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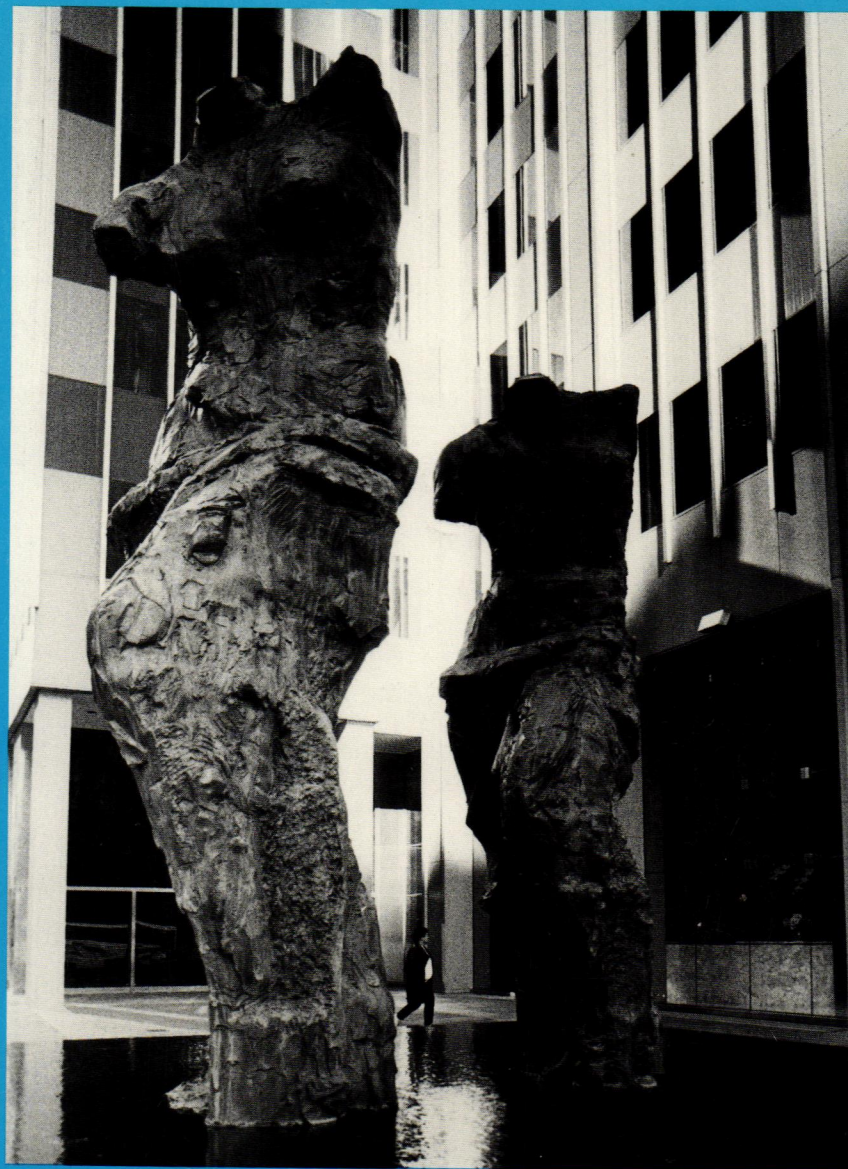
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Recent Japanese Architecture

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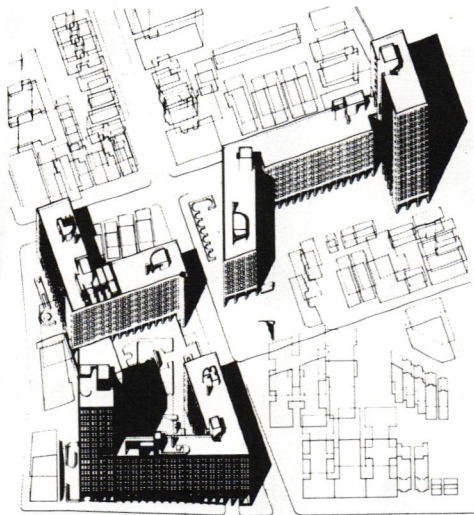
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FLEXIBLE NEW YORK

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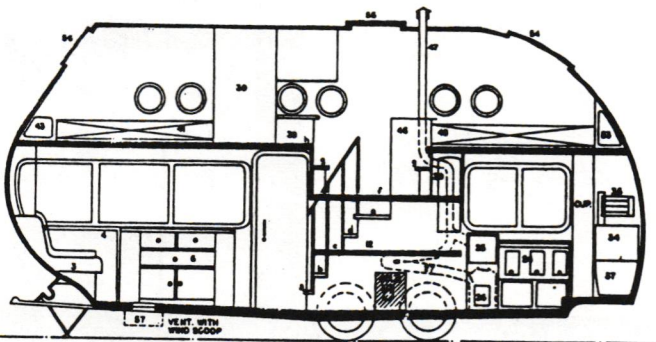
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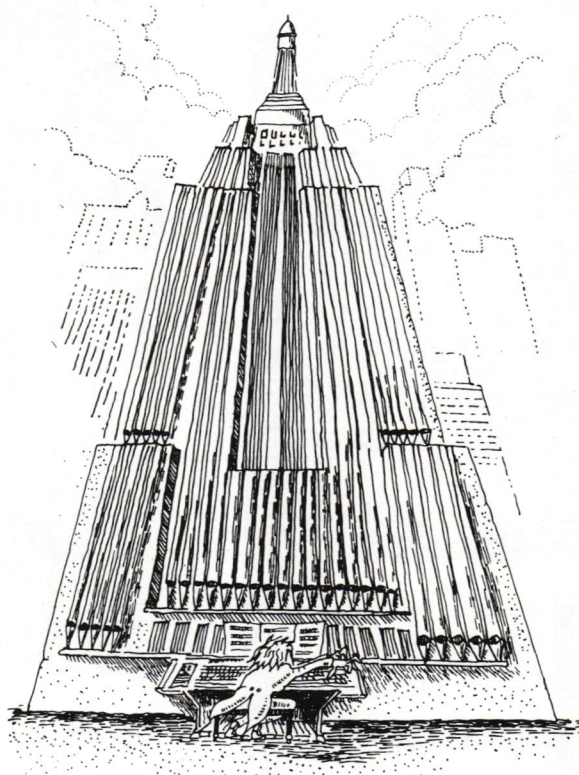


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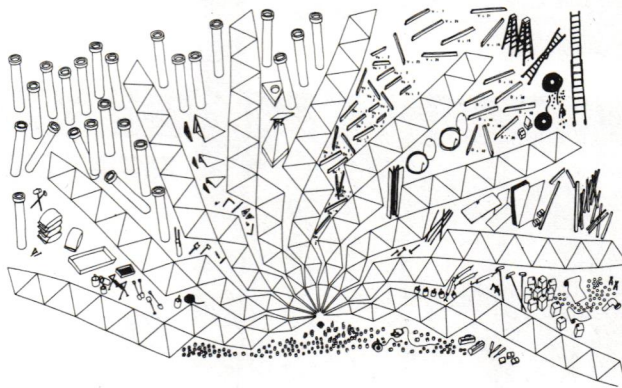
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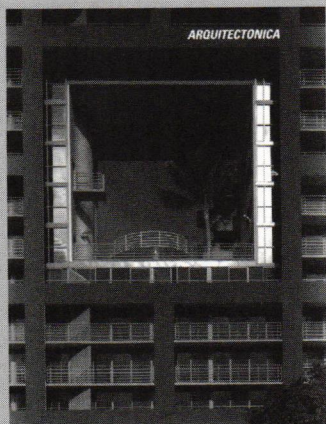


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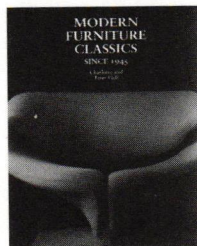
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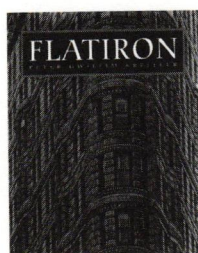
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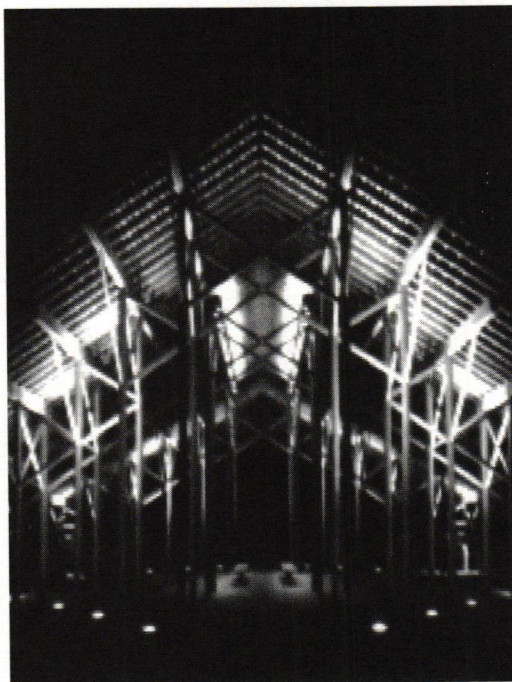


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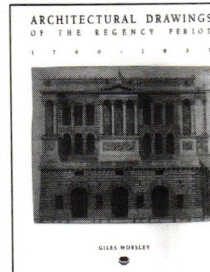


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The Death of Architectural History

To say that an entire field died with one of its preeminent practitioners would either be to claim too little for the field or too much for the deceased. Yet Spiro Kostof, who passed away on December 7, 1991, had such a profound effect on the practice of architectural history in the United States that it is safe to say that the field will never be the same and that it might be time to start calling it something else. Kostof was an electrifying speaker and a meticulous wordsmith who blended pathos and reason into every sentence. As he matured, he became the most convincing spokesperson for the defection of architectural history from the limited criteria of art history. His books, television series, and the memory of his volcanic lectures are a testament to a new architectural history that might better be called a history of the built environment.

To analyze architecture as a landscape, to consider buildings as parts of a working whole, to study artifacts as the result of social and cultural practices, to discover that history has no center: these are the lessons of Spiro Kostof. Where Nikolaus Pevsner liked to distinguish be-

tween Lincoln Cathedral as architecture and a bicycle shed as building, Kostof urged us to consider them both. Kostof's own preparation was strictly conceived on the axis of Western humanist traditions at Roberts College in Istanbul and as a Ph.D. student at Yale—the intellectual climate of which he recently described in *The History of History in American Schools of Architecture 1865–1975*, edited by Gwendolyn Wright and Janet Parks (Princeton Architectural Press, 1990). His first book, *The Orthodox Baptistery at Ravenna* (Yale University Press, 1965), is a model of archaeologically based scholarship, fulfilling the canonical goals of art history. What the first book accomplished with rigor, the second, *Caves of God: Cappadocia and Its Churches* (Oxford University Press, 1972), compensated for with passion. The caves were outside the realm of the canon; they belonged to the spirit of the land that had inspired so much poetry in him as a young man (he won a major national poetry award in Turkey at age nineteen, and dozens of his poems were published in that period).



Spiro Kostof, 1936–91. Professor of Architectural History at the the University of California, Berkeley; editorial board member and frequent contributor to *DBR*. (Photograph by J. W. White.)

It is difficult to say whether Kostof's concerns for non-Western cultures or for the vernacular process would have developed so fully if he had not broken away from the East Coast academic establishment and come to Berkeley in 1965. Here a revolution was under way to which one could not remain indifferent. "The people" became the subject of both self-serving demagogues and earnest citizens. Kostof was genuinely committed to the democratic experiment but was no revolutionary and maintained rigid academic standards in the midst of appalling disruptions and intellectual deceptions. "The people" emerged in his work as a natural outgrowth of constituent demands and his own conviction that ultimately it is people who make cities. This sensibility was perhaps best captured in his Mathews lectures at Columbia in 1976, in which he studied piecemeal, anonymous design acts in medieval Rome (a version of these lectures may be published posthumously). In *The Third Rome: The Traffic and the Glory* (an exhibition and catalogue for the UC Museum of Art, 1973), he took on late 19th-century and Fascist planning in Rome, at the time an unapproachable topic. Kostof was able to make one reconsider the most vilified monument in history, the Victor Emman-

uel "wedding cake," with some sympathy for it as a meaningful place. He likewise was able to evaluate objectively the relative virtues of Mussolini's planners without giving the impression of endorsing their policies. His particular skill was to shake the interpretation of architecture out of its aesthetic and ideological prejudices.

In *The Architect: Chapters in the History of the Profession* (Oxford University Press, 1977), which he edited and for which he wrote two chapters, the problem of architecture as an institution was finally breached. The volume established the scheme of a division of labor that had been strangely missing from most architectural histories, and has made it the definitive text. Although Kostof never broke ranks—in the late 1970s, for instance, he served a term as the president of the Society of Architectural Historians—he tended to listen more seriously to cultural geographers and urban historians than to those from his own field. Instead of the deadly formalist comparisons of great works and geniuses pursued by architectural connoisseurs, he demanded we look at the process of building and compare urban environments across cultures. After two decades of developing an integrated, multicultural vision of archi-

tecture with his colleagues and students at Berkeley, he published his great text, *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals* (Oxford University Press, 1985). It is an inclusive history that grants non-Western, urban, and vernacular issues as much attention as the canonical works.

During the last decade Kostof, aside from his appearances in academia, lectured tirelessly to civic organizations and professional groups across the country, trying to convince them of how people are responsible for the design of cities. In 1987 he conveyed this message in a five-part PBS television series, *America by Design* (for which he was forced to decelerate his usual breakneck pace of delivery in order to be understood by the average TV viewer).

Kostof has not been alone in his divestment of the elitist trousseau of architectural history, but his books put him confidently at the fulcrum of a field where the subject is no longer autonomous works of architecture but a complex fabric of civil, professional, and geographical processes. A man died but his discourse is alive and well.

Richard Ingersoll

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Richard Ingersoll
 NY, NY . . . DTs

New York City induces a contact high. It is as if the syringe-shaped skyscrapers are dispensing massive doses of amphetamines that keep the entire city hyperactive. Everyone in New York talks three times faster than normal, sharing in the exhilarating delusion of being at the center of power. The shrill screams of sirens, the rush of subways and taxis, and the dizzying updraft of the buildings help maintain the frenzy of intoxication. A little over a decade ago Rem Koolhaas described the city's unconscious "culture of congestion," crafted between the wars, as *Delirious New York* (Oxford University Press, 1978). The crumbling infrastructure of the city, however, where streets, sewer and water mains, bridges, health care, and housing are always on the brink of collapse, might allow for a complimentary sobriquet of "Delirium Tremens New York." (The current demeanor of the city can be viewed in *Big City Primer: Reading New York at the End of The Twentieth Century*, with photographs by Bill Barrette and poems by John Yau.) Economic deregulation and highly symbolic architectural gestures to public space have been the "fix" of the last decade, part of the program of flexible monetary, productive, and labor practices that have inspired the new crop of giddy towers (designed while stoned on cocaine), as bedlam has sprung up in the interstices.

The critique of "flexibility" has been advanced by urban geographers David Harvey and Edward Soja, who have set out to analyze the use of space during the major transformation of capitalism that began in the early 1970s. Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity* has produced a polemical definition of postmodernity as more of an economic phenomenon than a cultural movement. Capital accumulation in an information-based society occurs in a "flexible" manner due to new cybernetic technologies and deregulated

economic policies—money in the process has become virtually immaterial. The sites of postfordist production, due to the vertical disintegration caused by more flexible technologies and labor policies, have become increasingly mobile, stimulating simultaneously a greater internationalized division of labor and the demise of labor-class movements. Plant pullouts and mass migrations have been the obvious results. The competition between cities for the fruits of this economic restructuring has led them to aggressively market their urban qualities. The cultural function of postmodern design thus has been to create a new symbolic realm to mask or distract from the consequent social inequities.

Soja in *Postmodern Geographies* re-elaborates many of Harvey's points in the light of current critical theory, demonstrating that the discourse of space has replaced that of time, or history, in the theorizing of culture. In his discussion of the spatial restructuring of cities, Soja identifies a significant epiphenomenon that is quite evident in New York (although his major case study is Los Angeles), where "the macro-political economy of the world is becoming contextualized and reproduced in the city." The pattern of uneven development between nations and regions is now being internalized in the city itself.

During this transition to "flexible" New York, the most insightful chronicle of the architectural fallout has come from architect and critic Michael Sorkin. *Exquisite Corpse* is a collection of forty-six of his essays, primarily about New York, published in the *Village Voice*, *The Nation*, and elsewhere. While Sorkin admits that the task of writing about architecture in New York City "often seemed not simply irrelevant but complicit with the occlusive needs of capital," he nonetheless has not missed the opportunity to skewer some of the most unrepenting purveyors of symbolic capital. Philip Johnson, the most powerful architectural tastemaker in the city, is revealed to be the closest American equivalent to Albert Speer.

Johnson is quoted as saying, "I do not believe in principles, as you may have noticed," an attitude that has helped to conceal his youthful commitment to fascism and anti-Semitism. As the reigning superstar in the transition to consumerist architecture, Johnson, in Sorkin's terms, "doesn't so much design as he signs, a Louis Vuitton among architects." Johnson's success at selling image over urban reality, where "history becomes the extension of showbiz by other means," is a significant factor in the creation of "flexible" New York.

Another of Sorkin's favorite targets is Paul Goldberger, Johnson's media stooge, who emits the official interpretation of the master's many styles with a single art historical criterion: "Taxonomy constitutes judgment." Sorkin also takes on Donald Trump, whose "tower's only argument is greed," for his repeated attempts to develop the world's tallest skyscraper: "Was ever a man more preoccupied with getting it up in public?" Sorkin's prose bristles with delicious hyperboles as he peels away the lethal combination of speculation, environmental degradation, and intellectual travesty that passes as architecture in New York. "The city's current attitude toward development," he concludes, "unmistakably benefits only three classes of people: the rich, the very rich, and the extremely rich." Like all good critics, Sorkin is a moralist: "An architect's conscience is a curious thing: courageous on behalf of building but supine when it's merely a matter of human lives being destroyed."

The island of Manhattan, which in John Carpenter's forgettable action movie *Escape from New York* served as a credible maximum security prison, is not only the site of dramatic fraud, junk-bond trading, bankruptcy at all levels, and alienation, but oddly enough is also one of the most community-oriented cities in the nation. The monthly magazine *City Limits*, edited by Doug Turetsky and Lisa Glazer, details the other side of development, the neighborhood side. Stories in last year's issues foretold the violence in

Williamsburg over neighborhood turf struggles, critiqued the Port Authority for spending its profits on speculative development rather than transportation infrastructures, and analyzed the new housing and homesteading efforts, always with an eye on who really profits and giving a voice to real community efforts. In "flexible" New York, however, the emphasis on marketable images and developer's hype has not done much to help the city kick its bad habits or sustain community values. It has taken a palpable ecological toll, visible both in the human degradation occurring daily in the streets, and in the ever-rising garbage heap of Fresh Kills on Staten Island, which grows by 14,000 tons a day, and will soon be the highest point in the Northeast, rivaling the man-made towers of the city and promising to overwhelm it in its own waste. It is the kind of high that leads to overdose.

