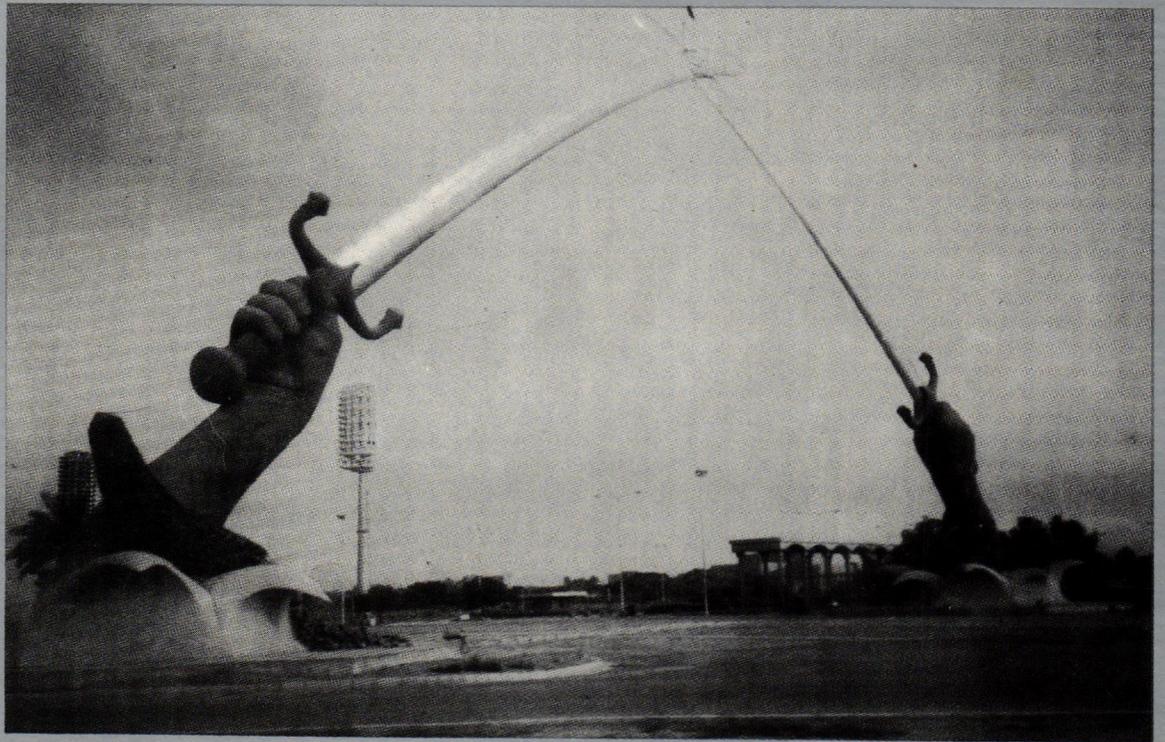


DESIGN **B**OOK **R**EVIEW



ICONS AND IRONY

Issue 22 – Fall 1991

Architecture

Urbanism

Landscape

Design

Eight Dollars

NEZAR ALSAYYAD
on The Monument

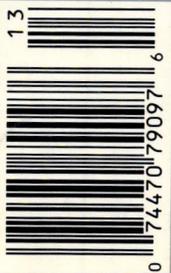
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AND MICHAEL WATTS
on The West as America

MICHAEL KAPLAN
on Heidegger and Nazism

DIANE GHIRARDO
on Deconstruction

ANDREA KAHN
on Philosophical Streets

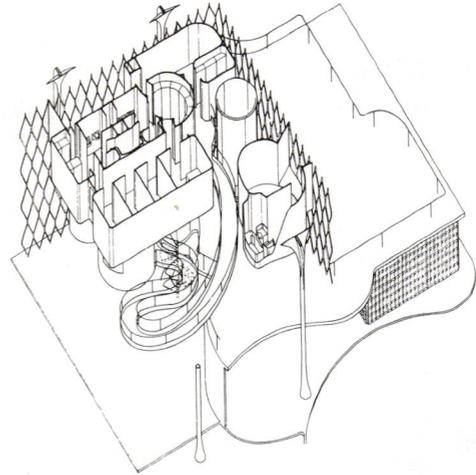
ROBIN BLOCH
on Postsuburban California



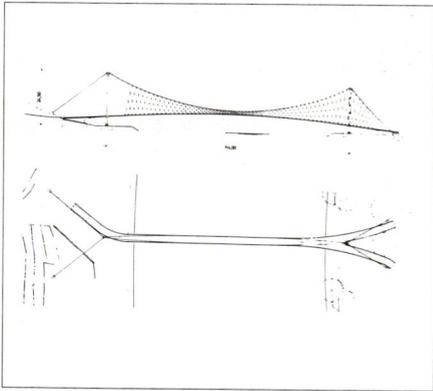
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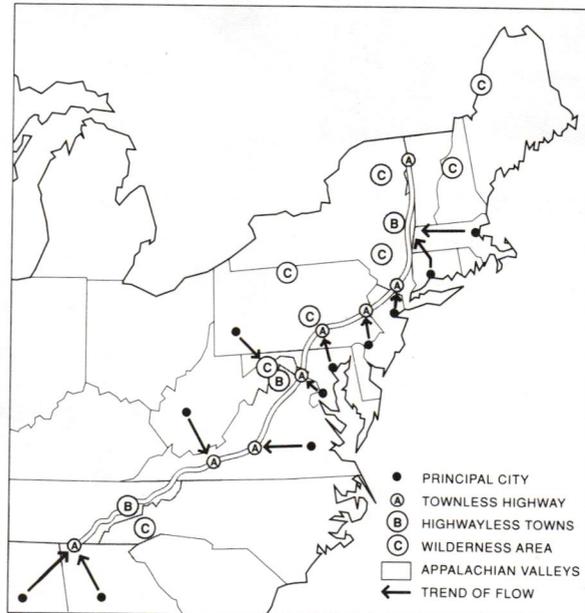
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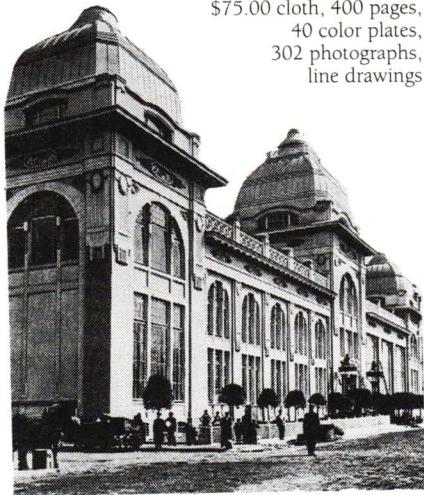
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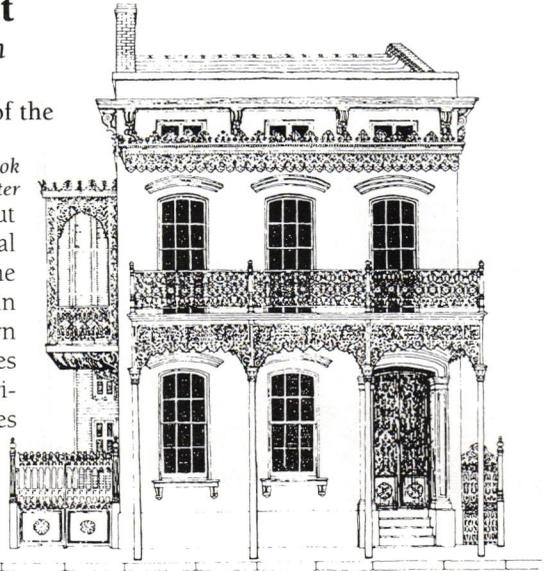
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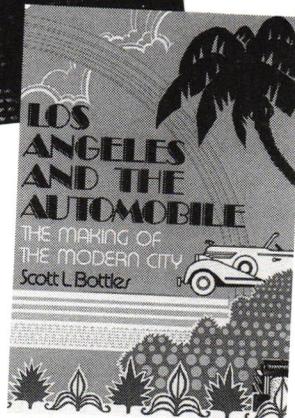
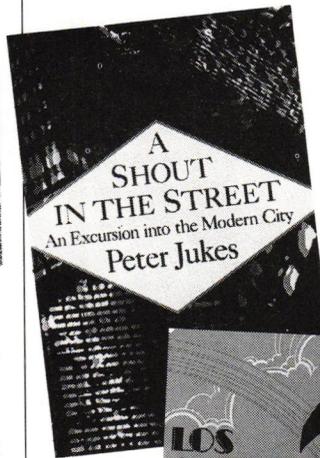
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Design Book Review (ISSN 0737-5344) is published quarterly (Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall) by The MIT Press, 55 Hayward Street, Cambridge, MA 02142, for the editors of *Design Book Review*, 1418 Spring Way, Berkeley, CA 94708. Copyright © 1992 by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Second-class postage paid at Boston, MA, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: send address changes to *Design Book Review*, MIT Press, 55 Hayward Street, Cambridge, MA 02142.

Business Offices: Subscriptions, address changes, and mailing list correspondence should be addressed to *Design Book Review*, MIT Press Journals, 55 Hayward Street, Cambridge, MA 02142. Subscriptions are \$30.00 for individuals, \$60.00 for institutions. Outside the United States add \$14.00 per year for postage and handling. Canadian subscribers also add 7% GST. To be honored free, claims for missing issues must be made immediately on receipt of the next published issue.

Send advertising inquiries to: Advertising Manager, MIT Press Journals, 55 Hayward Street, Cambridge, MA 02142, phone (617) 253-2866.

Editorial Offices: Books for review and editorial correspondence should be sent to: *Design Book Review*, 1418 Spring Way, Berkeley, CA.

Design Book Review is available on microfilm from University Microfilms, 300 No. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Of Icons and Irony

Rusting objects that should not be made of metal is what always came to mind when I heard the word "irony." Perhaps it was a metaphor for steel-like qualities that puncture and tear apart. Whatever it meant, I could not fathom the humor in the eponymous metallic associations of such a word. I lived in dread of hearing it as I was embarrassed to keep asking for a definition, still not being able to conjure up a precise corresponding image. By the time I could smile at my error of interpretation, I realized that I was no longer innocent. To understand things ironically is a privilege of age, status, and perhaps geography. Irony is an acquired taste that necessitates a certain level of sophistication and weariness of the world to affect. For the critic it becomes second nature: the inherent contradictions of a work, in which the intended meaning signifies its opposite, are the booty of discourse. Ironism, a philosophy that might be summed up in Nietzsche's quip that "truths are useful lies," helps to relativize uncomfortable extremes of religious, social, or political beliefs, yet often hinders one from being able to act.

The three articles that lead off *DBR* 22 circumnavigate the submerged polemic about the role of irony in the interpretation of the environment. Who would have ever imagined that seemingly innocent 19th-century landscape paintings of the American West could have ever been so exciting? The controversy over "The West as America" exhibition at the Smithsonian in the Spring of 1991, discussed by Mary Beth Pudup and Michael Watts, reveals the frontier of irony. The captions insisting that the vision of the seemingly boundless lands of the American West have fed a national ethic of exploitation hit a raw nerve. The attempt of the exhibition to prune the intellectual premises of western hegemony has led to the construction of ideological palisades against such threatening incursions of irony.

Irony of course does not play favorites since it can be used to undermine all beliefs and values. Michael Kaplan's con-

cern for the apolitical recycling of Heidegger's metaphysics into architectural theory, for instance, is in part an accusation of the consequences of postmodern ironism. That Heidegger's demands for authenticity, place, and the sense of dwelling can be uprooted from the historical context of Nazism and glibly infused into liberal America is only possible through the relativism of irony. But history, as Hegel and those after him insist, *is* ironic: the statues of yesterday's symbols of authority are today standing on their heads (witness the many recently overturned monuments to Lenin in the U.S.S.R.). Architecture, no matter what ideology sponsors it, expresses power that irony will eventually dissimulate.

That is why the "monument" sponsored by Saddam Husain, the subject of Samir al-Khalil's book reviewed by Nezar Al-Sayyad, appeals to western ironists. Such an explicit effort to visualize the power of the ruler, whose arms, cast literally from his own body, appear to be bursting from the soil like those of an all-powerful genie, would in any other context appear to be a colossal joke. That Husain's arms, cast in Britain and shipped across Europe were at one point confused with another type of arms, the famous supercannon, flip the irony around once more to reveal that western hegemony created its own nemesis.

An American contemporary of Husain's monument is Michael Graves's project for the Disney Corporation in Burbank, a work seemingly conceived with built-in irony. The cuddly seven dwarfs, protectors of the virgin Snow White (people), have been monumentalized as nineteen foot hermes on the classical pediment of the principal entry. Their scale is almost as grand as Husain's arms. Rather than stating directly the power of Disney, however, a corporation that has succeeded in commodifying enormous stretches of the western landscape and colonizing the American imagination, the absurdly overscaled cartoon characters serve as dissimulating icons of disbelief, to screen corporate power. The giant dwarfs can thus seem as frightening as Husain's arms seem ridiculous.

Richard Ingersoll

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LETTERS

To the editors:

The review by Susana Torre of *Architecture: A Place for Women* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989) in your Spring 1991 issue contains a significant error. Ms. Torre writes that the book "was assembled to accompany 'That Exceptional One,' an exhibition sponsored by the American Institute of Architects to celebrate the centennial of its acceptance of Louise Bethune as its first female member." This is incorrect.

The book was in no way intended as an accompaniment to that exhibition. The book was also in no way "sponsored" by the AIA. The editor and associate editor received a grant for the book from the American Architectural Foundation—specifically, from the College of Fellows Fund of the AIA—in addition to grants from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and from the Design Arts program of the National Endowment for the Arts. All grants came without strings or supervision of any sort.

The manuscript was not shaped or reshaped, approved or disapproved, by any committees, staff members, or officers of any of the funding agents. In fact, the exhibition entitled "That Exceptional One" comes in for some criticism in the book's introduction, as do other AIA actions (for various reasons) in several of the book's essays. Such criticism would have been impossible, of course, in any book "sponsored" by the AIA.

The idea for the volume came from Tony P. Wrenn, the archivist of the AIA, and he is so credited in the book's preface. And the person who became associate editor of the volume, Matilda McQuaid, was at the national AIA headquarters at the time the idea was suggested. (She was working as a research consultant for the AIA's exhibition on women in architecture—the exhibition that came to be called "That Exceptional One"—and she was helping to establish the AIA archive on women in architecture.) But most of her work on *Architecture: A Place for Women* took place after she had left Washington and had joined the staff of the Department of Architecture and Design at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

These details were fully spelled out in *Architecture: A Place for Women*, and it is unfortunate that Ms. Torre overlooked them, causing some doubt as to the book's status as an independent and uncensored work.

—Ellen Perry Berkeley

Susana Torre responds:

Architecture: A Place for Women, as I should have stated, initially intended to accompany the AIA exhibition, although as Ellen Perry Berkeley points out, it later became an independent project. I never asserted that the book had been "sponsored" by the AIA, only that the exhibition was. Therefore whatever "censorship" took place can only be attributed to the editors, as in the exclusion of Rosaria Piomelli's important polemic essay on her experience as the first woman appointed dean of an architecture school in the U.S.



Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation
(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. A. Title of Publication: Design Book Review
B. Publication No.: 07375344
2. Date of Filing: 9/20/91
3. Frequency of Issue: Quarterly; Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall
A. No. of issues published annually: Four
B. Annual subscription price: \$30/Ind \$55/Inst
4. Location of known office of publication (not printer): MIT Press, 55 Hayward Street, Cambridge, Middlesex, MA 02142-1399
5. Location of Headquarters of General Business office of the publisher (not printer): same as item 4
6. Names and Complete Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher: MIT Press, 55 Hayward Street, Cambridge, MA 02142-1399; Editor: Richard Ingersoll, Rice University School of Architecture, Houston, TX 77521-1892, Elizabeth Snowden, Design Book Review, 1418 Spring Way, Berkeley, CA 94708; Managing Editor: Michael Tobriner, Design Book Review, 1418 Spring Way, Berkeley, CA 94708.
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9. For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates: Has not changed during preceding 12 months
10. Extent and nature of circulation:
 - A. Total number of copies printed (not press run): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 4401
Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 3822
 - B. Paid and/or requested circulation:
 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 1878; Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 1967
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Nezar AlSayyad

The Architecture of Saddam

“On 8 August 1989, an important new monument was opened to the Iraqi public. The invitation card sent to selected guests rightly describes it as ‘one of the largest works of art in the world.’ The ‘Victory Arch’ as it is called, was conceived by the President of Iraq, Saddam Husain, who first announced the plan in a speech on 22 April, 1985. His initial sketch and an extract from that speech were reproduced on the invitation card. . . . The maquette was worked from the president’s arms, taken from just above the elbow, with a sword inserted into each fist. The President’s forearms and fists, sixteen meters in length (the same height as the Arc de Triomphe) burst out of the ground like gargantuan bronze tree-trunks and rise with their firmly grasped swords to an apex forty meters above the ground. War debris in the shape of five thousand Iranian helmets taken fresh from the battlefield are gathered up in two nets (2,500 in each) which are torn asunder at the base, scattering the helmets around the points at which the arms rise from the earth. . . . The swords were cast in Iraq and the official invitation card informs us that the raw steel (for the swords) was obtained by melting down the weapons of Iraqi ‘martyrs’ who died in the fighting.”

This is how an Iraqi expatriate, writing under the name Samir al-Khalil, preambles *The Monument*, a book that describes in detail Saddam Husain’s Victory Arch. The arch’s architecture and symbolism are discussed in the first half of the book while the second half examines what may be termed the vulgar public art that sprang up in Iraq under the Ba’thi regime of Saddam. Casting and enlarging the arms of Saddam instead of sculpting them, the use of thousands of Iranian helmets, and the melting of Iraqi war weapons are, according to Khalil, calculated decisions by Saddam, the artist, to consolidate his power. Only the lit-



The monument viewed along the ceremonial axis and showing both arches, Baghdad; Saddam Husain, Khalid al-Rahal, Mohammed Ghani, 1985–89. (From *The Monument*.)

eral use of these materials and forms could have rendered Saddam’s absolute message.

Khalil tells us that the symbolism of the monument also capitalizes on past Arab-Persian feuds going back to the seventh century and the battle of Qadisiyya. In this battle, the Arabs, under the leadership of Sa’ad, defeated the Persian empire and Islamized Iran. The use of the term Qadisiyya in Saddam’s official speech dedicating the monument is used by Khalil to prove this point. “By analogy, therefore, Saddam Husain is at the very least the Sa’ad . . . of the 1980s.” Khalil also tells us that Saddam’s claim to be a descendant of Caliph Ali, the martyr of Shi’ite Islam, is another attempt to remind his people of this notion.

Khalil then turns his attention to presenting the monument in its wider urban context and comparing it to other monuments in Baghdad. He makes special note of two other war-related monuments: the Martyrs’ Monument and the Monument of the Unknown Soldier. The Shaheed or Martyrs’ Monument, conceived by Iraqi artist Fattah, is a simple, ceramic-tiled onion dome sliced vertically into two parts shifted horizontally to reveal a sculpted Iraqi flag at its center. The

Monument of the Unknown Soldier, conceived by Iraqi artist Rahal, is a cantilevered oval-like shell fixed on axis with a small spiral tower reminiscent of the minaret of Samarra. Khalil seems to view the Martyrs’ Monument more favorably than the Monument of the Unknown Soldier, which he refers to as the “white elephant” and the “flying saucer.” He proceeds, however, to dismiss them both by linking them to Saddam’s Victory Arch. “The three monuments clearly form a unit. All refer to the gruelling eight-year war and the collective experience its pain and suffering forged in Iraq.”

In a chapter titled “Politics as Art,” Khalil engages us in an elaborate discussion of Saddam as an artist. He tells us that “the character of the man and his views on politics converge in his manner of thinking an art object into existence.” Khalil then moves to examine Saddam’s creation as pop art by making a strange comparison between Saddam and Andy Warhol. Continuing on the theme of kitsch as art, Khalil discusses Saddam’s artistic decisions regarding the Baghdad State Mosque Competition to which several prominent architects were invited to participate at the request of the president.

Khalil is particularly critical of Robert

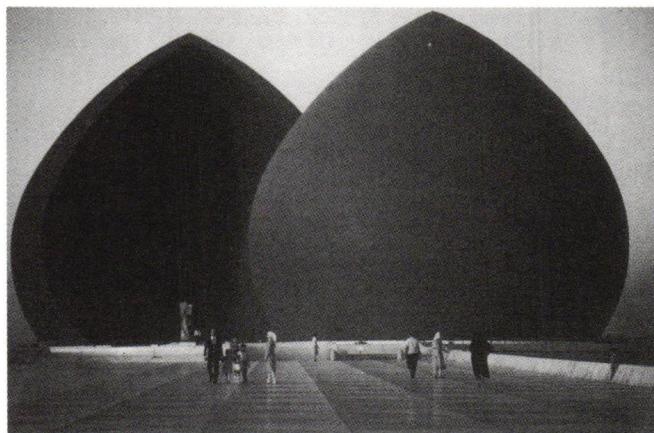
Venturi's entry, which he describes as "something out of Disneyland crossed with the scenery from Errol Flynn's *Thief of Baghdad*." What angers Khalil is that the form of the building, with its "Fantasia-like dome" placed over what would have normally been the open courtyard, is unsuited for this auspicious project. He asks, "Maybe he [Venturi] was deploying irony and wit to deal with the circumstances in which he found himself in Baghdad. But what is the point of a joke when neither your client nor any potential user of your monument has any idea of the ground rules that are supposed to make something funny." Khalil goes on to tell us that no one actually won the competition and that Saddam, in his infinite wisdom, suggested that the architects of the most favored entries cooperate under his guidance to produce the final design. The start of the war with Iran may have salvaged the situation by occupying the president, and in the end no mosque was built.

The littering of Baghdad with kitsch monuments is Khalil's next preoccupation. He dismisses much of Iraq's public art and architecture in the 1980s as "vulgar kitsch" sculptures and decorated pastiche "window-dressing exercises." In his survey of public art before Saddam Husain, Khalil singles out the Freedom Monument by Jewad Salim as worthy of critical attention. This monument is a long elevated travertine slab with symbolic bronze sculptures telling the story of the 1958 revolution in a visual narrative meant to read like a verse of Arabic poetry. Although an admirer of Salim's early work, Khalil is critical of this monument, which he believes provided cultural ancestry to Saddam's Victory Arch.

Khalil concludes the book by raising



The monument as depicted on the invitation card sent to selected guests on opening day. (From *The Monument*.)



The *Shaheed* (Martyrs') Monument, Baghdad; Ismail Fattah, 1983. Photo: Steve McCurry/Magnum. (From *The Monument*.)

what he calls "ethical ambiguities." He tells us that he singled out Saddam's Victory Arch "because it symbolizes a whole breakdown in the ability to judge right from wrong." According to Khalil, the culture Saddam's Ba'th party created in Iraq is simply a state-produced culture capable only of imitating its ruler's desires. A good discussion of the individual responsibility of the artist and the collective responsibility of the public ensues. In it, the artists who made Saddam's monument are proclaimed generally innocent since they had no choice but to accept the dictator's will.

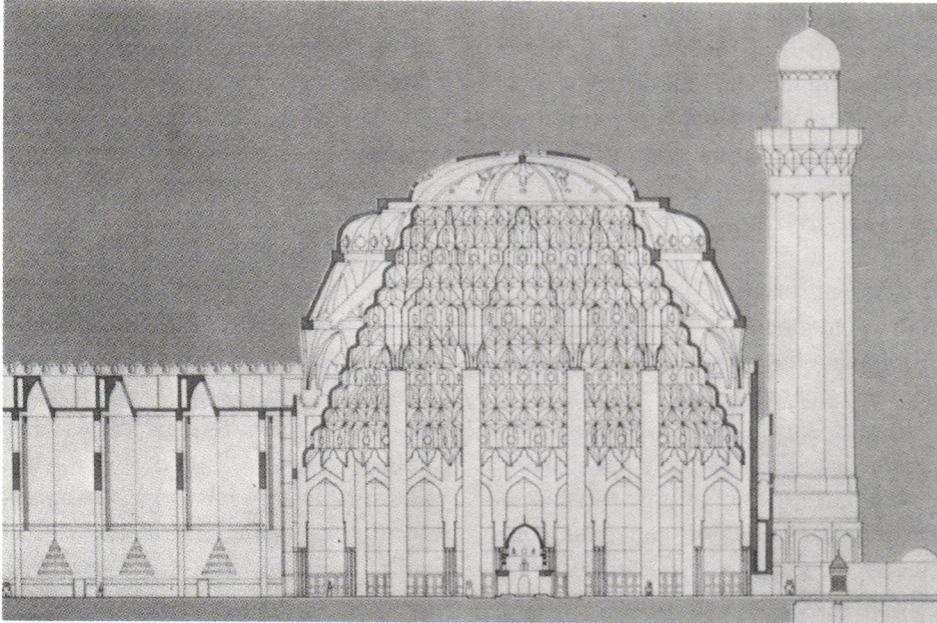
The Monument is a book I would highly recommend and is a good addition to the literature on urban public art.

Reading it for the first time, before the horrors of the Gulf War became known, I was most impressed. A fair review of the book, however, must put its discussion in the social and political context of today's Middle East.

Saddam Husain came to power in 1979 and since then has tyrannically ruled Iraq as a self-serving nationalist. His methods have made him the very embodiment of evil in the West. In the early 1980s Saddam, whose name means the one who confronts, began to promote himself as both the new Arab leader and the reincarnated Nebuchadnezzar. Among many of his acts was setting out to rebuild ancient Babylon. Indeed, its new gate is inscribed "the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar was reconstructed in the era of Saddam Husain." This is only part of the context within which the Victory Arch should be analyzed. Although Saddam is certainly unique among the present rulers of the Middle East, his mode of government and his actions are very similar to those of dictators throughout world

history. Khalil does not give enough attention to this point, wishing instead to participate in the mass campaign against this brutal dictator. In some sense, his book provides us with the moral justification to hate Saddam and to disdain his artistic creations. Although successful in presenting the case, there are a few aspects in the book with which I would like to examine further.

First, in his attempt to assess and then discredit the artistic qualities of Saddam's Victory Arch, Khalil engages in a harsh attack on both pop art and postmodern architecture. While his discussion of these two forms of expression is down-to-earth, it remains somewhat simplistic. Clearly the book is written for an interna-



Baghdad State Mosque Competition; Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, 1983. (From *The Monument*.)

tional audience, but this is no reason to assume that locally based popular art should be condemned if it does not have an international appeal. A better coverage of the unique, culturally specific, and historical significance of the sword in Arab tradition would have made Khalil's case more balanced. More emphasis should have also been paid to the function of the arch, which is built in duplicate, as a gate to what is predominantly a military parade ground.

On Islamic culture, Khalil's positions are either intentionally vague or unexplained. His use of the round plan of the city of Baghdad both at the beginning and the end of the book is an intelligent reference for those who would get the message. However, Khalil's casual mention and quick approval of Salman Rushdie's demystification of Islamic history is out of place and seems to be added only to give additional credibility to his own propositions.

On Arab culture, he tells us early in the book, "this still is a culture that places as much value on the representation of a thing as it does on the thing itself." Here one may ask: What culture does not? Even in the most democratic of

regimes, such deception is very common by the institutions in power, whether they are political, economic, social, or otherwise. Turning lies into truth and institutionalizing myth has become a standard tactic of our contemporary media-crazed society. Historically, the building of nationhood worldwide has always depended on this practice. Why should Iraq be an exception?

On the practice of architecture in Iraq, Khalil is also contemptuous. This is evident in his coverage of the Baghdad State Mosque Competition. While the competition's final outcome was disappointing, and its deliberations were used by the government for propaganda purposes, its organization may be interpreted as an enlightened act by a government interested in promoting public art. Iraqi and Arab architects were well represented in this invited competition. Iraqi television broadcast live a symposium called by the government and well attended by the intellectual community to debate the entries. Setting aside Saddam's dictatorial decision regarding the result, Third World governments engaged in the conduct of similar competitions for the design of national monuments would do

well to follow this model of public exposure instead of leaving the decisions in the hands of a closed foreign jury.

Another problem that has to be raised here concerns the political issue of the double standard that was brought to the fore during the Gulf War. One may ask, for example, why is it more legitimate for French president François Mitterand to decide to place a glass pyramid in the middle of the Louvre over the initial objection of many of his country's citizens? And how can we blame the dictator Saddam when all he is doing is following the precedent established by the leader of one of the world's oldest democracies? And would we feel any differently about the Victory Arch if its builder was instead our ally, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, whose country's flag and official seal contain the same sword as Saddam's monument?

At one point Khalil tells us that "maybe Saddam Husain's monument is unworthy of serious discussion." Maybe it is! But certainly not for the Iraqi public who deserve to benefit from Khalil's unique insight. Now, it is his responsibility to make sure that his message reaches his fellow Arabs through an Arabic translation of the book. In the end, the monument still haunts Khalil, as it will all Iraqi dissidents until Saddam is out of power. He asks, "What will future generations of Iraqis see in this monument: a symbol of the demonic machination of one man . . . or an unforgettable testament to their country's years of shame." Only time will tell!

THE MONUMENT: ART, VULGARITY AND RESPONSIBILITY IN IRAQ, Samir al-Khalil, University of California Press, 1991, 153 pp., illus., \$25.95.

Mary Beth Pudup
and Michael Watts

The Decline of Everything or Invasion of the Culture Snatchers

A society cannot exist . . . without forging a representation of its unity . . . [which] is constantly threatened. . . . The representation of unity in the context of restricted and mutable social relations thus implies the projection of an “imaginary community.”

Claude Lefort

They have finally penetrated the inner sanctum. After invading U.S. college campuses, deconstructing the humanities, and assaulting the literary canon, the purveyors of political correctness and post-modernism have now taken the holy of holies: the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D. C. On March 15, 1991, the culture snatchers displayed their new trophies at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American Art (NMAA) in its controversial exhibit “The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier 1820–1920.” Consisting of 164 paintings, engravings, and sculptures portraying the expansion and conquest of the West, the exhibit, and its companion volume *The West as America*, edited by NMAA curator William Truettner, posits that frontier art is a carefully staged fiction whose function has been to justify the hardship and conflict of nation building.

Opening amidst all the jingoistic nationalism and the pious talk of freedom, democracy, and a new world order surrounding the Iraq war, the culture snatchers could not have timed it better. In subjecting the iconography of the American frontier to a scathing critique, “The West as

America” exposes cultural truths as nothing more than myths in the American social imagination. What better way to begin an exhibition about mystification and occlusion than the remarkable photograph taken on a New Jersey rooftop across the river from New York City in 1903 in which western artist Charles Schreyvogel stands at his easel painting, from a live model, a fully adorned U.S. cavalryman shooting an Indian some two thousand miles and forty years distant.

In exploding frontier mythology, the curators naturally substitute a few myths of their own, re-inventing tradition in their own postmodern image and contributing to what Hazel Carby calls “the struggle over the definition of Americanness.”¹ After breaking through the Berlin Wall of western humanities at Harvard, Stanford, and Duke, it was perhaps inevitable that the Smithsonian Institution, another sleepy custodian of culture known principally to the public as the repository of first ladies’ inaugural-ball gowns and space capsules, would be the next to fall. “The West as America” sealed the final victory; for some it signaled the decline of just about everything. But has it?

It is one thing to revise the western literary canon in the universities where such frivolity can be tolerated as another passing fad. But to launch an assault on

how and why the West was won, to attack the frontier experience, which for many Americans is central to national identity, was another matter altogether, especially for the Capitol Hill crowd, and not least for those representing the West. Senator Ted Stevens (Alaska), who had not seen the show, declared it “perverse”; Senators Simpson (Wyoming) and Gorton (Washington) were respectively “shocked” and “appalled.” Daniel Boorstin, former Librarian of Congress, writing on the first page of the visitors’ comment book, tersely noted that “The West as America” was “a perverse, historically inaccurate, destructive exhibition”; hardly the stuff of his own *The Americans: The Democratic Experience*. Only in the land of the free, declared the *Wall Street Journal*, is it possible to attack and distort a founding history and “have the taxpayer foot the bill.” So subversive to taxpayer interests was “The West as America” that several explanatory texts were removed from the exhibition and two subsequent venues of the show, the Denver Art Museum and the St. Louis Art Museum, withdrew their bookings, ostensibly for “financial reasons.” Had the pomos and the politically correct deconstructionists won after all?

The crowds, needless to say, came in droves and, according to NMAA Director Elizabeth Broun, stood in line to deposit in the comment books such immortal lines as “Jesse Helms was right all along” and “all white people . . . should . . . return to Europe!” So much for the passive museum-goer slogging around Washington, D.C. for the annual dose of false consciousness.

Despite the hoopla surrounding “The West as America” exhibition, reading the catalogue comes as something of an anticlimax. It in no way foreshadows the contentious debates that attended the exhibition. In fact, in a curious way the volume is not radical enough. Some terribly important questions *are* raised—the relationship of artistic patronage to his-

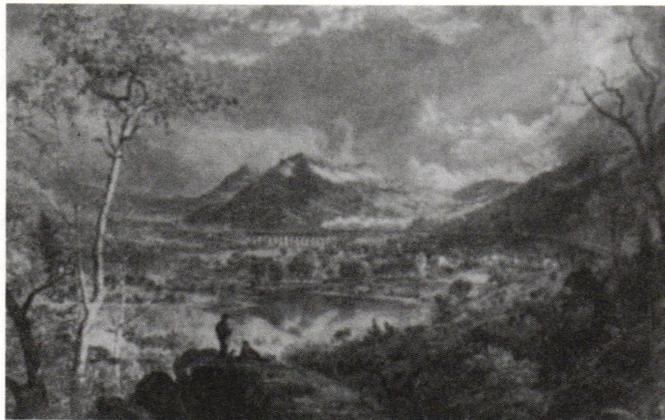


Charles Schreyvogel Painting on the Roof of His Apartment Building in Hoboken, New Jersey; photographer unknown, 1903. (From *The West as America*.)

torical representation, the relations between myth and ideology in art—but few are rigorously explored, and even fewer take the reader into the heart of the American imagination. This is not to say the book lacks merit. *The West as America* is a richly illustrated meditation on the place of western art within American art history and concomitantly, the place of the West within American history and identity. But in relation to the hair pulling and chest thumping last spring, it all seems pretty tame.

The West as America is divided into six substantive chapters preceded by two separate introductory essays. Howard R. Lamar, professor of history at Yale University and the dean of U.S. western history, provides the initial introduction titled “An Overview of Westward Expansion.” Lamar reaches far back into early American history to discuss three patriots whose endeavors figured largely in inventing the concept of the West as America: Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and James Monroe. These men worked in ways to quite literally add parts of the West to the U.S., whether through personal land speculation, treaty negotiation, or military occupation. Their personal and political writings also helped invent the concept of the West, a region of ineluctable American dominance wherein the nation could experience continual political and cultural rebirth and renewal.

William H. Truettner’s formal introduction to the catalogue, “Ideology and Image: Justifying Westward Expansion,” identifies twin cultural impulses—the quest for wildness and the desire to tame it—underlying expansionist rhetoric. Both literary and visual imagery of the West conspired to convince Americans they could find themselves in the untamed West as they embarked upon a civilizing mission. In a compelling juxtaposition of pictorial images of similar



Starrucca Viaduct, Pennsylvania; Jasper Cropsey, 1865. (From *The West as America*.)

subjects in the East and West (the railroad, farming, political discussion, and the landscape), Truettner shows how painters pursued a largely conservative representational strategy in their depictions of the East. As they turned their attentions westward, however, they filled their canvases with more aggressive images.

Railroad imagery in the East and West provides a striking condensation of regional iconography. Eastern railroads are exemplified in Jasper Cropsey’s painting of the Pennsylvania Railroad’s “Starrucca Viaduct,” which portrays rail technology as a benign presence, somehow diminished by the landscape surrounding it. Cropsey clearly took pains to “naturalize” the presence of the railroad by demonstrating how its path was organically

rooted in the contours of the landscape. The train is moving into the picture plane, away from the viewer, almost defying the viewer to take note of its presence. Andrew Melrose’s canvas *Westward the Star of Empire Takes Its Way—near Council Bluffs Iowa*, could hardly be more of a contrast. The railroad is shown making “a raw cut in the wilderness” pressing directly toward the viewer, headlight beaming. In front of the train two deer walk

in peril, clearly unaccustomed to sharing the wilderness with the new juggernaut. Lining one side of the train tracks is a landscape of felled trees, the imprint of civilization’s already considerable environmental impact. In Truettner’s words, the western image represents “an abrupt confrontation between new and old America, implying one must make way for the other.” If the East is the repository of traditional values and practices embodied in restrained imagery, the West is the region of conflict and struggle—with nature, with Native Americans. Western imagery is unleashed to represent the stormy side of manifest destiny.

According to Truettner, artists produced such contrasting contemporary images largely at the behest of their urban



Westward the Star of Empire Takes Its Way—near Council Bluffs, Iowa; Andrew Melrose, 1867. (From *The West as America*.)

(and eastern) patrons who demanded sharply contrasting imagery of the East and West: "They were quite content to envision the West as a land of promise, but the East they wished to see rendered in a less provocative fashion." Patrons wished, in other words, to displace the struggles and tensions of urbanization and industrialization to the West. The West appears as a space of displaced fears and anxieties, of hopes and triumphs: a space where Easterners could both lose and find themselves.

The displacement theme recurs with such frequency and in so many guises that the book might as well be titled "The East as West as America." Chapters one and two consist of iconographic studies of how western imagery is constituted through another cultural lens. "Prelude to Expansion" (chapter one) locates iconographical source material for western paintings amidst the tradition of European history painting while chapter two, by Patricia Hills, considers pictorial representations of the idea of "progress" during the 19th century. Hills constructs a narrative around the changing iconography of "progress," from the images of sturdy pioneer families as bearers of American culture and civility to the later iconography of the railroad and the telegraph.

Julie Schimmel contributes an intriguing essay on cultural invention in her chapter on changing representations of Native Americans. Painters adopted different strategies in depicting Native

Americans in direct relation to the fluctuating fortunes of Indian-white relations, particularly with respect to land and other resources. Indians are largely represented two-dimensionally in relation to white Europeans. Indians can be "good" by representing the beneficent aspects of nature and thereby superior European cultural attitudes. Alternatively, Indians can be "bad" by representing unrestrained nature and thereby the latent savagery of white men. Native Americans are first introduced into American painting as noble savages "whose grace and freedom (reason and intuition) put them in tune with nature." By the end of the 19th century, however, they are a violent but ultimately doomed and vanquished people, without a role in making the present or future.

The final three chapters return to western iconography. Elizabeth Johns notes that paintings depicting settlement and development tell "the story of the winners." The West was above all full of promise for the disciplined, diligent, and hard-working settler. Chapter five presents a lively discussion of representations of the natural environment addressing four physical archetypes of the West: Wyoming's Green River cliffs, Donner Pass in the Sierra Nevada, big tree groves in California, and the Grand Canyon. Nancy Anderson stresses the sense of boundless wealth and the environment as spectacle, an imagery paralleled in the advertisements of the 19th-century railroads, land companies, and tourist colonies. Alex Nemerov, in a final chapter titled "Doing the Old America," turns to nostalgia as it is mediated through and by urban industrial culture. In what is perhaps the most theoretically interesting contribution, Nemerov is concerned to restore, in two senses, a lost historical context to the work of such artists as Frederic Remington, Charles Russell, and Henry Farny. First he shows that a canvas such as Frederic

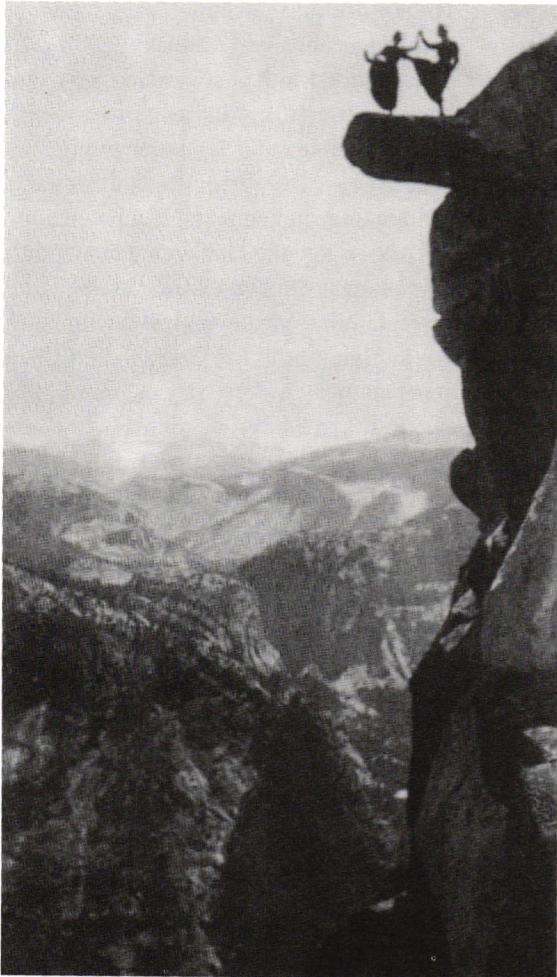
Remington's *Fight for the Water Hole* is an allegorical expression of urban industrial America in 1900, a world dominated by strikes and anti-immigration legislation. And second, he shows how painters struggled with a sublimated acknowledgment of the difficulties involved in "making history in a time so self consciously dislocated from the historical era they sought to represent." For Nemerov this explains western painting's obsession with other art, the passing of time, and the act of painting itself. He raises important questions about the social functions of western art, the "noise" which inserts itself between artist and subject. He is able to explore both how art assists in what Roland Barthes called "the passing from history to nature" and also how the allegorical aspects of western art were not deliberate but reflected the efforts of artists to depict social realities in terms that society, or some members of society, understood.

