

# **D**ESIGN **B**OOK **R**EVIEW



## LOUIS I. KAHN: THE LAST MASTER

Issue 21 – Summer 1991

Architecture

Urbanism

Landscape

Design

**RICHARD A. PLUNZ:**  
Louis I. Kahn: L'Uomo, Il Maestro

**WILLIAM H. JORDY:**  
The Louis I. Kahn Archive

**ALAN J. PLATTUS:**  
Kahn and the Order of the City

**SWATI CHATTOPADHYAY:**  
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**HARRY FRANCIS MALLGRAVE:**  
on the Descendants of Otto Wagner

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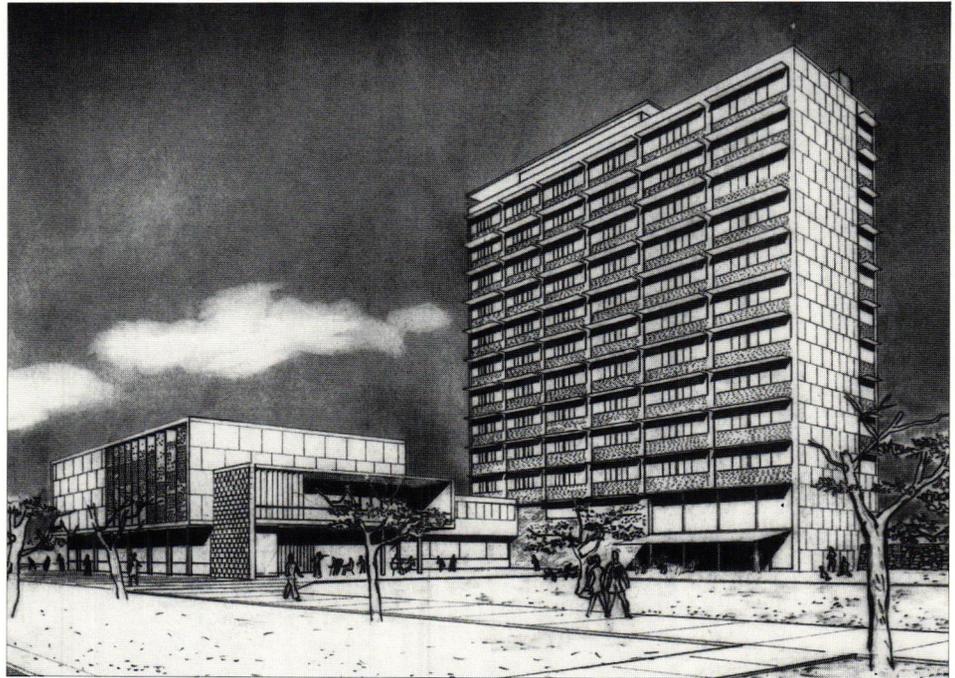
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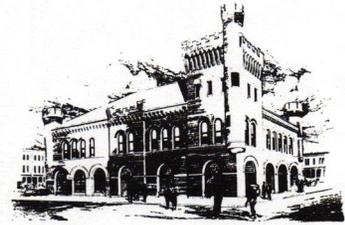
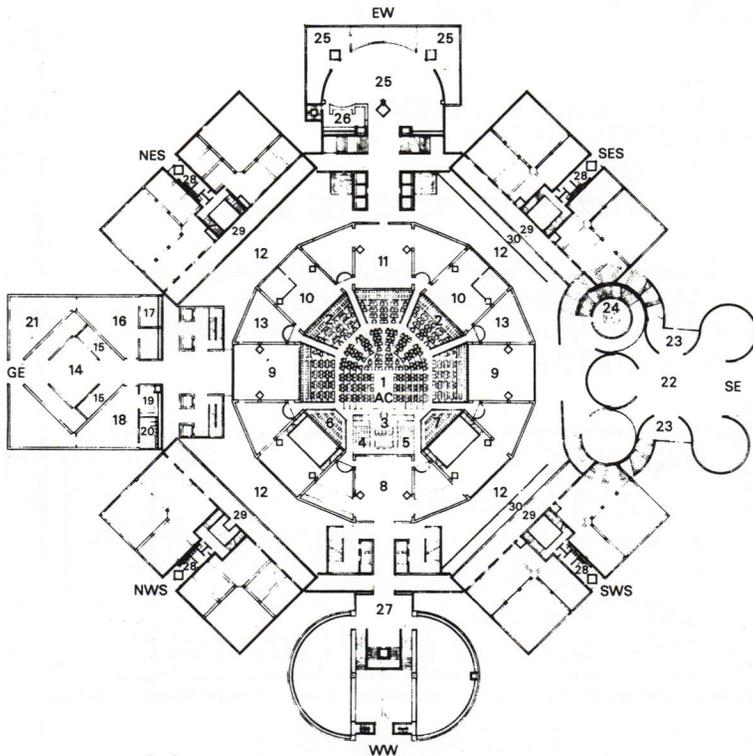
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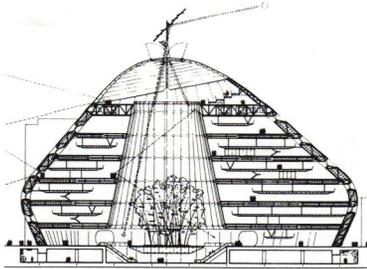
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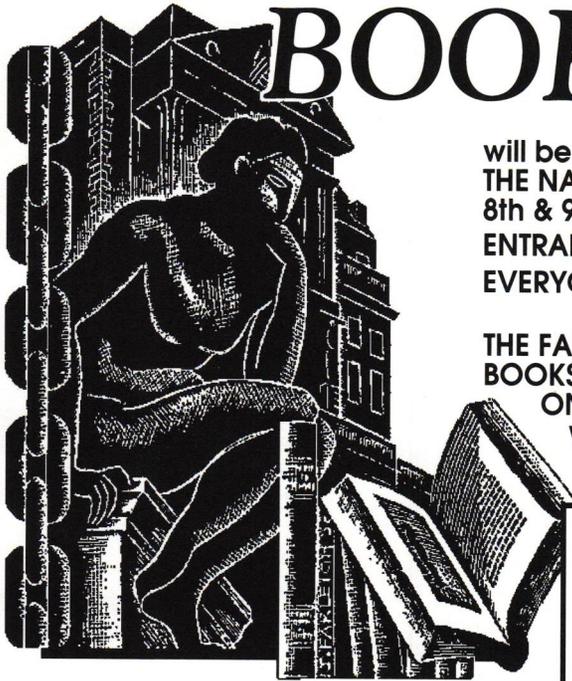
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## Encore Kahn

This is the second issue of *Design Book Review* to be devoted to Louis I. Kahn. In *DBR* 11 (Winter 1987) four critics were gathered to reassess the Kimbell Museum in Fort Worth. It was as much an attempt to expand the possibilities of architectural criticism as it was a thoughtful return to Kahn's work and thought. The current convergence of the first major retrospective exhibition of Kahn's work since his death in 1974 and the publication of several important scholarly works on Kahn have offered the pretext for a return to the modest master from Philadelphia.

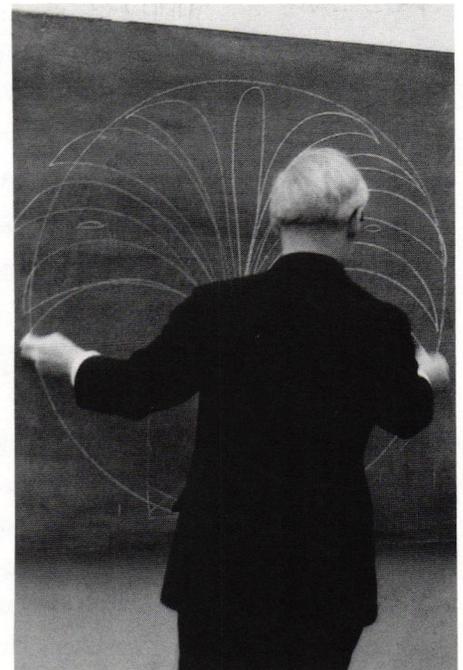
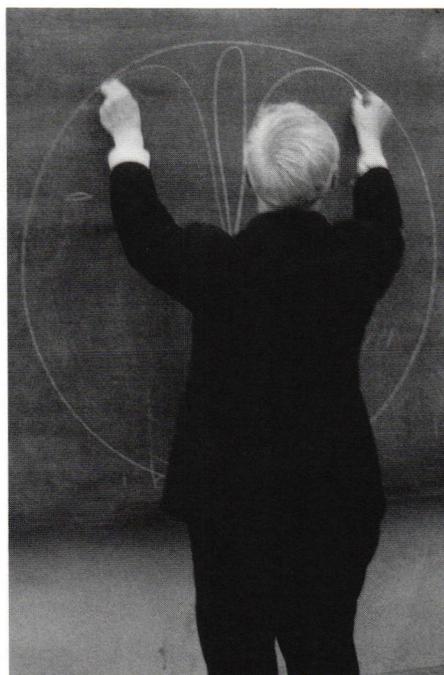
In this issue Richard Plunz reminds us of Kahn's political nature, which in the first half of his career was expressed ideologically while in the second half was more imbedded in a way of working that resisted commodification. William Jordy offers a detailed analysis of Kahn's drawing method, showing how intimately it was related to ideas of materiality and light in the built

projects. Alan Plattus considers Kahn's approach to urbanism as a poetic but ultimately futile attempt at restoring an architectural order to society. Finally, Swati Chattopadhyay looks at one of the institutions for which Kahn provided an evolved typology, the library, and then considers the eventual transformations of his plans for the Berkeley Graduate Theological Union Library.

Of all modern masters Kahn's work is so full of mystery that one can return to it many times and still discover something new. His compositional strategies, juxtapositions of materials, systems of joinery, and treatment of light are so fascinating that one can easily forget that buildings would be made for anything else. As a teacher he once said "as I teach myself, I teach others;" he was a master with all the questions rather than one with all the answers.

Richard Ingersoll

*This issue of Design Book Review has been generously supported by a grant from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.*



Louis I. Kahn, photographed by Martin E. Rich. (Courtesy of photographer.)

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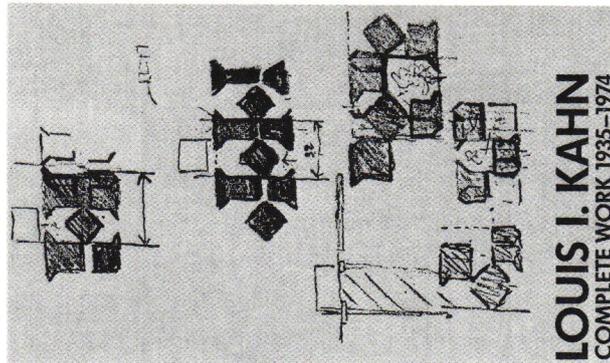
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## Louis I. Kahn: The Last Master

To call Louis I. Kahn "the last master" is not meant as a simple act of flattery. For at the same time that Kahn is being admitted to the exclusive pantheon of universally recognized 20th-century masters, one that includes Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Alvar Aalto, the category of "master" is being devaluated. In the pluralistic atmosphere of the late 20th century one can safely predict that there will be no more masters of such consensual appeal, nor will there be a collective desire for them. The master, the masterpiece, the master narrative, all of those hierarchical concepts are being undermined by centrifugal ways of interpretation. The battle against logocentrism has been won (although many people may never have been aware it was being fought, nor is it certain that there are any victors!) and masters past and present are becoming unwitting hostages to the new relativism.

Thus to be "the last master" is a dubious privilege. Kahn's great works, such as the Dacca government complex, the Salk Institute, the Exeter Library, the School in Ahmedabad, and the Kimbell Museum, have reached canonical status at a time when canons are being blown apart. His modernist reinterpretation of historical forms such as vaults (at the Kimbell) or pediments (at Ahmedabad) is often claimed as the legitimate source of postmodern historicism. But the general ambiguity of his statements and the double readings that so much of his built work allows might indicate his paternity for a more pervasive condition of postmodernism based on intersubjectivity. His Sufi-sounding proposition of asking a brick, or a room, or any other architectural element "what it wants to be" is a denial of the creator's dominion as the privileged subject; his insistence that "the fairy-tale is the beginning of

science" is a gentle attack on the rational, positivistic origins of architecture. Kahn's mode of practice, in which the work was fondled by clients, engineers, and assistants until it returned for his final forgiving, was a uniquely dialogic process. This display of "weakness" where others proceeded with uncompromising certainty seems to be an invitation to release posterity from the bond of the masters.

The museum plays a special role in the canonization of Kahn. It was as museum designer that he achieved his greatest recognition and now it is through the attention of museums that his fame will spread. The major retrospective exhibition, "Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture," which will open on October 20, 1991 in Philadelphia and travel until 1994 to Paris, New York, Gunma (Japan), Los Angeles, Fort Worth, and Columbus (Ohio), is on a scale that has only been exceeded by the retrospective for Le Corbusier in 1987.

An interesting prelude to the Kahn retrospective was the smaller exhibition and catalogue "The Art Museums of Louis I. Kahn," organized by Patricia Loud in 1989 at Duke University, and shown at Yale, Fort Worth, and San Francisco. Loud's catalogue is the first truly scholarly treatment of Kahn's work, scrupulously researched among archival and secondary sources, and thoughtfully organized to reveal as much factual information as possible without losing the reader's attention. By analyzing drawings and documents, Loud has done a superb job of piecing together the story of the commissions, describing the design process, and suggesting the theoretical consequences. Kahn's museums, the Yale Art Gallery, the Kimbell, the Yale Center for British Art, and the unbuilt complex planned for the de Menils in Houston, are the finest examples of his attempt to redefine institutions through architectural form. His manipulation of natural light, circulation, and sectional space have become archetypal to subsequent museum design. As Loud says: "Kahn's museums opened up the possibilities."

The uproar in 1989 caused by Romaldo Giurgola's discreet plans for additions to the Kimbell, which have since been scrapped, is another indication of Kahn's current untouchable status. While the Kimbell may be safe for awhile from new construction it has fallen prey to deconstruction in Michael Benedikt's brilliant little book *Deconstructing the Kimbell*. In surprisingly lucid terms Benedikt explains how Jacques Derrida's critical tropes, such as *différance* and *parergon*, apply to architectural phenomena, and then produces a deep formal reading of the Kimbell. In his thorough appraisal of elements and composition he seeks not only to prove the affinity between Derrida's manner of writing and Kahn's manner of building but by comparison to show how superficial the claim for "Deconstructivist" projects shown at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1988 was. The Kimbell possesses "hierarchy both stated and erased, infinitude declared and delimited, specificity pursued and then generalized. The principal themes of Classicism and Modernism are locked in against each other, and the timeless, upright pleasures of pragmatism both embraced and leapt over laughing." Benedikt's essay helps deconstruct yet preserve the mystery of Kahn's vaults, gaps, and displacements.

As to the Kahn retrospective, although it will open in Kahn's home town at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, "Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture" is an exhibition that grew from the initiative of Richard Koshalek, director of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art. Koshalek, who was trained as an architect, began the initial planning studies for the show ten years ago. Its preparation involved the close participation of Julia Moore Converse, who for ten years has been the curator of the Kahn Collection at the University of Pennsylvania, the major lending source for the exhibition. Koshalek has been assisted in Los Angeles by long-term associate Sherri Geldin and curator Elizabeth T. Smith, but the chief curators and those respon-

sible for the book that accompanies the exhibition are David De Long and David Brownlee, who have also been involved with the project for about ten years. De Long and Brownlee, who both teach at the School of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, are two of the finest historians of modern American architecture. In addition, De Long, author of the definitive work on Bruce Goff, *Bruce Goff: Toward an Absolute Architecture* (Architectural History Foundation, 1989; see DBR 20), did his master's degree in architecture with Kahn in the 1960s, while Brownlee, author of the award-winning *The Law Courts: the Architecture of George Edmund Street*, (Architectural History Foundation, 1984; see DBR 8), has previously curated the excellent archival exhibitions "Friedrich Weinbrenner of Karlsruhe" (1986) and "Building the City Beautiful: The Benjamin Franklin Parkway and the Philadelphia Museum of Art," 1989 (reviewed in this issue of DBR).

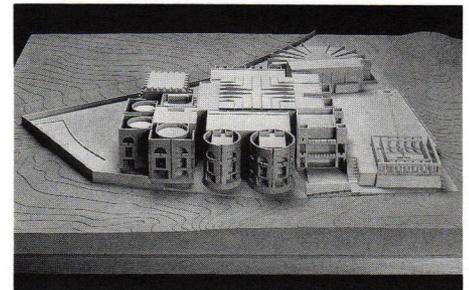
The installation, designed by Japanese architect Arata Isozaki, is derived from the cylindrical bastion forms of Kahn's unbuilt Mikveh Israel synagogue. The choice of Isozaki, who designed the new building for the Los Angeles MOCA, was determined by Koshalek, and although there were many more obvious choices among the descendants of Kahn, such as Robert Venturi, Romaldo Giurgola, or Robert Geddes, the Philadelphia curators admit that "there is a certain advantage in having someone who is detached from the Kahn material and can see it in a fresh light." The show has been arranged into six sections, each dubbed with one of Kahn's magically fuzzy phrases. "Adventures in Unexplored Places" treats his Beaux-Arts background with Paul Cret, his early urban designs for Philadelphia, and his work—mostly in housing—before 1950. "The Mind Opens to Realizations" presents his breakthrough projects: Yale University Art Gallery, The Jewish Community Center near Trenton, New Jersey, and the Richards Labs at the University of Pennsylvania. "Assembly ...

A Place of Transcendence" presents designs for religious and governmental institutions. "The Houses of the Inspirations" is devoted to places of learning such as the Salk Institute. "The Forum of the Availabilities" presents mostly unbuilt urban projects such as the Philadelphia Bicentennial Expositions of 1971–73. The final section, "Light, the Giver of All Presences," examines the great essays in the manipulation of light, such as the Kimbell. Aside from Kahn's evocative and wonderfully messy sketches, the greatest surprises of the exhibition are bound to be the original, elegantly crafted wooden models, 43 of which will be on display. In addition five new models have been constructed. In all, 60 built and unbuilt projects will be featured.

The book, *Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture*, edited by Brownlee and De Long, will fill the demand for a definitive source on Kahn's life and work. In addition to the introduction by Vincent Scully, Brownlee and De Long's essays are supplemented by individual essays by various authors on nineteen of Kahn's buildings, a 165-page series of color photographs, a list of complete works, and a chronology of Kahn's life and works.

One broad area that will be revealed by the exhibition and the book is Kahn's career before 1950. Kahn's interest in social architecture during the 1930s and 1940s has generally been obscured by the formal power of his projects during the last two decades of his life. In Brownlee's words: "Kahn was a successful activist in politics and architecture. He was engaged in several New Deal projects. The one that he succeeded in getting built, Jersey Homesteads near Hightstown, New Jersey, was designed together with Albert Kastner as a Resettlement Administration project to move clothing workers from the Lower East Side in Manhattan to a semi-rural environment where there would be a factory built; during the harvest season they would work the land, and during other times they would work

in the factory." The social ideals and the sense of human solidarity that motivated these early projects are often overlooked in assessing Kahn's oeuvre, yet were fundamental to his lifelong sensibilities. If Kahn abandoned an architecture of program for one of form it was not because he lost faith in people but because he believed that architecture could be even more generous if "we built something so wonderful that people would have to find a function for it."



"Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture" exhibition tour: Philadelphia Museum of Art, Oct. 20, 1991–Jan. 5, 1992; Centre Pompidou, Paris, Feb. 27, 1992–May 4, 1992; Museum of Modern Art, New York, June 14–Aug. 18, 1992; Museum of Modern Art, Gunma, Japan, Sept. 26–Nov. 3, 1992; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Mar. 7–May 30, 1993; Kimbell Art Museum, July 3–Oct. 10, 1993; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio, Nov. 17, 1993–Feb. 1, 1994.

THE ART MUSEUMS OF LOUIS I. KAHN, Patricia Cummings Loud, Duke University Press, 1989, 304 pp., illus., \$60.00 cloth; \$30.00 paper.

DECONSTRUCTING THE KIMBELL: AN ESSAY ON MEANING AND ARCHITECTURE, Michael Benedikt, SITES/Lumen, 1991, 140 pp., \$15.95.

LOUIS I. KAHN: IN THE REALM OF ARCHITECTURE, edited by David De Long and David Brownlee, MOCA and Rizzoli, 448 pp., illus., \$55.00 cloth; \$34.95 paper.

Richard A. Plunz

## Louis I. Kahn: L'Uomo, Il Maestro

ALESSANDRA LATOUR, EDITOR

Recent architectural history has not known exactly what to do with Louis Kahn, so anathema were his values to the mainstream ideals of the past decade, especially in the United States. In spite of his being American, and in spite of growing nationalism in 1980s culture, the critical establishment has largely downplayed his importance. Above all else, Kahn's contribution was as a moral force, and this has been too difficult a proposition for contemplation within the excesses of the recent political milieu. In Europe the situation is slightly different, and it is not surprising that this most interesting of the several monographs that have kept Kahn's presence alive comes from Italy.

This kind of monograph on an architect has not appeared before. Its uniqueness is in large part a reflection on Kahn. The twenty-two interviews and fifteen essays are a study in values, using as a common ground the authors' interaction with the architect in many different facets of his life and work. What emerges is a major biographical contribution, but it is also a powerful critique of mainstream architectural culture and practice, at least as it has come to be known in our time. Kahn's way did not conform; it was even hostile to professional convention. He did not participate. In large part, that he was an apostate gave him a framework within which his formal invention could flourish.

Symptomatic of Kahn's sensibility in this regard was the fact that he "disliked New York immensely," as Sue Ann Kahn relates. He simply did not possess the kind of social and political personality, which, stereotype or not, has tended to characterize the commercial world of architecture: an ideal which has always been defined by an amalgam of personality, media, and marketplace with New York City as epicenter. He was especially



Profile, Louis I. Kahn; photograph by Bob Wharton. (From *L'Uomo, Il Maestro*; courtesy of the Kimbell Art Museum.)

opposed to the superficialities of the stylistic marketplace which is so essential to maintenance of the machine of commercial architectural production. The example of Kahn was an important rebuke which could be lost on no one. Yet this critique itself was something new, especially in the wasteland of the 1950s, and as such it could also be used. Philip Johnson leaped at the opportunity. He liked the potential of Kahn's criticism, implied and real, of modernist functionalism. It had commodity value.<sup>1</sup> The predictable engagements followed: the Museum of Modern Art exhibition and the Vincent Scully monograph. Even in Johnson, however, one senses a certain awe: uncomprehending but nonetheless felt with whatever sincerity his world could sustain.

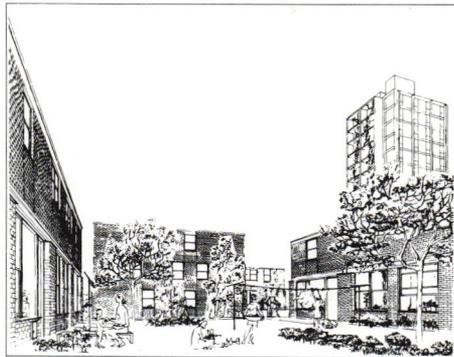
Kahn was not just one more commodity, something that the establishment could never really fathom. His newness could not be assimilated; he remained an outsider. He could not be reproduced, and he could not be idealized. In the past decade, this enigma has caused derision in some quarters, among the successor generation. In this volume, Robert A. M. Stern, principal assistant for Scully's 1962 monograph, is frustrated in his de-

sire to categorize Kahn's work as a transition toward "a way to return to classical order." Stern admits that this scenario does not work, while seeming to fault Kahn. He is "amazed" that today's students do not use Kahn as a "reference," as if the logic of Kahn's critique could be so engaged. Kahn would be amused: he who always admonished his students for trying to copy. Finally, seemingly in frustration, Stern dismisses Kahn's buildings as lacking "that life, that empathy, that sense of mass, of weight and activity that any ordinary, true Classical building has." Among the other stars of the past decade represented in this volume, Michael Graves ponders similar questions. For example, he recounts how he once drove Kahn to Kennedy Airport and Kahn did not recognize Eero Saarinen's recently completed and widely published TWA terminal. It was a "curiosity" to Graves how Kahn could function so completely "unaware," as if that were a weakness.

From others of the successor generation, especially among the protégés, there has been controversy surrounding the same issues. Romaldo Giurgola, who is represented in this volume with a very insightful interview, could not escape the

impasse of reproduction in relation to the Kimbell Art Museum. Then there has been the impasse of history itself. Robert Venturi has sought to establish himself as Kahn's mentor; or at least as Denise Scott-Brown has estimated: "the last phase of Kahn's architectural career should be seen as under the influence of Venturi."<sup>2</sup> In the past decade, such contention has led to acrimony of the sort Kahn detested: for example, in 1986 the denial of the Aga Khan Award for the National Assembly Building in Dacca, by a jury that included Venturi and Fumihiko Maki.<sup>3</sup> Certainly the decade of the 1990s will witness a more charitable view of Kahn, but his work will remain unexploitable, at least in the modes to which the successor generation has grown accustomed.

In her introduction, Alessandra Latour gives an excellent perspective on the importance of Kahn at the beginning of the 1960s, at least in Italy. Similar ideas are expressed by Francesco Montuori: "Louis Kahn's work seemed like an outlet from the 'blind alley' where the modern movement had ended." What is barely discussed, however, is the political dimension of this outlet, and perhaps there is a subtlety in this issue which can be understood only from the perspective of United States culture. Often Kahn was seen as "apolitical." In this volume, Latour relates the dismay of her young colleagues in Rome when Kahn refused to speak at the university after being asked, as an American, to take a position on the invasion of Cambodia; or Sue Ann Kahn describes how he refused her urging to join the antinuclear movement. Certainly Kahn could not be considered an "activist," at least in the later years when he was engaged in almost all of his major architectural production. But his architecture itself, as a moral force, was political in the deepest sense, especially in the United States context. One must begin with the early housing and other investigations into "social architecture"; a side of Kahn usually dismissed, almost as if another person did it. Critics choose to



Mill Creek Housing Project, Philadelphia; Louis I. Kahn, 1952–62. (From *L'Uomo, Il Maestro*.)



Mill Creek Housing Project, Philadelphia; Louis I. Kahn, 1952–62. (From *L'Uomo, Il Maestro*.)

focus on the more consumable later work. But Kahn has a very interesting early and "activist" history, starting with his founding of the Architecture Research Group in 1931, for which he did extensive research on low-cost housing in Europe and the United States. These activities extended in various ways into the 1950s.

It is just as well that Kahn did not try to continue his own activism, given the exigencies of the direction national priorities took. He would have been destroyed as an architect, as were some of his contemporaries, trying for example, to do public housing for a government that in no way believed in it. Instead, he took another path. Montuori writes that Kahn wanted "to renew architecture through architecture itself." He understood that he could use the subversive power of poetry as a form of resistance, and in the early 1960s, there could be no doubt as to the political depth of his position. For this reviewer, there was a confluence of three significant American architects at the time who offered a critical political di-

mension. Kahn was one; and the other two were Serge Chermayeff, the expatriate modernist whose *Community and Privacy* was of enormous significance coming out of the wasteland of the 1950s, and Shadrach Woods, the urbanist from the Bronx who was a principle author of the Team Ten revisionism. They were all very different, but they shared roles as outsiders in the American context. Their work interacts in a powerful dialogue apart from the marketplace. They respected each other's intellect and commitment. Theirs were ideals which have passed from view in the present scene. Of the three, it was Kahn who came closest to finding a working alternative for practice. He was able to reconstitute the *atelier* into a new instrument of inquiry, within the shadow of an increasingly oppressive and dehumanized environment for architectural production. The potential of the idea was invigorating. In this volume, a Japanese architect working for Kahn described his office as "the only place in the world where one could just go and philosophize, and think about the problems of architecture." That was the stuff of the great buildings.

#### NOTES

1. The workings of Johnson's mind in this regard are revealed in a talk he gave at Yale in 1958. See Philip Johnson, *Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979): 90–91.
2. Denise Scott-Brown, "Observations," *Architectural Record* (February, 1984): 78.
3. The award was finally given by the 1989 jury. Of particular interest in the 1986 decision were the dissenting statements of Hans Hollein and Mehmet Doruk Pamir, who both defended the importance of Kahn. See *The Aga Khan Award for Architecture 1986*, Geneva: November, 1986.

LOUIS I. KAHN: *L'UOMO, IL MAESTRO*, Alessandra Latour, Edizione Kappa, 1986, 422 pp., illus., 55,000 lire.

William H. Jordy

## The Louis I. Kahn Archive

ALEXANDER TZONIS, GENERAL  
EDITOR

### Louis I. Kahn: Complete Works

HEINZ RONNER AND SHARAD  
JHAVERI

What a relief to peruse Kahn's drawings, in these parlous days for architectural draftsmanship, when every study for a building seems diluted by two for the gallery. This for the file; these to the framer. In these volumes, one experiences the probing quality of the master designer thoroughly engaged in the "thoughtful making of spaces," and the intensity of energy, feeling, vision, frustration, and triumph evidenced in the process.

Charcoal is, above all, the medium one associates with Kahn's draftsmanship. So it appears when casually leafing through the seven-volume Garland edition of those drawings from the Kahn Archive at the University of Pennsylvania, which are either by his hand or presumed to be under his immediate guidance. To be sure, far more drawings are listed as graphite, often mixed with a fatter, blacker, greasier pencil, "negro lead." Still, in his prefatory essay to these volumes, Marshall D. Meyers, a longtime associate who completed several projects left unfinished by Kahn's death, also recalls charcoal as his preferred medium. Writing about Kahn as a draftsman, Meyers remembers him with a stick of vine charcoal in hand, in the dusk and dark of after-hours, working his way in this dusty medium across scrolls of hard-surfaced (usually yellow) tracing paper. He also liked to have one of his assistants at hand, with whom to extend his exploration on paper by musing, disjointed dialogue.

Charcoal seems kindred to Kahn's temperament. Its mark can be bold:



Figure 1. Perspective sketch, Salk Institute for Biological Studies, La Jolla; Louis I. Kahn, 1962. (Courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)

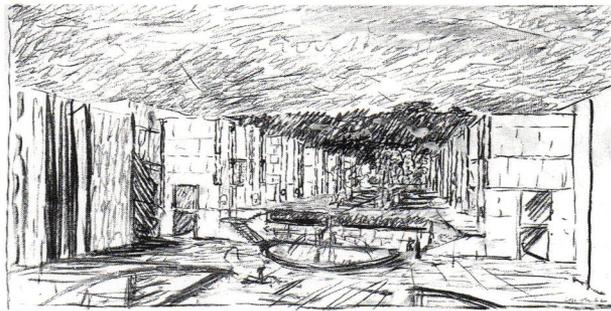


Figure 2. Perspective sketch, Salk Institute for Biological Studies, La Jolla; Louis I. Kahn, 1962. (Courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)

black, heavy, and thick. But at the release of the hand's pressure it becomes wavering and evanescent. Always its edges, ragged and granular, make tenuous boundaries. Of all the traditional drawing media, its line (together with those of its near relatives, chalk and pastel) seems the most material, retaining the quality of its dustiness even after the dust has been "fixed" against drift and smudge. On the unyielding surface of architectural trace, it sits *on* the surface rather than being *of* it. Increase the pressure, and the blackness leaps out, all the blacker for the cinders and smoulder emanating from the mark, like the char and smoke of scaffolding from expended fireworks.

The range of Kahn's touch in charcoal and the extremes of light it encompasses are evident in two elevational drawings for the rows of scientists' studies that frame the paved court of the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla (1959–65). One is dark and brooding; the other gossamer and arcadian (figures 1

and 2). Jet black and pewter. Both are loosely rendered, yet immensely sculptural in character. In another elevation, his proposed *Memorial to Six Million Jewish Martyrs* for Battery Park in New York (1966–72), his gamut of touch appears in a single elevation (figure 3). The glass blocks shimmer on their low platform in a tremulous touch that gives them spectral luminosity. Then, at the very edge of the elevation, a push-pull, black and vigorous, defines a clump of trees clipped to the rectangularity of the blocks. Against the feathery touch and ghostliness of the blocks the matted physicality of the trees recalls Kahn's definition of material as "spent light."

The elevation for the Jewish Martyrs Memorial is listed as "graphite, negro lead" and, in truth, pencil provides the bulk

of Kahn's drawings. Still, his handling of pencil came to resemble charcoal. In the Garland reproductions it is often difficult to distinguish the two media. So perhaps charcoal should be termed the spiritual medium of his draftsmanship—the medium at once most congenial to his work and personality, and the medium other media tend to imitate.

Graphite and negro lead overwhelmingly dominate his earliest drawings. The most interesting of these depend on the sketchy manner of Le Corbusier. Especially for urban projects, they rush, in the Corbusian way, toward an infinity of blankness, and, also following his lead, they invoke the headlong thrust of autos and low-flying planes, cleansing the past en route. But the Corbusian élan is sometimes missing from Kahn's drawings. Preferring soft lead to the bite of Le Corbusier's pen or crayon, he sometimes smudges the line (or it becomes smudged) (figure 4). Sometimes he turns the lead on its side to scumble a shadow or suggest a

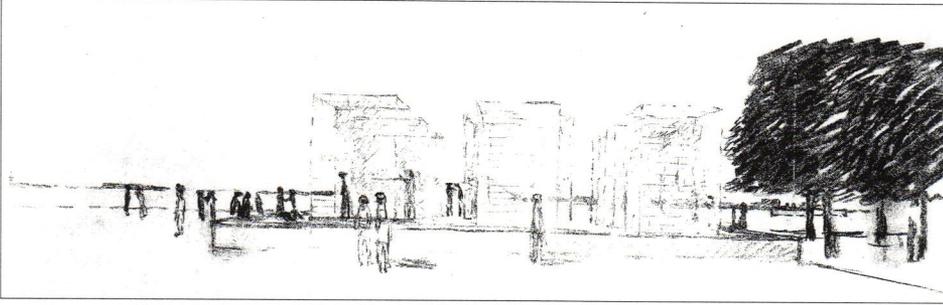


Figure 3. *Monument to Six Million Jewish Martyrs*, Battery Park, New York; Louis I. Kahn, 1966–72. (Courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)

texture, or fills in an area with pencil to create the blackest possible shadow or plane (figure 5). Already his instinct for weight and texture deflect him from Le Corbusier's spartan images of modernity toward the more pragmatic modernism of New Deal brick, wood siding, and occasional planes of random masonry that compose the "hard times" housing projects and community centers of the first fifteen years of his career. Already, pencil perhaps "wants to be" charcoal.

For client rendering during this early period, a few of the pencil drawings are meticulously textured and detailed with such professional finish that they become impersonal—the products of any superb draftsman in pencil of the period. The 1920s and 1930s were, after all, golden

decades, especially in America, for pencil draftsmanship—from fistfuls of hard to soft, thin to thick leads, which offered splendid training in "touch." Comparable rendering in pen and ink, which was also pervasive at the time, never appealed to Kahn. Insofar as he used ink, it was in the incisive, spare, scrawling manner that was so attuned to Le Corbusier's quick, impatient grasp of situations. Ink remained a subordinate medium for Kahn, who favored those fuzzier, less decisive media conducive to reverie and change of mind.