BIG CITY PRIMER: READING NEW YORK AT THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, poems by John Yau, photographs by Bill Barrette, Timken (distributed by Rizzoli), 1991, 131 pp., illus., \$25.00.

THE CONDITION OF POSTMODERNITY: AN ENQUIRY INTO THE ORIGINS OF CULTURAL CHANGE, David Harvey, Basil Blackwell, 1989, 376 pp., \$49.95 cloth; \$19.95 paper.

POSTMODERN GEOGRAPHIES: THE REASSERTION OF SPACE IN CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY, Edward Soja, Verso, 1989, 266 pp., \$50.00 cloth; \$16.95 paper.

EXQUISITE CORPSE: WRITING ON BUILDINGS, Michael Sorkin, Verso, 1991, 365 pp., \$34.95.

CITY LIMITS, Doug Turetsky and Lisa Glazer, editors, published ten times per year by the City Limits Community Information Service, Inc., subscriptions \$20/year.

DIALOGUE: Janet Abu-Lughod: "The Struggle for the Lower East Side"

Janet Abu-Lughod worked for several years in the field of city planning before her noteworthy career as a scholar and educator. Her disaffection for practice came from an awareness that the agents of planning could never see themselves with historical perspective. She thus went on to produce an impressive body of urban studies, including an urban history of Cairo, an analysis of colonial Rabat, and a history of the world system in the 13th and 14th centuries, Before Western Hegemony. Her recent textbook in urban sociology, Changing Cities, puts American urban development in historic perspective.

Since her appointment to the New School of Social Research in New York in 1986, she has been conducting with her students and colleagues a major study of struggles over turf in the city's Lower East Side. She has recently prepared a collection of essays on the subject, titled Contested Turf: The Struggle for the Lower East Side, which will be published in 1992.

In November 1991 DBR visited Janet Abu-Lughod in her New York apartment (she lives in Zeckendorf Towers off Union Square), and asked her to elucidate the case of the Lower East Side in terms of the flexible economy of the 1980s.

First, let me describe the demographic and ecological features of New York's Lower East Side, before considering the inflow of capital, followed by the collapse of the stock market, and how these interacted with very local events.

The southern end of the Lower East Side is Chinatown, which has had an enormous population influx since the immigration laws changed around 1965. The new ruling permitted family reunions and relaxed the quota system, allowing more Asians to enter the country. The first port of entry for many Asians in New York was Chinatown, although there are now many budding Asian communities all along the subway line that serves Chinatown. This influx greatly added to demand for housing in the general area.

Little Italy, which is just north of Chinatown, is under the jurisdiction of an architectural control law that requires that the facades along Mulberry and nearby streets remain "Little Italy." Thus the sidewalk cafes and restaurants look "Italian" except that almost every one of those buildings is owned by Chinese and the people who live upstairs above the cafes and restaurants are all Chinese. The pressure for new Asian housing has pushed onward to the lowest parts of the East Village.

Along with immigrants from Asia came heavy capital investments from Hong Kong and Taiwan. International banks, smuggled money, and drug money entered the local economy at this time. The underside of this investment—which is absolutely what we mean when we talk about the economic restructuring of New York—was the revival of sweatshops for the dying garment industry of this district. The new sweatshops have become its new shadow economy, and they employ mostly female labor. (Chinatown used to be almost all male until the recent change of immigration law.) A recent *New York Times* Sunday magazine section ran a photo-essay using Jacob Riis's photographs of tenements and sweatshops of the 1890s and almost identical photographs of the same kinds of activities in the 1990s. So you have the twin pressures of immigration and capital pushing from the south. Both pressures are related to the role of New York in the international economy.

The new money from Hong Kong and the East has naturally also gone into real estate, slowly used to purchase buildings for very high prices along the Bowery (all documented in the transaction data of who's buying what and for how much). I even refer to the building I live in at 14th and 4th Avenue (Zeckendorf Towers) as Chinatown north. Before the crash in the real estate market in New York, which was clearly related to the stock market crash of 1987 tied into the international economy, apartments in my building were selling like hotcakes. After the crash

and sales lagged, Zeckendorf started advertising in the Chinese and Japanese press. Perhaps a quarter of the current residents are Asian. It's both a safe outlet for capital and close enough to Chinatown, without having to live in Chinatown. I think I will still be able to sell my place when I leave if Asian capital is still investing in New York; otherwise I'm not so sure. The Asian population influx and capital investments then constitute one of the significant forces in the story.

Since the 1920s, the Lower East Side has been talked about as a place ripe for gentrification, attractive to a higher class of residents who want to be within walking distance of Wall Street and the outposts of the high economy. One of the chapters in our anthology looks at the plans of the 1920s and 1930s for upgrading this old tenement house district. The big controversy at that early time was should, and could, the Lower East Side, built initially for proletarian occupancy and never constituting good housing stock (although a lot of it is pretty), be recycled when the mass immigrations of the turn of the 19th century ended.

There were a number of upscale plans—for instance, to develop a yacht marina on the East River, to rehab the tenements into luxury dwellings, or to clear the land for new fancy apartments—but all these plans collapsed when the Great Depression hit in 1929. You can see evidence of these intentions to gentrify, however, in those magnificent art deco structures on East Fourth Street built around 1929 by a man named Ageloff and intended for wealthy Jewish doctors. When the Depression hit he took his life by jumping off one of his own buildings.

This first instance of competition between the forces of gentrification and the residents of the neighborhood resolved itself in the 1940s and 1950s with the construction of public housing pro-

jects. Instead of yacht basins along the East River, what you got with the Urban Renewal legislation acted on by Moses and others, was the preemption of the worst possible area, the old dock area, for public housing. Originally these projects were occupied by low-income whites. Currently 80 percent of their residents are Hispanic, plus a relatively small number of blacks. To some extent, this has set a limit on what kind of gentrification would be possible in the Lower East Side.

But during the great housing shortage and then the boom years of the 1980s, which saw the loft movement, the rush of downtown development, Battery Park City, the flowering of Tribeca, the escalating of rents in Greenwich Village, the Lower East Side was looked upon as "the last frontier," as Neil Smith has called it. The housing there was never great. Although by then the neighborhood included many Puerto Ricans—the Puerto Ricans call it "Loisaida" (New York Spanish for Lower East Side)—they now consider it one of the lowest ports of entry. The drug traffic and homelessness

that the area became known for were a consequence of what can occur in any interstitial area of the city. In other words, the area did not create the demand, but it offered itself as an unprotected site.

During the fiscal crisis of 1975, when the city was going bankrupt (partially related to international events such as the Bretton Woods collapse of the early 1970s and the energy crisis of 1973), the area was also affected by the tapering off of federal assistance to cities and the social disinvestment that would later characterize Reaganomics in the 1980s. Many of the programs of the 1960s, such as the War Against Poverty, which did bring money into the area, were declared finished. Reaganomics took over at the end of the dismantling, but the process had been underway since the early 1970s. So there were economic difficulties in this area for many reasons: Puerto Ricans were no longer coming to live on the Lower East Side any more. Many small-time owners of the tenements, probably the children and grandchildren of the original immigrants who settled on the

Lower East Side, were selling out. In 1976 there was talk of the city changing its fiscal laws on tax arrears. Originally the city repossessed property after three years of nonpayment of taxes and started proceedings against absentee owners. But to collect quick bucks they said, "let's cut that time down to a year to cull more taxes." They miscalculated, however, as the people in this area were not paying taxes because they were disinvesting. The city thus ended up owning and managing some 500 properties on the Lower East Side. Some owners burnt their properties down; the shells became great places for squatters and the drug trade. No one was particularly interested in protecting them. Buildings started to crumble and vacant lots appeared because investors had no one to sell to and they didn't want



Christodora House in New York City skyline (to the right of Empire State Building), "Loisaida" in foreground; photograph by Marlis Mommer, 1981.

to pay the taxes; after they had collected insurance money, they were very happy to have the city take over. The city, of course, couldn't sell the buildings any more easily than the individual owners could.

Around 1980, when the U.S. economy started picking up and real estate looked as if it might recover in New York, some speculators started moving in to buy up those properties not in municipal ownership. Some of these properties were occupied by people who were in there with rent control. Owners couldn't make any money and gentrify until they could get rid of their tenants, a lot of whom were Latino. How do you empty out buildings? By then empty land was worth more than land with buildings on it, and unoccupied buildings were worth more than occupied ones. Well, the drug trade is one way to get rid of people. And this is one theory why the drug traffic in this area was so well tolerated, because it did serve to get rid of as much population as possible. By the mid 1980s, after the speculators had been buying and selling and flipping properties, you began to get large developer interest. The developer would try to assemble large areas of land, tear everything down, and build bigger, more profitable apartments. About this time, a developer got control of the Christodora House, a lovely art deco building on the east edge of Tompkins Square Park that had once been a model settlement house for the disadvantaged. When I went looking for housing in 1986, there was one condo left, the penthouse, and they wanted a million dollars for it! The buyers of apartments there have really done badly.

In response to this move for large-scale development, there was counterresistance in the neighborhood. The affordable housing movement that said, "Yes we do want this area upgraded; yes, we too want to renovate the tenements"



Christodora House during renovation; photograph by Marlis Momber.

(probably unaware of the precedents for this). Some of those involved in the affordable housing movement have been there for forty years and are very well trained in organizing. The movement for cooperatives, sweat equity, homesteading, and other forms of mutual housing is very sophisticated in this neighborhood. Some of the participants are trained planners—one of the first advocate city planners in the country started out down there. So they organized to stop the city, which would have been quite happy to sell off the stock to developers. There's been a lot of negotiating in the past few years to give these housing reformers more control over the destiny of city-owned properties. A deal was worked out between the city and the community board specifying that in return for allowing the city to sell off all the vacant lots that it owned, the city would yield control over an equal number of city-owned tenements and provide money to renovate them for affordable housing.

That was the plot line until everything collapsed in 1987. The great hopes for Battery Park City fizzled—those very ex-

pensive condos were eventually auctioned off. If the demand had slumped so much, who would ever want to live in these old tenements? Suddenly the city was unable to unload its vacant lots on the Lower East Side. It is very much like what happened in the 1930s when the area was saved from development by the Depression. In the 1980s the area was again saved by national and international conditions beyond the control of the neighborhood. I think the area is safe for a while now. The missed opportunities of developers have become the opportunities for the neighborhood organizers. I'm now assessing how much actual rehousing is being done by these mutual housing associations with municipal subsidies.

The role of Tompkins Square Park is quite important to the ecology of the Lower East Side. There are almost no open spaces in the Lower East Side. The square was originally planned as a high-class open area in the 1830s along with Washington Square and Gramercy Park. It was sited on marshy land, however, and was originally called Market Square since much of the slaughterhouse and port activities gathered here. The only fancy houses to go up were put on the drier north end of Tompkins Square, but soon after that, the elite of New York moved uptown. The square never became the elite quarter that had been envisioned. By the time the Irish immigrants arrived in the mid-19th century, the marshes had been drained; the Irish moved into this area and worked on the docks and in factories; the area became distinctly proletarian. It was built up with "old law" tenement houses. Then the German immigrants moved in and the Irish moved up. The park became at this time more like a German beer garden. By the end of the 19th century the area was the landing point of the great Jewish immigrations from Eastern Europe. A maximum con-

struction of "new law" tenements followed, and it became the most densely settled quarter in the *world*, more dense than Paris, Berlin, Bombay, or even Calcutta. For this proletarian quarter the park served as the major space for public expression. Every time there was civil disobedience, such as the police riot in 1874, the park would be slated for a redesign. The city in each case tried to redesign it to eliminate places where people could congregate, but they also didn't want too many trees and structures that could be used for hiding. They tried to both open up the park for better surveillance and close it down for gatherings. In the 1960s this area became the Haight-Ashbury of New York. In addition to the leftover Italians, Jews, Ukrainians, Poles, and Puerto Ricans, there now were the hippies, the counterculture, and the drug scene. Tompkins Square Park became the "scene" for events.

Tompkins Square is only ten acres, but it's the only open space in the zone. Somehow the park in recent times had been able to contain simultaneously a whole range of urban types who under normal circumstances wouldn't be sharing space. In the 1960s the band shell went up and it became the site for rock music, but the old people still used the park. There was a big riot of police versus hippies on Memorial Day 1968, which led the city to again replan the park. Another big riot erupted in the square in 1988 (at that time only about fifty homeless people lived in the park and there were very few shanties). The riot was ostensibly about the noise the punks were making; an attempt was made to impose a night curfew. In effect it was a policy supported by both the gentrifiers and the gentrified: developers and yuppies. The



Hope, Charity, and Homeless. Tompkins Square Park before the shanty town; photograph by Marlis Momber, 1985.



The bandshell (now removed), center of all activities in Tompkins Square Park; photograph by Marlis Momber, 1990.

developers wanted the park cleaned up so that it would enhance their property values, and those who were spending up to a million dollars for their condos in the Christodora House, while tolerant of the

existing park conditions, could not be expected to desire them. The genteel conditions of Gramercy Park were what they hoped for. The older ethnics were afraid of the punks and weirdos, the drugs and the mess. Although curfews exist on all New York City parks, no one had ever enforced one on this park because it wasn't very important. The counterculture and homeless, who didn't want the curfew and most of the people in the neighborhood who are used to the diversity of the park found themselves drawn together against the developers, gentrifiers, and the city. About four hundred police intervened and there was a great deal of police violence. But they were unable to close the park in 1988. In fact the city backed off, the band shell remained, the concerts continued, and the curfew was revoked. Only then did several hundred people begin to move into the park.

Homelessness is on the rise all over and the story of this building, Zeckendorf Towers, is also involved. Union Square Park was formerly notorious for drug dealing and homeless residents. The developer succeeded in his deal with the city in having Union Square closed down. A lot of those forced from Union Square migrated to Tompkins Square Park. A shanty town of about fifty structures, some of them very well built, gradually appeared in the park, housing over three hundred people. This threw the local real estate investors into a panic. Properties on the square were instantly devalued. The situation was beginning to make everyone in the neighborhood a little nervous. First the city tried to contain the settlement by moving the homeless to the center of the park; then they drove them south, be-

cause the north end of the park is the fanciest rehabbed section. Mayor Dinkins's policy is hard to understand: the city began a campaign against the homeless everywhere in the city, ousting them from Central Park, Union Square, Columbus Circle, as well as train and bus terminals. All over they have been wiped out. In Tompkins Square the city administration used the altercation that occurred on Memorial Day 1991 as a *causus belli*. Within two days after the "riot" the squatters were thrown out of the park by 350 police; the park was closed and slated for yet another redesign. A chain-link fence now surrounds the only open space in the neighborhood, and events have now come to a halt in this particular plot.

So that's the story: the Lower East Side is a place where history, housing, local politics, the role of New York in the regional and world economy, national urban policies, as well as international capital and labor flows that have nothing to do with this particular area, but nevertheless affect it—all come together to create a very complex multilayered reality. I use the case of the Lower East Side as an example of the new kind of community study that we must learn to do.

There's an old type of study where a single social scientist went into an urban neighborhood to observe the way of life. That gave only limited findings. If you're going to study a complex area, you cannot be identified with one particular group. If your project is seen as an action for one set of actors, then you lose access to different perspectives. Instead, you need to involve many researchers from different disciplines; you have to have people who can talk to the squatters without casting the whole project as pro- or anti-squatting, others able to talk to the housing reformers without risking the ire of other contingents. Two students were in Tompkins Square with the homeless, another was in with the squatters; I have now identified myself to the housing reformers, whereas before I attended their meetings anonymously. I even had an-

other person just to watch riots. We used real estate records, censuses, visual material along with the usual methods of the community study.

Also, the reason I really got involved in this study is that I believe, given the international and national events that filter down to a neighborhood, along with the particular qualities of a place, that you can't study how these forces interact in abstract terms. I contend that you can only study them on the ground, in a given place where they intersect. You can only study their intersection if you can find some place where they are intersecting very visibly. We found that on the Lower East Side.

I'm happy this study is finished. But now that the study is done, I know who I want to work with and how the information we've gathered can help them save this neighborhood, maximize affordable housing and minimize displacement. This neighborhood is now able to resist gentrification in the short run because, given the recession, there is little developer interest in the real estate. That's why affordable housing now has its window of opportunity. In my opinion the mutual housing associations are the group to support, because they can have a long-term effect on preservation. The nonprofit associations retain ownership of the land, while mobilizing small investment, some subsidies, and some self-help labor to renovate specific units. Their control over resale of apartments, however, will minimize the possibilities for speculation and for the eventual loss of their buildings to profit-making developers. I think this can help preserve the area, at least until the next boom, if any, rolls around.

M. Christine Boyer

The City of Illusion: Or Flexible New York

A stroll through the streets of Manhattan offers a challenge to the sensibilities—trash clogs the gutters, putrid smells emanate from sullied corners, shrill sounds of honking cars and blaring music boxes fill the air. The cardboard shantytowns of the homeless, graffiti-covered walls, and pleading panhandlers line the sidewalks. Simultaneously, New York displays spectacular landscapes of luxury and privilege. The city has just experienced the most prosperous decade since the end of World War II, and signs of wealth and abundance are in great supply. Thus cheek to jowl with the city's display of poverty stands monumental evidence that New York is still the financial capital of America—through its gateways flow national and international investment capital seeking new markets to exploit. These investments in turn have generated in the last two decades swaths of new real estate development and redevelopment in large areas of the city, such as Battery Park City, Times Square, the Upper West Side, or South Street Seaport. In these districts the glimmer and glitter of wealth infuse new office skyscrapers, hotels, restaurants and theaters, boutiques and retail shops, luxury condominiums and renovated townhouses.

In New York, the plight of the poor cannot be avoided or sheltered from sight. The city contains the largest concentration of inner-city poor in the nation, revealing all the ravages of poverty, be it homelessness, violent crime, or drug abuse. Thus New York is a place where dreadful nightmares and fantastic dreams compete for each other's terrain; a city where there is no escape from the tangle of poverty and luxury, of crime and greed, of social justice and privatization. And every New Yorker is constantly aware that the city's pathologies and its opportunities must be addressed collec-

tively, that each of us shares in the plight of the other.