The West as America succeeds insofar as it confirms four basic premises: (1) that the western frontier, like frontiers everywhere, was a rough, violent, and exploitative space; (2) that the history of the frontier is shrouded in mythology and a thick ideological fog; (3) that artistic representations of the frontier are political and ideological; and (4) that art is not separate from the formation of national identity. These claims are neither unimportant nor uncontroversial, of course, but it needs to be said that much of the historical groundwork was already laid by historian Richard Slotkin in his pathbreaking book *The Fatal Environment* (1985).² All of this is thus somewhat standard fare as cultural interpretation.

In some respects, then, the analysis in *The West as America* is not controversial enough. The critical question of sponsorship by patrons, for example, is tantalizingly raised but never fully analyzed as a wellspring of mythic imagery and frontier ideology. From the suggestive clues strewn through various chapters of *The West as America*, the role of eastern



Fight for the Water Hole; Frederic Remington, 1903. (From *The West as America*.)



Kitty Thatch and Friend on Overhanging Rock, *Glacier Point, Yosemite*; George Fiske, c. 1890s. (From *The West as America*.)

urban patrons in the making of western art would seem to merit an exhibition of its own. Was the East really calling the tune? And if western art is deeply ideological, then one presumably needs to know a little more about class and social interests within the East than simply its "metropolitan" location. In a book devoted to ideology and mythology (two terms employed frequently and yet their definitions, mutual relations, and distinctions are often occluded), there is remarkably little reference to class and capitalist accumulation. Isn't the frontier, after all, simply one manifestation of what Marx called "primitive accumulation," whose history is "written in letters of blood and fire"?

Truettner is right to say that the West is the region that speaks, in cultural

terms, for the nation as a whole. And it has proven an enduring voice. Even Baudrillard, the current doyen of the Left Bank, spends most of his time talking about the West in his book *America*. But after reading *The West as America*, it is not clear why the West emerged in this way: why there is not or could not be, for instance, "The South as America." And finally, why, if one compares western historiography to that of the South or say Appalachia, has the revisionist critique been so late in coming?

But perhaps we shouldn't complain. Whatever the exhibition's shortcomings, the curators of "The West as America" have projected important questions into the heart of the national museums and into popular debate. Perhaps most central in its appearance is the context of its arrival: the debate over Americanness and the fragile patriotism and national self-esteem in the wake of the Gulf War and "the new world order."

This context has brought to the surface long-submerged questions of what a National Museum is permitted to display, what voices and interpretations can and should be heard, and, most fundamentally, who adjudicates upon such critical questions. In the 1990s, who has the power to represent in matters of founding history?

NOTES:

1. Hazel Carby, "The Canon: Civil War and Reconstruction," lecture delivered October 8th 1988, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, p. 8.

2. Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890*, Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 1985.

THE WEST AS AMERICA: REINTERPRETING IMAGES OF THE FRONTIER, 1820-1920, William H. Truettner, editor, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991, 408 pp., illus., \$60.00.

Michael Kaplan

"Lessons of Fascism" Heidegger and Nazism

VICTOR FARIAS

Twenty years ago one would have been hard-pressed to find a reference to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger in the literature of architecture. Returning to the United States in 1984 after an absence of twelve years, I was astonished at the extent to which Heidegger was being embraced by the architectural academy as a mentor. Articles appearing in the *Journal of Architectural Education* since 1986, for example, have regularly contained references to Heidegger, and refereed papers at academic conferences continue to be replete with citations.

The relation of philosophical trends in the theoretical and practical architectural agenda to the conservative political climate of the past two decades has become a common subject of speculation and debate. Bruno Zevi, an advocate of modernism, argues that certain formal aspects of historicism interface with ideological intents of fascism.¹ Leon Krier, while acknowledging the appropriation of the classical style by totalitarian forces, believes the convergence incidental and not an indictment of the style.² David Harvey frames the debate in terms of "a search for an appropriate myth" where modernist art served a capitalist version of the Enlightenment, and classicism a reaction to the universalist implications of technology.³ The very existence of the debate underscores the need to question the insistent citation by current theorists of one of National Socialism's most eloquent spokesmen.

The first extensive referencing I have found in an English-language architectural text occurs in Norberg-Schulz's 1971 work *Existence, Space and Architecture*, where the author cites Heidegger's essay "Bauen Wohnen Denken" (Building Dwelling Thinking), published in 1954, which had not yet been trans-



Martin Heidegger. (From *Heidegger and Nazism*.)

lated into English, and *Being and Time*, translated in 1962.⁴ A fully developed application of Heidegger's thought to architectural theory does not occur, until the publication of *Genius Loci* in 1979, where Norberg-Schulz states in the preface:

The philosophy of Heidegger has been the catalyst which has made the present book possible and determined its approach. The wish for understanding architecture as a concrete phenomenon, already expressed in *Intentions in Architecture*, could be satisfied in the present book thanks to Heidegger's essays on language and aesthetics, which have been collected and admirably translated into English by A. Hofstadter (*Poetry Language Thought*, New York 1971).⁵

With *Genius Loci* Norberg-Schulz brings the "existential" agenda into the mainstream of architectural theory in a scholarly, rational way, thus redefining theory for a generation of architectural academics. Is this phenomenon simply

fashion or part of a philosophical substratum on which postmodern and neoclassical trends of the 1970s and 1980s rested? Kenneth Frampton suggests the latter in the 1980 edition of *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, although the following paragraph was deleted from the revised 1985 edition of the same book:

After the publication of Martin Heidegger's "Building Dwelling Thinking" in 1954, it was natural that the Enlightenment category of *spatium in extensio* or limitless space should come to be challenged in architectural thought by the more archaic notion of *Raum* or place. The current architectural debate as to the finer stylistic points of Modernism versus Post-Modernism appears to be somewhat irrelevant in the light of this opposition.⁶

Interest in the apparent connection between "archaicist" thought and the growth of revisionist politics is evidenced by the appearance of several books that question myths carefully constructed in the postwar period. Albert Speer, for example, engaged in attempts at self-rehabilitation in the postwar decades, and various scholars have taken on the task of critically examining the records. Matthias Schmidt's *Albert Speer: The End of a Myth* was a response to Speer's *Inside the Third Reich*, a work emphasizing the apolitical nature of the architect's service to Hitler's regime. Schmidt's book, in its English translation, was reviewed in the *Journal of Architectural Education* by Dennis Domer, who previously translated Speer's article "Responsibility and Response," a fascinating exposition of the postmodern argument.⁷

In the period between 1945 and his death in 1976, Heidegger, too, tried to explain and defend both his membership in the Nazi party and sympathies for its positions. The controversy surrounding the publication in 1989 of Victor Farias's *Heidegger and Nazism* reflects the timing of its attack, launched precisely at the peak of the philosopher's posthumous popularity, indeed, apotheosis. Farias, who teaches at the Free University of Berlin, is described by editors Tom

Rockmore and Joseph Margolis as "a somewhat alienated observer, a Chilean Jew stranded in a postwar Germany that cannot yet confront its own history with equal directness." The author progresses chronologically through Heidegger's written and spoken texts, from a critique in praise of the 17th-century monk Abraham a Sancta Clara, through the more familiar philosophical writings, to the interview with *Der Spiegel*, published posthumously in 1976. By examining recurring themes Farias attempts to illustrate the convergence of Heidegger's thought and National Socialist action. A text written in 1910, for example, reveals a virulent antimodernist stance that later became a tenet of Nazi cultural revisionism. Farias excerpts the following statement:

If only our totally superficial culture of today, which loves rapid change, could visualize the future by turning to look more closely at the past! This rage for innovation that collapses foundations, this foolish negligence of the deep spiritual content in life and art, this modern concept of life as a rapid sequence of instant pleasures . . . so many signs of decadence, a sad denial of health and of the transcendent character of life.⁸

Such a position, appropriated by Hitler in his writings on the degeneracy of modern art, could be as easily exploited by a contemporary conservative politician or professed by an architectural design instructor intent on promoting a particular aesthetic. A more serious problem involves the works that contain few direct references to Nazi thought: they *appear* politically benign. Yet in his chapter on *Being and Time*, where he analyzes the philosopher's major work to "identify philosophical beliefs that foreshadow Heidegger's later convictions," Farias concludes that "pertinent political positions emerge with a clarity we can presume to read as an intended model for political society." Any contemporary theorist or critic contemplating citation of Heidegger might consider the author's argument.

Originally written in Spanish and published in 1987 in French, the present translation by Paul Bunell and Dominic Di Barnardi is a finely crafted, easily read work with little evidence of the move to English. Whenever a critical term is translated from German, the word or expression is left in its original within parentheses, recognizing Heidegger's own fastidious concerns about the nature of translation that reveal his cultural prejudices:

For if the beginning (Anfang) was Greek, to reclaim it we must use an instrument adjusted to that end, which could only be the German language.

The French assure me of this truth again today: when they begin to think, they speak German.⁹

If *Heidegger and Nazism* is efficient and predictable in its organization, there is one climactic moment of drama: the Socratic exchange of letters between Heidegger and his former student, émigré philosopher Herbert Marcuse. After carefully gathering the evidence, Farias casts Marcuse in the role of prosecutor who,

through the medium of personal correspondence, proceeds to accuse his mentor of spiritual support of the fascist regime and reluctance to disavow this support after 1945. Heidegger's response is both surprising and condemning, an ironic self-judgment.

The debate on style and politics has attracted designers and politicians alike. Architect Andres Duany, in suggesting Seaside, Florida, as the New American Suburb, claimed German town planning during the Third Reich as one of his sources of inspiration.¹⁰ Seaside, with its authoritarian building code and celebration of *pastiche*, is, in the end, a scheme for the affluent by an enterprising private developer, hardly a paradigm for socially responsive urban development. Another of Duany's patrons, HRH The Prince of Wales, chose in his Ten Principles to ignore social issues by scrutinizing contemporary design predominantly in archaic terms, favoring historicism (style) over history (process), thereby devaluing the contribution of "modern" architects, many in public service, to the postwar rebuilding of Britain. This reductionism suggests that an alliance of patron/mentors, their chosen developers and architects, and the establishment media can conspire to set the standards for architectural critique, effectively isolating and neutralizing those who might provide an alternative view.

These are times when architects tend not to voice their politics, particularly if their views diverge from those of the power elites. The recent controversy over governmental censorship of the content of artists' work in publicly funded exhibitions raises questions about the freedom professionals have to express their concern on important and politically sensitive issues: the environment, the state of the economy, civil rights, and the correctness of foreign policy.

When agents of authority become arbiters of taste, they have the power not only to censor, but actually shape the environment in the image of its patrons. A submissive cadre of artists and intellectuals serves to legitimize such power, surrendering responsibility for the outcome. Farias's awareness of this potential—as threatening today as during the Nazi period—seems a likely motive for his meticulous work.

NOTES:

1. Bruno Zevi, *The Modern Language of Architecture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), pp. 15–22.
2. Leon Krier, "An Architecture of Desire," *Architectural Design*, April 1986.
3. David Harvey, *The Condition of Post-Modernity* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 34–35
4. Siegfried Gideon's *Architecture and the Phenomena of Transition: The Three Space Conceptions in Architecture*, published in the same year (1971) as Norberg-Schulz's *Existence, Space and Architecture*, addresses many of the same issues, but from a modernist perspective. Gideon, an Austrian émigré who studied in Germany, surely knew of Heidegger, but there are no references to him in the book. Given Heidegger's anti-modernist views, the omission must have been deliberate.
5. Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980), p. 5.
6. Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 296
7. Albert Speer, "Responsibility and Response" (translated by Dennis Domer), *Journal of Architectural Education*, November 1978: 18.
8. Victor Farias, *Heidegger and Nazism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), p. 32.
9. Farias, p. 298
10. Duany's comments were included in his presentation at the 1985 AIA convention in Lexington, Kentucky, eliciting outrage by respondent Marshall Berman. In a later iteration of the presentation at the 1986 ACSA National Meeting in New Orleans, Duany deleted all references to German planning.



Nazis round up books for public burning in Berlin, 1933. (Courtesy of *Smithsonian* magazine.)

HEIDEGGER AND NAZISM, Victor Farias, Temple University Press, 1989, 368 pp., \$29.95 cloth; \$18.95 paper.

Eunice D. Howe

On Leon Baptista Alberti

MARK JARZOMBEK

From Signs to Design

CHARLES BURROUGHS

The penetrating writings of Leon Baptista Alberti continue to resonate with unexpected significance. While architects and architectural historians are familiar with the English translation of his ten books *On Architecture* (recently retranslated by Joseph Rykwert et al., see *DBR* 18), and they may have scanned excerpts from his treatises *On Painting* or, less likely, *On Sculpture*, few are aware of the vastness or the complexity of his literary production. In his study of Alberti's theories, Mark Jarzombek scrutinizes the author's entire oeuvre and produces a compelling study of Alberti's literary and aesthetic works. The image of Alberti as a caustic, incisive critic of contemporary society may not surprise scholars familiar with the Renaissance humanist. But what Jarzombek simultaneously reveals are the multiple layers of Albertian thought, and the mysterious processes that led to the formation of a cultural theory.

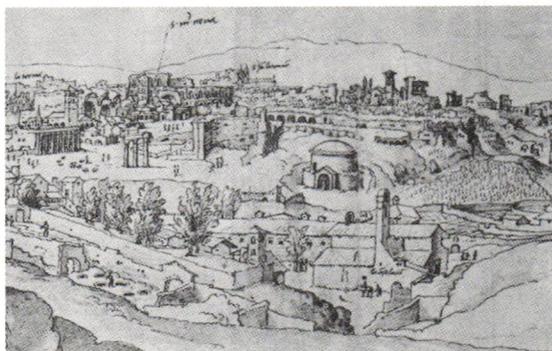
Thus Alberti's own writings, many of them obscure and previously untranslated, form the underpinnings of this accomplished study. His vast literary output is compacted into three sections, with a bewildering array of subtexts (chapters?) marked by headings and an addendum on his architecture. *On Leon Baptista Alberti* begins with a discussion of the "Autobiographical Imagination," which revolves around "a tripartite schema of characters: the saint, the cynic and the 'functionary' " who enunciate Alberti's philosophy. The explanation of Albertian method is followed by "Confrontation with the Arch-Aesthetic," an exposition of his theory of aesthetics. Finally, "Encounters and Misencounters in the



Commemorative medal of Leon Baptista Alberti; Matteo de'Pasti, c. 1445. (From *On Leon Baptista Alberti*.)

Albertian Theatre" examines Alberti's concept of the humanist dilemma when faced with the arch-aesthetic, which, according to the author, resulted in the contributions of painters and architects. "Postscript: Alberti as Architect" is appropriately titled, for it consists of speculative, fragmentary observations on five architectural commissions. It is to be expected that this final chapter, the only portion of the book dedicated to the intersection of theory with architectural design, will receive an unwarranted amount of attention.

In light of the conceptual nature of this study and its basis in literary rather than visual culture, the question arises as to the nature of its intended readership. There is little doubt that scholars of the Renaissance period will find the original



Panorama of Rome from the Campidoglio, with the Colosseum and Forum on the left and the cylindrical church of S. Teodoro and the Palatine hill in the center; Marten van Heemskerck, c. 1535. (From *From Signs to Design*.)

reading of Alberti's ethical and aesthetic views stimulating. Rather than the prototypical universal man with faith in rational discourse and the laws of nature, Alberti emerges as a mystic and a curmudgeon, a man at odds with many Renaissance ideals who perceived humanists as phonies or "vagabond intellectuals" perfecting the art of artifice. But will this line of inquiry inform architects and architectural historians? And should they grapple with Jarzombek's interpretative strategies, insightful but by no means familiar to readers trained in analyzing the material environment rather than epistemological systems? Inescapably, the answer is yes. At the very basis of *On Leon Baptista Alberti* is the conviction that a coherent cultural vision transcends the boundaries that separate academic and professional disciplines. Accessibility of that vision, however, may prove a challenge to the uninitiated reader.

In the second book under review, Charles Burroughs supports the characterization of Alberti as a complex and often contradictory thinker. Although hardly its primary objective, *From Signs to Design* explores connections between Albertian theory and practice; his views on urbanism, the ideal city, and his presumed plans for Nicholas V—which reflect rhetorical devices, social concerns, and changing rather than static models.

In his preface, Burroughs invokes the metaphor of a journey "signposted by the marks" on the public spaces of mid-15th-century Rome; and throughout the rest of the book he returns to the concept of the built environment as a text to which accrue diverse and mutable meanings. Admittedly restive with positivist art history, Burroughs charts his own methodological course, framed by scholarly discourse, in an introductory chapter likely to frustrate readers impatient with theoretical assumptions and to appeal to others in its ambitious scope. The author seems, at times, to model his language after his subject in aiming for a "highly complex and

conflicted societal model.” In any case, this is not a book for the uninitiated: it presupposes familiarity with the formal character of monumental Roman architecture—which is all but ignored—and the building history of famous projects like St. Peter’s, the Vatican Palace, and the plans for the Borgo—which are summarized in the footnotes. Thus, the reader would be well advised to re-view Piero Tomei (*L’architettura a Roma nel Quattrocento*) and Torgil Magnuson (*Studies in Roman Quattrocento Architecture*) for background. Nevertheless, *From Signs to Design* is beautifully produced; the format of the text is clear, and the references and illustrations easy to consult. The bibliography alone makes it a worthwhile addition to any library.

As anticipated in the introduction, the author focuses on the vernacular architecture of the city. The organization of his thoughts on the semiotics of urban space follows a free-flowing, almost random path in the first chapter. Within this occasionally fragmented and frequently discursive framework, Burroughs returns to original readings of his text—the urban forms of Rome—by decoding building surfaces as fields for inscriptions and examining the social-symbolic significance of the tower and the portico. The second chapter centers on “Interior Architecture,” represented in the frescoes of Fra Angelico in the Chapel of Nicholas V, where metaphor purportedly mingles with ambiguity to find resolution in the urban ideals espoused by the pope. The discussion then returns to the built environment and the way that symbolism intersected with papal policy to shape the emerging city. The reader may be perplexed by the over-reading of an urban sign, as in the supposedly panoptic powers of the Angel of the Castel Sant’Angelo, but may respond to a comparable method of interpretation for other forms, like the cogent arguments for the encoded language of the Via Maggiore and Monti. Similarly,



St. Lawrence Distributes Treasure to the Poor of Rome, chapel of Nicholas V, Vatican palace; Fra Angelico, c. 1450. (From *From Signs to Design*).

Burroughs sometimes seems weighed down by earlier scholarship, simultaneously acknowledging sources in his text, footnotes, and bibliographic citations. Yet all chapters, particularly the final ones, contain passages of elegant prose that effortlessly blend observation with historical insight.

For all of his emphasis on theoretical inquiry, Burroughs is at his best interpreting the scattered and exceedingly challenging archival sources that serve as the main key to understanding the Rome of Nicholas V. Assembling new documentation, he constructs a revealing account of the papacy—the internal conflicts and shifting loyalties—and proposes a new periodization of its goals based on the pivotal Porcari conspiracy in 1453. The political and social infrastructure of the papal government encompassed a diverse cast of characters, which included Alberti, who collaborated with Nicholas V during the later years of his pontificate, and Francesco del Borgo, who built urban works and later became the principal ar-

chitect (in contrast to the better-known Bernardino Rossellino, who is featured in Manetti’s account). Most intriguing is the curious figure of Nello da Bologna, the pope’s right-hand man, who supervised preparations for the Jubilee Year of 1450. Burroughs asserts that Nello’s success in that role (although one wonders how he escaped blame for the disastrous collapse of the Ponte Sant’Angelo!) led to his ascendancy at the papal court in succeeding years and his rise to chief building impresario under Nicholas V. In thus analyzing the mechanics of the papal administration, Burroughs rejects accepted notions of one-on-one patronage and proposes instead more fluid and complex processes of decision-making involving patron, contractor, architect, and builder. In the penultimate chapter, the topographical boundaries of the discourse are expanded in order to frame the territory surrounding Rome, the Patrimonium—rural provinces

seldom explored by architectural historians. According to Burroughs, the social and political connections between the city and its hinterland resulted in the transplantation of urbanistic codes.

Whether on account of its methodological stance(s) or its revisionist readings of the urban culture of mid-15th-century Rome, *From Signs to Design* is certain to arouse the full spectrum of response. At the same time, it is wise to remember that irrespective of the author’s wide knowledge of the period, he aims not for synthetic conclusions, but for the speculative and the paradigmatic. Readers may debate his provocative interpretations but, in so doing, they will have confronted thoughtful scholarship.

ON LEON BAPTISTA ALBERTI: HIS LITERARY AND AESTHETIC THEORIES, Mark Jarzombek, MIT Press, 1989, 258 pp., illus., \$19.95.

FROM SIGNS TO DESIGN: ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS AND REFORM IN EARLY RENAISSANCE ROME, Charles Burroughs, MIT Press, 1990, 344 pp., illus., \$40.00.

Gevork Hartoonian

Figures of Architecture and Thought

FRANCESCO DAL CO

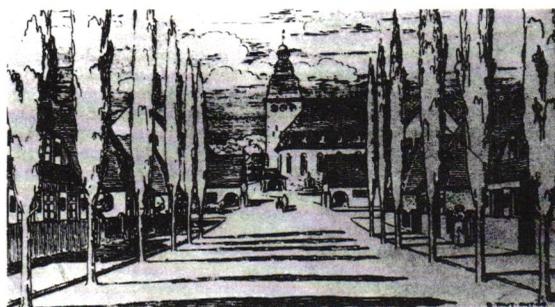
In *Figures of Architecture and Thought: German Architecture Culture 1880–1920*, Francesco Dal Co reconstructs the modern culture of architecture in Germany. Dal Co presents a genealogical study, mapping the autonomous body of architecture through the formative course of the economic, political, and cultural discourses that occurred at the turn of the century. At issue is an awareness of the loss of center, and the problem of dwelling in the modern city. The appendix of the book compiles works of prominent authors of the time encountering the dissolution of the organic bond between culture and technology. Dal Co probes these texts and reveals their importance for architectural discourse. The heterogeneous language of modern architecture is presented not as poetics, but as strategic positions addressing the chasm that civilization has opened in tradition. Dal Co's reading is also a critique of the Hegelian dialectic in favor of difference. At the end of the third part of the book Dal Co reveals his critical position. After comparing Peter Behren's AEG factory with Walter Gropius's and Adolf Meyer's Fagus-Werk, Dal Co concludes that the latter implies an idea of *Sachlichkeit* where "objects are pacified; in the concept of usefulness the terms of the Riegelian dialectic cancel each other out, type and style coincide, and the problem posed by Semperian 'mechanism' is resolved in coherent fashion." His premises recall William Morris's love of imperfection positing a "culture of dwelling" as a discourse of resistance against the process of desacralization of architecture by technology.

The first two chapters contain theoretical reflections on the interplay of tradition and civilization. To com-

prehend the problem of modern dwelling one must consider the eccentric nature of life in the modern city, the conceptual and technical separation between art, craft, and technology, and finally, the detachment of the populace from place and the dissolution of the home in the linear progression of the space of the metropolis. The appendix presents two lines of thought addressing the broken body of the organic totality. In the first, Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*, for example, takes its metaphorical life in Hermann Hesse's narrative of "The City." Hesse suggests that it is palpable for a city to recuperate its wealth and beauty after an earthquake, but not after a transformation caused by the "bloody revolution of the lower classes." Other views depict the socio-technical transformation of the turn of the century as a sign of progress. From this point of view, the task is to internalize the new developments: "It is not that the new body pains us, but that so far we lack its spirit." Thus, Hermann Bahr frames the problem of the second position. Dal Co posits the problem of modern dwelling beyond organicist and synthetic cultural tendencies. The theme that runs throughout critical work that is the subject of the essay is Martin Heidegger's thought on dwelling, and Emmanuel Levinas's concept of "wandering." According to Dal Co, Levinas "arrives at a totally negative resolution that clears the way for the emergence of a demystified concept of home."

Dal Co's text on the culture of dwelling is dense and inclusive. Drawing on

Bahr and Ernest Troeltsch, Dal Co posits the problem of modern culture of architecture, using the metaphor of the bridge and the idea of order, to picture "design" as a project connecting two separate bodies. According to Dal Co, "the project, the design activity of architecture, is this stirring up of the conflict between that which reveals itself autonomously and that which is brought about by a process of decision—so much so that the project produces by showing the difference." The ontology of the bridge, a structure that "unites and divides," as George Simmel suggests, becomes the metaphor for design strategies aiming to bring together tradition and civilization. We are reminded of Paul Klee's "Viaducts Break Rank," and Bahr's articulation of such duality from the point of view of the discourse of *das Moderne*: "Modernity exists only as our desire, while outside it is every where, outside of ourselves. It is not in our spirit." He continues, "Life has changed totally and continues to change all over, everyday, restless and fickle. But the spirit has remained old and rigid." To close the gap between life and the spirit, or to use an architectural metaphor, the inside/outside, one needs to establish an ordering principle, a bridge to the past, a definite center for modern culture, as Bahr concludes. Yet, this turn to history brings into question the relationship between technology and traditional artistic language. From Schopenhauer, and Konrad Fiedler to Alois Riegl—to mention just a few names discussed here—Dal Co brings our attention to the antimaterialist content of the theoretical work of art history between 1800–1900, and its implicit assumption of an "ordering principle." These theories are examined in light of their avoidance of any dialogue on technology, or critique of themes such as "type," "decoration," and "style." Evidently, this line of thought goes against the avant-garde's drive for the death of art as well as *das Moderne's* utopia of a harmonious totality. As Dal Co argues, the problem of mean-

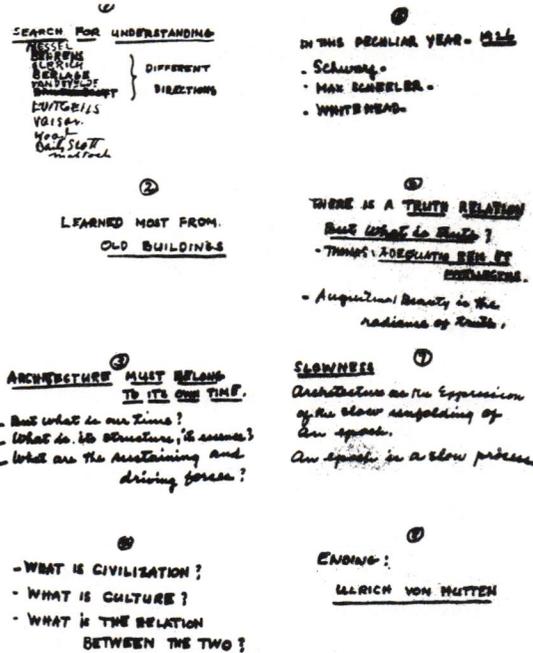


Project for workers' Siedlung; Bruno Taut, 1905. (From *Figures of Architecture and Thought*.)

ing in architectural language and forms could not be solved by its fusion into the world of technology: "A reduction manifest in the evolution of modern languages and forms of figuration." One must agree with Dal Co that this strategy has distanced architecture from its normative transformation implied in John Ruskin's thought—particularly in "The Lamp of Obedience"—and placed architecture in the view of the operative laws of technology. In conclusion, Dal Co reveals the import of political decision-making for practice and teaching of modern architecture.

The third chapter focuses on the Werkbund and its failure to formulate a proper order between design and the process of sociopolitical decision-making which for Dal Co implies the idea of project. In this context, the final chapter on Mies van der Rohe stands for the Other. Dal Co's conclusive account of the Werkbund experience makes a prior reading of the essay on Mies desirable. This is not the first time that a critical revision of modern architecture highlights Mies; however, the specificity of Dal Co's position is his effort to link Mies's work to the "culture of dwelling." In effect, Dal Co presents a possible existential reading of Mies. Of course, it is not difficult for the reader to pursue the significance of such a position throughout the book.

Concerning the duality between culture and civilization, Dal Co recognizes two tendencies in modern architecture. Undermining the import of civilization, some architectural projects looked for the home and place in the nostalgic abyss of contextualism. Others, fascinated by the nihilism of progress, opened the gate of dissolution to architecture. According to Dal Co, these works attempted to conceal the "apparent" separation between history, memory, style, and type by emphasizing abstraction. In support of his argument, Dal Co explores the idea of abstraction in the Werkbund where the complexity of the spirit and life, ex-



Notes for a speech given at the Royal Institute of British Architects, London; Mies van der Rohe, May 1959. (From *Figures of Architecture and Thought*.)

pressed by Bahr, is unequivocally resolved. We are also reminded of the educational program of the Werkbund and its association with the idea of the project, which means that one seeks and directs oneself toward a plan that has been thought out. Motivated by nationalistic politics, the Werkbund finds the emblem of cultural complexity in the rational organization of the production line. Dal Co's conclusion is apt: the Werkbund misread the import of technology and the culture of dwelling. Between the lines of the various presentations, one might suggest that a culture of dwelling implies an architectural way of thinking that negates the organic harmony between place and the home. It also rejects the simulation of traditional forms (such as rootedness). As Levinas suggests, dwelling "implies wandering, and delineates a fundamental linguistic disharmony. Dwelling is that which produces difference." Of course, linguistic disharmony has nothing to do with the will to form; rather, by suspending the totality of architectural language, a scope of freedom of choice comes to the fore. From the existential web of language and dwelling, the German term *Bauen* gathers its meaning. One is re-

minded of the compelling quality of silence and the dialectic of solitude and waiting in Mies's work. Recalling Bahr's analogy of inside/outside, we can suggest that the glass enclosures of the Miesian void push the dichotomy of tradition and civilization to its limits. Yet it is the "excellence" of Mies, as Dal Co notices, to hold his work against the beacon of this limit, turning technology into a principle of order; as Mies maintained, it is "a definition of meaning and the measure of being."

Dal Co's reading is significant for two reasons. First, the concept of dwelling and its relation to language is mapped in its existential dimension. In fact, language unfolds its truth content only in conjunction with dwelling. Otherwise, it could be reduced to an empty, abstract signifier. Dal Co's discourse departs from the formal interpretation of the relationship between language and dwelling, which is refined in the corollaries that Norberg Schultz draws between Michael Graves and Louis Kahn, to mention one example. Second, the concept of a culture of dwelling provides a tool for both interpreting and reconstructing architecture. The import of this second point is relevant to current major architectural theories and practice. In light of Dal Co's argument, one might suggest that *das Moderne* still frames the theories of postmodernism and deconstruction respectively. While one tendency attempts to terminate the course of the death of art, the other camouflages its "regret" and "nostalgia" by simulating history. In both cases technology is in command, though this time by its "soft" face of simulacra.

FIGURES OF ARCHITECTURE AND THOUGHT: GERMAN ARCHITECTURE CULTURE 1880-1920, Francesco Dal Co, Rizzoli, 1990, 344 pp., illus., \$25.00.

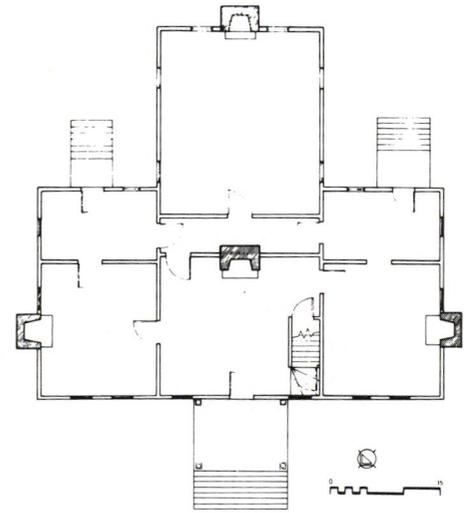
Stephen Fox

North Carolina Architecture

CATHERINE W. BISHIR

Catherine W. Bishir's *North Carolina Architecture* will impress by size alone. Reinforcing this initial perception are the number and quality of the book's photographs by Tim Buchman, the caliber of its descriptive drawings, most by Carl R. Lounsbury, and the discipline and clarity of its graphic design by Ed King. This large, handsomely produced volume is a historical survey of the architecture of North Carolina from the beginning of the 18th century to the middle of the 20th century. The conciseness and lucidity of Catherine Bishir's prose renders what might easily have been a glorified listing of disparate buildings into a coherent narrative interpretation of a state's social, economic, and cultural development as represented in its architecture.

Bishir's experience as a preservationist is apparent in her treatment of buildings. The weight she gives to architectural description and analysis is balanced by that which she accords to the social and economic context in which works of architecture were realized. Thus, stylistic, and to a lesser extent, typological, developments are consistently related to agricultural or industrial practices, urban growth, religious predilections, ethnic tradition, and the evolution of the building professions. As a result, North Carolina's architectural heritage is not presented as a dim, provincial reflection of metropolitan developments, but as a conjunction of diverse factors—personal, professional, and social—that respond to the immediate, as well as more distant, influences. Extra-local phenomena—from 18th-century English architecture books to the European Modern Movement—directly affected North Carolina, and Bishir documents how these influences were transmitted and assimilated by North Carolina builders and clients.



Plan, the Hermitage, Halifax County, c. 1790–1810. (From *North Carolina Architecture*.)

The number of highstyle architects who worked in North Carolina is impressive, from the mid-18th-century Englishman, John Hawks, the designer of Tryon Palace and possibly other buildings in the late colonial and early republican periods, to the 19th-century architects William Nichols (father and son), Ithiel Town and A. J. Davis, Thomas U. Walter, Richard Upjohn, Samuel Sloan, Richard M. Hunt, and in the 20th century, North Carolina-bred Henry Bacon, John Russell Pope, Hobart Upjohn, Cram and Ferguson, Charles Barton Keen, Horace Trumbauer, Shreve and Lamb, William Lawrence Bottomley, Oskar Stonorov, and Marcel Breuer. When one realizes, as Bishir emphasizes, that North Carolina remained, through the period she examines, a poor, predominantly rural state, this accumulation of architectural talent is even more noteworthy.

Indicative of the state's rural heritage are the log-built structures, the farm and plantation compounds, and the many plantation, farm, and tenant houses that are presented. The impact of industrialization on a rural economy is graphically portrayed in the distinctively shaped tobacco barns of the Piedmont. North Carolina's abrupt economic transition under the impact of tobacco processing and textile manufacturing at the end of the



The Hermitage, Halifax County, c. 1790–1810. (From *North Carolina Architecture*.)

19th century resulted not only in sprawling mill complexes but the development of workers' villages (whose rationalized planning was advocated as early as 1899 by the Charlotte engineer Daniel Augustus Tompkins) and, eventually, elite garden suburbs planned by such professionals as the Olmsted brothers and John Nolen. Almost as unexpected were the development of resorts of ever-increasing ambitiousness, from homely Wrightsville Beach and Linville, to which the nabobs of Wilmington retreated, to the stupendous scale of Biltmore House and the sophisticated architectural amenities of the Sandhills.

Some of the most fascinating sections of the book deal with the settlements and buildings of non-Anglo-Americans in North Carolina. Most prominent were the Moravians of Wachovia, who settled in the colony in the middle of the 18th century, bringing German types, construction techniques, and building professionals with them. And though their impact was much more restricted and short-lived, the



Slave house, Franklin County, early 19th century. (From *North Carolina Architecture*.)

Italian Protestant Waldensians likewise transported to the Blue Ridge mountains Alpine types and techniques at the end of the 19th century.

The contributions of African-Americans to the development of North Carolina are noted in the slave and sharecropper housing, urban and rural churches, and the house types that characterized turn-of-the-century black urban neighborhoods. Special attention is called to the work of Thomas Day, a free black cabinetmaker active in the 1850s, and to the early 20th-century type of the twin-towered church. While Bishir frequently mentions that African-Americans have been active in the building trades since the 18th century, such contributions are referred to generally many more times than they are examined specifically.

This shortcoming, which continued research into the history of urban and rural settlements should redress, is joined by several others. There is no map of North Carolina to pinpoint the principal regions, rivers, major settlements, and railroads. Urban development is not examined as such, so that the character of North Carolina's cities—colonial Edenton, mercantile Wilmington, utopian Salem and its entrepreneurial offspring Winston, industrial Charlotte—must be inferred from the buildings illustrated in each. (A happy exception is made for downtown Asheville in the 1920s.) There

are no city diagrams to complement Carl Lounsbury's diagrams of rural agricultural complexes. The last two chapters, dealing with post-Civil War and early 20th-century developments, require much compression of material so that they do not overwhelm preceding chapters. Given the increasing demographic and economic complexity after 1865, Bishir must survey many and much more diverse buildings more rapidly. In the process, important episodes are overlooked. The remarkable Queen-Anne style public buildings of late 19th-century Charlotte go unremarked, as does the extensive country-house work of Harrie T. Lindeberg in the 1920s and Philip Johnson's frustrated exertions on behalf of the International Style in the form of unbuilt cottages (for his parents, one assumes) by J. J. P. Oud and Clauss and Daub.

It is to be hoped that these oversights will be subjects of forthcoming scholarly examination and publication. In the meantime Bishir's book sets an admirable standard, for succeeding scholarship. *North Carolina Architecture* constitutes a landmark in its own right, a notable work of scholarship that documents and interprets the history of architecture in a heretofore underappreciated area of the United States.



Rotunda; Coolmore, Edgecombe County; E. G. Lind, 1859–60. (From *North Carolina Architecture*.)

NORTH CAROLINA ARCHITECTURE. Catherine W. Bishir with photographs by Tim Buchman, Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina and University of North Carolina Press, 1990, 514 pp., illus., \$59.95 cloth.

Mark L. Brack

Puerto Rican Houses in Sociohistorical Perspective

CAROL F. JOPLING

Community and Continuity: The History, Architecture and Cultural Landscape of La Tierra Amarilla

CHRIS WILSON AND DAVID KAMMER

Although we are quickly approaching the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas, the serious study of this country's Hispanic architectural heritage remains remarkably inadequate. The diverse missions of the Southwest have attracted the most attention, but have yet to be thoroughly evaluated within the larger context of Mexican ecclesiastical design. Domestic architecture has fared even worse, although it played an equally significant role in the settlement of the frontier. Only fifteen years ago, Bainbridge Bunting wrote that "less is known about the homes in which the Spanish colonists lived [in New Mexico] than about Indian dwellings of the previous thousand years."

Part of our ignorance may be ascribed to the fact that most of the early Hispanic domestic buildings in the United States have been destroyed or remodeled beyond recognition. Not surprisingly, the best recent studies of Hispanic housing and material culture have often been produced by archaeologists rather than architectural historians. However, the many years of scholarly neglect also reflect an unspoken prejudice against Hispanic culture that has deep roots in the history of the United States. Before the time of conquest, apologists for expansion

used the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny to convince the American populace that the great opportunities offered in the Southwest were wasted on the area's Mexican inhabitants. Once victorious, Americans showed little inclination to admit the value of anything that had preceded their arrival. Politically or psychologically, conquerors usually perceive little benefit from an appreciation of the vanquished. Continuing racial and religious prejudices relegated Hispanics to the status of "inferior aliens" with little chance of assimilation. Yet Hispanic culture survived (and in some cases flourished) in the new territories of the United States. Only lately have we begun to appreciate the extent of its contribution to American life. Two recent books on Hispanic domestic architecture do a great deal to expand awareness of Hispanic vernacular designs within our borders.

