also because of the influence of an art/architectural-historical education system that focuses on the singular "beautiful" artifact. Survey texts of American architecture give the impression that they sketch the whole story. Yet, as Amos Rapoport observes in *House Form and Culture*, roughly 5 percent of the world's building construction is designed by professional architects or built by engineers; the rest he defines as vernacular building.² Since Rapoport includes in this figure civil-engineering construction, architectural work (offices, houses, shopping malls, schools) would account for only 1 to 2 percent of the world's building activity. Nonetheless, architectural historians have interpreted the whole of American culture on the basis of a



BASHAM BUNGALOW. (PHOTO COURTESY OF DELL UPTON.)

selection of buildings from that 1 percent. This cultural myopia is changing, as shown by Spiro Kostof's assertion, in his recent *History of Architecture* (Oxford, 1985), that the whole of the built environment must be studied if any sense is to be made of what its builders intended. Upton and Vlach's book is a significant venture to supplement the usual "great monuments" of reading in American architecture.

The 23 essays range from a pioneer treatment of 17th-century Rhode Island houses by Isham and Brown, first published in 1895, to essays published as recently as 1982. The authors are cultural geographers and historians, folklorists, architects, archaeologists, social historians, decorative-arts scholars, preservationists, American studies specialists, and architectural historians. They emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of vernacular architectural studies and clearly illustrate how architectural history can be enriched by new methodologies. (A risk revealed in the essays is the accumulation of additional arcane

jargon, particularly from the social sciences.)

The editors' essential task is to define what vernacular architecture is, and why such a study of artifactual material is valuable. Their extended introduction deals with this issue, while outlining the content and purpose of the book's five sections. The six essays of the first section, taken together, suggest a definition of vernacular architecture, beginning with an essay (first published in 1965) by Fred Kniffen, a cultural geographer and an early scholar in the field of vernacular architecture. His definition of the basic one-room-deep "I-house" appears in many subsequent essays in the anthology. Basic too is his notion of the dispersion of types from central cultural "hearths." Edward Chappell's essay (1980) on houses in the upper Shenandoah Valley reveals their sources in Rhenish and Swiss models known to their Germanic builders and also includes a detailed catalogue of the nine houses examined in this study. A parallel article is John

Vlach's demonstration (1976) that the long, narrow "shotgun" house of Louisiana blacks came by stages from Haiti and Nigeria. Clay Lancaster's essay on the American bungalow (1958) suggests that popular middle-class building types also fit into the rubric. The definition of vernacular design is expanded by geographer Stewart McHenry's examination (1978) of the different patterns of field layout devised by the ethnic groups settling in 19th-century Vermont. Even patterns of the urban street and square are part of the vernacular environment, as demonstrated in Edward Price's essay (1968) on the layout of county seats, based on types developed in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and Shelbyville, Tennessee, and carried from these two "hearths" throughout the central states.

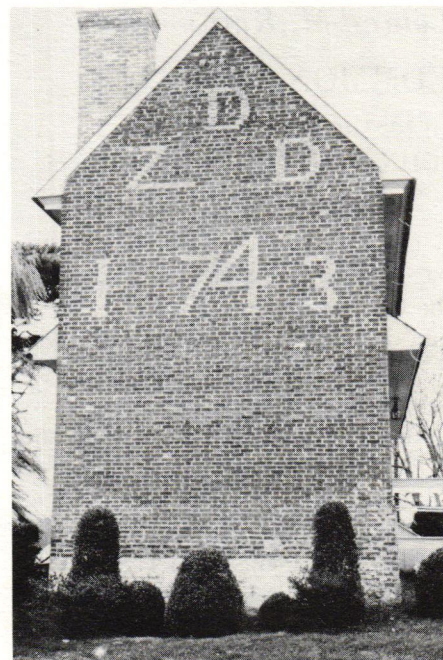
Since vernacular architecture is based on craft, the second section of the book treats methods of construction, opening with Isham and Brown's seminal essay on Rhode Island houses (1895), the first study of vernacular architecture published in the United States. This is followed by an essay by pioneer scholars in this field, Fred Kniffen and Henry Glassie (1966), on wood house construction methods in the eastern United States, especially the various techniques of notching in log construction; here, too, the emphasis is on demonstrating the dispersion of distinct notching methods in various areas of the Midwest. Appropriately, Warren Roberts's catalogue (1977) of the tools used in such log house construction follows. The section concludes with an essay by Theodore Prudon (1976) on the Dutch barn construction methods used in New York (one of the few essays in this anthology to treat heavy-framed barns, a fast-disappearing traditional building type).

As the editors point out in the introduction, architectural historians have been too quick to ascribe meaning in terms of exterior forms rather than interior operations. The meaning

of the vernacular building is inseparable from its use. Hence the third section treats the function of vernacular architecture and opens with Abbott Cummings's classic essay (1964) on the functions of the various rooms of 17th- and 18th-century Massachusetts houses, as revealed by the detailed inventories of furnishings made on the death of their owners (three such probate inventories are included). Kenneth Ames's study (1978) of the furnishings of the Victorian entry hall (with its hall stand, chair, and card receiver) permits a reconstruction of a highly structured, formal lifestyle that has entirely disappeared. Especially revealing is Elizabeth Cohen's examination (1980) of the home embellishments crafted by working-class immigrant homemakers, *bibelots* that confounded the best efforts of well-intentioned middle-class reformers who prized austerity, frills that celebrated personal prosperity made possible in America.

But history is dynamic, and the functional use of vernacular architecture is not static, as the essays in the fourth section demonstrate. James Borchert's essay (1979) on the alley houses in Washington, D.C., is an interesting presentation of the reversal of image, and refutes the notion that a given architectural environment invariably fosters specific kinds of behavior. The houses originally built by blacks in the mid-19th century in the centers of large city blocks opened up to narrow alleys that were the scenes of an active street life. Recently gentrified, the houses are now closed with fortified windows and doors and have become isolated retreats for affluent whites; as the editors note, "a landscape that once provided blacks with a basis for communal interaction was converted into an environment of personal security and privacy."

Unique in the collection of essays is Fraser Neiman's (1978) on the Clifts Plantation in 17th-century Virginia, for there are no visible physi-



ZACHEUS AND DEBORAH DUNN HOUSE, WOODSTOWN, NEW JERSEY. (PHOTO COURTESY OF DELL UPTON.)

cal remains of the buildings. The story of the house is revealed through painstaking archaeological soil analyses of the postholes left by house timbers pushed directly into the ground, and by written records and inventories. The various levels of excavation reveal the evolution of a farmhouse periodically reshaped as the economy based on tobacco gradually divided Virginia society into an enslaved working class and an aristocracy—a change dramatically declared by the demolition of the modest wooden house to make way for the great brick pile of the Lee house, Stratford Hall.

Dell Upton's survey of 18th-century residences in Virginia points up a different aspect of how function changes in vernacular architecture. He examines the typical two- and three-room Virginia house of the late 17th century, in which each room had a distinct function and a clearly understood name, as evidenced by contemporary written records. The spatial relationship of room to room was dictated by these social and utilitarian functions. Yet when the abstract and formal bilateral Georgian plan was adopted



JOHN AND MARTHA DICKESON HOUSE, ALLOWAY, NEW JERSEY. (PHOTO COURTESY OF DELL UPTON.)

in the 18th century as a legitimizing symbol of social position, the fourth room of that double-pile plan had no clear function; numerous written records fail to identify it clearly, nor does it have a commonly agreed-upon name.

The concluding essay in this section devoted to historical evolution is by Robert Blair St. George and focuses on the 17th-century yeoman farmsteads of New England. He, too, draws upon probate records to provide a detailed picture of the operations of several farms in Massachusetts, observing that the kind of farming operation established by new settlers corresponded to the kind of farming common to the county in England from which the settlers had emigrated. He also discusses the supposed environmental determinism that is said to have led to the substitution of shingles for thatch on roofs; as he points out, thatch was used on barns long after shingles became dominant for house roofs.

The fifth and final section of the book takes up the most difficult aspect of vernacular architecture for the

traditionally trained art/architectural historian to understand: Vernacular architecture does not arise automatically through some unconscious utilitarian impulse, but is, like "high-style" architecture, the result of countless carefully deliberated decisions, and conveys to its builders a system of meaning just as rich and complex. An essay by Henry Glassie examines vernacular house and farm types in the lower Delaware valley, suggesting a particular morphology and a range of meanings; the essay's best elements are the opening and closing paragraphs which contain excellent expositions on the value of artifact study and on the unique American character of settlement patterns. A related essay by Fred W. Peterson analyzes several typical late 19th-century farmhouses in Minnesota.

That vernacular architecture had meaning for its builders is illustrated by Alan Gowans in an article on the brick "Mansions of Alloways Creek" in southern New Jersey, built in the mid-18th century. Constructed by a team of local builders (not Swedes, as long assumed) and derived from urban row-house prototypes common in Philadelphia, these broad freestanding houses typically had unfenestrated brick end walls that were richly emblazoned with decorative patterns in the brickwork. As Gowans demonstrates, these patterns were derived not from Swedish folk arts but from Elizabethan brickwork. The houses, boldly displaying their builders' initials (both husband's and wife's) and the year of construction, were as important for these smaller farms as the great contemporary brick mansions were for tidewater Virginia plantations, and if the New Jersey houses could not impress through sheer size, they could at least proudly celebrate their builders' achievement in patterned brick supergraphics.