Yet the most memorable and imaginative of his early drawings are in pen and ink (and a few in brush and ink). They are included in his intermittent studies for Philadelphia's downtown. Those from 1952 include diagrams in

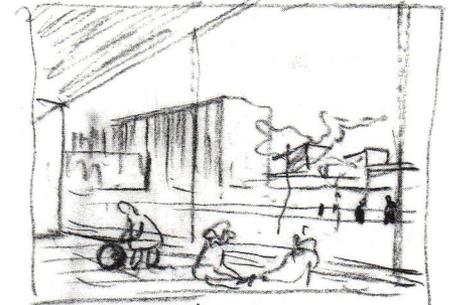


Figure 4. Perspective sketch, housing project; Louis I. Kahn, 1943. (Courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)

which the downtown grid of the city is translated into tiny arrow pulsations graduated by volume of traffic, and curled at the boundaries into his giant cylindrical parking towers, wrapped with offices and hotels, and making the self-proclaimed Carcassonne he envisioned for his native downtown (figure 6). Subsequent drawings for a downtown "civic center" in 1957 show, in addition to the requisite slabs of the time, more Carcassonne cylinders, but mostly moved from the periphery of the grid to its center, as though to increase the array of huge geometrical structures that compose what he also called his "forum" (figure 7). They display a number of additional shapes, all at huge scale; a truncated pyramid; another that is skinnier and elongated and extended by a tower until it assumes a funnel-like profile in elevation; a tower of four tapered elements bundled into a cluster; a circular auditorium with a conical roof up to a circular monitor; finally, the crosshatched, zigzag of his (and Anne G. Tyng's) famous Fuller-esque skyscraper composed of triangulated framing and glass faceting. Auxiliary drawings show the squat cylinders abutted by towers, square in plan; others show the cylinders cut by three wedges into a chunky Y, with cylindrical towers pressed into the angular spaces. These drawings, and his near simultaneous use of large, elemental geometry in preliminary designs for the Ardath Jeshurun Synagogue (1954–55) prefigure his characteristic use of such geometry (but not immediately) in works that came to characterize his vision of architecture.



Figure 5. Perspective sketch, housing project; Louis I. Kahn, 1943. (Courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)

The synagogue, however, employs shapes within shapes, whereas the forum makes their huge presences more evident, strewn through the space they were intended to command.

But, let us get back to the pen and ink, in which he masterfully recorded his wished-for forum in a scratchier version of Corbusian draftsmanship. The medium stayed with him; but only for the occasional drawing, and somewhat more frequently as an accent to pencil and charcoal, or as a diagrammatic correction.

If ink plays a minor role in Kahn's draftsmanship, watercolor and wash are almost wholly absent. A surprise, one might think, in light of his Beaux-Arts training under Paul Cret. As a self-conscious modernist, however, Kahn must instinctively have turned away from media associated with passé academic work in favor of the more graphic, reductionist, and energetic media of line. In the 1930s, linear draftsmanship, like cardboard and balsawood models (instead of plaster), marked something of a rite of passage into modernism. At the time, watercolor and wash must have seemed to him media for presentation and display, whereas he sought a draftsmanship of exploration. They were also media of pomp and privilege, redolent of the imagery of hidebound academism on the one hand, and of the frivolous "moderne" on the other. As a modernist, his early work was almost wholly devoted to skimpy Depression projects, as the first Garland volume demonstrates. It was a world that emphasized "community," and the mon-

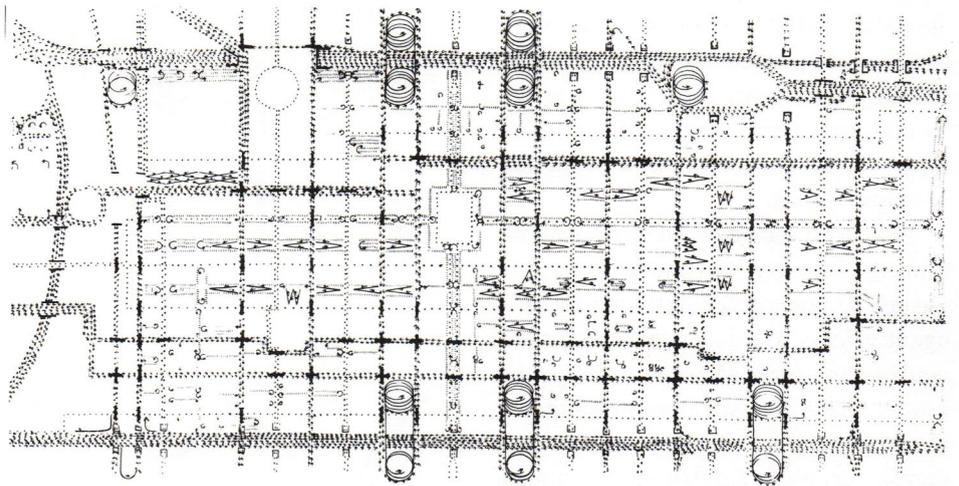


Figure 6. Traffic study for midtown Philadelphia; Louis I. Kahn, 1952–53. (From *Complete Works*.)

uments appropriate to complete community. (Indeed, no architect of his generation and stature had less contact with commercial commissions; nor was he ever destined to have much.) When he was eventually able to build the institutional and monumental buildings that are at the center of his achievement, his Beaux-Arts background would be filtered through the back-to-basics conditioning of the New Deal projects and their wartime aftermath, reinforced by his deepening sense of the origins of things whence the most profound experiences and symbolism derive. So grubby graphite rather than nuanced wash was appropriate to the liberal, idealistic bare-bones realm in which he entered the profession.

His abstemious sensibility must also have been wary of the splendor of color in academic watercolor. His drawings in color are mostly in color pencil, many in

a sketchy manner, seeming more notational in character than colored for gorgeous effect. Oil pastel provides the boldest of his drawings in color, with thick line set against impasto planes of color. Some are surprisingly brilliant. (The Garland volumes have no color plates, but Ronner and Jhaveri provide a fairly generous sampling.) It is astonishing to see (but not in either of these volumes) the intense color of some of his travel sketches from his 1951 trip to the Mediterranean. A magenta and light blue Acropolis with a pink and magenta Parthenon; a detail of the Parthenon columns in aqua and orange with a stripe of magenta; the Siena Piazza in blood red and orange.<sup>1</sup> He does not seek "expressionistic" color, however, but explores one of the profound themes of his career: the effects of light and environment on materials, stimulated by Mediterranean luminosity. To represent his own preferences for earthy materials in his drawings, charcoal and graphite sufficed, for the most part, as stand-ins. Not that he was uninterested in color, but his palette of materials seems to have been haunted by the frugalities of the Depression projects, subtly reinforced perhaps by the colors (as well as the simple, massive shapes) of the New Brutalist

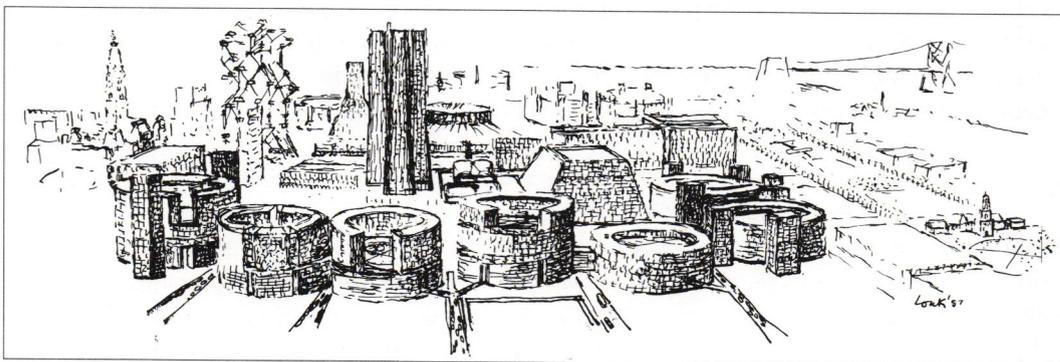


Figure 7. Perspective sketch, Civic Forum, Philadelphia; Louis I. Kahn, 1957. (From *Complete Works*.)

and Minimalist movements that were current as he entered into his professional maturity. Still more significant was his own interior bent: always the intrinsic, never the extrinsic, which the seduction of color implied.

His earthy range of materials can be bluntly assertive, but the bluntness is pushed to unexpected extremes and elegant effects. Consider the black slate walls of the Bryn Mawr dormitory, the pewter cast to the stainless sheathing of the Yale Gallery of British Art, the marble striations interrupting common brick at Dacca, patinaed concrete against weathered teak at the Salk Institute, or the glorious color shifts that occur with changes of light on the polished gray-concrete surfaces of the Kimbell Museum's vaulting. His palette of colors and textures allows the materials to remain prosaically what they are; but it is also a remarkably evanescent palette that changes in light, shifting our perceptions from the mundane actuality of the material at one moment to its transcendence as splendor at another. Charcoal is a medium that produces the same sort of change.

There is one exception, however, to Kahn's wariness with respect to Beaux-Arts watercolor and wash rendering. Meyers observes that Kahn always preferred that his models (in mostly unadorned cardboard and wood) be photographed with even, rather than contrasting, illumination. The resulting images appear as though abstracted in the gray tonalities of monochromatic wash; but they also possess a melding softness of effect and tonality that is sympathetic to Kahn's preference for charcoal.

When did charcoal become so prominent as the medium for Kahn's drawings that he used it for a significant proportion of them? It seems to have occurred almost spontaneously during the design of

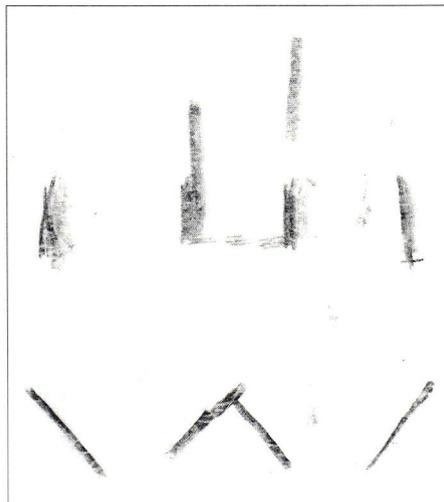


Figure 8. Plan for scientist's study, Salk Institute for Biological Studies, La Jolla; Louis I. Kahn, c. 1962. (Courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)

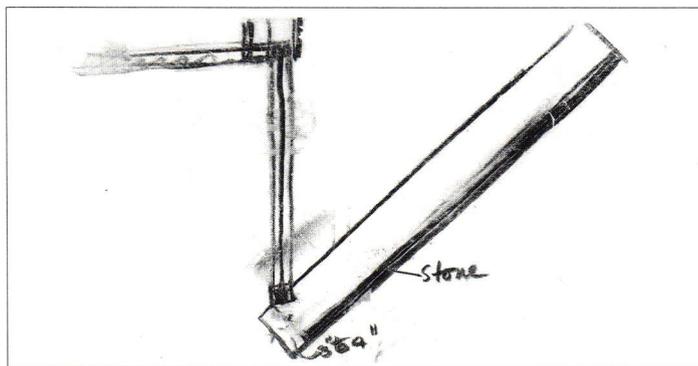


Figure 9. Preliminary window plan for scientist's study Salk Institute for Biological Studies, La Jolla; Louis I. Kahn, c. 1962. (Courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)

the Salk Institute. Notations of medium in the Garland catalogue show that approximately a third of the Salk Institute drawings are in charcoal. In previous projects charcoal was rather the occasional interlude from graphite. After, charcoal figures much more importantly.

Not that Kahn ever eliminated pencil; nor does charcoal predominate in the total number of drawings from the design of the Salk Institute onward. Indeed, the drawings for many post-Salk projects are almost wholly in pencil: for Luanda, for example (if my count is correct), two charcoal drawings among 28; for Mikveh Synagogue, it is five of 70; for the Korman house, one of 47. But extending this random sample: for Kimbell, char-

coal also accounts for more than a third of the drawings; for the Fort Wayne Fine Arts Center, the Roosevelt Memorial, and for Dacca, roughly half; for the Kansas City skyscraper and Stern projects, a little less; for Beth El Synagogue, fully two-thirds; for the Abbasabad Redevelopment in Iran, almost all. The computer could extend the tally with more precision. Then, too, in reproduction especially, a quick look at many of the graphite drawings makes them out to be charcoal.

So at the very least, from statistical evidence alone, charcoal was clearly the medium that grew with his career. But why from the Salk Institute commission onward? One suspects that it was the drawing equivalent for the grand watercolor and wash renderings of academicism. For Kahn charcoal provided an equivalent richness of effect, subtlety of range and grandeur of handling, while also retaining a sense of the materiality of building. Moreover, as a designer, rather than a delineator, charcoal (or his charcoal mode in graphite) would also have attracted Kahn in lieu of watercolor and wash because the most magnificent drawings emerged so directly from the sketchy gropings in which the creative act first

manifests itself. Salk Institute especially may have summoned forth Kahn's natural affinity for charcoal because of the very splendor of the conception: the array of clusters of monumental geometry across an arcadian site of cliff and sea, which was precisely the kind of theme for which the academic delineator would have provided the most lavish renderings in watercolor and wash. Kahn instinctively rose to the occasion, as we have seen, by providing elevations in *his* medium.

True enough it seems; but unfortunately for a tidy explanation, there are two complications. To begin, the most ambitious perspectives for the Salk Institute appear as very tight pencil

sketches—not in charcoal, nor in the charcoal mode of graphite. Since, however, such tightness of drawing is very rare in subsequent projects, could it be that Kahn himself was dissatisfied with results which only the daunting grandeur of the commission may have initially encouraged him to use?

Then too, although wonderful perspectives in charcoal (or in his charcoal manner) appear among his drawings subsequent to the Salk commission, they are few. (In the entire volume devoted to the government complex at Dacca, for example—922 drawings in all—only two can be called perspectives, and these only sketchily executed without any pretension to grand effect.) After all, the busy designer has little time for such drawings. The bulk of Kahn's charcoal drawings focus on details and are analytical in character. Still, to have used charcoal for so many of these, where pencil would have seemed the natural medium for the more intricate decisions in design, simply proves how attracted Kahn was to the clumsier, messier alternative.

A sequence of charcoal drawings that wrestle with the scientists' study areas at the Salk Institute reveals his feeling for the medium. Some are calligraphic

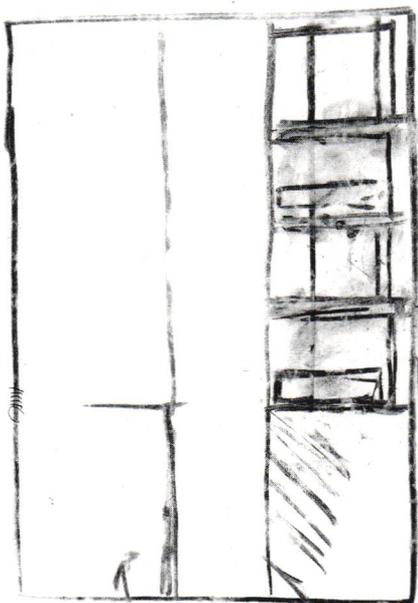


Figure 10. Elevation sketch for scientists' studies. Salk Institute for Biological Studies, La Jolla; Louis I. Kahn, c. 1962. (Courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)

(figure 8), and one feels that the attraction of charcoal for Kahn is partly in the boldness of the mark. The mark itself accords with thoughts of monumentality. Some are violently physical in their suggestion of the collision, conjunction, and opposition of parts, as in the diagonal thrust of a masonry slab out from the defining plane of the building wall to provide a sheltering aperture for a window set at a 45-degree angle to it (figure 9). Some are more meditative in quality, concerned with broad planes of sunlit wall protecting the stacked cubicles of the studies, which his finger has scumbled into shadow (figure 10). A stick figure (or so it seems, since it is minimal even as a rudimentary sign) passes the giant blank rectangles. In other drawings in the series, they inhabit the shadow. They populate Kahn's elevations as shorthand evidences of life and continuous reminders of scale. For all of these expressive possibilities, the charcoal mode not only provided a particularly suitable medium, but doubtless assisted him in locating the effects he sought.

Yet another kind of drawing—perhaps most numerous in these volumes—is also natural to his charcoal mode. These are the innumerable studies in site plan, building plan and elevation for the combinations of basic geometrical shapes that essentially compose his mature buildings. Consider two preliminary plans for the Fort Wayne Arts Complex (figures 11 and 12). The geometry is essentially static. Monumental in its stasis, it marks the place, bounds the room, asserts its position in a community of spaces, exists as icons of the function and light it makes. Charcoal makes decisive the bounds of squares, circles, triangles in a most physical way, as they combine to make the building. But their placement and alignment can be adjustment in a swipe or a blur, and the very act of change recorded in its pentimenti. A core can be staked out in dense blackness, while peripheral exploration occurs in tenuous sketches. Boundaries can be smudged into openings. Even in plan,

Kahn can play with lighted and shadowed space.

Nothing comes easily in these designs. Charcoal holds onto the process. It is the essentiality of both medium and geometry that makes these drawings by Kahn so powerfully moving. One thinks of Le Corbusier returning in imagination to the Acropolis to proclaim, "There are no symbols attached to these forms: they provoke definite sensations; there is no need of a key in order to understand them." In their cumulative impact Kahn's drawings are like Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavicord*: a kind of catechism of what is most essentially "architecture," and the infinitude of possibilities, variations, and expressions possible from contact with what is most starkly innate.

The medium plays no small role in the impact and import of these drawings. We may view his affinity for charcoal as an emanation of his meditative, poetic temperament. Or as an extension of his dual beginnings between the stringencies of his early New Deal experience and the splendors promised in his academic training. Or, for one who loved ruins, we could understand it in a more existential sense. Ruins have been rendered in all media. But how more appropriately than in charcoal? "Dust to dust; ashes to ashes." From dust, the glory of being; to dust returning.

Both works under review are obviously fundamental for understanding

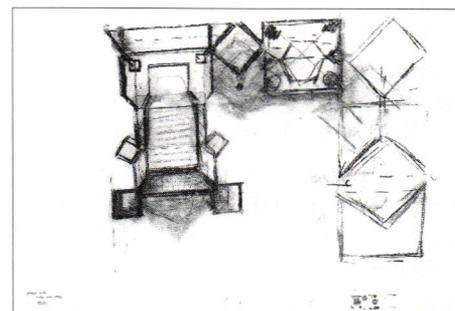


Figure 11. Site plan sketch, Fine Arts Center, Fort Wayne; Louis I. Kahn, c. 1963. (Courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)

Kahn's architecture. The Garland volumes provide access to the most important portion of the holdings in the Kahn Archive at the University of Pennsylvania: those 6,363 drawings (from a total of roughly 30,000) that are, or are presumed to be, by Kahn himself. The first edition of Ronner and Jhaveri's volume (1977, with Alessandro Vasella as a third author) proved so useful that it has called forth a second, substantially enlarged, with the addition of 479 new images, for a total of 1,700. This survey is particularly valuable because its focus is not on photographs of completed buildings or on final presentation materials for what went unbuilt, but on key drawings and photographs of models that illustrate the design concepts for each project and the principal stages or alternatives in the process of design. Hence Ronner and Jhaveri's book is actually a compact chronological guide to Kahn's designs for buildings rather than of the buildings themselves.

Like other Garland publications of distinguished architectural archives, these seven volumes reproduce the arrangement of the collection as determined by the archivists. Problematic attributions to projects and the order of the drawings within projects have been substantially resolved through consultations from those who worked most closely with Kahn. Catalogue entries and translations of hard-to-read remarks on the drawings occur in two lists at the front of each of the volumes preceding that portion of the reproductions. In addition to Meyers's prefatory recollections on Kahn as a draftsman, the volumes contain an introduction by Vincent Scully and remarks on the organization of the Archive by its curator, Julia Moore Converse. Scully's essay is expectedly insightful and passionate on aspects of Kahn's design, although making little effort to address issues specifically raised by the collected drawings. As illuminating as Meyers's remarks are, one could also wish for a fuller discussion of the nature of the drawings. Had such essays been provided for each of the distinguished

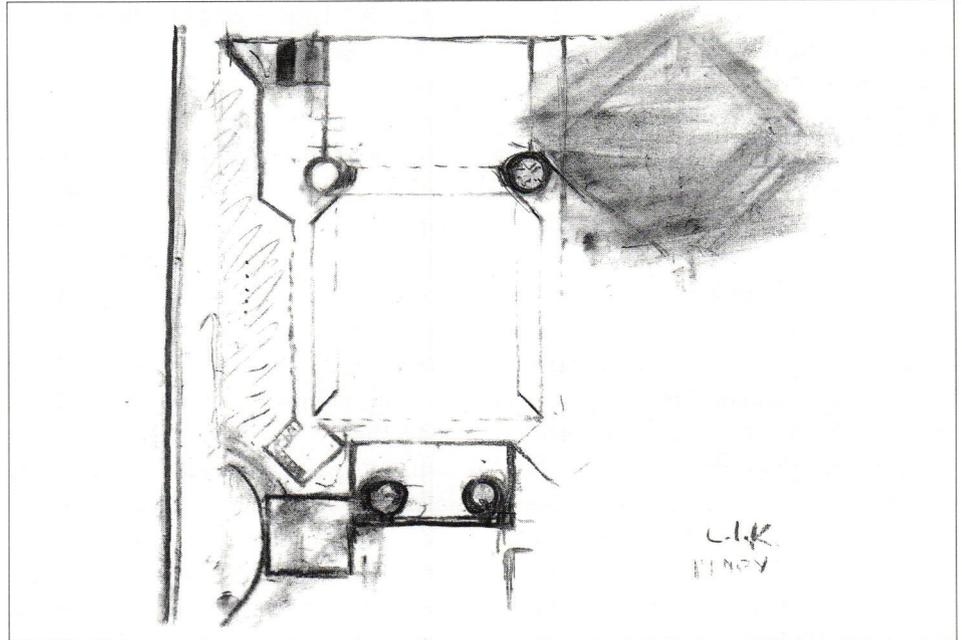


Figure 12. Site plan sketch, Fine Arts Center, Fort Wayne; Louis I. Kahn, c. 1963. (Courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)

collections published by Garland, their cumulative commentary would, by now, present considerable insight into the nature and varieties of architectural draftsmanship.

The Ronner and Jhaveri venture requires more extensive comment. It stemmed from an exhibition and catalogue in 1969 of Kahn's work rather awkwardly titled *Arbeitsprozesse* (Work processes), a title Kahn did not care for, at the Swiss Institute of Technology in Zurich. Kahn himself became interested in the catalogue, which was soon out-of-print, and agreed to cooperate in preparing a comparable, but more extensive publication derived from a thorough perusal of all the drawings in his office. So the initial selection has the additional interest of Kahn's personal intervention, shortly before his unexpected death, when no one foresaw it would turn out to be the "Complete Works."

To present the maximum number of images in a relatively compact format, the authors adopted a version of the horizontal page format of Le Corbusier's *Oeuvre complète* (which has inspired so many imitations for the oeuvre of other architects)—but with its pages roughly

half again as long, and with images set sideways on the page. The result is an elongated steno pad in which the images recede from the user across the width of a full-scale desk. One stands to use it, like those virtuoso piano performers who stand while playing; or, better, one takes it to a high-trestled drawing board, which may have been the use its compilers had in mind. In the narrow margin beside the run of images the authors provide identification and minimal additional comment mostly restricted to Kahn's remarks, either as he made them during the culling process, or from his publications. The authors intended that the drawings plus Kahn's observations would pretty much speak for themselves. For the second edition (which took advantage of the additional drawings and information that the Archive afforded), the margins are slightly wider to accommodate the insertion of some general, and sensible, comment from the authors, which only slightly diminishes their determination to stand in the background. The new edition substantially corrects, elaborates, and reorders the chronology of works, while adding identifying images for each item. It adjusts minor errors in text and

extends the chronological list of bibliography up to 1987 (with relevant references to the bibliography keyed to each project). It shifts the order of a number of the projects in the body of the book in accord with the rearranged chronology. Page layouts are substantially altered to accommodate the new images, mostly by eliminating white space, but without a crowded feeling—and in the process incredibly cutting 455 pages to 435.

Because the projects overlap, the authors have a degree of freedom in their ordering. They explain in their preface how they used this chronological overlap as a lever to juxtapose design themes that relate to one another. (At least I *think* that is what is meant in a none-too-clear statement in their preface.) They break with chronology for the Philadelphia projects, placing those in the long sequence from 1937 through 1962 at the head of the parade, with the late Bicentennial projects for the Mall and Exposition of 1971–74 as the finale. So the chronology is preceeded and concluded by a homage to Kahn's native city. All listings in the chronology are not illustrated. Some were too minor or too truncated to merit illustration. Kahn preferred that some with which he was dissatisfied be relegated to oblivion. The authors respected his wishes; so their volume also represents the work by which Kahn wished to be remembered.

In many ways these volumes complement one another. Ronner and Jhaveri ignore all the early work done during the New Deal–World War II period when Kahn collaborated with other architects, before the establishment of his own office around 1947 (except for the Philadelphia projects, plus the Ahavath Israel Synagogue of 1935–37 and the Oser house of 1939–43, which they assign to Kahn). The first Garland volume shows these missing drawings (but not some of the Philadelphia projects because they are not in the Archive). Ronner and Jhaveri include a generous sprinkling of drawings in color, which Garland does not. Where no drawings ascribed to Kahn appear to

have survived on a given project, Garland omits it—the most notable gap of this sort being the Trenton Bath House (although Kahn's unbuilt proposal for the accompanying Center is copiously covered). Such omissions are rare in Garland, but the even-handed coverage of projects in Ronner and Jhaveri must, in Garland, bow to the happenstance that it was Kahn's pencil or stick of charcoal that made the mark. Most of the projects in Garland lack the definitive presentation drawings which are essential if they are to be understood. They appear in Ronner and Jhaveri.

One hovers over Ronner and Jhaveri's work for the large picture and the quick comparison. Then (if one is very wealthy, or lucky enough to have access to a well-heeled institutional library) one burrows into the Garland volumes to peer into the shadow and turmoil of the act of creation, at possibilities used and others expended.

#### NOTES

1. See, for example, *The Travel Sketches of Louis I. Kahn* (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1978), the catalog of an exhibition held in 1978–79, curated by Frank H. Goodyear, Jr., with an introduction by Vincent Scully.

THE LOUIS I. KAHN ARCHIVE: PERSONAL DRAWINGS: THE COMPLETELY ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE OF THE DRAWINGS IN THE LOUIS I. KAHN COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA AND PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION, Alexander Tzonis, general editor, introductions by Vincent Scully, Julia Moore Converse, and Marshall D. Meyers, Garland Architectural Archives, 1987, 7 vols., 3,383 pp., illus., \$1,790 set; volumes are also available separately and are individually priced.

LOUIS I. KAHN: COMPLETE WORKS 1935–1974, Heinz Ronner and Sharad Jhaveri, Birkhäuser (Germany and the United States), 1987 (substantially revised and enlarged from the first edition, 1977), 437 pp., illus., \$229.00.

Alan J. Plattus

## Kahn and the Order of the City

Both the promise and limitations of Louis Kahn's idea of the city are summarized in two extraordinary sketches of 1971, which have been called: "The Room" and "The City." These poetic, but highly tendentious, emblems—emblematic insofar as they combine text and image—have been reproduced many times. They are, after all, appealing summaries of Kahn's thought in general, and Kahn himself used their key phrases over and over, like a theoretical mantra. "The Room" and "The City" are put to the test, as is Kahn's entire way of thinking and designing, in the case of the modern city.

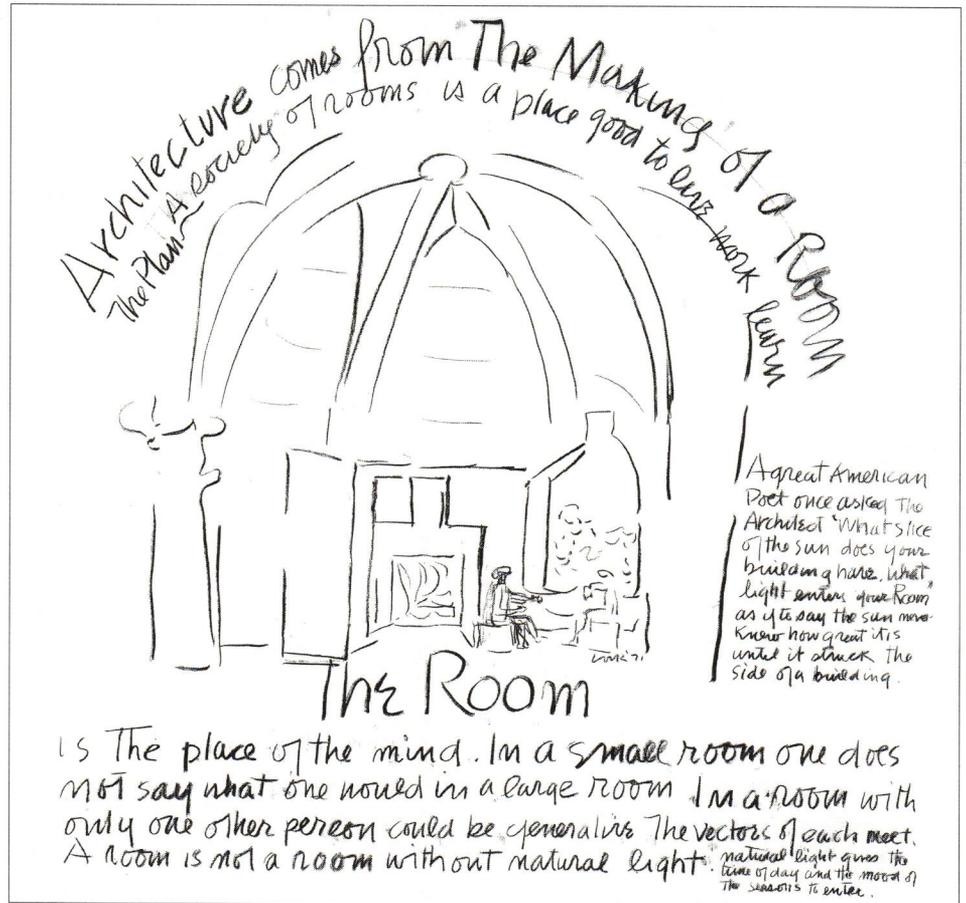
The sketches exemplify Kahn's persistent, indeed obsessive, quest for an *architectural order*. This quest, although personal, was fundamentally in the mainstream of the Western tradition of architectural theory since the Renaissance. In fact, it sought to recuperate that tradition for modern architecture—or, perhaps more directly, and desperately, to recuperate modern architecture for that tradition. In either case, Kahn, like so many architectural philosophers before him, situated the tasks of architecture along a sort of "chain of being," which imposed a continuously articulated system of order linking microcosm and macrocosm in all their various manifestations.

With respect to architecture, the microcosm for Kahn, as he so often reminds us in his built works as well as in his oracular pronouncements, was the *room*. Each well-wrought room, shaped about some fundamental human activity, was like a single strand of genetic material, containing within it a comprehensive and replicable order, linking space, function, and structure in an indissoluble and irreducible architectural proposition. Such a

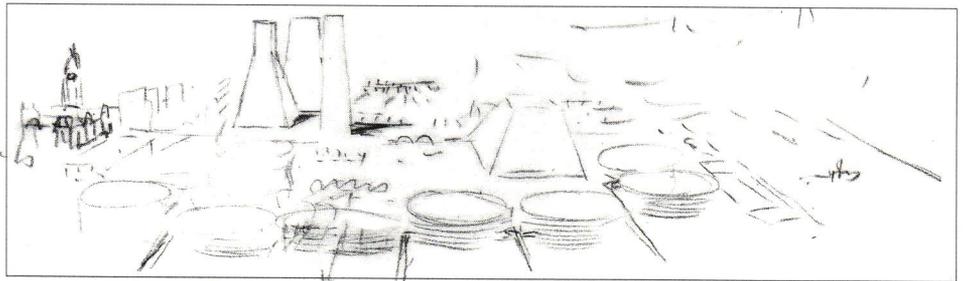
basic unit, resynthesized—not to say reinvented—for each new task, could then be repeated, or combined with other units, to build up more complex organisms, microcosmic in their own right: the “institutions of man.” Finally, the architectural macrocosm, the city, would be “the place of assembled institutions,” as Kahn’s caption to his acropoloid evocation of both ancient Athens and Kahnian Philadelphia suggests.

Kahn remains essentially true to this vision of the city as a large-scale manifestation of a fundamentally simple notion of a strong and pervasive architectural order, from his early studies of Philadelphia’s civic center to his late sketches for the celebration of the Bicentennial in his native city. However far his search for an integrated architectural order at the level of the individual building may have taken him from the schizophrenia of radical modernism, his urban thought never escaped the basically additive logic and functionalist rationale of modernist urbanism. That is not to deny the historical significance of his use, which was sometimes quite literal no matter how much he may have denied it, of preindustrial urban images of enormous power and consequence, from the Acropolis to Hadrian’s Villa and the Forum Romanum, to San Gimignano and Siena, and that icon of postmodernity, Piranesi’s Campo Marzio. We should remember, however, that Le Corbusier sketched many of the same images in his own travel notebooks, and while the style of visual appropriation is manifestly dissimilar, the style of thought that could rationalize the availability of traditional urban form in the contemporary city is really quite similar. That is to say that for better or for worse, urbanistically Kahn stands on the same side of a crucial epistemic divide with Le Corbusier, while both Leon Krier and Rem Koolhaas stand on the other side.

This is easy enough to see in Kahn’s earliest urban projects. His first of many projects for the redevelopment of central Philadelphia, undertaken in the early



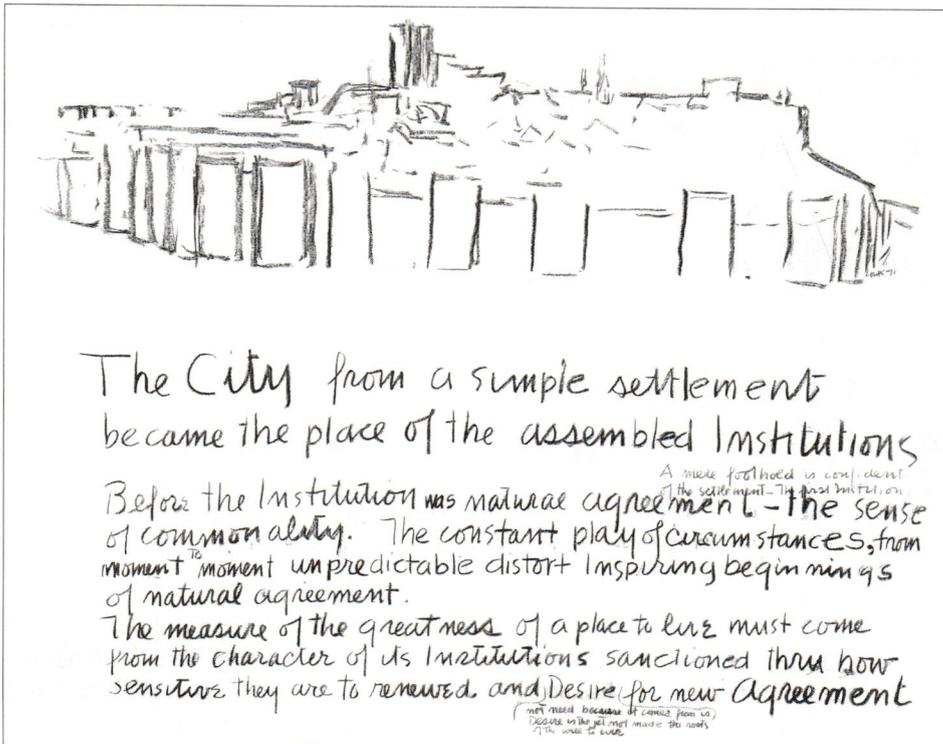
*The Room*, drawing by Louis I. Kahn, 1971. (Courtesy of Philadelphia Museum of Art.)