Carol F. Jopling's *Puerto Rican Houses in Sociohistorical Perspective* is an ambitious study that seeks a "socio-historical explanation of the diverse forms . . . of Puerto Rican houses." Jopling's scope is admirable; her survey attempts to discuss almost every type of single-family residence, ranging from the houses of the rural poor to those of well-to-do urban residents. The author breaks down both interior plans and exterior appearances into a series of typological forms, and her book is profusely illus-

trated with plans and photographs that illustrate the pertinent issues or notable qualities contributing to that typology.

Jopling provides an excellent account of her methodology which also recognizes its limitations. As an anthropologist, her primary interest is in the social relationships of inhabitants to their houses. Her familiarity with semiotics and cultural geography have also contributed to her compelling ideas of how the competing needs for community membership and individual aspirations are architecturally manifested. Jopling describes how vernacular homes are "individualized within inchoate limits, to express a family's *dignidad* and establish its status in a particular neighborhood." The study is particularly strong when it examines individual houses, describing family use and differentiations between public and private spaces. The Hispanic division of domestic space is usually quite distinct from the dominant patterns of the United States and this helps to establish the continuing vitality of Hispanic culture after annexation to the United States. Jopling also presents pertinent correlations between building types and levels of income, education, and travel. While some of her conclusions from these statistics seem self-evident, the thoroughness of the documentation is welcome.

The book's great virtue—the comprehensive scope of its survey—is also its greatest weakness. One is hesitant to fault the author for attempting to cover so much ground; such efforts are often the necessary first step in attempting to understand a given resource. But such a broad approach, while desirable, is impossible given the limited amount of field work involved (three survey teams worked for six weeks). To condense the entire island's several hundred years of domestic design into three hundred pages is overly ambitious, especially in light of the author's further intentions to



Vernacular Finca house with three-opening façade; La Parguera. (From *Puerto Rican Houses*.)



Map of historic district; Los Brazos, New Mexico. (From *Community and Continuity*.)

decode the cultural and historical meanings of the buildings.

Like many other studies of Hispanic architecture in the United States, much of the focus of *Puerto Rican Houses in Sociohistorical Perspective* is on the dramatic changes wrought by American culture before and after annexation. This issue of cultural confrontation is an absolutely crucial one; the conclusions of influential studies of Hispanic houses in this country were profoundly flawed because the potential Hispanic contributions were not recognized or understood. Although Jopling reviews the building traditions of Puerto Rico, her study does not adequately establish the relationship of the island's architectural history to that of the rest of the Caribbean, Latin America, and Spain. Jopling demonstrates, for instance, the long dominance of the *sala* (parlor)/*comedor* (dining room) axis, but it would be helpful to know the genesis of the form and where it fits into the larger pattern of Hispanic domestic architecture. Puerto Rico has been an American territory for nearly a hundred years, yet the significant and continuing influence of Latin American architecture on the island provides dramatic evidence

that Puerto Rico still manages to look in directions other than north.

In *Community and Continuity: The History of Architecture and Cultural Landscape of La Tierra Amarilla* Chris Wilson and David Kammer have admirably demonstrated the longevity of Hispanic traditions in the United States by focusing their research on a particular area of New Mexico. The Tierra Amarilla region is located in north-central New Mexico, near the Colorado border. Although the state's Rio Grande Valley witnessed Hispanic settlement beginning in 1598, La Tierra Amarilla wasn't settled until the 1860s, more than a decade after American annexation of New Mexico. Even so, Hispanic patterns of dividing land, allocating resources, and building houses continued to influence the area for decades.

Community and Continuity grew out of a survey of historic structures conducted by the authors for the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office. The book discusses five historic villages as well as scattered buildings and other significant historic resources. The authors are closely acquainted with the building traditions of Hispanic New Mexico, and their analysis of the fusion of Hispanic and Anglo-American building forms is generally excellent. Yet like *Puerto Rican Houses*, the Hispanic building elements of New Mexico are presented in isolation from the larger context of Hispanic architecture. In a few instances, references to building and settlement patterns in Mexico would have been welcome.

Although one chapter is devoted to architecture (predominantly domestic), it would be more accurate to characterize the book as a cultural landscape study. History, folkways, economics, agriculture, natural resources, and technology are brought together to create a vivid impression of how this remote corner of the country was settled. The chapter titled "Land and Water Use" provides a particularly fascinating description of the development and control of *acequias* (irrigation ditches) and their impact on community form. The authors thus remind us that the realities of rural life often create forms quite different from the ideal patterns of settlement (such as plaza towns) that usually dominate our discussions of Southwest frontier planning.

The book is illustrated with measured plans and many evocative photographs, both historic and contemporary. The second half of *La Tierra Amarilla* is presented in the format of driving tours of the region, and excellent maps locate the significant buildings and features in each area. The book's fluid prose and ample references will make it a valuable resource for those who wish to expand the scope of classroom discussions of the built environment beyond the field's current Anglo-American emphasis.

In New Mexico and Puerto Rico, historic and traditional patterns of life are finally being documented and protected, and these two important books establish the continuity of traditional Hispanic folkways in spite of pressures from Anglo-American society. They demon-



Fermin Martinez house, built c. 1890, now demolished; Los Brazos, New Mexico (structure 115 on map). (From *Community and Continuity*.)

strate that the American experience is more accurately characterized by its persistent diversity, rather than its supposed homogeneity.

Presenting *Puerto Rican Houses* and *La Tierra Amarilla* in the same review probably isn't fair, considering the authors' quite different intentions. One reason *La Tierra Amarilla* can be so satisfying is that the resources under consideration are so limited. Given the scale of Jopling's interests in Puerto Rico, one really couldn't expect the same attention to detail found in Wilson and Kammer's work. Jopling's book will no doubt be the standard reference work for future explorations of Puerto Rico's architectural heritage. *La Tierra Amarilla* will serve as a superb model for more intimately scaled cultural landscape studies.

Dennis L. Dollens

Jujol

IGNASI DE SOLÀ-MORALES

The collapse of modernism as prescription and dogma for structures and architectural discourse has left an angst-ridden profession, one seeking alternatives to discredited, fallen icons and sacred texts. In turn, this search has prompted a crisis in design, criticism, theory, and history, and is visible in the divergent paths of architects, scholars, and writers attempting to formulate or discover historical precedents or theoretical precepts they can suture to architecture as it approaches the next century.

The search for alternative dogma is evident in building and theory, from Bernard Tschumi to Christopher Alexander, Richard Meier to Arata Isozaki, and Frank Gehry to Cesar Pelli. Other, diverse and divergent views are heard in classrooms or read in journals. This healthy exploration is equally evident within the world of architectural publishing. A case-in-point: *Jujol* by Ignasi de Solà-Morales.

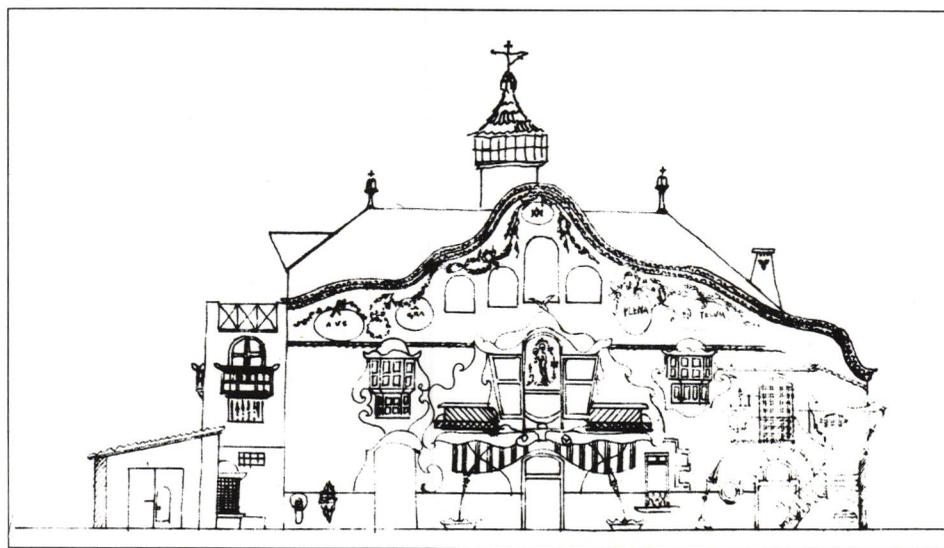
Until the breakdown of modernism's dictates, Josep Maria Jujol (1879–1949) was a heretic outside the confines of ac-

cepted categories. As recently as ten years ago when I started working with Ronald Christ, George Collins, Carlos Flores, and Josep Maria Jujol, Jr., to research and publish the first English-language guide to Jujol's architecture, Jujol was almost totally unknown, even in Barcelona—the city where he spent his entire professional life. Christ and I followed this collaboration with exhibitions in New York and Chicago and a videotape, but still no illustrated, general monograph existed in English. Now, however, because of the reexamination of modernism and the profession's subsequent search beyond its hallowed canons, interest is great enough for Rizzoli to present the architecture of this little-known, regional designer and builder: an architect whose most important works lie in sometimes remote villages of Catalonia; who, when known at all, is subsumed by Antoni Gaudí's shadow; who employed early guises of modernism—expressionism and surrealism—melded with a personal, often Catholic design typology; who rated only a footnote in architectural history before the status quo of modernism was jolted. Yet jolted it was and we are now able to see a onetime footnote as a full text, to hear a whisper as a clear voice.

Ignasi de Solà-Morales provides us

PUERTO RICAN HOUSES IN SOCIO-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, Carol F. Jopling, The University of Tennessee Press, 1988, 308 pp., illus., \$34.95.

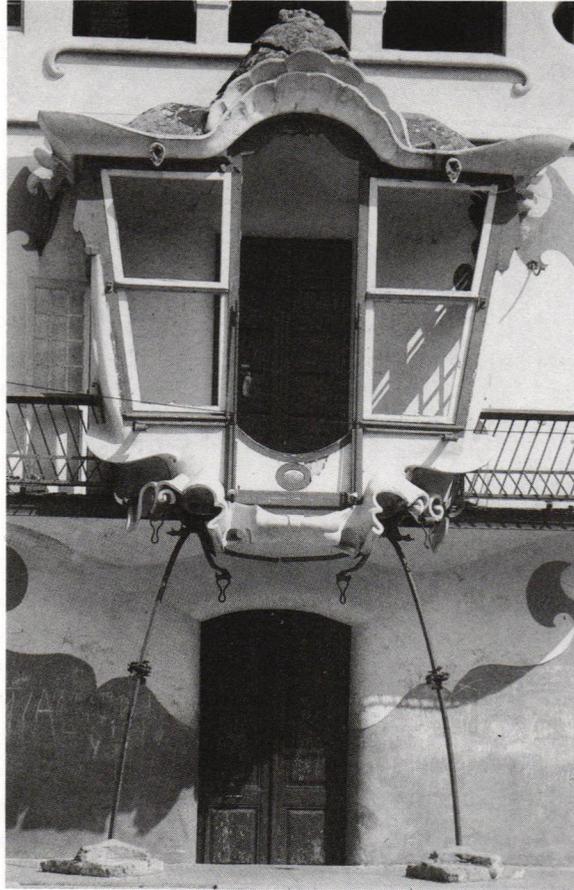
COMMUNITY AND CONTINUITY: THE HISTORY, ARCHITECTURE AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF LA TIERRA AMARILLA, Chris Wilson and David Kammer, New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, 1989, 134 pp., illus., \$11.00 paper.



Façade of Casa Negra, Barcelona; Josep Maria Jujol, 1915. (From *Jujol*.)

with a small chapter for a revisionist view of 20th-century architectural history. His *Jujol* presents the profession and the reader with an informed and informative (if too brief) introduction to one of Catalonia's most overlooked yet important architects (the argument for Jujol's position in Spain and ultimately in Europe has yet to be presented). Solà-Morales neither belabors Jujol's influence on or by Gaudí, nor shirks the subject. After a brief description of the young architect's family, education, and early experience in various Barcelona architectural offices, Solà-Morales describes Jujol's principal contributions to Gaudí's work—the coloration of Casa Batlló's façade, the iron balconies and gates of Casa Milá, the tilework at Park Güell. Picking up on a theme more fully developed by Carlos Flores in *Gaudí, Jujol y el modernismo Catalan*, Solà-Morales makes clear that the young architect not only learned from but also taught the older master—that Jujol's architectural development stimulated Gaudí just as Gaudí's stimulated his like-minded and equally religious associate.

After placing Jujol within a social and design context, Solà-Morales discusses many of the architect's important, though modest projects, all the while focusing on Jujol's small group of masterworks. His essay leads us to understand the importance of humble materials and hand manipulation, not as merely forced on Jujol by the budgets of small projects, but as elected by his overall belief in modesty and "poverty"—virtues buried in the architect's deep-seated Catholicism. Solà-Morales goes far to convince us that with greater economic freedom Jujol might have completed larger and architecturally grander projects, but his materials and craft methods would have remained consistent with those he actually used, as well as true to the palette shown in the book's many color plates.



Detail, façade of Casa Negra, Barcelona; Josep Maria Jujol, 1915. (From *Jujol*.)

Jujol, a master at structural transformations, often integrated old buildings into his visionary new additions—sometimes practically burying the old, or elements of it, within the new, as at the religiously "surrealistic" Casa Negra (1915–1930). Or other times Jujol allowed important historic elements to shine alongside new additions, for example at Casa Bofarull (1914–1931). These two private houses are among Jujol's most accomplished and decoratively important works, and Solà-Morales establishes them as prototypes of integrated craftsmanship employing wrought-iron, fresco, *trencadis* (ceramic mosaic), and *sgraffiti* (designs incised in the wet plaster of façades). Like most of Jujol's work these dwellings are complete worlds within themselves and carry symbolic or written invocations—usually to the Virgin Mary. Solà-Morales correctly indexes their hierarchial position: "Finally, the

house as a home, collective or individual, is a pious place in which faith should be embodied in construction as a manifestation of praise. While a house is not a temple, it should nevertheless be a major element in the tireless uplifting of a Christian city." Jujol would surely concur.

Moving away from the transformation of dwellings, Solà-Morales judges: "Among all the works carried out by Josep Ma. Jujol the one par excellence was the Sagrat Cor church in Vistabella." This small, isolated parish church is Jujol's most complete expression of structure as architecture and his finest example of humble materials, geometric manipulation, and craftsmanship joined with decorative arts—mainly painting—to create a complete architectonic universe. Without question, Vistabella is the finest Catalan building of the period, eclipsing even Gaudí's Colonia Güell (akin structurally and stylistically) and the master's lesser, though larger and more decorative work, Sagrada Família. Solà-Morales pays the Vistabella church its proper due (though he does not pit it against Gaudí's works), discussing its structure, parabolic domes, materials, and simple, yet ingenious plan. (Curiously, he includes no plans to illustrate his analysis, though they are necessary for a full reading of his points. Since drawings exist in earlier Catalan publications and in Barcelona archives, and since other lesser structures are illustrated by plan in the book, this omission glares as one of the book's few faults, but perhaps one for which the author is not responsible.)

Another exposition Solà-Morales owes the English-language reader is of Jujol's use of Catalan vaulting, an ancient system of construction known in the U.S. as Guastavino vaults (imported from Catalonia in the 19th-century and used extensively before poured concrete; two examples are Grand Central Terminal,



Main porch of the Sagrat Cor church, Vistabella; Josep Maria Jujol, 1918–23. (From *Jujol*.)

New York, and the Boston Public Library). This distinctive method, used for creating extremely strong, variously shaped vaults, bonds flat tiles end-to-end, and sometimes plies one layer over another. It provided Jujol (and Gaudí) with a flexible system of masonry capable of conforming to their designs for warped surfaces.¹

Though Solà-Morales does not classify the duplex house Torre de la Creu (1913–1916) as one of the monuments of modernism, he does place it prominently in Jujol's architectural evolution. Composed of intersecting masonry cylinders topped with *trencadis*-covered domes, Torre de la Creu predates Bruno Taut's expressionist Glass Pavilion at the 1914 Werkbund Exhibition, Erich Mendelsohn's 1917–21 Einstein Tower, and anticipates by more than fourteen years Konstantin Melnikov's Moscow house.² Along with Vistabella, Torre de la Creu positions Jujol among the most important expressionist architects in Europe. Solà-Morales's essay and Melba Levick's fine photographs (although the quality of reproduction is only fair) now permit readers to consider these structures close up, in a larger, modern "revisionist" European context.

Solà-Morales's *Jujol* reveals a ne-

glected chapter of Catalan, Spanish, and European architecture to American audiences. The book contributes significantly to the scholarship of the period, and is an important document for anyone interested in 20th-century European modernism, Barcelona, Gaudí, and Catalan *modernismo*. It rewards us, ironically, with a whetted appetite, as well as with the satisfaction of knowing that a revisionist history of modern architecture is encompassing regional, little-known figures and work and presenting them free of dogma.

NOTES:

1. George Collins, "The Transfer of Thin Masonry Vaulting from Spain to America," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 27 (October 1968): 176–201.
2. Dennis L. Dollens, manuscript in preparation.

JUJOL, Ignasi de Solà-Morales, Rizzoli, 1990, 128 pages, illus., \$22.50.

Joel Sanders

The Limits of Functionalism: Albert Frey and Paul Nelson

Albert Frey (1903–) and Paul Nelson (1895–1979) were two expatriate architects who might have envied the national and cultural identity of the other. From childhood, Frey, Swiss born and educated, was obsessed with America, which he envisioned as the land of modern technology. After working briefly for Le Corbusier, who referred to him as "this American guy," he came to the United States, first working on the East Coast in the partnership of Kocher and Frey and later establishing a practice in Palm Springs, California. Paul Nelson, born in Chicago, was a Francophile. Trained at the Beaux Arts in Paris, he worked in the atelier of Auguste Perret and was a member of the circle of artists and writers that included Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Georges Braque. Although he frequently traveled between France and the United States, most of his work was conceived and executed in France. Reversing the stereotypical characterization of the European architect as theoretical and the American as pragmatic, Frey was consumed by technical and material issues, while Nelson was more engaged in theoretical concerns.

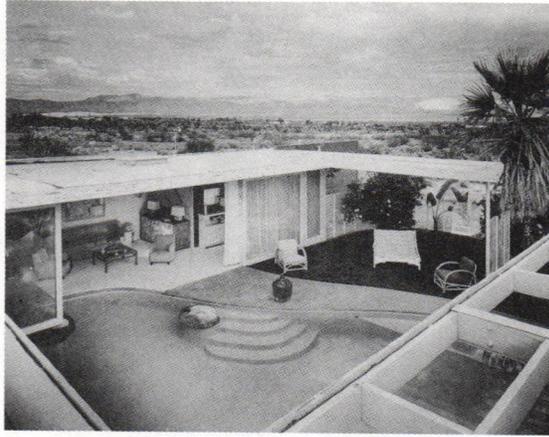
Not only do Frey and Nelson share "cross-cultural envy," but they share other affinities as well: both were disciples of Le Corbusier, and both were committed to the tenets of modern architecture. Now they are the subject of the Rizzoli monographs, *Albert Frey, Architect*, and *The Filter of Reason: Work of Paul Nelson*.

These monographs reflect the recent interest in reappraising the modernist tradition and broadening the canon to include the work of others besides the acknowledged masters of the European avant-garde, particularly the work of Americans, such as Frey and Nelson.

These monographs, however, do not elevate the stature of the careers of Nelson and Frey as other studies have done for such previously neglected modern architects as Richard Neutra, R. M. Schindler, Charles Eames, and Pierre Charreau. In my view, the work of both Nelson and Frey, while passionate and full of conviction, is often unresolved, derivative, and idiosyncratic. It is precisely these qualities that make a re-assessment of their work such a timely endeavor.

Since the 1960s, architects and critics have been concerned with critiquing the theory and ideology of modern architecture, particularly the doctrine of functionalism. Both Frey and Nelson were self-proclaimed functionalists, believing that the forms they created were dictated by objective technical and programmatic requirements. Yet, their most provocative projects, precisely because they are difficult and unresolved, show them struggling with, and testing the limits of modernist precepts, as if they were inadequate tools to realize their vision. Considered within the context of the current interest in rethinking modernist ideology, the work of Frey and Nelson, previously consigned to the margins of modernism, has much to offer.

In *Albert Frey, Architect*, Joseph Rosa presents a straightforward, if somewhat dry, account of Frey's life and work, offering little in the way of interpretation and analysis. The book is organized chronologically by place—the early years in Europe where he trained in Zurich and apprenticed for Le Corbusier, his partnership in New York, and his middle and later career working in Palm Springs. This organization by place underscores Rosa's portrayal of Frey as a mainstream European modernist dedicated to transplanting modernist principles, especially those advanced by his mentor, Le Corbusier, to American soil. Interspersed within the text are examples of the ongoing trans-Atlantic correspondence between Frey and Le Corbusier. The book



Loewy House, Palm Springs; Albert Frey, 1946–47. (From *Albert Frey, Architect*.)

charts the way Frey readapts and modifies these principles according to the new materials, methods, and landscape he found in America—first in New York, later in California.

Frey's most famous work, the Aluminaire house (1931), exemplifies his commitment to introducing Corbusian principles to the United States immediately upon settling on the East Coast. In fact, the recent controversy surrounding efforts to save this house from demolition, in which Rosa took part, accounts in part for the revival of interest in Frey. The house, designed to “demonstrate the



Frey House I with additions, Palm Springs; Albert Frey, 1947 and 1953. (From *Albert Frey, Architect*.)

possibilities of affordable housing achieved through modern technology” realizes Corbu's “Five points,” this time using American technology; aluminum columns and lightweight steel beams are substituted for the concrete frame. The house is a hybrid of the Villa Cook, with its insistent frontality, and the Villa Savoye, appearing as a horizontal freestanding volume raised on pilotis from the front. Typical of Frey's early work, the Aluminaire house lacks the spatial complexity and tension of its sources, never exploiting the spatial opportunities presented by the *plan libre*. Instead it exemplifies Frey's ongoing interest in exploring the possibilities of new materials and technologies, such as cardboard, corrugated metal, canvas, and rubber.

Frey's move to the West Coast in 1939 forced him to reevaluate and transform his International Style vocabulary. Frey came to America to “explore the new technological frontiers that America promised but found instead another frontier he had not anticipated—a virgin desert.” Rosa suggests that Frey recognized the shortcomings of modernist buildings—“static objects designed independently of the site”—and attempted to create an architecture that “embraced the culture of California.” His houses, once aloof and detached from the ground on pilotis, are brought down to earth. Reflecting the influence of early Mies, Neutra, and Frank Lloyd Wright, these houses escape the confines of the discrete Corbusian volume and extend horizontally into the landscape.

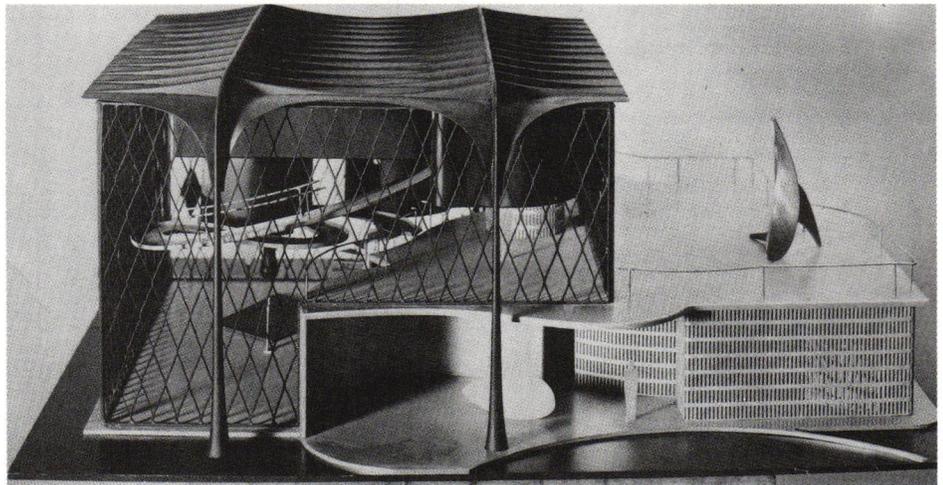
The author is somewhat unclear about Frey's relationship to modernist doctrine. On the one hand, he portrays Frey as a sort of contextualist, critical of modernism's universal vocabulary. On the other, he describes him as a card-carrying modernist who “managed to create machines for living in the rugged terrain of the desert.” In my view, Frey's most compelling designs—the first and second Frey houses and the Loewy house—make

problematic his ostensibly seamless translation of modernist principles to the desert.

A comparison between the Loewy house, designed for the prominent industrial designer, Raymond Loewy, and Richard Neutra's Kaufmann house, both designed in Palm Springs in 1947, underscores Frey's unorthodox interpretation of one of modernism's central tenets—visual transparency. Both architects use large walls of glass to join interior and exterior space. However, Neutra clearly differentiates interior and exterior; the inside—rational, cool, and geometric—is sympathetic, but qualitatively different from the rugged landscape. Overhanging eaves, changes in material and floor level articulate the threshold between the man-made and the natural. Furthermore, the direction of spatial movement is from inside to outside space; the fireplace marks a secure central place from which the pin-wheel plan radiates.

In the Loewy house, Frey manipulates virtually the same elements but in ways that subvert the clarity of Neutra's modernist spatial principles. Space interpenetrates from the outside in. The desert landscape acts as an alien and intrusive force—boulders, cacti, and the naturalistic pool violate the domestic boundary, literally penetrating the precinct of the courtyard and entering into the living room itself. Contrary to the modernist house, which carefully distinguishes between the natural and the man-made, Frey questions these distinctions. Shag carpet, textured concrete, and grass occupy the same undifferentiated ground plane, blurring the boundaries between man and nature.

In his own house, Frey stretches modernist principles and imagery to unsettling extremes. Again, man-made and naturalistic images and materials exchange places—in the living room the exterior-interior ameboid pool defined by plants and rocks is juxtaposed with corrugated metal and fiberglass walls. Images of technology fill the house; but now the images are derived not from the machine



Model, Suspended House project; Paul Nelson, 1936–38 (with artwork by Hans Arp, Alexander Calder, and Joan Miró). (From *The Filter of Reason*.)

but from futuristic Hollywood space movies. A dining table and staircase suspended by cables defy gravity. A circular bedroom whose walls are lined with yellow tufted fabric resembles the interior of a space capsule. From this womblike space, telescopic windows frame domesticated images of the alien desert landscape below. In this and other of Frey's later works, American consumer culture as well as the American desert contaminate the purist vision of European modernism.

As the title *The Filter of Reason* suggests, the Paul Nelson monograph explores Nelson's relationship to the rationalist tendencies of the European Modern Movement. Its well-illustrated and handsomely composed pages document a chronology of Nelson's major projects sandwiched between thematic essays by a variety of authors. Similar to the Frey monograph, the general perspective of the book presents Nelson as subscribing to functionalist ideas. However, also similar to Frey, Nelson's most provocative work resists rational explanation.

Most of the essays in this volume, a catalogue of the inaugural exhibition of the Buell Center at Columbia University, portray Nelson as a functionalist. Kenneth Frampton's essay situates Nelson within the context of the School of Paris, a group of architects concerned with structural rationalism. He distinguishes

between two tendencies of tectonic expression: "heavy," the concrete frame of Auguste Perret and "light," the metal construction of Pierre Charreau. Terrence Riley's convincing essay focuses on American influences, especially Nelson's personal and professional relationship with Buckminster Fuller, who introduced Nelson to metal construction, "lightweight, noncombustible and appropriate to mass production." Riley also credits Fuller's distrust of "aestheticism" and formalism, as influencing Nelson's commitment to a functionalist methodology. Ugo Nelson's essay describes Nelson's commitment to the development of the modern hospital, a building type which allowed him "to push his rationalist methodology to the limit."

Unlike Frey, who at least on the surface seemed to accept modernist doctrine, Bruno Reichlin in his essay, "Radical Functionalism," argues that Nelson's functionalist design methodology was a reformulation of this central modernist principle. Nelson was interested in responding to the unique and changing demands of the modern era—particularly to new technologies—and wished to circumvent them by appealing to preconceived stylistic or typological solutions. He was especially suspicious of "modern architecture," which he maintained had degenerated into "style." In search of a

"tabula rasa," Nelson maintained that "through rigorous objectivity one must put aside any preconceived solutions." Appropriate forms would transparently emerge from "the totally unforeseen consequence of a study of requirements." Reichlin attributes Nelson's historical marginalization to this method, which unlike orthodox functionalism's reliance on standard types, presupposes "unknowable results" that "culminate in solutions that preclude imitation" and cannot constitute a school.

Yet a close look at Nelson's projects, which this richly illustrated monograph encourages, calls his objective theory into question. Nelson's most compelling works resist rational analysis; they are characterized by expressive, sculptural forms that seem to undermine his ostensibly objective design method. In the Memorial Hospital of Saint-Lo, four ovoid operating rooms disrupt the Cartesian grid. Although justified as "free of angular, germ-trapping spaces," their form follows expressive rather than utilitarian ends. This panoptic interior conflates the section of an eyeball with the dome of the Pantheon, pierced not by one but by numerous apertures that emit light rays all converging on an operating table at the center. Similarly, the Palace of Discovery, a museum of scientific research, is a collection of sculptural objects organized around an ovoid concrete shell. While Nelson and the author justify the forms as an optimal response to pro-

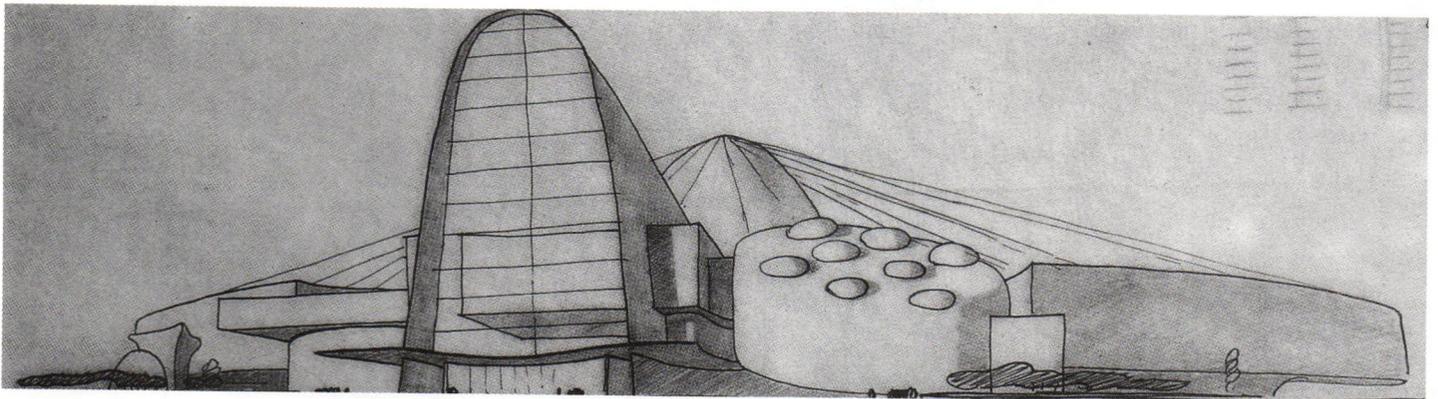
gram, these idiosyncratic elements bathed in dramatic light from a central oculus share affinities with an earlier monument to science, Boullée's Cenotaph to Newton. However, this assemblage of idiosyncratic forms tightly packed within the building's circumference threatens the geometric clarity of the circular volume, itself emblematic of the rational framework of science.

The tension between Nelson's method and production is most obvious in his most famous work, the Suspended House. Influenced by Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion house, Nelson describes it as being determined by purely technical and programmatic considerations. The house consists of two interpenetrating forms, a continuous open metal structure that carries a sheet-metal roof and a metal lattice enclosure, and a closed concrete and glass box containing the services. The prefabricated rooms are suspended from the metal spans and are linked by a ramp. However, this hyperfunctionalist house undermines its ostensibly functionalist premises. As Riley comments, "it is ironic that Fuller's concept of the standardized metal house served as a catalyst for Nelson's project when Fuller's intention was to eliminate expressive form from the industrially produced house." The Suspended House has a strange and poetic quality attributed to the influence of Nelson's painter friend, Jacques Helion. Its biomorphic forms seem to accommodate the psychological rather than

the physical requirements of the body. Contrary to expectations, the generous, column-free enclosure sponsors not domestic interaction but instead creates an amniotic space in which the individual, suspended in "thinking chambers," can take refuge from modern life in reverie.

Many of the essays address this contradiction between Nelson's objective method and seemingly subjective production. Frampton refers to his "latent predilection for technological forms with a surreal aura." Joseph Abrams attributes this "expressivity that goes beyond methodological considerations," to the influence of his artist friends, Georges Braque, Jean Helion, and Alberto Giacometti. However, the general consensus reconciles Nelson's opposing tendencies, explaining them as "controlled expressionism," expressive forms that are the inevitable outcome of rational analysis.

Both the Albert Frey and the Paul Nelson monographs portray their subjects as generally confirmed and confident modernists; I would like to propose a different interpretation, seeing both architects struggling, perhaps unintentionally, with the limits of modernist doctrines. Both Frey and Nelson subscribe to, but ultimately subvert, the notion of "transparency" in their work; for Frey the transparency of glass yields not a clearly differentiated world of stable identities but a domestic landscape where identities and boundaries are confused and blurred. Nelson's dream of an architecture where



Exterior perspective, Palace of Discovery project; Paul Nelson, Oskar Nitchke, and Frantz Jourdain, 1938. (From *The Filter of Reason*.)

communicating forms are transparently generated by function yields buildings that only confirm that architectural language is culturally, not naturally constructed.

How are we to account for these transgressions against modernist principles? For Frey, one senses these are exceptional incidents in a generally dry, straightforward body of work. They perhaps represent Frey, the emigré outsider, struggling to come to terms with America's alien culture and landscape. He writes to Le Corbusier, "As I have settled in America I had to understand and accept the psychology of life here so not to be in constant conflict, and also in order to earn a living."

In the case of Nelson, the question of intentionality is more ambiguous. In his essay, Frampton includes a lengthy quotation in which Nelson enthusiastically describes Charreau's *Maison de Verre*: "purely aesthetic research has not been the aim, but curiously enough solely through technical research this house approaches Surrealist sculpture." In this quote, Nelson seems to suggest that reason in the end produces unreason. New programs and technology yield not the objective Euclidean forms of Le Corbusier, but unique forms that respond to the particular and the personal—to subjective, not only objective experience.

Despite their intentions, both Frey and Nelson help us to see modernism in a new light; not a simple monolithic tradition, but one whose premises were susceptible to multiple interpretations. More important, these monographs enable us to see the critique of modernist doctrine not as a postmodern phenomenon but rather as internal to the tradition of modernism itself.

ALBERT FREY, ARCHITECT, Joseph Rosa, Rizzoli, 1990, 160 pp., illus., \$29.95.

THE FILTER OF REASON: WORK OF PAUL NELSON, Terence Riley and Joseph Abram, editors, Rizzoli, 1990, 152 pp., illus., \$29.95.

Annamarie Adams

Ernest Cormier and the Université de Montréal

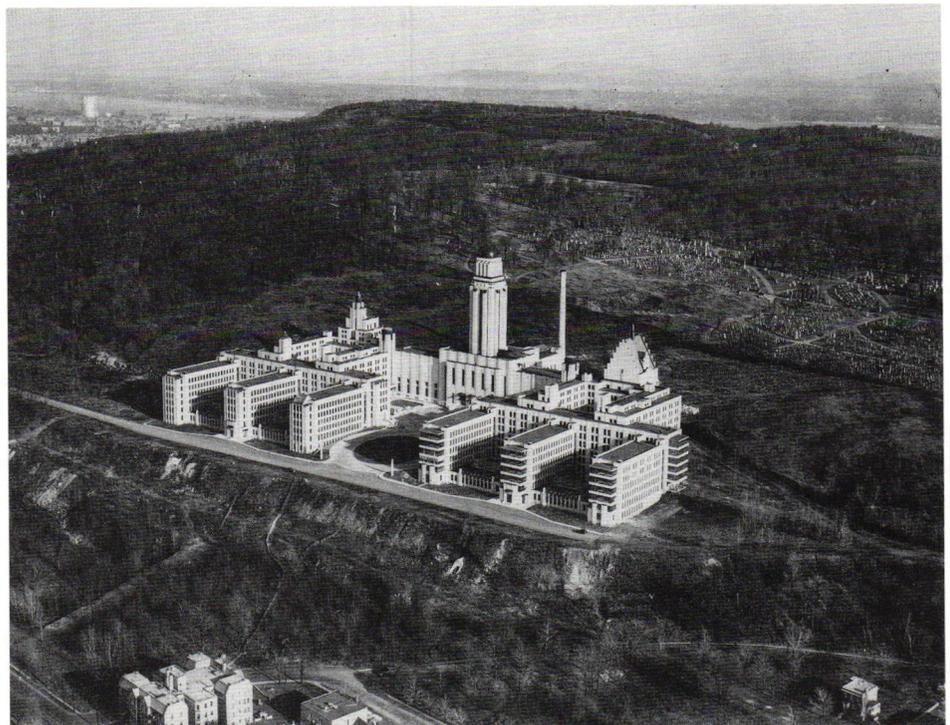
ISABELLE GOURNAY, EDITOR

By most accounts, "Ernest Cormier and the Université de Montréal" was a superb exhibition. Exploring the prolific career of one of Canada's most important 20th-century architects, the show occupied the main galleries of the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) in Montréal from May to October, 1990. Much more than a record of his major buildings—the best known are the University of Montréal (1924–43), the Supreme Court of Canada in Ottawa (1937–44), and his own house in Montréal (1930–31)—the exhibition lent real insight into Cormier the man; the requisite architectural sketches, presentation drawings, watercolors, and models were augmented by the architect's drawing and book-binding equipment, the sign hanging outside his Montréal office, volumes from his personal library, and photographs of the architect's friends and

colleagues, exploring far beyond Cormier's public life as "Architecte et Ingénieur."

The catalogue accompanying the exhibition, edited by Isabelle Gournay, has a much narrower view of Cormier. Six brief essays explore the aesthetic, social, cultural, and political contexts of a single commission: the University of Montréal. The catalogue is lavishly illustrated with material drawn from the Fonds Cormier, the extensive archive that also supplied most of the material for the exhibition. It was acquired by the CCA from Cormier's widow following his death in 1980. The series of contemporary color photographs of the University of Montréal by Gabor Szilasi, commissioned by the CCA to complement the historical material and the focus of a smaller, simultaneous exhibition, is also included in the catalogue.

The interpretation of Cormier's career by focusing on a single project is not unreasonable. The commission for the new University of Montréal was enormous, occupying Cormier for nearly two decades. A vast ensemble of Ohio-brick pavilions arranged symmetrically about a



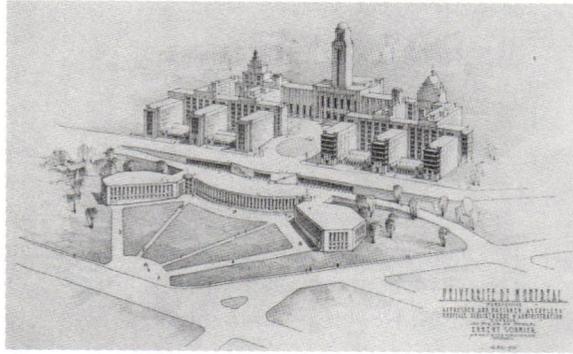
Aerial view of the principal pavilion, Université de Montréal; Ernest Cormier, architect and engineer, 1927–1943. (Courtesy of the Canadian Center for Architecture, Montréal.)

grand axis, it is located on a conspicuous and prestigious site in Montréal on the north slope of Mount Royal, for which the city is named. Its construction in 1928 marked years of reform in French Catholic higher education in Québec. Its “modernity” and carefully-orchestrated attitude to the tradition of American campus planning and to the city of Montréal was intended to express the independence and conviction of French intellectual interests in what was then Canada’s largest city.