Why then, we might ask, is the media so intent on detailing an upbeat image of the city? Why tap the city's nostalgic allure, its skyscraper scenography, special styles of life, and cultural advantages, in order to specify New York's unique distinctions of place? Consider, for example, an article by Paul Goldberger, the architecture critic for the *New York Times*, titled "Why Architecture Can't Transform Cities."¹ Goldberger maintains that architects and planners must adopt a "new realism." They must accept that there has always been a large gap between the rich and the poor in every great city, which over time makes the average citizen indifferent to the idea of the public realm or a shared commonality in the city. Following Goldberger's thesis, the homeless and vagrants have become simply "part of the landscape," objects like lampposts, that we basically ignore. Goldberger hopes to convince us that architects and planners are scene-makers, not social reformers; that architecture and planning are no longer public services instilled with social responsibility for the well-being of others. From this point of view, architecture in the city is an autonomous artistic expression that has nothing to do with the social and economic plight of the poor. Hence Goldberger claims the "new realism" is just that: "We realize now, far more than in the last generation, that architecture must be evolutionary, not revolutionary, that it cannot make the world anew. . . . We know there is no utopia." Consequently modest efforts bear sweeter fruits, and we are now resigned to work slowly, knowing that architecture counts, just not too much.

There are difficulties with accepting this position, which seeks to inscribe us as planners and architects, or as readers or spectators of the new architecture of



The World Trade Center and Battery Park City; photograph by Camilo José Vergara.

the city, sharing the consensus that there is little we can do but accept the status quo—the gap between rich and poor in a city where the quality of life declines with every new drug war, racial battle, and economic downturn. Furthermore, this kind of argument appropriates many discussions about architecture in the public sphere, erases their critical distinctions, and turns them to the purpose of consensus formation. This argument becomes a kind of public-relations promotion for the new kinds of space being created throughout New York City, be they in Union Square, Times Square, South Street Seaport, or Goldberger's favorite "public" space, Battery Park City.

Battery Park City is proof for Goldberger that we have neither forgotten how to build a city in these postmodern times, nor how to develop a master plan that makes the public realm primary and architecture secondary. I would argue, however, that this interpretation promotes the art of dissimulation: making Battery Park City appear to be what it is not, and appear not to be what it really is. This is surely a city of illusion when something

designed for such a selective constituency is called "public." The emphasis on luxury spaces in the center of the city has distracted attention from the crumbling in-between places. There has been a rush to create consensus around a symbolic landscape such as Battery Park City, instead of addressing the real problems of legitimation that haunt the latest stage of private multinational capitalism. This stage of flexible capitalism can shift capital from country to country and region to region, leaving swaths of uneven development, unemployment, and bankruptcy in its wake.

Perhaps a newspaper journalist shouldn't be held solely responsible for this artful dissimulation. Noam Chomsky has pointed out in his book *Necessary Illusions:*

Thought Control in Democratic Societies that the mass media became a major target of reform during the years of Reagan's presidency. Bent into a nonadversarial position, the media now is supposed to appear supportive and properly enthusiastic for whatever programs the government sponsors. For example, if the Reagan and the Bush presidencies have intentionally transferred resources to the wealthy, then the media have become "vigilant guardians protecting [this] privilege from the threat of public understanding and participation."²

Nevertheless, the census has recently revealed what most of us have taken for granted—that during the 1980s, the top one-fifth of Americans' household wealth increased by 14 percent, while that of the other four-fifths remained the same.³ And while the media may continue its style of artful dissimulation focusing on the lifestyles of the yuppies, gentrified neighborhoods, and leisure pursuits, an army of recent immigrants now compose over 30 percent of New York's population. Although the antics of Wall Street financiers, real estate brokers, lawyers, and accountants may seem to make the

city run, it is immigrant labor, most often underpaid or informally employed, that cleans their offices at night, prepares their food in upscale restaurants, sews their clothes sold in trendy boutiques, or drives the taxicabs that take them home late into the night.⁴

Behind the city of illusion that ignores the ties that bind the rich to the poor lies another story of privatization. In the past two decades, transnational corporations using new information technologies have developed a global market for their goods and services. Able to move easily from country to country or region to region, these super corporations have no loyalty to a specific nation, nor social accountability to any one locality. Many of these transnational corporations are major investors in the redevelopment of old American downtowns, yet investment today may bring abandonment tomorrow. Hence these corporations need to form new allies to build a consensus that gives the impression they are operating in the public interest and as a friend of local authority. The World Financial Centers and new corporate headquarters glittering in the downtown centers of our cities are implicitly subsidized by local governments through tax write-offs, grants of special financial powers, allowances to override local land-use regulations, and general lack of accountability to the public for the way they obtain and allocate their revenues. These corporations have in many different ways privatized public decision-making.

And all of this public expenditure and deregulation for private benefit attempts to build consensus and attain legitimation by the corporate sponsorship of public events and celebrations, by providing a few greenhouse foyers within corporate highrises, and by offering a few historic theme parks as leisure-time places. Thus Goldberger can claim that the fifty acres of new urban landscape at Battery Park City and the nearly two miles of esplanade that link a series of individually designed parks, public art displays, and open plazas demonstrate that New York

City knows the importance of the "public realm" and has been able to channel private money into public benefit. The World Financial Center Plaza and Wintergarden, South Cove, North Park, and South Gardens are examples of the new civic grandeur corporate benefactors provide.

In other words, this art of dissimulation mixes the public and private spheres together in great confusion. "Public" in a democracy should refer to the entire populace, all groups, all neighborhoods, all regions of the country. Its access should be open and its construction untampered with. The public does not just mean the welfare state, or the government bureaucracy, nor does public space just mean space that is not private property. But in the past few years, the meaning of "public" and "private" has been confused: "Public" has become a bad word connoting unruly bureaucracies, corrupt officials, inefficient management, regulations, and burdensome taxations, while "private" has turned into an exalted word, implying freedom of the market, the freedom of choice and style of life that commodities supposedly provide.⁵

In this war of positions, recruits are sought who support the dismantling and privatization of all the social-welfare programs of the last fifty years, and accept that participation is restricted to private consumption. Consequently, the market economy is expected to provide everything: housing, health services, transportation, police protection, garbage collection, even public space. And the rhetoric surrounding Battery Park City, in particular, plays on this confusion of terms—creating a private preserve for the very wealthy that is transformed into "a popular amenity" by allowing the public to stroll unimpeded along its corridors and spaces of power.⁶ Since it has been the federal government's explicit policy in the last twenty years to promote the corporate sector, many sites and channels of public expression and creativity have been seized for private ends. Corpora-

tions now sponsor blockbuster museum exhibitions, underwrite newspaper advertising of gallery shows, control the open streets of shopping malls as private domains, and orchestrate truncated public events and festivals—all once dependent on local sponsorship and community participation.⁷ In New York, South Street Seaport, the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade, the electric lighting of Times Square, special exhibitions at the art galleries in the IBM or Philip Morris buildings, are really advertising events based on commercial, not cultural, development.

If private capital is able to subsidize and sponsor the public arts program in Battery Park City, for example, where sculpture gardens, horticultural displays, and decorative lighting have been designed with lavish care, then we must also be aware that since the late 1980s, public parks throughout the city have been littered with broken glass, trash, and abandoned cars, while the number of maintenance workers employed has been reduced dramatically and the expenditure of millions of dollars curtailed.⁸ Although any contemporary use of the "public" is by nature a universalizing construct that can be questioned, touting Battery Park City as a "public" place stretches belief. Impossible to enter from the street, it is accessible only by two elevated footbridges over West Street that tie it directly to the World Trade Center. Either bridge, if it can be found, leads the spectator into the World Financial Center's platform lobby, which links four office towers one level above the ground. Still reminiscent of the futuristic megastructures of the 1960s, this arterial way is really an oversized and private interior hallway decorated in sensuous materials and relieved here and there by skylights and chandeliers until it arrives at the huge banks of elevators, stairways, or escalators that cascade down to the street. There is also the glass-enclosed Winter Garden, squeezed between two of the Center's towers, with its palm-court exhibition and concert space, restaurants and

shops offering New Yorkers one of the largest "public" atriums in the city. This awe-inspiring atrium has become the focal point for all of Battery Park City, and overlooks a 3.5-acre river plaza and the North Cove Yacht Harbor, where twenty-six yachts may rent a berth for the announced fee of \$2.25 million per berth.⁹

If the dualities of wealth and poverty tarnish the city's liberal tradition, what better way to veil these discrepancies and release the tension they create than by connecting the present to the civic tradition of New York's architectural heritage? And so the creation of Battery Park City, a place that advertisement claims "It's more New York, New York," and Goldberger calls "close to a miracle" being "the finest urban grouping since Rockefeller Center."¹⁰ This "urban dream" is the result of a 1979 master plan that decided there was nothing wrong with Manhattan as it appeared and that previous attempts by architects and planners to rethink the basic shape of the city had produced disasters. Consequently the master plan took control of the look of the place, negotiating through its design codes the architectural styles and historical allusions of this period piece in return for giving a developer permission to build.

These codes produced a scenographic arrangement replicating a series of comfortable views taken from New York's architectural past: the look of the Brooklyn esplanade, Central Park West, Park Avenue are all reconstituted within Battery Park City. Here we find the reproduction of Central Park lampposts and benches, the inspiration drawn from the private enclave of Gramercy Park, as well as the great landscape inheritance of Olmsted's parks. These images collected in Battery Park City become metaphorical carriers of a special kind of history and defenders of a set of values established in earlier times. Through

the re-creations of traditional New York spaces and architectural forms, the present is filled with a sense of grandeur and self-importance, or pleasure and excitement, that many modernist places apparently failed to achieve. In a backward binding gesture, Battery Park City stitches the production of this new luxury residential and commercial enclave to the architectural history of the city, and thus establishes the illusion that this space of New York was always there, or at least its essential aura was not artificially produced.

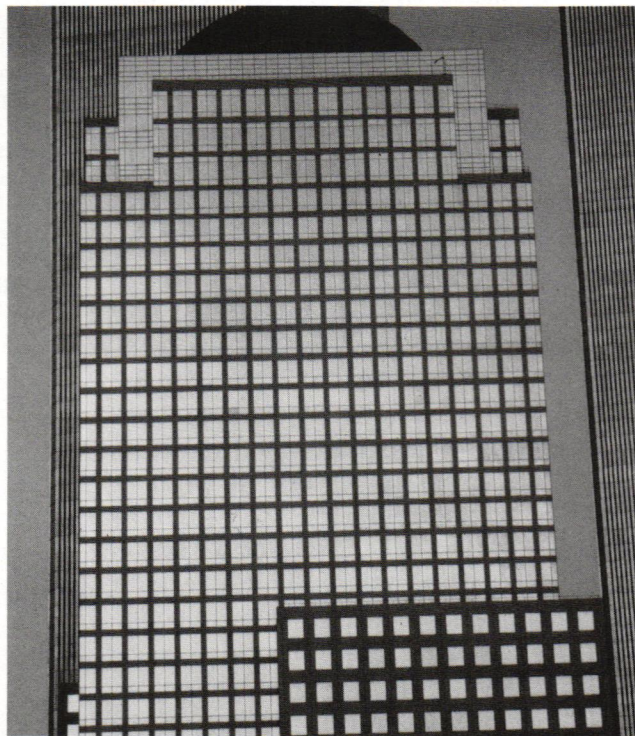
To cite these few images drawn from New York's commercial heritage seems to justify the entire outdoor museum of Battery Park City. As a predominantly commercial adventure, some might question whether the city and the state should be subsidizing a luxury project. But then, this is the intention of nostalgia, to invert and gloss over reality. As the boomtown mythology of New York's heroic era of architectural and commercial development between the two world wars is carried over into the 1980s and 1990s,

Battery Park City's development energy might simply spill over and push the project northward. And why should development stop there? For the entire waterfront around Manhattan, that fallow landscape of decaying piers and underused spaces, this too might follow the path of tradition outlined in the 1920s and 1930s and be restructured and recycled with monumental commercial development.

Currently the built environment of American cities seems to be controlled by a series of urban design conventions: well-composed ornamental nodes generated from a set of pattern guidelines like those put in place in Battery Park City. These ornamental fragments were planned or redeveloped as autonomous elements with little relationship to the metropolitan whole and with direct concern only for adjacent elements within each node. These new urban compositions have a serial appearance, mass produced in city after city from already familiar patterns or molds. Indeed some have claimed that a sure sign of Battery

Park City's success is the number of look-alike developments that have sprung up in other American cities. But instead of seeing a uniform pattern of almost identical places being generated in cities around the world, and in spite of intentional rip-offs, designers of the built environment seem content in attempting through unique visual quality and historic imagery to distinguish one place from another.

We might expect that since capitalism shifts its form and mode of operations over time, so would its spatial and aesthetic politics. And indeed this seems to be why differentiation of local places in the 1970s and 1980s has become increasingly important in the capital investment and relocation game.¹¹ In the last twenty years, a new network of global cities arose, taking charge of co-



The American Express Building against the World Trade Center; photograph by Camila José Vergara.

ordinating the worldwide circulation of capital, goods, labor, and corporations. The name of the game in the first-tier cities with global reach is to attract and retain the headquarters of multinational corporations and all the business services that these corporations demand, such as international banks, advertising agencies, legal, accounting, and communication support. But that's not all in this game of spatial roulette: computerized technology has enabled capital in the 1970s and 1980s to become increasingly flexible, to move from place to place according to various locational preferences. And mergers have made it even easier for larger corporations to shift various segments of their operations, making it possible for cities of many different sizes both inside and outside of the United States to compete for flexible investments. As computerized information systems make white-collar service jobs increasingly portable, America's mid-sized or "second-tiered" cities are experiencing fantastic growth because these cities combine the advantages of both town and country, affordable housing and good jobs.¹²

In the competitive war now being waged among cities, style of life or "livability," visualized and represented in spaces of conspicuous consumption, become important assets that cities proudly display. City images are essential players in this marketing game: the kind of image that urban design patterns can foster and sell. But spatial restructuring inevitably engenders uneven development. As attention is focused on the upscale and livable urban environment, it is simultaneously withdrawn from impoverished and abandoned territories. Furthermore, pro-growth advertising campaigns and locational incentives are invisible government subsidies. Called private-market endeavors, they nevertheless target millions of public dollars for the well-to-do sections of town and withdraw subsidies from the poorer parts of the city. In addition, property and income-tax abatements for home ownership, for historic preser-

vation, and for the renovation of older structures, abatements that have underwritten the residential and commercial gentrification of historic and older areas of the city, are never considered to be public subsidies even though they lower a city's revenue base. Nor are corporate income-tax abatements and infrastructure provisions considered to result from direct public policy, although they sweeten the prospect for private enterprise to invest project by project in the construction of new convention centers, new sports arenas, new office complexes, new luxury hotels and residential structures, new retail and cultural centers. These are all written off in the rhetoric of economic vitality as market incentives that have helped private enterprise reinvest in the city.¹³

This privatization of public issues bypasses the source of contention. It produces massive spatial restructuring, which is the result of no overall public agenda or plan, and offers no political forum for debate. Information technologies may have enabled corporations to create a worldwide decision-making base and market for their goods, but they have simultaneously eroded the public sphere and discounted the process of public accountability.

In the interest of luring capital investment to our contemporary cities, architects and city planners are inserting many well-designed nodes or scenographic stage sets into the space of the city until a matrix or grid of these nodes develops. Such a matrix encourages horizontal, vertical and diagonal links. These links suppress the connecting in-between spaces and impose instead a rational and imaginary order of things that interrupts our vision of the whole. We focus only on the empty box to be filled with a well-patterned place. As a result, we have no image of the contemporary metropolitan whole, no map that spells out its pattern of uneven development, and nobody plans for the city that lies beyond the well-designed nodes. These are only some of the hidden costs embedded

within "The City of Illusion": the forgotten needs of in-between places pushed through the sieve of spatial restructuring, and the unmet education, health, housing, and employment demands of the people who make up the marginalized segments of the public. And these neglected spaces and forgotten needs, these inversions of discourse should be the real shapers of our architectural and planning agendas as we move toward the 21st century!

NOTES

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D. Graham Shane

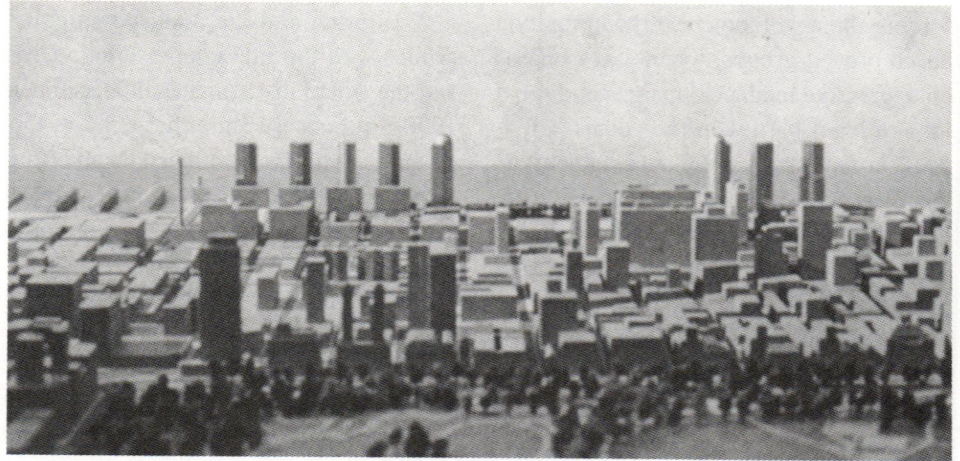
West Side Stories

The Planning Process in New York City

No single physical plan or set of rules governs the city of New York, nor is there an elected planning authority with power over all aspects of the city to help restrain the hidden hand of market forces. Aspects of planning are shared between the federal government, the neighboring state governments (Metropolitan New York stretches over four states), the New York state government in Albany, the city council, and local community boards, not to mention independent, intrastate government agencies like the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (which controls bridges, tunnels, ports, airports, and riverside development). The crafting of the city from this web of administrations is a complex and time-consuming job, often requiring trade-offs and payments to campaigns and causes that have no apparent connection to the case at hand. To deal with this complex situation, two major actors have appeared on the New York stage; and a third, previously kept in the wings, is now beginning to emerge.

The first major actor is the Special Zoning District.¹ Since the city has no master plan or real planning authority, the void has been filled by the creation of special planning districts with their own local areas and planning teams appointed by the city. These invisible cities within the city set and control limited local development objectives for a "neighborhood" (usually a business district or projected area of redevelopment, sometimes a historic residential community). Special districts set up urban-design goals and simplify the planning process for developers and citizens alike.

The first small special district was created in the 1960s to protect the theater district on Broadway in midtown; another surrounded the Convention Center site in



Model, Lincoln West as seen from Central Park; 1981.

Clinton (the site of Donald Trump's first real estate coup with the city). A special district protected the Little Italy neighborhood downtown, and another was set up on Fifth Avenue in midtown to prevent an invasion by office buildings and to ensure mixed-use development. A special midtown zoning district was created in the late 1970s to slow growth on the East Side, to direct it to the West, and to standardize the development process, so that developers could not negotiate special deals on individual sites as they had in the past. The Battery Park City Authority, an independent state agency of the 1970s, was the equivalent of a totally independent special district created to develop a new town on an enormous landfill in lower Manhattan.