Especially intriguing is the short essay by Thomas Hubka, an architect and historian of vernacular architecture now well known for his book on

the connected house-barns of Maine and New Hampshire. This essay deals with how vernacular designers go about developing a design, contrasting this method with that of a formally trained architect. The architect brings to the design problem all his or her accumulated scientific knowledge and, as a result, every aspect of the conceptual scheme is in flux. The vernacular designer thinks of the proposed building in terms of established patterns or types, and modifies that type only so far as is necessary to fit the particular situation. As Hubka writes, "folk designers start with the unchanging and accommodate change."

Vernacular contractor/builders also have a clear idea of what their clients want in their houses, as Catherine Bishir makes evident in her essay on builder Jacob W. Holt, active in the border area of Virginia and North Carolina from 1840 to 1880. Holt never considered himself more than a builder (although he might well have claimed the title architect); he also operated a large mill shop that prefabricated parts for the houses he built. In response to his clients' wishes, his houses were based on a simple double-pile plan with three windows across the front; the major variations were in the ornament, gradually shifting from neoclassical toward ever more ornate Victorian Italianate. For a church he could derive a scheme from a plate in Samuel Sloan's *Model Architect* (1852), and one of his most elaborate houses was based on Design 31 in William Ranlett's *The Architect* (1849). He deliberately chose to use ten-to-fifteen-year-old pattern book designs, and adapted late Georgian double-pile plans, which enabled him to suggest tradition while at the same time conveying modernity. When he was his own client in 1855, however, he produced a design closely modeled on one of the more picturesque plates in Downing's *Cottage Residences* (1842), a house that one local resident thought was "usually shaped." Except for himself and a few adventuresome clients,

Holt understood (as Hubka explains) that he could deviate only so far from the traditional house type if he wanted to continue to attract clients.

Following these well-researched pieces, a reader might well expect an exceptional concluding essay. However Barbara Rubin's examination of the conflict between elitist corporate urban aspiration and the imagery of the commercial strip is marred by weak scholarship supporting tenuous conclusions. An example is her persistence in describing the World's Columbian Exposition plan as "sinuous" and "curvilinear," attributing its white color to the inability to introduce pigment into the stucco, when, in fact, it resulted from problems in scheduling the spray-painting of the buildings. It should be noted, however, that her essay was first published in 1975, before the current rise in scholarly publication on such topics made correct information and more informed interpretations widely available.

Despite this unfortunately weak ending, *Common Places* is a welcome addition to the literature on American architecture. Like vernacular architecture itself, these articles have been around awhile, some in frontline journals such as the *Winterthur Portfolio*, others in more obscure journals. Perhaps collections such as this will help the next generation of students learn something of the breadth and richness of our built environment, of our buildings both great and humble.

1. Brunhilde Sismondo Ridgway, "The State of Research on Ancient Art," *The Art Bulletin* 68 (March 1986): 7-23.

2. Amos Rapoport, *House Form and Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 2. This observation is noted by the editors in their introduction.

Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture, Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, editors, University of Georgia Press, 1986, xxiv + 529 pp., illus., \$50.00.

Marc Treib:

ROMANTICIZING THE STONES (PLASTER, AND WOOD)

The term vernacular, as landscape historian John Brinckerhoff Jackson continually reminds us, derives from the word *verna*, Latin for a slave born in the house of his or her master. In common architectural parlance, on the other hand, the word has come to signify building that lies opposed to the High Styles of the polite architectural world, or more simply, folk or anonymous construction. Defining the term vernacular remains problematic, however, and few people use it in quite the same way. For example, how can we deal with that purgatory between true folk building and the high-gloss world of name-brand architecture, i.e., the gray zone of the strip, the franchise, the billboard? Although consciously designed, both purport to represent popular values. An anthropological reading is only partly helpful, however.

Folk architecture—to many the only true vernacular—is usually geographically circumscribed and changes only slowly with time. Mass culture, in opposition, affects a large geographical area and changes rapidly. Since so much of what we see in the built world represents the economic systems that generate mass culture, do not these buildings, too, represent or constitute a contemporary vernacular architecture?

The problems are compounded when we examine cultures that operate at a less inflated economic level than our own. While we might easily term these building traditions truly vernacular, and therefore independent of High Style developments, rarely has this been the case historically. In many instances the "vernacular" represents a localized reinterpretation of High Style—especially classical—elements. In other instances the polite tradition

has extracted forms and possibly values from the popular. *Venezuelan Vernacular* by Federico Vegas and *Caribbean Style* by Suzanne Slesin and Stafford Cliff, et al., present building traditions that dance across these lines, and not incidentally offer us some visually provocative buildings and towns.

At first *Venezuelan Vernacular* looks slim and sparse for the price. The cover image, however, raises our expectations with a brilliantly colored detail, part enticing, part abstract. Reading the book reveals magnificently composed and beautifully reproduced images that at times approach the spectacular. The text is divided into rough sections—the landscape, the town, the street, the house, ornament, and the church—but the subdivisions are of little consequence as the eye follows the flow of images.

Federico Vegas provides a text that combines the provocativeness of Jorge Luis Borges and the factuality of John McPhee, a string of historical anecdotes collectively illustrating that history is not objective. Two examples should suffice:

The town of Carache in the Venezuelan Andes grew with the utmost disorder; two centuries after the town's foundation, its streets were still twisted and its houses isolated randomly. The story goes that toward the end of the eighteenth century, a Spanish general named Cegarra, for a long time disgusted with the town's disorderly appearance, decided that enough was enough and took upon his hands the task of redesigning Carache. He went to the plaza and, standing on a corner, fired his musket through the maze of houses, aiming toward the outskirts of town; then he ordered his Aide-de-Camp: "See where the bullet's hit the ground? Go there and nail a stake; then bring a cord from the stake into the plaza." He repeated this operation from the remaining three corners of the square. Carache woke the following morning full of strings that marked straight streets to be built. Today Carache has one of the most elegant grids in the Vene-

zuelan Andes. . . .

We inquired about the origin and reason for the pilasters [in houses in San Sebastián on Margarita Island] and received a simple answer: some years before a house builder achieved success in view of the speed and cost with which he built; he also knew the fundamentals of beauty and proportion. This builder's only defect was his obsession with placing a pilaster in the drawing room of every house he built. His widely accepted and persevering habit made us understand something that recorded here today may seem irrelevant, but that in San Sebastián—in its houses, streets, windows, and door latches—it is obvious and relevant: *vernacular architecture is not anonymous*.

This is not a text which precisely explains, but one which comments, a text served by the striking color photographs, like images aimed independently at different eyes. The reader must make the connections, though these need not be direct.

It is fashionable in certain circles (take the pueblo-style fanatics of the Southwest) to suggest that natural materials used in a "natural" or "organic" way are the truest expression of the human building enterprise. This book proves them wrong. If we are left with one predominant impression from the photos in *Venezuelan Vernacular*, it is the enduring after-image of color; brilliant chroma; a garden of fluorescent pigment. The combinations of colors are often improbable, and always saturated, pitting complementaries together in ways that would make Josef Albers blush. The simplified decoration is painted in vibrating hues, in places an independent vehicle for formal articulation that magnifies the presence of architectural features and expands the impact of the limited means at hand.

This precious little book has an elegant layout and typography, marred only by the too-heavy black bar that brands every page and the designerly use of postage stamp-sized pictures

that are "composed" on the page as neutral rectangles with seemingly little consideration of the amount of detail in each image. A less tricky and more considerate sizing of the images in relation to the text would have elevated even further this intriguing study.

If *Venezuelan Vernacular* is modestly written, *Caribbean Style* is a pretentious effort that continues the High Tech, Italian, You-Name-It Style series that seems to aspire to use as decorating ideas. The book is the product of no less than five authors, though little in it is actually worth reading. The guest introductory essay (two pages), by Jan Morris, is of the Gosh-and-Wow school; the introductory text for each chapter offers limited insight into the material: "In the towns and throughout the countryside, the Caribbean offers a changing and varied architectural landscape.

Brightly painted fences, decorative balconies, half-open shutters, and ornately gabled roofs are elements that both contrast with and complement the luxuriant vegetation." That's it for "Chapter Two: Outside Views." If the introductions are limited, the captions are often insipid, merely describing what we can plainly see: for example: "A two-story house in the town of Port-au-Prince, on Haiti, is a play of turquoise and white." Remember, this caption accompanies a color photo, although the building is indeed painted turquoise and white.