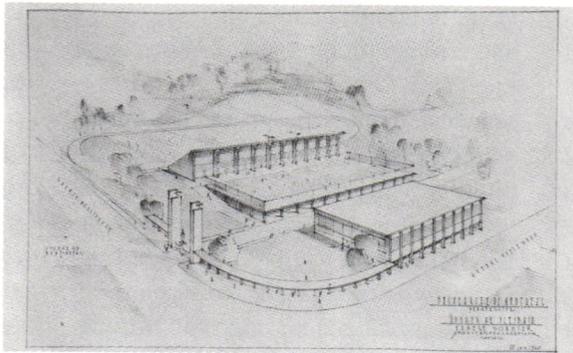
The essays in *Ernest Cormier and the Université de Montréal* explore this fascinating project from several perspectives, charting the complex relationship of a Montréal architect, recently returned from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and a powerful Québec institution, eager to utilize monumental architecture to ensure its unique place in Montréal and North America. Cormier’s education and early career, as well as an architectural analysis of Cormier’s design for the campus, are covered in sections by Gournay. The Cormier archive, the history of the University of Montréal, architectural practice in the 1920s, and Cormier’s combined backgrounds as engineer and architect are the subjects of the other essays in the book.

From this perspective, *Ernest Cormier and the Université de Montréal* follows a fairly traditional approach to an architect’s career by focusing on a single “masterwork” and extrapolating from it, in increasingly broad strokes, to include the architect’s immediate working environment, his other commissions, and finally the international architectural context in which he worked. Pierson and Jordy’s multivolume series, *American Buildings and Their Architects*, is perhaps the finest example of this genre, in which the authors construct a survey of the American built environment from a selected list of well-known buildings.

Using a similar methodology, the au-



Aerial perspective of the campus with proposed new library and administrative offices; Ernest Cormier, 1961. (From *Ernest Cormier and the Université de Montréal*.)



Aerial perspective of the sports facilities; Ernest Cormier, 1960. (From *Ernest Cormier and the Université de Montréal*.)

thors of *Ernest Cormier and the Université de Montréal* position the Canadian architect with confidence in a “Montréal-Paris-New York architectural triangle.” Indeed, architectural “style” is used throughout the book as a measure of architectural influence. A combination of French academic traditions and North American modernism, claims Gournay, “marks the entry of Québec and Canadian architecture, too often categorized as ‘colonial,’ into a new era.” Phyllis Lambert, Director of the CCA, asserts in her essay on the archive that the university “transcends questions of style” in its synthesis of North American scale, Beaux-Arts planning, and a French taste for engineering. Not surprisingly, given this rather orthodox view of architectural style, the book is replete with precedents for the building, ranging from John Galen Howard’s plan for UC Berkeley to Eliel Saarinen’s Helsinki railway station.

The three essays focusing on the social

context of Cormier’s career enrich the architectural analyses tremendously. Particularly insightful is Yves Deschamps’s essay on the relationship between the architectural and engineering professions in Québec. He argues that Cormier’s dual qualifications allowed him “entry to two cultures,” rather than representing a conflict or overlap in the two professions, and shows how the architect marketed his background to attract clients.

Ernest Cormier and the Université de Montréal is an outstanding addition to the history of Canadian architecture. The quality of the reproductions is superb and the format of the book—thematic, rather than chronological or biographical—is refreshing. In a field comprised almost exclusively of monographs, however, it could only have improved with comparative social and historical perspectives. The authors’ emphasis on Cormier’s “unique” training and background is misleading; many American architects com-

combined precisely the same interests as Cormier. Julia Morgan, for example, was also educated as an engineer and studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Like Cormier, she insisted on working alone and also kept a small office. Gournay seems unaware of the diversity of working methods employed by American architects. “Cormier organized his office more along French lines,” she says, “unlike North American architects’ offices churning out plans, his never had more than ten employees.” Perhaps there is a connection between architects’ backgrounds and the subsequent pattern of their careers. These missed opportunities for instructive comparisons serve only to illuminate the dangers of the “monograph” drawn from a single—albeit extensive—archive; such comparisons would not only have enriched our understanding of Cormier’s career, but also dispelled the pervasive myth that the eclectic mode employed by architects like

Morgan, Bernard Maybeck, and many others who attended the Ecole des Beaux-Arts represented a particularly “American” way of working.

The book’s dependence on a single archive and its seeming independence from many relevant secondary sources have also left several fundamental questions unanswered. It was rare for Canadians to study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, as several authors point out, while it was fashionable for American architects to attend the famous French school. Obviously French Canadians had fewer language barriers than Americans as students in Paris. What does this say about the architectural profession in Montréal or in Canada? Again, secondary sources concerning the history of architectural education may have shed new light on Cormier in this regard. Gournay claims in the introduction that the book is the first “scientific” work on Cormier. Comprehensive and rigorous, it is; unlike the work of scientists, however, it appears to have been conceived in relative isolation, failing as it does to build on the work of other scholars.

Ernest Cormier and the Université de Montréal is as much a reflection of its time as Cormier was himself. The architecture of the campus has been recently “rediscovered,” like inter-war architecture everywhere, but infused with new political fervor. As Québec ponders separation from the rest of Canada in 1992, the University of Montréal has become, once again, an important symbol of the strength and independence of Québec. Its construction was a major achievement in the history of education in Québec; its architecture marked its special relationship to North America and France. *Ernest Cormier and the Université de Montréal*, available in French and English, is a potent reminder of the power of the present to direct the ways we interpret the past.

ERNEST CORMIER AND THE UNIVERSITE DE MONTREAL, Isabelle Gournay, editor, Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1990, 179 pp., illus. \$29.95. [The French edition is titled *Ernest Cormier et l'Université de Montréal*.]

Gregory Herman
Architects of Fortune

ELAINE S. HOCHMAN

Among the revisionist analyses, reviews, and monographs that have appeared since the 1986 centennial of Mies’s birth, Elaine S. Hochman’s biographical account, *Architects of Fortune: Mies van der Rohe and the Third Reich*, contains the only extended exploration of the circumstances surrounding Mies’s final years in Germany, and his response to, and co-operation with, the demands of the Third Reich. Unfolding a well-researched drama, Hochman traces the development of Mies’s character from neophyte artist-architect, into his striving years guiding the Bauhaus through uncertain terrain, and finally to his flight from Germany, after a protracted face-off between himself and the opposing Nazi politico-tastemakers.

Yet Hochman has no difficulty finding direct and irrefutable contact between Mies and Reich groups. Allegations are neatly proven through surprisingly obvious sources; a letter appearing in the pro-Hitler newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* encouraging support for Hitler is clearly signed by Mies and several other sympathetic cultural contemporaries. But given Mies’s acknowledged and time-justified status in architectural history, and the fact that his relationship with the Third Reich was insubstantial relative to the roles played by committed Nazi architects such as Albert Speer or Paul Troost, why is it now important to explore his relationship with the Third Reich, and why has this never been considered before? Historically, seldom has the moral-

ity or provenance of Mies’s work (or the work of any other architect), been questioned; the influence and look of Mies has become a de facto element of the 20th-century urban environment. For architecture in general, time and transformation allow a separation of form from intended meaning and politics. Hochman, however, reminds us that Mies’s work and his openness to moral compromise in the name of continued practise and high art must not be separated or de-politicised, despite the documented diversions of Mies or his apologists. The reader is left with a sense of the irony resulting from the simplicity and purity of Mies’s idiom, paired with the complexity of his own personal morality. The crucial importance of Hochman’s work may lie in its mission to instate a consciousness of Mies’s unwillingness to protest National Socialism, and to give all of us pause to at least consider inherent meanings in architectural form. Hochman’s effect, intended or not, may aid the enrichment of current architectural form through a negative process,

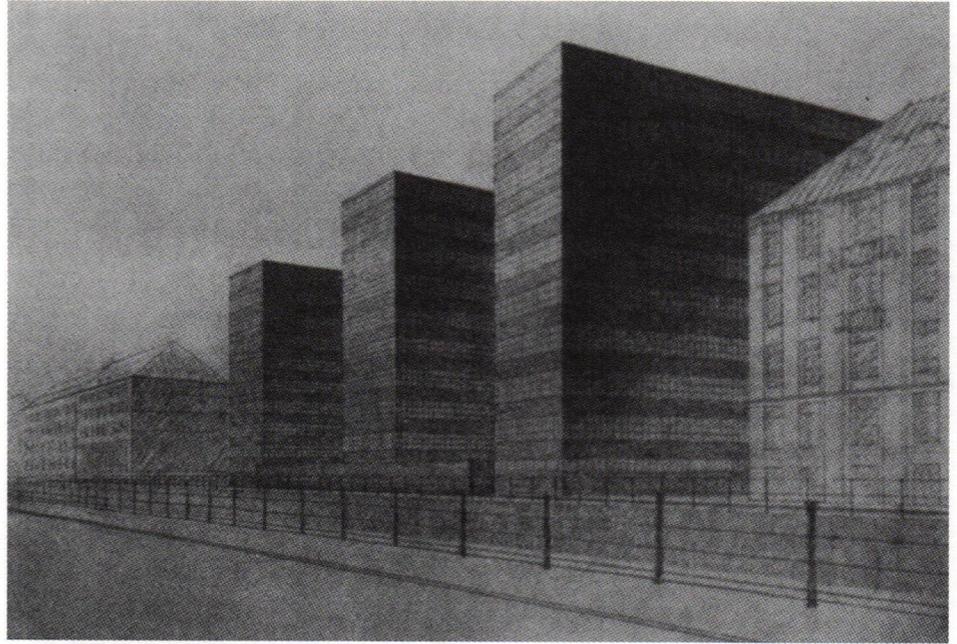


Newspaper article concerning the police search and closing of the Berlin Bauhaus on April 11, 1933, appearing in the *Lokal-Anzeiger* (Berlin) on April 11, 1933. (From *Architects of Fortune*.)

precisely in a period when meanings are confused or even eliminated.

The reader is lead to understand that during the heyday of the Third Reich, architectural practice inside or outside the bounds of officially sanctioned idiom forced an attitude of acquiescence and non-hostility, if not minimal participation with the regime. Mies's motto might have simply been "to get along you have to go along." But while Hochman's discussion is not about Mies's architecture per se, such a portrayal of Mies tends to equate an acceptance of his work with an acceptance of the Third Reich's taint. How do we view Mies, hero of modern architecture, after reading this book? Historically, architecture has been handily manipulated to represent any number of doctrines, and it is clear that we cannot successfully associate any specific architectural idiom to any specific ideology; Mies might remind us that there is no codified architecture of slavery, none of acquiescence, none of joy. Only if we can ascribe the Miesian language uniquely to Mies, and thence to the service of the Nazis, may we specifically associate such an idiom with the brutality of Hitler. Though we cannot find this to be the case, there remains a problem: all adherents of Mies have been delivered a bit of the burden of the moral dilemma that he successfully dodged for so many years.

Hochman's book does not deliver quite as much intrigue as one might hope for. Mies, a rather lumbering sloth motioning slowly through life's agenda, is portrayed as a stubborn and aloof artist. Certainly one reason for Mies' unwillingness to part from the Third Reich's threat was his personal and artistic intransigence; but one is tempted to find Mies a bit of a charlatan, able to pull off his ruse only through acute self awareness and clever manipulation of his demeanor and, by all accounts, his impressive physical presence. But sparse accounts of an emotional ascetic like Mies tend to make it difficult to delineate his character. Rather, it is the large cast of supporting characters that make Hochman's work readable.



Perspective drawing of Reichsbank project; Mies van der Rohe, 1933. (From *Architects of Fortune*.)

The enormous amount of background material, thoroughly and animatedly presented, transforms the book from a statement of fact to a rather entertaining tableau.

It is, ironically, the "entertainment" aspect of this book that blurs its importance within the domain of the serious historian and makes one suspect that a simple case of post-mortem character assassination is going on. Ends of chapters are often punctuated by an anecdotal "kicker," humorous or ironic, serving positively to render Mies as emotional flesh, but negatively to mitigate the gravity of his associations with the Third Reich, the very essence of the book. The book is further popularized by its packaging; its slick graphics, size and shape, through no fault of the author, tend to identify it more with mainstream best-sellers than with serious expository chronicles.

Despite these factors of manner and presentation, Hochman's work should remind us of what Hannah Arendt termed the "banality of evil"; that the aspect of unquestioning in human nature that makes social destructors seem outwardly benign, will nonetheless emerge and gash

more deeply through its irony. Hochman's message—that this quality can be found in Mies, and might consequently have filtered through his architecture—reminds us of the ease with which architects, traditionally self-professed travelers of a moral high road, may manipulate and be manipulated. But given this information, a condemnation of Mies must not be made only to acknowledge that such a stance might be appropriate. Rather, Hochman's work should provoke the critical questioning necessary for an objective and thorough analysis of Mies.

Architects of Fortune: Mies van der Rohe and the Third Reich, Elaine S. Hochman, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989, 382 pp., illus., \$22.50 cloth.

Kriti Siderakis

Jean Prouvé

Architecture can be made only within the building industry. When the entrepreneur has talent, the game is won (Nervi, Perret).

Big firms are a joke. People don't do anything, but they pay less taxes. The architect must once again become the builder, responsible for the workers and the accounting.

Jean Prouvé

During his long career, French architect-engineer Jean Prouvé (1901–1984) contributed significantly to the history of the Modern Movement, occupying an ambitious position somewhere between Viollet-le-Duc and Buckminster Fuller. As an innovator in the use of new materials and advanced yet efficient construction techniques, notably the use of sheet metal and aluminum, as well as an early proponent of “systems-building,” Prouvé deserves wider recognition; yet, despite continued popularity among those architects all too often lumped together as “High Tech,” he remains little known today, even in his native France. Last year, to rectify this situation and to pay homage to the man who, as president of the jury for the Beaubourg competition in 1971, supported the daring Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano scheme from the start, the Centre Pompidou held a retrospective on the life and work of Jean Prouvé. The exhibition space was designed, fittingly enough, by Renzo Piano.

For the exhibition, Piano laid out Prouvé's life and work as a sort of cabinet of curiosities, on a series of long, glass-covered tables with green lamps hung low. Although the hushed atmosphere was closer to that of a li-

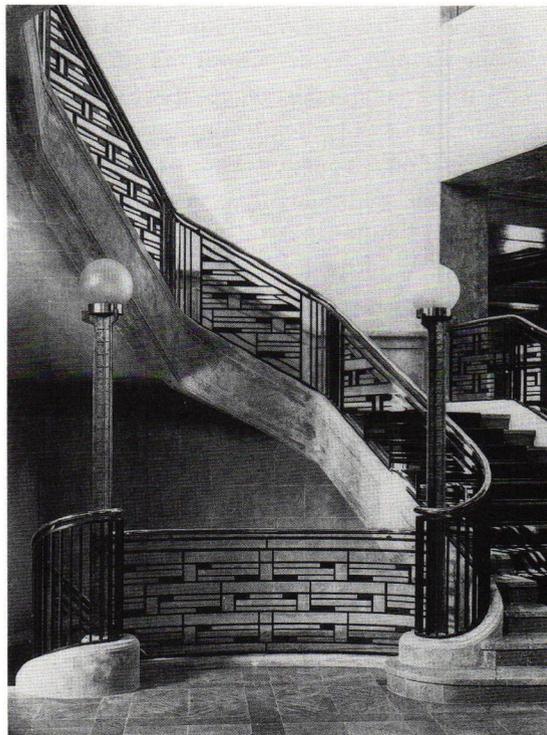
brary than the bustle of Prouvé's studio, and despite what seems to be a preference in French curatorial circles these days for near darkness, the show successfully drew the visitor into the intimate world of a man who was a metalworker, architect, engineer, inventor, entrepreneur, and teacher.

Son of the painter and sculptor Victor Prouvé, a leading proponent of the Art Nouveau movement in France, Jean Prouvé learned early on that art and production should be indissolubly linked. Formally neither an architect nor an engineer, Prouvé was, like his lifelong friend Le Corbusier, a self-taught designer whose ideas about architecture originated in his training as an artisan-blacksmith. He preferred to refer to himself as a *constructeur*, a term reflecting the direct relationship between design and craft that characterizes his method. “In my studios, an idea was immediately realized, whether it was a house or a piece of furniture,” he would say, demonstrating that he ascribed more to the methods of indus-

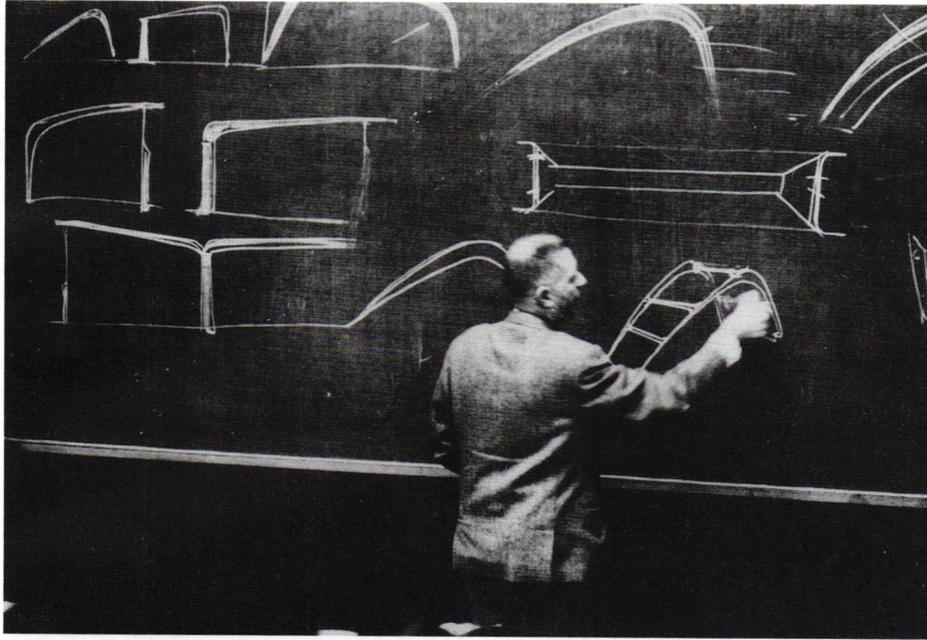
trial design than to architecture. Like many other architects of his generation, Prouvé admired cars and airplanes as symbols of modernity and progress and believed that the building industry had much to learn from their production methods. Prouvé borrowed from the aeronautical and automobile industries the use of sheet metal, which, once bent and welded, becomes very strong while remaining light and easy to assemble.

During the thirties, Prouvé began producing furniture and small structures, such as elevator cabs and kiosks, although it soon became apparent that his real interest lay in architecture. Along with the young architects Eugene Beaudoin and Marcel Lods, early proponents of prefabrication, Prouvé designed and manufactured the parts for several buildings, the most notable being the still-standing *Maison du Peuple* in Clichy, in the north of Paris, which combined an indoor market on the ground floor with a cinema and assembly room above. With its large expanse of glass, its movable floor and interior partitions, and a metal roof that rolls open to the sky, the *Maison du Peuple* represents French technical ingenuity at its finest, and has rightfully been called a precursor to the Centre Pompidou in spirit.

Although his views on the need for a stronger relationship between design and industry initially seem to reflect the tradition of the Arts and Crafts Movement or the Werkbund, there was nothing nostalgic about Prouvé's call for a new kind of architect in an industrialized society. Seeing the future role of the architect as that of the architect-entrepreneur, directly involved in the business and production of buildings, Prouvé, who described himself as a “man of the factory,” established his own profitable operation in 1947 at Maxéville, in his native town of Nancy. Over two hundred designers and technicians worked together to produce on a large scale prefabricated roofing



Stairway for the Hermitage of Vittel; Ferdinand Cesar, architect; Jean Prouvé, engineer; 1928. (Courtesy of Kriti Siderakis and Photo ADMM.)



Jean Prouvé teaching at the CNAM during the 1960s. (Courtesy of Kriti Siderakis and Photo ADMM.)

and façade panel systems, metalwork and furniture. This achievement appears all the more important and exceptional when viewed in the wider context of the largely conservative state of architecture and planning in post-World War II France, where, as one historian put it, “on the technical level, the building industry remained one of the most backward.” Today, in the context of huge, multinational interests, such a vision may seem quixotic at best were it not for the fact that the alliance between building and industry is once again undergoing transformations as new materials and methods of assembly appear. Along these lines, in the practices of Renzo Piano, Norman Foster, and Richard Rogers, in particular, the architects and engineers work as a research team with industry in the development of prototypes.

The advent of the World War II, with its exigencies of speed, economy, adaptability, and mobility, had provided Prouvé with a catalyst for the development of his work on lightweight, easily assembled structures. Collaborating closely with Pierre Jeanneret for many years, he produced hundreds of demountable structures, schools, hospitals, provisional factories, and economical housing

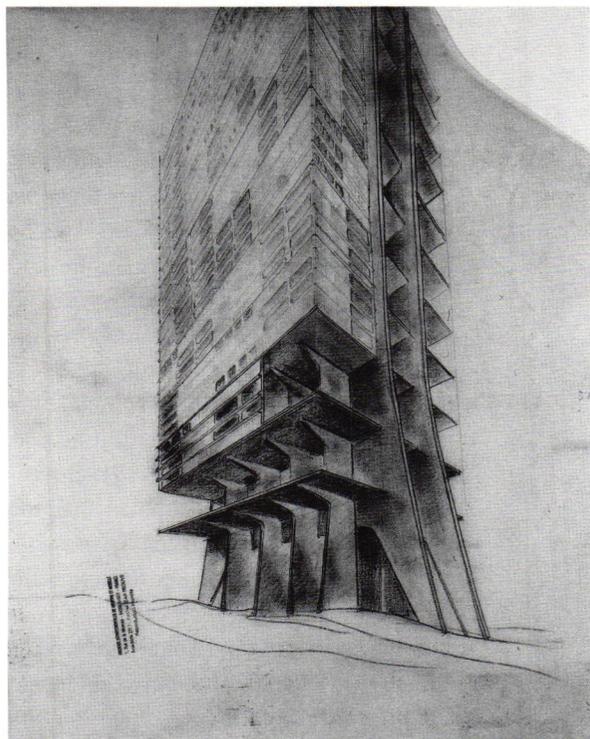
based on a system of external structure or axial frames and metal or wood panels. With several young architects who came to work with him during these years, Prouvé also developed the aluminum-sheet shed and shell roof, and a prefabricated service core, similar to Fuller’s Dymaxion, which acted as the central support of the roof. Although applied to the production of low-income, one-story houses in the early 1950s, Prouvé also developed this concept for high-rises, such as in his design for a faculty tower at the University of Nancy, which, with its concrete fins and metal units “hung” on the exterior, is reminiscent of a cross between Sant’Elia and Rogers’s Lloyds of London.

Unfortunately, for a variety of factors ranging from the dominance of the concrete industry to the ideological prejudices that still haunt the definition of what a house ought to represent, France was not ready for Jean Prouvé and most of his designs remained prototypes. Thus when his pioneering work in the application of aluminum to building components sparked the interest of the large consortium “Aluminum Français,” which was seeking to redirect its postwar production toward the building industry, Prouvé wel-

comed their offer to invest in Maxéville. But what at first had seemed to be a constructive step toward building production on a truly industrial scale ended with Prouvé losing control of his own company. Unable to stand against those he called the “big capitalists,” in 1953 he bitterly abandoned everything he had struggled for, never to return again. It was not until forty years after his first efforts in redeveloping the building industry to meet the new needs of France that his efforts were recognized, and he was awarded the Prix Erasme in 1981, characteristically enough by the Dutch, “for the industrial constructions he envisages with an eye toward the future, offering solutions to the problem of housing.”

Although he would never again reestablish the direct relation between design and production achieved during the years at Maxéville, Prouvé nonetheless continued his research into increasingly sophisticated systems, such as his integrated façade panels, while working as a freelance consultant in Paris with other architects and the research departments of large companies. During the 1950s and 1960s, he left his mark on almost every major modern project, justifiably earning the title “father of the curtain wall” in France.

A study of Prouvé’s long career reveals a diverse body of work whose unity lies in his complete mastery of metal as a building material and his unusual method of work. For example, the decorative gates and stairs he executed for Mallet-Stevens; the furniture designs he produced and exhibited at the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs in 1925; his work with Charlotte Perriand, with whom he was a founding member of the Union des Arts Décoratifs in 1929; his work with Le Corbusier on the early schemes for the Unité d’Habitation in Marseilles and with Pierre Jeanneret on demountable structures; his pioneering use of folded-steel sheet and aluminum in prefabricated building components, and his lifelong goal to bring new materials and techniques to building demonstrate how



Perspective, professors' housing, University of Nancy; Belmont, Silvy, Carim, architects; Jean Prouvé, engineer; 1949. (Courtesy of Kriti Siderakis and Photo ADMM.)

Prouvé used his technical mastery to produce designs that were not only elegant in their simplicity and rationalism, but more importantly, for which the social dimension always served as a catalyst for invention.

For anyone interested in the history of the relationship between design and production, the life and work of Jean Prouvé provide an invaluable chapter. The Centre Georges Pompidou has produced, as always, a beautiful and comprehensive monograph on Prouvé, with a wealth of photographs, drawings, and archival material, as well as twenty essays written by friends, architects, and historians. The curators of the exhibition, Raymond Guidot and Alain Guiheux, have written essays placing Prouvé's work in the larger context of developments in industrial design and architecture respectively. Other essays, such as those of architect Renzo Piano, who greatly admires Prouvé's methodology, and Joseph Belmont, who collaborated with him for many years, offer a more personal testi-

mony. Peter Rice's essay on the artistry of engineering is particularly forceful in placing Prouvé outside of the tired confrontation between the architect and the engineer, while those of friends, family and colleagues paint an endearing portrait of a modest yet opinionated man who wore work boots and was not interested in titles or getting credit for his work.

However, while all the essays are intelligent and informative, they are likely to appeal to only the "happy few" of those who are fluent in French and well versed in the history of modern design in France. Furthermore, the large number of essays, many of which are repetitive, do not give a clear picture of the development of Prouvé's career, and are not arranged

chronologically. The editors have compiled the wealth of archival material in a series of portfolios spaced between blocks of text, so that in some cases the plates will have to speak for themselves, introducing to the unsuspecting reader an architecture so fresh and contemporary that it will come as a surprise to have never heard of Jean Prouvé.

JEAN PROUVE, edited and published by the Centre Georges Pompidou, 1990, 248 pp., illus., 320 FF.

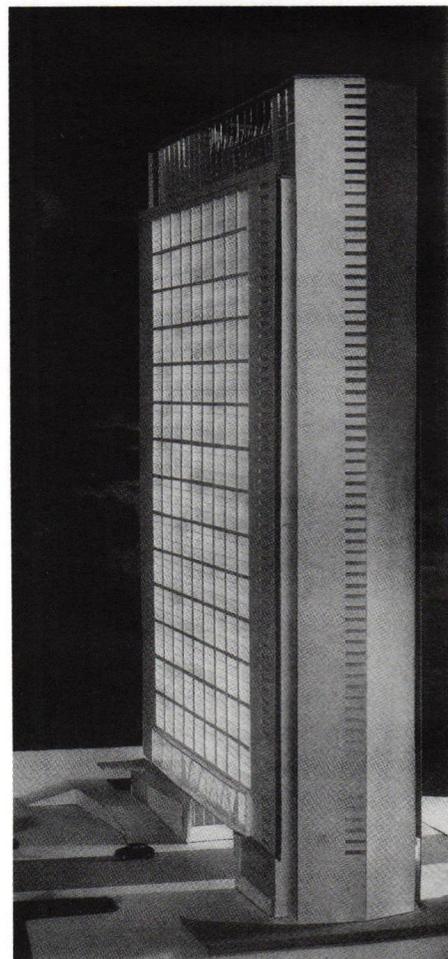
Stephen Leet

Gio Ponti

LISA LICITRA PONTI

With few exceptions the publication of a monograph marks a decisive moment in the history of an architect. For the architect who has faded from discussion, the monograph can provoke a reassessment both of the architect's singular innovations and the general cultural conditions that contributed to the architect's development.

The recognition of the importance of an architect is the most obvious intent of any monograph. The conventional monograph fulfills this intent by its authoritative format—foreword, critical essays, images, biography, and bibliography. It



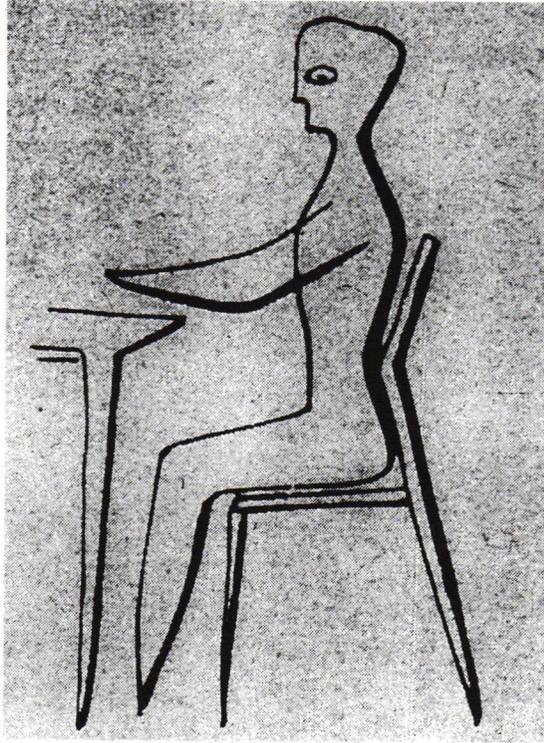
Project for the Lancia building, Turin; Gio Ponti and Nino Rosani, 1953. (From *Gio Ponti*.)

can act as a portable monument paying homage to a life's work, often lapsing into effusive praise and a less-than-objective appraisal. Or, the monograph can function as a neutral archive with the intention of providing both documentation and critical insight.

As Lisa Licitra Ponti, the author of *Gio Ponti: The Complete Work 1923–1978* frankly admits, this book on her father's work is an homage to the immense scope of the Milanese architect's diverse activities—from designing spoons to skyscrapers. The author is admittedly close to her subject, and the presentation is consequently a subjective and affectionate portrayal of one of the most uniquely generous and influential figures of 20th-century Italian design.

Gio Ponti's work is not easily classified. He was primarily an architect, but an architect whose interests were not limited to the design of buildings. He worked simultaneously as an architect, editor, writer, industrial designer, painter, and exhibition organizer. His career began as a designer for the Richard Ginori ceramics firm in Milan in the 1920s, which initiated his committed and continuous involvement with the applied arts, as both a designer and promoter, an activity he continued throughout his career as an architect.

In many respects he embodied the versatility of the modern architect in Italy, particularly in Milan where architecture and industrial design are closely allied. His primary interest was in the domestic landscape, the field of *arredamento*—interior furnishings, furniture, and lighting, pejoratively termed the “decorative arts.” These he emphasized alongside presentations of buildings by architects in the pages of *Domus*, the magazine he founded as editor in 1928. His editorial inclusiveness rejected the division between architecture and the applied arts. This integrated approach distinctly separated *Domus* from the other prominent Italian architectural magazine, *Casabella*,



Sketch for chair with pointed legs and a bent back; Gio Ponti, 1949. (From *Gio Ponti*.)

edited by the dogmatic promoter of modern architecture, Giuseppe Pagano, who stressed the importance of architecture as building. Pagano and his group of architects were indeed involved in the problem of furnishings, but Pagano's *Casabella* was careful to maintain the cultural and historical status of architecture over that of the applied arts. This editorial difference is still maintained today by the two magazines' current editors, Mario Bellini of *Domus* and Vittorio Gregotti of *Casabella*.

It could be argued that *Domus* is a more lasting and fitting legacy to Ponti than his own work as an architect. *Domus* is both archive and contemporary showcase for design, effectively fulfilling Malraux's definition of a “museum without walls.” The history of 20th-century Italian design is preserved in the hundreds of issues of the magazine produced since 1928.

Gio Ponti was by all accounts an unselfish and unusually charitable figure in architecture. In Italy the debates regarding the role of modern architecture were rife with posturing, divisive squabbling,

proclamations, manifestos, and hostile dismissals. Given his status as editor of *Domus* and power broker, Ponti was remarkably catholic and evenhanded in his publication of diverse figures. He promoted “all things Italian”—painting, architecture, and the applied arts, and his admiration for other architects' work and his inclusive editorial policy would give space to any work deemed worthy of recognition or discussion. This is an important distinction. Rather than using his position to demean work he did not appreciate, he optimistically supported, encouraged, and published projects from opposing groups, choosing to ignore their formal and polemical differences.

Charles Eames described Ponti as, “one of the rare ones . . . an architect who considers everything as architecture . . . he relives the experiences that others will have—in this enthusiasm—he surely thinks of all people as rich human beings possessing those same capabilities and sensitiveness to experience that are his own.”

Ponti's work as an architect and designer in Milan often fell on the side of the exuberant, spectacular, and excessive; a characteristic of one extreme of Italian design, particularly in the postwar years of the 1950s. Milan, the design and production center of Italy, accommodated all tendencies in design. At one extreme, the reasoned asceticisms of Franco Albini, and the architects Asnago and Vender (whose work has recently been characterized as “hyper-rationality”) set an example of a refined and perfected essential state. At the other extreme, work was produced that was extravagant and ornamental, an approach best represented by the work of the designer Piero Fornasetti, who frequently collaborated with Ponti in the 1950s.

This is not to suggest that Ponti's work was exclusively eccentric. For example, his design of the “Superleggera” chair of 1957, which he initiated in 1949 for the firm of Cassina, brilliantly represents a reasoned and contemporary re-

finement of a traditional type-form, the lightweight Chiavari chairs of the 19th century.

Within Italy Ponti's architectural work often provoked hostile reactions. Due to the serendipitous quality of much of his architecture, he was frequently dismissed as an erratic and minor architect. His work was sometimes praised, but in the histories of the development of Italian modern architecture, it was seldom discussed or studied as intently or seriously as the work of the Italian Rationalists of the 1930s.

Ponti was not a particularly spatial architect. That is, his work, while volumetric, at least in the sense of Ponti's theory of the "closed and finite form," never achieved the complete synthesis of space, light, and material accomplished by his contemporaries like Giovanni Michelucci, Carlo Scarpa, or Giuseppe Terragni. By the 1970s, Ponti diminished his role as architect to that of an exterior decorator. During this period, he designed façades of thin, perforated ceramic screens which indicated a preoccupation with surface decoration rather than plastic development. For Ponti, the building's surface, not the architectural spaces within, became the most important issue: "The effect of the architecture depends more on surfaces than on masses . . . the interplay is no longer between voids and solids but between reflecting and non-reflecting surfaces." The unfortunate one-dimensional character of these later buildings by Ponti are evident if compared to the more accomplished projects of the lesser-known but substantially talented Milan architect, Luigi Caccia Dominioni, for whom virtually no history exists even in Italy.

Before abandoning the three-dimensional responsibility of the architect and succumbing to self-parody, Ponti produced several substantially developed



The "Superleggera" chair; Gio Ponti, 1957. (From *Gio Ponti*.)

and innovative projects in the 1950s. The most significant of these are the Harrar-Dessie Housing in Milan (1952); the project for the Lancia building in Turin (1953), which combined an additive and reductive plastic definition of the space, volume, and surface of the building; the Faculty of Nuclear Physics in São Paolo (1953), where the walls begin to separate from the "finite form" of the building and anticipate the later Pirelli building; the Italian Cultural Institute in Stockholm (1954); the Villa Planchart in Caracas (1955); and finally the Pirelli building in Milan (1955–58). These six projects, which are in some respects one project, indicated an exploration that was developed, resolutely plastic, and carefully composed.

With numerous illustrations and descriptive texts for most projects, the book amply documents Ponti's diverse work of over six decades. The work is presented and arranged by decade, with short introductory essays by the author for each de-

cade. This format is useful in some respects—the most obvious is chronological—but it emphasizes the formal shifts of Ponti's work as changing fashions. The bibliography is arranged both by decade and project, and separately as a chronological list.

Despite the author's admitted bias, a bias that could have easily been overcome by the inclusion of additional critical essays, it is currently the best introduction to Ponti's work. Although architectural drawings are not numerous, projects and designs are well represented by color and black-and-white photographs. Germano Celant, curator of contemporary art at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, has contributed the book's sole critical essay, "The Substantiality of the Impalpable." Celant's essay is remarkably opaque and unintentionally amusing, due to his

use of overwrought metaphors and probably a bad translation from the Italian to English.

Gio Ponti's work is now obviously generating new interest and documentation. Several other Italian publications are recommended for an objective balance of his work: Fulvio Irace's *Gio Ponti: la casa all' italiana* (Electa, 1988) which concentrates on Ponti's architectural work; Ugo La Pietra's *Gio Ponti: l'arte si innamora dell' industria* (Coliseum, 1988), which covers his work in the applied arts; and *Gio Ponti, Designer 1936–1941* (Laterza, 1989), primarily on Ponti's furniture designs.

GIO PONTI: THE COMPLETE WORK 1923–1978, Lisa Licitra Ponti, MIT Press, 1990, illus., 300 pp., \$65.00 cloth.

William Littman

Silent Cities

KENNETH T. JACKSON AND
CAMILO JOSÉ VERGARA

The Last Great Necessity

DAVID CHARLES SLOANE

Americans of the 17th and 18th centuries thought nothing of locating a cemetery in the very center of town. The burial ground was often placed adjacent to the church or town commons and became part of the spiritual axis of the municipality as well as a sobering reminder to citizens of what awaited them after a brief stay on earth.

The cemetery today is no longer expected to play such a didactic role. Over the past two centuries, Americans have grown to prefer cemeteries on the outskirts of town where they do not intrude into the day-to-day activities of the living. Likewise, the internal arrangement of the cemetery has been altered to make it a more pleasing place for visitors, from the rustic attractions of the rural cemetery of the mid-19th century to the golf course-like lawns found in 20th century memorial parks.

Most historians of the built environment and landscape of the United States have similarly ignored these “silent cities.” Until recently, only a few writers—J. B. Jackson and John Stilgoe were two pioneers—have made attempts to make some sense of the dozens of different types of cemeteries that exist in the United States. Perhaps scholars found the topic too gruesome and marginal for serious study. Only in the last several years have scholars begun to show an interest in the cemetery and the message it contains concerning how Americans have felt about life and death.

Yet as historians begin to take the cemetery seriously, Americans are becoming less inclined to bury their dead in traditional cemeteries. The huge and ornate markers associated with the grand

cemeteries of the United States, like those found in Mount Auburn in Cambridge or Laurel Hill in Philadelphia, have given way to less obtrusive and “more tasteful” markers popularized by Forest Lawn in California and other memorial parks. Few contemporary architects even design monuments and mausoleums, while a century ago many noted architects tried their hand at funereal building, including Louis Sullivan, Richard Morris Hunt and Stanford White. Lastly, Americans are growing more comfortable with cremation of the dead. Considered by most Americans in late 19th and early 20th century to be a peculiar pagan ritual, cremation now accounts for about one-sixth of all burials in the United States and is growing more popular every year. It appears that the construction of the traditional American cemetery, complete with tombstones, curving drives, and weeping willows may literally be a dying art.