The second major actor to appear has been the developer as the representative of banks and institutional investors in New York real estate. Developers like Donald Trump exploited the vacuum in New York planning, contributed generously to the invisible network to facilitate their influence on deals, and ruthlessly exploited special zoning districts for their own purposes. They have attempted to extract from the city the maximum concessions for their investors, mining with energy and zeal the zoning regulations of the special district planners. Trump Tower (1981) in the Fifth Avenue and Midtown Special Zoning Districts pushed to the extreme the planners' desire for

mixed use in midtown. The brassy, hyperdeveloped package of shopping mall and office and residential tower had only one guarded entrance to the street. It was loaded with tax breaks, historic preservation grants, transferred air rights, and traded floor area bonuses for interior street-level public amenities.²

As the representatives of global capital in an open and international city, developers' egos and hubris grew with the accumulated funds at their disposal. By the end of the 1980s the Trump organization was proposing plans for an area as large as Battery Park City at Trump City, although Trump himself was close to bankruptcy (as a result of the 1987 crash, ill-conceived bets on Atlantic City casinos, and the current recession, which devalued his properties and junk bonds). While the banks did not allow Trump to default on his \$2 billion debt, they took control of his properties and controlled his income in exchange for releasing him from personal liability. In this situation Trump ironically reemerged as an underdog, a down-scaled and "reformed" local hero in an unlikely partnership with the community organizations that had long opposed him.³

This is the third actor: a group composed of the community boards of the city, community protesters, and City Beautiful organizations. Elected local community boards in special districts were often ignored in the roaring 1980s,

forcing the development of community-based protest groups, which have relied on aggressive media campaigns and prolonged legal battles in the courts. Citizens' groups stopped the development of the West Side Highway in a fifteen-year legal battle with the city. Community groups have grown more and more sophisticated, taking on far larger concerns than the local, grass-roots neighborhood concerns of the Jane Jacobs period. The complex court actions of the Municipal Arts Society, for instance, prevented the city from sponsoring overdevelopment on city-owned land at Columbus Circle. The society's legal brief successfully demonstrated that the city's environmental impact study was incorrect and that there would be a negative environmental impact, including a shadow that would stretch across Central Park.⁴

Community groups undertook planning studies, normally the responsibility of city agencies, to assess environmental, commercial, and traffic impacts. The community group Westpride hired environmental, legal, and economic consultants in February 1986 to begin fighting Trump City, a proposal for a 100-acre site on Manhattan's West Side, stretching along the Hudson River from West 59th Street in the south to West 72nd Street in the north. Beginning in 1987, Westpride has regularly analyzed Trump City's environmental impact and passed the material to the city. In December 1987 Westpride first began work on moving a highway contained in the proposal. People for Westpride produced the *West Side Futures* report assessing the social, economic, and environmental pressures on the West Side, while the Municipal Arts Society built a model showing the shocking built form of massed towers that would result from the approved, proposed, and possible as-of-right developments on the West Side in the late 1980s. In June 1990 Westpride and other community organizations filed a challenge to the zoning amendments necessary to rezone the area. Westpride simultaneously unveiled its "Civic Alternative" proposal.

Westpride and the other community groups won the suit against Trump City and the Board of Estimates in December 1990. In this case and others like it, the city argued for the developers in an effort to maximize the city's tax base. The legal successes and planning abilities of community groups, as well as the real estate slump, have greatly increased the leverage of such pressure groups in the planning process. In March 1991 the city and Trump endorsed the counterproposal made by the Municipal Arts Society and Westpride, thus silencing and co-opting the majority of the opposition. This des-

perate move brought the protesters on board as planners in an unusual partnership, and prevented the Trump organization's default on a \$200 million loan from a troubled New York bank (which would itself disappear shortly afterwards in a merger).⁵

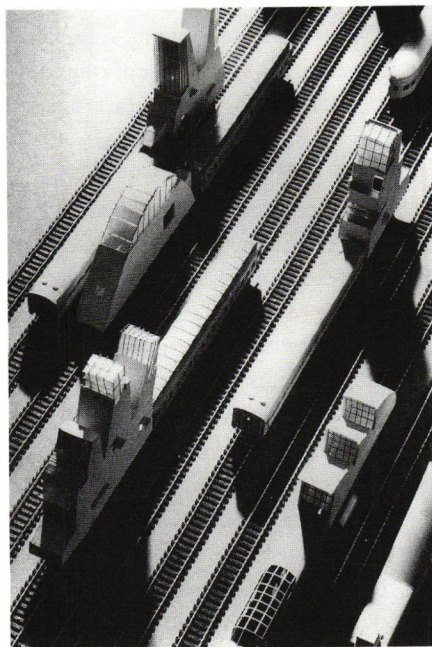
A limited pool of urban designers and architects have served all groups in this real estate wrestling match. The shifting tides of the real estate cycle bring many different opportunities, often to the same people. For example, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill chairman David Childs was also a board member of the Municipal

Sorkin's Tracked Housing Project

In face of the temporary triumph of reason, good taste, urban-design convention, and commercial contextualism at the Trump City site, few have proposed alternatives other than massive development. The *New York Times* has carried several stories about the homeless community living in shanties beneath the raised highways, but advocates for the homeless have never made any claim to the site. One project by Michael Sorkin has proposed housing for the site in the form of extraordinary and unprecedented antique

railway cars—poetic, wheeled variations of the domed railway skycar or observation car. Sorkin's trains have mini-towers, with balconies and spectacular skylights, and would occupy the tracks at the yard, making a movable city and skyline. Seen from the elevated highway, their towers would peer above the balustrade in changing configurations. Competition would be intense for these mobile homes, like the floating castles of the neighboring 72nd Street boat basin.

Sorkin's trains belong to the tradition of Archigram's Plug-In City or Cedric Price's Pottery Thinkbelt Project, a university also based on railway cars in sidings. Sorkin's trains also refer to America's predilection for mobile homes, most recently outlined by Alan D. Wallis in *Wheel Estate: The Rise and Decline of Mobile Homes* (Oxford, 1991). While their mobility refers to the technological future via the retro-technology of the railway, their message also links the fate of the homeless and nomads in a postindustrial future (for example, see Rosalyn Deutsche on Krzysztof Wodiczko and David Lurie's Homeless Vehicle in *October* no. 47; the Homeless Vehicle was exhibited at the Storefront Gallery, New York, in 1985, at the Clock Tower Gallery in 1988, and later at the Beaubourg, Paris). Mobility and modern communications created the suburbs, removed jobs from the inner city, and made suburban malls like the Galleria possible. The message of the trains and homeless carts is that mobility and modern communications also make suburbs redundant or impossible (as at Trump City).

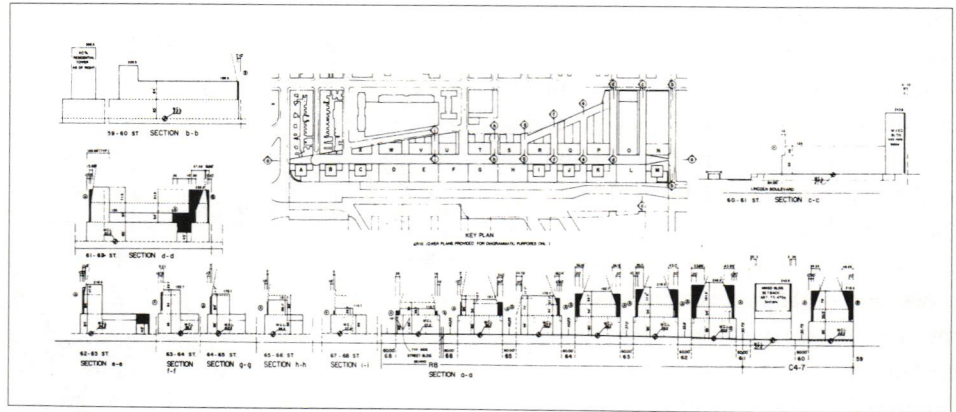


Model, Tracked Housing project for Penn Yards, detail of tower car; Michael Sorkin, 1990. (Photograph by Dorothy Alexander.)

Arts Society when it fought Moshe Safdie's proposal for Columbus Circle in 1989; now SOM's New York urban design office is in charge of downsizing the troubled project, with David Childs as designer. The Battery Park City Authority planning team of Richard Kahan, authority chairman, and Alexander Cooper, of the Cooper-Ekstat design team, has reappeared. In Riverside South (the current proposal for the Trump City site), Kahan brokered the deal between the city, Trump, and community organizations, ending up as chairman of the new organization that will supervise the development of the area. Cooper prepared the abortive Cooper-Robertson Trump City Master Plan, which jeopardized the reputation for contextual planning he had won with Battery Park City. Another figure, Paul Willen, served not only on the design team of Lincoln West (a pre-Trump City proposal for the West Side site), but also on the critical AIA committee that opposed the Trump City plan, and as the architect for the Municipal Arts Society/Westpride counterproposal to Trump City. It comes as no surprise that Trump and his new community partners (including the Municipal Arts Society) have turned to David Childs and SOM, in partnership with Willen, to help give final form to the community's proposal, which has been accepted as the basic model.

Urban Design and Trump City

The history of urban design at Trump City can be seen as a record of the trajectory of the real estate development industry in the 1980s. The initial design (called "Lincoln West") was a conservative modernist scheme of towers and large residential blocks, which could easily be broken down into flexible development packages. The second series of designs (Trump City proper) by Jahn and Cooper-Robertson represented the mid-1980s shift to the hyperdevelopment mode of enormous, megastructural packages with interrelated component parts. Massive infusions of international capital sup-



Site plan and section showing setbacks, Lincoln West; Gruzen Partnership and Rafael Viñoly Architects, 1982.

ported hyperdevelopment within a single-development package. The third series of designs ("Riverside South") marks a return to a smaller scale, with the development site broken into more flexible parcels and an overall plan allowing many smaller-scale investments to be coordinated, as at Battery Park City. The increased power of community groups and the collapse of the property boom has resulted in a general return to an urban convention of street corridors and setback towers in the pragmatic and commercial form of urban contextualism. A brief examination of the three schemes for the Trump City site will show the emergence and impact of this new planning consensus. For the sake of brevity this analysis will concentrate on the urban-design aspects of the three schemes; the sections are especially important, considering that the site drops forty feet from street level to the river's edge and contains an elevated highway.

Trump first made a proposal for 7,500 residential units on this site, formerly the Penn Central railroad yards, as part of his air-rights option purchased from the railway in 1975 (at the same time as his sale to the city of his options to the Convention Center site). A storm of community protest led the City Planning Commission to note the possibility of the use of the entire site as a park. Trump then sold his options in 1977 to a South American consortium of investors. These investors commissioned the Gruzen Partnership

and Rafael Viñoly to produce the Lincoln West scheme.

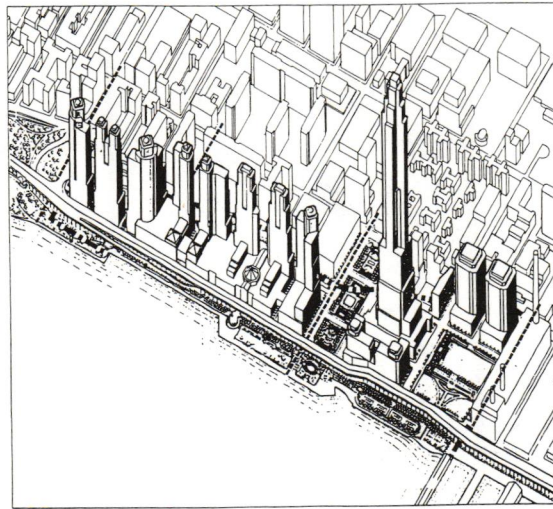
Lincoln West was a modernist scheme in which the contextual concerns of the Gruzen Partnership emerged. Two parallel strips of development made a new edge for the river and mediated the forty-foot drop across the site. The inland strip consisted of an eighty-five-foot-high band of "contextual" slab blocks (with setbacks and lower courtyard bases) that defined an edge boulevard to the city grid, with parking below grade. The second band consisted of a series of seven isolated modernist towers in various configurations, each tower set on its own base of car parking, which gave access to the boulevard. Each tower was an isolated and self-contained modernist development package, like the numerous other towers Trump developed on the East Side.

The tower band was broken to protect the river views of the existing Lincoln West development. Here steps led down forty feet to a gridded park area, which connected under the elevated highway to a thin extension of Olmsted's Riverside Park. The park was clearly going to be a dangerous, noisy problem area in shadow most of the day. Community groups successfully fought in court against the high density of the project, delaying the scheme; finally they reluctantly accepted a revised version with 4,000 housing units (a total of approximately eight million square feet of floor area), after im-

provements were promised in the park and in subway stations on Broadway. The South American syndicate had problems raising the necessary funds (projected at \$1 billion in 1983) and sold the development back to Trump for \$95 million.⁶

The Trump City hyperdevelopment proposal of 1985 represented an enormous act of spatial compression, modeled on the Gerald D. Hines mixed-use "Galleria" developments in Houston and Dallas. These megastructures contained whole cities (approximately four million square feet) within their building packages. Trump first revealed his ambition in Helmut Jahn's proposed design for "Television City," which would have included the world's tallest skyscraper, separated by a three-block park from the largest mall in America, and almost double the residential units approved in Lincoln West (total floor area approximately fourteen million square feet). After the predictable outrage from community groups and the withdrawal of the NBC television component, the Trump organization hired Alexander Cooper of Battery Park City fame to revise the design. In Cooper's 1989 revision, the enormous six-block multilevel retail mall and 4,000 parking spaces formed the base of the project, making an edge for the city and accommodating the forty-foot drop to the river. The eight 60-story-high residential towers sat on top of this base, using the roof as a podium.

As the AIA report on the project pointed out, the suburban models for Trump City were located at highway intersections, had good access to the edges of old cities, and had replaced existing downtowns. In New York, the existing city and site-sectional problems had been largely ignored, and only one connection through the mall led down to the thin strip of Riverside Park forty feet below. The city streets under the mall would drop steeply and would be dark and miserable. Loading docks and parking entrances faced the extension of Riverside Park, beneath the elevated freeway. The



Axonometric looking east, Trump City; from the 1990 AIA *Report of the 60th Street Yards Task Force*.

largely blank walls of the mall would face the city streets with apartment entrances at intervals. The apartments were small in an area of traditional larger family apartments (the report's authors included Rafael Viñoly and Paul Willen, an architect who was at work on the Municipal Art Society's Civic Alternative).⁷

The environmental impact study prepared for a court battle by the opposition coalition, which included Westpride, Coalition for A Liveable West Side, and the Municipal Arts Society, showed that, besides the world's tallest building receiving pollution from the neighboring Con Ed smokestack, the commercial impact would drain the city and West Side of activity, while totally overloading the highway and surrounding streets with traffic and automobile pollution. In a major victory the protest groups succeeded in convincing the court to reject the city's environmental impact assessment methodology because it looked only at citywide aggregate statistics and did not consider local factors (such as the smokestack).

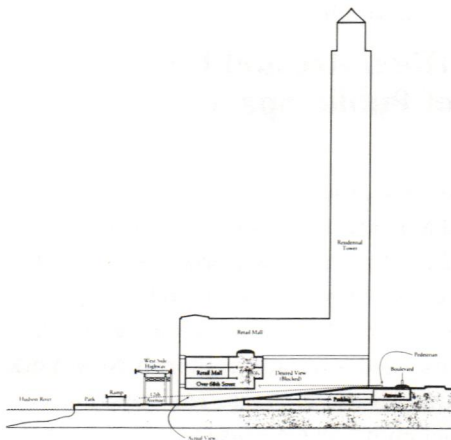
Riverside South, a proposal developed by Willen and the environmental consultant Dan Gutman for the Municipal Arts Society, appears to be a contextualist New York plan. Its first major innovation is the abandonment of the elevated high-

way; instead it uses already allocated state reconstruction funds to locate the highway inland from the park in a stacked section, beneath a new Riverside Drive, on land donated by the developer. The aerial perspective renderings make this complex technical feat seem easy and very reasonable. The parklands, also provided by the developer, are burned up to provide access at intervals over the highway, or steps and ramps give access to the park in the traditional manner. The wall of apartment blocks along the park drops to safeguard the views of Lincoln West apartment blocks, and traditional side-street row-house blocks link the project back to the city grid.

The second innovation of the plan is the adoption of the Battery Park parcelization scheme, based on small lots the banks can sell to other developers. This gives far more flexibility to the investors and does not involve the far riskier commitment of enormous funds for a megastructure. This piecemeal and incremental style of development has the additional advantage of allowing the pace of development to be tailored more closely to market conditions, making it possible to avoid big mistakes, as at Battery Park City. A small part of the scheme can fail without endangering the long-term value of the whole.

The third innovation follows from the flexibility of the parcelization. Riverside South, like Battery Park City, employs an array of smaller-scale, conventional, recognizable New York building types. Apartment blocks with towers on top form the wall against the twenty-three-acre extension of Riverside Park. Smaller buildings, like row houses, can infill the side streets, while the inboard avenues can accommodate larger residential buildings and commercial uses, including a cluster of four office towers in the south.

One of the oldest protest groups, the Coalition for A Liveable West Side (originally the Coalition Against Lincoln



Analytical section of "View Corridor" to Riverside Park, Trump City; from the 1990 AIA Report of the 60th Street Yards Task Force.