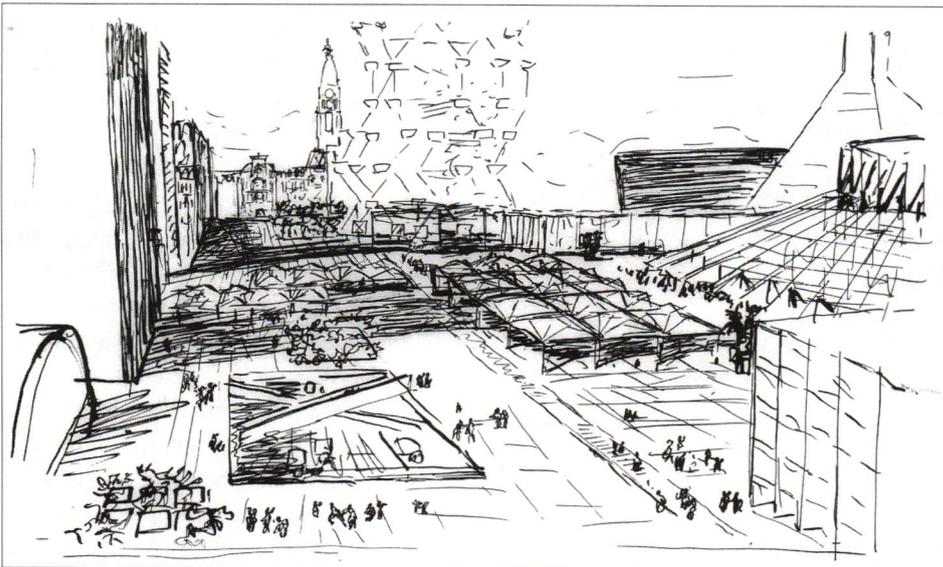
Perspective sketch with City Hall to the left, Civic Forum, Philadelphia; Louis I. Kahn, 1956–57. (Courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)

1930s by a team of unemployed young architects led by Kahn, is, in both form and ideology, orthodox CIAM stuff. Indeed, its graphics as well as its methodology identify its Corbusian sources: it is nothing less than a Voisin plan for Philadelphia. While there is no doubt that Kahn’s later schemes for Philadelphia are far more sophisticated, thoughtful, and original, it is not at all clear that they have evolved ideologically. One must remember, with some sympathy and ap-

preciation, Kahn’s urbanistic roots, not only in modernist polemics, but in Depression and New Deal rhetoric and monumentality, which was already directed, in the prewar years, not merely toward reform, but toward radical reconstruction. It is one of the ironies of architectural history that many of the most talented young American architects were fired by the idealism of liberal urbanism and regionalism, and inspired by the reduced urban vocabulary of Euro-



The City, drawing by Louis I. Kahn, 1971. (Courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Arts.)



Perspective sketch, view towards City Hall, Civic Forum, Philadelphia; Louis I. Kahn, 1956-57. (Courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)

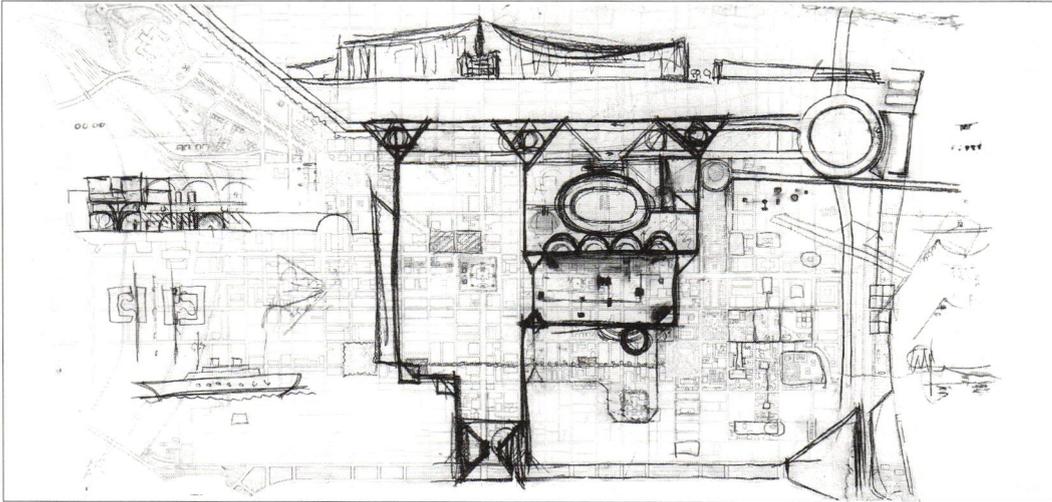
pean modernism which Kahn, like many others struggled to enrich.

In this aspect of his development, one can clearly see Kahn's affiliation with the young architectural turks of Team Ten, in which context he might otherwise seem out of place. Like Kahn, they could not

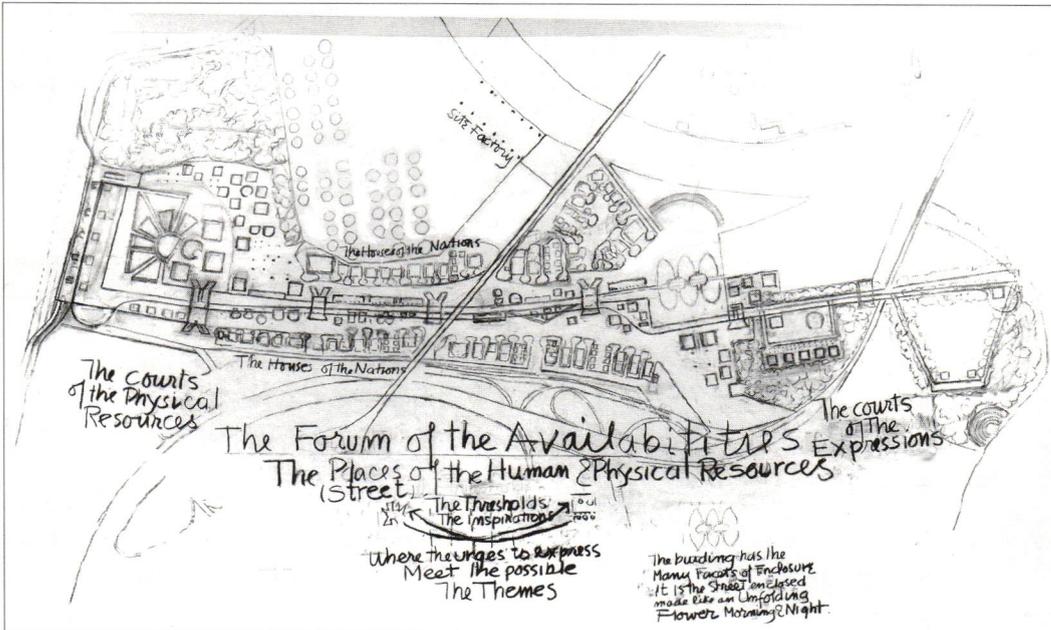
bring themselves to break with the heroic period of modern architecture, no matter how much they came to perceive its limitations, particularly as applied to the tasks of urbanism. Indeed, after the war it was, if anything, more difficult to disassociate architectural modernism from

liberal or socialist antifascism and urban progressivism in efforts to reconstruct European cities and "renew" American cities. (The sad story of Kahn's involvement with urban renewal in New Haven might be a parable of this condition.) And yet there was, among the more thoughtful younger architects and critics, a clearly felt need to expand and refine both the formal language and the methodology inherited from the founders of CIAM, and embodied in the Athens Charter. Most of the Team Ten urban experiments can be understood in this context, including Alison and Peter Smithson's "cluster city" diagrams, Aldo Van Eyck's "city-as-a-tree" idea, Jacob Bakema and Ralph Erskine's regionalist transformations, Georges Candilis, Shadrach Woods, and Alexis Josic's explorations in Toulouse-le-Mirail and Berlin Free University, and Kahn's postwar plans for Center City Philadelphia (prominently featured in the *Team Ten Primer*). None of the experiments, including Kahn's, fully broke with the urban functionalism of the Athens Charter, nor did they seriously challenge the idea of a "new" urban order built up essentially from scratch in a logical and systematic fashion, to replace, or at least overlay, the (dis)order of the existing city.

The work undertaken by Kahn as consultant architect for the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (1946-52) and for the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority (1951-54), however much it may stand as a coherent body of work within Kahn's own oeuvre, shares many habits of thought and design with the most "advanced" urbanism of its time, including the propensity to monumentalize the urban infrastructure and to transform functional categories through the application of metaphors, such as Kahn's hopeful description of traffic systems as rivers, canals, and harbors. Kahn's predilection for an increasingly monumental manifestation of a comprehensive architectural order and his poetic turn of mind and phrase exaggerated these characteristics. This work culminates with Kahn's



Site plan, Market Street East, Philadelphia; Louis I. Kahn, 1960–62. (Courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)



Site plan sketch, Bicentennial Exposition, Philadelphia; Louis I. Kahn, 1971–73. (Courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)

“Civic Forum” project of 1956–57 and the Market Street East project of 1961–62, by which time Kahn’s emergent theory of “Form and Design,” as applied to larger groupings of institutional buildings (design for the Richards Medical Research Buildings began in 1957 and the Salk Institute in 1959), conspires with his urban analyses to produce that impressive vision of Philadelphia as Carcassonne and Campo Marzio. The power of the image, however, ultimately

fails to integrate or redeem what remains—true to the theory—a fundamentally additive assembly of monumental institutional and infrastructural forms. These forms, as much as they tap the strength of urban tradition, dwarf, where they do not obliterate, the existing city (especially its nonmonumental fabric), anticipating Archigram, Metabolism, and Superstudio rather than Aldo Rossi.

Such a generalization does not apply to projects at the mid-scale of institu-

tional groups and campuses such as the Salk Institute. It is here that Kahn produces his most impressive and original urbanism. Here the influence of a strong urban model and the desire for a comprehensive spatial and functional order derived from a basic intuition of the almost Platonic *idea* of an institution work to strengthen the projects and reground them in a tradition suppressed by the diagrammatic utilitarian functionalism and antimonumentalism of most modernist institutional planning. Kahn does not, of course, stand alone here, and one must recall not only his Beaux-Arts education, but also Le Corbusier’s fascination with monastic architecture and his Mundaneum project, for which he drew the fire of the radical functionalists of the architectural left. Indeed, one imagines that more than one or two modern architects clung to their copies of Gromort’s *Grandes Ensembles* folio, which included plans of the Acropolis, the Forum Romanum, Siena, the Alhambra, Marly, Piranesi’s Campo Marzio, and Hadrian’s Villa. So dear to Kahn and so crucial to the achievement of the Salk site plan, Hadrian’s Villa reminds us of a theme central to traditional architectural theory, a theme that is explicitly revived

in Kahn’s work and that has become a crucial and problematic plank in the postmodernist urban platform across the ideological spectrum from Leon Krier to Peter Eisenman. This theme, of “the building as microcosmic city,” is articulated in Kahn’s work not only at the obvious level of picturesque plan and volumetric imagery, but more importantly at the level of analysis and *parti*, or, if one prefers, Form and Order. At that level, an idealized programmatic unit is repeated,

and grouped with other units according to the “order” of the institution. That logical grouping is made, by an act of considerable architectural will, to produce the monumental “public” spaces and “urban” experience associated with Kahn’s great institutional projects. What it will not produce is a genuinely urban order. For the task itself, as well as the methodology, is fundamentally misguided at the level of any real city.

It was the next generation of architectural and urban theorists, in many cases directly influenced by Kahn, who finally broke the functionalist straitjacket, in the process liberating not only urbanism but architecture as well. Although their agendas may differ, Aldo Rossi, Robert Venturi, Colin Rowe, and Rem Koolhaas all begin with a radical critique of functionalism as applied to the city, and with a rigorous account of the urban phenomenon in all its variety. Rather than conceiving of the city in terms of some idealized order, each in his own way describes it in terms of the historical processes that create and transform its multiple orders. The urban spaces and images that Kahn admired most were not created as manifestations of a comprehensive order. Even Hadrian’s Villa, as the product of an individual imagination, was meant to simulate the eclectic heterogeneity of the Empire. (It took a Charles Moore to see, with an architect’s eye, that aspect of the great villa.) Rather they owe their richness as *urbanism*—as opposed now to *architecture*—to their simultaneous engagement of multiple, often incommensurable, orders, as well as random events. They reflect the superimposition of a founding or reforming plan, later additions and deletions, patterns of settlement and demographic growth, patterns of economic development, transportation and infrastructural systems, and so on. Even at the level of an individual building, the demands of functional, structural, and spatial orders can rarely be made to align as Kahn desired, but at least one might imagine that alignment, and its expression, to be a

desirable goal in some cases. Kahn sought, however, what Louis Sullivan had described as a demonstration without exceptions: a comprehensive and pervasive order that would work its way up from the smallest kernel of human spatial activity to the largest realm of human possibility.

It seems clear now from what he said and wrote, as well as what he built, that Kahn saw the city as a work of architecture. In Manfredo Tafuri’s terms, this was yet another desperate attempt to ward off the anguish induced by the city as the site of modernity. If we see the promise of Kahn’s method in the enclaves of order made possible in modern culture by the protective enclosure of the museum, the research institution, and the university, we also see its failure to encompass the radical difference of modern urban society. It seems somehow appropriate that Kahn’s last urban project would be a design for the Bicentennial Exposition in Philadelphia, in the great tradition of the Chicago “White City” of 1893, the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876, or the New World’s Fair of 1939. However suggestive the plan, like a small open-air museum of Kahn’s architectural and urban strategies, and the language used to describe it—“The Forum of the Availabilities”—it remains, like its predecessors, a poignant attempt to create an architectural image of a harmonious and unified urban, national, even international order, that is already belied by the city just outside its gates.

Swati Chattopadhyay

## Kahn Libraries/ Bibliotecas

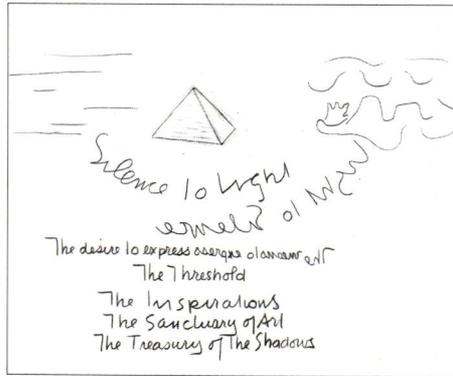
XAVIER COSTA, EDITOR

*Kahn Libraries/Bibliotecas* is a bilingual collection (English and Spanish) of four essays on Louis Kahn commemorating the first visit of an exhibition of Kahn’s work to Spain. The essays reprinted here include an introduction by Vincent Scully, articles by Joseph Burton and Peter Kohane, and the last article, by the architect himself. So much of what has been written about Kahn in the past few decades is repetitious that these essays tend to add weight without being illuminating. This collection does not push boundaries, but together the essays raise some interesting issues about Kahn’s architecture. The title of the book is misleading, however, as only one essay is explicitly concerned with libraries while the others reflect on more general questions of method in Kahn’s architecture.

At the very outset of his essay, Vincent Scully establishes his agenda—to refute Philip Johnson’s suggestion that Kahn would be considered a minor figure in the history of 20th-century architecture (both during Kahn’s lifetime and after his death, Scully had actively promoted Kahn). In eloquent prose, Scully reviews Kahn’s life history, development, and contributions, but he does not clearly identify the main reasons Kahn should be considered a major figure. He concludes by comparing Kahn to contemporary architects: “One or two of [the more recent architects] have developed qualities of a kind Kahn did not possess. None, however, builds with quite such marvelous structural connections or such rigorously classical assemblage. None has come close to Kahn’s physical power. If God is in the details as Mies van der Rohe once claimed, *Jehovah in His silence is there in Kahn’s*. It is hard to see him as a minor figure. He is much more resonant

with awe and terror than any of those who sit on Olympus now.”

This statement does justice neither to Kahn's contributions nor to Scully's critical ability as a historian. Scully seems defensive, resorting to his own authority as a premier critic and connoisseur, to proclaim Kahn as one of the greatest architects of the 20th century. It is not *just* the structural connections, classical assemblage, or the “physical power” (whatever that means) that makes Kahn stand above the rest. Scully cites more critical reasons that make Kahn's contribution so priceless, but does not emphasize the points enough. They are, first, Kahn's attempt to “solve” the problems of “function” so dear to the modernists by taking a conceptual strategy that went far beyond their rational methods; and, second, his liberation of historical precedents from the modernist stranglehold. Of the 20th-century architects, Kahn was the first to acknowledge the cultural basis of aesthetics, and sought from history a stronger conceptual foundation for his design, often transcending the “program.” He went down his own memory lane looking for elements and relationships that have endured, hoping to find those that touch the chords of the social memory of humanity. This ability to conceptualize a problem in a mold radically different from contemporary conventions was perhaps Kahn's



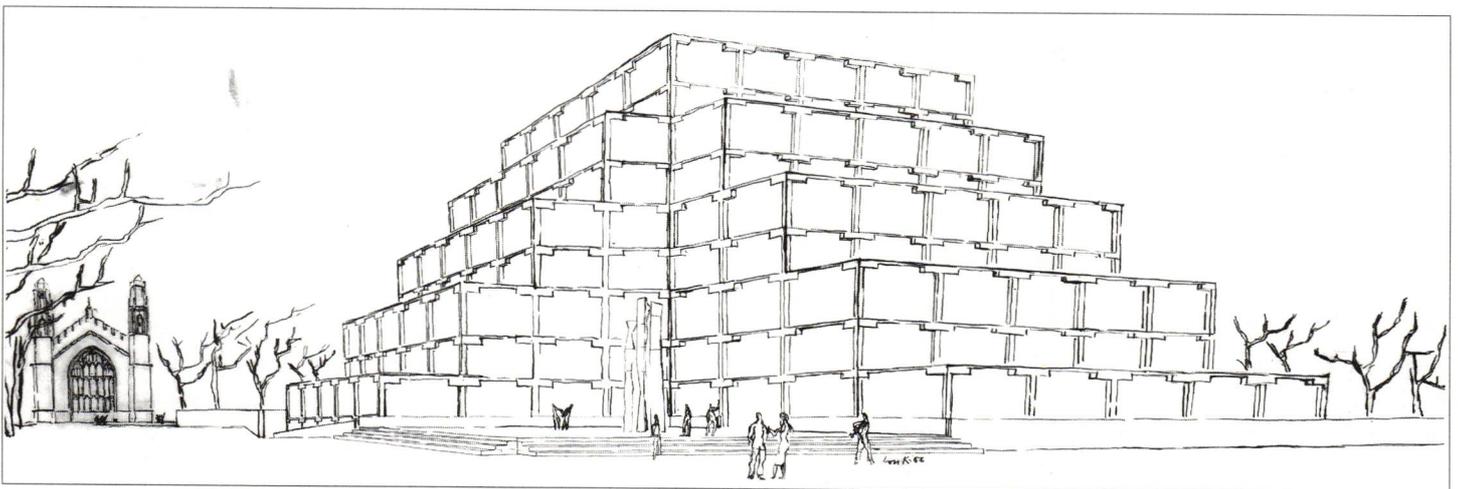
*Silence and Light*, sketch by Louis I. Kahn, c. 1970–74. (From *Kahn Libraries/Bibliotecas*; courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)

greatest contribution. With this he opened the doors of history for the next generation of architects who took the liberty to interpret and synthesize the historical lessons differently than Kahn did.

Burton and Kohane both focus on this issue of method—Kahn's strategies to seek the essence of an institution that he called Form, and the means by which this Form would be expressed in the Design. Scully emphasizes the Roman influence in Kahn's architecture while alluding to his Egyptian experience, but Burton offers evidence to suggest that while trying to communicate the essence of an institution, Kahn was inspired by ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, particularly pyramid texts that confirmed his belief in a Platonic ideal of beauty. According to Burton, Kahn was searching for means to

communicate a timeless language for fulfilling the psychic needs of contemporary 20th-century society, thereby exploring the symbolic and associational potential in architecture. Kahn found in the ancient symbol of light, expressed as a pyramidal hieroglyph, the ideal way of “spelling out” the manifestation of form in light, which accounts for the recurrence of the pyramid shape in his architecture, drawings, and murals. Also revealing is the derivation of the “composite order”—a segmental brick arch with a concrete tie beam—introduced in the Indian Institute of Management (Ahmedabad), from the hieroglyph representing heaven. In fact Burton informs us that Kahn literally tried to create some new hieroglyphics in his design of emblems for the Dupont-Columbia Award. Although Burton does not say so, his analysis challenges Scully's notion that association and symbolism were “foreign territory” to Kahn in spite of the symbolic nature of his architecture. It appears that Kahn was simply looking for a more deep-seated nature of these symbols—qualities that were more timeless than the postmodern social comment produced by architects like Robert Venturi.

Like Burton, Kohane explores the process through which Kahn rejected the functionalist rationale and embraced a more empathic approach in library design that emphasized the expression of fun-



Perspective drawing, Washington University Library Competition, St. Louis; Louis I. Kahn, 1956. (From *Kahn Libraries/Bibliotecas*; courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)



Perspective sketch, reading area, Phillips Exeter Academy Library; Louis I. Kahn, 1965–1972. (From *Kahn Libraries/Bibliotecas*; courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)

damental human aspirations. Kohane conducts an excellent analysis of Kahn's libraries, tracing Kahn's maturation from the beginnings in the competition design for the library of Washington University to the crystallization of his thoughts in the Phillips Exeter Academy library. He integrates formal analysis with Kahn's social assumptions to clarify several relationships fundamental to understanding Kahn's works—between the idea of Form and Design, activity, light and structure, and the place of the individual in community in the articulation of private and public domains. Particularly interesting is the influence of Russell Sturgis's description of the monastic libraries of the early Christian era, which illustrated the profound relationship between light, views, and adjacency of books in creating a reading space.

Finally, Kahn's own writing, de-mystified to a certain degree by some cogent analysis, is still powerful in its magical quality. The suggestive nature of his words deter simplistic derivations. But, particularly for those who never saw Kahn speak in person, the numerous writings elucidating Kahn's legacy bear a weight that often overpowers his architecture. Perhaps, the architect and his

desires were greater than his architecture, which only partially expresses what he sought. To think of Kahn's architecture without the accompanying text is difficult, but it is not unreasonable to imagine that his architecture could have afforded broader interpretative scope without the boundaries set by his writings.

Scully correctly points out that Kahn carefully covered his creative tracks, and like any creative artist Kahn's sources were numerous and eclectic. So each succeeding scholar picks up a few strands of evidence to suggest another path that Kahn traversed on his way to architectural creation, and all seem equally valid—the Roman, the Egyptian, the early Christian, and so forth. Ultimately what is valuable is probably not the sources per se, but the route traversed by these scholars hoping to re-create Kahn's experience. Having traversed the experience with these scholars, we get a glimpse of the method, the process of realization, and that is valuable in itself. Kahn did us a great service by covering his tracks, because the best way to understand what architecture meant to Kahn is perhaps by discovering his process anew.

For students new to the work of Kahn, this book provides an adequate glimpse of Kahn's architecture, perhaps intriguing them to explore more. For those already familiar with Kahn's architecture, writing, and criticism of his works, *Kahn Libraries/Bibliotecas* provides some new insights into Kahn's architecture, besides offering another chance to review his work. Had the text been freer of typographic errors, however, the journey would have been more pleasant.

KAHN LIBRARIES/BIBLIOTECAS, Xavier Costa, Editor, Editorial Gustavo Gili (Spain), 1989, 151 pp., illus.

Swati Chattopadhyay

## Interpreting a Vision: The Graduate Theological Union Library

*I do my work as far as I can go, always hoping that someone else can make it greater.*

Louis I. Kahn

(*What Will Be Has Always Been*, 1986)

A steel-clad four-level ziggurat with peripheral terraces shimmers as the jewel in the string of older brick buildings near the theologians' plaza. In the orange-tree shaded terraces, students discuss theology while sipping tea. A bridge leads to this building from an off-centered plaza, allowing visitors to absorb this steel vision before entering from the diagonal approach. Inside, the parti is similar to that of the Phillips Exeter Academy library—a centrally lit hall with triangular light shafts on either side, surrounded by an intermediate dark space of book stacks, in turn encircled by the carrels in the periphery celebrating natural light. Louis Kahn believed the essence of a library, any library, is the simple yet profound action of taking a book from darkness to read it in light. Located north of the University of Berkeley campus, this is the Graduate Theological Union Library as designed by Louis Kahn. On paper.

As one approaches the library from Ridge Road today—the library that was actually built—its concrete structure gradually emerges into view. Instead of a plaza, an axial fore-court introduces the building, eliminating a diagonal approach. Rather than the steel cladding shimmering in the Berkeley sun, the concrete structure with weather-beaten fir in-filling gently terraces back from the road. The monolithic quality of Kahn's four-level ziggurat is replaced by a more neighborly three-level horizontality of terra-cotta-colored concrete bands and a façade broken down visually by intervals

of small modules. Inside, the triangular light shafts have been replaced by a central light well capped with a pyramidal skylight. A more seismically stable nine-bay structural grid replaces the mechanical service stacks that were to double as structural support, thus dissolving Kahn's clean separation of served and servant spaces. Through all the changes, however, one can still easily perceive Kahn's influence in the clarity of spatial organization, crisp detailing, and meaning-impregnated movement from darkness into light.

Kahn died in 1974 with only the library's schematic design resolved. The daunting task of pursuing Kahn's vision fell on two firms, Esherick, Homsey, Dodge, and Davis, and Peters, Clayberg, and Caulfield. They made it clear they were not Louis Kahn, but would try to maintain his spirit. The final product is an interpretation of Kahn's vision sobered by compromises with neighbors, codes, and the changing programmatic needs of the client. Had Kahn been able to complete the building, arguably, the design would have been different, if not the exact version of his sketches. And perhaps, Kahn, the last "hero" in architecture by virtue

of his charisma, would have been able to "pull off" a monumental steel-clad building reminiscent of the competition design for the Washington University library, in a Berkeley neighborhood of primarily small-scaled buildings.

The Theological Union library, like other examples of Kahn's architecture, was the manifestation of a social vision based on the belief that an institution is a place where minds meet, and ideas are shared and celebrated. He empathized with the human being as a social entity and his architecture sought to give people not so much bodily comfort and convenience as nourishment of the spirit. Kahn's architecture aspired to make a person consciously reflect on the timeless qualities of the environmental experience. He rarely rooted his visions in social reality; instead he endowed his buildings with an



Perspective drawing, Graduate Theological Union Library, Berkeley; Louis I. Kahn, 1971–74. (Courtesy of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania.)

autonomous and transcendental character.

The present Theological Union library does not aspire for such a heroic presence or grand gesture. It attempts rather to maintain a lower profile in the neighborhood. Kahn's vision of community interaction had to succumb—the plaza was eliminated due to protest from neighbors and now for security reasons the tea-terraces are inaccessible from the reading spaces. Yet the architects' interpretation of Kahn's intentions, infused with their own sensibilities, subtly addresses the human entity through its very compromises, and its attention to a human scale and experience. The present building tries to make the visitor comfortable in the act of reading. It bears the elegant tension between architectural autonomy and rootedness to the context—a sign of the times, perhaps, acknowledging that there are no longer any "heroes" in architecture, and that a new building cannot, even by mandate of its own vision, dominate its neighbors.



The Graduate Theological Union as built, Berkeley; with design contributions by Louis I. Kahn; Esherick, Homsey, Dodge, and Davis; and Peters, Clayberg and Caulfield. (Photograph by Paul Budnitz.)

Peter J. Holliday

## Bearers of Meaning

JOHN ONIANS

During the two thousand years between their first appearance in ancient Greece through their eventual codification in Renaissance Italy, the orders—the columns and capitals known as Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Tuscan, and Composite—were the most striking features of the buildings in which people formulated and developed their relationships to their gods, to each other, and to themselves. The intriguing process of how the orders articulated these relationships is the subject of John Onians's *Bearers of Meaning: The Classical Orders in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance*.

Onians's central premise, stated in a short but cogent introduction, is that architectural elements that serve crucial physical purposes are also the most important psychologically. The classical orders, therefore, are not merely elegant solutions to problems of structural design, they also fulfilled expressive roles. The author, however, does not concentrate on those issues of description and definition taken up so dogmatically by Vignola in the 16th century; rather he explores the problems of how and why the orders were used in different building typologies and architectural contexts, and how and why they were discussed in texts. Onians presents a history of the orders as forms, a study probing architecture as both a field of built practice and written theory. The relation between practice and theory, therefore, is a persistent theme.

The mechanisms of visual experience, just one factor in a complex social process, are shared among architects and patrons; the shared experience of existing buildings only reinforces and further focuses such dispositions.<sup>1</sup> Onians argues that the psychological significance of the orders grew from the variable relationships between stimulus and response in the context of architecture. He correctly concludes that "people at earlier periods



Erechtheum, Athens; 421–405 B.C. (From *Bearers of Meaning*.)

appear to have been more alert to the variations of architectural form ... than we are now." Variations in architecture were read as indices of variation of status and morality, character and emotion.

The first chapters on the Greco-Roman world outline the origins and early use of the orders. Onians weaves together both archaeological data and ancient literary sources to establish people's initial experience of the orders when they first appeared. The Doric and Ionic orders started as regional forms, while the Corinthian began as a form associated with death, immortality, and healing; all eventually acquired secondary and tertiary meanings. The Doric and Ionic, for instance, were given racial associations with particular characteristics and values: the Doric connoted the outdoors and physical simplicity, while the Ionic suggested the indoors and intellectual refinement. For the Dorians, the Corinthian also evoked interior refinement. As one might assume, further sexual characteristics were also attributed to the orders.

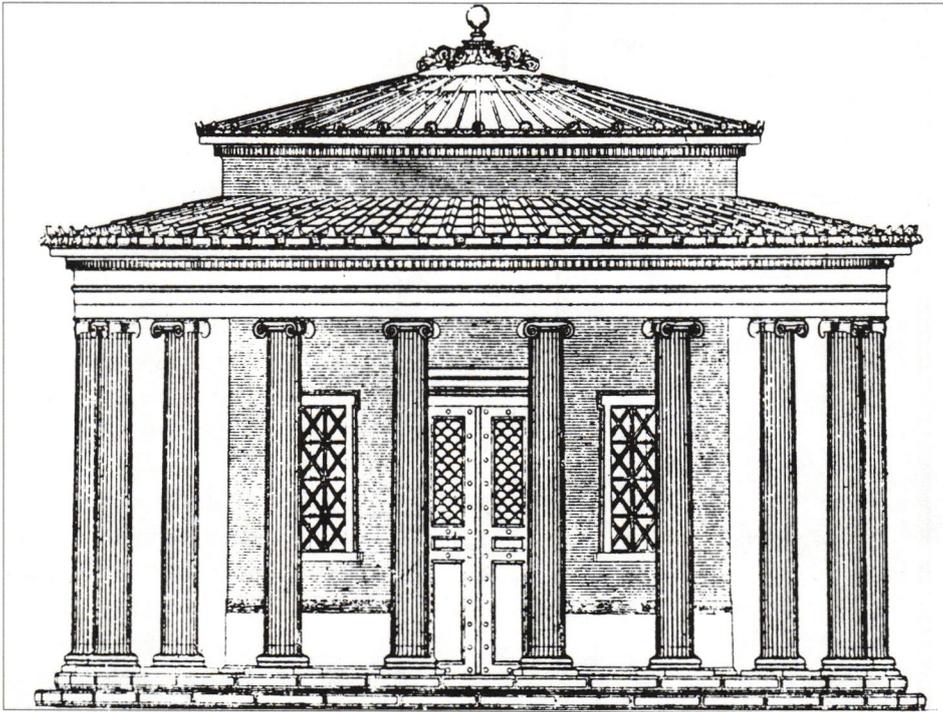
The Romans attributed so many additional associations to the orders that by

the late Republic the ever-increasing range of building types and architectural forms rose and fell without establishing clear traditions. Augustus and his successors imposed a new order on this chaos, and used the Tuscan and Composite styles to identify this specifically Roman order. Indeed, the innate *Romanitas* of the "new" orders guaranteed their popularity throughout the Imperial period.

Vitruvius, the architect and engineer contemporary with Augustus, reacted to the chaos of the late-Republican period by writing the first study to treat architecture with the same scale and systematic comprehensiveness the Greeks accorded to music and rhetoric.

In a chapter crucial to his argument, Onians discusses Vitruvius's attempt to raise architecture to the level of a discipline or science by giving it an ordered intellectual foundation, ennobling it as an art and reforming its practice. While Vitruvius succeeded in elevating the field, his desire to develop a theory that corresponded to the literary models of other activities meant that it was to them and not to actual practice that he adjusted his ideas. For this reason Vitruvius's treatise does not truly enlighten us on ancient architecture, although it was eventually to influence Renaissance thinkers already familiar with ancient writings on ethics and rhetoric.

Onians's parallel exploration of written theory therefore raises quite different issues from his discussion of the use of the orders. He suggests that not only is the background to the formulation and response to written theory different from that which lies behind the formulation of and response to built practice, it is also frequently hostile to it. Onians's further discussion of the use of the orders in early Christian, medieval, and Renais-



Philippeion, Olympia; c. 330 B.C. After Dörpfeld. (From *Bearers of Meaning*.)

sance architecture seeks to reactivate now-dormant response mechanisms. He demonstrates that the orders took on a rich variety of derivative, allusive, and original meanings in the service of church and state. His discussion of contemporary writing shows that the power of architectural theory is greatest when it can replace the instinctive with another, more sophisticated response. The function of words, Onians argues, is to persuade people that their spontaneous reaction is incorrect.

While too many scholars weigh down their works with overly expository footnotes that detract from, rather than add to, the central thesis, Onians seems to have swung to the other extreme. His notes are minimal, and rarely allow us to enter into a dialogue with the author and his sources, to trace his influences and the route of his speculations.<sup>2</sup> One wishes various assumptions casually tossed off, such as expenses involved in certain commissions, were better documented. The bibliography follows the traditional alphabetical arrangement, without taking different themes or chronologies into account. There are over two hundred care-

fully chosen illustrations; many are photographs by the author that truly illustrate his argument.

One final comment: this is not a book to be dipped into at random. Readers who want to find out what the author has to say about a particular architect or monument will be ill-served. Rather, this erudite and engaging account demands a complete reading.

#### NOTES

1. Unfortunately, Onians reduces the complexities of visual perception down to a few provocative paragraphs in his introduction. While he notes physiological dimensions, his argument emphasizes the social aspects of the field, without recourse to basic studies, such as those by Rudolph Arnheim and Ernest Gombrich.

2. Fortunately, unlike many recent works, Onians's notes frequently cite original documents and references for monuments discussed but not illustrated.

BEARERS OF MEANING: THE CLASSICAL ORDERS IN ANTIQUITY, THE MIDDLE AGES, AND THE RENAISSANCE, John Onians, Princeton University Press, 1988, 351 pp., illus., \$75.00.

Harry Francis Mallgrave

## The Descendants of Otto Wagner

Few historical periods are more seductive in their visual packaging than Vienna 1900. The charm of the city and the period is indeed Circean in its ocular hedonism: chaste, emaciated demimondaines afloat in the spermatoc stream of their tresses; the artist's fingers, disproportionately long, sinewy, twisted, idle, resembling those of a mass murderer; full moons and pubic hair prudishly elided from the university's firmament; gold everywhere, powdered into pigments, plastered onto walls. "Ineluctable modality of the visible," James Joyce once wrote, no doubt fantasizing about Vienna. If we throw in the French Impressionists, we have all the ingredients of the successful museum bookshop. The premonition that modernity may have been more complex historically than some ingenuous response to a hated historicism or more subtle intellectually than some stillborn progeny of a collapsing aristocratic culture was never allowed to clutter our coffee-table minds. By the late 1980s we had all become, in our mass consumption of this ubiquitous *fin-de-siècle* mania, entranced into swine.

Fortunately, there appears one hopeful sign on the horizon: the publisher's glossy fetish with this period is now found more and more in discount bookstores and catalogues. The historian's dilemma is that, considering all the colored ink that has been flaunted, the hard historical work remains to be done. Even leading figures of the period, such as Otto Wagner or Loos, appear as perfect enigmas when considered through the platitudes to which they are inevitably reduced. The situation with lesser known (but not necessarily inferior) artists, through whom the dynamics of a period often can be better studied, is much worse. We therefore look forward to three books attempting to rectify this unhappy situation. They concern the ar-

chitectural designs of Emil Hoppe, Marcel Kammerer, Otto Schönthal, Joze Plecnik, and Henry van de Velde.