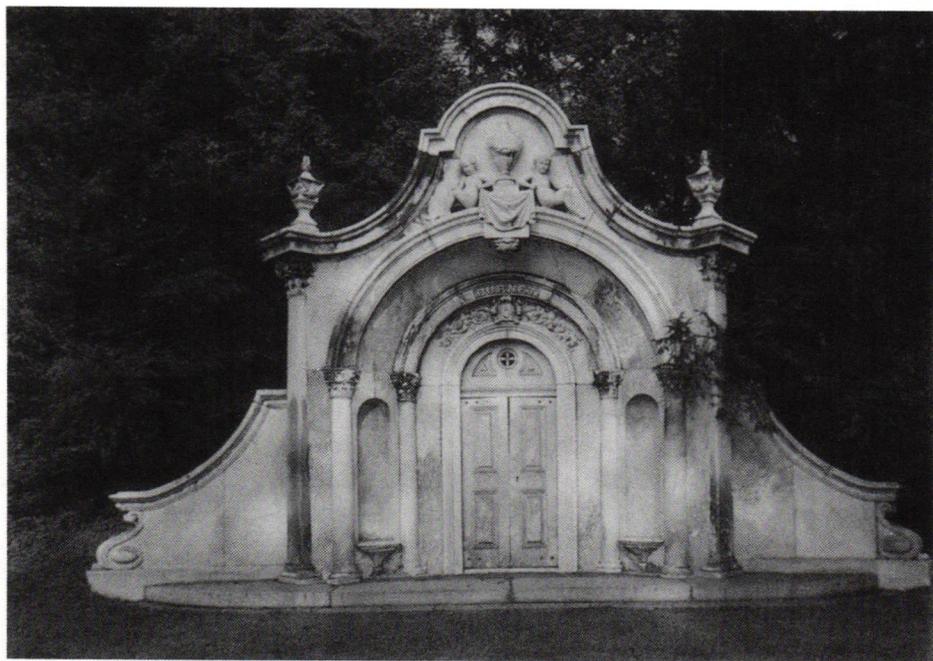
Kenneth Jackson and Camilo José Vergara’s *Silent Cities: The Evolution of the American Cemetery* is an elegant call for Americans to reconsider and again find value in the traditional cemetery. Jackson calls on historians to see the cemetery as a repository of essential lessons about the American cultural fabric,

including class structure, popular tastes in architecture, sculpture and landscape, religious beliefs, feminism, and even American views on sexuality.

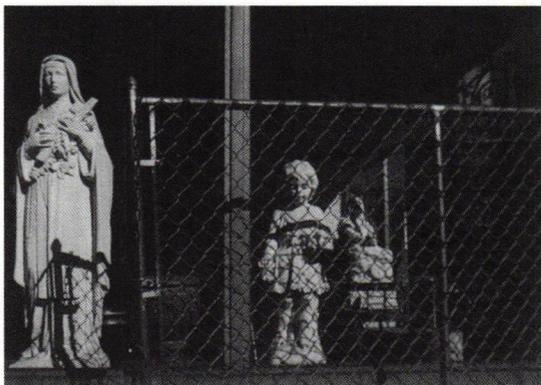
The introduction to *Silent Cities* is an excellent blueprint for the future of cemetery studies. Jackson states that, unlike others, he will not focus exclusively on elite cemeteries like Mount Auburn or Green-Wood cemetery in Brooklyn, nor the “tombs of the rich and famous,” but instead, look at the full range of burial grounds, including those of paupers, ethnic groups, and the middle class. He also asks the reader to observe how cemeteries fare after they are built: how they are maintained or neglected by the community and how they are put to alternative use.

Yet the size and format of *Silent Cities* gives Jackson little chance to achieve his lofty goals. Most of the 129-page book is devoted to the striking photos by coauthor Vergara. Jackson’s discussion of topics such as “Ordinary Urban Cemeteries” or “American Images of Death” receive only five paragraphs apiece and read like long photo captions.

In addition, Jackson contradicts his call to concentrate on the cemeteries of the nonelite. Much of the text and the accompanying photos are about the burying



Mausoleum for Jacob Burnet, 1865. (From *Silent Cities*.)



Monument dealer's display, Queens, New York, 1986. (From *Silent Cities*.)

grounds of the rich and famous, including entire sections on the Vanderbilt family cemetery in New York City and Spring Grove cemetery in Cincinnati. Like many architectural historians of the ordinary environment, Jackson is thwarted by the fact that elite monuments often survive longer and, as a result of their size and ornament scheme, offer more “readable” evidence than vernacular burial sites. Despite falling short of its stated goals, *Silent Cities* is a valuable text for historians and designers. Jackson’s lyrical and heartfelt prose and Vergara’s moving color photos combine to make a passionate plea for historians to see the value of considering the message of the ordinary cemetery.

David Charles Sloane’s *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History* offers a more comprehensive history of the American cemetery. While not as poignant as *Silent Cities*, it is a well-researched and scholarly effort to chronicle the changes in burial practices in the United States since the late 18th century and includes long entries on the rural and lawn cemetery movements as well as mausoleums and crematoriums. Sloane readily admits he has focused his attention primarily on the cemeteries of the Northeast, especially those in New York state.

Sloane is particularly good at charting the way changes in technology and business practices affected the arrangement and appearance of cemeteries. For example, the invention of the mechanical

lawnmower in England in 1830 allowed cemetery owners in the United States to reduce labor costs and helped bring about the development of the lawn park cemetery during the mid-19th century. He shows how cemeteries changed from quasi-philanthropic enterprises in the early 19th century to sophisticated business organizations that employ trained salesmen and use slick advertising campaigns.

Perhaps most notable about *The Last Great Necessity* is how it places 20th-century commercialized memorial parks like Forest Lawn in the context of American burial practices. Sloane shows that Forest Lawn is not some tacky manifestation of Southern California culture, but the logical extension of cemetery developments beginning with the establishment of Mount Auburn cemetery in 1831 and especially Adolph Strauch’s 1855 redevelopment of the Spring Grove cemetery into the nation’s first lawn park cemetery.

For Sloane, as well as Jackson, the future of the American cemetery lies not in the well-tended greens of Forest Lawn, but in high-density burial sites such as columbariums and community mausoleums, or in nontraditional burial places. Sloane points out that many Americans are beginning to avoid the use of a designated area for remains altogether and instead deposit remains in a pastoral place favored by the deceased. In this developing tradition, American burial practices come full circle as survivors again find comfort in having the dead among the living, but this time without the visible manifestations of cemetery and tombstone.

SILENT CITIES: THE EVOLUTION OF THE AMERICAN CEMETARY, Kenneth T. Jackson and Camilo José Vergara, Princeton Architectural Press, 1989, 129 pp., illus., \$29.95.

THE LAST GREAT NECESSITY: CEMETERIES IN AMERICAN HISTORY, David Charles Sloane, Johns Hopkins, 1991, 293 pp., illus.

Ricardo L. Castro

Money Matters

BRENDAN GILL, ROBERT NISBET,
AND SUSAN WAGG

Joseph-Nicéphore Niepce produced the first permanent photograph in 1826, culminating years of experimentation by would-be photographers all over Europe. The photo also marked the birth of a new artistic medium, and more importantly, a new way of seeing the world.

Niepce’s image—showing a pigeon house, the sloping roof of a barn, a pear tree, a patch of sky, and a wing of the photographer’s own farmhouse—was also the first successful *architectural* photograph. This photo of a fleeting moment signaled the beginning of an enduring relationship between photography and architecture.

In the fields of both architecture and architectural history, the reproduction of photographs in popular and specialized journals has contributed to an accelerated diffusion of architecture and ideas. In this way architectural photography has become a genre in itself, playing an informative role in molding today’s tastes and fashions. Consider the endless number of slick architectural periodicals and publications that transform our appreciation of buildings, gardens, and interiors.

Since the mid-19th century, architectural photographers have been commissioned to record—often in ambitious projects—different aspects and processes in the built environment. Philip-Henry Delamotte’s meticulous documentation of the re-erection of London’s Crystal Palace between 1851 and 1854 and Charles Marville’s commission to record Paris before Haussmann’s transformations are among the best-known ventures of the last century. Relevant, too, is the Farm Security Administration project realized between 1935 and 1943, resulting in the monumental photographic archive of over 250,000 images documenting the rural, industrial, and urban environ-



Second Bank of the United States, Philadelphia; William Strickland, architect, 1819–24; photograph by James Iska (From *Money Matters*.)

ment of the United States during the Great Depression.

More recently, corporations and museums have become major patrons of architectural photography. The Court House Project recording over one thousand county courthouses in the United States, the Cleveland Museum of Art's commission to Cervin Robinson to document that city, and the photography of the building, gardens, and construction of the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montréal are just a few examples of contemporary commissions leading to major exhibitions and publications.

Money Matters: A Critical Look at Bank Architecture is a historical and photographic analysis commissioned by the Houston Museum of Fine Arts and the Parnassus Foundation of a pervasive building type in Canada and the United States: the bank. The title is misleading, as it also has been used to designate the traveling photographic exhibition, originally displayed at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts early in 1990, as well as a succinct and elegant smaller brochure published by the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montréal, where the show was exhibited from November 1991 to February 1992.

Resembling a carefully and lavishly produced annual report of a bank, *Money Matters* has been meticulously assembled and packaged. Highly crafted images commissioned to eleven Canadian and

American photographers complement and are complemented by a series of historical narratives. While the overall graphic quality of the book, from dust cover to face type, lures one's attention to over sixty black-and-white and sixty full-color photographs compiled in the publication, the introductory texts by well-known columnist-architectural critic Brendan Gill and the social historian Robert Nisbet are equally enticing entrées to architectural

historian Susan Wagg's thorough analysis of bank architecture from the late 18th century to our present postmodern situation.

Brendan Gill's introduction is written in agile and seductive prose. His comments are full of wit, constituting one of the most vivid parts of the book. Gill's essay focuses on the symbolic character of the bank recently shaped, according to him, by "at least two revolutions."

In the first revolution, "the bank as a temple, whether in classical, Romanesque, or other dress, gives way by the middle of this century to the bank as a seraglio," a sort of harem as it were, "wearing as little dress as possible and bedecked with flowering plants." This type of bank, according to Gill, "invites the world to assume the role of the voyeur." It also presents itself as a panopticon for control and surveillance in Foucauldian terms.

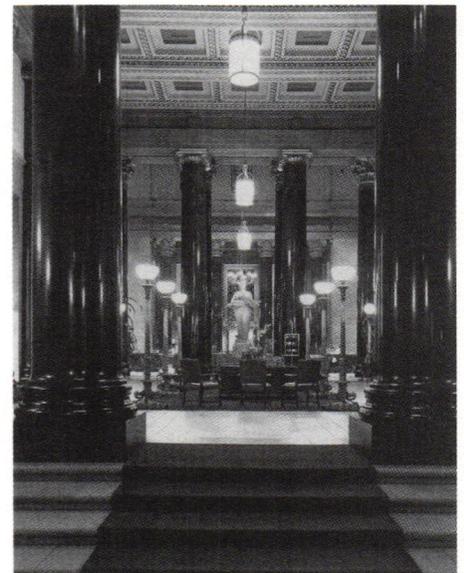
In the second revolution, banks abandoned "the voluptuous seductiveness of the seraglio in favour of a return to grandeur." This is postmodern grandeur, simply a pastiche of the real thing, according to the author. Gill's discussion whets the appetite for the pages following his mere six pages of text.

In a similar vein is the second introductory essay, titled "Men and Money: Reflections of a Sociologist," written by Nisbet. His fascinating analysis introduces the reader to the historical role of

money in the rise of modern individualism. "Banks are about money as churches are about divinity," contends Nisbet. "Money is never an isolated phenomenon, any more than human perceptions of the divine are." As part of his argument Nisbet deals with the concept of a bank's dependence on faith. "Without the faith of communicants on the one hand and the depositors on the other, neither church nor bank will endure," a proven fact in the recent failure of trust institutions.

This notion of faith is an aspect that bankers and bank architects have always tried to understand and to express in their buildings; faith underlies both the building and the social practices of banking. Through buildings, banks try to convey to the public and particularly to their customers a sense of stability and trust. Of course, this requires, as Brendan Gill puts it, a sort of "stagecraft."

The third and longer essay in the book, "A Critical Look at Bank Architecture"—the subtitle for both the book and the exhibition—was written by Susan Wagg. In nine chapters, Wagg delves through a chronological narrative into the general history of banking practices and the "stagecraft" used by architects to express



Atrium, Bank of Montréal; McKim, Meade, and White with Andrew T. Taylor, architects; 1901–1905. Photograph by David Miller. (From *Money Matters*.)



National Farmers' Bank, Owatonna, Minnesota; Louis Sullivan, architect, 1907–1908. Photograph by John Szarkowski, 1955. (From *Money Matters*.)

the trustworthy presence of the institutions in the Canadian and American urban contexts. The point of departure is the establishment in 1781 of the first modern bank on the North American continent by the United States Secretary of Treasury, Alexander Hamilton. The main narrative is interspersed with sub-narratives focusing on the particular histories of each of the fifty-five banks illustrated in the photographs.

Wagg's treatment is encyclopedic and orthodox in the use of stylistic periods. First, she discusses American Federal and Canadian late Georgian examples, separating discussions of Mid-Victorian and Late Victorian banks in the two countries. Wagg's rationale for this geographical differentiation of 19th-century architecture is straightforward. "Cross-border architectural influence was insignificant during much of this period," she claims. With the arrival of Beaux-Arts Classicism after 1900, "American influence displaced British influence in the Dominion," hence the grouping of Canadian and American architecture from this point until the present. The monotony of this

approach is counterbalanced, however, by the historian's more successful attempt to understand expressive differences in the architecture of nineteenth-century Canadian and American banks.

Take, for instance, Wagg's comments on the Canadian preference during the mid and late Victorian period for British palatial town mansions and gentleman's clubs in the classical tradition: "Falling somewhere between a private house and a public building, a gentleman's club was an especially appropriate model in hierarchical colonial society, since the bank manager, a person of high status in the community, generally lived on the premises. Moreover, boards of directors that met in these banks were virtually exclusive clubs." Americans at the time, with the rise of individualism in banking, were more likely to use a variety of forms to distinguish a bank from its competitors, hence architectural styles from this period in the United States ranged from revivalist medieval to classical. Wagg's essay finishes with a glossary of architectural terms, extensive notes, a bibliography, and a list of bank architects.

Anne Wilkes Tucker's essay "Where One Stands and When One Stands There" also falls at the end of *Money Matters*. A boon for the reader, it outlines the criteria used in both the choice of photographers and the selection of the photographs.

The 121 photographs assembled in the book are of exceptional quality. Unlike the narratives, which dwell with interior aspects of banks, they represent a more detached, externalized view of the type. In this way, the photos are like visual jewels, apprehensible only from a calculated perspectival distance outside the buildings. Disappointingly, only one-quarter of the photographs assembled in the book are of interiors.

Not only are interiors sadly missing, but people are also almost totally absent from the photographs in *Money Matters*, which bespeaks a photographic aesthetic in vogue among most of the photographers in the publication. Fewer than 20 photographs include people; none do it in the expressive form of John Szarkowski's 1955 photograph of customers in Louis Sullivan's National Farmers' Bank in Owatonna, Minnesota. This photo is included in the book although Szarkowski was not one of the artists commissioned to photograph the banks. For many readers, the omission of people, other than their tacit presence in these architectural photographs, may be unsettling.

Indeed, money must have also mattered in the production of this expensive book, a welcome attempt to assemble photography, architecture, and history. The book is also an excellent reference on a building type under transformation.

MONEY MATTERS: A CRITICAL LOOK AT BANK ARCHITECTURE, Brendan Gill, Robert Nisbet, and Susan Wagg, McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1990, 300 pp., illus., \$49.95.

John Cava

The Details of Modern Architecture

EDWARD R. FORD

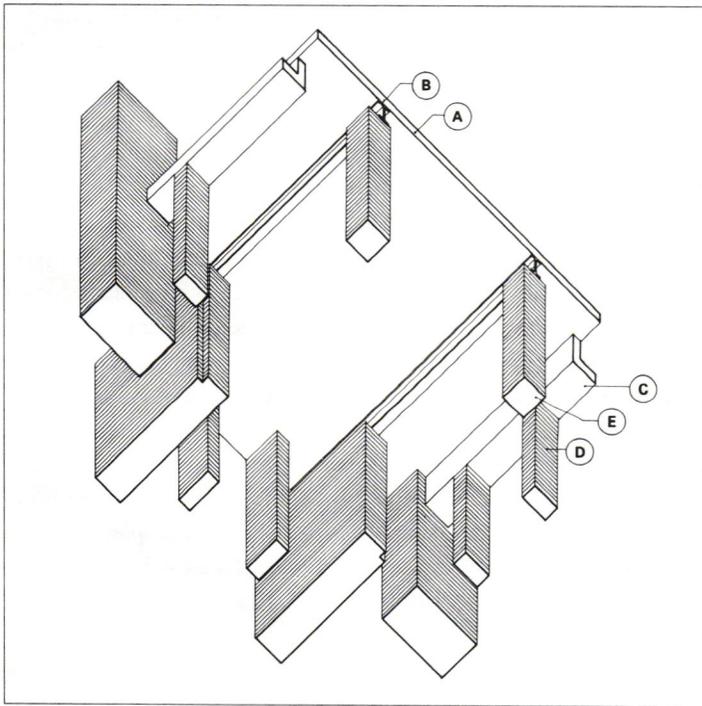
My most nostalgic memory as an “office boy” in a small architectural firm is of spending evenings alone in the office. I can’t remember what my official task was, for it was never done. Instead, I surreptitiously pulled drawings of building details out of the plan files and studied them intently. Like young Adso in the Labyrinthian Library, I was determined to unlock their cryptic meaning. Here in the details—cellular structures of the larger organism—the story of the building was either upheld and reinforced, or was revealed as a conjurer’s trick, an exercise in illusion. My obsessive interest was considered quite strange at the time, but Edward R. Ford’s magnificent book, *The Details of Modern Architecture*, has now vindicated this seemingly aberrant behavior. By viewing the development of modern architecture through the looking

glass of the architectural detail, Ford has been able to clarify the contradictions inherent between ideals and facts of construction. Although our worldview now accepts paradox as an inexorable—and perhaps necessary—part of existence, modern architectural thought has consistently denied it. Contradictions continue to confront us each time we build, when we attempt to make—to paraphrase Kahn—the immeasurable measurable.

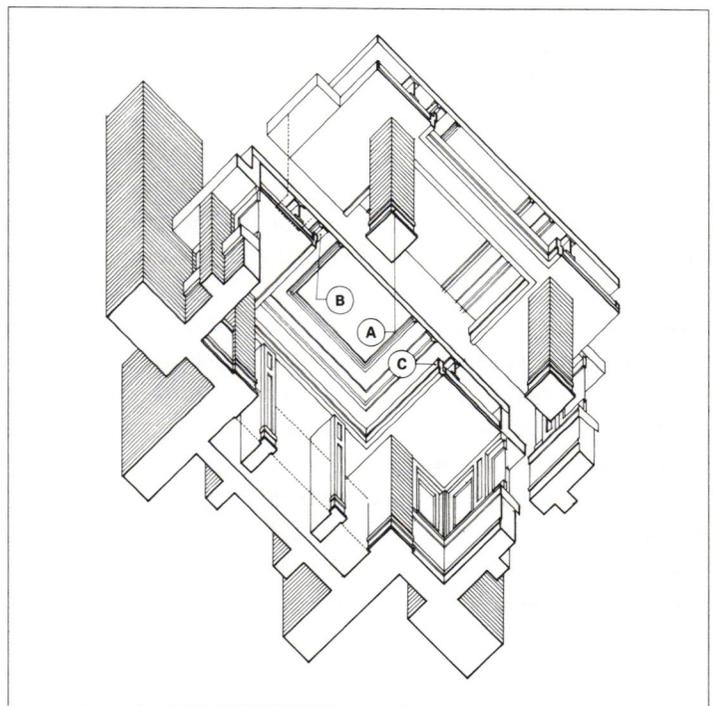
“The architect,” remarked Julian Guadet, “conceives, then studies, then constructs.” When the architect arrives at the point of construction, the issue of “truth” invariably appears; a construct that, as Karsten Harries has pointed out, remains remarkably elusive in architecture. The most awe-inspiring concept cannot by itself span across openings or keep water from entering rooms. Thus Guadet’s insistence that architectural students learn to design in relation to what is “buildable.” Ford’s book explores to what extent this was done in over eighty buildings conceived during the period 1877–1936. A second volume will cover the remaining time up to the present. The

investigation exposes some of the period’s most honored monuments to relentless scrutiny with many meticulous redrawings of construction details and the presentation of overall structural concepts, implied or existing. Within these concepts—often published and discussed at the theoretical level—are found lurking the inevitable contradictions, as well as some sleight of hand that the buildings’ authors would just as soon have kept out of public view. For to resolve them, they often ended up with inconsistent or mendacious treatment of materials, questionable construction practices, and—worst of all—leaks. As an architect, I read these pages with the same mixed feelings of guilt, pleasure, and curiosity one gets when reading private journals of favorite heroes or explanations of Houdini’s mysterious legerdemain. In some way, we are happier with illusions and don’t want to see the mighty Le Corbusier’s leaky parapet details. When we get too close to our idols, Flaubert reminds us, the gilt comes off on our hands.

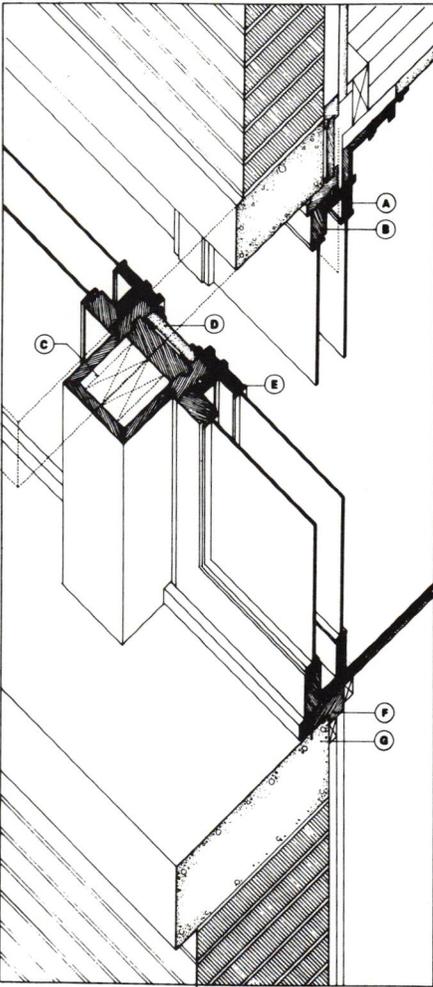
Upon cursory inspection, the book seems primarily concerned with present-



Worm’s eye axonometric, first floor framing of library, Martin House, Buffalo, New York; Frank Lloyd Wright, 1904. (From *The Details of Modern Architecture*.)



Worm’s eye axonometric, ceiling plan of library, Martin House, Buffalo, New York; Frank Lloyd Wright, 1904. (From *The Details of Modern Architecture*.)



Window details, Martin House, Buffalo, New York; Frank Lloyd Wright, 1904. (From *The Details of Modern Architecture*.)

ing constructional details and concepts. The details are like interviews with individual subjects; their voices—thanks to the wonderful line drawings—ring out clear and strong, and the text appears to be a general accompaniment. Soon, however, another book comes to light; one finds that the accompanist has turned soloist. Now, it is a historical text, using details as illustrations for interpretations and ideas. These two modes switch back and forth without warning, like the Gestalt drawing that is at times a young girl and at others, an old woman. This oscillation is both pleasing and annoying. Pleasing because the two voices are interwoven in a kind of contrapuntal fashion; annoying because it doesn't seem to

be intentional. Once one realizes this, the contents become more accessible; the drawings speak for themselves and the text—insightful and well written—can be read as a separate narrative.

There is precedent for architectural detail books, nearly all of them meant for use in the “drafting room.” This includes Martin’s volume of 1905, Knobloch’s two volumes from the early 1920s, the ubiquitous *Graphic Standards*, Mills’s three volumes from the 1950s, and *Details* a short-lived London journal, (1909–1910), which might just as well have been called “Profiles,” for it gave little or no constructional information. A handsome Munich-based periodical has been published under a similar name since 1966, and Frank Snyder’s plates in his 1908–13 portfolio set (to which Ford refers), are among the most elegant ever published. All these are presented mostly without comment, and it is to Ford’s credit that he uses his compilation of historical details for something more. All this information becomes a platform for discourse on a relationship between theory and practice, or as Marco Frascari has written, between construing and constructing.

Construing, in the pages of architectural history, is awarded the leading role. Although understood as a *sine qua non* of architectural performance, construction is considered a servant to the master of theory. Throughout the pages of this book, construction is allowed to speak, and it has much to tell. We find many buildings that imply a certain congruence between construction and spatial expression—either by appearance or by the architect’s inference—but are in fact prevarications. Others, appearing more scenographic in intent, have a surprising integrity between tectonic device and spatial effect. One of this book’s greatest pleasures is that it continually upsets preconceptions through close investigation of constructed reality. The details’ story becomes a kind of alternate history of modern architecture, one that has a different attitude toward tradition than its theo-

retical counterpart, the written manifesto.

The voice of the architectural detail takes experience and training to hear, but Ford does everything possible to make it audible to a more general audience. Certainly my own nocturnal studies as an office boy would have been largely unnecessary had this book been available then. The 45-degree vertical-oblique projections make exterior and interior orders of the constructional assemblies instantly clear. Ford’s drawings are accessible even to lay observers or beginning students, to whom the unadulterated architectural detail drawing often remains very nearly impenetrable. Such readers will also benefit from the frequent explanations of standard construction techniques, refreshing to see in a historical context rather than in textbook form. The drawings are offered as historical precedents—to be absorbed and discussed in the same manner as whole buildings are studied—for the lessons they have to offer. Variations on the drawing type—notably the “worm’s eye” axonometric, pioneered by Choisy—all clarify, in somewhat more abstract form, constructional and volumetric relationships. The two chapters on Wright are exemplary. Wright’s residential work is particularly difficult to “diagram” and Ford’s graphic analysis of the Martin house, for example, is among the clearest to date. The sole cavil with the drawings—beyond the occasional editing or drafting error—is that it is sometimes difficult or impossible to tell exactly where, in a given building, the details are taken. Usually, a photograph is the guide, but in many cases—as in Casa del Fascio and Seacroft—it is not clear whether the condition shown is generic or specific. This is important if they are to be relied upon as source material. For example, two construction photographs associated with the Johnson Wax Administration Building are actually photographs of the Research Tower construction, occurring around ten years later. On the same page is a photograph of the Tower exterior and the Administration Building interior, all under

the general caption heading of the Administration Building. This blunder is by far the exception, however, and is perhaps inevitable in the first edition of a book of so great a scope.

It is in the course of the written text that some ambiguities and biases are revealed. Two categories of structural/material/constructional relationships are posited; when structural building elements are what they appear to be—in use, in materiality, and in enclosing space—the construction is “monolithic.” “Layered” construction comprises all else, of which most buildings are made. Here, all is not quite as it seems, although close inspection may reveal “re-presentation” of internal structure in the cladding. This, a kind of subset of the layered technique, is dubbed “analogous” construction. The text’s theme suggests that a primary goal of modern architecture was the achievement of pure “monolithic” construction, unhampered by use of traditional detail, which has a tendency to cover up potentially expressive joints. The dramatis personae who inhabit this stage are familiar: Ruskin, Pugin, Laugier, Viollet-le-Duc, Guadet, and Semper. They tend, however, to make an obligatory appearance, speak their lines, and vanish. All except Julian Guadet, who is translated here in several long and wonderful passages not found elsewhere. Their desire is implied to have been misguided, as shown by those who adopted a less confrontational attitude to tradition, using layered, analogous construction for their buildings. Among the reassessed followers of this latter program are Cram, Richardson, Lutyens, and McKim, Mead, and White. Ford summarizes this difference in attitude, in discussing Pugin’s conviction “that an honest building is one in which the structural frame and the means of its connections are exposed, in which there is no distinction between structural materials and finish materials, and in

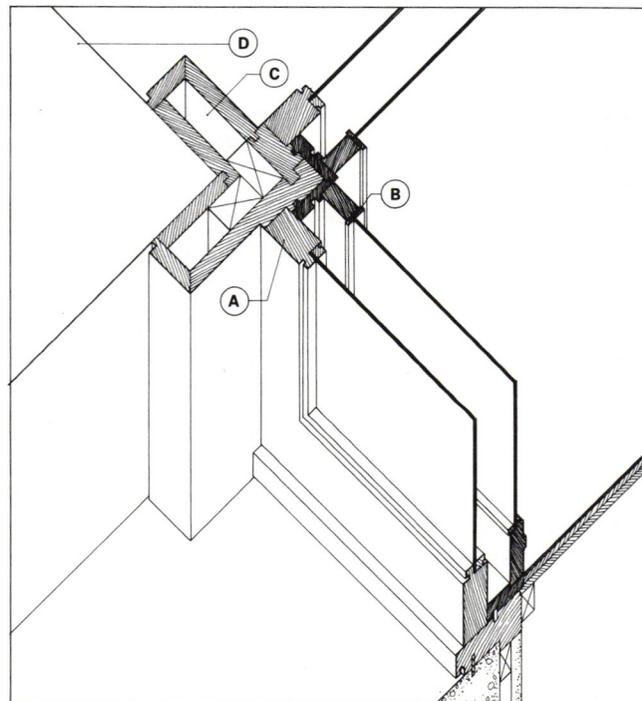
which these structural elements are for the most part monolithic. This ideal . . . is in many ways ill suited to the systems of modern building as they have evolved in the twentieth century.”

This is true—as any practicing architect can testify. But it depends on accepting certain paradigms of 20th-century culture; paradigms that may not be in the best interests of all concerned (except the a developer’s checkbook). The text on Neutra and Schindler explains how Neutra gradually relinquished the steel frame in residential construction to pursue wood platform framing, which is cheaper, faster, and more flexible. The revealed paradigm is that the former is “unsuitable for residential construction” and the latter, “suitable,” accepting these short-term financial gain characteristics as better in some way. But it is not clear why, for these are not always desirable qualities. Many “monolithic” details require—as anyone who has built them knows—a high degree of precision and craftsmanship. They can be excellent weather and movement control joints, but they are distinctly more difficult to build than their traditional layered equivalents

(often making frequent use of moldings). Curiously enough, these modern details are often closer to the inherited traditions of building than contemporary standard details, simply because they rely more heavily upon craft in a genuine, not a nostalgic, sense. The interesting question is, should the construction of the building maintain the same exploratory status as the construing of the idea, or can ideas be sufficiently meaningful in architecture by outward form alone?

Underlying the text is another paradigm, which holds that tradition, in architecture, has an inextricable relationship with the classical orders and the architectural baggage that accompanies them. This understanding explains the book’s odd way of beginning with the work of Ralph Cram, H. H. Richardson, and McKim, Mead, and White. Even the early Frank Lloyd Wright (not reached until after chapters on Lutyens and the Greene bothers) is presented as a classicist. This is truly a remarkable way to enter the domain of modern architecture and indicates a highly specific approach. It’s possible that the usual entrance through Paxton’s Crystal Palace is tiresome by now, but this approach does manage to tackle most of the dominant issues head on, in a way that Ralph Adams Cram simply cannot do. Ford rightly indemnifies himself against everyone’s favorite buildings being left out—already he’s performed a Herculean task. But consider how different the tone of this book might have been had the beginning sequence been not Cram, Richardson, McKim but Paxton, Labrouste, Berlage.

Although better general histories of this period can be found elsewhere, the text is filled with insightful new contributions. Beautiful passages describe subtle manipulations of building materials by McKim and Lutyens to achieve particular effects. Stone courses diminish imperceptibly as



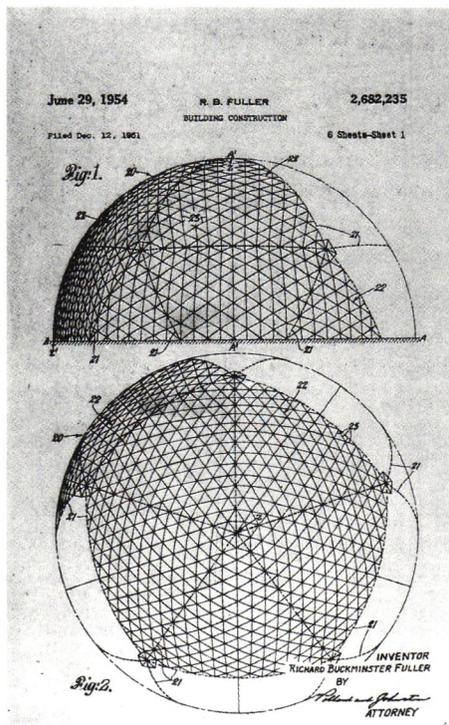
Window-jamb details at corner brick pier, Martin House, Buffalo, New York; Frank Lloyd Wright, 1904. (From *The Details of Modern Architecture*.)

they rise within the height of a wall, lightening its apparent weight. Roof lines flare just enough at their eaves to give the whole roof a slight lift, and the angles of hipped corner rafters are altered, resulting in outlines of greater dignity and repose. Ford is extraordinary in these portions; he has lovingly studied the making of these buildings and the precedent from which they derive. In the early chapters we are alerted to fine variations within classical grammar, and there are many perceptive observations on molding configurations, both inside and out. As the orders fade out over time (literally so with Lutyens's "phantom orders"), the role played by moldings in this history is emphasized. Unlike the orders, they could be greatly modified from classical shapes—abstracted, and even "inverted" in profile—without losing their practical value. C. H. Walker, in his *Theory of Mouldings*, summarizes their eternal usefulness: "Mouldings (ornament) define and accentuate structure and form and occur at the places of changes of surface, of material, of intention of expression and of the articulation of complex structures." They have managed to perform some of the tasks of the orders at a lesser scale and with fewer historicist references. The story these details are telling is of the transformation of this sensibility to align with theories like those of Carlo Lodoli (1780) where "in architecture, only that shall show that has a definite function, and which derives from the strictest necessity." These contradictory views are part of the legacy that architects have inherited, and the details presented here reveal the tremendous amount of effort they have expended on this issue; one that may never be clearly resolved. But as this book shows, for those who actively engage this dilemma, it breathes life and depth and even great beauty into their work.

THE DETAILS OF MODERN ARCHITECTURE, Edward R. Ford, MIT Press, 1990, 371 pp., illus., \$55.00.

Mary Mc Auliffe

Papering Over the Cracks or Bridging the Gap?



Geodesic Dome patent, Buckminster Fuller, 1954. (From *Bridging the Gap*.)

Since the gradual definition of professional education during the 19th century, the relationship between architect and engineer in the production of the built environment has been a significant preoccupation of both disciplines. The early decades of this century seemed to augur an alliance of both tactical and philosophical dimensions between the construction professions. Objects of engineering vernacular—the ocean liner, the grain silo, the factory—haunted the architectural polemic of the modern movement. In the pages of their texts, the engineer often assumed the accusatory guise of a progressive symbol, ventilating the airless boudoirs of architectural stylism with the rigor of calculation and function. The suggested interplay between the applied science of engineering

and intellectual credibility in Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture* prompted Colin Rowe to characterize Le Corbusier as a "bricoleur disguised as an engineer."

The suspicion that such a rhetorical *rapprochement* may form a brief interlude in a relatively recent and volatile partnership is confirmed by the allusion to a "gap" in the title *Bridging the Gap: Rethinking the Relationship of Architect and Engineer*. Proceedings of a three-day symposium organized by the Building Arts Forum/New York, it is the presumption of its sponsors that cross-disciplinary communication within a fragmented construction industry is urgently needed. The text begins with a scholarly prologue which provides a historical and theoretical context for the current "schism." The remainder of the proceedings consists of presentations by prominent practitioners in both fields describing their experience of various forms of interdisciplinary collaboration.

A large amount of agreement on broad issues emerges from both academic and professional arenas: descriptions of the architect as synthetic generalist and the engineer as analytic specialist remain largely undisturbed, while the educational system that exacerbates such difference comes under fire. More cross-fertilization between specialties is recommended, involving more emphasis on technology within architectural curricula and increased emphasis on design in engineering education. The diminished profile of both professions within building production, reducing the role of the architect to that of packaging designer, the engineer to that of technician, is noted.

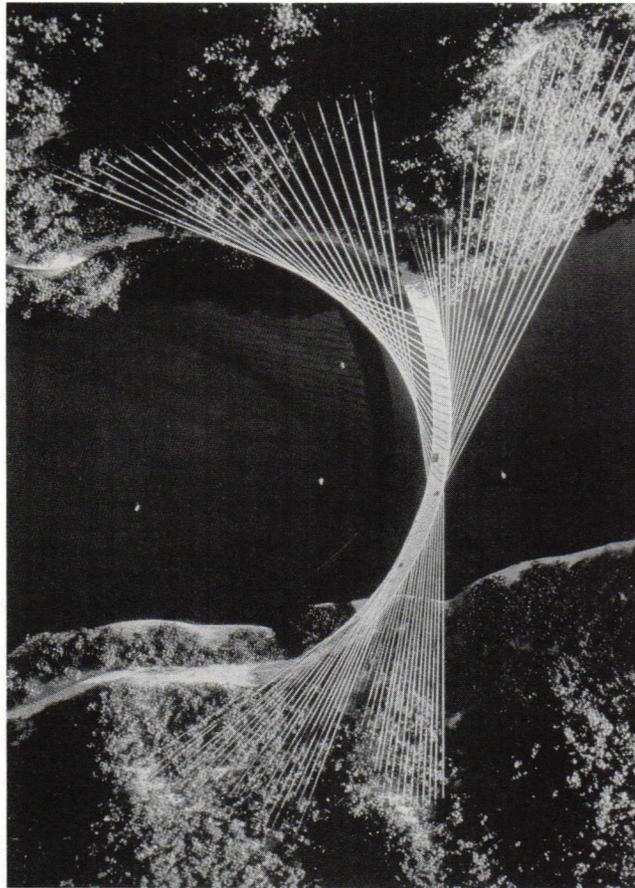
Nevertheless, the most salient feature of this publication lies in the thematic weakness of its format. The desire to increase the impact of an event through the documentation of proceedings is an understandable and increasingly common phenomenon. However, since the majority of presentations included involve professional promotion of the "Recent Work" variety familiar to the design lec-

ture circuit, crucial differences between the written and spoken word become apparent. Deprived of the aura that the presence of a well-known speaker may lend to such occasions, and with the visual documentation on which such presentations depend severely curtailed, one inherits a text in which generalized description alternates with anecdotal self-congratulation. Gentle reminders, such as the perceptive and provocative questions submitted in advance to each contributor by the organizers rarely succeed in maintaining control of the issues.

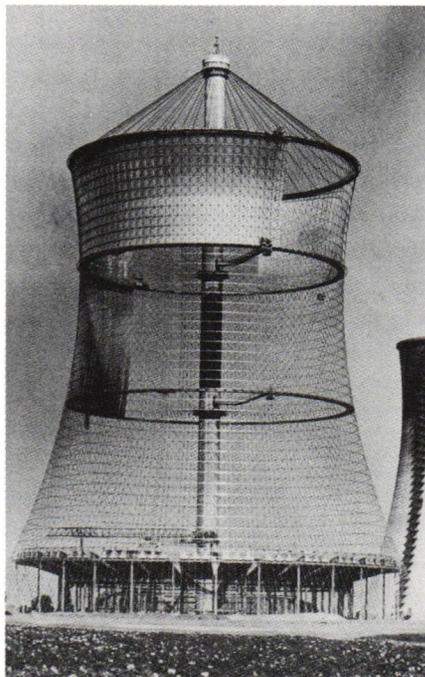
One exception to this lack of focus is the contribution of engineer Peter Rice, who peppers his accounts of collaboration with architects such as Renzo Piano with some telling observations about the power and intransigence of the construction industry. When the tone of the proceedings sharpens, it is more likely to produce self-serving shrillness than critical insight.

Richard Rogers's commentary on the current becalmed state of modern architecture in Britain through the medium of his National Gallery competition entry is a case in point. Not surprisingly, the introductory scholarly contributions survive the transition to publication more robustly.

While more aggressive editing might have usefully disturbed the chronology of the proceedings in order to excavate important issues, the reader is left to identify interesting observations which by and large fail to generate sufficient critical momentum. Even the transcripts of informal discussion sessions which often provide an antidote of spontaneity and focus to prepared presentations seem to consist largely of non sequiturs. Sporadic references are made to the larger political context of construction practice. The relationship between the fragmentation of



Model of Ruck-a-Chucky Bridge (unbuilt), Auburn, California; Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill with T. Y. Lin, engineer. (From *Bridging the Gap*.)