West), still opposes Riverside South as overdevelopment (it is approximately eight million square feet, like Lincoln West). The group demands that the city zone the entire site as a park. At an AIA meeting in 1990, critics of Paul Willen's Civic Alternative emphasized the difficulty of the three-level road section at the edge of the park, pointing out the need for fans to disperse the pollution in the enclosed roadbeds, the presence of the Amtrak railway right-of-way at grade, and the difficulty of accessing the park except at busmed areas. Other critics pointed out that the buildings along the park edge, while they appear to conform to the Riverside Drive typology of the 1910s, were actually far denser and taller (especially with planned, luxurious ten-foot high ceilings). The base blocks were sixteen stories, instead of the traditional ten to twelve, and the towers above were fourteen stories, more like the giant Eldorado, Majestic, and Beresford blocks on Central Park West from the 1930s. The buildings on the side streets are also larger and

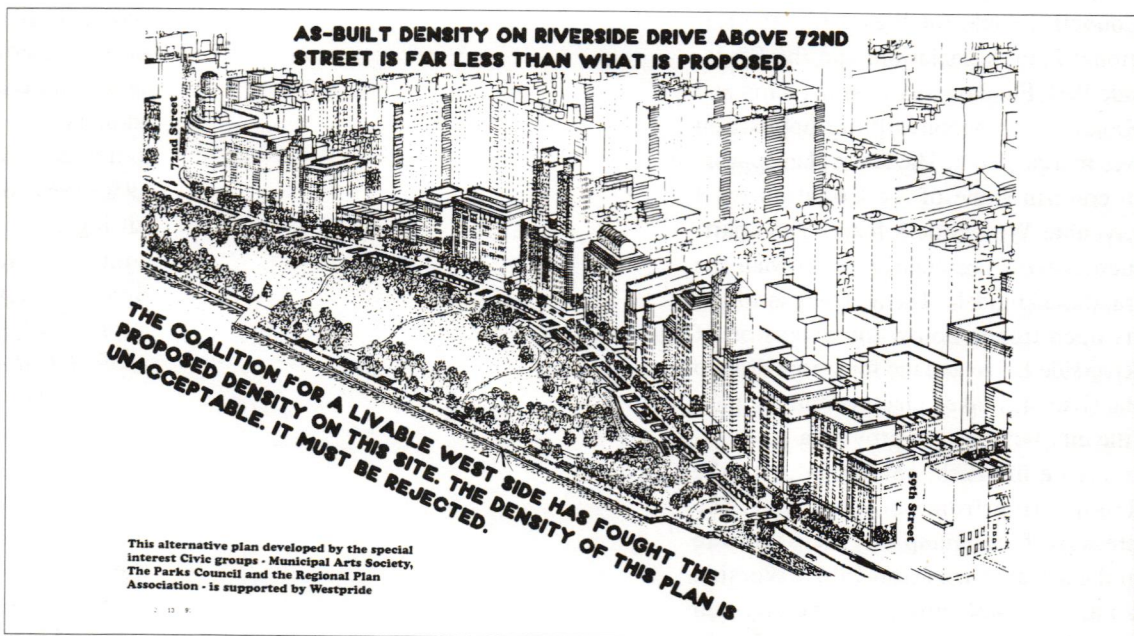
these streets often dead-end in the surrounding super blocks, which destroys the city grid like the earlier Lincoln West.⁸

The rapturous reception of the SOM/Willen version of Riverside South by the *New York Times* (which hailed the proposal as a contextual masterpiece), the developer's cooperation, the AIA's participation in the city's ULURP (Urban Land Use Review Process, which they had previously deemed inappropriate for the site), and the presence of community critics on the design team virtually ensures the approval of the scheme. Crucial to the abandonment of Trump City was the election of Ruth Messinger, long a representative of the Upper West Side, as Manhattan Borough president. Under the newly revised city charter of 1991, this borough president, an ally of Westpride, has two days in which to veto any large-scale project such as Trump City, after all approvals have been received from the City Planning Commission and Council.

The Riverside South II scheme demonstrates the flexibility of the system of small parcels, allowing the developer to follow the cautious model of the public corporation in Battery Park City. The pri-

vate developer and the community groups have been able to incorporate a variety of commercial components, which have returned to the scheme since peace broke out. The NBC "Television City" component has returned at the southern end of the site to occupy some of the vast underground territory that will be available beneath the platform of built-up city side streets and avenues. In a move unimaginable without the cooperation of the powerful Lincoln West Community Group, the tallest residential apartment buildings are now clustered in the north in front of Lincoln West, blocking cherished views. This move provides additional, valuable Riverside apartments to the developer, who has retained the large southern blocks. The move was justified on the grounds that the shadows for the tallest blocks would now fall to the north on the surrounding streets, not on the park at its widest point as in the Civic Alternative. In a gesture to Lincoln West, a new commercial avenue of shops is proposed for Independence Place, the currently bleak and inhospitable western edge of the project, creating a commercial core for the old and new communities.

Riverside South II also contains an-



Coalition for a Livable West Side poster, Riverside South Design; publicity image by Stephen S. Evanusa from the Municipal Arts Society.

other significant variation. In the southern part of the scheme, small urban squares are provided on the side streets with mid-block towers, providing a new urban pattern for New York. These squares break up the grid to provide a public garden forecourt to the unusually placed towers, thus enabling the developer to increase the residential density by ignoring the traditional West Side pattern of end block towers. The cluster of towers on the southern part of the scheme are inland from the park and their shadows fall on the surrounding residential development; the towers will have valuable river views from their upper stories. Critics have not yet commented on the nature of this radical urban innovation, its density, physical appearance, or implications for the rest of the city.

The speed and flexibility with which both Trump and the community groups responded to this altered political situation was astonishing. The besieged developer sensed a tactical opening that could no doubt be altered or abandoned later ("I saw people coming out and loving the plan. I wanted to take advantage of that.") The result was the rapid formation of the private Riverside South Development Corporation, with the Municipal Art Society, the Natural Resources Defense Council, People for Westpride, the Regional Plan Association, and the Riverside Park Fund on board with Trump and Kahan. All nonconforming opposition was marginalized. The latest plan appears to confirm some of the Coalition for a Liveable West Side's fears. The apartment towers are clearly larger than the traditional models. The highway is still in its open trench below the extension of Riverside Drive and the forty-foot drop to the river still takes place within the park (the city will need to provide a lot of fill to create the park, adding value to the Trump riverfront properties).⁹ The breakup of the Trump City megastructure and its transformation into Riverside South has implications for the city that extend beyond the immediate site. Trump City was the largest capital project in the

city, and its fragmentation into small, more manageable pieces reflects an altered political as well as economic reality.¹⁰ This is a novel combination, even for New York, where the invisible network of interests and influence has produced many strange bedfellows in the absence of any coordinated city planning.

NOTES

1. Described by Richard Babcock and Wendy Larsen in their *Special Districts: The Ultimate in Neighborhood Zoning* (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 1990).
2. S. Rubin, *Trump Tower* (Secaucus, New Jersey, 1984), pp. 22–25, 35–36.
3. "Trump, the Fall," *Newsweek*, 12 June 1990.
4. J. Taylor, "The Shadow: The Uproar over the Big Coliseum Project," *New York*, 5 Oct. 1987, pp. 41–48.
5. C. Cary, "Donald, Have We Got A Deal For You," *Westpride Update* (Spring 1991).
6. For further details see S. Marpillero, "Renascence and Illusion: Battery Park City and Other Stories," *Casabella* (November 1984): 16–29.
7. The New York AIA Chapter, *Report of the 60th Street Yards Task Force* (New York, 1990).
8. M. Christine Boyer, *Manhattan Manners* (New York, 1985), pp. 193–222, and A. Alpern, *New York's Fabulous Luxury Apartments* (New York, 1975).
9. P. Goldberger, "Lower Skyline, Higher Aspirations," and D. Dunlap, "Trump and Civic Groups Team Up To Oversee Riverside South," the *New York Times*, 14 April, 1991.
10. Governor Cuomo endorsed the plan, citing its economic benefits. See *M.A.S. Newsletter* (November 1991): 2.

Rosalyn Deutsche

Tilted Arc and the Uses of Public Space

In 1989, four years after a public hearing that many critics viewed as a show trial, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) dismantled Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*, a public sculpture the agency had installed a decade earlier in New York City's Federal Plaza. The government's action became a cause célèbre in certain sectors of the art world, especially among those left-wing critics who saw it as one episode in a neoconservative campaign to implement policies of cultural privatization, abridgment of rights, and state censorship of critical art. Briefly, the *Tilted Arc* story unfolded like this: 1979: The GSA commissions Serra to conceive a sculpture for the Federal Plaza site.

1981: Following approval of the artist's concept, *Tilted Arc* is installed.

1985: William Diamond, the GSA's New York regional administrator, appoints himself chairman of a hearing to decide whether Serra's sculpture should be, as Diamond calls it, "relocated" in order "to increase public use of the plaza"; although the majority of speakers at the hearing testify in favor of retaining *Tilted Arc*, the hearing panel recommends relocation and Dwight Ink, the GSA's acting administrator in Washington, tries in vain to find alternative sites for the sculpture. 1986–1989: Serra files several unsuccessful legal actions—based on breach-of-contract, violation of constitutional rights, and artists' moral rights claims—to prevent *Tilted Arc*'s removal.¹

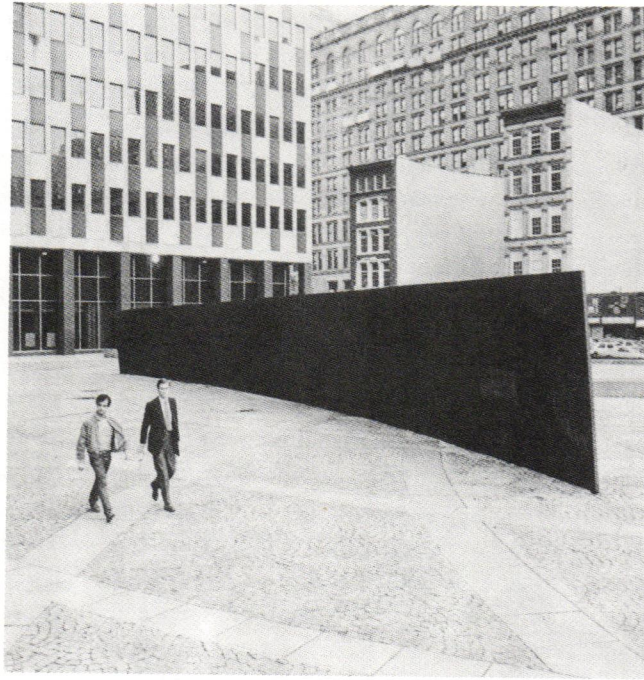
1989: *Tilted Arc* is destroyed.

Now, *The Destruction of Tilted Arc: Documents* has appeared, like an act of historic preservation. At this point, of course, the book can do nothing to save the sculpture itself. But it does preserve the record—correspondence, official memos, press releases, hearing testimonies, and legal documents—of a key conflict in a growing controversy about the

politics of contemporary public art. Clara Weyergraf-Serra and Martha Buskirk have carefully edited the papers generated in the course of the *Tilted Arc* proceedings and the publication of this primary material will provide a solid foundation for future art-historical and legal scholarship. Some readers will welcome the book for the opportunity to weigh opposing arguments and to determine, in retrospect, the merits of an individual public artwork. Most importantly, however, *The Destruction of Tilted Arc: Documents* keeps alive—and public—debates about the political issues embedded in the incident now that the case has been officially closed. The documents raise timely questions, whose implications

extend far beyond arcane art-world matters, about what it means for art and space to be “public.” And, insofar as the GSA ostensibly dismantled *Tilted Arc* in order “to increase public use of the plaza,” they pose related questions about current uses of urban space.

Despite claims to the contrary, the officials presiding over the *Tilted Arc* procedure were far from neutral on these matters. To suggest that the GSA had, in fact, decided them in advance is not to contend, as many of Serra’s supporters did, that the sculpture’s fate had been prejudged (though that may also be true). It is to say, however, that the GSA had accepted previous decisions about the meanings of the terms “use,” “public,” “public use,” and had built these precedents into the structure of the *Tilted Arc* proceedings from the start. As the editors of *The Destruction of Tilted Arc* point out, official announcements of the hearing contained an implied value judgment, framing the proposed debate as a contest between, on the one hand, *Tilted Arc*’s continued presence in the Federal Plaza and, on the other hand, increased “public use of the plaza.”² But this judgment—that the sculpture’s presence detracted



Tilted Arc, Federal Plaza, New York; Richard Serra, 1981–89. (From *The Destruction of Tilted Arc*.)

from “public use”—depended on a previous assumption that definitions of “public” and “use” are self-evident. “The public” was presupposed to be a group of aggregated individuals unified either by adherence to fundamental, objective values or by the possession of essential interests or, what amounts to the same thing, divided by equally essential conflicts. Similarly, “public use” connoted practices beneficial to all because they fulfill purportedly universal needs. The creation of such coherent categories entails, of course, the erasure of conflict, particularity, point-of-view, and difference. By removing the concepts of “public” and “use” to a realm of objectivity located not only outside the *Tilted Arc* debate but outside public debate altogether, it also eradicates public space. For what legitimates public debate on social questions if not the disappearance of external sources of meaning and the concomitant recognition that such questions are decided only *in* a public space?

That terms like “use” and “public”—employed as figures of universal accessibility—function to delegitimize conflict will hardly surprise anyone familiar with prevailing discourses about the built envi-

ronment. The GSA’s verdict, corroborating its premise that *Tilted Arc* obstructed the use of a public plaza, was inseparable from numerous other opinions handed down throughout the 1980s on the uses of public space and public art. Indeed, the *Tilted Arc* decision coincided with a pronounced movement by city governments, real estate developers, and corporations to support public art, particularly a “new public art” which—loosely defined as art that takes the form of functional urban objects like plumbing, park benches, and picnic tables or as the collaborative design of new urban spaces themselves—was celebrated precisely because of its “usefulness.” Official efforts to discredit *Tilted Arc* cannot be de-

tached, then, from attempts to portray other kinds of public art as truly public and useful. In turn, the promotion of the new public art accompanied a massive urban transformation: the redevelopment and gentrification of cities that also took place during the 1980s as part of an international spatio-economic restructuring. In this context, the *Tilted Arc* proceedings were part of a rhetoric of public benefit and utility that surrounded the redevelopment of urban space for purposes of profit maximization and state control. *Tilted Arc*, represented by its opponents as elitist, useless, even dangerous, became the standard foil against which conservative critics and city officials routinely measure the “accessibility,” “usefulness,” and “humaneness” of the new public art.³

Some of Serra’s advocates, though remaining aloof from questions of urbanization, astutely countered the argument that *Tilted Arc* obstructed the use of public space by defending the sculpture precisely because, as Rosalind Krauss argued, it “invests a major portion of its site with a use we must call aesthetic.” Because the use was aesthetic, Krauss implied, it was also public: “This aesthetic use is open to every person who

enters and leaves the buildings of this complex, and it is open to each and every one of them every day.” Relativizing concepts of use, this strategy challenged determinist notions that space has objective, monolithic, or natural uses. But it also adhered to a concept of the aesthetic as a universally accessible sphere, an idea which, reinforced by concepts of universal publics and uses, is the hallmark of mainstream accounts of public art. It is just this neutralizing vocabulary that has made public art so effective in legitimating particular uses of space—to fulfill the needs of profit, for one—as uniformly beneficial. Simply holding out the possibility of a plurality of spatial uses leaves intact the depoliticizing language of use that was the most powerful weapon wielded against *Tilted Arc*.

By contrast, *The Destruction of Tilted Arc: Documents* invites us to examine the uses of language. But the volume’s title, taking up Serra’s contention that “to remove” a work like *Tilted Arc* “is to destroy the work,” announces that the book will not simply report on, but will also engage in, discursive struggles, beginning with the contest over the meaning of site-specificity. By adopting Serra’s terminology of destruction, Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk defend a materialist approach to aesthetics invested in practices of site-specificity against current efforts to bring site-specificity into conformity with depoliticizing concepts of art. Diamond, the GSA administrator, avoided allusions to destruction, calling the sculpture’s removal a “relocation.” In fact, he presented himself as an urban preservationist who, in accordance with conservative versions of preservation, sought to *restore* a socio-spatial harmony that should have been preserved but was not. Hence, he stated that *Tilted Arc*’s “relocation” would “restore” and “reinstitute” the Federal Plaza’s openness, coherence, and public use. But Diamond’s designation of the sculpture’s removal as a “relocation” evades a crucial contradiction between, on the one hand, the modernist doctrine that aesthetic value is a stable, indepen-

dent property of self-governing art objects that can therefore be moved intact from place to place, and, on the other hand, a site-specific art practice based on the premise that meaning, arising only in context, depends on the circumstances in which art is produced and received.

Seemingly blind to this contradiction, officials who opposed *Tilted Arc* saw no incompatibility between site-specificity and the concept of a “truly public American art” outlined in the GSA’s fact sheet about the Art-in-Architecture Program for Federal Buildings. The GSA felt that the program should sponsor public art aimed at “integration” with its site—defined as a “total architectural design”—art “embellishing” federal buildings and “enhancing the building’s environment for the occupants and the general public.” But the designation of art that creates such harmonious spatial totalities as “site-specific” is so profoundly at odds with the impulses that historically motivated the growth of site-specificity that it amounts to a terminological abuse. For the commitment to developing a new kind of artwork that neither diverts attention from, nor merely decorates, the spaces of its display originated from the imperative to interrupt, not to secure, the apparent coherence and closure of those spaces. Site-specific art arose as part of a widespread movement, first, to criticize the idea that works of art are self-governing totalities and, then, to show how assumptions of autonomy disavow art’s political relations. Attention to context, however, represented a radical mutation in the form of the artwork only if artists did not replace the fetishization of the art object with a similarly fetishistic treatment of architectural, spatial, or urban environments. Or if artists avoided fetishizing “the social context” itself by treating society as a determinate entity unified hierarchically by a foundation which, extraneous to art, governs aesthetic meaning. Both these approaches reestablish, at the level of context or site, the closure of meaning that site-specificity helped challenge.

Ignoring this challenge, many of *Tilted Arc*’s opponents advocated the sculpture’s removal in order to restore coherence to the Federal Plaza site. Proponents of a *political* site-specificity, however, are skeptical about spatial coherence, viewing it not as an a priori condition but as a fiction that smoothes over the conflictual relations producing space. Henri Lefebvre, the urban theorist who coined the phrase “the production of space,” encapsulated this process when he described late capitalist space as “simultaneously the birthplace of contradictions, the milieu in which they are worked out and which they tear up, and, finally, the instrument which allows their suppression and *the substitution of an apparent coherence* [emphasis added].”⁴ In contrast to the GSA’s notion of “integration,” site-specific works become part of their sites precisely by restructuring them, by fostering a perception of the divisions and indeterminacy expelled in the creation of spatial totalities.

When Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk use the term “destruction,” they adopt an avowedly partial stand consistent with the abandonment of totalizing perspectives implicit in site-specificity itself. It should be unnecessary to point out, after so many years of cultural critiques of objectivity, that to admit partiality is not to abdicate responsibility for factual accuracy or fairness. In *The Destruction of Tilted Arc*, the reverse is the case. The book is scrupulously researched, the documents carefully footnoted, and chronology and texts painstakingly reconstructed. Far from a license to dissemble, the designation of *Tilted Arc*’s removal as a “destruction” frankly signals the editors’ desire to rescue the definition of site-specificity as a critical art practice from current reinventions of the term that make it consistent with an affirmation of artworks’ sites. Such affirmative site-specific art, imbued with an aura of social responsibility, validates a site’s social relations, legitimating spaces as public when they may actually be privately owned or, when, tolerating little resis-

tance to corporate or state-approved uses, they exclude entire social groups. The editors' admission of partiality also contrasts with the position taken by *Tilted Arc*'s most powerful opponents who claimed to speak for such certainties as "common sense," "reality," or "the people's interest." Only when participants in a debate dispense with these privileged grounds of meaning do they accept responsibility for definitions.