Clearly, this is a picture book. Though *Caribbean Style* offers us three times as many pages as *Venezuelan Vernacular*, the general feeling is one of seeing the same material over and over again. Structured in chapters dealing with landscape setting and gardens, island and foreign influences, traditional building types



GALLERY WITH
LOUVERED DOORS
AND WINDOWS,
FROM *CARIBBEAN
STYLE*

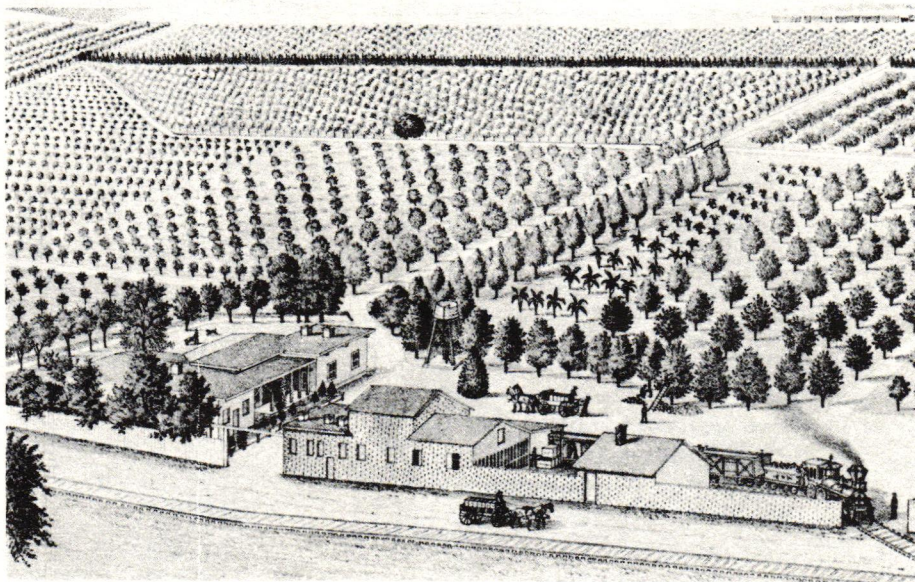
such as the plantation, the town house, and the "popular house," it concludes (chronologically) with a section called "The Contemporary House," new or remodeled, whose interiors could be straight out of *Architectural Digest*. The photographs by Gilles de Chabaneix are generally good, though they display little of the love that Federico and Martín Vegas and Ramón Paolini have for their counterparts in Venezuela. The photographs display a practiced objectivity and distance, looking as if they were coolly shot by a professional on assignment.

For the architecturally oriented, the appendix, "Architectural Notebook," may be the most rewarding section, with line drawings and analysis mostly taken from another book by two of the authors, Jack Berthelot—who unfortunately died while *Caribbean Style* was being compiled—and Martine Gaumé: *Kaz Antije: Jan Mour Ka Rété* (The Caribbean Popular Dwelling). Though only ten pages long, this is the only part of the book that rises above the level of the Sunday newspaper magazine.

Neither book provides any answers to the theoretical questions that it raises. To be fair, neither tried to do so. In some ways, both books are limited by their presentation of this architecture as object, distinct from the lives and values of the people who have produced it. On the other hand, the differing attitudes that generated these two monographs are clear in their text and pictures. *Venezuelan Vernacular* sensitively objectifies the color and form of architecture and village; *Caribbean Style* offers images for consumption.

Venezuelan Vernacular, Federico Vegas, Princeton Architectural Press, 1985, 96 pp., illus., \$25.00 pb.

Caribbean Style, Suzanne Slesin, Stafford Cliff, Jack Berthelot, Martine Gaumé, Daniel Rozensztroch, Clarkson N. Potter, 1985, 290 pp., illus., \$35.00.



FROM *POWER OF PLACE*

Richard Ingersoll:

THE POWER OF PLACE

DOLORES HAYDEN, GAIL DUBROW, and CAROLYN FLYNN

The Power of Place is a small, annotated map with large implications. It not only challenges the city of Los Angeles to recognize its own history, but further challenges the covenants of historic preservation. Organized in 1983, the Power of Place is a committee devoted to preserving and reviving historic sites in downtown Los Angeles. This might sound like a perfectly harmless, even matronly, activity, until one discovers what they mean by "historic." The history Dolores Hayden and friends are interested in was not staged in stately homes or high-style commercial buildings, but in orange groves, oil fields, and union organizing halls. The nine sites of their map commemorate the minorities and labor communities that produced the wealth of the city. This is quite a slap in the face to preservationists who save fine architecture as the preserve of the privileged and

thereby contribute to a by-now conventional means of gentrification. Hayden's group is lobbying to preserve buildings, or sometimes just spaces, that are, for the most part, of negligible aesthetic interest but of considerable real-estate interest.

The logic appears to be that a genuine sense of place can be gained by memorializing the heterogeneity of the city and by saving certain spaces from the rapacious forces of development. Within a 15-block radius, the sites include the orange groves of William Wolfskill and the City Oil Field (both subdivided in the 1880s); the house of Biddy Mason, a pioneering health worker and the first black woman to own property in Los Angeles (now a parking lot); the Chinese- and Japanese-dominated produce markets; Ready-Cut Homes, a pre-fab home-building company founded in 1909, which in its day had a two-block exhibit of model homes; Fire Station 30, manned by an all-black crew until the integration of civil services in 1955; the Japanese Flower Market; the Embassy Auditorium, site of union organizing for the 1933 Dressmakers' Strike (the majority of the union's

membership was Mexican-American women); and the Plaza, an open square used by Mexican-American labor organizers from the 1870s on.

Some of the "placemaking" proposals include saving a house on the oil field site where three pumps still operate, replanting orange trees on the site of the orange grove, putting a free speech rostrum in the plaza, and leaving a space to mark the site of Biddy Mason's house. Such a collection of mementos, to be coordinated by planners, architects, and artists, calls to mind the relics sought by pilgrims rather than the monuments sought by tourists. While the concept overturns the patriarchal myths inherent in the architecture of the monument, its ultimate success depends on the willingness of people to remember or learn about their origins—you can't have pilgrims without faith. If enacted, the Power of Place would be an attempt, in a city famous for its apparent disregard of history, to say that history is not just the memory of great patrons, but is industry, commerce, labor organizations, and ethnic diversity as well. In some cases the proposal for historical reevaluation will be in direct opposition to the economic value of the site, meaning that profit motives will have to be sacrificed for these new cultural priorities, a prospect that is probably more frightening to city fathers than the threat to their patriarchal image. Despite the distractions of glamour and high-speed mobility, Los Angeles does have a history that is legible in the city's fabric, and *The Power of Place* reminds us that this patrimony includes not just the estates of the Huntingtons or the Dohenys, but also the spaces of the Biddy Masons.

The Power of Place Walking Tour Map, Dolores Hayden, Gail Dubrow, and Carolyn Flynn, The Power of Place (requests to Publications Consultant, Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90024), 1986, \$1.00.

Margaretta Darnall:

THE FORMAL GARDEN

The formal garden has gone in and out of fashion since the Renaissance. The Renaissance study of ancient Roman sites was the basis of the formal garden, and its most spectacular manifestations were the Italian gardens of the 16th century and the French interpretations of the 17th century. Its premises were challenged in England, and by the late 18th century the picturesque or English garden was the vogue everywhere. The formal garden enjoyed a brief Victorian revival in the mid-19th century and was emulated in earnest from the 1890s until the 1930s throughout Europe and America.

The term "formal garden" was rarely used until the 1890s. It was synonymous with the "architectural garden" and included structured spaces, defined by stonework and clipped greenery, complementing the design of the house. Symmetry and a hierarchy of spaces along a central axis leading to the house were common. Historically, the formal garden was almost always juxtaposed to an informal park or a wood.

There are two approaches to the study of the formal garden: the appreciation and the true history. The approaches are by no means mutually exclusive, but a distinction between them is useful.

Shepherd and Jellicoe's *Italian Gardens of the Renaissance*, first published in 1925, and recently rereleased, is the classic appreciation. It has a short introduction that includes a historical outline, a brief discussion of how the gardens fit into their surroundings, and an explanation of the way color, shade, sculpture, water, the parterre, framed views, and perspective contribute to their overall effect. The most important part of the book is the drawings, renderings, and photographs of 26 Italian villas and

their gardens. Shepherd and Jellicoe's drawings were the first to be published since Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine's volumes at the beginning of the 19th century.

The renderings, in ink with washes, bring alive the masses of buildings and trees, open spaces, water, and shade in the gardens. No other set of drawings captures the composition of the Italian gardens so clearly. The new fourth edition comes very close to reproducing the quality of the original plans, sections, and elevations.

The drawings, however, often isolate the formal gardens. They rarely include the park or the wood. At Caprarola, for example, it is important to know that the garden is approached by a path leading up through the woods from the walled gardens behind the massive pentagonal fortress on the edge of the town. At the Villa Lante, more recent historical research has demonstrated the conceptual importance of the contrast between the park, representing man in the golden age, and the formal garden, representing the coming of civilization. These are two instances where Shepherd and Jellicoe included only the formal pieces and ignored the larger context which influences the way the gardens are perceived and experienced.

The Villas of Tuscany by Harold Acton, a reissue of his 1973 book under a new title, presents a different view of the Italian Renaissance garden. Acton was born in 1904 at the Villa La Pietra in Florence, where he still lives. The same year, his father, Arthur Acton, began remaking the garden there, now one of the loveliest in Florence. Harold Acton's appreciation of the Tuscan villa comes from long and close association.

Acton divides his subject into four parts: the villas of the Medici, the Florentine villas (including La Pietra), the villas near Lucca, and the Sienese villas. It is a delightful book, full of amusing characters, including the French prince who habitually went off



THE GRAND TRIANON, OR TRIANON DE MARBRE, AT VERSAILLES, SHOWING THE PARTERRES.
PAINTING BY JEAN COTELLE.

to the former Medici villa La Petraia to scratch himself, and the wife of a late 17th-century Medici who tickled and chased her French cook around the royal apartments at Poggio a Caiano. Many Tuscan villas have had English owners during their later history. Acton knows them all, and a subtheme of his book is the eccentric English residents. In addition to the entertaining narrative, Acton displays considerable knowledge about the history of the villas and understands the nuances of their design. Wonderful photographs by Alexander Zielcke and 17th-century bird's-eye views further the reader's pleasure.