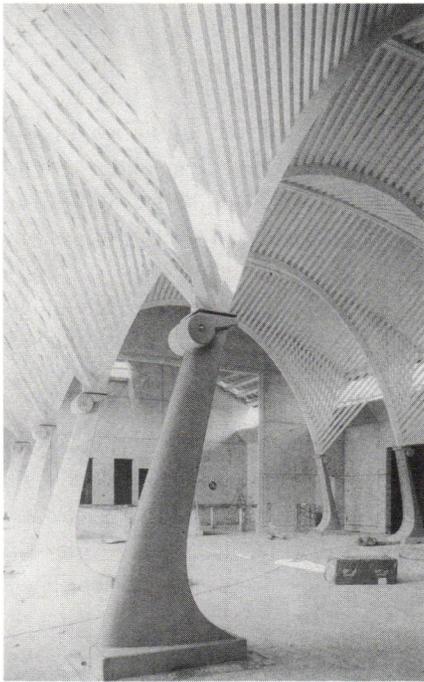


Cable net cooling tower, Schmehausen; Joerg Schlaich, c. 1970. (From *Bridging the Gap*.)

specialized disciplines and the more general division of labor within capitalist society is touched on. Kenneth Frampton stresses the influence of the developer client and financial pressures on the loss of craft in construction. Both professions are urged by Rice to work together in wresting technological control from a complacent and defensive construction industry.

Such calls for unison are interspersed with minor but vivid instances of traditional professional territoriality. A brief exchange between architect Rogers and engineer Joerg Schlaich reveals different professional attitudes towards the question of team leadership. The recurrent emphasis on structural engineering and structural expression—evident in the text and remarked upon more than once by participants—recalls the fissures existing within each discipline and of the traditional prestige accorded to the structural specialist within the field of engineering.

The proceedings are also intermittently haunted by the issue of progress. Echoing a familiar refrain, Rogers frets that architecture “hasn’t moved forward fast enough to keep up with science and technology.” In a parallel vein, Peter McCleary concludes his presentation with the invocation of “new concepts of space and time” of which both architects and engineers, immersed in 19th-century technological means, remain largely unaware. In seeming disagreement, Rice observes that, with the exception of improved methods of testing and calculation, “we really haven’t advanced all that far in conceptual terms” since the 19th-century. Frampton, providing a welcome critical perspective to discussions, questions the centrality that novelty often seems to assume in a discussion of technology:



Auditorium of the High School at Wohlen; Santiago Calatrava with Burkard, Meyer, Steiger, 1988. (From *Bridging the Gap*.)

In many areas of every day technology, the premium placed on newness as a necessary condition of creativity is surely one of the fallacies of the late twentieth century.

Progressivism provides one instance of philosophical assumptions regarding technology that remain implicit in this publication. Tom F. Peters's essay, following a perceptive examination of differences in orientation between the two professions, culminates in the proposition of "technological thought" uniting both and founded on their common orientation towards design and application. The ensuing claim that "the proof of the correctness of a technological method lies solely in the functioning of the object" seems to dissolve the foundation of his proposition into the philosophical quagmire of an undefined functionalism. One suspects that crucial philosophical differences between the disciplines of architecture and engineering might pivot around the concept of "function" alone.

An equally prevalent assumption of professional culture as a monolith ap-

plies: Mario Salvadori in his introduction explicitly favors the examination of professional culture as a quasi-autonomous phenomenon. Frampton, on the other hand, in his concluding remarks suggests that despite the appearance of a global economy, apparent cultural differences between, for example, the United States and Japan in the production of buildings remain significant and illuminating. Such an observation may be supported by the participation and organization of the symposium itself: as the proceedings progress toward prescriptive examples of more synthetic practice it seems significant that none of the relevant presenters (Rice, Calatrava, Schlaich, Rogers) maintains a practice in the United States.

The primary value of such a publication, other than as an introductory primer to such issues, is difficult to gauge. Its modest production values limit the comprehensive illustration of projects which have been covered in greater depth in more glossy monographs. The various contributions do not maintain sufficiently consistent critical depth to secure its worth as a scholarly effort. The clear organization of the document in terms of layout and illustration ultimately underlines the laudable but vague intentions of the event. Occupying a rather compromised middle ground, the resulting text is at once too general and too specialized: too general in its account of practice in the projects illustrated, and too specialized in giving only elliptical consideration to the wider web of political and cultural forces within which architects and engineers operate.

BRIDGING THE GAP: RETHINKING THE RELATIONSHIP OF ARCHITECT AND ENGINEER, edited by the Building Arts Forum/New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1991, 183 pp., illus., \$29.95 paper.

Luis Fernández-Galiano

An Overly Violated Perfection

The idea for Philip Johnson's celebrated deconstructivist show at the MoMA came from another exhibition that never actually materialized. Proposed in 1986 by two Chicago architects, Paul Florian and Stephen Wierzbowski, its title would have been "Violated Perfection." Following an unsuccessful search for funds and backing, the Chicago partners managed to capture the interest of the Los Angeles critic Aaron Betsky, who then sold the idea of an exhibition to Philip Johnson and that of a book to Rizzoli. As we know, the exhibition was finally organized under another title—"Deconstructivist Architecture"—and with other protagonists; the book, in turn, was published in December 1990 after a four-year gestation period under the original title but, alas, under the sole authorship of Betsky: the originators of the idea have had to resign themselves to many thank-yous in the acknowledgments and to two special pages trimmed in black—a violation, they call it—which reproduce a rather weak project of theirs for the American Library of Berlin competition.

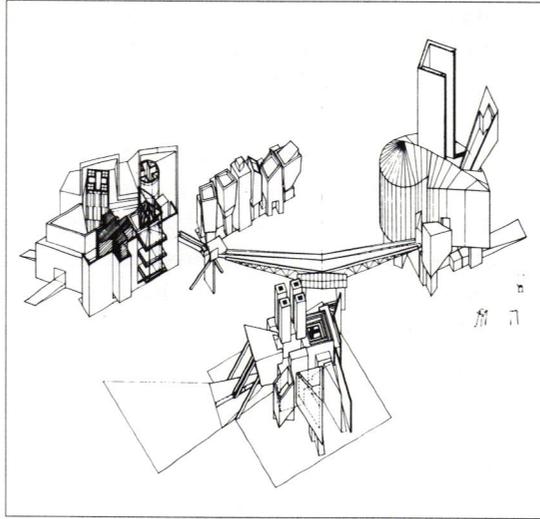
While the book already has quite a prepublication history behind it, and the author has an obvious ambition to map out the entire territory of contemporary avant-garde architecture, the book's importance need not be overemphasized. Though the focus is Los Angeles and the American context, European and Japanese architects are also represented, almost always with recent projects or realizations—a great portion of them dated 1989. Betsky's book may be criticized for many things, but certainly not for any sacrifice of topicality.

Betsky starts with the premise that the "project of the modern," linked to technology and rational order, is more or less reactionary, since this architecture reaffirms the social and economic status quo. Harmony, beauty, and function must be

violated by architects in the attempt to subvert modern order. Happily, these architects are many, and almost all of them famous. The author groups them into five currents after identifying the four “godfathers” of the movement—Robert Venturi, Peter Eisenman, John Hejduk, and Frank Gehry—and the four “sorcerers” of subversion—Rem Koolhaas, Bernard Tschumi, Daniel Libeskind, and James Wines. The five currents are made up of “revelatory moderns” (Helmut Jahn, Jean Nouvel, Renzo Piano, and Emilio Ambasz, but also Günter Behnisch and Eric Owen Moss); creators of “shards and sharks” (Coop Himmelblau, Zaha Hadid, Gunther Domenig, and a big group of Japanese); “textualist” (almost all artists who make installations and such things); “new mythologists” (the old Paolo Soleri and other planners of model cities); and, last but not least, “technomorphists” (Toyo Ito, Shin Takamatsu, Morphosis, Michele Saee, and a representative selection of Californian students). As befits a book published on the banks of the Pacific, the volume opens and closes with a sample from each coast, Atsushi Kitagawara and AKS Runo.

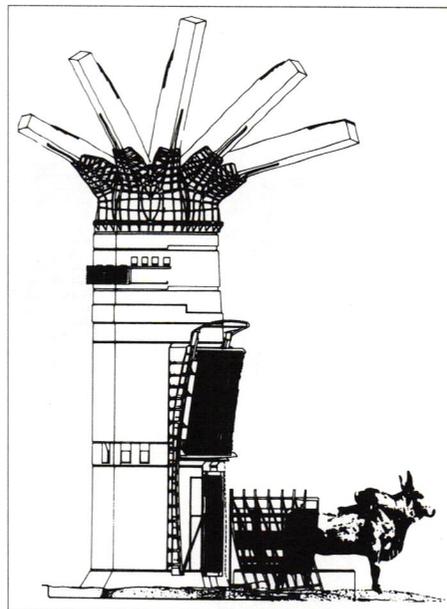
It could not be more *à la page*. Unfortunately, though the architects are very new, their ideas are not so new and are even distorted to the point of caricature. Jacques Derrida and Jean Baudrillard appear to be the mentors and even get the privilege of being mentioned by name, which is no trifling circumstance in a book whose alphabetical index includes, aside from *Derridian* and *Baudrillardian*, words like *Kantian*, *Hegelian*, *Bergsonian*, *Heisenbergian*, and even *post-Heisenbergian*, but not the legitimate owners of the adjectives.

I should avoid quoting fragments of the author’s peculiar jargon for fear of being accused of malevolently extracting paragraphs from context; but I dare assure that if one opened the book at random, chances exceed fifty percent that the page has either no logical sense or no grammatical sense, or neither logical nor



Piazza Navona project, Rome; Tom Buresh and Danelle Guthrie, 1988. (From *Violated Perfection*.)

grammatical sense. I do not doubt that this is precisely the author’s intention. And I must say that Lorraine Wild’s typographical design, well described by her name, and based on the use of different combinations of columns and letter types and sizes and even different spacings between letters of the same title, effectively contributes to the overall confusions; the perfection of the Bodoni Bold is adequately violated by the proximity of the News Gothic.



ICI Trade Pavilion, Royal Agricultural Showground, Stoneleigh, England; Christopher MacDonald and Peter Salter, 1983. (From *Violated Perfection*.)

Whenever the text is comprehensible, it can even be entertaining. As when Duchamp’s *Large Glass* is described as perhaps “one of the most complicated architectural investigations of the twentieth century,” or when it is affirmed that architecture survives in what Michel Foucault calls heterotopias: “cafes, railroad stations, rest homes, psychiatric clinics, prisons, cemeteries, theaters, museums, libraries, fairs,” all “fragments of a utopian world floating in the real world...” Anyway, the supposed theoretical hodgepodge of plays on words and paradoxes, seemingly so popular of late in American academic circles, is by far the worst aspect of the text. The book, after all, is written within a stone’s throw of Hollywood, and is most comfortable when mentioning futuristic films (from *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Blade Runner* to *Alien*, *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, and even *Batman*) and relating them to the architecture à la Mazinger Z of some Californians and many Japanese.

When it comes to European ideas and architectures, Betsky seems more disoriented. Among the hundreds of architects whose work is illustrated are two Spaniards: Santiago Calatrava, whose buildings dissolve “into incomprehensible flows of dynamic engineering,” and Enric Miralles, who appears beside a mysterious architect from Porto repeatedly called “Arturo Silva.” Only after a while do we realize it is the Portuguese master Alvaro Siza.

The author of this book vehemently propounds the “violation of perfection.” But I strongly fear that in the heat of the polemic he has taken the matter all too literally, feverishly raping spelling, syntax, and even typography. Acquittal is unlikely.

VIOLATED PERFECTION: ARCHITECTURE AND THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE MODERN, Aaron Betsky, Rizzoli, 1990, 208 pp., illus., \$50.00 cloth, \$35.00 paper.

Diane Ghirardo

Deconstruction: The Omnibus Volume

ANDREAS PAPADAKIS,
CATHERINE COOKE, AND
ANDREW BENJAMIN, EDITORS

The London Project

MAREK WALCZAK ET AL.

The Wexner Center for the Visual Arts

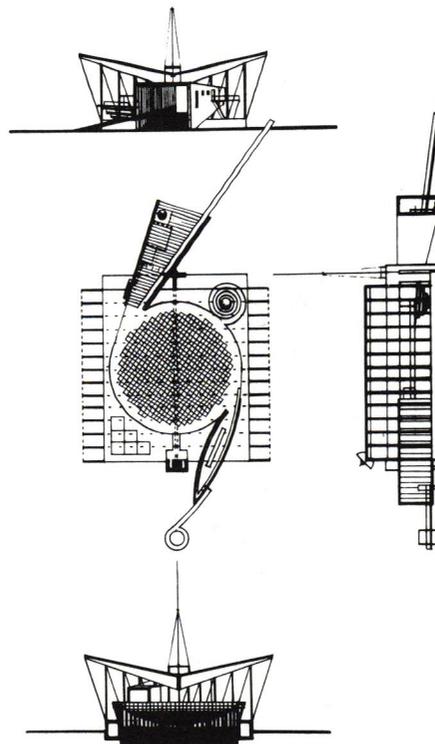
R. STEARNS, RAFAEL MONEO, AND
ANTHONY VIDLER

If the 1970s and early 1980s were the heyday of postmodernism, the late 1980s and early 1990s clearly belong to Deconstruction—at least in some quarters. Postmodernism began in the homes of the rich (in designs by Robert A. M. Stern, Charles Moore, and others) and soon became a corporate emblem in buildings such as Philip Johnson's AT&T headquarters, assorted skyscrapers by Kohn Pederson Fox, Michael Graves, and others. The entire passage—from the elite preferences of the wealthy homeowner to the preferred style of mini-mall and shopping mall developers—occurred in just over a decade. Much the same is happening with Deconstruction, which has already become a hallmark of trendy restaurants and shops, and even a Mac-Donald's or two.

Just as postmodernism's advance into popular consciousness was lined with celebratory publications, so is that of Decon. As the title suggests, *Deconstruction: The Omnibus Volume*, seeks to provide a basic anthology of projects and essays, including a history of Russian Constructivism—the aesthetic origin of many of the current Deconstructivists—as well as a series of theoretical essays and a body of work identified as Deconstructivist.

Almost from the outset, Russian Con-

structivism has been identified as a primary source for contemporary Deconstructionism; Rem Koolhaas and Zaha Hadid in particular acknowledge their debt to Ivan Leonidov, Iakov Chernikov, and other Constructivists. In the first part of the book, Catherine Cooke discusses the significance of the Constructivist aesthetic on Decon designers, including ties both shared with contemporary literary movements. Even the Russian word *konstruktziia* draws the two together, since it means structural organization both in grammar and in building. But she also notes important differences. The earliest Constructivists—Vladimir Tatlin, Alexander Rodchenko, and others—explicitly theorized an organic link between political values, industrial techniques, and manipulated materials. Later adherents continued to stress the primacy of the political, specifically communist, nature of their work. For most of the Russians, severing any of the three components was unthinkable—and arguably the political was the most fundamental of all.



Westminster proposal: "A processing system for the induction and dissemination of political decisions"; Marek Walczak, 1988. (From *The London Project*.)

Thus while architects such as Moisei Ginzburg worked on new spatial types, and others addressed issues concerning urbanism, the engagement with the political always remained prominent. In addition to her essay, Cooke includes two pedagogical texts by Chernikov and Leonidov in which they demonstrated Constructivist moves in a series of exercises developed for their students.

The first part of the volume, Cooke's essays and the translations, is scholarly and thorough, carefully argued and documented. As the book approaches contemporary works in Part 2, "Theory and Philosophy," the scholarly quality disappears. Jacques Derrida delivers a series of self-consciously cryptic aphorisms, i.e.: "If there is a truth of architecture, it appears doubly allergic to the aphorism: essentially it is produced as such, outside of discourse. It concerns an articulated organization, but a silent articulation." A lot of ink is spilled here trying to figure out what Decon is—or isn't—and Derrida adroitly, in quintessential Decon mood, avoids being pinned down on anything. Instead of coming off as a considered philosophical argument, Decon begins to sound suspiciously like a temperamental disposition, or even a religion. Derrida, after all, asserts that while Decon is not a critique of modernity, neither is it modern or a glorification of modernity, nor is it a system or method—but rather it is a *commitment*.

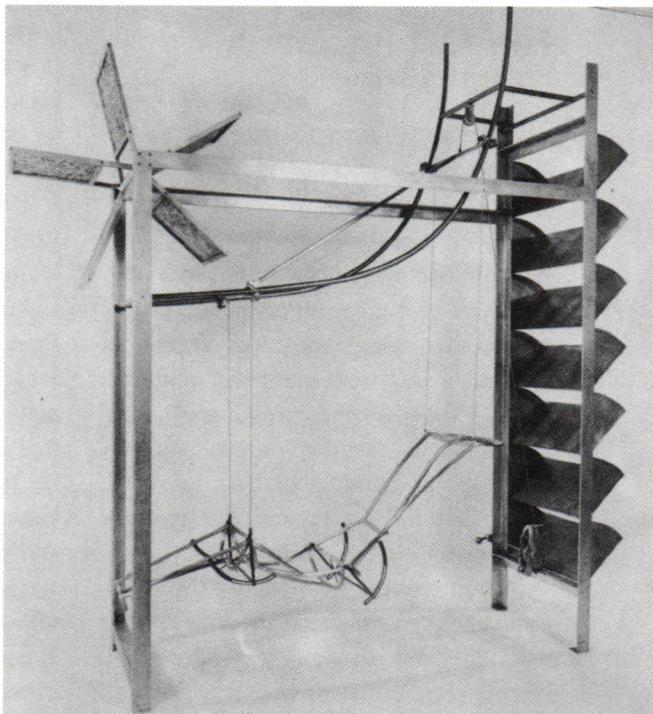
In architecture, Decon is clearly an aesthetic mood. As one flips through the essays in this book, it is difficult to argue otherwise. In a review of the Tate Gallery symposium, which gave birth to many of these essays, David Lodge of *The Guardian* reports how a member of the audience contested the Decon projects for being "elitist and sprawling," basically remote from any serious real-world problems. Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi, and Zaha Hadid all promptly retreated behind a shield of professionalism. Just as intellectuals in literary and philosophical circles have long criticized Decon as a pretext for evading social and political

responsibilities, so too did it become clear that much the same could be said of the work celebrated in this book as Decon.

Following a third part devoted to Decon art, Part 4 focuses specifically on Decon in architecture, with essays by Charles Jencks and Mark Wigley, and projects by the canonical decons—Eisenman, Tschumi, Hadid, Coop Himmelblau, Morphosis, Office of Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), and some surprising additions—Behnisch and Partners, Stanley Tigerman, Emilio Ambasz, and, just when you thought they were locked away in a pastel postmodern pastiche, Arquitectonica. If the list seems eclectic, wait until you see the illustrations. For incontrovertible evidence of the capriciousness of just about everything

having to do with Decon in architecture, one need look no farther than the transubstantiation of Arquitectonica's Atlantis condominium complex—formerly not only a *Miami Vice* logo but also a Postmodern icon—which, for no discernible reason at all, sits here now supposedly a Decon piece. One cannot escape the sneaking feeling that all the philosophical baggage is a put-on, and this is yet another promotional tool bereft of any other meaning. The interview with Peter Eisenman, with his by now standard, cloying, and syncophantic obeisance to Philip Johnson, only reinforces this suspicion. It would be difficult to convey the vapid character of most of the writing here, but let one project description stand for all: "The interior space is vaguely exterior. Its hall-like quality reflects its public intention [sic]. People within this space tend to be extremely conscious of their position."

In the brief for *The London Project*, organizers Karen Bausman and Leslie Gill elected to "explore conceptual ideas about cities and urban architecture," but



Métier à aubes, construction by Jesse Reiser and Nanako Uemoto for the Globe Theater, 1988 (From *The London Project*.)

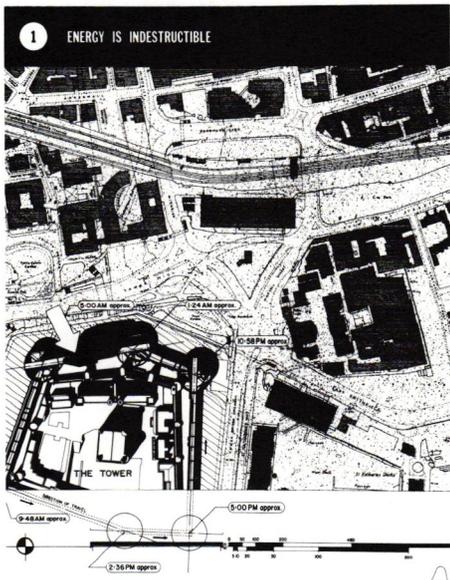
to do so by having ten selected architects abandon all pragmatic restraints and any concern about construction in order to allow them to dream. Based on my knowledge of other designs by these architects, since few have done any building, it is probably safe to say that so far *all* they have done is dream. I point this out because the ten projects are pretty much what one would have expected from these individuals.

Although in her introduction Patricia Phillips optimistically determines that the final projects offer fresh approaches to thinking about urban phenomena, it is difficult to discern this in the projects. However evocative the images, conceptually they resemble beginning student works, and banal ones at that. A new design for Westminster, for example, is defined as "a processing system for the induction and dissemination of political decisions." Jesse Reiser and Nanako Uemoto proposed prints and a machine-like contraption for the Globe Theater that resemble old Libeskind projects. Although the projects seek to collapse the

distinctions between aesthetic objects and texts, they do so by rendering fragmentary texts aesthetic objects. As K. Michael Hays aptly points out in his afterword, the projects may attempt to challenge high-low cultural distinctions—although even this is dubious—but they do so by entirely evading any specific engagement with cultural and ideological formations. Just as in their aesthetic they appeal to Decon imagery, so too do they complement the Decons in the *Omnibus Volume* by escaping into aesthetic games in full retreat from real-world issues.

The Wexner Center for the Visual Arts, Ohio State University at this point probably needs no introduction. Has any contemporary building been more widely published, and had more

monographic editions of magazines dedicated to it, than the Wexner Center? This media response is less a testimonial to the building than to the public-relations acumen of designer Peter Eisenman, who has shepherded through publications on his design ever since it was selected in 1983. This particular volume appeared as part of the inaugural festivities for the building in 1989, and contains 23 pages of text, and another 185 pages of illustrations, 54 of them in color. As video artists MICA-TV remarked, this building is photogenic, and Eisenman has left no stone unturned in reminding us of this. From minute pencil diagrams to shots of workers, we are provided exhaustive, if not exhausting, documentation of nearly everything about this building, from conception to birth, and now, in yet another Rizzoli volume, the experiences of the artists who exhibited at the Wexner in the first year. Although one would think that there would be no further illustrations to publish, *A+U* and *AD* both produced monographic editions, largely duplicating these photographs and even reproducing



Tower of London solar clock project; Neil Denari, 1988. (From *The London Project*.)

the same “critical” essays, and countless other magazines accorded the Wexner extensive coverage.

Since the building really does not merit all of this, one can only note that something, or someone, is demanding center stage at all costs. Here the comments of some of the artists are appropriate, for they refer to the building as authoritarian, totalitarian, obsessive, offering no relief from the imposition of the illogical extreme of the guiding logic—and if these observations seem more appropriate to a person than to a building, perhaps this is about all there is left to say about the Wexner Center.

DECONSTRUCTION: THE OMNIBUS VOLUME, Andreas Papadakis, Catherine Cooke, and Andrew Benjamin, editors, Rizzoli, 1989, 264 pp., illus., \$75.00 cloth, \$45.00 paper.

THE LONDON PROJECT, Marek Walczak et al., Artists Space/Princeton Architectural Press, 1988, 102 pp., illus., \$25.00.

THE WEXNER CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS, OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, R. STEARNS, Rafael Moneo, and Anthony Vidler, Rizzoli, 1989, 208 pp., illus., \$29.95.

Nathan Silver

The Architecture in Detail series

MARITZ VANDENBERG, SERIES DIRECTOR

As we move away ever further from the good five-cent cigar (once the archetype of the value/cost paradox: a good cigar is handmade, so how could it cost only five cents?), the list keeps growing of more things the world certainly needs. Another is the good “building profile,” and perhaps forty dollars is scarcely enough for that.

A building profile—we use the word profile here, of course, as the *New Yorker* originally did, to mean a biographical sketch—is a useful explanatory span that in extent, falls between a building writeup and a building biography.¹ Its justification is the provision of more descriptive and analytical detail than there is generally room for in a magazine, home of the writeup, without having to go on at full book-length in order to suitably tell of the building’s genesis and design process, as in a biography. Some buildings do deserve a full biography, and not necessarily the most sublime—the Houses of Parliament in London or the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela, for example, have rich stories; the story of the Centre Pompidou’s competition history and design development is gripping.

The four books under review, from the series *Architecture in Detail*, with Maritz Vandenberg as series director, look like building profiles. But are they, or are they only distended building writeups? A suspicion of bloat is conveyed by the record-album size and just sixty unnumbered pages, with plenty of white paper around an average of five thousand words, fifty photos and sixteen drawings each. Indeed, there are fewer photos than fifty, because some appear twice: as tiny illustrations within the text, then a few pages later as big artistic shots. And the

books’ prices are big, too. At sixty-six cents a printed page (i.e., \$1.32 per leaf), it is a rather extravagant cost for paperbacks with glued bindings. So we’d better consider their subjects to see if they should tempt fortune.

I think the profile on Philip Webb’s Red House, by Edward Hollamby, might. Hollamby, a powerful official architect and planner in Lambeth and afterward in Docklands, London (the latter an important job curiously uncredited in his author’s blurb), has owned and lived in Red House since 1952. Sited in Kent not far from London, Red House was first commissioned and built in 1859–60 for William Morris, the great designer and social activist. It was Morris’s first essay into a brotherhood of architects, designers, and craftsmen, “in which the work of mind, eye and hand would play complementary parts,” as Hollamby puts it. Morris’s precepts are clearly seen in Red House’s unassuming materials, the decoration by Burne-Jones and Rossetti and Morris himself, and the quest for homely beauty that became characteristic of the Arts and Crafts Movement. For the architect Philip Webb, formerly a fellow apprentice of George Edmund Street with Morris, Red House was an introduction into a refined architectural eclecticism that left the Gothic revival behind. Webb moved from his admiration of Street and William Butterfield into an early phase of the common-sense tradition that Nikolaus Pevsner identified as early modernism in his *Pioneers of Modern Design* (1936). Thus, Red House is historically important, and architecturally interesting as it



Red House, Kent; Philip Webb, 1859–60. (From *Red House by Philip Webb*.)



Glass stairway, Joseph Shops, London; Eva Jiricna, c. 1980s.
(From *Joseph Shops* by Eva Jiricna.)

points to greater works by Charles Voysey, Sir Edwin Lutyens, and Webb himself. It makes a good subject for a building profile, and it is sensibly illustrated here with Webb's own drawings as well as contemporary measured drawings and photographs.

The values are more problematic in the cases of the *Financial Times Print Works* of Nicholas Grimshaw and Partners, and the *Mound Stand, Lord's Cricket Ground* of Michael Hopkins and Partners, each with commentary by David Jenkins. This is not because of their subjects, both recent landmarks of technological architecture in London, but because ungraceful texts (e.g., "an advanced state of decay"; "protective bags . . . keep them in pristine condition") often spread information too thickly where it's unimportant, too thinly where it matters. In the book on the newspaper plant, we wish to have more about the development of the glazed walls since the design is elaborately concerned with them: as the photos show, temperature change seems to make a big difference in the undistorted reflectivity of the glass. This appears a major shortcoming of the glass suspension detail. In the case of the grandstand, the fabric canopy is the defining aspect of the design, and in the precise form eventually chosen, the tensile stress considerations seem modified, or subordinate to, the stand's bay structure. The text here is unclear and unillustrated on successive design refinements for the fabric roof, but in the Hopkins design this

is what we most want to know about.

The *Joseph Shops* of Eva Jiricna, with commentary by Jose Manser, sparsely describes seven retail clothing shops and cafes in London designed over several years by one architect for one client. The design look achieved is techno-minimal, but the shopfittings seem less serviceable and have less impact

than in many interiors not so grandly served up for our attention. Since the detailing too is crude (e.g., a glass staircase is held up with a basketwork of stainless steel rods, and even this great multiplicity of supports finally needs augmenting with slabs of acrylic plastic for tensile strength under the glass treads), it is difficult to see who the book was intended for, or why this was considered a suitable subject in the series.

NOTES

1. It would be more accurate to call the written account of a building a *morphography* instead of a biography, but that word has already been appropriated to mean a scientific description of form. A "building biography" has the merit of intimating that life is at least a metaphorical part of the architectural story.

THE ARCHITECTURE IN DETAIL SERIES, Maritz Vandenberg, series director, published by Van Nostrand Reinhold. Volumes reviewed:

RED HOUSE BY PHILIP WEBB, text by Edward Hollamby, photographs by Charlotte Wood, introduction by Sir Hugh Casson, 1991, illus., 60 pp., \$39.95.

FINANCIAL TIMES PRINT WORKS BY NICHOLAS GRIMSHAW AND PARTNERS, text by David Jenkins, photographs by Jo Reid and John Peck, 1991, illus., 60 pp., \$39.95.

MOUND STAND, LORD'S CRICKET GROUND BY MICHAEL HOPKINS AND PARTNERS, text by David Jenkins, photographs by Dave Bower, 1991, illus., 60 pp., \$39.95.

JOSEPH SHOPS BY EVA JIRICNA, text by Jose Manser, photographs by Richard Bryant and Alastair Hunter, 1991, illus., 60 pp., \$39.95.

Bruno Giberti

Design History and the History of Design

JOHN A. WALKER

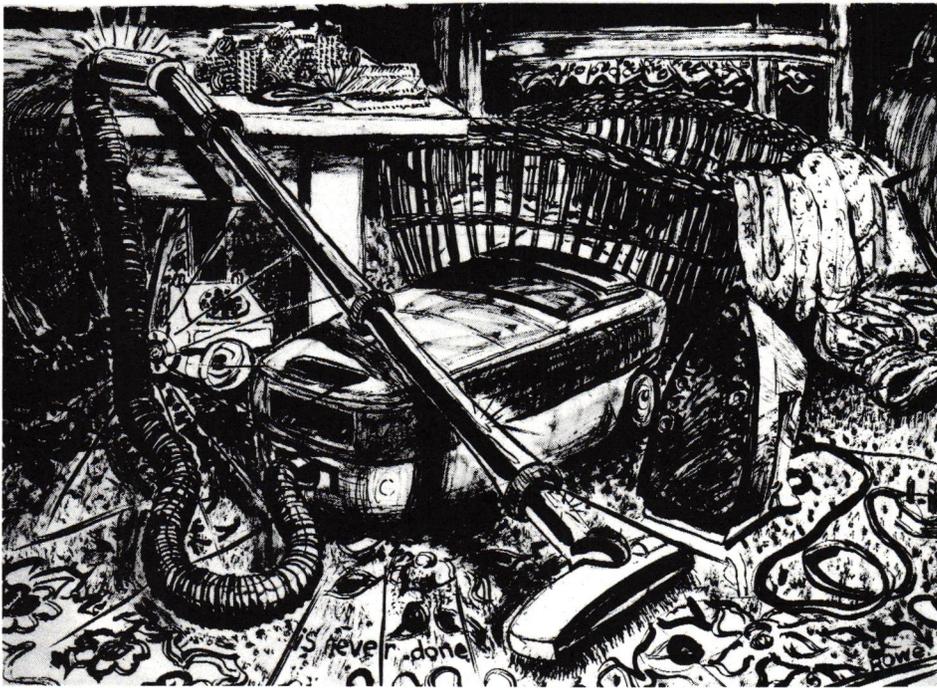
The Meanings of Modern Design

PETER DORMER

The history of design is not a new subject. It has been the theme of two well-known if not always well-loved pillars of the historical literature, Nikolaus Pevsner's *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (1936) and Sigfried Giedion's *Mechanization Takes Command* (1948). In contrast, design history is a relatively new discipline, well established in Britain but still forming in this country. The time is right, then, for a book like *Design History and the History of Design*, in which John A. Walker surveys the landscape of this field for its students.

Walker's previous works include a *Glossary of Art, Architecture and Design Since 1945* (1973), *Art Since Pop* (1978), and *Art in the Age of the Mass Media* (1983). Such a background might seem to qualify him more as an art critic than a design historian, but the experience of writing a dictionary seems to have given him a permanent appetite for the encyclopedic, and his latest work provides a methodological introduction suitable for the novice historian in several disciplines.

As an introduction, Walker's book is comparable to Hazel Conway's *Design History* (1987), an anthology of essays written by specialists in various subject areas of design history—dress and textiles, ceramics, furniture, interiors, graphics, industrial, and environmental design. Walker takes a very different tack in his book. He pretty much ignores professional divisions, and treats the history of design as the subject of a single discipline, which he calls design history. De-



The monstrous aspect of the routines of modern domestic life; drawing by Stephanie Rowe. (From *The Meanings of Modern Design*.)

sign history is a relatively new discipline, when compared to related fields that study art or architecture. In fact, Walker can date the establishment of design history as a discipline very precisely to 1977, when British design historians, previously meeting as a subsection of the Association of Art Historians, founded their own professional organization, the Design History Society. Not surprisingly, the discipline has been dominated by British historians.

Every discipline has to stake its own territory, and so Walker begins his book appropriately, by proposing a definition:

Design history, it is proposed, shall be the name of a comparatively new intellectual discipline, the purpose of which is to explain design as a social and historical phenomenon.

But what is “design”? That is not a simple question to answer, given the variety of people we have seen involved, and the ambiguity of the term “design” itself. In chapter two, “Defining the Object of Study,” Walker addresses the problem of defining this fundamental concept:

Design historians agree that their object of study is the history of design, but there is not yet a consensus concerning the meaning and scope of the term/concept design. For example, does design include architecture? Is architecture part of the object of design history or art history or is architectural history an independent discipline in its own right? Similar uncertainties arise in respect of the crafts, the minor or decorative arts and the mass media.

In the course of the chapter, Walker considers the strengths and weaknesses of several definitions. Although he doesn’t commit himself to any single definition, he notes that most design historians accept “design as a specialist activity associated with the industrial revolution, mass production manufacture, the modern movement in architecture, and the consumer society.” This is broad enough to include all the previously discussed fields, with the possible exception of the crafts, which receives separate attention in chapter three. It also locates design firmly within the modern period.

Given the youth of the discipline, and the contentious task of defining its most essential concept, Walker expresses sur-

prise that design historians have reached such an easy consensus about what they should study: “New research on design usually focuses upon an extremely narrow range of topics: consumer goods, public transport, advertising, the home, etc.” He scolds his fellow historians for taking refuge in such “safe” topics, rather than stretching their imaginations, as well as the boundaries of their field, to include new or troublesome subjects, and the political and moral implications of what designers do:

Why are design historians so unimaginative? Why are they so reluctant to consider military space vehicles, engineering machines, computer hardware and software, the role of the state in promoting design, the relation of design to pollution, profit and exploitation, as topics worthy of analysis? There appears to be a deeply-entrenched conservatism among design historians, an unwillingness to confront the relationship between design and politics, design and social injustice.

Walker claims to be a materialist, but he talks like a social historian. In chapter four, he argues that it is not enough for scholars to tell the story of individual designers and their creations. Design is a process enmeshed in social relations, explains Walker, and it is the historian’s job to unravel these connections.

This discussion of the theoretical basis of design history reaches its culmination in chapter five. Complaining that too much of the literature consists of narrowly focused studies—“books on designers, products, styles, design education, etc.”—Walker unveils a four-part “Pro-duction-consumption Model” that tries to account for the entire design process, and by extension the entire range of subjects available to the design historian. This model, which illustrates the workings of a modern industrial system, diagrammatically relates the production of a design to the production, distribution, and consumption of designed goods. The chapter is unfortunately very short—only six pages—and thus the model, while interesting and comprehensive, does not receive sufficient application.

If the first part of the book can be considered an introduction to the theory of design history, Walker's last four chapters survey the methods of this field. These are not in any way limited by disciplinary boundaries. As Walker points out at the beginning of chapter six, "design historians encounter in their practice the same basic methodological and theoretical problems as do all historians." Much of the work he presents belongs to scholars working outside the discipline.

In chapter seven, one of the longest and meatiest chapters in the book, Walker surveys the various methods, their literature and their significance for the design historian—the materials/techniques approach, the comparative method, content analysis, typology, national histories, anthropology, social history, structuralism, and semiotics. Chapter eight considers the problem of style in all its various aspects, and nine explores the complicated and topical relationship between design and consumerism.

With a few brief exceptions, references to feminism are conspicuously absent from Walker's theoretical and methodological survey. Walker explains his omission by asserting that the feminist approach is not merely another ingredient that can be thrown into the methodological pot. As he says, "it is a politics rather than a method," which calls into question many of the basic (male-serving) assumptions of design and design history.

Walker leaves the task of introducing a feminist perspective to Judy Attfield, who contributes a final essay entitled "FORM/female FOLLOWS FUNCTION/male." Attfield maintains that the statement, "form follows function," normalizes a situation in which men hold the real design power, while women are relegated to the subservient roles of consumers and ornamentalists.

This is how she deconstructs the meaning of this basic and widely shared assumption:

It assigns men to the determining, functional areas of design—science, technology, industrial production—and women to the private, domestic realm and to the "soft" decorative fields of design. It places form in the feminine realm where its role is to reflect the imperatives of the "real."

Like Walker, Attfield downplays the importance of the designer and the designed object as historical subjects, and she argues that scholars should adopt an approach that is more deeply involved with the social, economic, cultural, and technological contexts of design. On these grounds, she considers the merits of *A Woman's Touch*, Isabelle Anscombe's well-known history of women in design (1984).

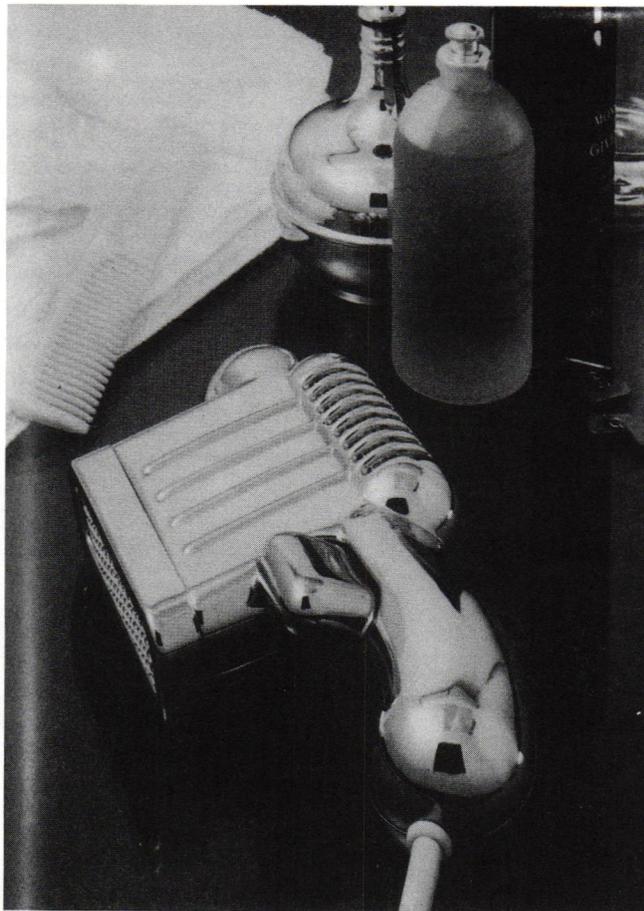
Attfield admires the book for shedding

some light on the work of female designers, but she fears that Anscombe's "women-designers approach" actually serves to perpetuate anti-feminist attitudes. These include the traditional view that women are better suited to "soft" pursuits such as the decorative arts, textiles, interior design and fashion, as well as an equally traditional, art-historical focus on the work of "great" designers, a category that has usually excluded women.

Having laid out the advantages of a feminist approach, Attfield considers how feminist historians have looked at the relationship between the physical organization of the built environment and the social organization of labor. She also examines feminist approaches to everyday objects, consumerism, the Arts and Crafts movement, and the concept of gender.

Attfield's essay is comprehensive and concise, if not especially eloquent (neither she nor Walker can be accused of harboring belletristic tendencies). The fact that her essay follows Walker's own conclusion means that her ideas are not at all knitted into the fabric of the book. In the simplest terms, these condense to a plea for reconsidering the history of design from a woman's standpoint—a point of view that should be within the conceptual reach of male historians, who are learning to tell the story of people not of their own, well-educated class. In spite of this still timely message, one wishes that Walker had reserved for himself the privilege of having the last word, that he had been somehow able to work her contribution into his own concluding remarks. As it is, Attfield's essay comes as a kind of feminist postscript—not unappreciated, but an afterthought.

I'll leave my own last words for an underwhelming book of criticism by Peter Dormer. This



Hairdryer for men by Atlantic Design. (From *The Meanings of Modern Design*.)