To support the book's argument in favor of *Tilted Arc*, the editors have framed the chronologically arranged sections of documents with footnotes and brief introductions that summarize and interpret data, provide supplementary information, or point out inaccuracies and fallacies in opponents' statements. It is, however, the editors' decision to include a general introduction written by Richard Serra himself, an extensive polemic against the GSA's arguments and subsequent court decisions dismissing Serra's appeals, that most candidly declares the book's partisanship. This frank abandonment of pretensions to documentary objectivity offered the possibility of using the prefaces to provide a commentary that would complicate and transform, as well as preserve, the *Tilted Arc* debate. Yet the editors have missed this chance, reserving the introductions for a reiteration of opinions expressed by Serra and his supporters in the documents themselves. Thus the book's intervention in public art discourse stays firmly within the boundaries that shaped—and limited—discussion in the thick of the *Tilted Arc* controversy. At that time, liberal and left-wing members of the art world who unconditionally supported *Tilted Arc* forged their arguments largely in opposition to the neoconservative polemic mobilized against the sculpture, a reactive stance with some serious risks. For, if the desire to defeat conservatism exhausts all political contests over

the meaning of public art, the problems in traditional left-wing constructions of aesthetic politics and of art's public functions will go unchallenged. Critical thought, though, is hardly united in support of these constructions and, for that matter, the left did not unanimously defend *Tilted Arc*. To give the impression that there is a self-evident unity of opinion forming the basis for opposing conservatism (a strategy that comes close to mirroring that of *Tilted Arc*'s enemies) is to issue a prescription that implicitly positions different critical ideas as fragmenting forces, giving comfort to the enemy. It is in the interests of extending public debate—and not because the book should impart an aura of disinterestedness—that the absence of a *critical* essay by someone other than Serra is regrettable.

This deficiency narrows the book's treatment of many issues. Consider, for instance, the central problem of site-specificity. Serra's introduction patiently elaborates the meaning of site-specificity and insists that, because a site-specific work incorporates its context as an essential component of the work, site-specificity implies permanence. Serra's

contention is hard to refute insofar as it is the basis for claiming that *Tilted Arc*'s removal breaches the government contract guaranteeing the sculpture's permanence and for disputing Diamond's invention of definitions that make site-specificity compatible with "relocation" or "adjustment." Still, the link between site-specificity and permanence is a complicated one and the simple equation of the two diverges in important ways from the principles of materialist art practice. To the extent that site-specific projects address the relational, not absolute, character of meaning, they imply instability and impermanence. The book's failure to differentiate among diverse claims of "permanence" perpetuates a slippage made repeatedly in the Serra camp throughout the hearing process. At that time, unqualified references to the intrinsic permanence of site-specific works fostered a blurring of distinctions between, on the one hand, the anti-essentialist tenets of site-specificity, and, on the other hand, liberal platitudes that "great art" is eternal and possesses "enduring qualities." In the second case, permanence is given the properties of an essence. The belief in art's timelessness—its independence of historical conditions—is precisely the idea that contextualist practices challenged in the first place. This is no trivial confusion. Allowing site-specific art to move into a realm of transhistorical continuities, it neutralizes—just as Diamond's "relocation" proposal did—the very shift in contemporary art that decisively opened the artwork to history, politics, everyday life, wresting it out of an eternal sphere superior to the rest of the social world. Not surprisingly, the shoring up of *Tilted Arc*'s unconditional "permanence," and therefore its aesthetic privilege, accompanied a tendency for *Tilted Arc*'s defenders to evade questions of elitism.

It has been traditional for some left-wing voices in the art world



Federal Plaza after the destruction of *Tilted Arc*. (From *The Destruction of Tilted Arc*.)

to deal inadequately with issues of elitism or democracy, even to dismiss them out of hand. This dismissal parallels a tendency prevalent until recently in broader left politics where discussions of democracy have often concentrated on exposing the mystifications of formal democracy or proposing “concrete” socialist alternatives while ignoring the undemocratic character, not only of existing socialist regimes, but of the left’s own theoretical constructions. Among artists and critics, the failure to “take democracy seriously” springs in part from the pressure the left has felt to defend itself against attacks from the right which consistently employs anti-intellectual and populist strategies to legitimate *as democratic* their campaigns against critical art and theory.

Populist pressures were strong during the *Tilted Arc* hearing. A survey of the documents illuminates the extent to which a stepped-up rhetoric of democracy pervaded the debate. Indeed, public art discourse has become one site of a far more extensive struggle over the meaning of democracy, a struggle that has erupted dramatically over the last few years in political movements, social theories, and cultural practices. When it comes to public art, even neoconservative critics, usually so fearful of “democratic excess” and surely no strangers to elitism, routinely disparage critical artworks under the banners of anti-elitism and democracy. The denigration of art’s “arrogance” and “inaccessibility” enables neoconservatives to champion privatization and to justify state censorship in the name of the rights of “the people.”

The *Tilted Arc* proceedings exemplified this inversion, combining talk of governmental accountability to the public with action by the government in its “private” capacity. From the beginning, the GSA emphasized its responsibility to protect the people from *Tilted Arc*’s “private” encroachment on public space. Diamond mobilized this protectionist discourse on the day the sculpture was dismantled: “Now,” he declared, “the plaza returns rightfully to the people.” Later,

however, the courts protected the government as a property-owning entity. They dismissed Serra’s claims that he had been denied due process in the form of a fair, impartial hearing and that the GSA’s decision violated his First Amendment rights which prohibit the government from removing a medium of expression on the basis of its content once it has been publicly displayed. Reflecting a legal tendency with potentially staggering effects on the exercise of free speech rights, the judge for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit argued that because the government owned the sculpture and the Federal Plaza Serra was never constitutionally entitled to a hearing: due process is thus a “benefit” rather than a right. Serra then claimed, again unsuccessfully, that, against the rights of private ownership, he has moral rights as an artist in the work. Yet the GSA complicated the opposition that is frequently drawn between private interests and moral rights by asserting that the government owned the work and the plaza *as the people*: “This space belongs to the government and to the public. It doesn’t belong to the artist . . . he doesn’t have the right to force his art upon the public forever.”

Tilted Arc’s proponents spoke for democracy, too. Some upheld the right of free artistic expression or, like Abigail Solomon-Godeau, eloquently deplored the denial of due process inherent in Diamond’s prejudgment of the case. Benjamin Buchloh stressed the democratic necessity of independent peer review as a guarantee against statism and collective prejudice, and Clara Weyergraf-Serra spoke out against the totalitarian dangers in appeals to the people’s “healthy instincts.” The advocates of *Tilted Arc* thus argued persuasively, and I think justifiably, against a government intervention that could be a textbook example of what Stuart Hall terms “authoritarian populism”: the mobilization of democratic discourses to sanction, indeed to pioneer, shifts toward authoritarianism. Serra’s supporters insistently exposed the manner

in which state officials used the language of democracy and such democratic procedures as public hearings and petitions to bind popular consent to the coercive pole of state power in so-called public spaces. The importance of their doing so can hardly be overestimated. In New York, as in other cities, authoritarian populist measures, linked up with anticrime campaigns—the very strategies rallied against *Tilted Arc*—authorize the proliferation of pseudo or private public spaces.

Still, beyond the challenge they raised to authoritarian populist notions of public art and to the trivializing reduction of public spaces to harmonious leisure spots or places to eat lunch, and beyond their espousal of formal rights, Serra’s supporters made few efforts to articulate concepts of democracy, public art or public space in a more radical direction. Insofar as *The Destruction of Tilted Arc: Documents* perpetuates this omission, it abandons public art discourse as a site of struggle over the meaning of democracy. In fact, although Serra alludes briefly to the crucial difference between “community” and “public,” *The Destruction of Tilted Arc* makes little effort to theorize the public. The introductions do not, for instance, elaborate the suggestion, broached in both Douglas Crimp’s and Joel Kovel’s hearing testimonies, that a distinction between public space and the state apparatus is essential to democracy. Nor do they amplify the implications for public art of Kovel’s point that democratic public space must be understood not as a realm of unity but of divisions, conflicts, and differences resistant to regulatory power. The *Tilted Arc* controversy is never linked to current efforts to recast public art as work that helps *constitute* public spaces in the sense of discursive arenas of political debate. And although Serra’s work might well be classified as public because it addresses a viewing subject formed outside itself, in a system of relations, the book never asks, Who is the subject of democratic public space?

Given the neglect of this last question,

it is hardly accidental that throughout the Serra debate lack of attention to critical issues about public space and democracy has been coupled with a failure to challenge substantially either the myth of "great art" or its corollary, the myth of the great artist. In fact, *Tilted Arc*'s left-wing supporters have frequently relied, almost by default, on other versions of these myths—political-aesthetic vanguardism and the exemplary political artist. Consequently, they have offered only a limited and problematic alternative to authoritarian populist concepts of public art. Vanguardism, built on a belief in sovereign subjects whose superior social vision can penetrate illusions and perceive the people's fundamental interests, has itself been charged with authoritarianism—and even with the attempt to eliminate public space. For public space, according to new theories of radical democracy is the uncertain, political realm where, in the absence of absolutist foundations of social coherence, the meaning of the social is both constructed and put at risk. *The Destruction of Tilted Arc* is valuable for its vigorous defense of public space against neoconservatism, privatization, and state control as well as for its scrupulous, intelligent presentation of documents illuminating the current state of public art discourse. But it is also such a document itself, revealing that if we want to extend rather than close down public space, it is to theories of democracy that we should turn.

NOTES

1. For a discussion of moral rights, see Martha Buskirk, "Moral Rights: First Step or False Start?" *Artforum* 29, no. 7 (July 1991): 37–45.
2. *The Destruction of Tilted Arc: Documents*, p. 22.
3. For an analysis of the relationships between discourses of utility and urban redevelopment, see, Rosalyn Deutsche, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City," *October*, no. 47 (Winter 1988): 3–52.
4. Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace* (Paris: Anthropos, 1974), p. 420.

THE DESTRUCTION OF TILTED ARC: DOCUMENTS, Clara Weyergraf-Serra and Martha Buskirk, editors, introduction by Richard Serra, MIT Press, 1991, 287 pp., illus., \$16.95 paper.

Susan Christopherson
New York Noir

"Why do Americans so hate cities?" This question was posed to me by a French woman in response to what she saw as the purposeful destruction of New York City. To an American urbanist, this is an old question with easy historical answers. What my French friend saw and made me reflect on, however, was the new urban pessimism and its consequences for the future of urban life in all its unavoidable disorder.

According to postmodern sensibility, the city, i.e., New York City, is dark and satanic, full of chaos and danger. Almost completely absent from contemporary depictions are the other faces of the city, those Elizabeth Wilson has described in *The Sphinx in the City* as a disguise, a refuge, an adventure, a home. Wilson echoes Richard Sennett's paen to urban disorder twenty years ago in *The Uses of Disorder*. Both Wilson and Sennett emphasize the liberatory aspects of urban life and the uses of conflicts in culture and values. And, in the tradition of urban intellectuals, they contrast the potential for greater freedom and diversity in the city with the more restricted life lived in towns and suburbs.

In the contemporary American urban idiom the positive face of urban disorder has been obscured even to those who are drawn to the city to escape conventional mores. Fear and fatalism are vaguely directed at the city itself as though dangerous streets, failing infrastructure, and legions of street people were somehow natural extrusions of the urban organism.

Perhaps because of the unfocused nature of contemporary urban pessimism, much of what is written about the city leaves the interpreter of "the urban" resorting to images with only a passing resemblance to material reality. This dilemma permeates *Dual City*, an anthology, edited by Manuel Castells and John Mollenkopf, describing and analyzing various facets of New York City in the

1980s. Reading this volume, one constantly faces the inadequacy of its central concept, dualism. The editors themselves assume contradictory positions—"a rigorous analysis of social stratification would lead us to conclude that New York is not a dual city. The occupational system cannot be reduced to the top and bottom of the urban social structure," and "New York's extraordinary cultural mosaic certainly cannot be reduced to two cultures," and again, "From a spatial perspective, New York is increasingly dual and increasingly plural." Contradiction reigns.

Possibly the most important article in *Dual City* is by Bailey and Waldinger, on the changing ethnic and racial division of labor in New York. They point to the extraordinary influx of immigrants into the city in the 1980s as a demonstration of continuing economic vitality, albeit not in a form measurable by conventional means. This influx is diverse in origins and has taken place during a period of middle-class white flight to the emerging suburban cities, now the loci of job growth and, not incidentally, places to escape from the urban. The new immigrants play complex roles in New York City, in some cases using the city instrumentally rather than being incorporated within it. The highly differentiated positions of immigrant groups vis à vis each other and native Hispanic and African American populations belie easy categorization. They also defy stereotypes that portray immigrants as a servant class imported to meet the needs of the urban bourgeoisie. Although captured most effectively in Bailey and Waldinger's analysis of race, ethnicity, and class, the complexity of contemporary New York is reflected again and again in the essays in *Dual City* on the media, politics, and neighborhood change.

Although the concept of "the dual city" is unable to capture the dynamic processes reshaping New York City, there is nothing thus far to replace it. We remain captives of a distorting and almost wholly negative image. So, *Dual City* teaches us something about the contem-



Northwest corner of Westchester Avenue and Kelly Street, South Bronx, April 1981; photograph by Camilo José Vergara.

porary urban situation through its own contradiction—between its title and its more complex evidence. It reminds us that we choose from a stream of conflicting representations to characterize urban life. And, sometimes representations tell us more about the social mood than about the realities of life for urban dwellers. It is in this way that visions of contemporary New York mirror a dark social vision of the possibilities of the urban.

The essential “New York *noir*” is represented in films and novels such as *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, but it extends into the entire range of ways in which the city is interpreted and depicted. *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism* represents a quite different manifestation of the antiurban social and cultural milieu. The book documents a project by Martha Rosler intended to explore issues of housing, community,

homelessness, and urban planning through art, public discussion, and documentary research. The series of exhibits and town meetings that made up the project was conducted under the auspices of the DIA Foundation. In Rosler’s description of the conception of the project, there is a sense, that (high) cultural New York had somehow escaped unscathed from the urban nightmare. This suggested (to some minds at least) the need to bring these issues into the cultural sphere.

As it happens, one of the most confusing aspects of this effort is its relation to art. There is an explicit argument in the book that exhibits and displays had something to do with art and that art and artists could be relevant to issues such as homelessness and vice versa. In a provocative opening chapter, Rosalyn Deutsche describes this relationship in terms of new aesthetic strategies, refor-

mulating the problem of context into a scrutiny of artistic texts, subjects, and spaces. Her critique of art institutions and the social production of art opens new issues in the art/society dialogue. Although there is much to say about the control and use of artistic expression by the market, it is more difficult to make the connection between artistic expression and the kinds of activities represented by the Rosler project. Cognitive responses to art are very different from those to exhibits whose conscious intent is to educate or to raise consciousness of a social problem. This is not to say that art and society are distinct, but that it is the very implicitness of “society” in an artist’s work or in a genre that adds to its mystery and interest. As social objectives and society become more explicit, the range of potential interpretations diminishes.

The actual distance between social



Northwest corner of Westchester Avenue and Kelly Street, South Bronx, May 1983; photograph by Camilo José Vergara.

documentary and art is manifested in one of the central works in this series of exhibits, the photographs of Camilo José Vergara. Vergara's photographs document the demise of New York's housing in the 1980s. Their effect is that of a visualized set of statistics, showing, for example, the destruction of a building through a series of photographs over time. These images are intended to produce a quite explicit intellectual response. By contrast, consider photographs such as those by Walker Evans, images that live in our minds not because of what they tell us but because of their power and mystery as images. We respond to them differently each time we see them.

So there is an unresolved and perhaps unresolvable strain between art and documentary in this series of exhibits, with documentary clearly preeminent. One way this strain shows is in the conversa-

tions recorded in the volume: the role of artist is generally reduced to that of social agent, dupe of the developer, and "pregentrifier" of Soho. And, there are problems and preconceptions about the audience. One of Martha Rosler's intentions in siting the exhibits in an art district was to challenge the supposed polarity between social and cultural space. She wanted to reach an audience outside the "usual" art audience, to construct a new audience. A new audience presupposes that there are distinct audiences for art and for social documentary. This is too simple, too dualistic, especially in a city such as New York. The spirit behind the siting of the exhibit seems more an attempt to *épater la bourgeoisie* than to reach out to a new audience.

Even if we question its relation to art, *If You Lived Here* works effectively as

complex documentary. As such, it offers some interesting insights into the paradoxes of postmodern urban pessimism. Throughout the exhibits and the book, there is a plaintive sense of the "de-humanization" of the homeless and a desire to make them into "real" people instead of bodies to step over and around. This desire to humanize and particularize is problematic in the context of a sensibility that rejects "the dead hand of universalism," and glorifies multiple others. In this context, we don't see any T-shirts emboldened, "It's a homeless thing. You wouldn't understand." The objective here is to include rather than exclude, to connect rather than to assert difference. This necessity is rather ironic, given the continuous assertion of difference in contemporary American culture. In the depiction of the homeless or of the urban poor, the creation of a sense of connection depends



Northwest corner of Westchester Avenue and Kelly Street, South Bronx, October 1987; photograph by Camilo José Vergara.

on a visual syntax that tells us “these people are like me.” Or, even if the poor and homeless are different, my ethical survival depends on their well-being. In other words, to humanize is to appeal to the universal rather than to the particular. So, while they are perhaps not “family of man” images, we are presented here with a visual syntax that conveys humanness—the brave smile, the resistant posture, pride of ownership.

The other interesting vehicle for humanizing the homeless and overcoming the boundary of the other is to claim common victimization. Peter Marcuse’s quote is indicative: “Homelessness exists not because the housing system is not working but because this is the way it works.” We are all in this together, all victims—of planning, of politics, of capitalism. This claim to common victimization says more about the sense of urban travail among the New York middle classes than it does about the working poor and homeless. Again, we can speculate about the mood underlying this sense of victimization. In previous periods of extensive homelessness, such as the 1930s, the middle classes may have felt sympathy and pity, but they did not con-

nect the plight of the homeless or the poor generally with their own situation as urban dwellers. In contemporary New York City, the opposite is true. This identification as common victims of the city will not make a city worth living in, however, without a concomitant revitalization of the positive values of urban life. Paradoxically, some of these positive values arise from the same sources as urban problems. As it is, New York *noir*, the contemporary urban pessimism, encourages exit rather than either voice or loyalty, and so makes it less possible to address urban problems.

THE SPHINX IN THE CITY: URBAN LIFE, THE CONTROL OF DISORDER, AND WOMEN, Elizabeth Wilson, University of California Press, 1992, 191 pp., illus., \$14.00.

DUAL CITY: RESTRUCTURING NEW YORK, John Mollenkopf and Manuel Castells, editors, Russell Sage, 1991, 256 pp., illus., \$29.95.