The four Viennese-trained artists—Hoppe, Kammerer, Schönthal, and Plecnik—are the creative offspring of the great Mosaic figure of Viennese architecture, Otto Wagner. This stern patriarch of the Danube (himself harboring a healthy measure of Old Testament lust in his decorative designs) ascended the mount in 1894 with his unexpected appointment to the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. The academy was then by imperial decree divided into two schools of design: one headed by a Gothicist, one by a classicist. By virtue of his successful, thirty-year practice as the self-described architect of a “certain, free Renaissance,” Wagner was chosen to head the latter sequence of three studios (known as the *Wagnerschule*). With divine dispatch, Wagner announced a complete reform of the program. Students in the first two years of the studio were now expected to focus on such “real” problems as urban housing and governmental office buildings; efforts were to be directed to satisfying the needs of “modern man.” Admission to the first studio was limited to six or seven students a year, creating an elite architectural school. Wagner inherited as a student assistant Joseph Olbrich, who was succeeded by Joze Plecnik, Josef Hoffmann, and Max Fabiani. Hoppe, Kammerer, and Schönthal entered the program in 1898, the same year the Vienna Secession was formed. The best of Wagner’s students were also hired into his office. In this way Wagner hoped to give his born-again practice of modernity a competitive edge. To such an end Wagner also composed in 1896 the first professional breviary to the new movement, entitled *Modern Architecture*.

Iain Boyd Whyte, in the intelligent and well-written introduction to *Three Architects from the Master Class of Otto Wagner*, leads us through the interwoven careers of Hoppe, Kammerer, and Schönthal. Each architect possessed exceptional delineatory and decorative skills: impor-

tant criteria for admittance to the Wagner studios. Each successfully completed Wagner’s apprenticeship program and gradually acquired independence from the master over the course of a decade.

Two interrelated issues raised by Whyte are particularly instructive. The first is the eclectic path pursued by various Secessionist-inspired architects in the first decade of the new century, years after such influential “modern” apologists as Richard Streiter (1898) and Hermann Muthesius (1900) had warned against the undemocratic futility of engaging in this “Decadenz und dem fin-de-Siècleletum.” Just how aware were these young designers of events taking place in Munich and Berlin, and how did they perceive their own development within this context? This eclectic phase concluded with Hoppe’s and Schönthal’s spare, but lively, designs for the Kuntschau in 1908.

The second question raised by Whyte is Hoppe’s, Kammerer’s, and Schönthal’s influence within Wagner’s studio—their collaboration on such projects as the Postsparkasse and Vienna Stadtmuseum in the early years of the decade. Here again it is a question of who was leading whom. Both questions underscore the limitations of viewing Wagner primarily as a Secessionist architect. His overtly revolutionary “realist” agenda on one hand, his Baroque training and much underemphasized respect for tradition on the other hand, both undermine this earlier visage. The fruitful dialogue between Wagner and the best young designers of the huge Hapsburg empire is, as Whyte suggests in his study, no matter of little consequence. The substantial catalogue of drawings following the text, many of which have never been published, beautifully augments this argument.

Hoppe, Kammerer, and Schönthal eventually established a joint practice in 1909, but the timing was inauspicious. No sooner did the firm and the men mature professionally, producing remarkably modern designs (now free from the influence of Wagner), than the calamitous events of the war brought an end to all

construction. The demiurgic spirit of the three men never revived in a postwar, economically depressed Austria. Kammerer eventually embraced the solution of Nazism (itself an interesting question first raised by Eduard Sekler in 1988); Schönthal was forced into political exile; Hoppe, less overtly sharing Kammerer’s political persuasion, simply languished.

*Joze Plecnik, Architect: 1872–1957*, edited by François Burkhardt, Claude Eveno, and Boris Podrecca, considers another important figure of this circle. The artistic stature of this Slovenian architect has grown appreciably in recent times. Not too many years ago Plecnik was known (in the West) to only a small group of cognoscenti in Vienna, chiefly for the oval staircase and monumental telemones of that city’s Zacherl house. Today, with his work in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia becoming better known, he is emerging as one of the most important architects of the *Wagnerschule*, rivaling Joseph Olbrich and Josef Hoffmann in brilliance, perhaps exceeding them in artistic integrity.

Plecnik represents, like so many architects whose careers were impaired by World War I, the lost history of modern architecture. The son of an artisan from Ljubljana, he was accepted into Wagner’s studio in 1894; he graduated four years later third in his class, behind Hoffmann and the Czech Jan Kotera. In 1899 he inherited the artistic leadership of Wagner’s office, where he remained only a few years. With the completion of the Langer house, Loos house, and Langer building (all in 1901–1902), he had emerged as a leading Viennese architect and rival to Wagner. Plecnik should have succeeded Wagner at the academy, for both in 1911 and 1912 he was voted by the faculty committee and the students to assume the chair of the retiring Wagner. Higher governmental officials, presumably for political reasons, vetoed this appointment.

Plecnik left Vienna for Prague, to accept a position at the School of Applied Arts. Concentrating on pedagogical ac-

tivities during the war, he built up a loyal, Wagner-like cadre of followers in Prague before nationalist prejudices in 1921 again forced him to move—this time to Ljubljana. He did not leave Prague, however, before securing the commission to renovate parts of Prague castle, designs of striking originality that he implemented from Slovenia over the next fourteen years. In near anonymity to the West, he also built a bevy of secular and religious works in his homeland, among which was his masterpiece, the National University Library of 1936–41. It is now hard to imagine how this corpus of impressive works has remained unknown for so long.

This book derives from an exhibition catalogue of the Centre Pompidou in Paris and comprises ten essays attached to a portfolio. The book as a whole (excluding its editing) is well constructed and many of the individual essays are of high quality. The one painful exception is the essay by Alain Arvois and Cristina Conrad von Eybesfeld, which, with its sweeping generalizations and woeful misreading of Gottfried Semper, Wagner, and Riegl, is best avoided. This is unfortunate, since the basic premise of these authors—the Baroque influence on both Wagner and Plecnik—is worth pursuing.

This shortcoming is easily offset by the essay of Plecnik's biographer, Damjan Prelovsek. His very sensitive treatment of Plecnik's career is further enhanced by the thoughtful studies of Friedrich Achleitner, Vladimir Slapeta, Alena Kubová and Guy Ballangé, and Boris Podrecca. I would like to single out for special praise François Burkhardt's essay, "Modern or Postmodern: A Question of Ethics." Although I am often dubious of efforts to apply the lessons of the past to contemporary dialogues, Burkhardt's essay, which considers Plecnik's architecture apart from the mainstream of modernism and its ever more tedious successor, is truly instructive and convincing. Plecnik, with a pluralist, vernacular vocabulary and ethical, social, and aesthetic concerns, firmly

opposed the directions of Le Corbusier and international modernism. Burkhardt's essay, together with Plecnik's always compelling designs, give the architect and historian every reason to purchase and study this book.

The third text under review, Klaus-Jürgen Sembach's *Henry van de Velde*, forms a worthy complement to the first two books, since here we have a monograph on a well-known figure of modernism, an artist who also issued from the same turn-of-the-century wellspring. Sembach's study is excellent as far as it goes. My reservation with this book is that the author's desire to present van de Velde's architectural work "in a sharp focus" is often made impossible by his related decision to exclude "distractions"—presumably the work's theoretical and historical context. A marvelous opportunity has been lost to counter some of the more troubling banalities of traditional historical surveys. As a result, our appreciation of van de Velde has not been substantially advanced.

This failing is especially noticeable in three periods of van de Velde's artistic development: his early years with the group *Les XX*, his important theoretical deliberations around the turn of the century, and the political events of 1914.

Modern historians like to shy away from the 1880s, but this decade is crucial to van de Velde. There is a wealth of material here to be explored: the political alliance of *Les XX* with the Belgian Workers' Party, the influence of William Morris, Richard Wagner, and symbolist free verse.

The situation around 1900 is perhaps more important, for here we have the architect van de Velde, presumably still in the formalist grip of an art-nouveau aesthetic, composing works of theory that are almost indistinguishable from Muthesius's concomitant vision of *Sachlichkeit*. Sembach places great emphasis on van de Velde's statement "A line is a force," but why not explore the tenet's source in the Lippsean psychology of "empathy"? The transposition of these

ideas into design (initially considered as a problem of ornament by Lipps himself) is as exigent as it is transparent: first taking place in the late 1890s in the writings of Richard Streiter (who took his doctorate under Lipps at Munich in 1896) and August Endell. The formal similarity Sembach sees between a van de Velde chair and the Eiffel Tower could then serve as a paradigm for a broader issue of theory.

The architectural polemics of 1914, the year of van de Velde's greatest triumph in Cologne, is certainly something about which I would like to know more. Although the historical emphasis has always been placed on the Muthesius/van de Velde debate at the Werkbund conference, much was also taking place behind the podium: personal opportunism, professional jealousies, and nationalist fervor. The "foreigner" van de Velde was shortly thereafter expelled from a warring Germany and his two Weimar art schools were eventually handed over to the control of Walter Gropius. Although Sembach stresses van de Velde's many comebacks after the war, his career never really recovered its former prominence. Even those personally sympathetic to van de Velde in the 1920s, such as Walter Curt Behrendt, could do no more than refer to him in the past tense—as an early "pioneer" of modernism. Van de Velde did not die until 1957.

Once again, I do not want to diminish Sembach's achievement with this text. The book serves as a good introduction to the designer, even if a definitive study of the man, his theory, and perhaps even a little of his Odyssean guile remains to be written.

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THREE ARCHITECTS FROM THE MASTER CLASS OF OTTO WAGNER, Iain Boyd Whyte, MIT Press, 1989, 240 pp., illus., \$50.00.

JOZE PLECNIK, ARCHITECT: 1872–1957, edited by François Burkhardt, Claude Eveno, and Boris Podrecca, MIT Press, 1989, 204 pp., illus., \$39.95.

HENRY VAN DE VELDE, Klaus-Jürgen Sembach, Rizzoli, 1989, 200 pp., illus., \$50.00.

Ellen Weiss

## Southern Comfort

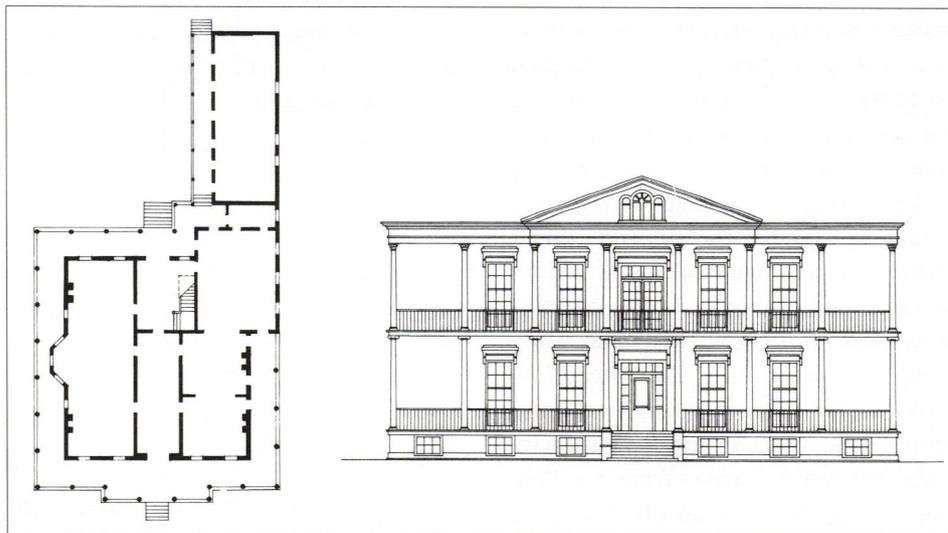
S. FREDERICK STARR

With the exception of the essays of Samuel Wilson, Jr., and the seven neighborhood surveys published by the Friends of the Cabildo, New Orleans has been ill-served by architectural historians and critics. Local scholars guard their findings, and dissertations languish unpublished. New Orleans lacks the sophisticated analyses lavished on other older American cities despite its popularity with both lay and architectural tourists and despite the romantically exceptional nature of most of its building stock. S. Frederick Starr has stepped into this breach with *Southern Comfort: The Garden District of New Orleans, 1800–1900*. The Garden District, an approximately 100-block area with many grand mid-19-century houses, is not covered by the preservation-oriented surveys because it is already nicely stabilized by wealth. The good news is that someone has taken the plunge and that MIT Press has published it on good stock for proper display of Robert Brantley's excellent photographs. The bad news is that it was not written as it ought to have been.

Starr is an ebullient writer, much in the spirit, one suspects, of the Yankee entrepreneurs who pique his curiosity and who built his subject. Starr's preface includes an eloquent plea for a wide reading of the forces that "explain" architecture. We are to hear about the patrons, artisans, materials, and urban infrastructure, not just architects (Starr seems unaware of the multitude of such studies produced over the past 40 years). Therefore we get engaging chapters on the volatile antebellum economy and its politics. Fortunes were quickly made and lost, owners sometimes having to sell their mansions while they were still being built. Houses seldom stayed in a family for more than a generation—so much for local delusions of ancestral Southern aristocratic grandeur. In other richly packed chapters we learn about furnishings or gardens or who owned how many slaves and who owned none, the latter not out of abolitionist sentiment but rather because it may have been cheaper to lease others' chattel or to hire Irish servant girls. We meet two worthy mid-century architects, Henry Howard, who tried to support himself by design alone, and failed, and Lewis Reynolds, who seems like an architecture professor before his time with his Masonic design theories and his lectures. Starr's taste for

the human dilemma renders this chapter charming and makes us want to know more.

What we don't learn, however, is how all this affected buildings because, when it comes to architecture, Starr's critical and scholarly weaknesses leave his text too problematic to be convincing. Instead of using literary sources to get closer to his patrons' values, he deduces their character by his reading of building styles. The Yankee entrepreneurs were especially conservative, for example, because there is only one early Gothic Revival cottage. Starr does not seem to realize that one of those per neighborhood, or even city, is about right. Even though these Yankees (always men) are conservative, the appearance of brackets on their Greek Revival entablatures at the right time shows that they were in the vanguard of adventurousness for their conservative ilk. Such tautologies pervade the attempts at architectural and social linkages, sometimes, absurdly, while the author looks right through the better formal evidence the photographer inadvertently provides. Starr treats the pervasive two-story galleries only as two dimensional surfaces for display, never considering the possibility that they might also be spatial amenities in a torrid climate or that they might have a benign effect on the rooms behind. These visible outdoor living spaces, held before the street in a rhythmic cage of insistent white verticals, serve as a better formalist case for consensus than the other stylistic evidence Starr offers to support his view that in 1853 the district coalesced into a community. But Starr knows of an earlier double gallery in another state—Palladio and Herculaneum apparently do not count—so that these are not original to this city and therefore are of no interest. (Starr values "originality" above all.) The galleries, enduring emblems of New Orleans for tourist and design maven alike, are also dismissed because as of 1853 they were allegedly no longer well integrated into the building mass. Two particularly handsome versions cited as



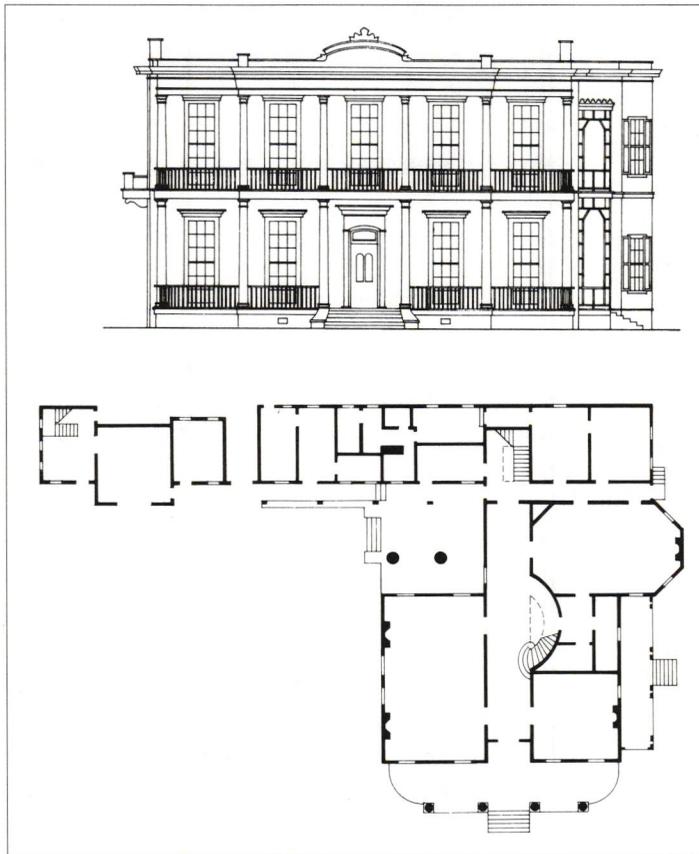
Plan and elevation, the Buckner house, New Orleans; Lewis Reynolds. (From *Southern Comfort*; drawings by Alan McGillivray and Luis Vildostegui.)

evidence for this great divide, photos of which were found after an agonizing search fifty pages away, fail to support the claim.

Other attempts to connect life and form fail from similar misfirings and a seeming lack of common sense. Starr is particularly wonderful when he writes about the servants. But then he ruins it when he concludes that there was a more familial relation between servants and masters here than in the “upstairs-downstairs” relation of some-undesignated-elsewhere because both groups used the same grand staircase, there being no service stairs. But the notion that there were no service stairs is incredible, flying in the face of the logic of building use and standard New Orleans building practice from the decades before the district was built. Starr should provide evidence if a service-

stairless Garden District is to have any acceptance. On servants and stairs, Starr also misses his chance to be truly clever: there was no upstairs-downstairs relationship because *there were no basements*. All houses were constructed on two-foot piers to allow air circulation underneath (even Yankees had to build to New Orleans soil and climate). Starr’s will to prove that these are simply transplanted Yankee buildings for transplanted Yankee clients by transplanted Yankee artisans and designers allows him to ignore all the ways the houses are profoundly of the place in which they stand (ceiling heights are another New Orleans form/climate/society issue missing from the tale).

The frustrations engendered by such glib messiness are magnified out of all manageability by publication problems that raise questions about the responsibility of a university press. The tiny print is hard to read. The text contains no plate



Plan and elevation, the Robinson house, New Orleans; Henry Howard. (From *Southern Comfort*; drawings by Alan McGillivray and Luis Vildostegui.)

or page references to the photographs; the index no boldfacing or italicization and there is no list of illustrations, making it impossible to see what is discussed and read continuously enough to follow the argument. Nor can the reader set out alone to learn something about the houses because redrawn plans (without scale or orientation) and photographs of the same building are scattered throughout the book without cross-reference. The text constantly and boringly cites buildings by address, suggesting that the reader is meant to wander the district, three-pounder in hand. But this process will not reverse. One cannot look up a building from the address because the index works from first owner only. Cutesy captions provide scant information and occasional absurdities—Starr should *look* at Soane sometime before drawing facile parallels. But then, this is a book in which a simple definition of the Golden Section is mangled beyond recognition and in

which a Samuel Wilson article is attributed to another scholar whose name is then misspelled—David Handlin here is “David Pitthandlin”. The side-hall plan is consistently but without explanation called a “London plan,” and we never learn when or why the term “Garden District” came into use even though we are expected to buy the notion that this was a garden suburb, which it was not. Two pages occupied by a meaningless street diagram should have been given to a Sanborn insurance map so that the reader actually interested in buildings and community form could have something to chew on, but no one seems to have thought of that.

The word on the street is that Starr will now take on the French Quarter, an unbelievably large hole in the literature that badly needs filling. Starr could do this well if he would only keep to people and their

business and political lives and refrain from writing about buildings. Sovietologist, jazz musician, and college president, Starr should know enough to recognize his own limitations. But he probably won’t. Anything sells if it is well packaged and about rich people. And if MIT Press chooses to play this game, let us hope that it is all to support its many better publications.

SOUTHERN COMFORT: THE GARDEN DISTRICT OF NEW ORLEANS, 1800–1900, S. Frederick Starr, MIT Press, 1990, 308 pp., illus., \$35.00.

Don A. Hawkins

## Building the Octagon

ORLANDO RIDOUT V

Those windows we see in the fences around urban construction sites are evidence of a general fascination with the building process. The television series "Skyscraper" is also a response to that fascination. The difference is that through the windows we may see construction as a kind of utilitarian choreography, while through the tube we sense the imminence of chaos. Up too close we are convinced that nobody could control such complexity long enough to produce an eighty-story building. And indeed no single person could do it, nor could a team, unless it had been done many times before. All buildings, and modern ones are no exception, depend upon continuity in the building trades. Each building might be more advanced than the last, but not by so much as to disrupt the community of suppliers and mechanics who produce them.

In the past two centuries, as the complexity of construction has increased, the trades have slowly adapted, while remaining a reservoir of basic knowledge upon which new architectural ideas are floated. Orlando Ridout's *Building the Octagon* is the story of a significant 18th-century house that largely depended upon tradition to be built.

Ridout's account begins in 1792 when John Tayloe, one of the wealthiest men in Virginia, married Ann Ogle, whose father and grandfather had been Maryland governors. Their principal residence was at his family home, Mount Airy Plantation in Richmond County, but they enjoyed town life and wanted to be near her family for her frequent confinements. The first five of their fifteen children were, therefore, born in Annapolis, where they leased a house for several years. During this time George Washington, an old family friend, was promoting the new

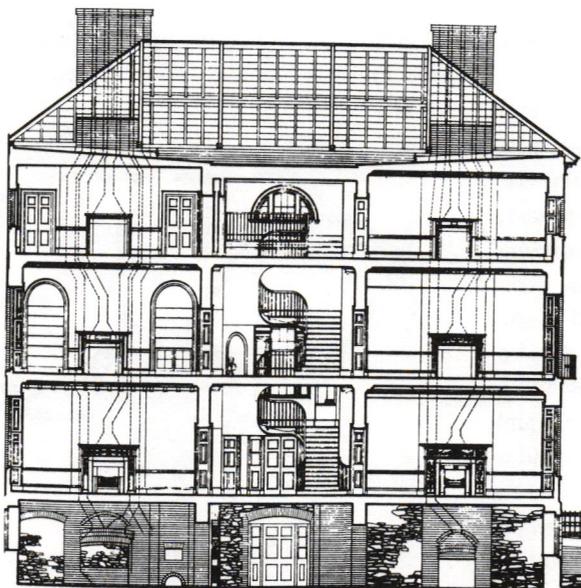
Federal City as the potential center of business, government, social, and intellectual life for the young nation. Washington was anxious to have the popular, wealthy, and well-connected couple establish themselves in an appropriately grand house to attract other fashionable families to the city. The Tayloes began talking with Benjamin Latrobe, newly arrived from England, about designs for a house. Latrobe produced drawings for a rectangular corner site, but the Tayloes bought another corner lot, two blocks west of the White House, and chose another architect, William Thornton, from among their acquaintances.

Ridout uses the discussion of the Tayloes' background, their Annapolis experience, and the Latrobe design as a framework for describing Tidewater architecture and its use in expressing and controlling social relationships. One of the points he makes repeatedly with illustrative examples is that architecture was a manipulative art and that the Octagon was advanced far beyond the standards of the day for a city residence.

In William Thornton, Tayloe found a fellow horse fancier, a former planter from the West Indies trained in medicine in Scotland, a well-traveled gentleman,

and an amazingly successful amateur architect. He had won America's first architectural competition with his design for the Library Company of Philadelphia, and then its most important architectural competition with his design for the U.S. Capitol. Thornton was temporarily replaced as architect of the Capitol when the amateurishness of his prize-winning design became evident, but he was back in control by the time he met Tayloe. The role of gentleman architect was common enough at that time, made possible by that tradition in the building arts that filled in automatically whenever the designer's knowledge was inadequate. At the Capitol, Thornton told those who solicited detail drawings from him to get them from people qualified to do such things. As the architect he considered himself responsible for the aesthetics and functions of buildings, not the details of their construction. So it seems to have been at the Octagon as well. Once the drawings were done he stepped back and let the professionals do their work.

From the beginning Thornton faced the Octagon into the site's acute angle, the entry hall projecting as a semicircle. The first of the three surviving development plans shows four attached columns on this projection and a broad semicircular terrace. A blind window balances a real window on the main body of the house. This plan with badly proportioned rooms was followed by another one, simpler and much more pleasing, and then by a third and final version that masterfully resolves the problem Thornton gave himself. The entry hall has become a substantial space separated from the stair hall by an archway, which made it possible to transact much of the business of the house, and probably some of Tayloe's larger business concerns, in the front of the house without intruding into



Cross section, the Octagon; Washington, D.C.; William Thornton, c. 1799; measured drawing by Glenn Brown, 1914. (From *Building the Octagon*.)

the interior. Within the house, behind jib doors, there was also a service stair running from basement to attic. Two major rooms of equal size, the dining room and the parlor, occupy the ground floor. The second floor contains bedrooms and, above the entry hall, a circular study.

A glance at the hexagonal plan is enough to provoke the question, "What octagon?" The name was probably first used in the 1830s and there is no satisfactory explanation for it.

Construction began in May, 1799, and continued for three years. The projected cost was \$13,000, but the actual cost was \$35,000. No explanation by Thornton or Ridout is given for the discrepancy. Estimating costs at that time was no more of a science than it is now, but the standard systems based on the quantity of materials were fairly dependable. It would be interesting to know how the unexpected costs were incurred. Not that very much else is held back from us—Ridout explains the possible contractual arrangements prevalent in the 18th century and details the agreement between Tayloe and William H. Dorsey, a builder who acted as construction manager. He also hired William Lovering to act as supervising architect. Thornton apparently once more deferred to a professional for the practical work. Lovering had begun as a carpenter and, as might be expected, tended to be quite conservative.

Dorsey was not only a builder, but a prominent Georgetown business man from a respectable Maryland family. His account book, reproduced in an appendix, provides the detailed story of the building process. Payment was based mostly upon the quantity of material installed in the job. Since Lovering was available to judge the quality of the work, this was a system with advantages to the owner and good, fast mechanics. Again we wonder about that estimate.

However important the Octagon might be as a Washington landmark or an architectural milestone, a book devoted solely to its construction would not attract very broad readership without sub-

stantial general information on 18th-century construction practice. Ridout seems to have been aware of this and his presentation is well balanced and not overly detailed.

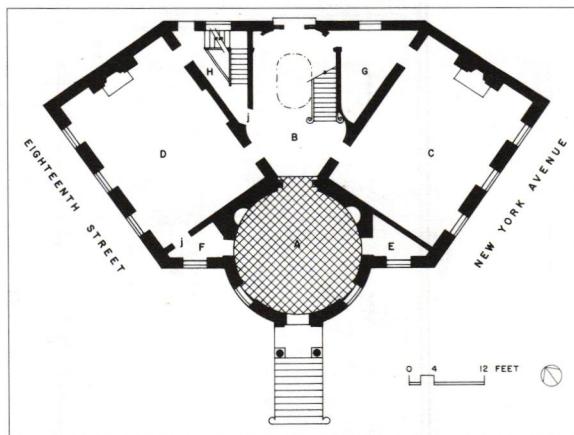
In the last section, "Living in the Octagon" Ridout gives only a very broad outline of the history of its use, a few anecdotes, and then returns to his theme of architectural hierarchy. This is just as well, both because it's an interesting thesis and because, nothing of great significance seems to have happened at the Octagon while it was a home.

In 1886 the Washington architect Glenn Brown began a campaign to save the then-disused Octagon from fifty years of neglect. He measured it, drew it, wrote about it, and pushed the idea of the AIA moving its offices there from New York. Ultimately he won the battle and, in the process, set events in motion that culminated in the creation of the Senate Parks Commission, which revitalized the L'Enfant Plan in 1901. Fifteen years later, the AIA commissioned Brown to publish a portfolio of drawings of the house. The result was a wonderful record of the building's skin and its structure. His transverse section through the whole house is on the cover of *Building the Octagon*. Ridout, frankly, should have relied more upon Brown's drawings. It is surprising that this book about construction does not include Brown's drawings

of the floor and roof framing, which convey so much about 18th-century structural practice. The illustrations are, in fact, the great weakness of this book. The designer's use of a cream-colored paper makes the illustrations appear dull and the wide outer page margins reduce the space available for the illustrations. Furthermore, there is only one potentially good, but murkily printed, photograph of the outside of the house—the three paintings are entirely useless if you want to know what the building looked like—and you wonder if anybody was concerned about the visuals. Yet there are three good illustrations of Mt. Airy, the house the Tayloes moved *out* of! A solution to this problem, for those who can get a copy, is to buy as a companion volume, for its illustrations, the very cheap Octagon guidebook by George McCue.

One of the things we miss by not seeing the house clearly is its relationship to British late Georgian architecture. Originally crowned with a parapet roof, which even Brown did not illustrate, this prismatic house with its half-absorbed cylinder was far more advanced in its degree of abstraction than any other building of the time in America. The mouldings and decorative details are conventional and fashionable, in no way advanced. It is unclear how much of the detail work Thornton designed. Lovering, a perfectly conventional architect, could easily have been the one who helped the sophisticated and Eton-trained Tayloe select the decorative details. Even at his last and equally notable house, Tudor Place, Thornton did not refine the interior to the degree of abstraction of the exterior. He was first a gentleman and then an architect, possibly too sensitive to the politesse of the social setting to think of bringing his mildly revolutionary forms inside.

This volume is the second of five in the Octagon Re-



Plan, the Octagon; Washington, D.C.; William Thornton, c. 1799; redrawn from Glenn Brown by Nancy Kurtz. (From *Building the Octagon*.)

search Series, which parallels five Octagon exhibitions over four years in celebration of the Bicentennial of Washington, D.C. The first was Kenneth R. Bowling's very informative though awkwardly titled *Creating the Federal City: 1774-1800: Potomac Fever*, which described the political maneuvering behind the placement of the nation's capital on the Potomac. Later volumes will deal in increasing detail with the social life of the early 19th century. The Octagon has become known for its small exhibitions of the highest quality. It is pleasing to note that this little jewel in the string of Washington's marvelous museums is now a center for research into the early culture of the city.

Nothing in nature cares about centuries. They are entirely human constructs which probably wouldn't exist if we had six fingers on our hands. As it is, anyone interested in Washington's history must be grateful for the concept, since the city's bicentennial is the excuse for a great deal of new research into subjects inadequately studied in the past. By the bicentennial of the federal government's arrival in the new city in 1800, we may expect to have the results of a new generation's work on the planning of the city, its geography, its buildings, its politics and its society. *Building the Octagon* is a welcome and useful part of this new wave.

Bruce Thomas

## War Memorials as Political Landscape

JAMES M. MAYO

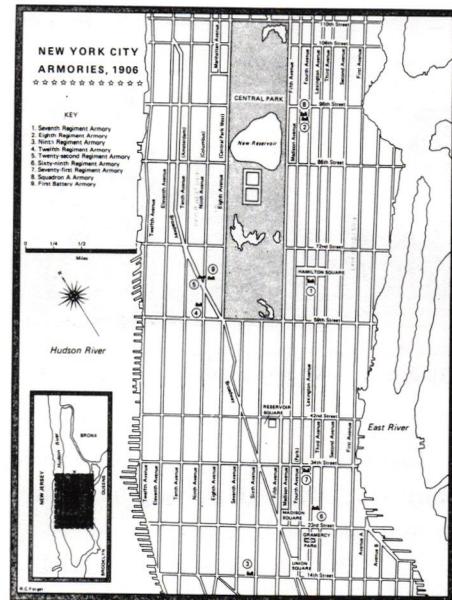
## America's Armories

ROBERT M. FOGELSON

As still-beribboned mailboxes, front doors and car antennae demonstrate, the public display of patriotism is a significant part of the American character. That impulse is formally incorporated into the landscape in the war memorial. Too little attention has been paid to these emotionally conceived—and then often forgotten—markers that dot so many towns and cities. James M. Mayo calls many of them to our attention in *War Memorials as Political Landscape: The American Experience and Beyond*, suggesting that some of this country's efforts to memorialize its battles have been almost as rancorous as the conflicts commemorated.

Mayo's survey raises a number of important questions: How might death, the most personal and emotional of human experiences, be expressed in the built environment? Is it possible to unite personal and public displays of emotion? And, as the title suggests, to what extent do politics shape the memorialization of war?

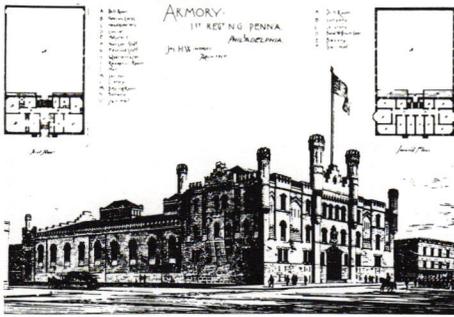
Unfortunately, too often these philosophical questions are not followed by essential specific inquiry. For example, Mayo explains that after World War I, by discouraging separate military groups from building their own monuments, the American Battle Monuments Commission was responsible for the "more consistent" design of American war memorials. Why was the commission thought necessary? Who was on it? How were they chosen? What were the limits of the



Locations of New York City's armories; 1906. (From *America's Armories*.)

commission's influence? None of these questions are asked. Or, consider New York City's Dewey Victory Arch, one of the largest American war memorials ever built. Put up to celebrate the Spanish-American War, the plaster arch was torn down within a year. Why? Mayo explains, "The admiral's victory at Manila Bay was important, but not important enough in a city where celebration is embraced like fashion, which lasts only a season." Surely, there's more to the story than that.

An interesting facet of Mayo's method is his ambitious extension of what might be considered a war memorial. Convincingly he contends that a photograph of a family member killed in war placed on a mantel in a private home may be as complex and deeply felt a war memorial as the grandest stone statue, an example that brings into question how that shadowy quality "meaning" is best infused in monuments. At the same time, it's debatable whether or not anything that is in any way connected to conflict is a "war memorial." Mayo tells us that "private businesses are memorials when their merchandise and services are related to war." This sentiment might, I suspect, surprise newsstand clerks as they ring up the latest copy of *Soldier of Fortune*.



First Regiment Armory, Philadelphia; James H. Windrim, c. 1880. (From *America's Armories*.)

Likewise many may be surprised to learn that, although no tangible monument exists, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point is one great memorial to the Mexican-American War. This is so, Mayo explains, because successful Mexican adventures established West Point as an excellent institution for military leaders. Thus, “West Point itself can be conceived as a memorial to the Mexican War in the metaphorical sense that the war gave birth to its distinguished reputation.” Although such remarks may accurately illustrate a bellicose American history, too often they dilute the focus of Mayo’s thesis. The war memorial as it is usually defined is in itself a complex enough issue to tackle. As architects, their clients, and the public find every day, substantive meaning in the built environment is not easily grasped. For the historian or critic, it is often just as difficult to understand or to empathize with the meaning others have tried to build into the landscape.

Given the nature of his subject, Mayo finds it tempting to harden human emotions into quantifiable input. In an opening chapter one matrix indexes humanitarianism, honor, service, and identity against shrine and commemorative ritual, public service, business, and war remains, and collection and recreation. Is it possible to chart information such as this? In other instances social science gives way. We are told that sometimes when vets gather at reunions, “sacredness transcends the patriotic to evoke a feeling of world brotherhood.” Elsewhere it’s

noted that “a gravestone for a soldier from World War II has meaning even to the stranger.” How can we know that? It is perhaps indicative of the degree of difficulty involved in Mayo’s task that neither social science nor more personal reflection are entirely satisfactory.

Finally, the scope of the survey raises still other important questions. Is the depth of meaning involved in a war memorial proportionate to the numbers that fell? The “Beyond” in the book’s title refers to monuments to the Holocaust, Nazi atrocities in the French village of Oradour-sur-Glane, and the bombing of Hiroshima. Apparently these are included because of the numbers of dead. Yet if number of dead is a criterion for inclusion, why is discussion of World War II memorials focused on American examples? American deaths accounted for less than 2 percent of the war’s total casualties. Where are the striking Soviet monuments commemorating their millions lost? Mayo’s choices, although interesting, might be criticized as idiosyncratic.