Acton is of the same generation as Shepherd and Jellicoe. The latter set off for Italy shortly after completing

their studies at the Architectural Association in London, produced their book, and went on to successful careers as landscape architects in England. Acton was a graduate of Eton and Oxford who returned to Florence to write. *The Villas of Tuscany* reflects back over his life and is in many ways an extension of his autobiography, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*. Shepherd and Jellicoe describe the Villa Medici at Fiesole by saying, "There is probably as much dignity of learning expressed in the long simple lines of the terraces ..., as there ever was in all the cultivated arguments promoted within its precincts." For Acton, it was the home of the eccentric Lady Orford in the late 18th century, the 19th-century artist and writer William Blundell

Spence, and Geoffrey Scott, author of *The Architecture of Humanism*, in the early part of the 20th century.

Turning from the Italian gardens to the French, Kenneth Woodbridge, in *Princely Gardens*, brings together diverse sources and illustrations to synthesize a history of the formal garden in France. His subject is an enormous one, spanning the 15th–18th centuries, plus the revival and restoration of important gardens in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The history begins with the medieval French garden. Woodbridge carefully documents the Italian influence, particularly in the 16th century, and the development of the distinctive French style. He explains that the implications of the formal style in France were ceremonial as well as artistic, and that the gardens indicated the status of their owners. Each chapter begins with an outline of the relevant political and social history, and there are explanations of the basic planting schemes and the complex hydraulic systems. Woodbridge puts the work of Louis XIV's great landscape architect, André Le Nôtre, into a historical context, and demonstrates the importance of Cardinal Richelieu's gardens and the teachings of the architect François Mansart to the development of Le Nôtre's style.

Amidst the profusion of facts, it is clear that Woodbridge has a profound understanding and appreciation of the artistic merits and shortcomings of the French formal garden, and he is not afraid to criticize its most venerable monuments. For example, at Vaux-le-Vicomte, Le Nôtre's first complete garden, designed for Nicolas Fouquet, Louis XIV's finance minister, he concludes that the end result did not justify the enormous expense and displacement of people. Woodbridge also admits that the vast scale and flatness of Versailles are ultimately boring.

Many points in the book, particularly attributions, will trigger scholarly debate. Other readers may be

disappointed that Woodbridge does not discuss the relationship between garden design and urban design, that he does not discuss the intimate gardens of the Paris *faubourgs*, and that he does not mention how the gardens relate to the overall agricultural patterns in France. However, it would be both unwise and unfair to fault the book for these omissions.

Princely Gardens is densely written and has over three hundred illustrations, primarily period engravings, supplemented by the author's excellent photographs. It is well designed and produced and will be the definitive scholarly history of the French formal garden for many years.

M. Christine Klim Doell's *Gardens of the Gilded Age* is the least impressive of these new books. It follows an exhibition of historical photographs of New York State gardens of the era 1860–1917. The introductory chapter on the history of gardening in New York State contains some interesting new material and references, while the remainder of the text discusses the various styles and tastes displayed in the gardens, ornament, flower gardens, maintenance, and gives a more detailed description of five large gardens of the period, including Stanford White's "Box Hill" at St. James, Long Island.

Gardens of the Gilded Age is awkward to discuss as either a history or an appreciation. The time frame excludes the earlier 19th-century Hudson River gardens and the contributions of Andrew Jackson Downing. Within the period, Doell ignores the work of two of New York's most significant garden designers, Frederick Law Olmsted and Charles A. Platt. While Olmsted is best known for his public parks, he was also responsible for some important private gardens. Both Olmsted and Platt are well documented in New York collections.

The reader's appreciation of the selected gardens is hampered by the lack of plans. They were completely excluded from the book because they

were rarely followed exactly. As a result, it is impossible to get a sense of the overall composition of any of the gardens. Poor-quality reproductions also make it difficult to locate many of the elements discussed in the photo captions. *Gardens of the Gilded Age* covers an important phase of American garden history but does not provide a good history or allow for its full appreciation.

These histories and appreciations illustrate an incredible variety of formal gardens. Some are grand, others intimate. Periodically the discipline of the formal garden has come under attack for being rigid and counter to nature. These books demonstrate that the formal garden is amazingly sensitive to both people and the natural landscape. As Acton explains, "The aim of formal gardening was to make the house grow out of its surroundings and to modify the grounds so as to bring nature into harmony with the house." Nothing can be as soothing as the calm and quiet order of the formal garden or as pleasing as a carefully framed view across the countryside. This collection of books supports the contention that the formal garden is one of the most sympathetic settings for the contemplation of nature.

Italian Gardens of the Renaissance, J. C. Shepherd and G. A. Jellicoe, Princeton Architectural Press, 1986, 144 pp., illus., \$45.00.

The Villas of Tuscany, Harold Acton, Thames and Hudson, reissued 1985 (formerly titled *Great Houses of Italy*), 288 pp., illus., \$40.00.

Princely Gardens: The Origins and Development of the French Formal Style, Kenneth Woodbridge, Rizzoli, 1986, 320 pp., illus., \$45.00.

Gardens of the Gilded Age: Nineteenth-Century Gardens and Homegrounds of New York State, M. Christine Klim Doell, Syracuse University Press, 1986, 210 pp., illus., \$24.95.

Kenneth I. Helphand

LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY

Our most common perception of landscape is the legacy of the Dutch *Landskip*—a visual concept, the area encompassed by a field of vision—the vista. These are the landscapes we seek on a day's outing, preserved in parklands, on coffee tables, and in postcard images. But the landscape has another heritage, of *Landschaft*, the physical manifestation of the interaction of people and place over time, the embodiment of culture in the environment. The tension between these two concepts is at the heart of our contemporary landscape thinking. The distinction becomes visible in landscape photography, typically perfectly composed images of awe-inspiring natural scenery, with perhaps a lone figure traversing the scene. These photographs may be beautiful but, as the complexities of landscape are recognized, so too are the intricacies of landscape photography.

In Estelle Jussim and Elizabeth Lindquist-Cock's *Landscape as Photograph*, the subject is the catalyst for a discussion of modern aesthetics, using the metaphors of genre, God, fact, symbol, pure form, popular culture, concept, politics, propaganda, and the photograph. This reliance on the metaphor and its evocative use is inherent in any work about photography, since photography accentuates the paradox of verbalizing the non-verbal experience. In *Common Ground* Gregory Coniff describes this as a quest for a "wordless state of mind," by which "the camera gives voice to the eye," but our peculiar human psychology demands the pairing of text and photo, from caption to essay. Who does not walk to the gallery wall or turn to the back of the book to find out "where it is?" The motive is both the curiosity and the desire to place ourselves in the photographer's situation, to know where.



FROM CONNIFF, *COMMON GROUND*, WILDWOOD, NEW JERSEY, 1979

Second View: The Rephotographic Project is an extreme example of this desire to know where. It documents the photographing of the 19th-century Western American survey photographs, predominantly by Timothy O'Sullivan and William Henry Jackson. The project photographers returned to the original sites and sought the precise vantage point, the space occupied by the camera lens over a century before. The book features these photographic pairs, before and after, separated by a century. To stand at that point is to approach the viewpoint of the original photographer and highlight questions about the *donnée* of the scene. Why this place, and not two feet to the left? Why the view west and not south? Why the walker's view, why not from horseback or a car window? Why a rectangle? Why at dusk? The list is infinite.

The Western American Survey was one of photography's landmark events, along with the Farm Security Administration project of the Depression, the touchstone and model for the photo-

graphic survey. In a modest way any photographer has a link to these projects. The first surveyors are explorers, and the explorer's sensibility pervades photography. The accomplished photographer, like the expert hunter, at last becomes a guide.

Gregory Coniff, photographer of *Common Ground*, investigates American space not through the sublime grandeur of the West but via backyards in the East and Midwest. He photographs America as he peers over and through fences made of pickets, chicken wire, and chain link. His photographs are of the walk around the block and down the alley, the paperboy's landscape. Coniff's taste is nostalgic; these houses have weather-beaten walls, one-car garages, and yards with mature trees and plants no longer stocked by nurseries. The quality of these spaces is pragmatic and makeshift—they have an intense clarity when cared for, but when left to the elements revert to a ruined tangle. We are shown a domestic world with glimpses into private lives,

a white nightgown hidden behind immense drooping sunflowers.

These surveys remind us that landscapes are temporal as well as spatial, from the ephemeral passing clouds to evocations of the eternal. In the arid New Mexico landscape the pace of natural change is slow, while the temperate landscapes of the East rapidly obscure the markings of history. In his essay in *Land*, John Fowles reads in Fay Godwin's photographs the "usedness" of the British landscape, apparent in its many layers of occupancy. In the rephotographic survey the most easily read changes after one hundred years are the growth of vegetation and the appearance of railroads or highways. Most striking are the sites which seem unchanged, where the time cycle is geologic, not organic, or a change so dramatic that the site is unrecognizable, as in a dammed valley. Oddest, because it is so unexpected in our landscape of progress, is landscape devolution. Mining towns visited in their boom period which have since gone bust or the haunting image of the Quartz Mill near Virginia City, Nevada, an industrial plant replete with smokestacks, erased from the landscape.