IF YOU LIVED HERE: THE CITY IN ART, THEORY, AND SOCIAL ACTIVISM, Brian Wallis, editor, Bay Press, 1991, 312 pp., illus., \$16.95.

Michael R. Corbett

A History of Housing in New York City

RICHARD PLUNZ

Alone Together

ELIZABETH COLLINS CROMLEY

In *A History of Housing in New York City: Dwelling Type and Social Change in the American Metropolis*, Richard Plunz observes that for most of its history, the American architectural profession has turned its back on housing: the profession has preferred the monumental and the unique rather than the ordinary and repetitive. One could make a similar statement about architectural historians and the writing of architectural and urban history.

Although there are more residential buildings in the United States than any other kind of building and most of our urban land has been developed for residential purposes, only in the last decade have architectural historians begun to address the history and meaning of this great mass of construction. Since 1980 there have been several good books on different aspects of this subject, including Gwendolyn Wright’s *Moralism and the Model Home* (1980) and *Building the Dream* (1981), Dolores Hayden’s *The Grand Domestic Revolution* (1981), Kenneth T. Jackson’s *Crabgrass Frontier* (1985), Sally McMurray’s *Families and Farmhouses in Nineteenth-Century America* (1988), and several shorter pieces generally thought of as vernacular studies; but still most architectural history is about particular designers, works, periods, or styles of individualistic, high-style design. Rather than a concern for the dominant features of cities, architectural historians as a group have continued to emphasize the study of elite design and designers for a small segment of society.

On the level of particular cities this is largely true as well. Until 1990, no com-

prehensive study of housing in New York existed. (There are several studies of aspects of New York's housing history—*Bricks and Brownstones: The New York Rowhouse 1783–1929* by Charles Lockwood [1972]; *A Place Called Home: A History of Low-Cost Housing in Manhattan* by Anthony Jackson [1976]; *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street: Housing and Social Change Among Italian Immigrants, 1880–1930* by Donna R. Gabaccia [1984]; and *Manhattan for Rent, 1785–1850* by Elizabeth Blackmar [1989]). Nor was it easy to find published material about virtually the only thing one could see walking down almost any street in Manhattan, the Bronx, and most of the rest of the city—apartment buildings. The absence of such studies of the most conspicuous buildings in our daily lives is especially astonishing once we've crossed that invisible threshold and looked back at what we've ignored.

The reasons architectural historians have not dealt with the history of housing parallel Plunz's statement about architects and his fascinating discussion about the development of the architectural profession in association with groups of artists, rather than with groups of engineers. Architectural history as a field emerged from art history, and the concerns of ar-

chitectural historians have been focused on the art of architecture rather than its production or meaning in a social context. The absence of an interest in housing has been part of a larger blindness about the history of cities, and about the histories of particular cities. Without realizing it, we looked predominantly at the buildings of the upper middle class, designed by upper middle-class architects, as if that were the whole of the history of architecture, neglecting most of what was built.

The two books under review about residential architecture in New York City speak not only to the particular case of New York, but also to the larger history of American residential architecture. Plunz's *A History of Housing in New York City* is a comprehensive history of housing since the mid-19th century. Elizabeth Collins Cromley's *Alone Together: A History of New York's Early Apartments* is a study of a particular important episode in that larger history of housing.

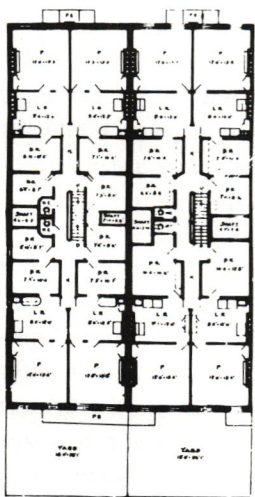
Plunz, an architect and a professor of architecture at Columbia University, has a long-standing interest in the history of housing. He is the editor of *Housing Form and Public Policy in the United States* (1980); *Design and the Public*

Good: Selected Writings by Serge Chermayeff, 1933–1980; and the author of numerous articles about housing in New York. Work on this latest book began in 1976 and is the outgrowth of several courses at Columbia University. It was published in a shorter form in French in 1980. The book is organized in ten chapters are profusely illustrated, mostly with plans.

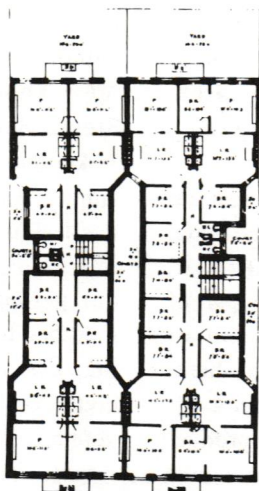
A History of Housing in New York City is an ambitious study of an immense subject. The book outlines and analyzes the spectrum of housing in New York from about 1850, "when the city moved out of the shadows of its colonial origin," to the present. Plunz's method is to establish a "typology" of housing in which he identifies row houses, tenements, hotels, apartment buildings, apartment hotels, philanthropic housing, garden apartments, private and publicly assisted suburban single-family developments, and public housing of numerous sorts. He analyzes these in various contexts, including politics, architectural ideas, social structure, housing advocacy and other public attitudes, legislation, economic conditions, financing, and so forth, for the primary purpose of helping to "clarify distinctions between the architectural and social dimension of the history of housing."

This method enables us to go beyond the typically superficial formal analysis of this subject to an understanding of housing as a physical product of complex social and cultural conditions. Historically, it enables us to see the whole texture of housing at any point in the past. For the present, it illuminates the variables that are inevitably part of the creation of housing. This is a history of housing, but it arises from a concern about contemporary housing problems.

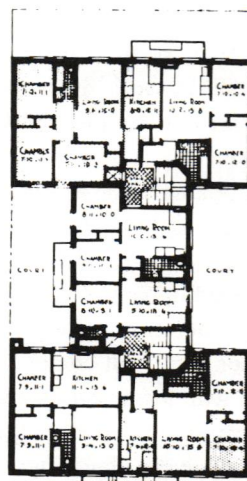
Despite the daunting complexity of the subject, Plunz writes with confidence and clarity, without oversimplifying issues. He observes that some aspects of this history are conscious and planned, others are unconscious and unplanned. There are some rather predictably recurring villains



Railroad type old law tenement; 85% of land covered.



Dumbbell type of old law tenement; 82% of land covered.



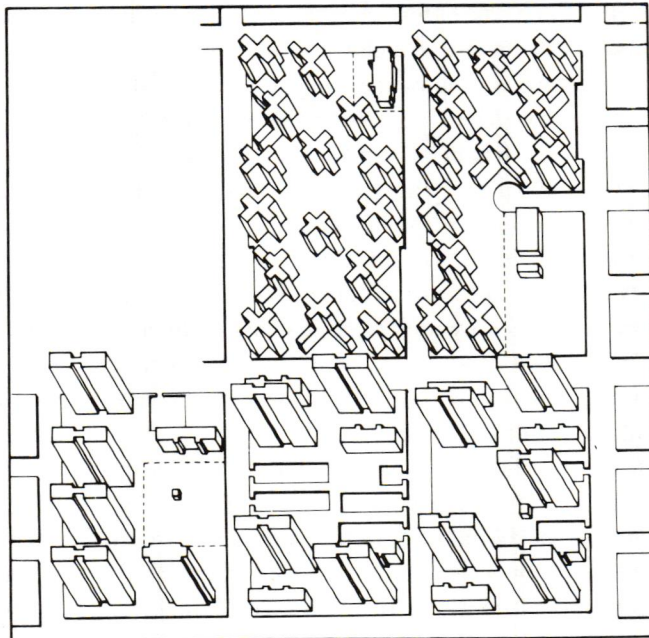
New Law tenements; 70% of land covered. Erected by a limited dividend company.

Evolution of the New York City tenement plan from railroad flat to the dumbbell, to a New Law plan. (From *A History of Housing in New York City*.)

in the story, but he acknowledges their contributions when they occur, while he subjects the effort of the more honorable to exacting criticism. This is not a *Power Broker* kind of book where the case is stacked against the villains, nor is it a polemic. Rather, it is a complex picture of a subject that is sometimes almost hopelessly depressing and, at other times, exciting for its achievements.

In addition to a chronological history that includes many specific housing projects, there are numerous threads in the narrative that have implications for areas outside the history of housing in New York. While Plunz talks about the uniqueness of New York's "culture of housing" (unlike other American cities, New York has a long history and established culture of *housing* rather than *houses*), at the same time, this story is a touchstone for understanding the history of housing in the United States and in other American cities. Because of New York's unique position among American cities ("the American metropolis"), just about anything that happened anywhere happened here first—both the worst slums and the solutions to them were products of New York. Also, because so much American journalism—including architectural journalism—has been based in New York, much of what happened here was known elsewhere and, for good or bad, was a reference point. In a more practical sense, the book is useful for anyone interested in the history of housing elsewhere as a fully (almost) indexed reference to well-known projects, practitioners, and legislation.

The history of housing in New York turns out to be a useful lens to look at several other important subjects, including the history of New York City, the history of the American architectural profession, the canon of significant architects in America, and modernism and the



Van Dyck Houses (fourteen-story slabs, below; Isadore and Zachary Rosenfield, 1955) and Brownsville Houses (three- to six-story cross plan, above; Frederick G. Frost, 1948), Brooklyn. Within two years of its completion, Van Dyck developed social problems which were far more serious than anything experienced at Brownsville. (From *A History of Housing in New York City*.)

International Style. As a history of New York City, this presents a glimpse of the quality of the daily lives of the whole spectrum of city residents throughout New York's history, from dwellers at Gotham Court, a grim, multiunit tenement built for the poor in 1850 with a basement and interior rooms that had no natural light and "air holes for subterranean water closets" along a narrow dark alley, to Lewis Mumford at Sunnyside Gardens, to the "young urban professional" of the 1980s in his outlandishly priced two-room apartment at Trump Tower.

Looking at the American architectural profession through its relation to housing, Plunz presents a view of the AIA, founded in New York in 1857, as part of an association of architecture with art rather than with engineering, and therefore with the ornamentation of buildings for an elite clientele rather than production of routine buildings and spaces, like housing. The early dominance of the profession and architectural education by proponents of the methods and ideas taught at the Ecole des Beaux Arts gave

impetus to this direction. In an important exception, during the 1920s a generation of architects, many of whom worked in the first federal housing programs during World War I, turned enthusiastically toward housing in the most productive and successful period for housing design and construction. Even the AIA strongly supported housing efforts in this period and through the Depression and World War II. Then, after World War II, the profession generally lost interest in housing, when it was lured into more lucrative commercial work in a boom period. Plunz observes that the American architectural profession for much of its history has been worse than a neutral bystander in resolving housing problems—it has considered housing beneath the concern of architects and at

times has worked against housing programs.

Who were the architects who have played a significant role in the design and development of housing in New York City? Although there are exceptions, most have been relatively unknown or recognized for other aspects of their work. Plunz discusses in particular the work of Edward T. Potter, Ernest Flagg, Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes, Grosvenor Atterbury, Henry Atterbury Smith, Andrew Thomas, James Ford, Clarence Stein, Henry Wright, and Frederick Ackerman. Potter and Ackerman, for example, developed the role of research in the design of housing. Others developed important plan types or refinements. If our perspective on architecture were modified by a full consideration of housing, these and other architects around the country would be viewed with greater appreciation than many now recognized largely for their accomplishments with style.

Looking at the acceptance of European modernism in the United States in relation to housing, Plunz sees Hitchcock

and Johnson's *The International Style* and its associated exhibition of 1932 as representing "a watershed for the dominant ideology of the next half century." Even the most socially progressive American housing of the 1920s often relied on traditional stylistic motifs (Plunz calls this "scenographic"), but in the 1930s it would become ornamentally simplified. Housing was not considered by Hitchcock and Johnson to be generally fertile ground for true architecture. They engineered the acceptance of the International Style: "In the depths of the Great Depression this new architectural expression was seen as an affirmation of the potential for renewal of the capitalist system along liberal humanitarian lines."

Not least, *A History of Housing in New York City* is a timely essay on housing that should stimulate thinking about the current housing mess in this country. Among other things, when Plunz says that there has not been an exhibition on housing "of such size and scope" in New York since that of the Charity Organization Society of Lawrence Veiller in 1900, it is an indication of the status of housing for the poor in America today.

This book is especially important because it directly addresses concerns beyond those of specialists. It is a shame that Columbia University Press didn't take extra care to make the book more accessible. In view of the scope of its subject and the mass of material presented, it would have benefited in readability and usefulness by the insertion of subheadings within each chapter, by a summary chapter, and by a chronology identifying major events, legislation, competitions, and buildings. All of these things might have been suggested by a good editor; one wonders if an editor was involved at all given the large number of lapses, including typographical errors, missing words, extra words, outright misspellings of proper names and other words, the transposition of captions, missing footnotes, the use of undefined terms and architectural studio jargon, and occasional leaps in logic.

Alone Together: A History of New York's Early Apartments by Elizabeth Collins Cromley looks at a much narrower slice of the history of housing in New York. Its subject is the creation and early development of the modern middle-class apartment building that took place from the 1860s to about 1910. While this is a narrower subject, it is a special one and well worth its own detailed study. Whereas *A History of Housing in New York City*, with its broader brush, is more concerned with the ways housing has been created, *Alone Together* looks at one time in this whole story when an important new housing type was developed.

Cromley brings the tools of an architectural historian aware of recent trends in scholarship to her subject. Her chief sources, she says, are factual and graphic for the physical dimension of her history, and from literature and language for its mental or cultural dimension. In addition, her own experience living in New York apartments enriches her insights into the ways they were used and experienced historically.

The central idea of the book is that the creation of middle-class apartment buildings, more than anything else, required a significant cultural adjustment, an acceptance of apartments as meeting the criteria for a "home" and a socially acceptable place to live.

The book's six well-illustrated chapters are helpfully organized under subheadings. It begins with a picture of the tradition of shared dwellings in New York in the first half of the 19th century. Hotels are the best-known examples and the most socially acceptable for elements of the middle and upper classes. But also extremely common were the innumerable row houses whose principal tenants took lodgers or boarders to help make ends meet, floors for rent in row houses, and subdivided row houses operated as commercial boardinghouses. At the low end of the socioeconomic scale, as early as the 1820s, multifamily dwellings, already called tenements, were built for the purpose. When the idea of multifamily

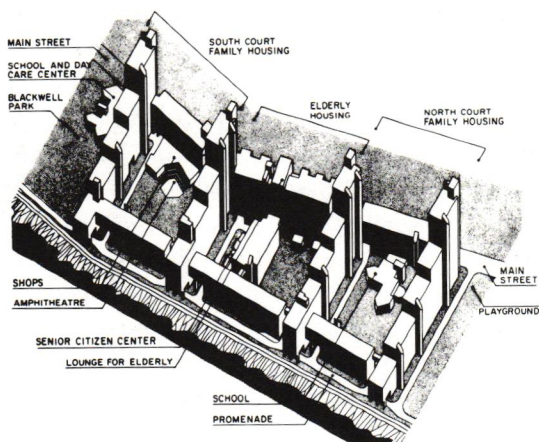
dwellings for the middle class was proposed in the press and elsewhere, there were two kinds of positive models or reference points: the single-family house and Parisian apartments; and one negative model: the tenement. The single-family house embodied the qualities needed for the popular idea of a "home," including privacy and identity.

The Parisian apartment was a commodious place in the city, whose drawbacks to Americans were largely cultural (bedrooms off public rooms suggested immoral behavior), but which was otherwise considered comfortable, well planned, and respectable. On the other hand, the tenement represented squalor, contamination, disease, and lack of social status. Efforts to improve the tenement came just as apartments were beginning to catch on.

Despite numerous claims for the honor, it isn't possible to identify a "first" apartment building. The first well-known apartment building was Richard Morris Hunt's Stuyvesant Apartments of 1870. Many of the first generation of apartments were built on the same size lots as



The New York "ring" of devastation that surrounds Manhattan; shading indicates areas which have experienced a population loss of more than 40 percent since the 1960s. (From *A History of Housing in New York City*.)



Eastwood complex, Roosevelt Island, New York; Sert, Jackson, and Associates, 1976. (From *A History of Housing in New York City*.)

row houses and tenements (25 × 100 feet) and contained one apartment per floor. These were called French Flats, to associate them with Parisian apartments rather than tenements (which many of them resembled). The development of French Flats was accompanied by a struggle to come to terms with this new kind of home and its different associations with deeply held ideas about home. This struggle was carried out in the press, in literature, in marketing campaigns, and in private lives. With a growing acceptance of apartments, increasing sophistication in their planning and design, and the construction of larger, elevator buildings in the 1880s and 1890s, apartment buildings began significantly to shape the appearance and life of the city. By the turn of the century, apartment buildings were universally accepted as suitable for the middle class, and they were thoroughly assimilated into the life of the city. By 1910, with the introduction of additional technology, the modern apartment, recognizable to us today as the same kind of place we live in, had been developed.

This is a well-written, well-organized, well-edited, and attractive book. The author does a good job of presenting and analyzing the important cultural transformations essential to the creation and acceptance of apartment houses and

apartment-house living by the middle class in New York. Other factors—real estate economics, technology, transportation, construction costs, class mobility, population growth, and geography—are acknowledged, but cultural resistance to change followed by acceptance of new ideas about home, social relationships, and city life are emphasized over all these: “With decades of experience, New Yorkers recognized the new possibility that multifamily apartment houses could be the best settings for modern family life.”

As much as this cultural change was a central element in the acceptance and development of apartment buildings, however, the emphasis seems misplaced. What choices were available to the middle class? Wasn’t the situation in 1900–1910 more a matter of accommodation to given conditions rather than any choice made for “the best settings for modern family life”? From the larger perspective of housing history, the fundamental conditions seem to be those of rapid population growth, constricted geography, and developing technologies of transportation and architecture. Although his analysis is not nearly so detailed on this matter, I think Plunz was closer to the truth about the ultimate success of middle-class apartment buildings when he asserts the importance of the elevator and other technologies. A more convincing answer to this question might also come from a closer study of real estate economics and land development processes.

A HISTORY OF HOUSING IN NEW YORK CITY: DWELLING TYPE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE AMERICAN METROPOLIS, Richard Plunz, Columbia University Press, 1990, 480 pp., illus., \$45.00.

ALONE TOGETHER: A HISTORY OF NEW YORK’S EARLY APARTMENTS, Elizabeth Collins Cromley, Cornell University Press, 1990, 252 pp., illus., \$24.95.