English writer is previously responsible for several well-illustrated catalogues, which form a "new" series surveying different areas of design. These include *New Jewelry* (1985), *New Ceramics* (with Ralph Turner, 1986), and *New Furniture* (1987). Dormer was also a contributor to *New British Design* (1986).

Dormer's latest effort, *The Meanings of Modern Design: Towards the Twenty-First Century*, is a very different kind of book. Its seven essays attempt to survey, not the discipline of design history, but the state of current design practice; he even has something to say about its future. As outlined in the preface, the book examines three categories of designed objects: consumer durables such as vacuum cleaners, cameras, and blow dryers; craft objects; and status-loaded, high-design artifacts—"heavenly goods" created for the truly rich or "tokens" fabricated for status-conscious yuppies. The book also explores four broad themes: the economic context of design (capitalism); the influence of new technology; the relationship between making, consuming, and individual satisfaction (consumerism); and the effect of larger social values on the design process.

One of the most interesting points in the book comes right at the beginning of the first chapter, where Dormer makes an important distinction between "above the line" and "below the line" design. The line in question is the boundary between public and private; between what's evident about an object and what's concealed from view. Styling is above the line, in these terms; engineering is below.

This is a critical distinction, according to John Walker, that design historians have ignored in the past. What a shame, then, that Dormer has so very little to say about "below the line" design, important as it is. He is only interested in what designers do, and even that is restricted to a fairly narrow range: "In this book the emphasis is upon the designer as stylist—as a broker of ideas and values, a middle personage between the manufacturers, engineers and applied scientists on the

one hand, and the consumer on the other."

As is evident from such a statement, Dormer has some very large claims to make for the significance of the designer as stylist. (By "designer," of course, he means the industrial variety.) Ultimately, he has to admit that this kind of work has an increasingly limited significance, in spite of what designers like to think about themselves, when compared to areas of our culture that are really bubbling. In a very sad and unexpected conclusion to a chapter on "Valuing the Handmade," he announces the dulling of design's cutting edge:

The heart of the contemporary *avant garde* in the West is not craft or art or the modernism versus post-modernist debate—the heart is theoretical physics and applied technology. How many of us are able to enter the conceptual landscape of the new physics or are at home in the craft of computer software construction?

It seems that stylists are now condemned to the margins.

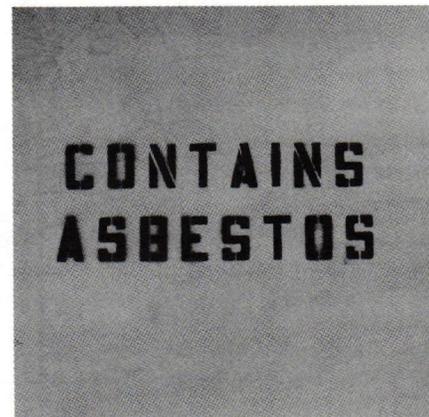
A. Eugene Sparling

"Material Matters"

Ezio Manzini's *The Material of Invention* examines materials of contemporary industrial design, and what people make and think of them. In so doing, Manzini highlights the technical genius and design sophistication involved in producing even the most seemingly common items.

The book is divided into four sections. The first discusses how laypeople, fabricators, and designers understand natural and synthetic materials in today's world. The second presents materials in use today, making palpable the complex worlds of plastics, metals, wood, ceramics, fibers and fabrics, and their composites and offering in its technical information a formidable though not unrewarding challenge to the general reader. A wide-ranging group of specific product/material applications, separated according to chosen performance criteria, or "meta-functions," follows in the third section. In the fourth section, Manzini includes several design sketches for various products/inventions executed by selected Italian designers. Two appendices include a technical article introducing properties and structure in plastic materials, and a glossary of technical terms.

Neither solely criticism, nor a technical handbook, *The Material of Invention*



Asbestos, material collage by Michael Sorkin. (From *Mondo Materialis*.)

DESIGN HISTORY AND THE HISTORY OF DESIGN, John A. Walker, Pluto Press, 1989, 243 pp., illus., \$44.95 cloth; \$16.95 paper.

THE MEANINGS OF MODERN DESIGN: TOWARDS THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, Peter Dormer, Thames and Hudson, 1990, 192 pp., illus., \$24.95.

contains elements of each. Its critical reflections on the status and perception of materials and the cultural issues facing industrial designers merit a wide audience. So does its overview of materials.

Mondo Materialis is a catalogue from an exhibition of the same name sponsored and created by the Steelcase Design Partnership, America's largest office-furniture company, and curated by George M. Beylerian, a Steelcase vice-president, and Jefferey J. Osborne of the Aspen Design Conference. The exhibition opened in Los Angeles in the spring of 1990 and moved to the Cooper-Hewitt in New York for the fall and winter. The exhibition comprised more than 130 thirty-inch-square collage panels and accompanying text panels, volunteered by the same number of invited "leading architectural, interior, and industrial designer firms." Contributors ranged from Arquitectonica to Zebra Design Inc. and included Coop Himmelblau, Eva Jiricna Architects, Richard Meier and Partners, Sottsass Associates, and Venturi, Rauch, and Scott-Brown, among others. Steelcase asked contributors to provide "artful collages of materials . . . that will be important in your work in the next five years." In addition, Steelcase included in the exhibition a few "curated materials," un-fabricated materials samples presented on rolling carts; these claimed little attention in the show, and claim less in the catalogue.

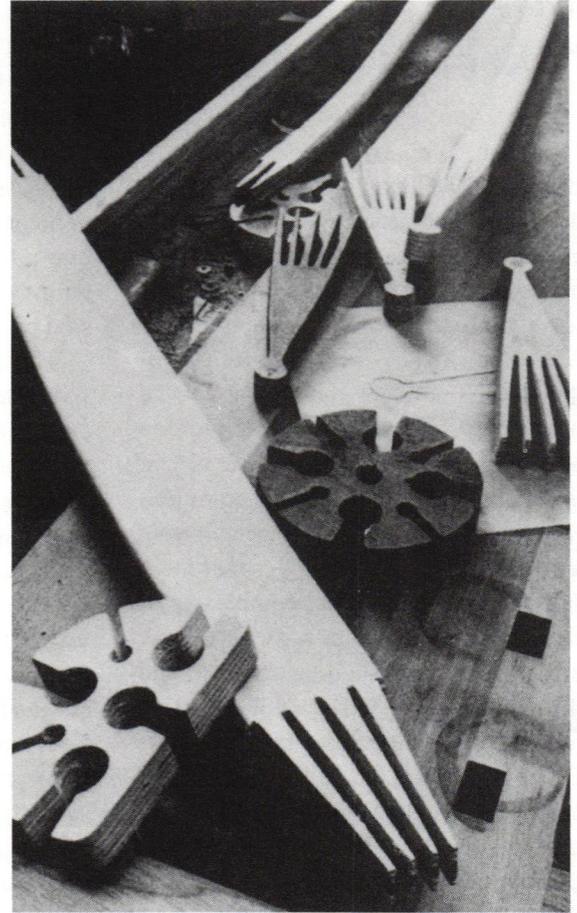
At the Cooper-Hewitt the collage panels were exhibited under general headings to establish a common thread among the selected works. Headings included environmental issues, appropriateness of materials, essence of materials, artifice and nature, new technology/new materials, aesthetic approaches, juxtaposition of materials, and philosophical reflections. The book is ordered in parallel fashion.

Uniting all categories is a tacit understanding that "materials" mean finish materials, or construction materials treated as finish. Manzini's interest in the elegant fit of material performance, appearance, cost, production, and fabrication stands apart from *Mondo's* universe.

Many of the exhibition's offerings are no more (or less) than lovely materials samples boards similar to those presented by architects and interior designers to their clients for specific projects. As such they are inspirational examples of the form. Other panels seem to spring from painterly, sculptural, or architectonic motivations. In many of these panels the didactic and illustrative core of the exhibition is eclipsed by compositional ambition; for the artlike works, the collection seems without focus and coherence. And the works themselves, products of individuals and firms more practiced in larger and more complex projects, suffer for not being architecture, interior, or industrial design. Collages might have been better done by artists.

The most interesting and forceful panels address themselves explicitly to the conjunction of materials, and the world outside design. Michael Sorkin's bright yellow asbestos-laden box is one example. By raising the deadly material specter, Sorkin challenges design professionals to address issues of materiality that matter to a larger constituency.

Mondo Materialis, the book, includes 124 large-format pages of beautifully photographed and printed color reproductions of the panels, one per page, some with additional close-ups. Readers can clearly see the details, texture, and finish of each panel. A preface by Beylerian and an introduction by Osborne begin the volume; designers' statements, a list of "curated materials," and a list of contributors (also emblazoned on the dust-cover back) end it. Yet the book is incomplete. Conspicuously absent are the serious catalogue essay one usually finds in such a volume, an index of the vast array of finish materials included on the



Structural components made of lamellated wood; Renzo Piano, 1982. (From *The Materials of Invention*.)

panels, and any information about their material properties, or applications, or where, how, and at what cost they might be available. Giving considerable play to contributors and so little hard information about materials makes both exhibition and book more of a promotional than a cultural or intellectual endeavor. The deal: panels for publicity, legitimation, and some fun. Suitable for a coffee table, but hardly the stuff one hopes a museum to mount or a library to purchase.

THE MATERIAL OF INVENTION: MATERIALS AND DESIGN, Ezio Manzini, MIT Press, 1989, 255 pp., illus., \$45.00 cloth.

MONDO MATERIALIS, George M. Beylerian and Jefferey J. Osborne, Abrams, 1990, 155 pp., illus., \$45.00 cloth.

Andrea Kahn

"Taking It to the Street"

Architects and urban planners often adopt divergent approaches to a fundamentally convergent topic: the city. Historically, planning theory sponsored typical solutions to urban problems while architecture dealt with site-specific concerns. Although it is unlikely, and probably even unwise, to expect a single discipline to address the multiple facets of the city, it is not unreasonable to imagine how cities (and their residents) stand to benefit from analytic and design strategies that more fully consider the actual complexity of contemporary urban environments. In an effort to produce such an account, and through a lens of self-critical reflection associated with philosophical inquiry, Dennis Crow's anthology, *Philosophical Streets*, questions the predilection among urban planners for ideal systems and the counter-tendency among architects to deal with actual built conditions.

Philosophical Streets places itself "in the streets," the vital urban locus where architectural and urban-scale investments converge. Both book and namesake are sites where conflicting interests meet; where large-scale and local-scale design decisions interact; where urban theory and city life confront one another; and, because of these confluences, where apparently secure distinctions between urban and architectural thinking begin to show signs of stress.

While the seven essays collected here do not address the physical form of the street per se, they do take up the challenge posed by a site that cannot be adequately defined either in purely abstract or definitively concrete terms. This book (like a city street) is an active and, at times, dangerous space. Crow

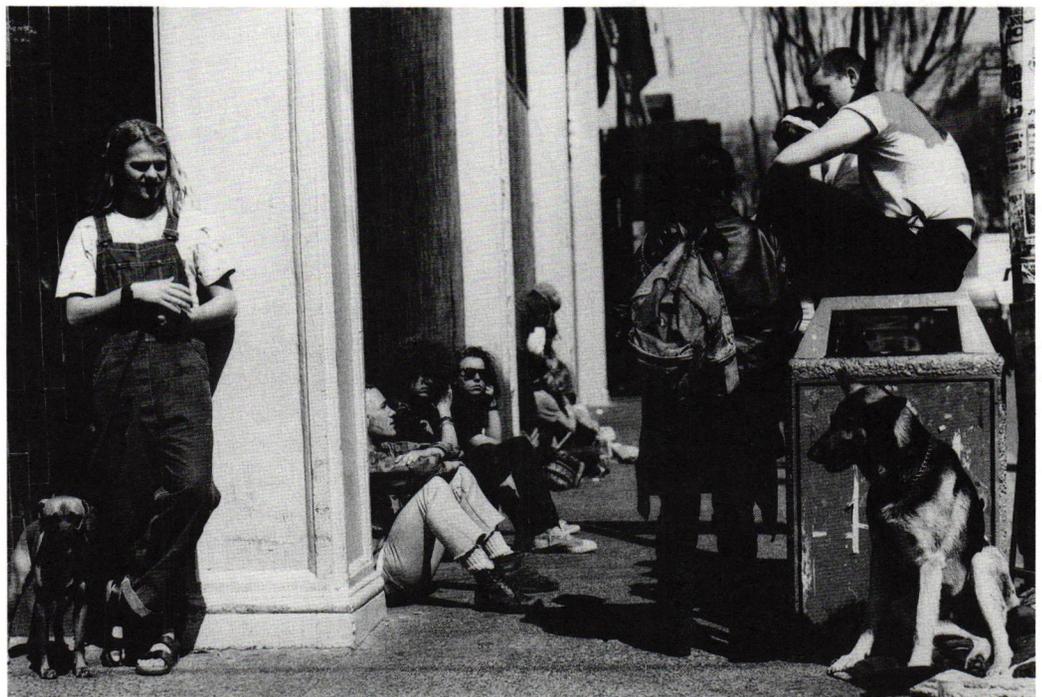
delineates his editorial position as a critique of the antagonistic models he believes characterize planning discourse: the particular versus the general; theory versus practice; planning versus design. Emphasizing three factors in urban development—aesthetics, politics, and economics—Crow wants to reframe the philosophical, political, and practical vision of the city.

The constructs enclosing the discursive space of *Philosophical Streets* include not only the discourses of urban planning and architecture, but also the humanities. (Baudrillard, Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard are among the names that insistently figure in the references cited at the end of each of essay, save the first.) The collection, which aims to forge an urbanism "as well informed about contemporary philosophy as about the 'nuts and bolts' of planning and architectural practice applied to the street," is squarely situated on poststructuralist turf.

The proclivity of its authors to contest the values of accepted design discourse delineates a conceptual territory contained by, but not within, existing structures of thought. From Jennifer Bloom-

er's sectional cuts through James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* (text formulated through drawing conventions), to Dennis Crow's close reading of the "blank frame" in Le Corbusier's *City of Tomorrow* (drawing approached as rhetorical text); from Christine Boyer's call to exercise the "incommensurability of different aesthetic expressions" as an escape from the codes of market production, to Harris Breslow's summons to "adopt the tactic of field reversals," we are faced with writers whose affinities lie as much with the rhetoric of contemporary theory and criticism as with the discourse of design disciplines.

Helen Liggett's discussion of the political implications of the theory/practice split in planning offers a cogent outline of poststructuralist concerns. Following Theodor Adorno's "Culture and Administration," Liggett's is nominally the second essay, but arguably the first. The extent to which *Philosophical Streets* expands upon, and refers back to, topics broached by Adorno suggest that his contribution could as easily be the volume's introduction as the editor's own. (One might ask why Crow, so set on challenging convention, chose to place the one



Street scene, Berkeley, California, 1991. Photograph by Jonathan Eden.

essay with “historical authority”—Adorno’s essay was originally published in 1960—first?). In his consideration of the tension between culture’s “claim of the particular over the general” and administration, “which necessarily represents . . . the general against this particular,” Adorno refers to a pamphlet guide to artistic festivals in Europe (conceived to help the “cultural traveller” plan his time); the example encapsulates both his argument and that of the anthology as a whole. Adorno notes: “Administrative reason which takes control of [the festivals] and rationalizes them banishes festivity from them.” The problem becomes one of planning the unplanned.

This theme appears in another guise in the editor’s essay “Le Corbusier’s Plan,” a politically and economically charged rereading of *The City of Tomorrow* as a “postmodern” rather than a “modern” text. For Crow, “Le Corbusier’s work does not reveal a guide for rational town planning, but leaves only a blank space—an open zone which like the so-called free market receives its determination by the exercise of public and private power.” The question of determinacy is also raised by Christian Bergum’s “Urban Form and Representation,” and figures in Christine Boyer’s articulate “Return of Aesthetics to City Planning.” Noting that the “crisis of modern criticism and the tragedy of city planning” has led to the “great malaise of relativity,” Boyer refuses to lose faith in the possibility of critically resistant production. Outlining the intentions of city planning from the end of the 19th century to the present day, and drawing on Adorno’s remark that no matter how reified categories become, they never are totally reified, Boyer’s rigorous argument for alternative urban visions stands out as a substantive claim, made with full knowledge of the dangers lurking behind certain currently fashionable critical models.

An equally strong voice—one actively practicing the construction of an architecture from seemingly incommensurate materials (Joyce, Vico, Piranesi)—is

heard in the collection’s final essay, Bloomer’s “In the Museyroom.”

The space of the street is inherently unstable; it is an open, contested space where the diversity of urban life collects. Crow’s intellectual agenda, “to challenge architects and planners to reexamine their relationship to planning theory and contemporary developments in the humanities,” and “to challenge scholars in the humanities to bring criticism to bear on the problems of towns, cities, and regions where they live,” prompts a reframing of urban studies. His politics are also explicitly stated: provoke the resistance necessary to invoke social change. Addressing the claims of different constituencies is crucial to a poststructuralist agenda determined to examine and expose the discourse of power; yet, despite its sound intentions to air long-muffled voices, this approach is not immune to its own peculiar forms of closure. If Crow’s anthology has a weakness, it lies in arguing for multivalent approaches to the city while adopting a single (poststructuralist) methodology. But the strength of the collection is that this methodology is predicated on disclosing the limits of our current thinking. Even if some of the questions prompted by *Philosophical Streets* can be directed back onto the book itself, most focus directly where the editor intended, out to enhance our ability to improve life on the street.

PHILOSOPHICAL STREETS: NEW APPROACHES TO URBANISM, Dennis Crow, editor, Maison-neuve Press, 1990, 172 pp., illus., \$11.95.

Jeffrey M. Diefendorf

Garden Cities in Germany

For German planners, architects, and makers of urban policy, the publication of *Im Grünen wohnen—im Blauen planen: Ein Lesebuch zur Gartenstadt*, edited by Franziska Bollerey, Gerhard Fehl, and Kristiana Hartmann, is timely. The Germans are now trying to cope with an enormous housing shortage—estimates range from 1.5 to 2.5 million dwellings. The Federal Ministry of Construction says that at least 500,000 new housing units must be constructed each year in this decade, with at least one-fifth of this in the five new states that used to form the German Democratic Republic. Much of this must be moderately priced housing for low- to middle-income families or individuals, and that means a return to the kind of state-subsidized, cooperative housing projects that characterized much of the construction in the Federal Republic during the 1950s, when West Germany largely made up for the housing destroyed in World War II.

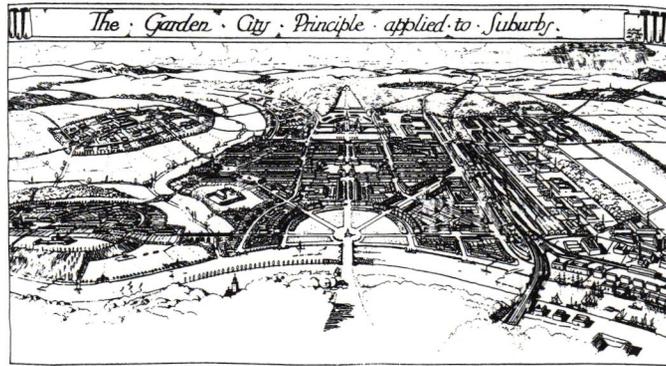
During the first two postwar decades, the model of the garden city provided some of the key motifs for most West German planners. They routinely called for the decentralization of large cities into smaller, organically connected units, functional zoning, the introduction of greenery into existing cities, and, most important, the construction of new housing in garden settings. As the editors of this book point out, this program amounted to the creation of garden suburbs rather than autonomous garden cities. German planners were applying a technical (or technocratic) adaptation of the garden-city ideal; the new suburbs were not planned around the social-reform ideals of Ebenezer Howard’s original garden-city model of 1898. In particular, the trend from the late 1950s on was away from community or cooperative ownership toward private ownership, and construction of housing in “garden settings” was increasingly turned over to

the private marketplace. One result, forty years later, is the current shortage of inexpensive housing.

The East German state took a different path. Private property and private home ownership in the cities were largely abolished—something also called for by the early garden city movement—but the regime rejected the model of garden cities or garden suburbs in favor of densely populated cities characterized by prefabricated, state-owned, high-rise housing on the edges of surviving older areas. This produced over time a housing shortage of another sort. Housing was cheap, but not enough was built to match demand, and the quality was usually low. East German satellite suburbs (the German word is *Trabanten*) exude the same aura of shabby construction as did their infamous little plastic cars, the Trabant. Recently some of these suburbs, such as Dresden-Gorbitz, with its 45,000 inhabitants, have been the scene of right-wing, neo-Nazi extremism. Clearly not only more housing but a new form of housing is needed.

Now that the newly unified German state must build huge quantities of new housing, what models will they follow? Might the garden-city concept enjoy new life? In the afterward to this book on the garden city, published just before German unification, the editors pose this question, but unfortunately neither they nor the other contributors provide a clear answer.

The book is the outgrowth of a small conference that was held in Delft in 1986. As is often the case with conferences, the papers lacked the coherence necessary for a tightly integrated book. As a result, the editors decided to augment the papers with pieces originally published between 1900 and 1957 by individuals who had in one way or another advocated garden-city ideas. Some of these are printed as facsimiles, some were reset, and almost all are short excerpts. The fourteen scholarly essays, plus the long introduction, make



Satellite suburb design; Raymond Unwin, 1912. (From *Im Grünen wohnen—Im Blauen planen.*)

up three-quarters of the book. Eleven of these essays and all but two of the primary documents deal with the garden-city movement in Germany. (Three focus on specific architects, three discuss specific garden-city projects, and five discuss broader themes.) Two essays and two documents deal with the influence of the garden city ideal in Holland, Belgium, and the USSR, and one essay examines the model of the ribbon city as an alternative to the garden city. The book is roughly chronological, according to the topic of each essay and the publication date of the primary documents. There are a great many well-chosen illustrations, though the book contains neither an index nor a list of illustrations, which makes it difficult to use as a reference work. Nonetheless, both the format and the richness of the content will allow this volume to serve, as the editors hope, as a "reader" for anyone interested in the history of the garden-city movement, especially in Germany.

In their introduction—the most interesting essay in the volume—the editors offer an informative and provocative interpretation of the developments in Germany. As was the case in Britain, German reformers were attracted to the garden-city model as a solution to the problems of the industrial city of the late 19th century. But, they argue, where Howard advocated a true reform in the way of life—a third way between socialism and capitalism—in addition to advocating a technical model of planning, Germans sought to use Howard's model to pre-

serve rather than to change their way of life. Thus residential areas set in greenery, with wide streets and modern sanitation, promised many benefits. The middle class could escape the "stone wastelands" of the crowded inner cities into suburbs of villas, while new housing settlements for workers could be isolated from the bourgeois parts of the city; both could help conserve the existing

bourgeois social order. Reformers wanted to prevent inner-city slum conditions from replicating themselves in new suburbs and they believed that the garden suburbs, would be healthier and would thereby improve the German race.

The German Garden City Association was founded in 1902 by a very heterogeneous group of writers, teachers, artists, economists, reformers, planners, and architects, with political connections from the conservative to the social democratic. Founding members included planning pioneers Joseph Stubben, Theodor Fischer, and Theodor Goecke, the Jugendstil architect/artist Richard Riemerschmidt, and Paul Schultze-Naumburg, the cofounder of the Bund Heimatschutz, an organization for the preservation of traditional architecture and culture. Before World War I, the movement's efforts resulted mostly in what the editors call small, petty-bourgeois residential suburbs like Hellerau outside Dresden or in company-sponsored worker settlements like the Margarethenhohe near Essen. There was no real effort in Germany to found new towns like Letchworth, England, the most extensive attempt to fulfill Howard's ideal. The same was true during the Weimar Republic, when there was massive construction of many small and some large settlements consisting of public or cooperative housing in greenery, but not the founding of autonomous new towns on the garden-city model.

In short, by the end of the 1930s, the dream of a new way of life had given

way to a reformed planning model: utopia yielded to mundane practice. The planning model went through three conceptual stages: garden suburbs as satellites of a metropolis; an urban landscape, with interpenetration of nature and built-up areas; and regional planning to connect city, village, and countryside. For the first and third the Germans followed the lead of Raymond Unwin, with his design of satellite suburbs and then his Greater London Regional Plan of 1929. By 1933, the editors contend, Howard's garden-city model in its original sense of social reform was "clinically dead."

Upon coming to power, the Nazis quickly abolished the garden-city association, but they also adapted, transformed, and perverted the garden-city planning model for their own purposes. Under the auspices of Himmler's SS, German planners developed highly structured regional plans for the conquered territories in Poland, whereby small agricultural communities were to be organically clustered around "central places" to form larger units. Masses of people were to be evacuated (or exterminated) to make room for Germans. Here Nazi planning had a structural resemblance to the garden city model, but it was "total planning" in the most authoritarian fashion, just the opposite of Howard's intention.

"Total planning" did not survive the Nazi era, but the technical planning model with garden-city elements did. Here this book contains an interesting disagreement. The editors, having pronounced the genuine garden-city model

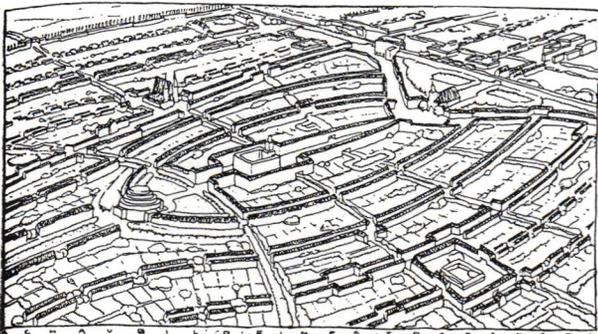
dead in 1933, argue that true garden cities could not succeed in the postwar Federal Republic because the means to realize such projects were inadequate, because the autonomy of the towns and the principle of private property frustrated the planners, and because urban development was simply too dynamic to be harnessed by such a static planning model. They conclude that the garden city "had to remain a foolish utopia," "an illusion which could only be realized through force," an ideal "over which no one should any longer shed tears."

In one essay, however, Hans Kampffmeyer, whose father was a founder of the movement and its business manager, rejects this conclusion. Both from having observed his father's work (a 1918 report by his father is reproduced here) and from having participated himself in building garden suburbs in Frankfurt am Main in the 1960s, Kampffmeyer rejects the distinction between utopia and reality. He argues from personal experience that the garden city was always more a bundle of interrelated concepts, methods, and procedures that guided planners than a fixed ideal of a predefined urban structure. Thus he feels that not only is the model still alive but also that real progress has been made toward realizing it. Kampffmeyer, it should be noted, is the only contributor to this book who was an active practitioner rather than an academic, and the editors admit that they chose to concentrate more on conceptual continuities and changes than on practical applications. Whose word should one take?

Among the other essays and thirty-three sources here, readers new to the subject will find Wolfgang Voigt's essay on "The Garden City as Eugenic Utopia" and Bollerey's essay on "The Dutch Path: The Adaptation of the Idea of the Garden City in the Netherlands" particularly interesting. Voigt demonstrates that social Darwinistic ideas on racial hygiene and environ-

mental influences on eugenics were central to the garden-city movement from the late 19th century through the 1950s. Indeed, they can be found in Howard's original treatise. In Germany, this was a conceptual continuity that existed apart from Nazi ideas on race. Bollerey explores the varied and sometimes utopian attempts to realize the garden-city idea in densely populated Holland. As in Germany, truly autonomous new garden cities were in fact not built, but garden-city principles were extensively applied in building new suburbs around cities such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The sources reprinted from the Nazi period will also be of interest since they reveal the kinds of technocratic, amoral urban and regional planning that took place during the Third Reich.

Im Grünen wohnen—Im Blauen planen is well worth careful study. It can be read with profit alongside Dennis Hardy's new two-volume study of the garden-city movement in Britain, *From Garden Cities to New Towns* and *From New Towns to Green Politics* (Chapman and Hall, 1991) and the forthcoming *The Garden City: Past, Present, and Future* (Chapman and Hall, 1992), edited by Stephen Ward, which contains major papers from the 1989 International Planning History Conference whose theme was the garden city. In one form or another, the model of the garden city has enjoyed continuous popularity throughout this century. In the case of Germany, it surely will be one of the models to which urban planners will turn to help to alleviate the current housing shortage and to ameliorate the awful environmental conditions existing in the former East Germany. Indeed, perhaps the garden city might be a common ground on which West and East German conceptions of housing and urban development can come together.



Aerial view, *Trabanten* (satellite suburb); East Germany. (From *Im Grünen wohnen—Im Blauen planen*.)

IM GRÜNEN WOHNEN—IM BLAUEN PLANEN: EIN LESEBUCH ZUR GARTEN-STADT, Franziska Bollerey, Gerhard Fehl, and Kristiana Hartmann, editors, Hans Christians Verlag, 1990, 470 pp., illus., DM 69.00 paper.

John T. Metzger

J. C. Nichols and the Shaping of Kansas City

WILLIAM S. WORLEY

Jesse Clyde Nichols was one of the most influential real estate developers in 20th-century America. Born in 1880 in Olathe, Kansas, Nichols returned to his home area after graduating from Harvard, and in 1908 embarked on the creation of the renowned Country Club District in Kansas City. Over the span of four decades, J. C. Nichols assembled, subdivided, planned, and controlled the largest contiguous residential community ever completed by one developer. He promoted the use of new and innovative practices in land subdivision and private community planning, and built the Country Club Plaza, the first large-scale neighborhood shopping center in the United States. Historian William S. Worley has combed the records of the J. C. Nichols Company and other primary sources to uncover the history of the development of the Country Club District and the origins and elements of Nichols's strategies and business decisions. His case study of the Country Club District is an important contribution to the emerging field of real estate history and enhances our understanding of the dynamics of suburban growth and real estate entrepreneurialism.

Nichols popularized several techniques in the subdivision and sale of unimproved land. He used landscape ar-



The Country Club Plaza, Kansas City; developed by J. C. Nichols, c. 1935. (From *J. C. Nichols and the Shaping of Kansas City*.)

chitects to design and plan residential areas. Wide curvilinear streets were laid out to conform with the existing topography, instead of in a narrow gridiron pattern. Open space was preserved, and trees, grassy areas, parklets, and art objects were carefully placed to beautify the subdivision. Restrictive covenants were attached to the sale of the land. In the "1,000 Acres Restricted" of the Country Club District, the covenants governed the lot coverage, structural design, building cost, and the race of the occupants of the homes Nichols and others built. By the 1920s, Nichols also required the purchasers of his lots to join homeowner associations. These organizations, funded by assessments on landowners, served as local governments in unincorporated subdivisions. They arranged for sewer and road improvements, street-cleaning services, and garbage collection. Kansas City, Missouri, eventually annexed many of the unincorporated areas, but Nichols continued to vigorously promote the usefulness of homeowner associations as a means to preserve and protect the appearance, character, and land values of the exclusive, upper-income neighborhoods of the Country Club District.

J. C. Nichols's goal was to create a living environment that, as Worley describes, was "planned for permanence." He knew of the boom-bust real estate cycles of the late 19th and early 20th century in Kansas City, and the decline of

"high-class" districts such as Quality Hill and Hyde Park. He aggressively acquired land in the path of residential decentralization, and capitalized on proximity to the elite Kansas City Country Club. Using landscape planning, restrictive covenants, and homeowner associations, Nichols sought to create subdivisions that possessed intrinsic long-term value. He added retail and service uses, schools, churches, and other community facilities, and

successfully lobbied for public-transit service and new boulevards that connected the district to downtown Kansas City. All of this perpetuated the attractiveness and longevity of the Country Club District, which became the residential center for the city's wealthy elite, and an early prototype for American suburban community development.

Worley describes how Nichols was influenced by Edward H. Bouton and the experiences of the Roland Park Company in Baltimore. Although Nichols did not invent many of the key subdivision methods that he used for the Country Club District, the author notes that "he synthesized them in a way seldom found elsewhere in the United States prior to the 1930s." Worley devotes a chapter to Nichols's role as a homebuilder, and the evolution of residential construction, design, and finance in the Country Club District. Nichols, unlike many suburban developers of the era, permitted Catholics and eventually Jews to live in his neighborhoods, but the covenants explicitly excluded blacks.

J. C. Nichols has recently been singled out as one of the first important large-scale "community builders" who influenced land planning and subdivision regulations on a national level (see Marc A. Weiss, *The Rise of the Community Builders*, 1987), a subject that Worley briefly discusses. Nichols aggressively promoted his ideas across the country. He



J. C. Nichols, photographed c. 1940. (From *J. C. Nichols and the Shaping of Kansas City*.)

also served on the Kansas City Planning Commission and Board of Education. Through his local and national activism during the early 20th century, Nichols became an important political role model for his profession, setting a precedent for others in the real estate industry to follow in becoming public figures and policymakers in their communities and through organizations such as the National Association of Real Estate Boards and the Urban Land Institute. Worley neglects this, perhaps because his book is more of a case study of the Nichols-controlled development of the Country Club District than a professional biography.

The author also does not discuss the internal workings of the J. C. Nichols Company, the relationship between Nichols and other developers in Kansas City, or conflicts among residents in the Country Club District or between residents and Nichols. The area has remained a center for the city's wealthy, and continues to reflect the developer's vision for a permanent and stable suburban community. Worley does not mention any changes or tensions within the Country Club District in the forty years since J. C. Nichols's death in 1950, except for the movement of a few blacks into the area and the recent construction of office buildings near the Country Club Plaza shopping center.

Photographs are used effectively throughout the book, although one or two more descriptive maps would have been helpful. Those who are interested in the local flavor and historical context should see the recent film *Mrs. and Mr. Bridge*, based upon Evan Connell's novels of family life in the Country Club District during the decades between the world wars.

J. C. NICHOLS AND THE SHAPING OF KANSAS CITY: INNOVATION IN PLANNED RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES, William S. Worley, University of Missouri Press, 1990, 324 pp., illus., \$29.50.

Jane C. Loeffler

TVA's Public Planning

WALTER L. CREESE

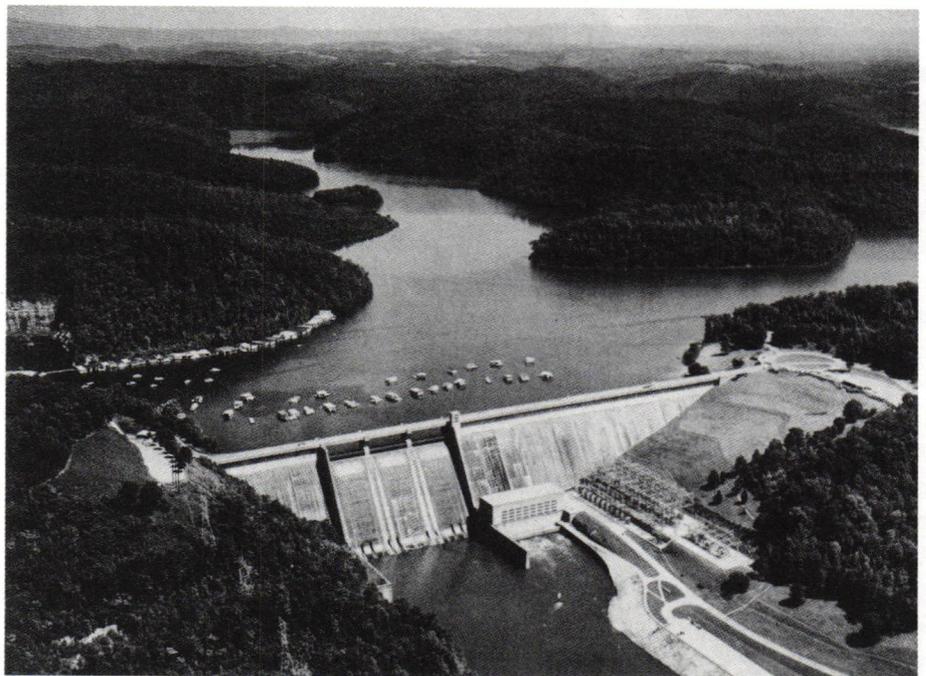
When the artist Christo hung a huge curtain across a Colorado mountain valley in 1970, he drew attention to the relationship between art and landscape. He might have saved himself the cost and bother of that ephemeral project by visiting the Tennessee Valley, where architects, planners, and public policymakers joined in a much more significant and lasting effort to unite art, nature, and public purpose in the 1930s. Out of that effort, known as the Tennessee Valley Authority, came a series of twenty-one dams that spanned the Tennessee River from Knoxville to Paducah, providing hydroelectric power and an infusion of good intentions aimed at the overall improvement of the worn-out land and its equally worn-out tenants—poor mountain people for whom the promise of American life had lost its meaning.

President Franklin Roosevelt established TVA during his first 100 days in office in 1933. It was a dramatic and tan-

gible manifestation of his intention to stimulate economic recovery through conservation, scientific resource management, and regional planning. In the 1920s it became possible for the first time to transmit electricity over long distances, thus making it possible to imagine self-contained industrial communities of low density dispersed across the open landscape in place of ever-growing central cities surrounded by sprawl.

But TVA was much more than a scheme to produce and distribute electricity, as Walter L. Creese points out so eloquently in *TVA's Public Planning: The Vision, the Reality*. It was rather an honest attempt to apply design and technology to the task of conserving nature and building community. As Creese notes, however, it was also an attempt that became tangled in a web of politics—personal, local, national, and global, one that came to reflect the American ambivalence toward public planning, and ultimately, as a result of changing priorities and wartime needs, one that failed to achieve its ambitious goals.

Writers such as Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe list TVA among the greatest of the world's man-made landscapes in *The*



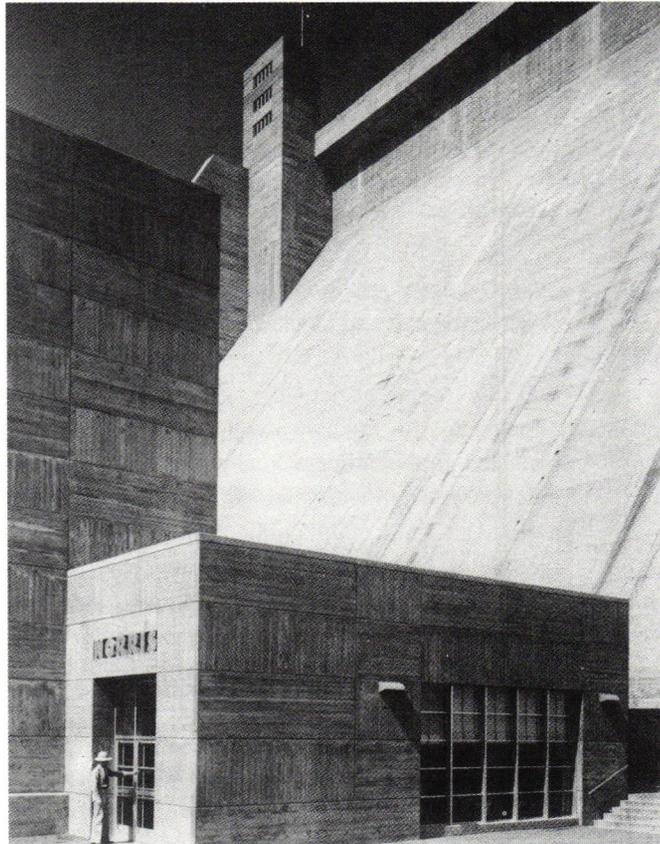
Bird's eye view, Norris Dam, Tennessee Valley Authority; Bureau of Reclamation and Roland Wank, 1934–36. (From *TVA's Public Planning*.)

Landscape of Man (1975), a survey that starts with Stonehenge and includes Moorish fortifications at the Alhambra, massive Peruvian stone structures at Machu Picchu, and the Roman aqueduct at Nîmes. But even the Jellicoes, sensitive as they are to the human dimension of landscape, define TVA objectives largely in terms of its potential to provide power, flood control, and recreation facilities. At its inception, as Creese ably argues, TVA had a specific mandate to go far beyond such considerations, to combine industry and agriculture in a way that would create a new sort of economic and social structure capable of sustaining regional integrity and promoting regional growth.

TVA was not a totally new idea when Roosevelt created it and appointed its first three-member management team: Arthur Morgan, the engineer and idealist; Harcourt Morgan, appointed for his expertise in Southern agriculture (no relation to Arthur); and David Lilienthal, protégé of Felix Frankfurter, advocate of Taylorism and Scientific Management, and former public-utility manager whose goal was cheap power, above all.