Fowles, a skeptic, offers a helpful warning if we are too enticed: He praises the frailty of the mind's "vague recall" versus the vivid deceptiveness of the frozen photographic frame. He is saying beware, lest the landscape photograph become the new "landskip."

Landscape as Photograph, Estelle Jussim, Elizabeth Lindquist-Cock, Yale, 1985, 168 pp., illus., \$35.00.

Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project, Mark Klett, Ellen Manchester, JoAnn Verbarg, Gordon Bushaw, Rick Dingus, University of New Mexico, 1984, 224 pp., illus., \$65.00.

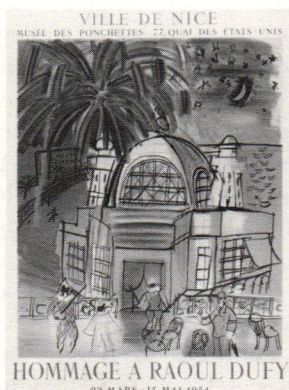
An American Field Guide, Volume I: Common Ground, Gregory Coniff, Yale, 1985, 125 pp., illus., \$35.00.

Land, Fay Goodwin, with an essay by John Fowles, Little Brown, 1985, 127 pp., illus., \$35.00.



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John R. Stilgoe:

THE CROWNING OF THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE

WALTER L. CREESE

Landscape lasts; no message resounds more clearly in *The Crowning of the American Landscape: Eight Great Spaces and Their Buildings*. Walter L. Creese probes not so much the history of eight spaces as their psyches. His book demonstrates the eternal truth of Francis Bacon's irritating dictum, "When ages grow to civility and elegance, men come to build stately, sooner than to garden finely; as if gardening were the greater perfection." The diadem of the republic is not, according to Creese, the skyline of New York, which Henry James likened to a pincushion. Creese's book will not only guide scholars and designers along new paths, it will undoubtedly incline the minds of the educated young, particularly those

considering careers in landscape architecture, regional planning, and even architecture.

Creese chooses eight spaces—perhaps taking the number from the eight eminences of the British crown—each space a measure of "what is possible from Americans at their broadest and best." Context governs the selections; the author remarks that "thickening urbanism encouraged the disregard of surrounding space by architects, together with a reluctance to consider more than a single building at a time on the part of the architectural historian." Hope fuels the text: "This investigation doubts that all can be known from the study of a single landscape, or a single building, but has great confidence that the combination of the two media will yield much more than is presently known." And he succeeds, with the analyses of "Jefferson's Charlottesville," the Hudson Valley early in the 19th century, Yosemite several decades later, the 1920s and 1930s Timberline Lodge (culminating several decades of admiration of Mt. Hood), the Boston Fens

in their heyday, Graceland Cemetery, Riverside, and Wright's Taliesin. *The Crowning of the American Landscape* spans far more than the eight landscapes; it offers capsule inquiries into others—Llewellyn Park, for example—and a disciplined breadth of vision that marks the coming of age of historical analysis of the designed landscape.

Neither summary nor selective analysis does justice to the subtle, almost poetic argument of the eight major chapters. Perhaps the essay on Yosemite National Park exemplifies the inquiry, for it links the earlier romantic appreciation of the Hudson Valley and the late 19th-century admiration of the Rocky Mountains. Creese traces the realization of Yosemite in the public mind after its discovery in 1851, and especially after the 1869 completion of the transcontinental railroad brought more visitors. The chapter analyzes the views of Frederick Olmsted, John Muir, Starr King, Thomas Hill, and other contemporaneous admirers of the misty views of the small valley; the debates sur-

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rounding its geology are relayed, the significance of Ralph Waldo Emerson's 1871 visit—a brief appearance that illuminated the change after 1850 in landscape-appreciation leadership—and “the great dispute” focused on the acquisition and preservation of the valley as a park. The handling of the last issue is particularly penetrating, for Creese reveals the complexity of the preservationist stance, the problems posed by the hotels and plowed fields (chiefly planted to grain and grass to feed the horses used by tourists) in a supposedly pristine place, and the modernist significance of the visit by Theodore Roosevelt in 1903.

The Crowning of the American Landscape succeeds for many reasons. Creese's footnotes demonstrate a genuine familiarity with the sources relevant to his chosen spaces and structures, and with those illuminating wider contexts. He pushes far beyond the

well-known secondary-source opinions, reexamines obscure original documents, and sifts his material very finely. He is at home with visual significances, and capable of translating period verbal descriptions and criticisms into visual arguments intelligible to contemporary readers familiar with different aesthetic traditions. Most of the illustrations are little known, or even rare, and all, with their captions, advance his arguments, illuminate the text, and reward prolonged scrutiny. The book reflects years of study.

Only one question lingers to vex the reader. Why the eight spaces with their buildings? Eight alone is understandable, if only as a literary device; crowns often have eight eminences. But the selection of places deserves explanation, for any such choosing raises questions at once. If natural setting looms so large, why choose

Olmsted's Riverside over his—and Stevens's—Cushing's Island in Maine's Portland Harbor, surely a jewel-like, middle-class success that offers insights into Creese's discussion of Mt. Desert Island? Creese remarks at the outset on the “enormous importance of the philosophical experiment of democracy in the landscape,” but ignores the difficulty citizens have protecting carefully nurtured great spaces from their unsophisticated fellows, wholly immune to passive enjoyment of delicate views. Sensitive Americans, Creese points out, have been driven ever farther from cities. If the chosen spaces offered (and offer) lessons of national and international significance, and some surely did and still do—the Boston Fens, for example—how does Taliesin fit? Such questions continue to puzzle even after the second and third readings the book deserves. Creese asks, “Does democracy necessarily and always imply immediate superficiality and eventual tragedy?” Clearly his answer is no, or at least not always. But beyond that the reader can only wonder at the questions implicit in the argument—the power of the religious experience, the role of leaders convinced that they know more than the people and willing to bypass government support, the uncanny force of educated women in shaping the values of educated businessmen, the cryptic place of civil engineering in the larger scene. *The Crowning of the American Landscape* transcends such questions even as it raises them, however, and will find an enduring place in the literature of American civilization. More than perhaps any other recent book, it raises unnerving questions about the shortcomings of contemporary architects and the immense potential contribution of landscape architects still unaware of Bacon's dictum.

The Crowning of the American Landscape: Eight Great Spaces and Their Buildings, Walter L. Creese, Princeton University Press, 1985, 289 pp., illus., \$55.00.

**Sara Bodine
and Michael Dunas:**

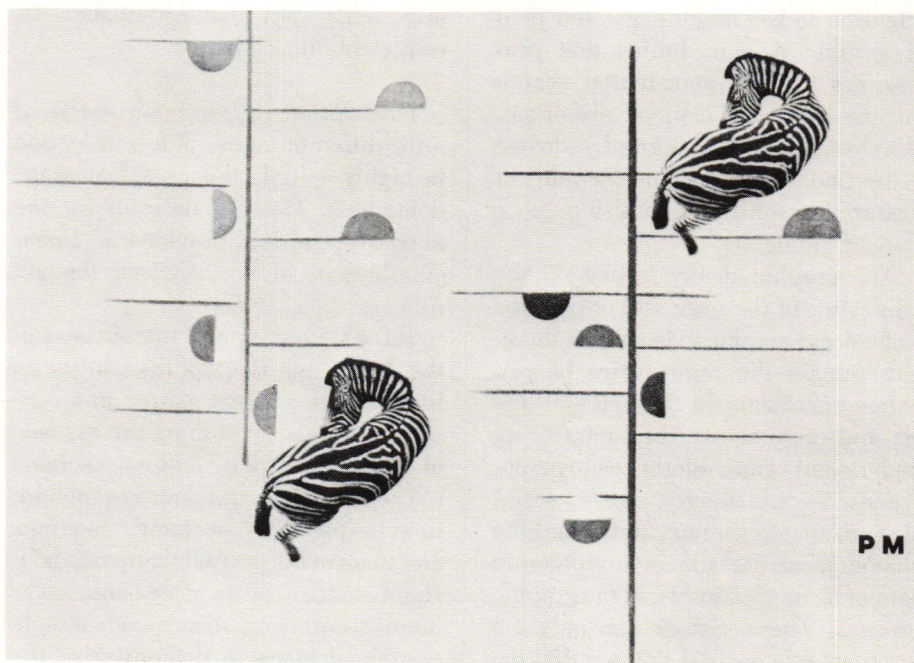
**CHWAST, LUBALIN,
and RAND**

A "title bout" looms between Seymour Chwast and the late Herb Lubalin for the sobriquet "greatest left-handed designer." With right/left-side theory pitting the creative faculties on the recto, the romantic connotations of unorthodoxy, mystery, and rebellion associated with leftist politics or the baffling southpaw of baseball lore seem appropriate to both combatants.

Seymour Chwast: The Left-Handed Designer is a catalogue yearning to be a scrapbook. Steve Heller, art director of the *New York Times Book Review*, assists Chwast with the interview that serves as an introduction and allows Chwast to speak comfortably of his youth, influences, inspirations, hopes, and frustrations.