Mayo’s examination—perhaps anyone’s—of such an emotional aspect of the landscape provides more questions than answers. How are public displays of patriotism prey to cynical political manipulation? And more importantly, how is it possible to infuse a heroic 150-foot-tall figure rising above a Stalingrad commemorative park or a black granite slash in the Mall in Washington with the same heartfelt emotion that rests on a mantel with an old photograph?

Robert M. Fogelson’s *America’s Armories: Architecture, Society, and Public Order* focuses on a more manageable segment of America’s martial history. In this skillfully crafted architectural/social history, Fogelson invokes Louis Sullivan’s shrewd observation, “The critical study of architecture becomes, not the study of an art—for that is but a minor phase of a great phenomenon—but in reality a study of the social conditions producing it.” To that end, Fogelson explains that the castellated fortresses that sprang up in scores of American cities in the last few

decades of the 19th-century primarily resulted from fears of class warfare.

The impetus to build urban armories rested in late 19th-century labor troubles, most importantly the railroad strike of 1877. With the Paris Commune still a fresh memory, American upper classes believed that there was a “volcano under the city” and that any day social and industrial discontent would explode into open warfare. As Fogelson explains, however, the late 19th-century American social condition was a more complex matter than mere simplistic class division. Most Americans, regardless of social or economic standing, agreed that no matter how great the grievance, order should be maintained at any cost—by force, if necessary. Moreover, the 1880s and 1890s in America were marked by the spread of the spirit of nationalism, patriotism, and militarism. There was a great proliferation of veterans’ societies, and the adulation of the flag and agitation to prohibit its desecration were prevalent.

The maintenance of public order fell to the state; local police forces were unreliable, and the militia was regarded as a check on power, a means of preserving liberty, not a means of protecting property. Thus, civic order became the responsibility of the National Guard—in reality, a state institution. To do the job the Guard, which often met in saloons or drilled in rented warehouses, needed bases of operation.

With the fears of the affluent aroused and public patriotic fervor running high, any Guard armory could be funded. But the process by which building materializes is often illogical. Soon the armory was a favorite pork-barrel project as small-town legislators proved their worth by landing state building contracts for their constituents. In fact, the majority of armories were erected in villages where civil unrest was most unlikely.

In big cities, equally curious decisions were made about where to locate the new bastions of civic order. Most Guard units had taken shape as crosses between military units and gentlemen’s clubs—

blacks were excluded, and members bought their own weapons and paid dues. When it came time to build clubhouses, they had little interest in locating their headquarters in scruffy areas of the city, but rather chose to be close to home in fashionable neighborhoods. Consequently, in New York City for example, in the 1880s no new armories were built in Lower Manhattan, where not only most of the “dangerous classes” lived, but also where most banks—considered by many to be irresistible targets in the warfare to come—were located. Meanwhile new Guard headquarters proliferated above Fifty-ninth Street.

Despite the inherent lack of logic in the location of many new armories, they were regarded as fortresses from which urban class warfare could effectively be waged. New York City’s Seventh Regiment Armory, between Park Avenue and Lexington, boasted strategically placed gun slits and towers, “enfilading all approaches,” as one newspaper noted, so that guardsmen could “pick off advancing crowds.” The castellated style favored for so many of the new armories was a most appropriate image for the perceived function; they were called “citadels of social strength ... towers of strength to lovers of civic order.”

As with all aspects of his story, Fogelson pushes beyond the easy answer to a more complete explanation. He points out that in the late 19th century the armory was but one of many new building types to emerge without any apparent architectural model. Existing forts were inappropriate for modern cities, and more importantly were deemed stylistically inferior to other monuments to civic order such as city halls, banks, or the mansions of the wealthy. Moreover, the armory had an awkward functional program: it needed a variety of social spaces like those found in any great house, yet it also required a huge street-level drill space for the assembled unit. By chance, medieval castles, with living quarters around and within walled courts, fit the bill. Serendipitously, the aura of might

and force inherent in the architectural style was assumed to help keep troublemakers in their place.

As a new century dawned, architectural styles changed. More importantly, the fear of open class warfare waned as the memory of the railroad strike of 1877 dimmed. More recent labor unrest, such as the Homestead lockout or the Pullman strike, had been more ruthlessly and efficiently quelled. The armory changed correspondingly, becoming less a fortress and more a community center. The castle walls opened to social groups, fraternal organizations, political parties, sports and cultural promoters, most of whom paid the Guard unit rent for its conveniently located assembly space. Given its new civic function, the armory became more appropriately a hospitable, rather than a formidable, building. So complete was the metamorphosis that by the 1930s, when class warfare was once again considered a threat, building new armories was conceived by the Roosevelt administration not as a forging of links in a Maginot class line, but as means of providing relief for the unemployed and stimulating the economy.

Robert Fogelson’s story of a ubiquitous, yet under-studied building type is informative, entertaining, and carefully considered. In short, it is scholarship of the highest rank. In his preface, Fogelson stresses that his book “is not so much architectural history as social history.” If we are to understand—and aspire to manipulate—the meaningful core of architecture, the most public of arts, can we take any other approach to studying the landscape?

WAR MEMORIALS AS POLITICAL LANDSCAPE: THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AND BEYOND, James M. Mayo, Praeger, 1988, 306 pp., illus., \$42.95.

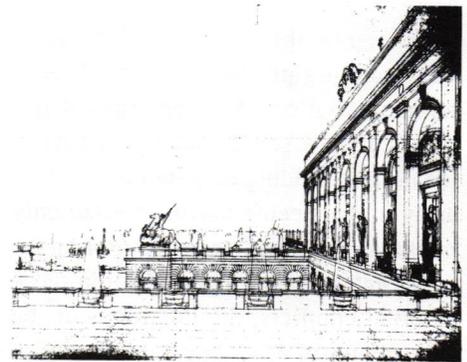
AMERICA’S ARMORIES: ARCHITECTURE, SOCIETY, AND PUBLIC ORDER, Robert M. Fogelson, Harvard University Press, 1989, 268 pp., illus., \$30.00 cloth.

Mark Stankard

## Building the City Beautiful

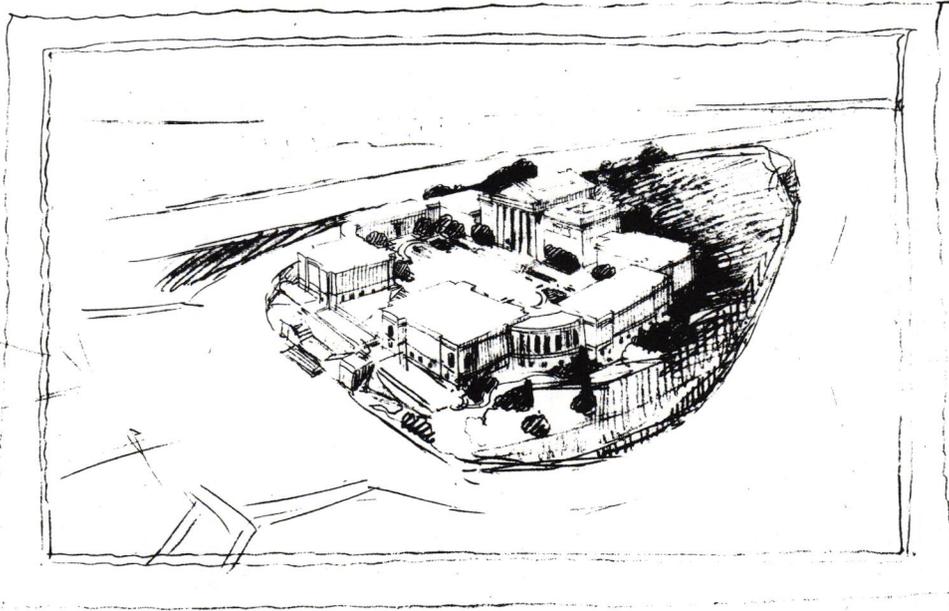
DAVID B. BROWNLEE

David Brownlee’s *Building the City Beautiful: The Benjamin Franklin Parkway and the Philadelphia Museum of Art* is both a definitive history and a useful guidebook that thoroughly documents the development of the Philadelphia parkway, a monumental boulevard connecting the city and Fairmount Park. Beginning in the 1870s, the book recounts the building of the parkway in the context of modernist architectural debate, political corruption, and the City Beautiful Movement.



Close perspective from east, arcuated variant, Philadelphia Museum of Art; Borie, Trumbauer, and Zantzinger, 1914. (From *Building the City Beautiful*.)

David Brownlee, associate professor of the history of art at the University of Pennsylvania, and Ann Percy, curator of drawings at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, organized the coinciding exhibition held at the museum in 1989. Previously unavailable drawings and watercolors by Paul Cret, Jacques Greber, Hugh Ferriss, and others were compiled to reconstruct the history of the parkway in a succinct and creative presentation. The catalogue reproduces the images from the exhibition and broadens their meaning to illuminate the development of Philadelphia’s oblique connection between the city and the park. Architects and urban planners will empathize with the obstacles en-



Bird's eye study from east, Philadelphia Museum of Art; Borie, Trumbauer, and Zantzinger, 1915. (From *Building the City Beautiful*.)

countered by the designers of the parkway: funding problems, World War I, inconclusive competitions, client demands, review board rejections, committee design, bidding negotiations, and an array of overseeing mayors rivaled only by the succession of popes sponsoring the construction of St. Peters. Within these external conflicts, the intentions of the City Beautiful Movement and the influence of modernism also created theoretical contention.

Brownlee begins the book by legitimizing the modernity of the parkway project, claiming that the ideology of its creators transcends the received view of classical revival. The debate between function and form occurred behind the "modern classicist" façades of the parkway architecture. Although the designers of the parkway debated the issues of their time—democracy, progress, technology, and self-conscious choice—the vocabulary of their designs was classical and far removed from the early modern European architecture with which the author attempts to associate them.

The Benjamin Franklin Parkway began as an individual proposal in 1871. After several schemes for a diagonal boulevard were proposed and rejected,

demolition of the existing fabric commenced in 1907 after "an invincible alliance had been created between powerful citizens and corrupt politicians." The French architect and planner Jacques Greber joined forces with Paul Cret and many others in designing a parkway intended to be lined with buildings, which Greber eventually transformed to an open, tree-lined vista with buildings set back from the street.

The design of the Philadelphia Museum of Art contained as many hardships as the parkway. Charles Borie, Horace Trumbauer, Clarence Zantzinger, and their collaborators arrived at a solution only after considerable debate. In 1915, Howell Lewis Shay, a designer in Trumbauer's office, produced the final compromise plan, a single building with three temple forms. Brownlee writes, "The disputing architects agreed to Shay's solution, and they set him up with a bottle of bourbon and a small office of his own" to draw the conclusive scheme. Only a brief mention is made of the man generally credited with the museum design, Julian Abele, Trumbauer's chief designer and the first black graduate of the University of Pennsylvania architecture school. After Shay's design was ac-

cepted, Hugh Ferriss produced a striking rendering of the museum with crowds flocking to the "Philadelphia Acropolis."

Similar frustrations characterized the creation of other buildings on the parkway. In 1927 Paul Cret proposed the demolition of City Hall, retaining only the tower reclad in an austere stone façade. Ralph Walker's bold 1932 proposal for a new concert hall on Logan Circle to replace the Academy of Music was a symmetrical, modern composition well suited to its context and particularly significant today in light of the current struggle to build a new orchestra hall in Philadelphia. Concluding with a short epilogue, Brownlee gives cursory consideration to the buildings erected on the parkway between the 1950s and the present. His brief mention of the Youth Study Center, Parkway House, and Park Towne Place apartments discloses an inconsistent attitude favoring his claim for the modernity of the earlier classicist parkway buildings over the later established modernity of 1950s and 1960s American architecture. Characterizing the Park Towne Place apartments (1959), the author states, "Their simple forms, placed with calculated nonchalance in the landscape, bespoke the tardy arrival of the International Style on the parkway and its degeneration into the language of real estate development." Here Brownlee reveals his unwillingness to consider these buildings in relation to the modern principles emphasized in the first chapter. While a detailed discussion of the later parkway architecture falls outside the scope of this book and exhibition, integrating them into the theme of modernity through words, drawings, and photographs would simultaneously reach back to the origins of the parkway and forward to the current state of architecture.

BUILDING THE CITY BEAUTIFUL: THE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN PARKWAY AND THE PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART, David B. Brownlee, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989, 136 pp., illus., \$33.95 cloth; \$18.95 paper.

Christopher Yip

## California Architecture

SALLY B. WOODBRIDGE

The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began in the 1930s as a branch of the Department of the Interior. HABS was charged with the task of enlisting "a qualified group of architects and draftsmen to study, measure and draw up the plans, elevations and details of the important antique buildings of the United States." This task, intended to last for only ten weeks, continues to this day. The early charge was to emphasize buildings built before 1860, which meant that there was very little to examine in California and the Far West. HABS's charge was slowly expanded, and by the mid-1960s the documenting of major 20-century architectural monuments began. The level of documentation for a site varied from a snapshot attached to a one-page form to the twenty-two sheets of measured drawings for the U.S. Branch Mint in San Francisco of 1869–74.

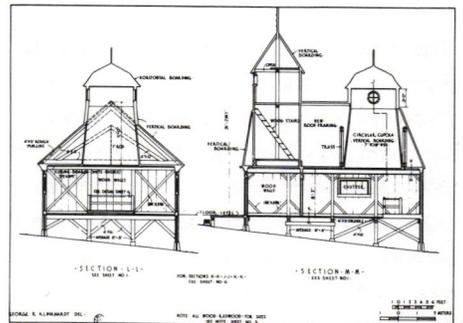
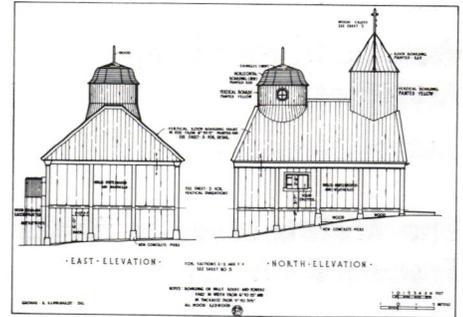
*California Architecture: Historic American Buildings Survey* makes some of the information gathered by HABS available to a wider audience. The book is divided into two parts. The first is a historical essay by the author, Sally Woodbridge, who presents the history of architecture in California against a background of local history and anecdotes about specific buildings. The second part

is a HABS catalogue of buildings and sites listed alphabetically by town. For each entry where the information is available, a building's materials, size, shape, roof type, date of construction, and the available reference documents and photographs in the Library of Congress are noted. The text in both parts is well illustrated by a combination of drawings done by various HABS teams and by photographs. The book concludes with an index of architects, which could have been supplemented by other indexes based upon, for example, periods, building types, regions, and ethnic groups.

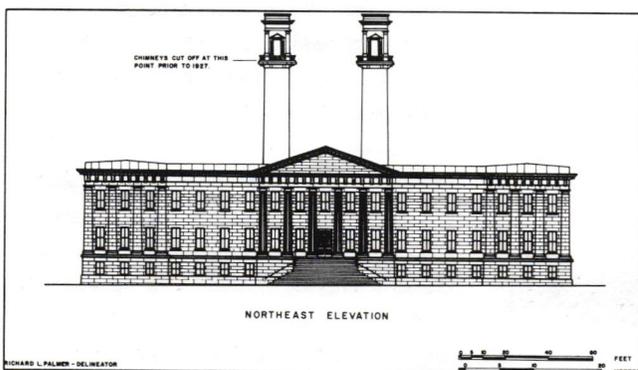
The buildings listed in the HABS catalogue constitute an amazingly eclectic and varied collection. What was included depended upon the shifting criteria used for selecting buildings of significance, and the varying levels of HABS activity in different periods. Buildings of modest importance might get included due to their location within the area to be studied by a summer team while more significant buildings elsewhere remain unrecorded. As a result, Bernard Maybeck's Gates house (1904) in San Jose is included in the catalogue but his masterpiece, the First Church of Christ Scientist (1910) in Berkeley is not. Whereas San Francisco's Chinatown has not been surveyed by HABS, the small rural Chinatown of Locke has been surveyed.

The heterogeneous and incomplete character of the survey data created a difficult task for Woodbridge, who must have felt compelled to construct a coherent historical essay while making sense of

the buildings included, but gingerly gliding past the omissions. She tends to deal with the early buildings of the colonial period in terms of cultural types and to view more recent works in terms of the personalities of designers and clients. Woodbridge makes some sense of the collection of buildings, and she begins



Elevations and sections of Russian Chapel, Fort Ross; originally built c. 1828, rebuilt several times. (From *California Architecture*.)



Northeast elevation, Old Mint, San Francisco; A. B. Mullet, 1869–74. (From *California Architecture*.)

to suggest how design was influenced by the state's dramatic differences in geography and climate, as well as urban and rural settings. Given the complexity of the task, the author has done an admirable job of piecing together a chronological narrative from such an odd assortment of buildings. The text is clearly written with an eye to the descriptive, as seen in the historical essay, which is best when individual monuments are described and bits of related information are offered. The chronological structure of the historical essay was not easily achieved considering the state's great regional and ethnic diversity. Many will find this book a valuable addition to their library on California's architectural heritage.

CALIFORNIA ARCHITECTURE: HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY, Sally B. Woodbridge, Chronicle Books, 1988, 274 pp., illus., \$35.00 cloth; \$19.95 paper.

Stephen Fox

## Wallace K. Harrison, Architect

VICTORIA NEWHOUSE

## The Architecture of Philip Trammell Shutze

ELIZABETH MEREDITH DOWLING

The New York architect Wallace K. Harrison and the Atlanta architect Philip Trammell Shutze were contemporaries—Harrison was born in 1895, Shutze in 1890. But apart from the fact that both experienced professional success, their careers were quite dissimilar. Harrison was a corporate architect of international reputation, responsible for some of the most important American building projects of the mid-20th century. Shutze's reputation was more local, based on the country houses that he produced for Atlanta's elite. The architectural issue that ostensibly set these two apart was modernism. Harrison became identified with modern architecture in the 1930s while Shutze remained loyal to the historical styles in which both had been trained. This meant that Shutze gave up the opportunity for wider recognition and, eventually, for a broadly based architectural practice. Yet in the comparative assessment that the monographs on these two architects now make possible, Harrison emerges as the lesser figure, a conclusion not merely attributable to recent shifts in taste, but growing out of deeper convictions about architecture as a vocation.

Victoria Newhouse, in her book on Harrison, gives a thorough account of his life and practice. He was a poor boy from the wrong side of the tracks, but bright, hardworking, good-looking, charming, direct, yet deferential. Despite a haphazard academic education, he gained entrée to the right architectural offices (McKim, Mead and White and Bertram G. Goodhue) and, after service in World War I,

studied briefly at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, then won the Rotch Traveling Fellowship in 1922. In 1926 Harrison married Ellen Milton, who belonged to an established, well-connected New York family; in 1927 he was invited to become the junior partner of his former teacher, Harvey Wiley Corbett; and in 1928 Corbett, Harrison and MacMurray was one of three firms invited to participate in the design of what would become Rockefeller Center. Because of the death or withdrawal of his professional seniors, Raymond Hood and Corbett, and his wife's family connections, especially to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Harrison acceded to a position of architectural authority in the planning and execution of Rockefeller Center. This set the precedent for his involvement in future complex collaborative undertakings. The most compelling chapters in Newhouse's book detail his work on the New York World's Fair of 1939, the permanent headquarters of the United Nations, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, and the Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza in Albany. All, with the exception of the World's Fair, were connected to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., or his sons, Nelson and John.

Yet the trajectory that Newhouse traces follows a descending curve. The smooth architectural collaboration that characterized the planning of Rockefeller Center was a phenomenon that Harrison was never able to duplicate. However, rather than lamenting the pathos of a promising career that was not fulfilled in

other works of the caliber of Rockefeller Center, one can examine Harrison's career for the secret of his success: What was it that brought his firm, Harrison and Abramovitz, major commercial and institutional commissions despite the mediocrity of its architecture? Newhouse does not ignore this question, but she continually elides it. Moreover, by concentrating on Harrison's major building projects, she avoids examining him from a critical perspective that might clarify not only this question, but certain cultural and political conditions affecting the United States from the 1940s to the 1970s.

Three phenomena intersected in Wallace Harrison's career. First was the formation of segments of what Nelson W. Aldrich, Jr. (another family connection of Mrs. Harrison) in his book, *Old Money: The Mythology of America's Upper Class*, calls the American patriciate into an elite that sought to manage the American political and cultural enterprise, most ominously through such institutions as the Central Intelligence Agency (whose headquarters Harrison and Abramovitz designed with author Edith Wharton's cousin, Frederic Rhineland King). Second, the acceptance by American business corporations of modern design beginning in the late 1940s. And third, the dissolution of the modernist project in the United States, once popular acceptance had deprived it of its vanguard role. Viewed in terms of power relations, Harrison was an ideological functionary, a consensus manager who, within the enclave of power where he came to reside, served as an arbiter of taste at a critical point of stylistic transition. But he was a misinterpreter and vulgarizer of modernism who seemed unable to comprehend the passionate architectural conviction that drove Le Corbusier at the United Nations (and Gordon Bunshaft and Eero Saarinen at Lincoln Center) to behave in ungentlemanly ways, disrupting the consensus Harrison was supposed to achieve.

The modernity of Harrison's architec-

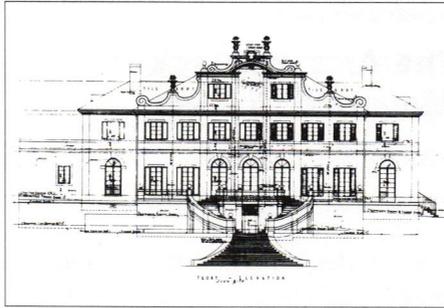


Sketch for the United Nations, New York; Wallace K. Harrison (undated). (From *Wallace K. Harrison*.)

ture was ambivalent. Its weakly picturesque aspect owed more to surrealist painting than to rationalist architecture, and the results veered from the prosaic (the Republic National Bank Building in Dallas) to a kind of science-fiction grotesque (the Albany mall). Newhouse notes that Harrison relaxed by painting pastiches after Picasso and Léger. Might this suggest an attitude in which design is a private preoccupation, emotionally nourishing perhaps, but not central to the business of getting the job and seeing it through? In light of Harrison's managerial conflicts with Le Corbusier and others, it is clear that he lacked a compelling vision of architecture, despite his inclination toward modernism. Architecture existed as a means toward an end—satisfying clients, smoothly coordinating design teams—rather than as an end in itself. Hence Harrison's confusion and despondency when, as Newhouse describes, Nelson Rockefeller turned on him in the late 1970s because of the banality of the towers that Harrison and Abramovitz had added to Rockefeller Center in the 1960s.

Harrison and Abramovitz practiced modern styling, what Vincent Scully and other critics in the 1960s came to decry as "packaging." They subverted the modernist project not by making it more widely acceptable but by making it seem that achieving acceptability was the critical issue rather than producing good buildings. Today, it is difficult to understand how Harrison and Abramovitz could have been taken so seriously, not only in the 1950s but into the 1960s as well. Yet Harrison was instrumental in developing a corporate following for modern architecture after World War II.

Along with Skidmore, Owings and Merrill and Eero Saarinen, Harrison and Abramovitz were the first architects to design modern buildings for big American business organizations. It is this circumstance, contingent on Harrison's preference for modernism, his strategic position in a power elite, and the trust reposed in him because of his executive



Front elevation, Calhoun House, Atlanta; Philip Trammel Shutze, 1922. (From *American Classicist*.)

abilities, that makes him so fascinating a figure, one whose career affords a privileged glimpse into the flawed American project (imperial *and* modern) from the 1940s through the present. By restricting her account of Harrison's career chiefly to his major building projects, Newhouse avoids what is most significant about his life and work.

Philip Trammell Shutze came late to celebrity. In 1977, when he was 87, Shutze and his architecture were the subject of an illustrated article by Henry Hope Reed published in *Classical America*; the next year three of his houses were featured in a tribute in *House Beautiful*. More recently, scenes in the film *Driving Miss Daisy* were staged inside and in front of one of Shutze's most outstanding public buildings, the Temple of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation in Atlanta. In the context of his eclectic peers, Shutze was singular. His predilection for baroque models, bold scale, and full-bodied classical details set him apart from other American country-house architects of the 1920s and 1930s. These attributes are brilliantly conveyed in the photographs that Timothy Hursley made for this monograph, but far less clearly articulated in the text by Elizabeth Meredith Dowling.

Dowling concentrates on two facets of Shutze's practice: his study of the classical monuments of Rome and Italian baroque villas and gardens during his tenure at the American Academy in Rome between 1915 and 1920, and the application of his historical researches to

building commissions in Georgia. The account is conscientious, but omits too much. The text never gives a sense of what startling works of virtuosity Shutze and his firms, Hentz, Adler and Shutze, and Shutze and Armistead, produced. There is no attempt to situate Shutze in any sort of a historical context, either national or local. One particularly misses an exploration of the Atlanta scene. James H. Grady's *Architecture of Neel Reid in Georgia* (1973) partially compensates for this, but Grady concentrated on domestic architecture and slighted Shutze's contributions to what, before 1927, was Hentz, Reid and Adler, for whom, according to Dowling, Shutze worked on and off from about 1908. Dowling gives no hint of Shutze's impact upon Atlanta architecture, although issues of the *Southern Architect and Building News* indicate that such architects as M. A. Tucker and Owen James Southwell were inspired to design flamboyant Italian-villa-style houses that departed considerably from the dominant model for this type nationally, Charles A. Platt's McCormick house of 1912. Shutze's urban buildings for Hentz, Reid and Adler—specialty stores, apartment buildings, social clubs—are examined for their exterior classical decor only.

There is too little consideration of the planimetric and spatial organization of Shutze's buildings, although from what one can infer from Hursley's photographs of the McRae and Patterson houses, the Little Chapel of the Glenn Memorial Church, and the Academy of Medicine, such consideration is warranted. Dowling neglects the issue of regionalism in Shutze's production of the 1930s and 1940s, leaving out an entire genre based on early 19th-century Southern precedent, which Henry Reed illustrated in *Classical America*. Too few of the buildings discussed are illustrated with descriptive drawings, the dating of projects is haphazard, and there is not a complete list of works nor a bibliography of published references to Shutze. Yet Dowling's text is commendable in many respects. Her

descriptions of the buildings, and especially of Shutze's deployment of historical precedents, are careful and attentive. She identifies the decorative artists and craftsmen—Allyn Cox, Athos Menaboni, and Herbert J. Millard—who contributed to many of his building projects. And her recounting of the reasons, both of principle and practicality, that Shutze withdrew from practice in the 1950s is illuminating. Nonetheless, it is frustrating that a book on so inventive and idiosyncratic an architect as Shutze, about whom so little has been written, is less than definitive.

Wallace K. Harrison and Philip Trammell Shutze represent two poles in 20th-century architectural practice. Harrison became a smooth, pragmatic bureaucrat; Shutze, a snippy, even petulant, individualist. Harrison's buildings are secondary, a mere reflection of the place of architecture and architects at the summit of 20th-century American society. Shutze's buildings, no less than Harrison's, reflect power relations. But their intrinsic qualities ensure that such relations do not describe the limits of their significance. Whatever his personal shortcomings, Shutze produced architecture that enriches the experience of those who occupy it. Harrison, for all his personal virtues, failed to do so. The juxtaposition of these two architects makes it clear that ability—talent, genius—is the greatest gift. Recognition of it, and the determination to adhere to it, will historically prove to be more rewarding than stylistic currency, influential connections, or personal prestige.

WALLACE K. HARRISON, ARCHITECT, *Victoria Newhouse*, Rizzoli, 1989, 332 pp., illus., \$45.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper.

AMERICAN CLASSICIST: THE ARCHITECTURE OF PHILIP TRAMMELL SHUTZE, Elizabeth Meredith Dowling, Rizzoli, 1989, 239 pp., illus., \$45.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper.

Sandra Kocher

## The Arts at Black Mountain College

MARY EMMA HARRIS

Amidst the rather settled nature of today's college and university art programs, where experimentation and unexpected breakthroughs in creative thought are rare, it is refreshing to read Mary Emma Harris's *The Arts at Black Mountain College*. The fecund energy and creative interactions generated by a tiny college in the mountains of western North Carolina, whose lifespan was a mere twenty-three years (1933-56) with a total overall enrollment of only twelve-hundred students, still impresses and stimulates.



Studies building, completed wing, Lake Eden, North Carolina; A. Lawrence Kocher, 1940. (From *The Arts at Black Mountain College*.)

The handful of professors who founded Black Mountain College in 1933 did not set out to emphasize the arts. As they charted the aims and initial course of a new college, little did they realize how substantial would be its impact on the visual arts in America at mid-century.

John A. Rice, professor of classics and iconoclast of remarkable turn of mind, was fired from Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, in 1933 for opposing many of the educational policies of the college's president, Hamilton Holt. Rice and several other former Rollins faculty members (who left in the wake of his dismissal) plus a handful of loyal students set out to create an entirely new college. The college they envisioned would foster education within a democratic, faculty-controlled governing

structure. Creative studies in music, art, and theater would lend discipline, form, and tone to the curriculum. The practice of art, rather than its history and appreciation, would be taught as an integral, but not primary, part of the student's program.

The dominant force in the visual arts at Black Mountain from 1933 to 1949 was Josef Albers. With his Bauhaus imprint, developed as student, then teacher, in Germany of the 1920s and early 1930s, Albers and his wife, Anni Albers, an accomplished weaver and also a former Bauhaus instructor, brought with them Europe's new currents of modernism. They were among a number of European refugees who, grateful for the opportunity to teach and a safe place to live after the rise of the Nazis (and later the outbreak of World War II), arrived at the fledgling college in the North Carolina mountains.

Albers came with his Germanic discipline, the Bauhaus view of design as basic to education in the arts, and an enthusiastic propensity for abstract art, especially geometric abstraction. For Albers abstract art was "a natural part of an historical development toward a 'pure art.'"

Albers felt strongly about teaching students to "see" and was a strong force to reckon with in the classroom. Robert Rauschenberg, first a Black Mountain student at a summer institute in 1945, was among those artists honed by Albers's teaching. "Albers," he recalled, "was a beautiful teacher and an impossible person. ... He wasn't easy to talk to, and I found his criticism so excruciating and so devastating that I never asked for it. Years later, though, I'm still learning what he taught me, because what he taught had to do with the entire visual world."

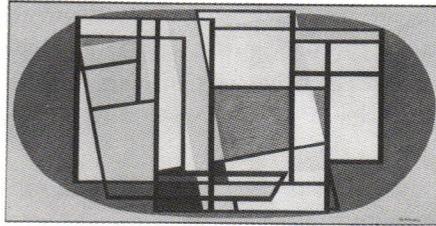
*The Arts at Black Mountain College*, a handsome volume of large format, is studded with black-and-white photographs of work by Albers's students. Albers's traits of precision and quality are unmistakable. When Albers was away from the college on leave, or when he

planned summer art institutes—which brought Black Mountain its greatest renown—he wisely brought in other teaching artists whose approach in the classroom differed from his own. Among these was Alexander (Xanti) Schawinsky, a graphic designer and former Bauhaus student, who taught painting and drawing in the 1930s and developed an Oscar Schlemmer-inspired performance theater. Unlike Albers, Schawinsky felt that students should be permitted to develop more of their own expression.

By the mid-1940s the education of the visual artist at Black Mountain was ensured a primary focus. Weaving was strong, thanks to the professional approach of Anni Albers; the woodworking shop was ably staffed; and ceramics, while not taught until the late 1940s and 1950s by David Weinrib, Karen Karnes, and others, was of high caliber. Ernest Haas was among those teaching photography; Nancy and Beaumont Newhall served as visiting lecturers. Many of the black-and-white photos in *The Arts at Black Mountain College* owe a debt to the high regard placed on photography at the college. The design of printed brochures and catalogues for the college as well as its theater and, in later years, the far-reaching poetry publications, shows a concern for a coherent design aesthetic in type, layout, and the whole process of printing production on a quality hand press.

While architecture never quite gained the stronghold of the other arts, it had its moments. Walter Gropius had an ongoing interest, though rather infrequent association, with the college. In 1939 with Marcel Breuer he designed a complex of buildings for the Lake Eden campus (Black Mountain acquired permanent property in 1937). Given its very limited finances, however, the college decided against building the complex.

A. Lawrence Kocher, architect and former editor of the *Architectural Record*, was called in to teach and to design a modest set of buildings for the college. He proposed a central gathering



Diagonal Plane; Ilya Bolotowsky, 1947. (From *The Arts at Black Mountain College*.)

hall with four radiating wings. Only one wing, the studies building that overlooked the lake, was constructed under a highly successful student-faculty work program. Kocher also designed a faculty house and other small structures for Black Mountain and taught architecture (1940–43). In teaching he was joined by Howard Dearstyne, the only American-born graduate of the Bauhaus, and later, by Anatole Kopp.

Gropius encouraged Harvard students to spend time at the college, to study design under Albers and to gain construction experience. He himself served as visiting lecturer at several summer institutes. Bertrand Goldberg visited briefly in 1946 as did Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., who lectured on design in the summer of 1948. Buckminster Fuller taught during two summers, involving students in his structural theories as they helped build a number of test-model geodesic domes on campus.

The temptation in discussing the arts at Black Mountain College is to rattle off lists of stellar names in music, dance, theater, creative writing, and, of course, the visual arts, names of those who came to teach and to study, many students returning later as teachers. Perhaps noting the art faculty of two summer institutes will suffice. Under the guidance of Albers, who organized the 1944 institute with the focus on “the education of the artist,” the college brought in José de Creeft, Jean Charlot, Amédée Ozenfant, and Bernard Rudofsky. Gropius gave two lectures.

The end of the dominance of European artists at the college came in 1948, giving way as author Mary Emma Harris points

out, to the emergence of young Americans. This shift was reflected in the roster of visiting summer faculty: John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Willem de Kooning, Buckminster Fuller, Richard Lippold, Beaumont Newhall, and others—plus seventy-seven students.

In producing *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, art historian Mary Emma Harris took on a herculean task. So much happened at Black Mountain within a short period, often in a high-voltage atmosphere, that sorting out the chronology of the now-defunct college, the personalities involved, and the significant art developments there was an extremely difficult task. The college’s never-ending financial problems (ultimately its nemesis), its isolation, the inevitable conflicts and ongoing changes in direction as well as the profusion of summer institutes and visiting faculty, and the underlying emphasis on experimentation further complicated Harris’s task. Harris is to be commended for her efforts to give us both the chronology of the college’s development and an assessment of the arts as they unfolded. Sometimes there is repetition and at points we may lose the forest for the trees. Those who were at Black Mountain themselves will no doubt find omissions.

Nevertheless, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* provides us with a comprehensive, well-researched, and amply documented record of rich interaction among artists, teachers, and students, which will serve to inspire and perhaps to nudge us beyond complacency in the education of today’s artists. Further study might explore the fonts of creativity and the psychology behind the generative forces of this dynamic and remarkable institution.

THE ARTS AT BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE, Mary Emma Harris, MIT Press, 1987, 315 pp., illus., \$50.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper.

Colin Cathcart

## “High Tech Brits”: The Strains of Technology

*Do those ducts really have to be so big?*

A legitimate confusion has always existed between the rhetorical and the functional content of architectural technology. The technical environment that inspired the architects of the Modern Movement to symbolize the “machine age” with an abstract architectural aesthetic also inspired a fringe of radical designers (Fuller, Eames, Leonidov, Williams, Chareau, Prouvé), who were convinced that technology should be allowed to symbolize itself. But while “architecture” is conventionally understood as both the making of an object and the end product, “technology” usually refers to means, but not ends. The manifestation of “technique” in any object tends to be transitory.

In America, the Modern Movement’s “radical technology wing” was steamrolled by the postwar building industry, while in the Soviet Union it was suppressed by Stalin. Conditions in Britain were different, however. Conservative resistance to technical innovation in the British postwar economy contributed to a glorification and continued faith in technical progress. Technological images were given a new “pop” significance by Cedric Price and Archigram. The continued craft basis of the building industry made small-scale technical experimentation possible. Young firms like Team 4 and Farrel Grimshaw overcame commercial obstacles of time and money with the prefabrication of their small factories and modest public commissions. With the opening of the Pompidou Center in Paris, “High Tech” ironically became Britain’s ruling style, so that the Royal Institute of British Architects quite naturally referred the Hongkong Bank and Lloyd’s to the movement’s most mature practitioners.