A variety of small-scale utopian schemes preceded TVA in the region, Creese notes, including the socialist community of Ruskin founded in 1894. His analysis ties TVA to Gifford Pinchot's earlier experiments in scientific forestry at Biltmore (George Vanderbilt's vast estate in Asheville, North Carolina); Arthur Morgan's earlier development of the Miami (Ohio) Conservancy District, the first coordinated flood-control program in the United States; Benton MacKaye's proposals for urban decentralization; and Henry Ford's attempt to create a model community merging city and country in the area of the Muscle Shoals Dam.

Even with these precedents, it took the



Elevator tower and entrance to the power house, Norris Dam, Tennessee Valley Authority; Bureau of Reclamation and Roland Wank, 1934–36. (From *TVA's Public Planning*.)

initiative and far-thinking awareness of several additional figures to shape TVA into a public-policy package. Senator George Norris, who stopped Ford from buying Muscle Shoals because he adamantly opposed private ownership of electric power, is the man most closely associated with the TVA legislation. His interest in power had to do with his interest in fertilizer production—one of TVA's prime objectives. But Norris was not the idea man. According to Creese, Frederick Gutheim, a young Washington planner, authored the crucial sections of the law pertaining to social betterment with John Nolen, Jr. Gutheim and Nolen, aided by Charles W. Eliot II, convinced Norris to consider the valley as a total region rather than as a series of unrelated episodes and saw in the TVA the opportunity to improve the quality of life through planning. They were backed in their efforts by Frederic Delano, the

President's uncle, who had Roosevelt's ear in this matter.

Viennese-born architect Roland Wank was appointed chief of the design team. His optimistic statement of clarity and control at Norris Dam (1934–36) grows out of City Beautiful thinking, French Art Deco, and Viennese Moderne, but not, as Creese points out, from the International Style, so much in vogue at the time. It was not transparency nor weightlessness that designers sought to achieve at the TVA, but rather solidity and security. Still, they managed to animate their work with color and texture, giving even the turbine rooms a brightness and openness that contrasts sharply with later facilities built at Oak Ridge by the Atomic Energy Commission.

The original TVA vision faded as wartime needs imposed themselves upon the region. The tiny greenbelt town of Norris Village, symbolizing so much of

the hope for rural prosperity, was never adequately funded and was eventually sold to private investors in 1948. Likewise, Fontana Village, the first prefabricated community in the United States, possibly in the world, passed into oblivion as the overall focus shifted from uplifting the life of the valley to atomic weapons research, and national-defense policy forced TVA to open steam plants fired by strip-mined coal.

Creese's work is remarkable for the way in which he sets TVA into the broad context of American cultural history, enriching his narrative with examples from art, photography, literature, and film history. It is noteworthy also for the author's nonpartisan, but by no means indifferent, approach to his material—especially apparent, for example, in his remarks on the Tellico Dam and its associated new town, Timberlake (1967–75). The book is beautifully produced and illustrated with fine

photographs, but the publisher should have tried harder to reproduce a readable map of the region.

It has always seemed curious that graduate schools have offered degree programs that differentiated between city planning and regional planning, when such a distinction makes so little sense. Furthermore, the preoccupation with "urban" design tends to set up a regrettable dichotomy between urban and rural. This sort of book underscores the fact that fruitful innovation occurs best when designers, politicians, and historians part with such preconceptions.

What makes the book illuminating is the way in which Creese examines his complex subject from varied perspectives. Readers familiar with his *Crowning of the American Landscape* (1985) know that Creese is an architectural historian for whom architecture involves much more than building style and planning is more than statistical analysis. For him, both are projections of policies and values and both are interrelated. Here he has the opportunity to study one regional landscape in depth. The result is a broad and thoughtful assessment of physical design and social planning as tools for improvement. It is most welcome in this field for its fine writing and unusual for its balance. It will be of special interest to those who ponder the preciousness of regionalism, the impact of technology on people and land, and the expressive meaning of civic art.

TVA'S PUBLIC PLANNING: THE VISION, THE REALITY, Walter L. Creese, University of Tennessee Press, 1990, 388 pp., illus., \$38.95.

Robert Wojtowicz

Lewis Mumford: Public Intellectual

THOMAS P. HUGHES AND
AGATHA C. HUGHES, EDITORS

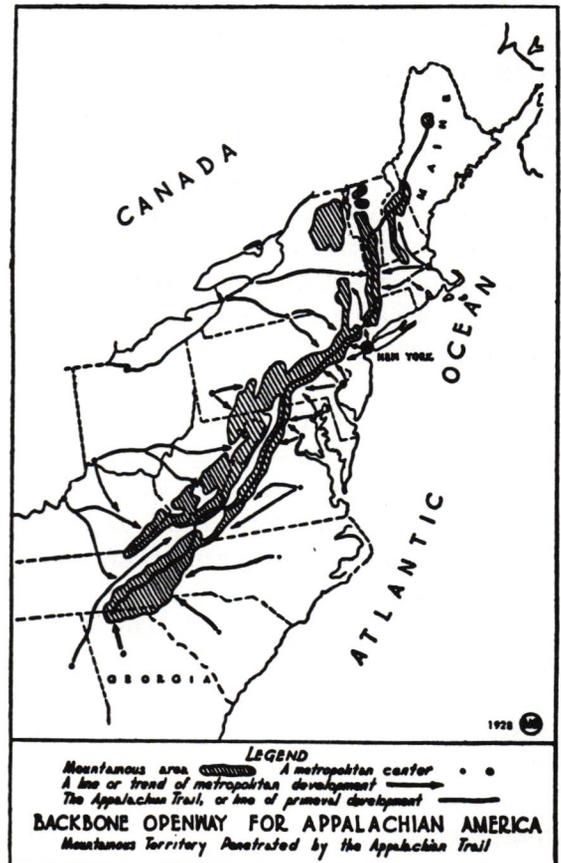
This collection of sixteen essays written by scholars in a wide range of disciplines vastly increases our understanding of Lewis Mumford's central position in 20th-century American intellectual history. An outgrowth of a conference held at the University of Pennsylvania in the fall of 1987, the book's focus is Mumford's attitude toward the dominant role of technology in the shaping of modern culture. Mumford expressed these views in his landmark studies *Technics and Civilization* (1934) and the two-volume *Myth of the Machine* (1967 and 1970) as well as in numerous articles.

True to Mumford's interdisciplinary vision, the various authors have used technology as a touchstone for exploring related fields, including literary and cultural criticism, art and architectural criticism, regional planning, sociology, the history of science, and politics. The book's subtitle, "Public Intellectual," a term borrowed from Russell Jacoby, thus attempts to provide Mumford with the widest-brimmed hat possible in assessing his manifold contributions to an increasingly specialized academic world.

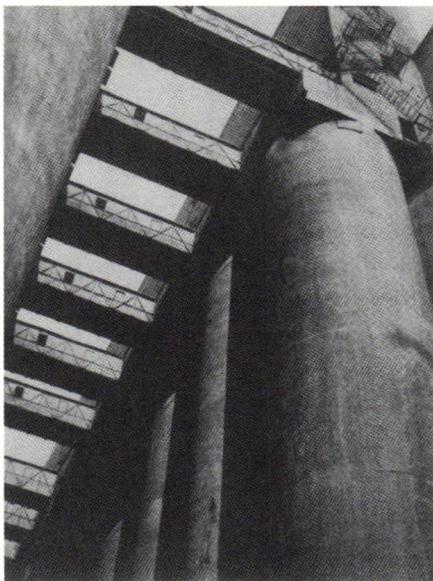
Although enthusiasts of Mumford's criticism of architecture and urbanism may be disappointed by the book's emphasis on technology and culture, there are several noteworthy essays that address his attitude toward design and the environment. The reader should perhaps disregard the linear organization of the book and begin instead with John L. Thomas's engaging, biographical treatment of Mumford's friendship and col-

laboration with Benton MacKaye, the visionary behind the Appalachian Trail. Together with their colleagues in the Regional Planning Association of America during the 1920s, Mumford and MacKaye conceived of the "Fourth Migration," regional planning conducted in the broadest possible sense. The two men correlated ideas about conservation, housing, technology, and industry within an organically balanced, regional framework, a framework colored by their love of the New England landscape.

From a different angle, Rosalind Williams explores Mumford's interrelated interests in technology and regionalism as they were influenced by his acknowledged mentor, the Scottish biologist and townplanner, Sir Patrick Geddes. Central to Geddes's teachings was the doctrine of "insurgence," the belief that organisms have the innate ability to transform and to adapt themselves to their environment.



Benton MacKaye's map of the Appalachian Trail from *The New Exploration*, 1962 edition. (From Lewis Mumford: *Public Intellectual*.)



Eric Mendelsohn's view of a Chicago grain elevator from *Amerika*, 1925. (From *Lewis Mumford: Public Intellectual*.)

As Mumford himself noted in an early draft of *Technics and Civilization*, “In man, the [insurgent] reaction reaches its apex, and manifests itself most completely and objectively in the arts.” This fundamental principle guided all of Mumford’s writings, for even at his most pessimistic in *The Myth of the Machine*, he retained an optimism that somehow humankind would save itself from annihilation. Williams’s discussion of Mumford’s occasionally murky distinction between “good” neotechnic—or even organic—machines and “bad” paleotechnic machines is particularly apt, given the moral implications of his writings.

In what is perhaps the book’s most important essay, Leo Marx explores Mumford’s fundamental doctrine of organicism as it was shaped by Geddes’s biological thinking, and by such 19th-century writers as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, William Morris, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. As Marx notes: “In Mumford’s work ‘organic’ and ‘mechanic’ are names for warring principles, or belief systems, whose unending struggle has dominated human history at least since the age of pyramid-building.”

Mumford’s organicism described an environment and even a way of life that was informed by the past and marked by social and ecological harmony in the present. Marx notes that Mumford used this principle most effectively in his architectural criticism to berate modernists for their allegiance to machine-inspired forms at the expense of organic function. Less satisfying, Marx argues, is Mumford’s imposition of organic belief systems on past civilizations, most notably on the builders of medieval cities. Moreover, what should organic buildings or cities look like? To state, as Mumford repeatedly did, that a holistic solution was necessary, leaves the reader unconvinced, Marx concludes. In this regard, one wishes that Marx had scrutinized Mumford’s appraisal of the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, the architect who came closest to realizing Mumford’s organicism in built form.

Art and architectural historians will no doubt be drawn to Stanislaus von Moos’s insightful essay on Mumford’s visual imagery, from which he adapted his article in the *DBR* 19. Von Moos delves into the curious relationship between the illustrations and text of *Technics and Civilization*, in which the illustrations modify yet exist somewhat independently from the text. The various technological objects are presented not only as icons of the Machine Age, but as dynamic agents in the modern world. Von Moos notes striking similarities between Mumford’s iconography and the dynamic views of technology published by Eric Mendelsohn; Mumford in fact borrowed a view of an American grain silo from Mendelsohn’s *Amerika* for his own study of technology. Not surprisingly, von Moos also sees Mumford’s images as the antithesis of the largely static, formal views of industrial and commercial objects favored by Le Corbusier. Still, it is difficult to accept von Moos’s statement that Mumford’s “bias for architectural expressionism as opposed to what he perceived as the mechanocentric idolatry of the early ‘International Style’ is the central theme

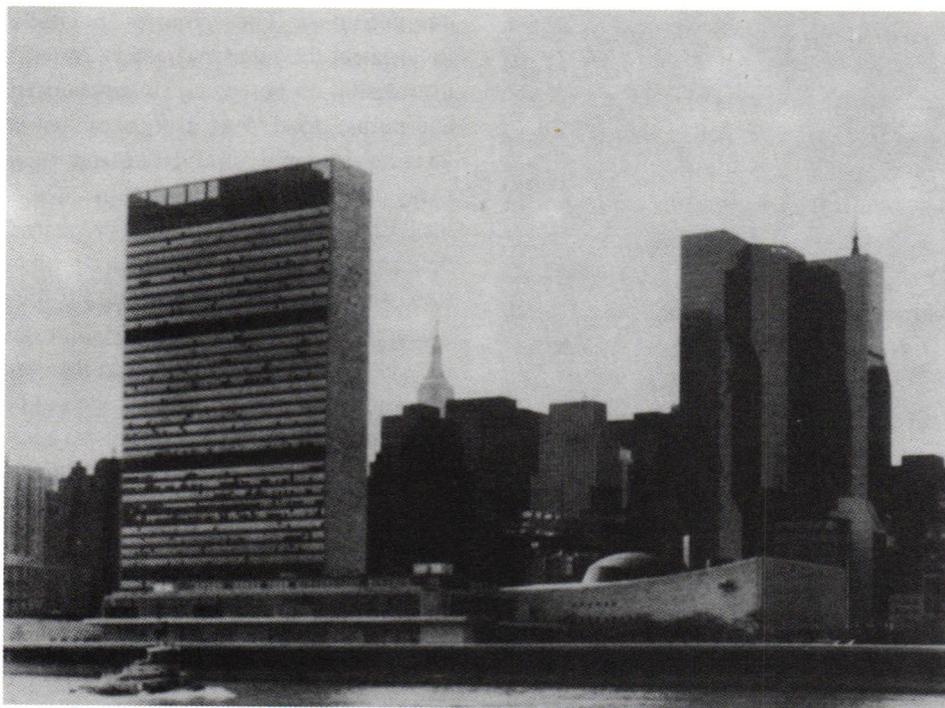
underlying *Technics and Civilization*.” Expressionism was but one of many currents that Mumford admired in 20th-century architecture, and his pluralistic conception of the Modern Movement remains his most important contribution to architectural criticism.

Mumford stood somewhat apart from the modernist mainstream, unwilling to participate fully in a largely European movement driven by aesthetic motives unsupported by attention to organic principles. Von Moos’s comparison of *Technics and Civilization* with Sigfried Giedion’s *Mechanization Takes Command* is especially illuminating in this regard: “Mumford’s book is essentially a book *on* modernism, written by a sympathetic but not uncritical observer; Giedion’s . . . represents an authentic document of the modern movement itself.”

Curiously, a pivotal image in von Moos’s argument cannot be linked directly to Mumford at all. Charles Sheeler’s phototriptych “Industry,” the central panel of which is reproduced on the cover of the book’s dust jacket, may well have been known to Mumford, but to inflate its importance vis-à-vis the critic’s writings seems to be misleading. One should also note that what is presumably a typographical error in this essay places Mumford’s introduction to the German public in 1952, when in fact, *Sticks and Stones* and other articles were translated into German in 1925.

Given recent world events, Lawrence J. Vale could not have chosen a more timely subject around which to focus his analysis of Mumford’s architectural criticism: the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. In his capacity as architecture critic for *The New Yorker*, Mumford devoted several columns in the late 1940s and early 1950s to the planning and design of the U.N. complex, which to him should have symbolized the aspirations of a postwar world order.

As built, the dominant skyscraper slab of the Secretariat Building seemed to Mumford a reprehensible capitalist symbol, but as Vale points out, the critic



General view of the United Nations Headquarters, New York. Photographer: Lois Conner. (From *Lewis Mumford: Public Intellectual*.)

could offer no specific alternative other than the "bold use of a cylindrical or hemispherical form." It should be remembered, however, that this desire for a new, monumental architectural symbolism to replace the clichés of the past proved equally vexing to architects and other critics, including Giedion, at this juncture in the Modern Movement. Vale seems to suggest that Mumford expected too much from the U.N., both as an organization and as an architectural presence, but should we regard this as the fault of the critic or of modern society? One wishes too that Vale and von Moos had shared information regarding the U.N. commission. Did Mumford's opinion negatively affect Le Corbusier's chances at the design as von Moos implies?

The other essays in the book discuss Mumford's contributions to a whole host of related fields. While the editors' rationale for organizing the essays into various categories may not always be immediately apparent, clearly written introductions preface each section. Each reading, moreover, informs the others, so that a multifaceted yet integrated portrait of

Mumford emerges. One wishes, however, that the editors had included more illustrations. Except for von Moos's and Vale's essays, there are only random photographs interspersed with the text. Photographs of Geddes, MacKaye, Van Wyck Brooks, John Dewey, and even Mumford himself would have complemented the readings. Furthermore, subtitles meant to clarify many of the essays often intrude on the text.

Such complaints are minor, however, given the contribution this volume makes to our assessment of Mumford's written legacy. As such, it expands upon Donald Miller's recent biography of Mumford, which served up the critic's personal life often at the expense of his ideas. That so many specialists find Mumford relevant to their individual fields today indicates the breadth and enduring quality of his writings.

LEWIS MUMFORD: PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL, Thomas P. Hughes and Agatha C. Hughes, editors, Oxford University Press, 1990, 450 pp., illus., \$39.95 cloth.

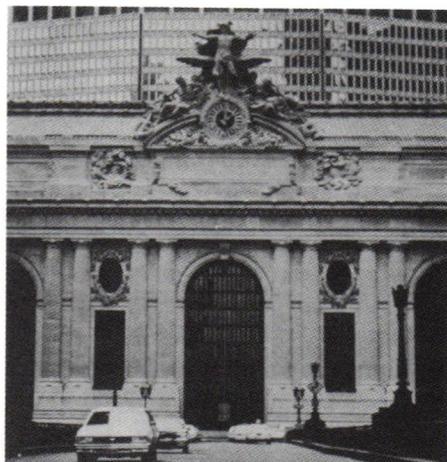
Grace Gary

Landmark Justice

CHARLES M. HAAR AND JEROLD S. KAYDEN

On July 10, 1991, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court issued a ruling that surprised the entire preservation community by declaring portions of the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance unconstitutional under the state constitution. Most surprising of all was the Court's quoted reliance on the minority, dissenting opinion in the United States Supreme Court decision in the pivotal Grand Central Terminal case (*Penn Central Transportation Co. v. New York City*). This decision by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court underlines the importance of the judiciary in the increasingly complex arena of land-use planning regulation. Unfortunately, while the substance and import of judicial decisions are usually available to design professionals, the cases themselves are often presented in a language and format that makes it difficult for nonlawyers to follow the arguments, understand the philosophy, and assess the limits of the precedents established.

The majority opinion in the Grand Central Case was written by Justice William J. Brennan; during his more than



Grand Central Terminal, designated a landmark by New York City in 1967. (From *Landmark Justice*.)



Billboard advertisement in San Diego, where a city ban on billboards was challenged by Metromedia, Inc. in 1981. (From *Landmark Justice*.)

forty years of state and federal court service, Justice Brennan wrote twenty-one opinions in land-use cases, and those opinions form the basis for Charles M. Haar and Jerold S. Kayden's *Landmark Justice: The Influence of William J. Brennan on America's Communities*. While, as the authors note, Justice Brennan's legacy lies in areas as diverse as voting rights and sex discrimination, his land-use decisions, when viewed collectively, provide an overview of most of the major land-use controversies of our time.

Despite the Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision, Brennan's opinions are fundamentally in line with, or provide the basis for, most contemporary land-use law. Each of his twenty-one opinions is presented in an abbreviated and "lay-reader friendly" fashion with the authors providing general contextual commen-

tary. The first three chapters, which provide an analysis of Justice Brennan's approach to land-use decisions may be the most useful section of the book.

In this opening section, the authors summarize Brennan's judicial philosophy toward land-use in four "recurring" propositions and then illustrate each by example and explanation. When further simplified these propositions come down to an emphasis on sound and comprehensive planning of large geographic areas over a substantive period of time; that "regulations affecting fundamental personal rights cloaked as private property rights . . . place a higher burden of justification on government"; zoning variances and other discretionary governmental decisions are often arbitrary; and, whatever the public good, the individual property owner is entitled to a reasonable economic use of his property or just

compensation. These four propositions thus reflect the inherent balance in land-use regulation between private property and public good. Two aspects of Justice Brennan's career stand out and raise these propositions above the run-of-the-mill, dry legal justification: his repeated, determined emphasis upon the "protection of comprehensiveness" and his own unusual willingness to propose solutions not put forward by the parties in the case (the authors include a quote alleged to be from Justice Frankfurter, "I always encouraged my students to think for themselves but Brennan goes too far."). Both of these points are thoroughly discussed in the opening chapters and also in the commentaries that accompany the actual opinions.

Haar and Kayden, both attorneys, are especially qualified to analyze both legal and planning issues. Haar, Brandeis Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, is a former assistant secretary in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Kayden served both as a law clerk to Justice Brennan and as a faculty member at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy before joining the General Counsel's staff at the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Haar and Kayden early in the book make the point that Justice Brennan's importance as a jurist is substantially enhanced by his ability to "[present] arguments in a step-by-step organized structure." That is equally Haar and Kayden's strength in this book; it provides an understandable overview of the philosophical underpinnings of some of the major land-use decisions of the past forty years. For all of that, it is still a book about the law and is not a "light read;" it will however repay the time you spend reading it.

LANDMARK JUSTICE: THE INFLUENCE OF WILLIAM J. BRENNAN ON AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES, Charles M. Haar and Jerold S. Kayden, The Preservation Press, 1989, 264 pp., illus., \$39.95.

Robin Bloch

Postsuburban California

ROB KLING, SPENCER OLIN, AND
MARK POSTER, EDITORS

The phenomenon and process of the “urbanization of the suburbs,” to use a convenient term now in currency in both the popular and academic presses, has received much attention over the last five years. From such accounts, it has become clear that American suburbs have changed irrevocably. But what suburbs—formerly perceived as mostly middle-class bedroom communities—have actually been transformed into often remains vague, as is indicated by the plethora of new names for the resulting environments (technoburbs, outer cities, and so forth). The economic vitality of these places as employment has expanded, the scale of (over)building through the 1980s, and the continued loss of faith and interest by many Americans in their “traditional” cities makes an understanding of the new suburbs a crucial task, especially for those interested in architecture and design.

Interpretation has not been made easier by the fact that, until now, there has been no single volume that deals systematically with this suburban transformation within the context of a single region. *Postsuburban California: The Transformation of Orange County since World War II*, edited by Rob Kling, Spencer Olin, and Mark Poster, is presumably designed to fill this gap. By focusing on Orange County, California, arguably the most developed of such newly urbanized regions, the twelve essayists seek both to illuminate the process of urbanization and change in Orange County itself and to stimulate a better understanding of similar places all over the United States.

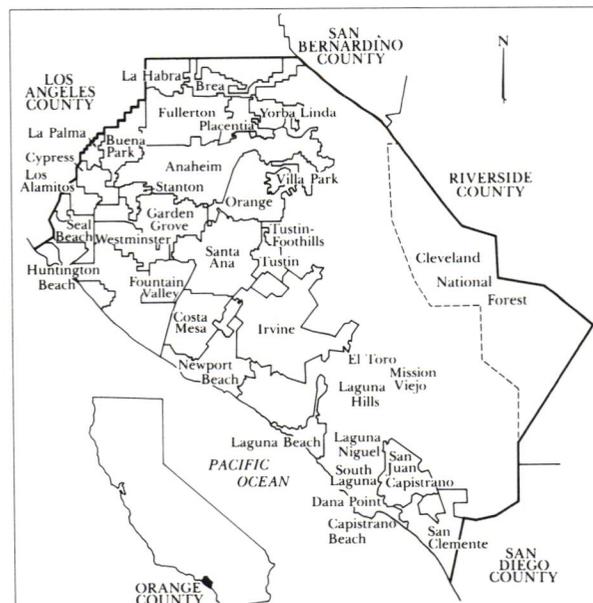
The volume, while worth reading, succeeds only to a limited de-

gree in these objectives. In the postwar era, Orange County has mutated from agricultural region in the 1940s to “traditional” bedroom suburbia in the 1950s and 1960s to something new and different in the 1970s and 1980s: a primarily urban landscape and milieu that nonetheless commingles the urban, suburban, and rural in novel ways. Its 2.2 million people and one million plus jobs make it the tenth largest county economy in the United States. Its highly developed and successful high-technology manufacturing (aerospace, electronics, biomedical industries) has recently been portrayed as constituting the linchpin of one of the paradigmatic capitalist growth centers for this era.¹ But such primarily economic characterizations still do not answer the big question, what is Orange County now? And, by extension, what are other places like it?

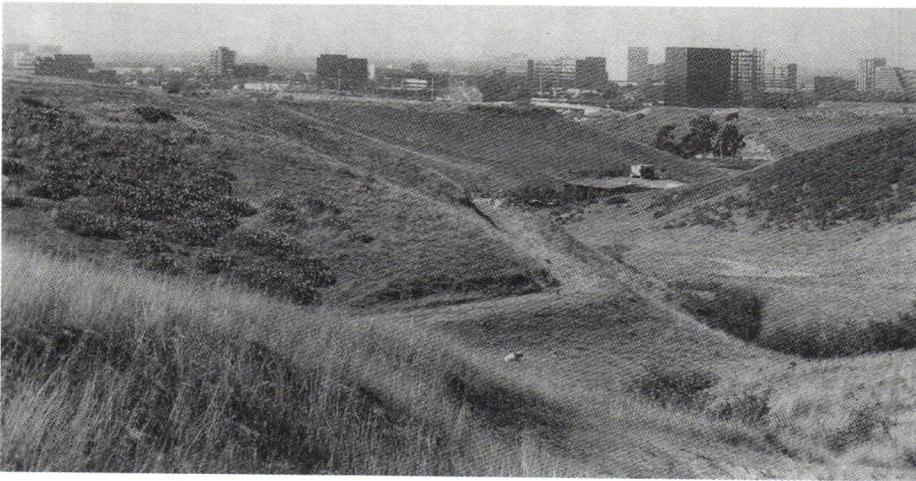
The authors of this book answer that Orange County is now, definitively, “a postsuburban region.” This characterization emerges from an avowedly multidisciplinary perspective, which poses the problem of thematic coherence. The pieces in the book are thus organized around four concepts: postsuburban spatial organization, information capital-

ism, consumerism, and cosmopolitanism, all of which are well explained in an introductory chapter by the book’s editors. Present-day Orange County as a new environment, or as a “city” as Robert Fishman in *Bourgeois Utopias* (1987) might claim, is characterized as “a postsuburban spatial formation” organized around multiple and distinct centers. This decentralized postsuburban region’s current economic strength stems primarily from its role as a major locus of information capitalism, the current economic stage in which the managing, processing, and distributing of information is the central economic activity.² This information capitalism is directly linked to consumerism—at which Orange County’s “metaconsumers” have proved highly adept by pioneering new modes of spending their money both in spectacle-laden retail environments and in a housing market that has become one of the most expensive and inaccessible in the United States. And furthermore, the county has shifted from being culturally and politically identified with “provincial orientations” (long signified by semi-mythical John Birchers) to becoming a cosmopolitan center of international business and entrepreneurialism, and culture and politics, entertainingly satirized in Joseph Wambaugh’s recent novel, *The Golden Orange* (1990).

The other nine articles are then pegged around these concepts. The best extend their meaning and utility. M. Gottdiener and George Kephart’s “The Multinucleated Metropolitan Region: A Comparative Analysis” argues convincingly for the supercession of traditional conceptions of the city by virtue of the rise of the multinucleated metropolitan regions of their title, “a settlement-space form that is polynucleated, functionally dispersed, culturally fragmented, yet hierarchically organized.” Such forms are best exemplified by deconcentrated “fully urbanized counties” like Orange County; by



Map of cities and major unincorporated communities in Orange County, California; 1991. (From *Postsuburban California*.)



Office buildings and pasture land, Orange County, California; photograph by Rob Kling. (From *Postsuburban California*.)

statistically comparing twenty-one such counties, they evaluate theories explaining their growth, concluding that no single factor (for example, industrial development) suffices alone, and that a multifaceted explanation is required. Such an analysis is not, however, provided either for Orange County or for the other counties they compare to it. In "The Information Labor Force," Rob Kling and Clark Turner specify and stratify Orange County's information workers, asserting that some 59 percent of jobs in the county currently fall within this category. Spencer Olin's "Intraclass Conflict and the Politics of a Fragmented Region" demonstrates how changes in the county's economic base and output have inflected intracounty politics away from the city-based localism of earlier years toward a greater concern with the county as a region. This is ascribed to the greater cosmopolitanism of contemporary business leadership, inserted as it is into a globalized economy.

Other articles tend to add little to the conceptual framework (Alladi Venkatesh's "Changing Consumption Patterns"), ignore it (Mark Poster's very interesting analysis of the contemporary middle-class family and William F. Gayk's examination of the taxpayer revolt issue), or show its limitations clearly (Lisbeth Haas's attempt to fit her analysis

of grass-roots protest in the county's Latino center, Santa Ana, into the conceptual frame of postsuburbia). Indeed, this piece, and those of Venkatesh, Olin, and Gayk, point to the problems involved with defining a postsuburban whole with the four concepts in a region marked by differential timings of economic and urban development, and by spatial, social, and ethnic differences and fragmentations.

The study of the design of the built environment could be central to the accuracy of such a definition, particularly if carefully linked to changes in both the productive base and local politics. But this unfortunately remains a somewhat submerged theme in most of the papers. In his historical analysis of the role of the Irvine Company in Orange County, Martin Schiesl refers directly to the significance of the garden city tradition as an influence on the masterplanning of the Irvine Company and on the design of its developments. But he does not follow this up. Most of the writers are content merely to defer to Orange County's distinctive landscape—its contained, separated, and fragmented residential, commercial, and industrial zones—by musing about its possible impact on accelerating consumption, stymieing and falsifying public interaction, and isolating family life. As no in-depth analysis is provided

of either the design and building of Orange County's larger environment, or of its larger meanings, these links between design and other social processes cannot properly be drawn, and remain purely speculative. And this speculation is mostly prosaic at that. Missing is any sense of wonder, surprise, or even despair at what has been wrought on the terrain of Orange County in the past forty-five years. For this, Kim Stanley Robinson's marvelous "science fiction" novel of the Orange County of the past and future, *The Gold Coast* (1988), should be read. It's a book filled with awe and fear.

All of this limits the usefulness of the volume for *DBR*'s readers—as does the failure (aside from Gottdiener's and Kephart's statistics) of its authors to produce "significant generalizable findings" for the numerous Orange County analogues across the United States. *Postsuburban California* nonetheless emerges as a very interesting vantage point for considering current changes in America's suburban landscape and built environment and may very well provoke further thought and research.

NOTES

1. Allen Scott, *Metropolis: From the Division of Labor to Urban Form* (University of California Press, 1988).
2. In November 1990, Orange County's unemployment rate was 4.1 percent, two percentage points below the state and national rates. Median yearly income was \$56,380. With nonfarm employment at 1,222,500, labor shortages continued to exist despite a net inflow of 11,000 Hispanic and 8,000 Asian immigrants a year (Jay Matthews, "Orange County: Trouble in Paradise, But It's Still Paradise," *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, February 4, 1990).

POSTSUBURBAN CALIFORNIA: THE TRANSFORMATION OF ORANGE COUNTY SINCE WORLD WAR II, Rob Kling, Spencer Olin, and Mark Poster, editors, University of California Press, 1991, 307 pp., illus., \$34.95.

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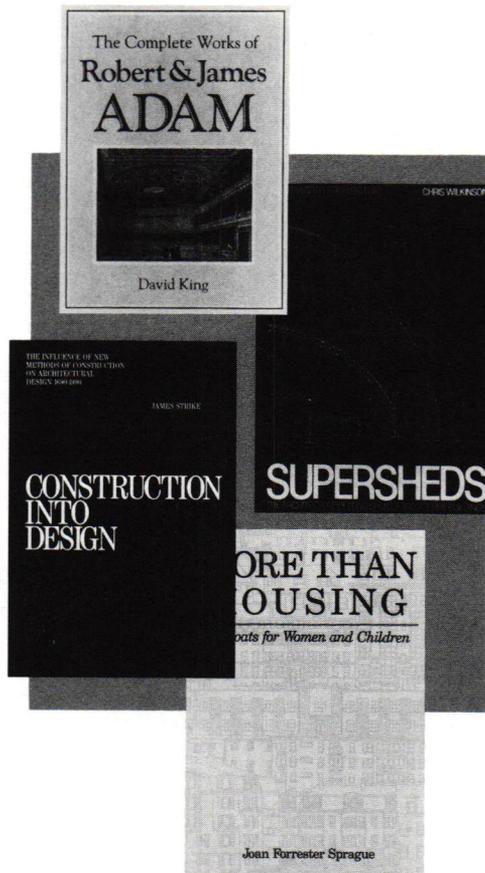
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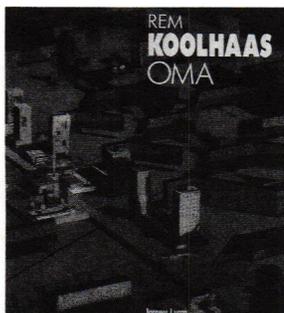
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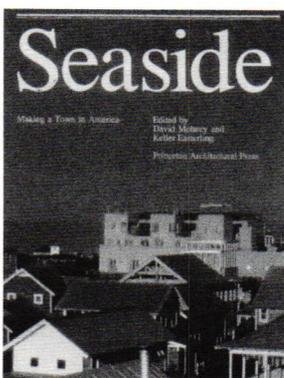
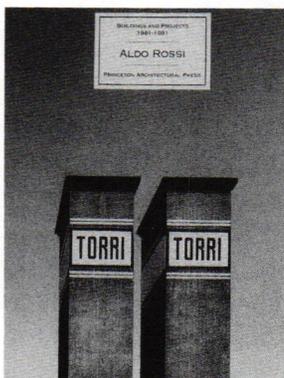


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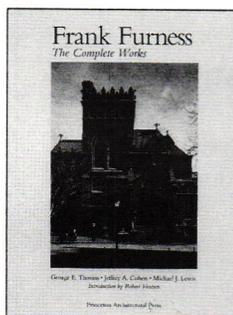


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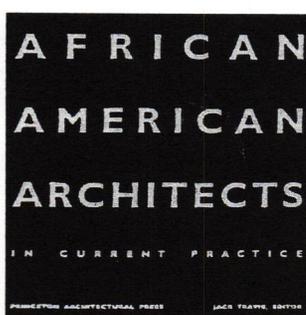
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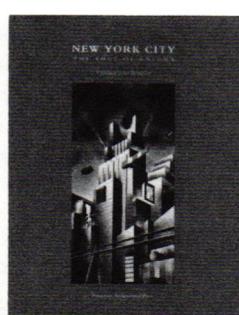


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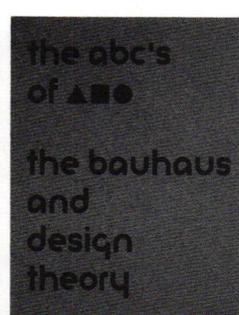


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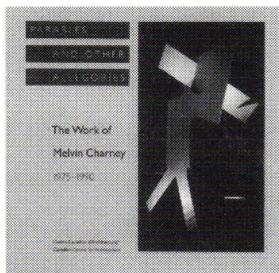
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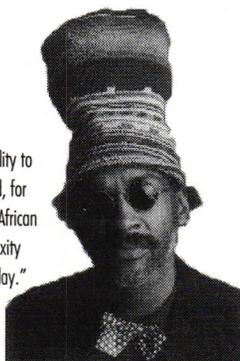
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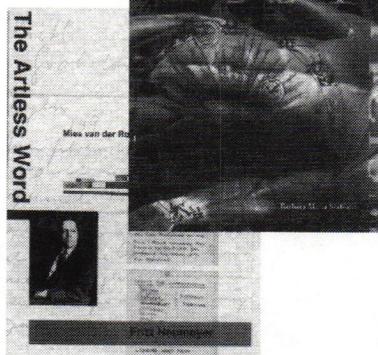
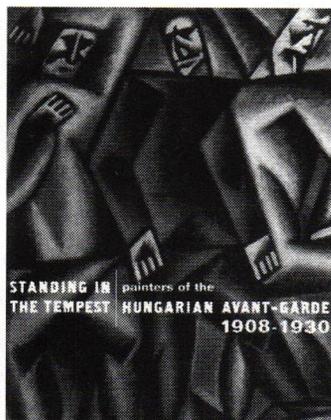
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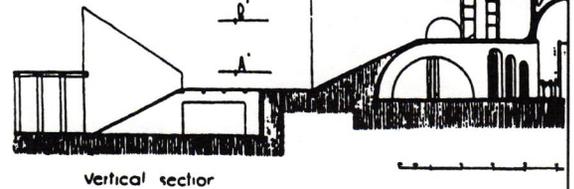
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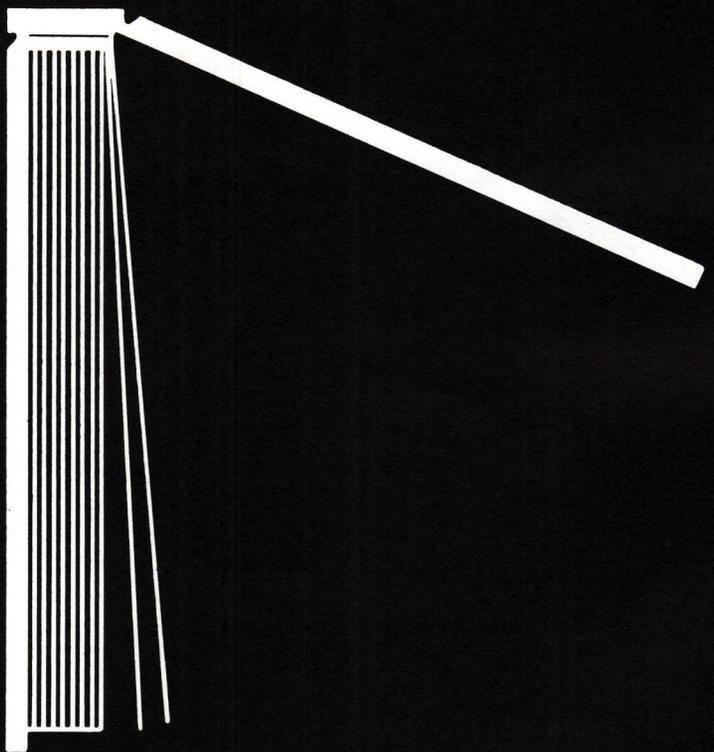
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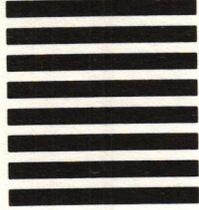
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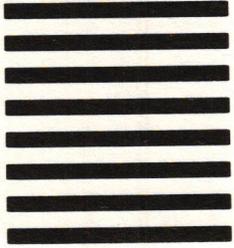
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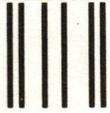
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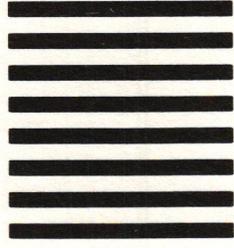
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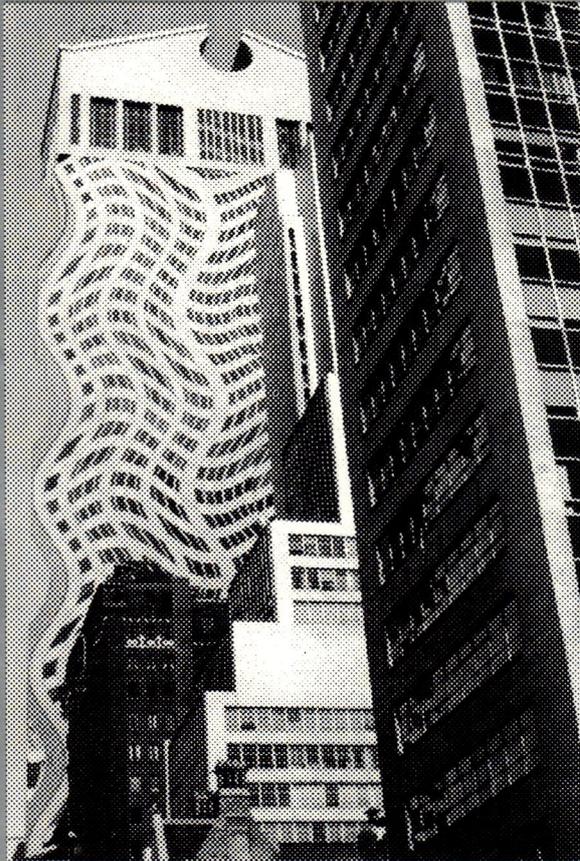
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