Heller affects the tone of an admiring student, eschewing any temptation to explore the introspective process that might serve as a critical point of entry for the ensuing portfolio. When the book does pursue a more subjective analysis, it often lapses into the vanity of self-promotion—as in, for example, the repetitive annotations of the visuals. Whether presumptuous—"Someday someone may analyze why Freud is such a recurring theme in my work"—or naive—"Only after I designed the 'a' did someone say it looked like a drop of ink. It's funny how fresh eyes perceive unconscious meanings"—these captions fail to provide any insight into Chwast's value system. They reveal an adolescent attitude toward the work of notables as a data bank of forms and solutions to apply to recurring problems. This not only limits the book's potential for a wider audience, but limits its usefulness to practitioners, who are seduced into parody and imitation.

There is much to say about Chwast's



FROM PAUL RAND

Nature has striped the zebra. Man has striped his flags and awnings, ties and shirts. For the typographer stripes are rules; for the architect they are a means of creating optical illusions. Stripes are dazzling, sometimes hypnotic, usually happy. They are universal. They have adorned the walls of houses, churches and mosques. Stripes attract attention.

work, little of which comes to light here. Where is the elucidation of his renowned style? "Style in general is useful because it provides immediate clues to the message," he says, but what of his synthetic approach that borrows from so many different sources? What of his aesthetic, his affinity for animation, cartoon, caricature, and the comic strip that circumscribes his position in the lineage of children's books and films, and in the wider spectrum of poster design and illustration? What of the persistent themes of political satire, Freudian Surrealism, and the humanizing

catharsis of absurdist humor that wield their power between the lines of Chwast's graphic message?

Chwast and Lubalin both evolved a highly recognizable style. Both gained considerable stature through their own promotional vehicles; Chwast with *Push Pin* magazine and Lubalin with *U&I*, both established as alternatives to the constraints of the client. Neither the Chwast book nor *Herb Lubalin: Art Director, Graphic Designer and Typographer* address the context that defines the value of graphic design.

The urgency to publish "monographs" to codify a reputation, while drawing

attention to the much-neglected field of graphic design, belies that profession's current painstaking search for the roots of critical discourse. Moreover, the use of a graphic device—the book—to explicate the subject matter of graphic design also poses a critical ambiguity.

The graphic device relies on the properties of the page and of printing technology; graphic monographs therefore remain the repositories of embalmed artifacts. In the fields of fine art and architecture, in contrast, we understand visual references in monographs as illusionary, since scale, texture, mass, volume, light, and the character of the site in architecture cannot be approximated in the graphic process. These visuals can only act as mnemonic devices that parallel the exposition in the text.

In the field of graphic design, the inability of the monograph to project the work except upon itself obscures the essential value of the context, which is defined not only by the limitations of the medium, but also by a dependency on the viewer's reaction. The graphic design monograph does nothing to reconcile "the medium as the message" because it does not address the inherent problems of graphic subject matter beyond the presentation of the artifact.

Taken out of context, Lubalin's famous "Mother" logo, with its child rendered graphically as an ampersand imbedded in the womb of the "O," does not sustain our attention. The "Families" logo, with its stick-figure portrait of the three i's, or the condensed "Thirteen" logo for WNET leaves us amused by the animation of the static letter forms, rather than conscious of its associative meanings—viewer participation, community responsibility—rendered visually and emotively by Lubalin's sensibility. That Lubalin's work has been characterized as illegible is exactly the point: his signature approach is not a species of type-book transposition or verbal semantics, but rather an expres-

sive calligraphy that establishes his own symbolic code.

Paul Rand: A Designer's Art is of a far different genre. While the book is highly visual, the verbal message dominates. The visuals reinforce the narrative, which provides a linear simulacrum of a designer's thought process.

Rand's success and the success of the book are due to his ability to interpret his subject matter on a conceptual level. By probing the essence of graphic design problem solving ("The designer's problems are twofold: to anticipate the spectator's reactions and to meet his own aesthetic needs"), Rand constructs an accessible communication, using disarmingly simple graphic devices to defamiliarize the symbols and clichés of everyday life and compel the viewer's attention.

The present book is imbued with the spirit of Rand's *Thoughts on Design*, a classic since its publication in 1947; yet the posture vis-à-vis art and design is noticeably altered. While *A Designer's Art* seeks to raise design to an art, the book itself does not pretend to be nor does it present Rand's work as art. For him, the art of graphic design lies in its conception, not in its execution. His approach stresses intellect over finished product, creating a value that goes beyond the printed page.

Ostensibly a compilation of writings drawn from the 40 years since *Thoughts* appeared—a sort of retrospective—*A Designer's Art* is more of a textbook in its logic and methods. A thinker, Rand explains what he is thinking, for all to read and understand. In consequence, every illustration, line of type, and white space in the book reward the reader with deeper implications.

We ask ourselves why the book jacket is black—a color detested by publishing sales managers worldwide, and Rand defends the color's complement to nature, its romantic connotations, its elegance and mystery. We

wonder about the book's lively, multi-color striped spine, and Rand notes that people seldom recognize books by their covers, but by their spines as they sit neatly in rows on the shelf.

For the graphic designer, thinking is corollary to seeing, as Rand implies in the frontis collage. We see this first as a corkboard in the designer's studio. On closer examination, it reveals itself to be "all eyes": an eye chart, the exaggerated eyes of a primitive painting, the blinders on a horse's eyes, innocent eyes, suspicious eyes, a town plan shaped like an eye. A quote from Goethe brings the point home: "The hardest thing to see is what is in front of your eyes." Unlike texts on visual acuity, which present the principles of seeing without the content, Rand derives these principles from content, then imbues them with a personal meaning.

For all the delight in Rand's ideas, we must not overlook nor hesitate to argue with his rhetoric. In his chapter on "The Good Old Neue Typography" he states forthrightly what has been obvious throughout the book: that the International or Swiss style has won his vote. This is ideology, not pedagogy. Similarly, in his chapter on "The Politics of Design" he comes down hard on the business community's lack of sensitivity, though perhaps here he does so to inure students to the reality that the life of the mind is not the life of the dollar.

Seymour Chwast: *The Left-handed Designer*, Steven Heller, editor, Abrams, 1985, 144 pp., illus., \$35.00.

Herb Lubalin: *Art Director, Graphic Designer and Typographer*, Gertrude Snyder and Alan Peckolick, American Showcase, 1985, 184 pp., illus., \$39.95.

Paul Rand: *A Designer's Art*, Paul Rand, Yale, 1985, 240 pp., illus., \$39.95.

Kax Wilson:

TEXTILE ART

MICHEL THOMAS,
CHRISTINE MAINGUY, and
SOPHIE POMMIER

There have always been textile artisans and textile artists—an artist being described as one who has mastered the skills of the artisan and also added the element of imagination. *Textile Art* does a creditable job of showing that fabric makers can be both, and that the long-time controversy among textile historians as to the line between craft and fine art is irrelevant. Fiber artists, apparel makers, architects, and interior designers

especially will enjoy both the ideas and the illustrations presented by Michel Thomas, a Parisian who founded the journal *Textile/Art* and organized the international *Fibre-Art* 85 exhibition held at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris; Christine Mainguy, a research assistant at the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, contributor to *Textile/Art*, and active member of the Centre International d'Art Textile; and Sophie Pommier, an Egyptologist, student of textiles, and contributor to *Textile/Art*.

The book is divided into three main chapters: *World Centers of Textile Art*; *The Primacy of Tapestry in the West*; and *The Revival of Textile Art*. Each of these could be the subject of its own book, but Michel Thomas has united them through an intriguing theme. The divergent techniques found in ancient textiles converged in medieval tapestry, which became the major technique used by modern textile artists. At first only tapestry was deemed "art," due to its longstanding relationship with painting, the major visual art of the West. (Indeed, European tapestries served as portable murals for migrant nobility.) Finally, in the seventies and eighties came a new divergence of technique as contemporary fiber artists expanded their repertoires by using ancient textiles as inspiration.

Chapter 1 briefly covers a variety of historic textiles (Peruvian, Near Eastern, Oriental, African). Sophie Pommier has written a good survey and supplied the bibliography that would give more in-depth coverage of each topic. She shows how fabrics can be read, like books, for symbolism and social significance, to find how the attitudes of the weavers (whether slave or free) may have affected quality, or for evidence about the economic situation in a particular place at a particular time.

Tapestry is one of the oldest weaves and the best for making complicated designs. The tapestry weaver uses numerous different colored wefts which

are woven in a plain weave (over one warp, under one warp sequence), the weft covering the warp completely. Tapestry is also distinguished by its discontinuous wefts—each weft is not carried full width of the fabric (as in machine weaving) but rather will double back on itself to complete a pattern. Adjacent colors are interlocked in various ways, or slits may occur.

In chapter 2, Thomas and Mainguy do include embroidery as a second type of tapestry (notably the Bayeux) in their discussion; however, this section is mainly an overview of the major manufactories (Paris, Arras, Tournai, and Brussels) and a history of European tapestry from the Middle Ages through the 20th century. Many important pieces, such as *The Angers Apocalypse*, are described in detail. Again, the bibliography supplies references for more complete study.