Recent royal persecution has effectively ended the movement, and High Tech practices and characteristics are now being assimilated by more recent tendencies.

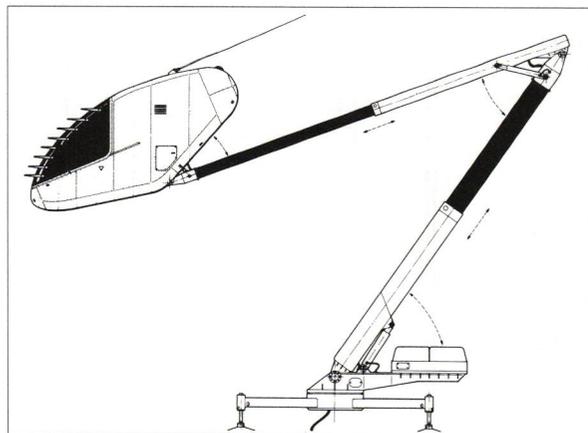
The practical and historical significance of the movement is marked by a wealth of recent publications, such as the four books under review. Each author has a different approach—analytical, documentary, polemical, journalistic—and each has adopted a different book format.

*High Tech Architecture* by Colin Davies documents a movement that aspires to “something more rigorous than mere style.” The critical introduction traces the movement’s articles of faith and the dominant motifs—such as steel and glass, plug-in pods, exposed services, and flexible space—which mark the practices of the movement’s leading exponents: Norman Foster, Richard Rogers, Nicholas Grimshaw, and Michael Hopkins. With illustrations ranging from Sant’Elia to Kurakawa, this introduction is a plain-spoken summary of great depth. The bothersome conflation of “high technology” (pure science applied in industry) and “High Tech” (conventional technology applied in architecture) is pointed out and dismissed: “If High Tech has nothing to do with high technology, well neither has Gothic anything to do with Goths.” The last decade of High Tech output is then documented, project by project. Each project is introduced by

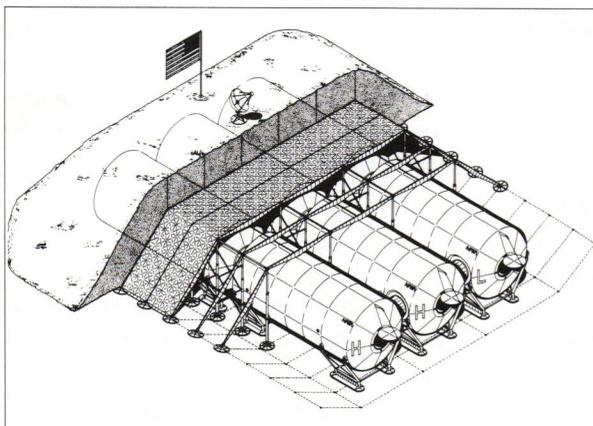
a dense technical description and presented thoroughly with photos and drawings. As a bonus, the captions contain illuminating tidbits and sly commentaries: “High Tech houses work well when the architect is also the client.” The 31 British projects are comprehensive, but the six international projects appear, perhaps inevitably, to be scattershot in their selection. America is underrepresented; and there are no Japanese projects, but we must remind ourselves that High Tech is an overwhelmingly British movement. This book will undoubtedly be seen in the future as the most complete documentation of the “High Tech Canon.”

Davies points out that if the High Tech tradition is no “mere style,” it does not exactly represent a realistic use of technology either. The dedication of Davies’s book to the movement makes his frank criticism easy to credit. While he conveys the sheer architectural power of High Tech’s recent output, he is also capable of recognizing that “there are not many good, practical reasons for putting a steel structure on the outside of a building, but plenty of reasons for not doing it.”

High Tech expression is always based on the rationale of an obstacle (construction time, bad soil) or a performance goal (flexibility, transparency). Many of these now-mature architects began their practices with industrial and commercial work, where their advocacy of prefabrication met with great success over obstacles of construction time and cost. The aesthetic shock of Reliance Controls, Universal Oil Products, and Modern Art Glass came at the end of a process that (outwardly, at least) concentrated upon rational and efficient accommodation. It was only when visual logic came to be taken as a sign of technological elegance that the High Tech movement entered its final phase. In the last ten years, High Tech has pro-



“Peanut” kinetic living unit; Future Systems. (From *Future Systems*.)



Preliminary lunar base; Future Systems. (From *Future Systems*.)

vided industrial culture with its most self-conscious artifacts.

*Future Systems*, produced by the currently most radical of High Tech ideologues, is a slim but provocative pamphlet, named for the partnership of two far-flung Foster Associates alumni: Jan Kaplicky in London and David Nixon in Los Angeles. Several short introductions make *Future Systems*' intentions clear; attempting to energize architecture by celebrating borrowed technologies, they wish for "an architecture of sleek surfaces and slender forms." More text is unnecessary, for the graphics are highly rhetorical. For each of the two dozen projects, a signature photo sets a tone of sometimes farfetched analogy, ranging from manta rays, bucket seats, and hydraulic cranes to Big Macs. The projects are presented with surreal photomontages and microscopically detailed cutaway line drawings; one wishes for either a larger format or a magnifying glass.

The rationales for *Future Systems*' forms are even more farfetched. Unlike most buildings, which sit still on the earth's surface, *Future Systems*' projects seem more like equipment, mounted precariously on legs, articulated arms, or tensioned cable arrays; they orbit in space or are buried underground. They rotate, telescope, inflate, adjust, and sometimes just disappear. Their stressed skins and monocoque shells resemble aircraft, yachts, seashells, even jellyfish. These are radical solutions, and they seem to

require problems more radical than those posed by ordinary human need. Does a building really need the streamlining, lightness, and hard shell perhaps more appropriate for some speeding pressurized vehicle? Kaplicky and Nixon are disappointed that the building industry is not subject to greater demand for improved technical performance. After providing shelter, heat, and comfort, should buildings somehow

also be required to ... fly?

*Future Systems* intends to find a more ecologically responsible, romantically demystified technology. For example, some of the more outlandish "habitation modules" are vacation houses intended for a more transparent and immediate experience of nature. *Future Systems*' technical optimism may seem naive to a world now so sensitized to the unintended side effects of technical "progress." They are enamored of technologies which to others seem somehow threatening.

Compared with their reluctantly earthbound projects, *Future Systems*' soil-shielded lunar base uses available, modest, and appropriate resources to overcome the difficult problems posed by space exploration. Their projects for crew quarters and wardroom table for the space station and collapsible space-frame platforms for the shuttle are truly ingenious and thought-provoking. The hostile environment of interplanetary space makes *Future Systems*' solutions so convincing that they seem almost modest.

The approach of Deyan Sudjic in *New Directions in British Architecture: Norman Foster, Richard Rogers, James Stirling* is awkward, to say the least. The table of contents lists promising chapter titles such as "Architecture as a Political Art," "The Modern Tradition," "The Machine Aesthetic," but what appears to be a collection of scholarly essays quickly dissolves into project-by-project

commentaries. Since a project may apply to more than one theme, the reader is too often referred back and forth between chapters. For example, the chapter titled "Building the City" ends by proclaiming the Stuttgart Statsgalerie as "the fruition" of James Stirling's contextualist model, but the reader must go 27 pages ahead to find its description. The book appears to be aimed at an international readership, but since there is little serious analysis of contemporary British architectural practice, it is difficult to discern the trajectories of the "new directions" claimed in the title. Although beautifully produced and filled with many subtle observations, the book appears to be pieced and patched together.

As Deyan Sudjic makes clear, Norman Foster, Richard Rogers, and James Stirling commonly use industrial or mechanical technology "out of context" in their buildings. Although James Stirling started practicing a generation ahead of Norman Foster and Richard Rogers, all three architects were affected by the British technical optimism of the sixties and seventies. But while Stirling's early work reflected the expressive articulations of Le Corbusier, Foster and Rogers responded to the service integrations of Louis Kahn. Stirling never abandoned plastic concrete and bearing masonry, and his work has become progressively more Victorian and "unthreatening" in its technical references. The work of Rogers and Foster, on the other hand, has exhibited ever more daring technical devices and structures, aesthetics being relegated to a consciously hidden agenda. Sudjic's criticism, however, is focused on the less-than-completely-devoted British public. "The architectural trappings of unpopular aspects of twentieth-century life—materials such as concrete, 'slab' tower blocks, and so on—have taken on a symbolic scapegoat role for the ills that they represent." The inattentive reader might miss entirely the muted critique of some of the more strained and pointless exercises that famous architects produce when pushed by their status to come up

with “original” tours de force. The public might legitimately suspect such exercises.

*Hongkong Bank: The Building of Norman Foster's Masterpiece* is a kind of “authorized biography.” Foster and the Hongkong Bank commissioned Stephanie Williams to write a “warts and all” version of the design and construction of the building, although they retained a veto (apparently unexercised) on any damaging content. This might lead one to suspect the narrative of some self-censorship—there is no discussion of fees, for example—but the narrative form is rare in architectural writing, and this one is quite compelling. “In the murk of deep fog (too thick for Foster, who had flown down, but was unable to land in his helicopter), the assembled team watched experimental Ministry of Defense vehicles throw bridges made of pins of maraging steel across a 12-meter-wide ravine.” Williams captures the birth of this building with all the stylistic trappings of a supermarket best-seller: colorful characters, exotic locations, plenty of action and conflict, the crush of time and events, suspenseful crises, disappointments, despair, and the final triumph.

Foster's proposal to the Hongkong Bank—to span the existing banking operations with the new bank tower—was accepted because it solved a practical problem and because this solution gave rise to a novel architectural image. But after the architect was retained, the original banking hall was pulled down. Foster was confronted with a clear site, a client who simply requested “Great Architecture,” and no obstacles upon which to base an unconventional technical expression. By default, the secondary criterion of flexibility, the need to accommodate the growing and changing needs of a vital organization, became the primary design goal. But even here, the architect's intentions were frustrated. The bank assumed (quite naturally) that the completely flexible building promised by the architects could accommodate any function anywhere. They resisted giving solid programming information to their

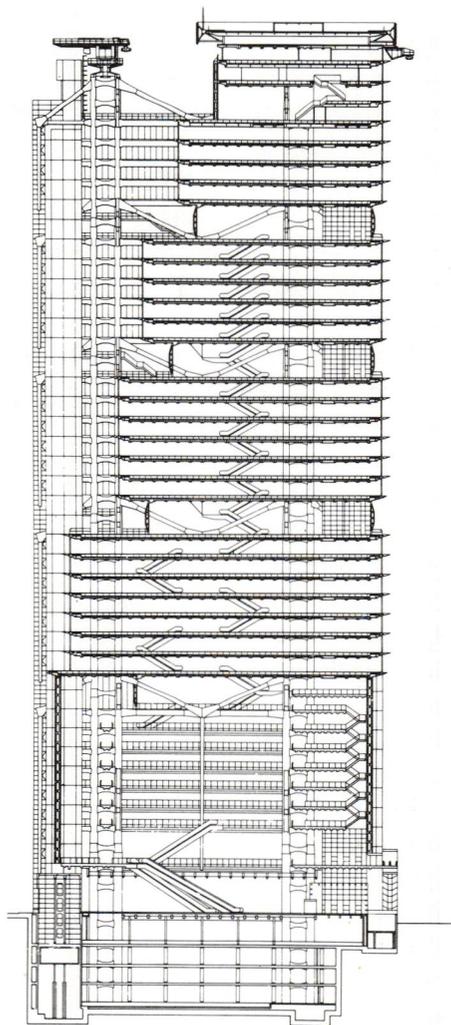
architects; due to the head-spinning growth of the bank, they didn't know themselves anyway. But despite its omnifunctional image, the design had to be tailored for specific structural loadings, mechanical capabilities, and organizational functions on each floor, just like any other building. The client learned, after several delays, that this flexible image was a symbol, not a functional reality. To give only one example, the “plug-in” mechanical pods may appear to be repetitive on the outside, but in fact no two are the same.

The most important legacy of the High Tech movement may well be not what they have done, but *how* they have done it. In passing, Williams's narrative im-

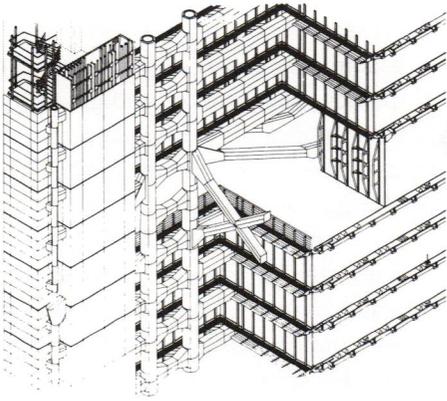
parts useful information about a work phase termed “research” by Foster's office. This phase not only involves research into available construction materials, but a worldwide search for innovative processes, transfer technologies, mock-ups, production methods, and detailed design in concert with technical subcontractors' research and development departments. All the subcontracts for the Hongkong Bank were assigned before the design was completed, for the humble reason that no architect's office has the expertise to detail these specialized components by itself. When the American curtain wall veterans, Cupples Products, were approached to clad this relatively small building (which nevertheless boasts one and one-half times the surface area of their World Trade Center), their bemused response was, “So, you've never built anything over three stories?”

The Hongkong Bank subcontractor selection and bidding process thus effectively involved the nomination of design collaborators, and, frankly, “chemistry counted.” The subcontractors for the bank's prefabricated service modules, for example, were prequalified on the basis of a two-page outline specification; left open were the commercial terms of the subcontract, the methods of manufacture, transport, erection, the technical details and layout, even the finishes. Apparently, Japan's HMT Consort Ltd. won the assignment because they offered stainless-steel cladding at no extra cost.

Paradoxically, although this approach seems operationally humble, it is also frighteningly ambitious. The technical development of a mass-produced product usually involves the steady perfection of a long series of prototypes. Such a process is of course impossible for the construction of a single building. Constantly “pushing the envelope” of each building's technical performance should send shivers through clients' and liability carriers' spines. There are design risks, too. Practical ends are sometimes lost in the strain for technical innovation. The bank's innovative structure, laboriously



East-west section showing setbacks to comply with local planning regulations, Hongkong Bank; Foster Associates, 1986. (From *High Tech Architecture*.)



Cut-away isometric showing external terrace at double story, Hongkong Bank; Foster Associates, 1986. (From *High Tech Architecture*.)

prefabricated and erected at absurd tolerances, provides "clear spans" only if we count four columns as one "mast" and ignore all the tensile "columns" at midspan. Foster's ceaseless invention eventually expended his clients' patience and budget. When a mounting system for the sign atop the building was estimated to cost no less than HK\$1.5 million, the client responded: "Allow me to present these two six-inch nails, at a total cost of fifty cents, to Foster Associates." Unfortunately, some of Foster's best ideas ran out of research time, like the glass plaza paving, which would have glowed at night with subterranean light and given daylight to the basement vaults. "Saturday, 10 March: The glass floor is out. Three years of design work is thrown away in a day."

Of these four books, Davies's is the most thorough and straightforward documentation of the technologies, the buildings, and the inspiration of High Tech, and provides the student with a concise critical introduction to the movement. Williams's book is for those who enjoy a good plot, and are more interested in the conceptual diagrams and construction shots than in the final drawings and glossy photos. For practitioners, it is also quite reassuring to see "Great Architecture" coming out of the same boardroom fights, programming battles, design misjudgments, and on-site snafus that we all endure. It reminds us that the making of any building, no mat-

ter how technically ambitious, is a profoundly human action.

Williams's book would be more significant if it called greater attention to the innovations represented by the actual practice of High Tech architecture. Foster's research processes spring from his belief that architectural progress comes through the egalitarian application of technical invention. As such, this process provides a potent operational critique to those architects of recent decades who have tended to apply ideological styles to "tried and true" technical orders. One senses that research processes such as Foster's could give technical direction to future stylistic or social tendencies.

It is also the practice innovations, not the technical ambitions nor the built objects, which may serve to elevate the historical status of High Tech from "mere style" to true movement. Historically, architects have not participated significantly in building technology innovations. A book that documents the High Tech movement's openness to technical research, and outlines its collaborative process for the architectural innovation of building systems, could be appended to every designer's "Handbook of Professional Practice."

HIGH TECH ARCHITECTURE, Colin Davies, Rizzoli, 1988, 160 pp., illus., \$35.00.

FUTURE SYSTEMS, David Nixon and Jan Kaplicky, Architectural Association, 1987, 64 pp., illus., £12.00

NEW DIRECTIONS IN BRITISH ARCHITECTURE: NORMAN FOSTER, RICHARD ROGERS, JAMES STIRLING, Deyan Sudjic, Norton, 1987, 208 pp., illus., \$35.00.

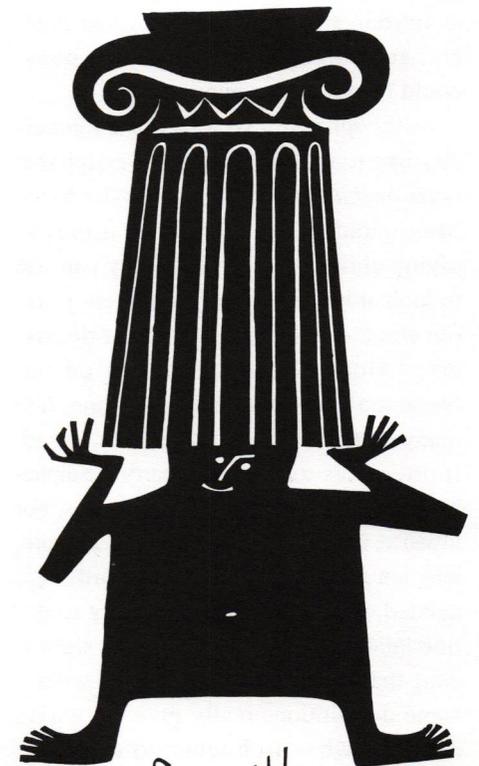
HONGKONG BANK: THE BUILDING OF NORMAN FOSTER'S MASTERPIECE, Stephanie Williams, Little, Brown and Co., 1989, 302 pp., illus., \$50.00 cloth.

Bonnie Fisher

## Architecture Books for Children

Tremendous opportunities exist today for children to learn about and better understand the built environment. For young people who like to read, over five thousand children's books are published every year and an increasing number of these have to do with architecture and design. Most of these are not intended, of course, for the budding architect or designer, but for those with a serious interest in their surroundings. Their value can be measured by how well they spark the imagination and foster conceptual development, not only for children, but for parents, teachers, and any adult generally interested in design.

In the expanding world of children's architectural books, the Preservation Press deserves special recognition. Over the past several years, it has demonstrated a strong commitment to children with the publication of numerous books for the young reader, including three of the four

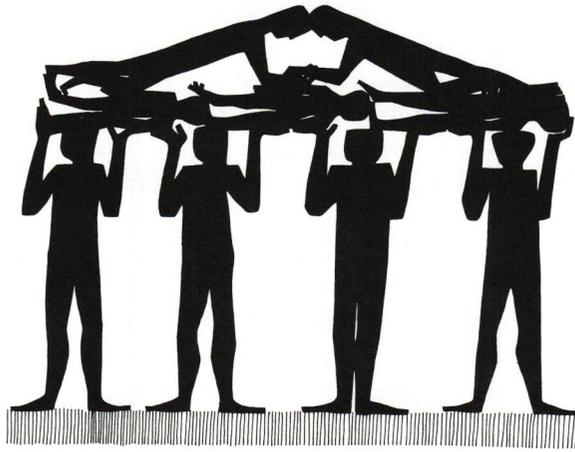


It feels like **SQUASH** to be a column  
(From *What It Feels Like To Be A Building*.)

reviewed here. To its credit, the Press has embraced a broad spectrum of interests and has not drawn too tight a focus on preservation, which is the mission of its parent organization, the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Instead, it has explored through its books the broadest dimensions of architecture, generously enriching our understanding and appreciation for buildings and the spaces they create.

Each of the books reviewed here is an outstanding example of the range and depth of children's architectural books available today. Each, in its own way, successfully engages the young reader, sustaining an interest that carries through more than one sitting. Thankfully, none is too consciously designed for children, at the expense of adults. None is condescending or too "cute." They all meet the test of good children's books in that they explain their subject matter in a simple, straightforward fashion. Generally, I think that they are best suited to children over the age of seven or eight, although they could work as introductory materials for older readers, and some, like the alphabet book, could be read to a younger child.

Although not a type of book I generally like to read to children, the alphabet book *Architects Make Zig-Zags*, by Rosie Munro and Diane Maddex is useful in giving children some tools they can use to look at buildings. For our seven-year-old child, each page was another discovery: "Mom, we have brackets on our house too!" Its greatest shortcoming, like many alphabet books, is that it is forced. It often tries too hard to marry the alphabet with meaningful architectural terms. For instance, if the author were to select a *z* word, why not ziggurat—or, if an *l* word were needed, wouldn't the opportunity to define landscape architect be more significant than "landscaping"? Even worse, some descriptions really give the wrong sense of what architects do and why. Most importantly, the title itself seems somewhat out of kilter, and just for the



"If you felt like a Greek temple, you would feel very important, but you would still feel squashed, bent and inclined to butt."  
(From *What It Feels Like To Be A Building*.)

sake of a witty opener. On the whole, though, the illustrations are well chosen and pleasing, and they are what most readers will remember.

*What It Feels Like To Be A Building*, by Forrest Wilson, is a great book. It takes what are often considered to be highly sophisticated concepts—the structural systems of buildings and the forces they respond to—and explains them in the most directly physical terms. By using the human body as a pedagogical tool, the author is able to convey the stresses and strains of buildings to even the most befuddled mind. Clearly, the author has taught engineering or architectural construction techniques and has spent the time trying to figure out how he could best communicate the ideas in the most straightforward and convincing fashion. The result is a book that is well conceived, well written, and well illustrated. Each page presents one fundamental idea through black-and-white, easy-to-understand drawings and very brief supporting text. The book is tremendously valuable in advancing the conceptual development of its readers.

*Round Buildings, Square Buildings, and Buildings That Wiggle Like a Fish*, by Philip Isaacson, is a beautifully made book. It is illustrated with enchanting photographs of architectural masterpieces taken by the author in strong light and saturated color. Though relatively small

in size, the book has a coffee table stature that comes from its stunning photos, fine printing, and generally skillful design. The organization is effective in drawing the reader into the substance of the text, beginning first with three "wondrous" buildings, the Taj Mahal, the Parthenon, and Chartres, and then proceeding into the components and characteristics that define buildings—walls, light and color, pathways, doorways, rooflines, ceilings, posts and columns, and shape. Each of the chapters is written in a provocative style that demands rereading and reflection. You find yourself asking, or trying to answer

for your inquiring child, what the author meant when he said that in the moonlight the Taj Mahal becomes the old emperor asleep and dreaming, or that the Brooklyn Bridge is playing a game of tag. Instead of putting the reader off, such descriptions reveal the rich and multifaceted illusive quality of buildings. Readers learn about the special contribution that each building makes, through the use of materials and light and color, to the spirit of place. The end of the book feels like the end of a magical journey led by someone slightly eccentric but highly attuned to the art of building.

From a child's perspective, I thought the sole weakness in the book was its occasional inaccessibility. Photos are not captioned, but are referenced by number in the text and not in a highly ordered or easily retrievable fashion. As a result, readers really cannot jump in to one page or the next, immediately uncover the name or date of construction of places shown in photos, or rapidly skim the book and grasp its intent, but must read it carefully chapter by chapter, often flipping pages back and forth to integrate the photos and the text. While this may be somewhat cumbersome and trying for a younger reader attempting to master the book alone, it, on the other hand, forces the reader into the author's own terms and adds to the sense that you are sharing a highly personal vision. For this, you are

rewarded with a special, secret understanding of the art and accomplishment of certain wonders of the architectural world.

Books like *Round Buildings, Square Buildings* use seeing as the primary vehicle to further an understanding of buildings. *What It Feels Like To Be A Building* uses feeling to communicate complex ideas. *I Know That Building!*, by Jane D'Aleio, relies upon doing. The book is immensely entertaining and full of ingenious things to do. It provides thirty different games and activities that can be undertaken alone or in a group to help discover the built environment. It, too, presents architecture as an inclusive domain, encompassing not only the design and construction of individual buildings, but also landscapes and cities. The fascination of construction tools, farm buildings, fire houses, landmarks, and Main Street are explored through interactive activities. The book is designed so that it can be entirely taken apart—to match architects with their buildings, to make masks of gargoyles, construct paper buildings and the like. Questions are posed and responses elicited to engage the reader, increasing an awareness and understanding of buildings and the built environment. I have used this book with my child and her friends and spent many afternoons using it as a tool for discovering the urban environment. I highly recommend it for children over the age of six and their families.

ROUND BUILDINGS, SQUARE BUILDINGS, AND BUILDINGS THAT WIGGLE LIKE A FISH, Philip M. Isaacson, Knopf, 1988, 121 pp., illus., \$14.95.

I KNOW THAT BUILDING! DISCOVERING ARCHITECTURE WITH ACTIVITIES AND GAMES, Jane D'Aleio, Preservation Press, 1989, illus., 84 pp., \$14.95.

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE A BUILDING, Forrest Wilson, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1988, 81 pp., illus., \$15.95.

ARCHITECTS MAKE ZIG-ZAGS: LOOKING AT ARCHITECTURE FROM A TO Z, Roxie Munro and Diane Maddex, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1986, 64 pp., illus., \$8.95.

Frank Edgerton Martin  
and Brian Hoffman

## The Razing of Romania's Past

DINU C. GIURESCU

*How to write a manifesto—on a form of urbanism for what remains of the twentieth century—in an age disgusted with them? The fatal weakness of manifestos is their inherent lack of evidence. Manhattan's problem is the opposite: it is a mountain of evidence without a manifesto. This book was conceived at the intersection of these two observations: it is a retroactive manifesto for Manhattan. Manhattan is the twentieth century's Rosetta Stone.*

Rem Koolhaas,  
Delirious New York, 1988

One of the great ironies in Nicolae Ceausescu's dream of "systematization,"<sup>11</sup> in which the vast majority of Romania's historic urban and rural landscape was to be rebuilt according to "rules for a rational redimensioning," is that no single plan or social manifesto ever existed to direct planning and design efforts. After the downfall of Ceausescu's regime in late 1989, the extreme degree of his renewal plans, has received much attention in the Western press. Systematization was a network of fragmentary social policies that projected the reduction in the number of Romania's villages from thirteen thousand to as few as five thousand. In May 1988, when the demolition of Romania's historic architecture was still relatively unknown to the outside world, a *Wall Street Journal* reporter writing about the exiled Romanian art historian Dinu Giurescu claimed that "what is taking place in Romania is a massive attempt at social engineering never before at-

tempted in any part of Europe, as the country systematically expunges its pre-communist past."<sup>12</sup>

In *The Razing of Romania's Past*, published shortly before Ceausescu's fall, Dinu C. Giurescu offers the only available account of the extent of the massive yet fragmented approach of Ceausescu's policies. With regard to the origins of the program, Giurescu claims that there is "no information on how such essential decisions were made and put into effect" during the late 1970s. Yet, the "change in tide soon became visible." By November of 1977, the government had disbanded the Directorate for the National Cultural Patrimony (Romania's central historic preservation agency). Systematization became an important component of annual and five year plans beginning in the early 1980s.

Like the Manhattan perceived by Rem Koolhaas, the partially "systematized" Romania left behind by Ceausescu at his death in 1989 is a mountain of evidence without a manifesto. While Koolhaas argues that the delirious yet coherent tone of Manhattan was the product of many minds with many divergent plans and aspirations, Romania's tone is the product, perhaps, of a single mind (or institution) with no real plan. Giurescu recounts how the highly destructive Romanian earthquake of March 1977 gave the state and Ceausescu the opportunity to demolish houses and streets that were perceived to be in a "state of imminent collapse." It was in the wake of this natural disaster that existing plans for the homogenization of



West façade after demolition began, main church of Vacaresti, Bucharest. (From *The Razing of Romania's Past*.)

differences between rural and urban environments were revived and expanded.

Giurescu's brief book, written after his flight from Romania in 1988, is an impassioned account of the extent of Ceausescu's plans to erase and write over his country's history and ethnic diversity. The book was clearly written by someone grieving over the destruction of the architectural fabric of his nation's towns and cities. Indeed, the *Wall Street Journal* article noted that Giurescu had lost his own 19th-century house in Bucharest.

Contrasting the stark "agro-industrial centers" that were to replace groups of villages was Ceausescu's far more elaborate and ornate House of the People, a palace planned to be three times the size of the United States Capitol. An anecdote in the *New Yorker* about the building of the House of the People, one of Ceausescu's pet projects, typifies the chaotic state of Ceausescu's decision-making: "According to Lieutenant Colonel Mihai Evores ... Ceausescu dropped by two or three times a week to supervise the construction, and on almost every visit he ordered design changes. 'He changed the scale or the materials of the staircase in the south foyer twelve times,' Evores said."<sup>3</sup>

As Giurescu shows, Ceausescu's "plans" do not simply confirm a pattern of the dictatorship's programs to remake the landscape in accordance with one overarching, homogeneous ideology. Rather, the systematization of Romania's history and ethnic diversity represents not so much an attempt to homogenize the diversity of the past as to *erase it completely*. This comprehensive approach to geographic and social engineering challenges not only history—traditionally understood as a set of facts recoverable by scholars in the present—but strategies of historiography itself.

In a country such as Romania, surviving urban and rural landscapes testify to more than the known taxonomy of ar-



Demolition at the center of Bucharest. (From *The Razing of Romania's Past*.)

chitectural styles and geographic patterns that historians are trained to recognize. Their makeup and selective preservation imply a historiographical method in themselves; their creation and maintenance are a means by which a society remembers its past; thus they can be seen as a mode of historiographical discourse.

Ceausescu's efforts to erase the precommunist past can also be seen as a projection and preservation of the future. In this sense, "preservation" not only creates an idealized past, but can also project a rationalized structure of life for the future geography of a nation. Ceausescu's programs show an almost unmitigated hatred of the past, unparalleled by either Hitler or Stalin, causing one to come to the enigmatic conclusion that Ceausescu may have seen his country as a museum of its own future and the possibilities of the socialist state. Giurescu is quoted elsewhere as saying "If you want to have this type of society, you need a totally new type of human being—a being who will willingly, cheerfully, and diligently carry out all the orders given out by the leadership. To have such an individual, you must create a new environment for them."<sup>4</sup>

*The Razing of Romania's Past* is one of the most poignant "calls to arms" ever written by an architectural historian and preservationist. The book provides a factual and historical basis for further theoretical questioning regarding the role of architecture in the engineered control of history, ethnic diversity, and political

resistance. But in retrospect, we can now understand Ceausescu's failure to complete his program as further evidence that architecture alone cannot transform a society or unify its historical diversity. While Ceausescu's dream of a rationalized state may seem concise, his approaches to create a new "socialist man" were far more ambiguous. Ultimately, the machine that he sought to create, a machine in which architecture unified historical and geographical difference, collapsed from

within. We will probably never know how much of the anger released in the violent revolution of late 1989 was related to the destruction of entire neighborhoods and towns. Giurescu's study may well be remembered as the real architectural manifesto of this period; it may be seen as a preservationist's defense of valued places in which, between the lines, the overthrow of the dictator who would destroy them can be foreseen.

#### NOTES

1. The term was Ceausescu's own. Robert Cullen, "Report from Romania: Down with the Tyrant," *The New Yorker*, April 2, 1990, 97.
2. Manuela Hoelteroff, "Romania's Restructuring: No Perestroika," *Wall Street Journal*, May 19, 1988, 34.
3. Cullen, 98.
4. Cullen, 97.

Peter Anders

## “The Vision Thing: Soviet Avant-Garde Architecture before Glasnost”

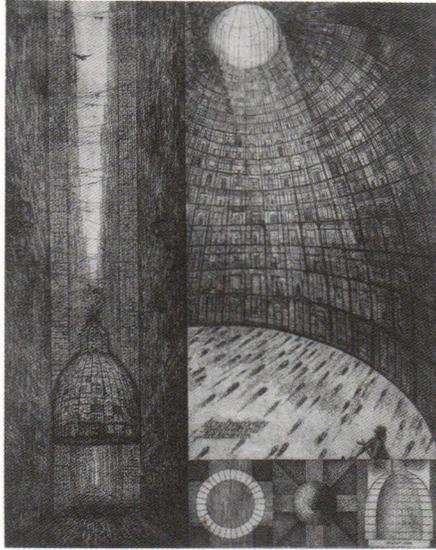
THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING! AGAIN!

If aesthetic trends in the United States are any indication, the Russian avant-garde of the 1920s is here to stay. After years of suppression at home, Constructivism and Suprematism have found expression in Western media, graphics, and design. Deconstructivist architecture in the 1980s has taken the image of Constructivism, if not its social program, and become a pervasive aesthetic in both Europe and the United States. Ironically, in the same decade that the Soviet Union began its self-disintegration, the triumph of Russian art over the West was complete.

But what of the Russian avant-garde today? Last summer, New York had two exhibitions of Russian architecture: one at the Museum of Modern Art on Soviet revolutionary architecture of the 1920s and 1930s and the other displaying the recent work of Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin at the Feldman Gallery. A comparison of the two exhibitions reveals the difference between the architects working then and today. The visionary optimism of the Revolution has been supplanted by a dark whimsy, a graphic congestion reflecting frustration within a dying empire.

Brodsky and Utkin's work is part of the recent Soviet phenomenon of paper architecture, which focuses on designs never intended to be built. In the inspired projects of the team, augmented by the graphic genius of Brodsky, a world of shadow emerges. At once poetic and personal, the works convey dreams and sensibilities defying the realities of present Soviet architecture. Paper architecture was born of this resistance and ambition.

In the West, there have been sporadic publications of recent Russian architecture. Russian victories in international



*A Contemporary Architectural Art Museum*, etching; A. Brodsky and I. Utkin, 1987. (From *Paper Architecture*.)

competitions announced the birth of something new. Although relatively few books have been published in this field, *Paper Architecture: New Projects from the Soviet Union*, edited by Heinrich Klotz, is a valuable new entry. Its chief purpose is to present the projects of the architects, rather than to editorialize about them. To understand the works, however, it is important to understand the land and culture that produced them.

Twentieth-century architecture in Russia must be understood as a response to political forces. This is vital for understanding the paper architects of today. Whether in support of the surge of the Revolution or in sullen opposition to Leonid Brezhnev's "Period of Stagnation," Russian architecture remains a critical force in its society.

Works that remain on paper are either traces of inspiration or records of frustration. Given the turmoil of its history, Russia has provided many opportunities for both. The aspirations of the architects of the Revolution is balanced by the doubt of those working today. As a form of social commentary, the works of the paper architects of the 1920s up to the 1980s mark the turbulence of Soviet political life.

The euphoria of the 1918 Revolution revolutionized art as much as politics.

The fire of change sparked movements ranging from rationalism to expressionism, from Constructivism to Suprematism. Our architectural world is still reeling from this period of invention. While many of the works were realized, most of the visions were to remain drawings. Tatlin's Monument to the Third International could not be built since, among other reasons, Russia did not have the iron needed to build the huge structure. Projects of the students of the Moscow school VKhUTEMAS transcended the limitations of early Soviet economy (and physics) to produce blimp-supported structures and orbiting ring cities girdling the earth.

True paper architecture, defining the clash of dreams and political reality, begins with the advent of Stalinism. While the Russia of Lenin was born in revolution, that of Stalin was rooted in nationalism, the consolidation of the nation under a Socialist government.

Nationalist architecture in the Soviet Union, as in Germany, placed a high value on architecture. Germany used classical and recently discovered Assyrian styles to assert the image of empire. The Russian counterpart was the agglomeration of great "wedding cakes," the piling of classical orders to clad its bureaucracy. While Stalinism's conveyance of politics through architecture was shared with the Soviet avant-garde, the stylistic differences could not have been more striking.