The real value of *Textile Art* lies in its third chapter, which traces the sources of contemporary textile art "from a priori confluence of the Bauhaus with non-Western textile traditions." Because the development of what we now call fiber art is not nearly as well documented as tapestry and other historic textiles, this section, written by Michel Thomas, joins the even more complete and lavishly illustrated *Beyond Craft: The Art Fabric* (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1982) and *The Art Fabric: Mainstream* (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1981) by Mildred Constantine and Jack Lenor Larsen as our principal sources for the history of contemporary fiber art and its artists.

The final section deals with textiles as digital art. Weaving is based on a binary system (a warp is up or it is down when passed by a weft) which makes it amenable to the use of computers. The artisan turned artist becomes technician to produce the textures that warm our cold condo walls.

Textile Art, Michel Thomas, Christine Mainguy, and Sophie Pommier, Rizzoli, 1985, 272 pp., illus., \$65.00.

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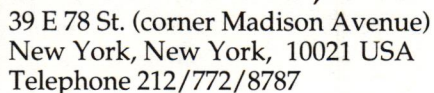
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Robin Moore:

PLAYGROUND DESIGN

AASE ERIKSEN

In *Playground Design* the author, who is both educator and architect, attempts to provide a design framework for children's play, based on contemporary theories of child development.

The opening chapter is a well-articulated plea for environments varied enough to meet the full spectrum of children's physical (motor and sensory), perceptual, emotional, social, and intellectual needs. These can be stimulated or malnourished, depending on the form and content of the designed environment.

Dr. Eriksen comments negatively on the state of public playgrounds in the U.S. Many still consist of bland expanses of asphalt, devoid of vegetation, with few opportunities for children to physically manipulate and change their surroundings. To help us understand this sorry situation, the author reviews the history of the playground and public open space movement in America since the 1880s. It is a fascinating record of the effect of individuals, philosophies, theories, organizations, and movements on play facility design and provision. Interestingly enough, the educational value of play was recognized early on (schools in Gary, Indiana, set in spacious grounds, were based on Froebel's hands-on philosophy of education).

Later, the "jocks" began to take over, emphasizing a narrow, physical education view of outdoor learning. Playgrounds became "outdoor gymnasias," with pieces of equipment scattered across windswept asphalt prairies. In postwar Europe, meanwhile, the adventure playground movement took off, dedicated to the very different notions of diversity of choice and user control of the setting; a movement which Eriksen suggests will continue to be unacceptable in most North American communities.

What is to be done? Are there acceptable alternatives that still fulfill children's developmental needs? Here we come to the book's principal contribution: the notion of developing school sites as community parks—a powerful idea because it is more likely to attract the involvement and backing of the whole community. To illustrate the concept, Eriksen presents a case study (in Grand Rapids, Michigan) of a site adjacent to three schools that was replanned via a community participation process (after the official "closet" plan ran into a storm of negative feedback).

Part of the project has been implemented as what Eriksen terms a "playscape" at Fountain Elementary School. A series of color plates illustrate different activity settings: a hard surface ballplay area, platform structures, nature, and sand.

Eriksen's final chapter is devoted to a description of the principles of playscape design, with a strong advocacy of participatory design. She considers it the only effective way to work with both adults *and* children to develop designs to meet social needs so that artifacts will be both used and respected. A lot more detail could have been added here, describing exactly how some of the techniques were carried out. The reader's appetite is whetted with the general approach but without further information (group size, age of group; duration and number of meetings; materials; logistics), it would be difficult to replicate the process.

A weakness of the book is that it is illustrated by a single project. In a case study of the school-park concept, this might have been acceptable; but this book purports to deal with the much broader scope of playground design. A review of several case histories would have added considerable thrust to Eriksen's arguments; even more so if evaluations had been included. A single page devoted to "post-occupancy evaluation" of the Fountain school project contains posi-

tive comments by the school's principal about the relations of children and the project's excellent safety record. But a few scraps of anecdotal material do not equal an evaluation. Dr. Eriksen says the project was a "success." But to take more than her word for it would require substantial evidence in support of the activity-setting relationships proposed in her design criteria.

A glaring omission is the need to integrate children with disabilities into public play settings—especially in schools which, by law, must be mainstreamed. No mention is made of this issue, and yet in any community approximately one in ten children have some form of impairment and it is reasonable to assume that some will show up on the playground.

Unfortunately, the visual quality of the book does not match the quality of the text. Some of the black-and-white halftones are very poor, hardly readable, in fact. Site plan illustrations are difficult to read and don't support the text effectively.

Higher grade color plates compensate somewhat for these shortcomings, but they have added considerably to the cost of the book. At almost forty dollars, it may be beyond most individual professional pockets. Designers, and certainly the public, are accustomed to getting more for their money than such a slim volume.

In spite of these criticisms, *Playground Design* is useful for introducing educators and designers to participatory design concepts and the idea that developmental principles can be applied to the design of play environments.

Playground Design: Outdoor Environments for Learning and Development, Aase Eriksen, Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1985, 102 pp., illus., \$39.95.

Allan B. Jacobs:

URBAN DESIGN IN ACTION

Since June 1967, the American Institute of Architects has sponsored a program of Regional Urban Design Assistance Teams (hence the terrible-sounding acronym, R/UDAT or RUDAT; the belch of a frog) whose purpose is to provide assistance to requesting communities on planning/design issues. The method of assistance is basically a four-day charrette undertaken by five to nine experts, mostly architects. By 1985 there had been some ninety assistance teams. This book purports to review, assess, and report upon that considerable activity. Mostly, it does not do that, although the second half comes closer than the first.

The first part embraces a bundle of subjects, from the initial ideas about architect-led assistance teams and how they work (presented better in the second part), to such potentially cosmic subjects as urban form and structure, urban design in practice, urban design process, and urban design education. It is hard to figure out this first part. If you didn't know better, you might get the impression that citizen participation in physical planning and urban design started with these assistance teams. Nor is it easy

to swallow assertions like, "The impact of the R/UDAT programs on the nation's cities is unequalled by any other urban design activity over the past decade." Come now!

The second half of the book is fairly straightforward, covering how an assistance team gets underway, the involvement of local AIA chapters, background research, putting the teams together, involvement of students, and a typical schedule of events leading to a concluding presentation, following the architect's beloved all-night charrette. What is not mentioned is how and why the requests for assistance are generated. Clearly, they don't come out of the blue. Are there special interest groups, including the local architectural communities themselves, that regularly emerge as the advocates for this outside help? A multidisciplinary approach is claimed, yet a cursory count of the members of each RUDAT team, from material in the appendix, suggests the overwhelming participation of architects.

Seven case studies are presented, which may be the best part of the book. They are well written, giving a background and history of the problem at hand and seemingly thoughtful and appropriate solutions. For the most part, they bespeak professionals who are thinking comprehensively and without fear of broadening their charges in order to get at the root of problems.

fill calculations, road alignments, and tentative maps should be covered. Too much time is spent on specific tools, such as the old-style planimeter, which has in many cases been replaced by electronic instruments. The reader should be encouraged to get the basic thinking down first, then to stay current on tools and their use.

Discussion of the participants in the site planning process would be helpful to the technician, particularly when a phone call comes in from the client's site planner, broker, architect, landscape architect, or construction

manager. These role types could be explained in a few paragraphs. But what is notably missing is any critical assessment of either the process or the products. No one has presented what seems to work best as a process or what does not. There are no follow-up interviews with local participants, nor do we know what, if anything, happened as a result of the assistance team's visits. Everything is rosy.

In the first section it is hard to figure out the connection between a rather disjointed chapter on urban form and structure and the assistance teams (chapter 3) and by the time you get to the chapter on urban design in practice, you wonder who the book is really for; students will find it heavy on rhetoric and light on substance; it's hard to say what professionals will find of use. The text and elaborations don't necessarily follow the headings. The graphics don't necessarily match the text. And there's a lot that doesn't seem to have much to do with RUDATs at all. At best, this part is a plea for humanist, contextual city design and architecture—a fine subject. Can it be said that the assistance teams have helped to produce appropriate urban places?

Urban Design in Action: The History, Theory, and Development of the AIA's RUDAT Programs, Peter Batcheler, David Lewis, editors, AIA and North Carolina State University Press, 1986, 250 pp., illus., \$25.00.

Kalvin Platt:

SITE DEVELOPMENT

B. C. COLLEY

This is a straightforward guide for the engineering technician, intended to assist in everyday nuts-and-bolts situations. The book is clear and easy to read, but suffers from poor-quality photographs, some out of focus and inexcusable in a finished book.

While the book wisely does not dwell on the use of computers, instead emphasizing the basic thinking process, the use of computers for cut and

manager. These role types could be explained in a few paragraphs.

This book seems to be directed to a very specialized audience, the engineering technician or junior engineer. It is without great appeal for architects, planners, or developers; perhaps its place is in the junior colleges, technical schools, and engineering schools, as a handy desk-sized reference for school problems or one's first job.

Practical Manual of Site Development, B. C. Colley, McGraw-Hill, 1985, 220 pp., illus., \$37.50.

Aaron Betsky is an architect and architectural writer working in the office of Frank Gehry and Associates.

Sarah Bodine writes articles on art, design, and crafts with Michael Dunas. They also coedited a collection of essays from the last thirty years of *ID* magazine.

M. Christine Boyer teaches at Columbia University in the Historic Preservation Program. She is the author of *Dreaming the Rational City* (MIT, 1983), and the forthcoming *City of Collective Memory* and *Manhattan Montage*.

Robert Brueggmann teaches architectural history at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle. He is the author of *Benicia: Portrait of an Early California Town* (101 Productions).

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Margaretta J. Darnall has taught the history of architecture and landscape architecture at several universities. She published *Il Sacro Bosco di Bomarzo: Its 16th Century Literary and Antiquarian Context* (the January 1984 issue of the *Journal of Garden History*), and is completing an anthology of literary gardens.

Peggy Deamer is an adjunct professor in architecture at Columbia University and a doctoral candidate in architecture at Princeton University.

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Mark Girouard is a well known author and historian. His most recent book is *Cities and People: A Social and Architectural History* (Yale, 1985).

Kenneth I. Helphand is head of the Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Oregon. He teaches classes in landscape literature and theory.

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Spiro Kostof teaches architectural history at the University of California, Berkeley. His most recent book is *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals* (Oxford, 1985); a series based on it will be aired on public television in 1987.

Panos Koulermos is a professor and former dean in the School of Architecture at the University of Southern California, and principal in the architectural firm of Studio Panos Koulermos.

William Miller is professor of architecture at Kansas State University, and author of *Alvar Aalto: An Annotated Bibliography* (Garland, 1984).

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Kax Wilson, author of *A History of Textiles* (1979), has a masters in Textiles and Clothing from Colorado State University, and is currently a freelance writer, lecturer, and consultant.

Christopher L. Yip teaches architectural history and design at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

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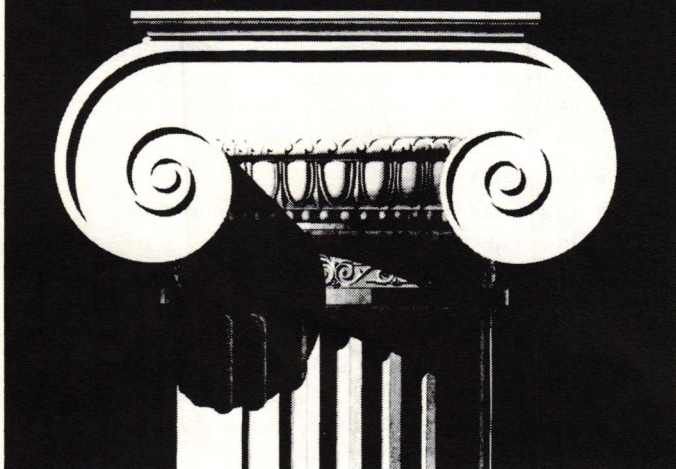


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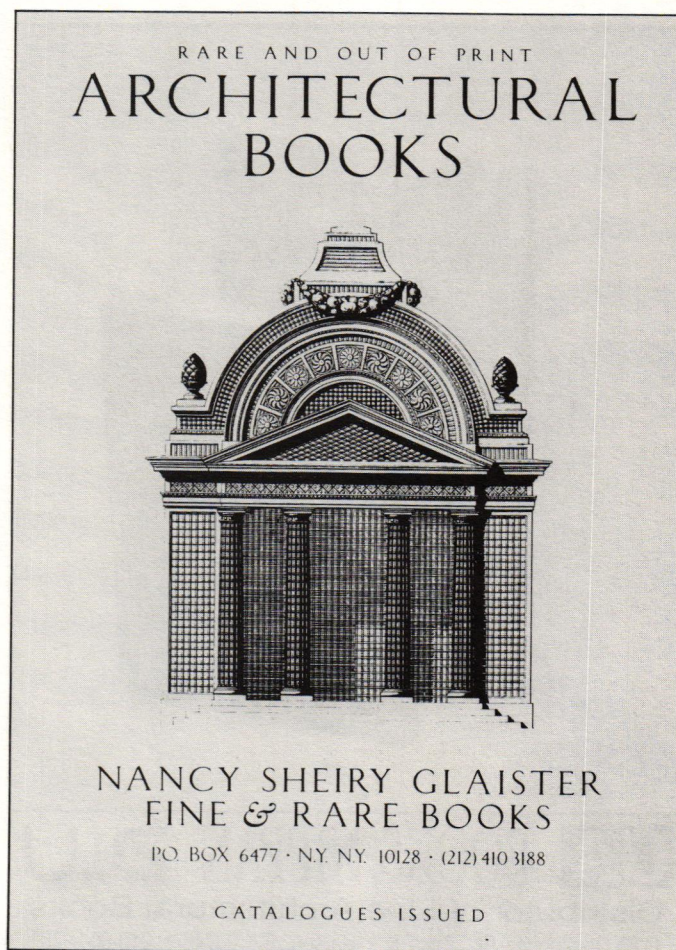
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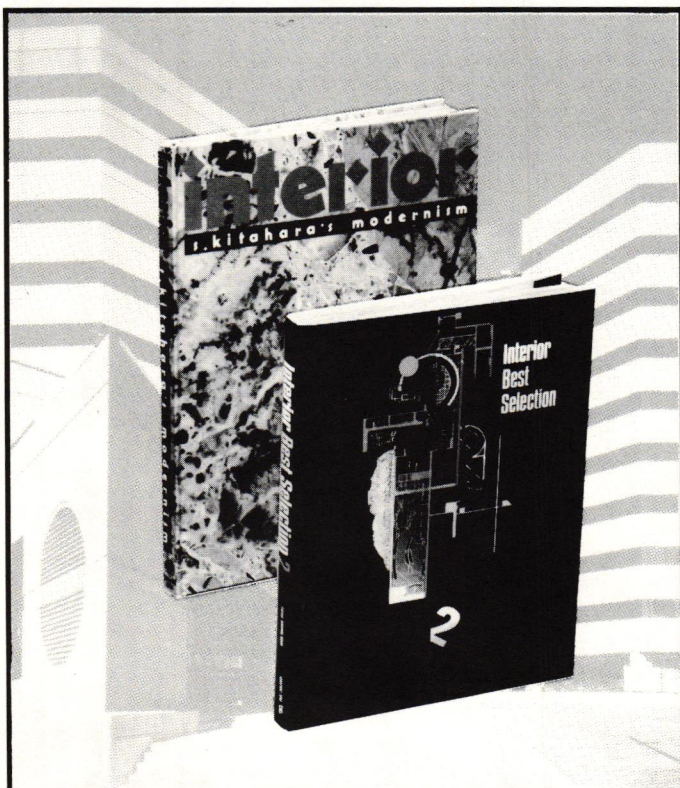
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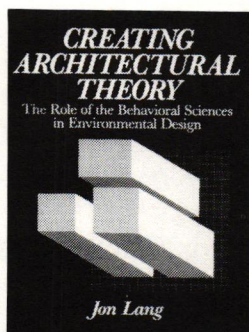
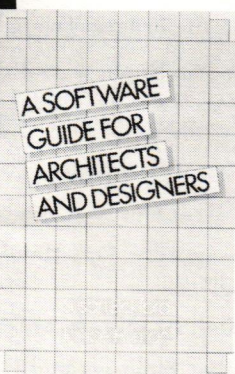
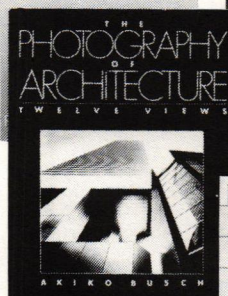
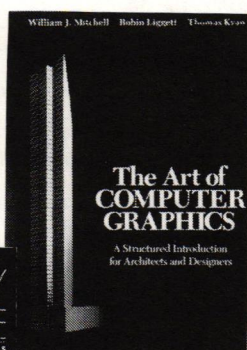
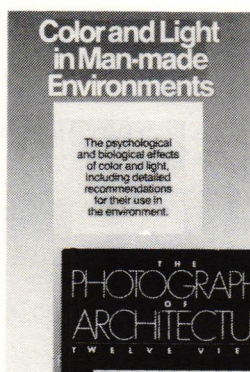
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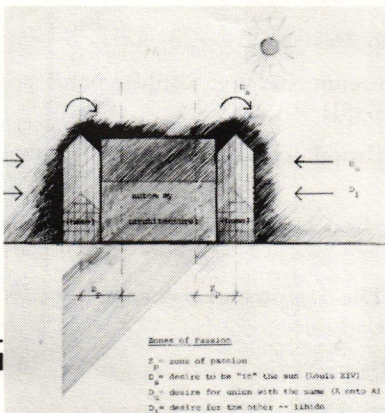
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Norman Foster on the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank and **Emilio Ambasz** on projects in Seville and San Antonio (both sponsored by the LA chapter, AIA). **Achille Castiglioni** on his work. Lighting designers **Ernesto Gismondi**, **Ron Rezek**, **Richard Sapper**, **Piotr Sierakowsky** and **Phillipe Starck**. Starck and interior designer **Andrée Putnam** on their work. **Michael Rotondi**, **Paul Haigh** and **Stanley Felderman** on restaurant design. Graphic and product designers **Kathy** and **Michael McCoy** on the creative potential of linguistics. **John Lautner**, **Evaristo Nicolao** and **Mario Botta** on the expression of structure in architecture. And a discussion of Equitable Tower, New York, with **Randolph Gerner** and **Judy Swanson** of Kohn Pederson Fox Conway.

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