While visionary architects like Ivan Leonidov struggled to purify form toward a Suprematist ideal, Stalin's architects stubbornly held to the recognized architecture of authority. Classicism, realistic sculpture, the trabeated orders of architecture were Stalin's medium. They conveyed a simple, powerful message: "These are the spoils of our victory. The classicism of our imperial past is now for all the people to enjoy."

This was a disaster for the avant-garde. The authorities would tolerate none of the "bourgeois" abstractions of the Constructivists. They were the work of an elite, not the proletariat. To the

Stalinist mind, they lacked a necessary link to the imperial past and, paradoxically, they were a threat to Soviet authority.

Careers were destroyed. The great schools of Moscow were forced to produce state-approved designs. The works of the avant-garde were banished, unbuilt if not suppressed. The luminaries of the revolution were limited to the paper they drew on. Rarely published, even their earlier publications were withheld from circulation.

[Alexander Velikanov] has recently described in the professional press the extraordinary experience undergone by his generation in MARKhI (the Moscow Institute of Architecture) in the 1950s when they discovered the work of the 1920s avant-garde for the first time in magazines which the school library insisted did not exist—and when they discovered that the self-effacing old assistant in their modelmaking workshop was Ivan Leonidov, “still living like a heroic ghost from those forbidden pages.” (*Nostalgia of Culture: Contemporary Soviet Visionary Architecture*, published by the Architectural Association, 1988.)

While Stalinism crushed the modernist movement in Russia, it did maintain a respect for architecture. Architecture became a form of propaganda, conveying the grandeur of the state through its derivative classicism. Later, in the fifties, Khrushchev’s program for building attacked even this indulgence and brought on the sterile modernism which distinguishes Russian architecture of today.

Architecture became a victim of Khrushchev’s denial of Stalinism, his need to distinguish himself from Stalin’s regime. Khrushchev called for a pragmatic approach to the problems of housing and construction in the USSR. The classicism of Stalin’s architects was seen as effete; ornament was scorned in favor of effective, simple construction techniques. Khrushchev believed that the demand for construction in Soviet Union could not be met by those who built monuments to themselves.

This, ironically, set the stage for the

return of modernism to the USSR. Smooth planes and unadorned surfaces were the reductive style best suited for mass-produced housing and high-rise construction. While initially there was enthusiasm for the new work and the results of the housing program, the construction was often poor and the planning uncritical and brutal. Perhaps the results were no worse than similar attempts in the West; the training and opportunities of modern Russian architects, however, left few alternatives to the status quo.

And so, a government-approved, zombie modernism took root in Russia. Amnesia regarding the avant-garde movements of the 1920s combined with the state-enforced blandness of Khrushchev’s programs stultified Russian architects. Professional architecture became a debased form of engineering subject to the dictates of the state.

Paper architecture was born in this darkness. In the 1960s a new futurology was born resulting from concurrent research on the Soviet avant-garde by Vigdaria Khazanova, the initial aspirations of Khrushchev’s program, and the work of the NER movement. NER was founded by Gutnov, Lezhava, Kudriavtsev, and other graduates of Moscow’s architec-

tural institute, MARKhI. Intensely optimistic, and inspired by breakthroughs in technology, NER became Russia’s answer to Archigram. Their work maintained an aggressive belief in the power of architecture to improve the world. Utopia, a theme inherited from the Revolution, still was a possibility.

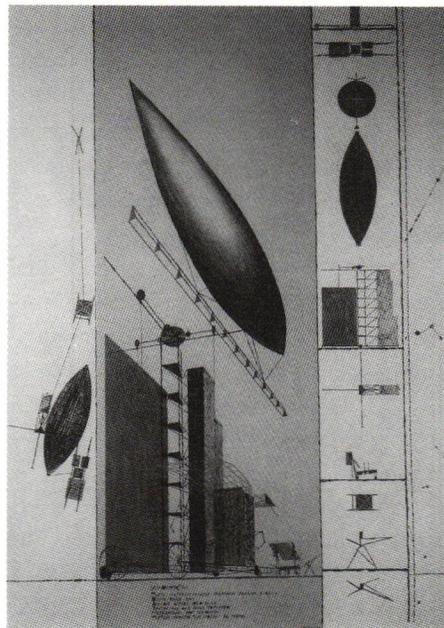
In the past twenty years, however, utopia has faded from view. Brezhnev’s “period of stagnation” managed to still hopes for a perfect future. Few architects with training received any of the design responsibilities or supervisory roles in state work. Even today, only two-thirds of the practicing architects in Moscow have formal training, while effectively no towns except Moscow have any architects at all.

Many of the young architects graduating from MARKhI in the 1970s and 1980s refused to practice, opting instead to work on paper. They no longer saw their work as curing the ills of the world. Their proposals became internalized fantasies, intimate revelations.

Distinguished from utopian thought, fantasy lacks an external vision or aggressive social programs. It makes no sweeping declarations; its voice is poetic, sometimes ironic. Its values favor content over function. As Heinrich Klotz states:

[This] revolt against an architecture of functionalism ignores any claim toward realization and reverts to the dream image, the brainchild. This is all beyond facts. As a protest and melancholy retreat, as courageous abandonment of social injunctions and as a fictitious resistance, the drawings become exercises in the survival of the imagination.

This quote is from the introduction to *Paper Architecture: New Projects from the Soviet Union*, published to document a recent traveling exhibition of works by young architects in the USSR. The book comprises beautifully reproduced drawings and an appendix containing the architects’ explanations of their projects, and is an important resource for those interested in the recent artistic developments in Russia.



*City Sockets*, oil and plastic; Yuri Kuzin, 1988. (From *Paper Architecture*.)

The introductory texts written by Heinrich Klotz and Alexander Rappaport are moderately helpful in establishing a context for the presented work (in my opinion, a much better essay on paper architecture is Catherine Cooke's "A Picnic by the Roadside or Work in Hand for the Future?" in *Nostalgia of Culture*). Klotz reminds the reader that paper architecture is not glasnost architecture. The work shown was done during the Brezhnev regime without the hope offered by Gorbachev's policies.

Rappaport draws parallels between concurrent postmodernism of the West and that done in Russia. The same irony, the same use of classicism and historical precedent are found in both worlds. Rappaport underestimates a crucial difference, however. Despite the whimsy, one senses much more is at stake with paper architecture. It is an architecture of resistance, done despite the state. At the same time that the AT&T building was under construction in New York, paper architects had to sneak competition entries through Soviet security to get them to their destinations.

Architecture is not just a matter of stylistic language in Russia. It still represents a political commitment both for the state and those who defy it. Rappaport's attempt to reduce the matter to linguistics mistakes paper architecture for Western postmodernism. Despite visual similarities, the stakes are different. To focus on language is to miss the thrust of the Russian work and to underscore the weakness of Postmodernism.

But let the work speak for itself! Here we find self-erecting houses of cards and skyscraper mausoleums, cottages made of honey cakes and Escherian sky cities. Contrasts and similarities abound in this pluralist explosion. Some, like Yuri Awwakumov's "City of Clubs" or Yuri Kuzin's "City Sockets" carry on the work of the Revolution by positing utopias, be they remedial or comic. Others, like the team of Sergei Chuklov and Vera Chuklova, present a dematerialized, fractal future.

In others, though, a sensibility that characterizes some of the best paper architecture emerges. A feeling of closure and internalization marks the work of Dmitry Busch, Dmitry Podyapolsky and Alexander Khomyakov. Their "Cube of Infinity" extends beyond perception within itself through internal mirroring. Its exterior is opaque. In Brodsky and Utkin's "Intelligent Market," a concentric labyrinth appears to be a crushingly dense city at its center. The rendering of their work is heavy with ink, chiaroscuro weighing the work down like lead.

This internalization evokes claustrophobia, a confrontation of limits. The work may indeed reflect architectural practice in Russia and its oppression through banality. However, the work of Nadya Bronzova and Mikhail Filippov provide a paradoxical solution. In beautiful aqua-relle and ink drawings, they propose the healing of Russia through a revival of classicism and indigenous styles. Lacking the irony of postmodernism, their work portrays a utopia of beauty and order. In a project, lamentably missing from this book, they suggest that the style for the 21st-century be a return to the past. In a sequence of drawings, the derricks and slabs of the metropolis are replaced with dachas and church steeples. The pendulum has swung far enough toward the future, they say, let us follow it on its return. Their work may truly be a glasnost architecture, addressing the future by resolving the errors of the past.

In sum, the works presented in this book are exhilarating, a triumph of content. From this book we know that the intellect and spirit of Russian artists prevails. Americans can go beyond consuming the style of Constructivism and learn also from the content of today's paper architects.

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PAPER ARCHITECTURE: NEW PROJECTS FROM THE SOVIET UNION, Heinrich Klotz, editor, Rizzoli, 1990, 111 pages, illus., \$29.95.

Daniel Barbiero

## Writing Architecture

ROGER CONNAH

In many respects, *Writing Architecture: Fantômas Fragments Fictions: An Architectural Journey Through the 20th Century*, Roger Connah's unconventional monograph on Finnish architect Reima Pietilä, represents the literal application of a postmodern aesthetic of fragmentation to the vast territory in which modern architecture and culture intersect. The most striking feature of Connah's book is frankly its systematically discontinuous method of construction and elucidation.

The subtitle of the book, *Fantômas Fragments Fictions*, intimates the author's postmodern method: Fantômas, the criminal hero of popular French literature at the beginning of this century, was an elusive character who always seemed able to evade those who sought to capture him. Although Connah discusses Pietilä's work throughout the book, and provides an illustrated timeline of Pietilä's development and projects, Pietilä remains the elusive Fantômas of this book. His escapes and disappearances, in contrast to those of the original Fantômas, however, have been engineered not so much by himself as by Connah, his pursuer and collaborator.

Pietilä's work assumes an allegorical role within the context of Connah's larger purpose. That larger purpose is to present a series of "collisions" (Connah's term) in which the main programs, slogans, and statements of modernism broadly construed confront one another in a manner reminiscent of the surrealist's vaunted meeting of the sewing machine and umbrella on an operating table. Pietilä's work attains the status of allegory in the old sense when it is arranged in fragments and used to signify modernism as a whole. For Connah, Pietilä is the personified sign under which an entire historical moment can be subsumed and represented.



Steven Holt

## Domestic Animals

ANDREA BRANZI  
(WITH NICOLETTA BRANZI)

## Learning From Milan

ANDREA BRANZI

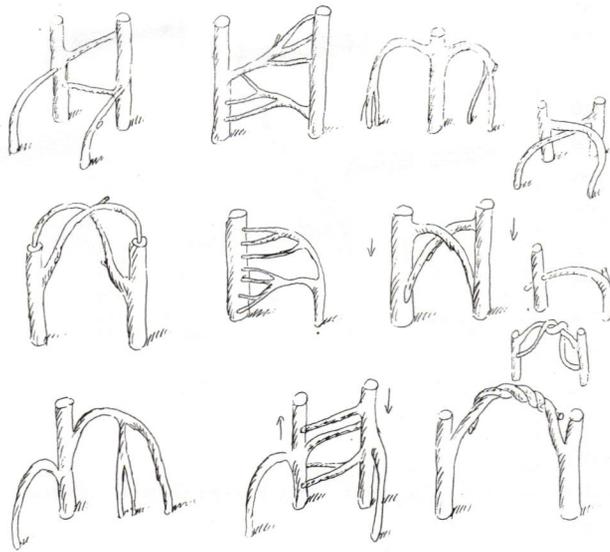
## Design Metaphors

ETTORE SOTTASS, EDITED BY  
BARBARA RADICE

Industrial designers: Read these books! They won't help anyone understand what you do, they won't get you better clients, and they won't make you a sexier dresser, lover, or renderer, but they may help save our profession. These books by Andrea Branzi and Ettore Sottsass Jr. are hand-sized, passion-based, value-added texts that proffer more hope, information, and awareness per page than any other recent books I can remember.

There are currently three kinds of industrial design of competing interest. The first is Populist, and its practitioners, inspired by Victor Papanek, John and Nancy Todd, and Patricia Moore, work with the less fortunate, differently abled citizens of the world, using anything available to them, and living anywhere and everywhere. The second is High Tech, and its practitioners interpret function and give fabulous teleological forms to new technologies. Its CAD-CAM-centered, frog-design-inspired workers tend to live and work in engineering-intensive locales like Silicon Valley. The third is Psychological, and its practitioners focus on reestablishing a connection with meaning. This group includes various art- and craft-based alternatives, and its practitioners tend to live in industrial culture centers like New York, London, and Milan.

Clearly, Branzi is among the last group—he thrives on meaning. His heavily illustrated *Domestic Animals* be-



Preliminary study for "Domestic Animals;" Andrea Branzi, 1985.  
(From *Domestic Animals*.)

gins by succinctly examining the disappearance of the mass market, and proceeds to design's relationship with music videos, rock concerts, and postliterate, consumption-oriented society. While it may sound ponderous, the reading is brisk—Branzi writes with a delightful accent. Produced in collaboration with his wife, Nicoletta, a designer of limited-edition art clothing, *Domestic Animals* is a book of short comments and compelling objects—mainly Branzi's furniture projects for the Italian company Zabro. Most of these pieces use an iconic, squared-off, industrial base juxtaposed with eccentric (often birch) branch backs and armrests to form a series of willfully misinterpreted furniture. Part latter-day Shaker, part retro-future Adirondack Twig style, these are not mass-market pieces, but hybrid, visionary art-design studies. They are about ideas; they show how to "think an object."

The furniture invites reflection on the way that we live, the way that we link ourselves to a number of "presences" within our homes. Branzi uses the furniture to buttress the book's premise that these presences are, by turns, literary, technical, profoundly cultural, and decidedly animalistic. As Pierre Restany

points out in his foreword, Branzi believes in "tribal" values, the opposite of global design. He calls this approach Neoprimitivism, and it is clearly a psychological, ironic, knowing-what-you-don't-know kind of design based on local cultural archetypes set into a bedrock of mythology. Its *modus operandi* is to rethink everyday objects such as furniture and tabletop products, to question and critique what passes for advanced design, and to use this insight as the basis for creating strange, yet familiar, furnishings that speak to our competing feelings of alienation and belonging.

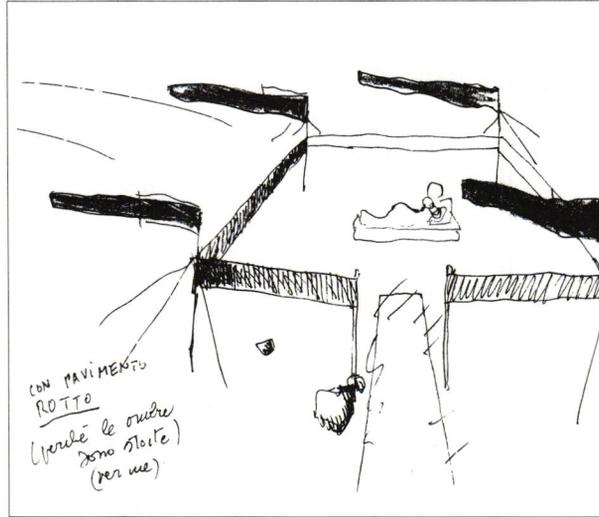
We all heard in design school that Le Corbusier said the house is a machine to live in, but Branzi has taken that a step beyond; he believes that "the house is a machine that has just begun to be used" where "information [will] circulate like air conditioning" and "post-television citizens will use the TV like a bunch of flowers on a table." Incorporating the lessons of communication art mavens such as Brian Eno, Nam June Paik, Marshall McLuhan, and Dick Hebdige, Branzi swims through media oceans that most designers don't even dare place a toe in. Branzi has done this as a designer, but also as a teacher (at Domus Academy); historian (his book *The Hot House* chronicled advanced Italian design of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s; curator; editor (currently of *Modo*); and a host of other roles—whichever hat he wears, pen he writes with, or pencil he sketches with, there is no one else operating in as comparably rich a range of design-centered creative activities in the United States, or, for that matter, in the world.

In contradistinction to *Domestic Animals*, Branzi's *Learning from Milan*—an America-only title known as *Afternoons at the Factory* elsewhere—lets the writ-

ten word dominate. Through ten essay-length chapters, Branzi examines and speculates upon design's past, present, and future role in the universe. This time there are no Branzi projects to back up his arguments, but the title does piggyback on Robert Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown, and Steven Izenour's seminal *Learning from Las Vegas*, and a melange of work in the middle of the book draws from the works of Joseph Beuys, Richard Hamilton, Marcel Duchamp, Fritz Lang, Norman Foster, and Cecil B. deMille, among others. Themes developed in the earlier book are amplified: television becomes "the great sensory system of the world"; rock music becomes "the universal code of communication," and Africa is "the primordial mother of a new and primitive archetypal and mythic sensibility."

Additionally, Branzi also favorably reappraises the German design school at Ulm, ponders the rosy future of Caribbean and Canadian design, and speculates on the economic prowess of the Japanese and their ability to synthesize and consume other cultures. He emphasizes that the "protagonist of current planning culture is design, and not architecture," and I must agree. This is the Age of the Object. "Objects possess the mystery of the universe which once belonged to man," Branzi wrote in *Domestic Animals*, and in *Learning from Milan* he states crisply, "We live in a megasystem of furnishings and fittings." Branzi justifies this not with academic rhetoric but with empirical evidence, explaining that a typical family that might have owned hundreds of objects in the 19th century now owns *thousands*.

For most designers, *Domestic Animals* will be the preferred book: a lot more pictures, far fewer words, and Branzi's key arguments in distillate form. For those already enthused about the possibilities presented by *Domestic Animals* and ready for more involved his-



Untitled design sketch; Ettore Sottsass. (From *Design Metaphors*.)

torical and theoretical considerations, *Learning from Milan* is the ticket. In both books, Branzi's writing, at its best, offers an expressive, fluffless density of thought that will have you reaching for pens to highlight ideas and to scribble notes in the margin.

Ettore Sottsass, the most written about and least understood designer of the second half of the 20th century, has produced a revealing book, *Design Metaphors*, containing some of his most personal projects, such as "Decoration of a Shrine for the Hair of My Father's Right Hand," and "Design of a TV Set for Night Butterflies." As author and present-day Sottsass companion Barbara Radice points out in the book's introduction, "All the photographs published in this book were taken by Sottsass between 1972 and 1973," when Sottsass (still unknown to most Americans) forsook his previous life in Milan for a nomadic existence with young Barcelona artist Eulalia Grau, searching for "deserted places" where he could cleanse himself of culture and history.

One gets the impression that during this time Sottsass not only ate, drank, and daydreamed, but got stoned, laid, and waylaid on his way through the Pyrenees, and in the process, reaffirmed a primal fragment of life. It is cool stuff. Radice's all-too-brief introduction tells the story of Sottsass's odyssey not just as a designer but as a person plagued by doubts as to

design's (and his own) contribution to the universe. During this period, Radice reports, he almost stopped designing—but it is apparent that he never quit searching.

The designs he did do, replete with their unusual titles, are not at all like the work he is known for in this country—those sleek Olivetti designs of the 1970s, for example, or the quirky Memphis pieces of the 1980s. Nor are his designs like the metaphors the book's title refers to, although they do function in an expanded linguistic sense. Rather, these projects are akin to 3-D meditations. Carefully, yet often

spontaneously composed from whatever is around, they show a designer more intent on making (and celebrating) magic moments than on practicing industrial design as we know it. Sottsass, too, shows how to "think an object," partially through study of one's self-doubts, fears, and inner motivations; I had the distinct impression that this time was pure therapy for Sottsass, and hence it is not surprising that the work is scribbly and resonant with thought.

There is very little writing in *Design Metaphors*, but not much is needed; you either understand this quirky, mid-1970s work, or you don't. For example: a bird-house-like, Sottsass-made architectural monument sits atop hills of small stones; beneath it, the caption reads "Design of a Very Very Beautiful Architecture. So What?" Or a handmade door frame at the edge of a shadow in a deserted rocky valley is held in place by twine with two palm fronds at the top; the caption says, "Design of a Door to Enter into Darkness."

Clearly, Sottsass has walked through the aforementioned portal to explore his own darkness. By 1960, if not earlier, Sottsass knew he could do "pretty," even beautiful, design. But, to repeat the question, so what? What, Sottsass wondered, does beauty mean in a world like ours? Unlike Mies van der Rohe (who said "I'd rather be good than interesting"), Sottsass preferred "interesting"

work, and that meant growth, transformation, and good *and* bad work. It is important to recall that Sottsass invented Memphis in the 1960s—with a range of provocatively colored, sexually referenced objects, rooms, buildings and cities published on the pages of *Industrial Design* and the cover of *Casabella*—and the world was not ready to accept it.

No wonder Sottsass went off to the wilds in the 1970s. We're lucky he didn't cut off his ear! In 1973, he wrote, "It may occur to someone working in design to produce objects that are of no use to industrial civilization ... but that serve to release creative energies, to suggest possibilities, to stimulate awareness, to bring people's feet back onto the planet." That "someone" was himself, and Radice reports that he wanted "to use consumerism ... (to become) a liberating force rather than a conditioning one." If it could be said that Memphis brought *soulfulness* to mainstream industrial design, then it was his own soul that Sottsass first nourished during his days and nights in the mountains making the projects shown in *Design Metaphors*.

In the end, it is impossible to review the Branzi or Sottsass books without also in some way commenting about the work of the designers themselves. Both designers work with the discrepancies between what is considered artificial and what is termed natural; expensive materials are treated humbly while common materials are highlighted. Both designers make work not only useful and beautiful, but worthy of contemplation as well. They are asking the big questions about how we see, think, and feel, going far past the normal "whens" and "wheres" to focus on the "whys."

Each book is grounded in the conviction that design is a deeply entrenched and potentially poetic enterprise; it is art with a capital "A" and culture with a capital "C." The arguments of Branzi and Sottsass contrast sharply with those of contemporary American product-design pundits, who are eager to join design and business. Although Branzi and Sottsass

are concerned with the partnership of design and industry, they never mention the alleged "stuff" of business: bottom lines, focus groups, or market shares. Instead, their focus is resolutely on design's *relationship* with contemporary society.

If the industrial designer in America is ever to be better than a capitalist tool or more than a janitor hired to tidy up corporate messes, then the models that Branzi and Sottsass represent deserve to be much more widely discussed. MIT Press and Rizzoli—by taking on these shorter, smarter, less profitable and more affordable books—are beginning this process. We know by now that the revolution will not be televised, but, after reading these books several times, I felt it was still possible that it may be designed, and it is this single possibility that I feel may save our profession from itself as well as from the myriad external forces that swirl around us.

Matthew B. Seltzer

## Icons and Aliens

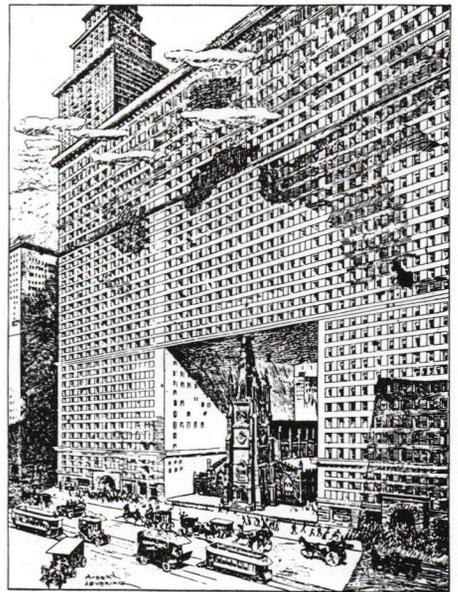
JOHN J. COSTONIS

What is the justification for using law to regulate the appearance of architecture and other features of the visual environment? Vanderbilt Law School Dean John J. Costonis argues that the preservation of cultural and psychological stability in the environment justifies aesthetically based laws and describes the motivations of the parties to aesthetic disputes. Costonis first explored these themes in his 1982 *Michigan Law Review* article, "Law and Aesthetics: A Critique and a Reformulation of the Dilemmas." Unlike the 1982 article, his new book avoids legal technicalities and is intended to be accessible to non-lawyers. For Costonis, the basic format of an aesthetic dispute, such as a battle over the preservation of a beloved historic structure, is a threat to a community "icon" by a newcomer "alien." Costonis says that "'icons' are features invested with values that confirm our sense of order and identity," while "'aliens' threaten the icons and hence our investment in the icons' values." As the basis for this theory, Costonis draws upon the work of prominent urban theorists

DOMESTIC ANIMALS: THE NEOPRIMITIVE STYLE, Andrea Branzi (with Nicoletta Branzi), MIT Press, 1987, 80 pp., illus., \$9.95.

LEARNING FROM MILAN: DESIGN AND THE SECOND MODERNITY, Andrea Branzi, MIT Press, 1988, 79 pp., illus., \$9.95.

DESIGN METAPHORS, Ettore Sottsass, edited by Barbara Radice, Rizzoli, 1988, 61 pp., illus., \$12.50.



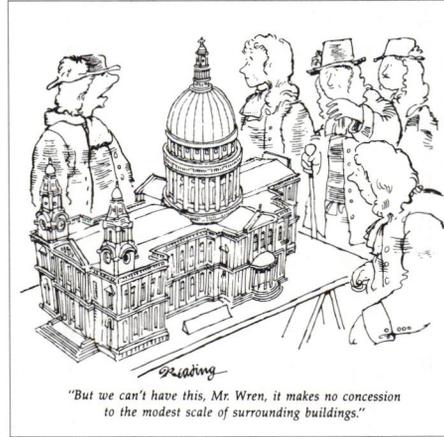
"The Future of Trinity Church," cartoon; from *Puck*, c. 1907. (From *Icons and Aliens*.)

and designers such as Walter Firey, Donald Appleyard, and Kevin Lynch.

In recent years, there has been an outpouring of aesthetic legislation. While he supports this new aesthetic emphasis, Costonis is concerned that today's aesthetic regulations and the judicial decisions upholding them often lack a coherent conceptual basis because they are premised upon the promotion of beauty, which is elusive in nature and cannot be reduced to a clear set of standards. The resultant lack of clarity calls into question the constitutionality of the regulations.

Costonis believes that the protection of stability, which is the impulse behind the struggle to preserve icons, can provide a better legal justification for aesthetic regulations than the promotion of beauty. The flavor of his position is suggested by his discussion of the constitutional requirement that legislation must serve a legitimate governmental purpose. Many of the judicial decisions that uphold the promotion of beauty do not even attempt to explain the purpose this serves. Some judges argue that the creation of a beautiful environment helps foster civic virtue in members of the public, but Costonis finds this asserted connection between beauty and citizenship unconvincing. Other judges base the promotion of beauty on the protection of property values. Costonis's research on the effect of historic preservation in Chicago, however, indicates that landmark designation can significantly reduce property values and the amount of property taxes collected by the city. Costonis is more persuaded by a small number of recent judicial decisions that adopt stability-based reasoning and argue that aesthetic regulations support cultural and psychological stability by preserving familiar environments and promoting identity and pride.

The author's appreciation for the complexities of his subject is the strength of the book. Rather than taking a narrow view of the scope of aesthetic regulation, Costonis recognizes that laws which promote aesthetic goals appear in many



Cartoon from *Punch*; not dated. (From *Icons and Aliens*.)

different forms, including local zoning initiatives, federal tax incentives for historic preservation, and numerous other local, state, and federal measures. Costonis attempts to define features and processes common to all aesthetic regulations. He provides a number of illuminating analytical distinctions, including the difference between aesthetics in the museum and the courthouse, and the tension between the end-state values of aesthetics and the process values of law. Furthermore, Costonis has taken on the difficult challenge of interdisciplinary scholarship and attempted to merge his own field of law with insights from other fields.

As a lawyer, however, I do not find that Costonis wins his case. His fundamental premise that the preservation of environmental icons promotes psychological and cultural stability is an empirical hypothesis that would require evidence to substantiate. Even if there is some truth to this claim (as is undoubtedly the case), I am skeptical that standards for aesthetic regulation premised upon stability-based reasoning will be significantly more justifiable than standards premised upon beauty-based reasoning. Just as standards of beauty are highly subjective, so too are the environmental features which for a particular person will promote a feeling of stability. Furthermore, there is great potential for abuse of stability-based reasoning. As Costonis would acknowledge, license to

protect cultural stability can have pernicious results ranging from the stagnation of change to the exclusion of unwanted groups of people from the community.

In many ways, Costonis's emphasis on stability can be seen as a product of the historic preservation movement of the 1970s and 1980s. During this period, the battle for historic preservation was fought from coast to coast, and many historic structures were preserved. Seen in this light, it is understandable that Costonis focuses upon preservation of icons and legal justifications for the protection of icons. While historic preservation continues to be important, there are other vital aesthetic issues remaining to be addressed. A historic district with a distinct and significant architectural character provides an easily identifiable group of icons that are worthy of preservation. The measures that should be taken to enhance the aesthetics of the more predominant suburban freeway environment of today are not as readily apparent. Much work remains to be done, both in figuring out how to use laws to improve the settings in which most of us live and in providing coherent justifications for such laws within our constitutional framework.

Even with these difficulties and limitations, the book is useful because of the author's insights into some of the core problems in analyzing issues in law and design. With qualifications, I recommend this book to non-lawyers because it is one of the few books available on the subject and because it does a good job of framing many of the issues. My recommendation is qualified because the book does not provide the kind of clear and complete guide to the law of aesthetic control that would be desirable for non-lawyers. The ambitiousness and uniqueness of the book's central thesis dictate the focus of analysis and render the book less comprehensible than a truly introductory work.

ICONS AND ALIENS: LAW, AESTHETICS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE, John J. Costonis, University of Illinois Press, 1989, 129 pp., illus., \$24.95.

Nan Ellin

## Cities of Tomorrow

PETER HALL

Rather than take advantage of hindsight to pronounce the succession of past ideas and events as somehow inevitable, Peter Hall clearly delights in discerning the incongruent. In *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century*, Hall resists assembling the assorted puzzle pieces of planning theory and practice over the past century into a seamless picture of reasoned intentions, causes, and effects. Instead, he conveys an image of planning history that—like the people who generated it—is complex, paradoxical, confusing, perverse, odd, disturbing, messy, weird, unbelievable, and anomalous. Mainly, however, Hall finds planning history ironic, a word that appears in its various forms with numbing frequency in this critical survey of conventional planning wisdom and the challenges posed to it by urban designers, social scientists, developers, and community groups. In a fashion similar to Jonathan Barnett's *The Elusive City* (Harper & Row, 1986), *Cities of Tomorrow* is organized thematically reflecting Hall's tenet that "there are just a few key ideas in twentieth-century planning, which reecho and recycle and reconnect." Themes addressed include utopian schemes, the industrial city, the anarchist tradition, the garden city, the linear city, regional planning, the monumental tradition, the tower-in-the-park, sweat equity/self-built housing, community architecture, suburbanization, the impact of new technologies (especially transportation) on urbanization, urban enterprise zones and urban revitalization, planning theory, and the persistence of poverty. In exploring these themes, Hall provides biographical sketches of the "true founding fathers of modern city planning," noting that there are "alas, almost no founding mothers," even though



Inner Harbor, Baltimore; developed with the guidance of James Rouse, c.1956–present. (From *Cities of Tomorrow*.)

Catherine Bauer, Edith Elmer Wood, and other women are featured (but perhaps not worthy of "founding mother," status). The geographical scope of Hall's synthesis is, he concedes, "glaringly Anglo-centric" drawing almost exclusively from the British and American experience, although touching lightly upon other parts of Western Europe, the Soviet Union, Asia (especially China and India), South America (especially Brazil and Peru), and Australia. The bibliography reflects this focus, offering a comprehensive guide to urban planning history in the United States and Great Britain. The text is amply illustrated with well-selected, well-reproduced, and well-situated photographs, drawings, and plans.

The organization by theme rather than chronology or geography enlivens this gracefully written account with in-depth discussions of classic planning issues and debates such as the extent to which political tendencies can be said to correspond with urban design styles, public versus private sector development, urbanism versus suburbanism, and pro- and anti-land use controls. But the thematic

organization also suffers from unnecessary repetition, digressions, apparent gaps sometimes filled in another chapter, and excessive cross-referencing among chapters. These shortcomings both detract from the narrative flow and mitigate against the reading or assigning of single chapters. Not oblivious to—and likely frustrated by—this flaw, Hall warns the reader that his organization does "not quite work out" because "logic and chronology refuse stubbornly to keep in step." And sensitive to the book's partiality toward planning theory at the expense of its implementation, Hall adds the overly modest caveat: "Do not attempt to read this as a textbook of planning history; it may be dangerous to your health, especially in preparing for student examinations."

That said, *Cities of Tomorrow* synthesizes a wide range of sometimes complex planning theory and practice without being reductionist. A leitmotif is the separation between planning thought and practice that emerged with the rise of the planning profession during the first decade of this century and was exacer-

bated during the 1950s when a “remarkable inversion of roles” took place. Beginning with the new locational analysis, which drew from early 20th-century German location theory and entered planning curricula in the 1950s, planning shifted from “a kind of craft” into a more “scientific” undertaking, applying computer technology and the science of cybernetics. By the 1960s, planning was being reconceived as a continuous process of monitoring complex or “open” systems rather than a finite act on a static world. Initially applied with a certain success to defense projects, however, this “systems planning” proved more problematic when applied to the less deterministic and quantifiable objectives and methods of urban and regional planning. Consequently, Hall explains, the circle closed back onto the traditional craft approach to planning. The right turned to incremental planning while the left embraced advocacy planning. Whereas the right paid lip service to respecting “pluralism” by providing appropriately for all, the left’s buzzword was “diversity” with the goal of “empowering” others (through participatory projects) rather than imposing ideas and products upon them. In practice, Hall points out, these two approaches often boiled down to the same thing and from 1965 to 1975, these perspectives and others contributed to strip “the planner of whatever priestly clothing and consequent mystique, s/he may have possessed.” In planning theory, Neo-Marxian perspectives began highlighting the inherently political component of planning but, despite the stated goal of joining theory to praxis, actually discouraged engagement because of the insistence that planning theory remain separate from the planning process. When Marxian urban theory is practically applied, Hall maintains, it is like the earlier advocacy planning in that it “all comes out as good old-fashioned democratic common sense.”

With this academization of planning,



The London Docklands, revitalized during the 1980s. (From *Cities of Tomorrow*.)

practitioners increasingly regarded planning theory as irrelevant because “while academia was going its way, the world was going another.” Hall’s dour assessment of the current situation is that planning practice “has become determinedly reactive, artisan, and anti-intellectual while planning in the academy has retreated ever higher up its ivory tower.” With the 1970s recession, planning was transmuted from “an orderly scheme of action to achieve stated objectives in the light of known constraints” to a developer-aligned growth-promotion undertaking that Hall calls “planning as property development.” In the United States, this was being referred to as “urban revitalization” entailing a “creative partnership” between the public and private sectors and resulting in the “Rousification” (since James Rouse was so instrumental) and gentrification of central city districts. While replacing the declining manufacturing industries with a new economic base and generating a renewed sense of pride in downtowns, urban revitalization also accentuated the polarization between rich and poor. In Great Britain, Enterprise Zones were introduced in 1980, and Hall—who had been advocating economic and social revitalization through applying a sort of “Hong Kong model”—was cited by the Chancellor of the Exchequer as authoring the concept. Unimpressed by the Conservative Government’s application of

this plan, which diverged from his own proposal, Hall takes this opportunity to defend himself from the criticism to which the Enterprise Zones have been subject. He explains that while the “fairly shameless free enterprise” he had initially proposed was implemented, the elimination of immigration controls and other legislative restrictions was not.

Where does this majestic account of the incompatible puzzle pieces of planning history take us? Hall concludes with a chapter on the history of urban poverty and the dismal recognition that by the 1980s, “we find we are almost back where we started” in terms of both the conditions that stimulated the planning reflex in the 19th century and the nature of planning thought itself. Despite a century of earnest efforts to cure urban ills, Hall laments, the city “is again seen as a place of decay, poverty, social malaise, civil unrest and possibly even insurrection,” and consequently, “theorists have swung sharply back to planning’s anarchist origins.” “Where, then, was planning?” he asks, and responds that although planning efforts have not managed to eradicate poverty—or even to explain it satisfactorily—they have managed to offer a better life to millions than if no efforts had been made.

Although no original data is reported in this account, its contribution lies in the nature of Hall’s synthesis, which is especially keen to transnational (mainly United States–United Kingdom) flows of people, ideas, and events. He discusses, for instance, the impact of Ebenezer Howard’s early years of residing in the United States on his garden city concept and the planning career of the itinerant Thomas Adams, whom Hall refers to as the “ultimate transatlantic planner.” Transgressing national boundaries, he reveals how certain trends—mainly involving social, cultural, and philosophical movements, such as the settlement house movement in the 1890s, syndicalism, the post-1950s investment into central cities,

and mass transit—migrated from Europe to the United States while others—mainly having to do with technological and entrepreneurial innovations such as the mass production and distribution of cars and houses—flowed in the opposite direction from the USA to Europe. In addition, Hall's finely-tuned spatial imagination calls attention to the significant geography of ideas, pointing out, for instance, that the attack on suburbia arose mainly on the East Coast of the USA while the counterattack arose on the West Coast, and that the birth-place of modern urban Marxist studies in the late 1960s was Paris.

This transnational and historical scope enriches our understanding of planning history by bracketing local events within a larger context and by expanding the data base that informs recurrent debates, such as the preferences for individual houses or apartment living, suburban versus urban living, planning for people or planning with people, and many more. We are left, for instance, with the distinct impression that, when viewed throughout space and time, the labels "left" and "right" are bereft of meaning, especially with regard to urban design. The sensitivity to transnational flows results in an evenhandedness that avoids jingoism or the equally prevalent grass-is-greener syndrome. In a way recalling the Swedish anthropologist Ulf Hannerz's survey of urban social science, *Exploring the City* (1980, Columbia University Press), Hall offers a welcome antidote to the prevalent United States-centric view of planning history.

But having cast such a wide net, the catch appears at times incomplete and idiosyncratic. An interesting chapter on the "City of Sweat Equity: 1890–1987," for instance, discusses the contributions of William Morris, Raymond Unwin, Patrick Geddes, the Regional Planning Association of America, Frank Lloyd Wright, John Turner, Christopher Alexander, Ralph Erskine, Rod Hackney, Prince Charles, the Chinese experience, Leonard Duhal, Antonia Chayes, and

Hall's own "iconoclastic Nonplan Manifesto," written with Reyner Banham, Paul Barker, and Cedric Price in 1969. But conspicuously absent are Hassan Fathy, Nicholas J. Habraken, Yona Friedman, Serge Chermayeff, and Lucien Kroll. Moreover, this chapter conflates participatory design with the debate surrounding nonplanning, which would have been more appropriately reviewed elsewhere with the works of Robert Venturi, Jane Jacobs, and Robert Goodman (who is not mentioned at all). Like so many other urban critics of the past two decades, Hall's own sympathies lie unabashedly in the anarchist camp and opposed to the countertradition of authoritarian planning epitomized here by the ideas of Le Corbusier. Nonetheless, he is candid about his views and the narrative is refreshingly free of axe-grinding polemic as well as apocalyptic prophecy. Ever sensitive to mutual influences as well as misunderstandings among countries—especially the United Kingdom and the United States—and between theoreticians and practitioners, Hall sheds light upon the nature of these flows of people, ideas, and events along with the late capitalist political economy in which they all mingle. Hall's unique experience, which bridges academic planning with practice and Great Britain with the United States, brings a breadth that effectively punctures many common assumptions while breathing life into the past and making it relevant to current issues. In doing so, he offers an especially lucid account of how cities have grown and what we—as urbanists, planners, and people—can do to improve them.

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CITIES OF TOMORROW: AN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, Peter Hall, Basil Blackwell, 1989, 451 pp., illus., \$19.95.

Marta Gutman

### **"Families of Edifices': The Architecture of Ordinary Buildings"**

In *Paris Nineteenth Century: Architecture and Urbanism*, an elegantly designed and lavishly illustrated book, François Loyer narrates a thoughtful history of 19th-century Parisian urban fabric. Loyer's book is grounded in twenty years of fieldwork—surveys of neighborhoods, inventories of buildings—and archival research, sponsored by the Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme (APUR), a nonprofit government agency for urban studies.<sup>1</sup> The French subtitle of the book, *Immeuble et rue* (Apartment house and street), more accurately describes its focus than does the English *Architecture and Urbanism*. Unlike other major works in English on 19th-century Paris,<sup>2</sup> this book's detailed formal analysis gives a close-up picture of the design of Parisian housing, especially middle- and upper-class apartment houses and private homes, and streets and smaller public spaces, including street furniture and equipment.

Loyer's book is not primarily social history. He presents his story using "purely visual criteria," all the while insisting that he has "not adopted this approach out of a blind conformity to an obsolete formalism." Rather he wants to understand the interrelationship of social and physical structure. As Loyer states, "In a formal system as codified as architecture is, it is not hard to distinguish families of edifices, to situate them geographically and historically, and then to formulate a socio-economic hypothesis." Loyer argues that the persistence of "a classical [architectural] cultural system" permitted Paris to adapt during the 19th century "perfectly to the demands of an industrial economy ... [notwithstanding a] brutally obsolete socioeconomic system" and to "gradually transpose that system into the language of modernity." This process worked best for the bourgeoisie; "indisputably, the new city belonged to those who could afford to live in it."



Boulevard Haussmann; photograph by Charles Marville, 1876. (From *Paris Nineteenth Century*.)

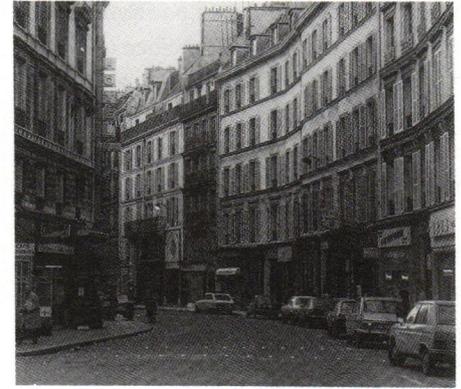
Beginning in the late 18th century, the architects of the physical transformations of Paris recognized and reinforced the critical difference between public and private space, as they sought to accommodate the needs and products of an industrializing society. In contrast to their post-World War II successors, these designers used a spatially coherent vocabulary of streets, boulevards, squares, housing, and public buildings to modernize the inner city and plan its expansion into near suburbs, eventually bringing the edge of developed Paris to the Thier's fortification wall, the boundary designated by Haussmann. An analytical map, one of several included in the book as examples of an APUR-sponsored cartographic study of 19th- and 20th-century Paris, shows that this process continued well into the 20th century. By 1939, large areas, especially in the south and east of the city, locations traditionally avoided by middle and upper classes, remained undeveloped.

Loyer's detailing of the modernization of the city chronicles the ways in which city regulations, construction practices, and aesthetic values affected the design of emerging middle- and upper-class neighborhoods. As he narrates this story, he traces the effect of geographical location and time of development on the pattern of neighborhoods and districts in the city. He examines evolving design strategies for determining architectural expression of new urban—and, implicitly, social—hierarchies in the expanding city, now bereft of its earlier pedestrian scale. In the first part of the century, the simple opposition of monumental to vernacular building, and urban to suburban location, sufficiently clarified the

urban system. Beginning in the 1850s, Loyer argues that architects and developers seized the aesthetic and financial advantages of the apartment-house type, and larger and larger repetitive clusters of apartment houses lined the new Haussmannian boulevards in the inner arrondissements and formed new neighborhoods in the outer ones. Coupled with increasing standardization of construction materials and building types, Parisian urban space was transformed by the end of the Second Empire: the “center/outskirts opposition ... became so pronounced that it could be considered a key structural feature. ... On the other hand, apartment houses became so monumental that the old opposition between monumental and vernacular architecture practically disappeared. The public monument was no longer defined in opposition to the apartment house, but simply as the highest degree in a hierarchy.”

*Paris: Nineteenth Century* shows how the apartment house became the dominant Parisian housing type during the 19th century, even though other types, among them working-class cottages and detached single-family homes, remained available or became available. Prefigurations of the apartment house type occurred in Paris as early as the 17th century when the extraordinary density of the city forced some of its inhabitants to share rooms in tall, narrow, party-wall buildings. Loyer argues that the true apartment house appeared in the late 18th or early 19th century; as opposed to the earlier types, these multilot buildings, grouped around a service courtyard, provided separate rental apartments, generally one or two per floor, entered through shared semipublic circulation.

The best parts of the book describe and analyze the development of middle- and upper-class housing during the first half of the 19th century in areas such as the Place de Europe and then in the outer arrondissements, during the Second Empire, which, as Loyer points out, consumed as much (if not more) of Haussmann's attention as the more renowned alterations of the Parisian inner core. Little discussion is given to working-class housing; as Loyer himself



Apartment house, Rue Saint Lazare. (From *Paris Nineteenth Century*.)

and other reviewers of this book have pointed out, many other texts explain this subject. Rather, Loyer focuses on housing constructed for the middle class. Using drawings, his own photographs, and period photographs by Eugène Atget, Charles Marville, and others to illustrate his analysis, Loyer sensitively traces the ways in which architects responded to social hierarchy, especially in the designs of façades where, for example, the location of balconies, the kinds of detail, and richness of execution indicate social ranking. Unfortunately, he discusses interior space only very briefly; what he does mention (and illustrates all too sparsely) is fascinating and deserves further study.

Loyer's description of apartment houses in *Paris: Nineteenth Century* focuses on façades and massing—the parts of these buildings that form public space—in part for polemical reasons. Loyer has been an active player in the movement for preservation of 19th-century buildings in France because, as he freely and frequently admits throughout the book, he greatly admires the buildings and the ordered urban environment they make. The buildings are constituent elements of a hierarchical urban pattern, which distinguishes public from private space, which encourages uniformly designed urban ensembles, and which permits different appearances for different kinds of streets, neighborhoods, and districts. While he backs away from advocating a simpleminded reiteration of these buildings for present-day Paris, he does propose, at the book's closing, a reconsid-

eration of the Haussmannian approach, an approach that “never lost sight of the city as a whole” even as it accepted “stylistic fluctuations.”

*Paris: Nineteenth Century* is caught, then, between being two kinds of books—one, a detailed narrative of the formal history of 19th-century Parisian urbanism and the other, a polemic advocating the virtues of the 19th-century streetscape. Loyer justifies this midway position as necessary to his formulation of a new synthetic approach to this material and relies primarily (and admittedly) on his own impressions and analyses of Parisian streets and housing to write it. He glosses over the many, varied lives of the families who occupied these buildings, and he does not discuss at all how gender, class, race, and ethnicity create multiple, subjective views of the city’s public and private spaces. The new Paris may have belonged to those who could afford to live in it; the fact that a servant girl may have seen and used streets and housing differently than her employer is important to acknowledge and discuss. Despite Loyer’s shying away from these kinds of questions, *Paris: Nineteenth Century* is a worthy and beautiful book. Its exhaustive, detailed, formal analysis of the architecture of ordinary buildings constructs much-needed appreciation for ways in which their nuanced designs contribute to the public realm.

#### NOTES

1. APUR published the first results of Loyer’s work in 1980 as *Paris au XIXe siècle: l’immeuble et l’espace urbain*.
2. David H. Pickney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (1958); Anthony Sutcliffe, *The Autumn of Central Paris* (1970), and Norma Evenson, *Paris: A Century of Change* (1979). Evenson’s book analyzes the form of housing and streets during the second half of the 19th century, but not with the detail that Loyer provides.

PARIS NINETEENTH CENTURY: ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM, François Loyer, translated by Charles Lynn Clark, Abbeville Press, 1988, 478 pp., illus., \$85.00.

Mark L. Brack

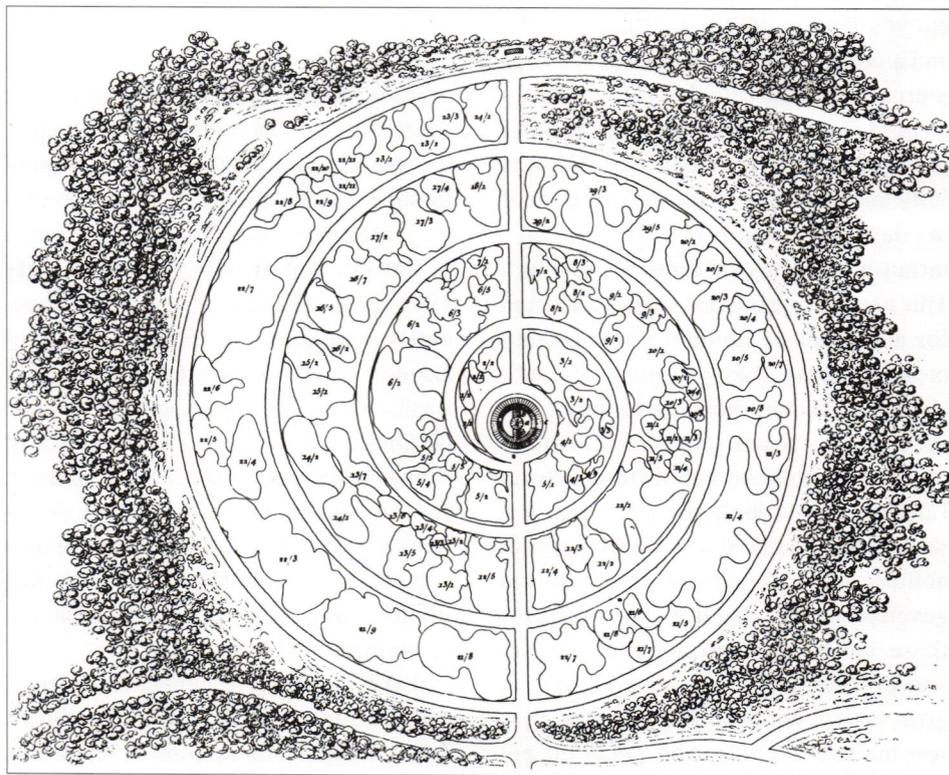
## Loudon and the Landscape

MELANIE LOUISE SIMO

Most American students of architectural and landscape history are introduced to John Claudius Loudon (1783–1843) only as an important influence on Andrew Jackson Downing. This is a pity, as Loudon’s writings were far more comprehensive than Downing’s and were more influential throughout the English-speaking world. Downing “borrowed” liberally from Loudon’s publications, and his attempts to diffuse the elite taste for landscape art to the expanding middle classes bear the unmistakable stamp of Loudon’s earlier achievements in Great Britain.

Melanie Louise Simo has written a broad and interesting account of the development of Loudon’s designs and theories. Rather than concentrate, as others have done, on Loudon’s notable

career as a horticulturalist or architectural writer, Simo has presented the full range of his ideas involving the shaping of the landscape. This is an ambitious project as Loudon’s knowledge and interests were literally encyclopedic. Simo discusses the wide variety of Loudon’s activities, including his efforts at increasing farm productivity, the design of arboreta and greenhouses, metropolitan planning, and domestic engineering. As a publisher of magazines as well as books, Loudon was one of the most influential tastemakers of his period. Yet he was not an aesthete content to argue the intricacies of English Picturesque theory. Loudon’s publications forcefully addressed many of the important social issues of his day, from public education to urban improvements—even at the expense of alienating his more conservative readers. The scope and contentiousness of the causes he advocated are remarkable for someone in his position. Can you imagine the editors of *Horticulture* or *Metropolitan Home* featuring politically charged articles on social conditions? One of the great vir-



Design for a national botanical garden near London; J. C. Loudon, c. 1811. (From *Loudon and the Landscape*.)

tues of Simo's book is that she places Loudon's career and ideas firmly within the social and intellectual contexts of his period. Unlike those landscape histories that are content to analyze the aesthetic virtues of notable estates, Simo's account of Loudon's career reminds the reader that comprehensive environmental analysis was attempted long before the ecology movement of our own century.

Simo informs the reader that "Loudon wanted to seize the wholeness of anything—a city, a garden, a body of knowledge—before considering its parts." It was Loudon's particular genius to be able to understand and reconsider the intricacies of any number of topics. Like his contemporary A. W. N. Pugin, he possessed remarkable drive and a curiosity that was as creative as it was ultimately self-destructive. Loudon wrote or edited numerous books, several encyclopedias on horticulture and architecture and a number of

journals on related topics (his *Architectural Magazine* was the first architectural periodical written in English). He was fully versed in the scientific advances of his day and was a follower of the utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham. This progressive outlook helps to account for a number of Loudon's remarkably prescient ideas. His 1818 plan for a subsidized multistory housing project came decades before such schemes were topics of general public or architectural debate. Loudon's greenbelt plan for London would have required a radical change in notions surrounding private property and government responsibility. Simo presents these and other intriguing and little-known schemes in a manner that provides great insight not only into one man's career but into the reform efforts of the period.

Reading Loudon to determine his



- |   |                              |                              |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Finchley Common; in the zone of country. | 17. Bethnal Green; country.  | 35. Walworth; town.          |
| 2. Tottenham; in the zone of town.          | 18. Hoxton; town.            | 36. Brompton; town.          |
| 3. Walthamstow; town.                       | 19. Islington; country.      | 37. Kensington; town.        |
| 4. Forrest House; town.                     | 20. Somers Town; country.    | 38. Hammersmith; town.       |
| 5. Stoke Newington; town.                   | 21. Regent's Park; country.  | 39. Lambeth; country.        |
| 6. Highgate; country.                       | 22. Paddington; town.        | 40. Kennington; country.     |
| 7. Hampstead; country.                      | 23. Paddington canal; town.  | 41. Camberwell; country.     |
| 8. Kingsbury; country.                      | 24. Six Elms; town.          | 42. Peckham; town.           |
| 9. Wilsdon; town.                           | 25. Baywater; town.          | 43. Dulwich; town.           |
| 10. Kentish Town; town.                     | 26. Hyde Park; country.      | 44. Clapham; town.           |
| 11. Clapton; town.                          | 27. Green Park; country.     | 45. Fulham; country.         |
| 12. Hammersmith; town.                      | 28. Southwark; town.         | 46. Putney; town.            |
| 13. Stratford; country.                     | 29. London Docks; town.      | 47. Roehampton; country.     |
| 14. West Ham; country.                      | 30. West India Docks; town.  | 48. Wandsworth; town.        |
| 15. West Ham Abbey; country.                | 31. Woolwich; town.          | 49. Wimbledon Park; country. |
| 16. East Ham; town.                         | 32. Isle of Dogs; town.      | 50. Tooting; town.           |
|   | 33. Greenwich Park; country. | 51. Norwood; town.           |
|   | 34. Deptford; town.          | 52. Sydenham; town.          |

Concentric greenbelt scheme for London, titled "Hints for Breathing Places for the Metropolis"; J. C. Loudon, 1829. (From *Loudon and the Landscape*.)

opinion on a particular subject can be frustrating, as contradictions do appear in his writings. Simo traces the evolution of Loudon's ideas over time, describing his responses to the rapidly changing social, scientific, and artistic milieu of early 19th-century Europe. The book is especially valuable for its discussion of Loudon's relationship to the ideas of Bentham, Thomas Carlyle, and Quatremère de Quincy, as well as to the poetry of William Wordsworth and James Thomson. By tracing Loudon's intellectual development, Simo provides the reader with a complex understanding of the forces that influenced his attempts to shape the environment.

Like the other recent architectural publications of Yale University Press, *Loudon and the Landscape* is beautifully illustrated. The book is organized into fifteen concise chapters with appendixes

listing Loudon's works and a chronology of events in his life. As most of the chapters are presented as separate essays, information is sometimes repeated. A final chapter providing a summation of Loudon's legacy would have been appreciated. The very diversity and volume of Loudon's productions no doubt challenged Simo's effort to be both comprehensive and profound. Although Simo's prose is clear and direct, she occasionally presents so much information the reader can become lost in the details. In a few instances, Simo provides only cursory analysis of significant issues in Loudon's life. One would like to read more about Loudon's cottage designs and encyclopedias, his career as a publisher, or the writings of his remarkable wife, Jane. Some of these topics are considered in John Gloag's *Mr. Loudon's England* (1970) or *John Claudius Loudon and the Early Nineteenth Century in*

*Great Britain* (1980), edited by Elisabeth MacDougall. Yet it is unreasonable to expect that a single volume could present and analyze Loudon's entire works. His diverse accomplishments insure that he will remain a fertile subject for historical investigation. Simo is to be commended for undertaking a task of such complexity and breadth, and she has produced a book that is consistently thoughtful and readable. *Loudon and the Landscape* is an excellent account of an individual whose inclusive studies of landscape, architecture, and urban planning presage so much of what we consider to be modern environmentalism.

LOUDON AND THE LANDSCAPE: FROM COUNTRY SEAT TO METROPOLIS, Melanie Louise Simo, Yale University Press, 1988, 329 pp., illus., \$45.00.

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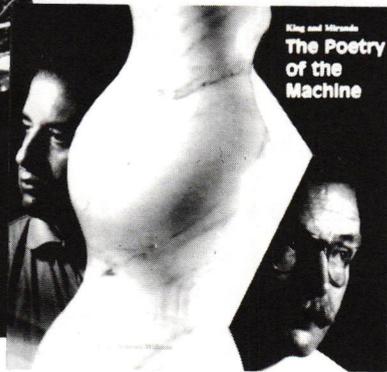
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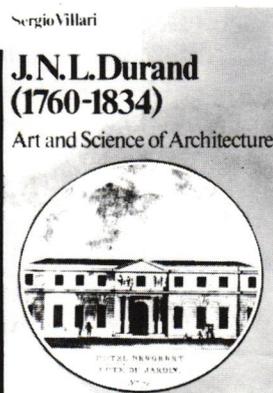
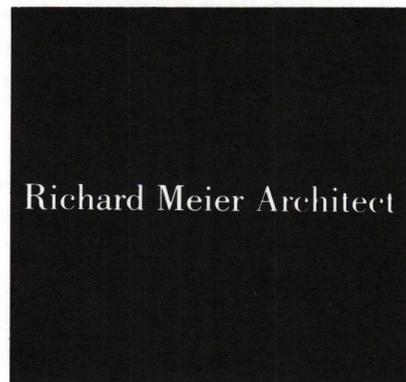


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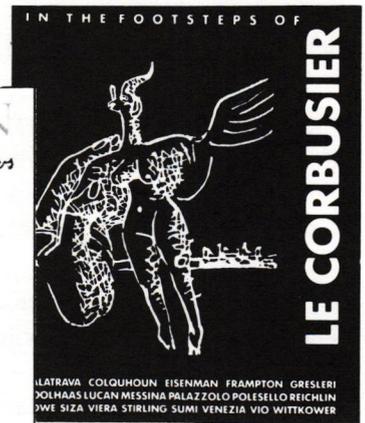
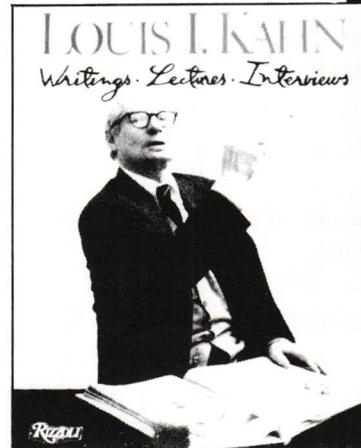
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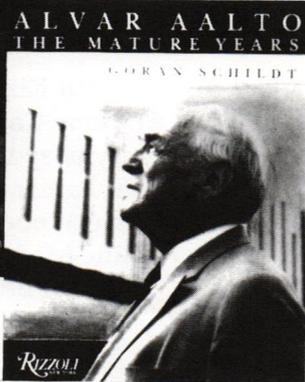
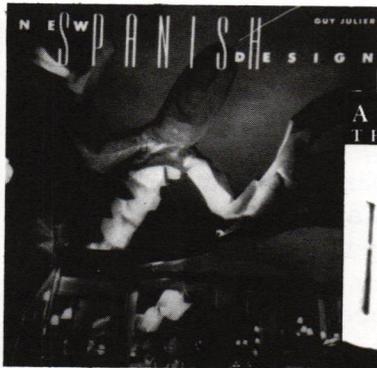
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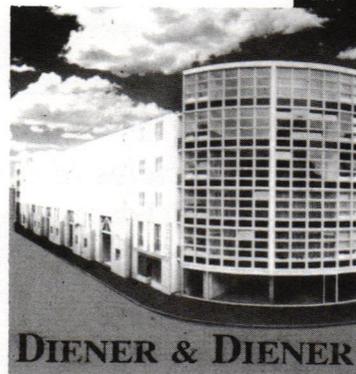
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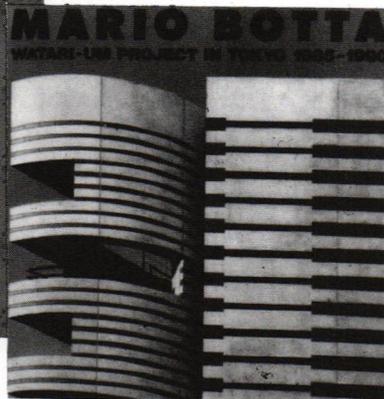
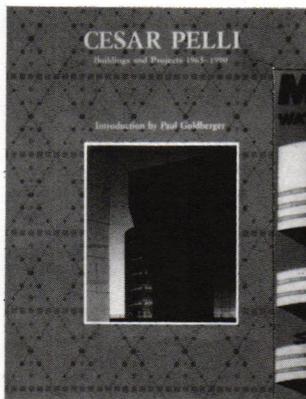
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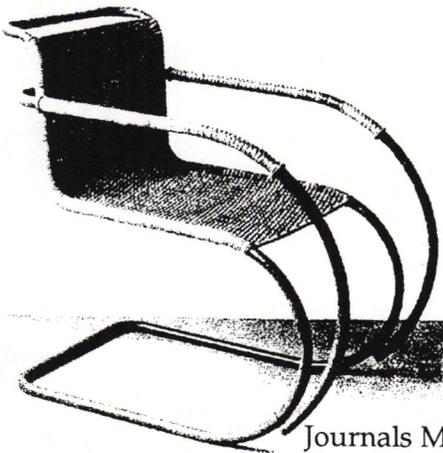
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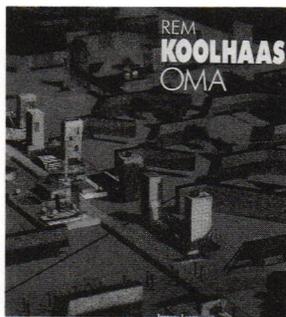
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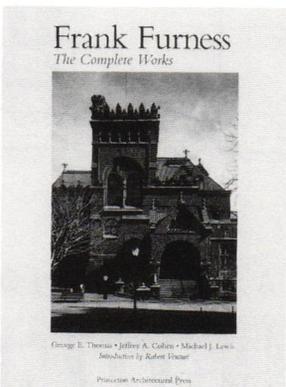
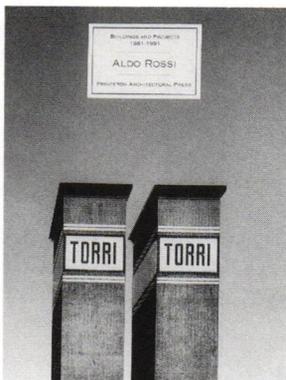
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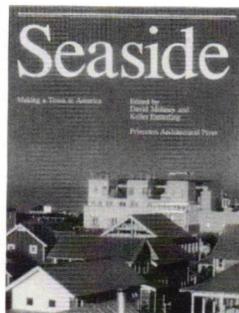
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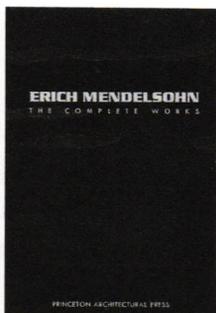
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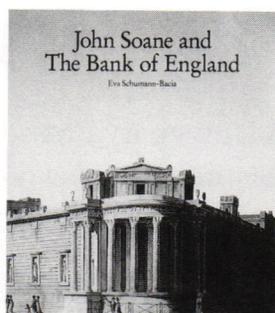
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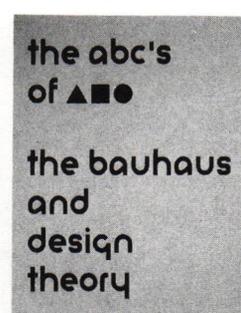
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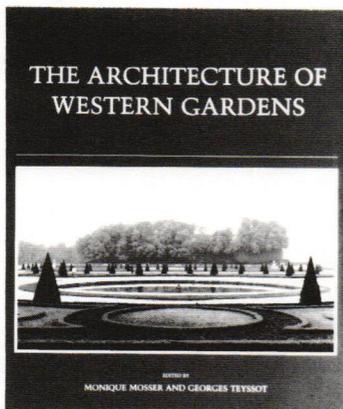
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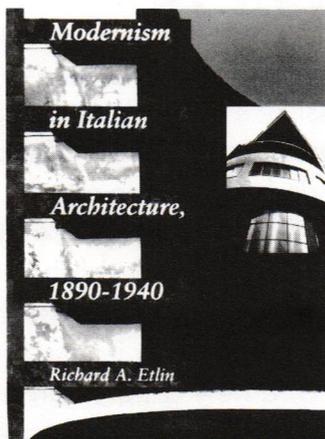
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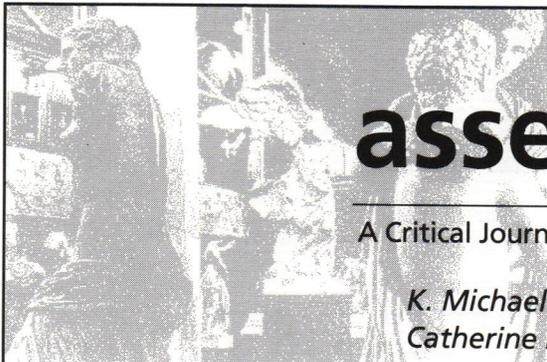
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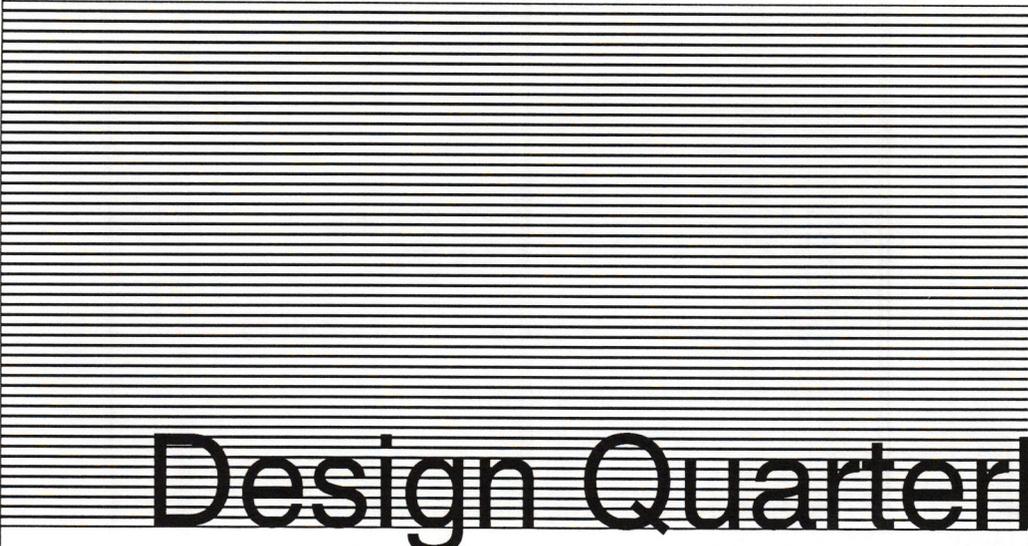
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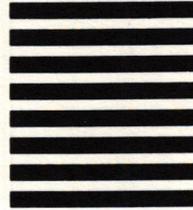
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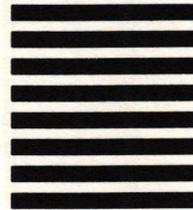
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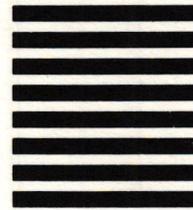
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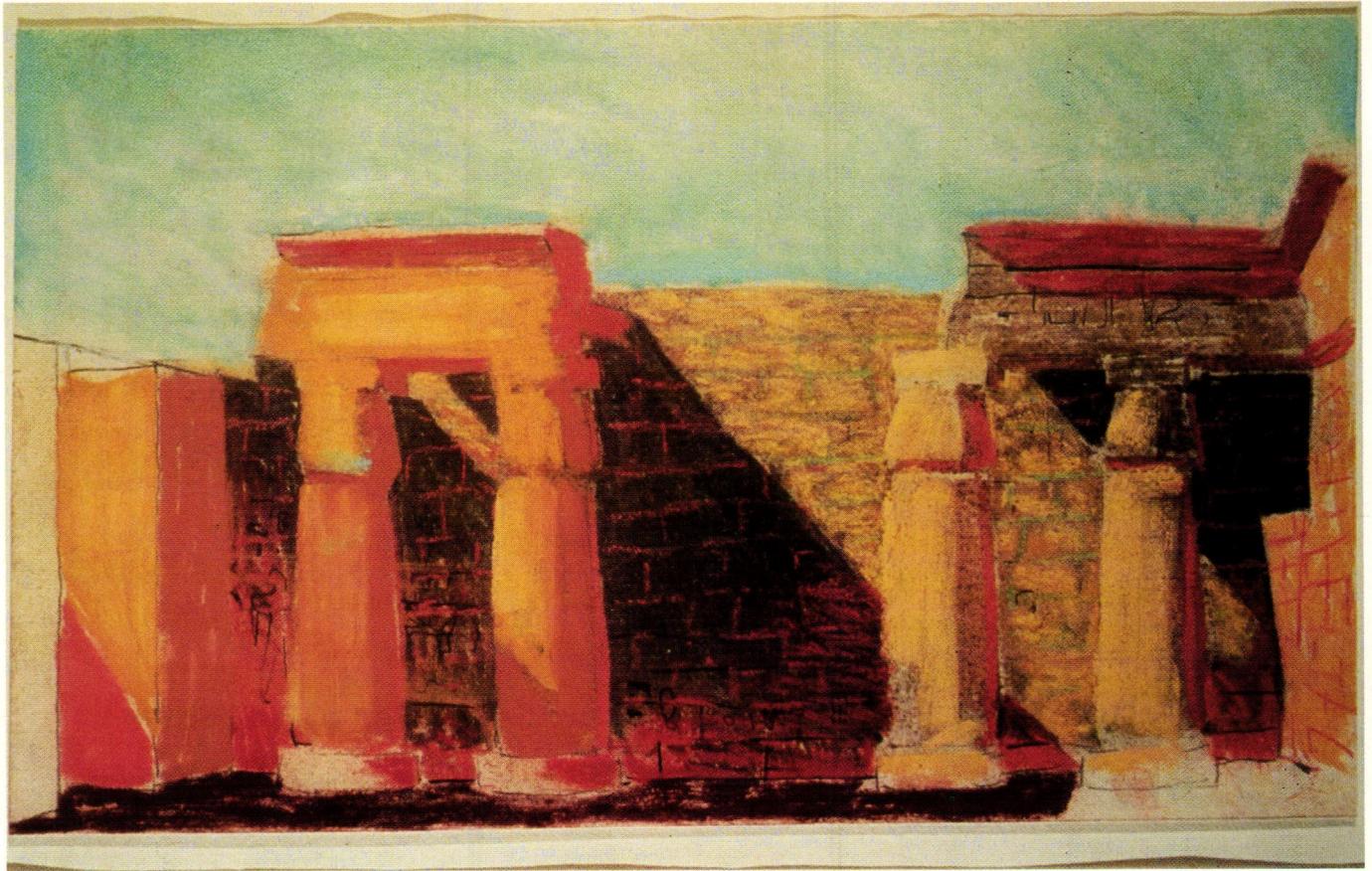
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