E. Perry Winston

New York’s Infill Housing: The Weaver’s Tale

Any public focus on the urban housing crisis is to be welcomed in this age of benign neglect, but when two design competitions for low-income housing occur in the same city within two years, this is in itself a noteworthy event. In 1985, as federal expenditures for publicly-assisted housing production were approaching zero, the New York State Council of the Arts, in collaboration with various city and neighborhood organizations, sponsored “Inner City Infill,” a national design competition for infill housing in Harlem. Before the results of this event could be published, the Architectural League of New York, together with the city’s Department of Housing, Preservation, and Development (HPD), sponsored “Vacant Lots,” another design competition for ten different vacant lots scattered throughout four boroughs of New York City. The competitions’ sponsors, together with Princeton Architectural Press, have published books on both events, in good time to ride the wavelet of optimism generated by the passage of the National Housing Act of 1990, the first significant new Federal housing legislation in twenty-five years. The Housing Act includes \$1.5 billion for the new HOME Investment Partnership program for construction of new homes and rental units, with 15 percent set aside for community-based housing developers. Infill housing is at a scale particularly suited to these organizations, and these two books provide a valuable means of helping developers and designers to understand the task at hand.

Reweaving the Urban Fabric: Approaches to Infill Housing is a collection of essays that uses the entries to the 1985 Inner City Infill competition as a springboard for a discussion of the housing crisis in general and of infill housing in particular. The result is an interesting mix of social history, public forum, respon-

sible architecture, and sociopolitical analysis coming at a time when all are in short supply.

The introduction by Peter Marcuse expresses clearly the anger and frustration felt in the mid-1980s by designers and planners in the face of the “melange of cruelty, neglect, and sybaritism that housing in the United States has become.” He sees the competition—and infill housing—as an opportunity for architects to play a role in changing things by designing in “a humane and life-respecting fashion.” The next two essays present the site, program, and selected designs by the entrants. Ghislaine Hermanuz highlights the current issues facing housing in Harlem: long-term affordability for current residents of the neighborhood, changing patterns of user needs, and the creation of job opportunities along with home creation (construction, maintenance, furniture-making). While accepting that the physical reality of the site necessitates a mix of rehab and new construction, she makes an excellent point that such a mix “implies a choice between reinforcing the expression of class structure in the physical environment, by relegating the poor once again

to refurbished tenements, while the new housing is slated for the better-offs, or inventing a new physical order to represent a more equitable distribution of space according to need rather than ability to consume.” She holds that infill housing is the best opportunity to create a housing type capable of responding to all these pressures.

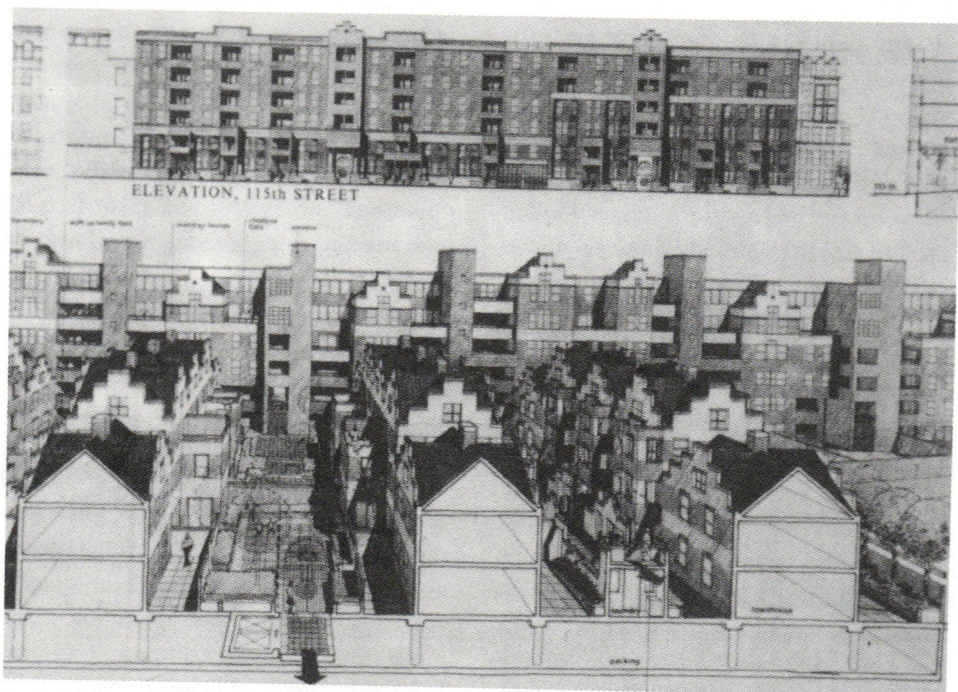
Accordingly, the program called for prototypes that were replicable yet flexible for different sites, that could accommodate nontraditional households, that attempted to redefine the spatial relationship between the public and private realm, and that were affordable. Her essay ends with a summary of the various development strategies open to the entrants mixed with illustrations showing how some designs responded to these choices.

Marta Gutman’s essay begins with an insightful statement of the advantages of infill development over high-rise slabs floating in space: “Greeting rather than confronting the fabric, these buildings reestablish the physical continuity of the city as they tie new construction to the city’s past. This establishes a visual dialogue that vividly comments on the rela-

tionship of old and new buildings while it preserves the city as the physical emblem of human memory.” She addresses the two main categories of entries to the competition: those focusing on the street and those concentrating on reshaping the city block, and examines how past infill developments in New York have handled these two approaches. Gutman then lists and comments on several contemporary infill projects in this country and in Europe. Richard Plunz places the Inner City Infill Competition in historical context: the ten housing competitions in New York City that preceded it, extending from the first in 1879 through the 1975 Roosevelt Island competition, the last competition before Inner City. He points out that while some competitions resulted in real housing reforms (passage of the “Old Law” and “New Law” codes governing housing design after the 1879 and 1900 competitions), “those which produced the most innovative designs occurred in a context which lacked the possibility of realization.”

The essays are followed by excerpts from a public symposium held as part of an exhibit of the Inner City Infill entries at the Paine Webber headquarters in Manhattan. All the authors of the above essays were participants, along with several activist architects and planners. The consensus of the remarks seemed to be that greater political will would have to be exercised on a national scale before the housing crisis could begin to be seriously dealt with. The book concludes with an illustrated catalogue of infill housing projects in the United States and Europe.

Overall, the book provides a valuable discussion of a particularly relevant housing type. Especially interesting are Hermanuz’s criteria for judging the entrants’ responses to the particular cultural context of Harlem: “units capable of housing intergenerational family groups; single young adults sharing larger accommodations; allowances for economic activities from child care to catering to use of open spaces for street vending, institu-



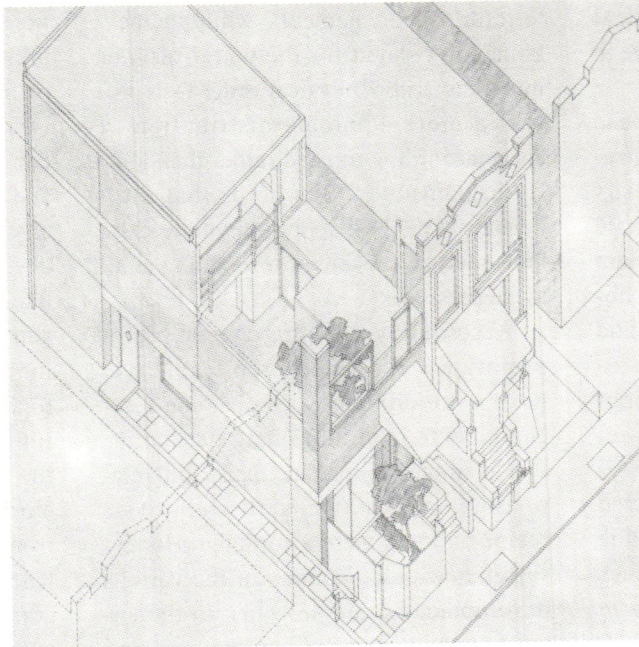
First place entry, Inner City Infill Competition; Harlem, NY; Mike Pyatok, Ira Oaklander, and William Vitto, 1985. (From *Reweaving the Urban Fabric*.)

tional spaces closely knitted into the residential fabric." She feels that the proposals reflecting a collective or communal life-style come closer to expressing the character of the site, while "others seem to recreate the isolation and alienation of suburbia." Gutman makes a strong case for the infill scale of development: it is readily accessible to small, locally based developers and contractors; it reinforces street life; and allows for change without destroying or freezing the basic character of a neighborhood, thus avoiding the stylistic hegemonism of historic districts. Plunz's essay presents a fascinating look at the origins of some of the basic building types in the city, while offering a provocative reminder of a central dilemma

of the reform efforts running through past New York competitions: "Within the political ideology of our market economy, housing reform cannot be implemented without enhancing profits. And ultimately those profits must be paid for in one way or another by the same underclass who are supposedly the beneficiaries of reform."

Nevertheless, for all the effort at providing a historical, theoretical, and contemporary setting for the Inner City Infill Competition, one is left wishing for a more detailed analysis and a better visual presentation of the entries themselves. With few exceptions, only large-scale plans are presented, reduced to a near-unreadable size. Detailed descriptions of infill projects elsewhere in the United States and Europe are made, but not of the competition designs. Indeed, in light of the emphasis on cultural context in the competition's program, one wonders why examples of recent infill projects in non-European countries were not included among the examples cited in the text and in the catalogue.

The choice of illustrations provides a mix of renderings, elevations, plans, and photos. Nevertheless, in several places



Vacant Lots project proposal, studio or two-bedroom unit on ground floor, two- or three-bedroom duplex above; Brooklyn, NY; Jeff Kiefer, 1987. (From *Vacant Lots*.)

the illustrations are scattered and do not easily relate to the relevant text. The site plans for the projects listed in the catalogue are nearly unreadable, and no addresses are included, dampening any reader's enthusiasm for going out to see local examples.

Whether it was coincidence or an indirect effect of the Inner City Infill competition, two years later another infill housing competition was held and the results catalogued. Where *Reweaving the Urban Fabric* moves horizontally across the infill band of the housing spectrum, *Vacant Lots* lingers for a longer look at each of the sites presented in this sequel competition. The organizing committee, along with HPD, chose ten sites from among the thousands of city-owned buildable vacant lots. As the catalogue's editors, Carol Willis and Rosalie Geneviro, describe in the introduction, these small lots present an opportunity for community-based contractors and development groups to (that phrase again) "reweave the urban fabric" with innovative yet affordable designs. Participants were asked to conform to city building and zoning codes and to the design guidelines of HPD (who, rumor has it, was

considering financing construction of the best entries). The designs were exhibited in October and November of 1987 at the old Commercial Exchange Building in Manhattan and three symposia were held where different panels, composed of architects, public and private developers, and the organizing committee, commented on the results.

Before presenting the entrants' designs, *Vacant Lots* offers some background, summary, and analysis. Historian Deborah Gardner examines the background of the three main housing types that dominate the areas around the sites—row house, tenement, and detached one- or two-family house—and documents the emergence of the row house and the small apartment

building as the most accepted and flexible market choice in the outer boroughs. Mark Robbins describes how some of the entries responded to the three types of infill sites offered: through-block, corner, and mid-block, as well as whether the designs could be reproduced on scales beyond the single lot. Deborah Gans looks at the aesthetic nature of the designs: contextual or counter-contextual, inward-looking, responsive to the city or "hallucinatory." Rosalie Geneviro analyzes how the entrants addressed affordability, "the gap between the income and the ability to pay of people who need housing and the actual cost of providing it."

Seventy projects are then presented, grouped according to the ten sites. Each is given one page of descriptive text and/or project data facing a graphic: either a layout, elevation, axonometric, rendering, photo of a model, or some combination of these. There is a welcome variety to the illustrations and the floor plans are at a scale sufficient to visualize the spaces. Although generally the right choice was made from among the entrants' graphics, some selections are either pretentious or obscurantist.

Vacant Lots is a very useful reference for architects and developers attempting to deal sensitively with small urban sites. By looking at many different solutions for one site in combination with the critics' commentaries, the reader comes away with a heightened sense of the possibilities and pitfalls of each type of site and how they affect the internal layout and economics of the buildings. There is evidence of serious efforts to incorporate more than shelter onto the sites; workshops, child care, protected play spaces, and communal dining spaces appear, and more than one team listed neighborhood service providers with whom they had consulted during the formulation of their design. Many of the cultural criteria listed for the Inner City Competition are echoed here.

The project narratives give the reader an interesting sampling of individual architects' opinions on the housing crisis. Although several of the entrants display a good sense of the context of the housing crisis and of architecture's limited power to effect large-scale political change by itself, most seem to approach their task as technocrats (e.g., "Inefficiencies in the housing market have resulted in thou-

sands of homeless in our city"). Inevitably, jargon helps cloud the picture; low-income housing is referred to as "subsidized housing," forgetting that the largest single government subsidy to housing is in the form of mortgage interest tax deductions, which helps keep ownership of privately-built homes a viable concept.

Despite the current depressed construction industry and tight public budgets, the city's \$5 billion Ten-Year Housing Plan initiated in 1986 has by now produced some interesting infill projects using innovative strategies from financing to construction to ownership structures. A look at some of these projects, keeping in mind the theoretical framework of the two books above, can shed light on both the theory and reality surrounding urban infill housing.

Modular Housing

On a vacant urban renewal site in Williamsburg, just north of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, 117 units of three- and four-bedroom apartments are nearing completion. "Brooklyn Villas" is the first big housing project for their producer, New

York Modular, located across the street from the site in a cavernous 880 × 100 × 90-foot-high crane bay building in the Navy Yard (itself a nice swords-to-plowshares conversion). The buildings are steel-framed boxes stacked into twin three- and four-story walk-ups, separated by a party wall. Eighty percent of the 1,600-square-foot condominiums are for sale at "market rate" (\$131,000 to \$181,000) while the rest will be sold with income restrictions on buyers at \$81,000 for three bedrooms or \$84,000 for four bedrooms. Although not a true example of infill, how this project does will be watched very closely by area housing developers since the modular system has potential for reducing construction costs on small, scattered sites.

The core of the system is a 2 1/2-inch-square steel tube post and beam 25 × 66-foot frame supporting a metal deck and 2 1/2-inch-thick gyp-crete slab. New York Modular says they can go up to six stories with this structural system. Exterior walls are heavy-gauge steel studs with exterior foam sheathing and cement board, finished with cement stucco or kiln-fired thin bricks on the outside, batt insulation and gypsum board on the inside. All interior finishes, kitchen cabinets, plumbing and electrical lines and fixtures are installed on the factory assembly line. Cutouts are made for the stairwell and mechanical chases before each unit is hoisted onto trucks by the overhead crane for the trip to the site. (One big advantage of local production is that the twenty-five-foot-wide load is allowed to move on city streets but exceeds the fourteen-foot limit on state roads.) At the site, mobile cranes set the twenty-five-ton units on pile foundations, where a "zip-up" crew closes the gaps between the units and around the footings with panels of fiber-reinforced cement, connects the mechanicals to the preinstalled underground lines, installs the steel pan stairs through the cutouts, and welds on balconies on the front facades. Bricolage Design Associates of Brooklyn are the architects.



"Brooklyn Villas," steel-frame factory-built housing by New York Modular, whose factory in the Brooklyn Navy Yard can be seen in the background. (Photograph by E. Perry Winston.)

After having tooled up for this project, New York Modular has been turning out three units every two weeks, including production and zip-up, for a cost of \$55/square foot. Further work must be done on access roads and sidewalks by a separate contractor. Large storm-drainage retention tanks had to be built on this sloping site, emphasizing the importance of sub-surface conditions as a cost variable on previously built sites.

According to local newspaper accounts, the project is an example of the city's "cross-subsidy" approach to financing low-income housing through sales of city-owned vacant sites.¹ Brooklyn Villas Inc. was the successful private bidder, paying \$3.3 million for the urban renewal site; this money has been used to generate 105 coop units in thirty-five town houses now under construction elsewhere in Williamsburg. Company president Joe Margolis was chosen to set up the modular business when the partners of Brooklyn Villas Inc. realized that the \$1.5 to \$2 million savings they would gain on construction loan interest would be approximately equal to the cost of setting up the factory. Another advantage to the factory approach was the creation of a work site sheltered year-round where a quality-controlled product could be produced by union workers paid the more moderate "shop" rate. Being an all-union shop (eighty-three carpenters) enabled New York Modular to overcome one previous barrier to setting up an industrialized housing factory in the city.

This is not the first modular housing plant in the city; a plant set up eight years ago in East New York did not survive, even when operating in a better market than today's. With such high start-up costs, a predictable demand and delivery schedule are essential. It remains to be seen whether this new plant can survive the fluctuations of the residential construction industry. New York Modular's prototype is also being used for classrooms and offices, however, and it currently claims a year-and-a-half's worth of work. Margolis sees a growing market for



"Southside Homes," new factory-built housing mixed with existing brownstones on South 9th Street; Williamsburg, Brooklyn. (Photograph by E. Perry Winston.)

modules, especially among nonprofit builders.

As a reminder, however, that infill projects must achieve more than a physical "fit" into the existing community, Brooklyn Villas has aroused the ire of Hispanic community groups in Williamsburg, who filed suit against alleged favoritism shown to Hasidic groups in the lottery that produced the first list of buyers. A proposed settlement would result in another lottery, which might produce more minority buyers. Despite these difficulties, pre-sales have reached 70 percent on the market-rate units. No information was available on sales of the 20 percent "affordable" units.

As innovative as the construction system might be, architecturally the buildings are fairly conventional. The exterior veneer is manipulated to provide a variety of front parapet shapes and textures and the cement corner zip-up panels are staggered to simulate masonry trim. The entrances in the middle of the sides where the stairs begin are an apparent attempt to limit interior circulation in the upper units, but once inside, this circulation reappears as a long internal hallway. Also, removing the building entrance from the

street side weakens the relationship to the street and makes the transition from private to public space abrupt. The project seems to have benefited from a cooperative city building department; generous waivers to the handicapped accessibility law were obtained for the ground floor units and a two-hour rated stairwell was accepted in lieu of a second means of egress. Although the units definitely have a more substantial look than other factory-made buildings, the overall impression of the site is an unusual combination of multifamily buildings arranged in a suburban site plan. The twenty-five-foot-wide module's potential for sliding into one or two vacant lots in a more classic infill situation remains untested.

A better test of modular housing in a true infill site has just been completed a few blocks away in Williamsburg. "Southside Homes" is the 105-unit coop project developed by Los Sures United Housing Development Fund using the city's "cross-subsidy" funds generated by "Brooklyn Villas," along with financing from New York State and the New York City Housing Partnership. On streets lined with a few older brownstones, churches, and with vacant lots sprinkled

among them, a new streetscape has been created with units built by Deluxe Homes of Berwick, Pennsylvania, to fill in the missing teeth. (As a commentary on where the architectural profession finds itself today, the project's offering plan credits the layouts to Deluxe's in-house engineer. Architects were used only on the site and foundation plans and on the "report" contained in the offering plan.)

These units (fifty-five feet long and either nineteen, twenty, or twenty-two feet wide) are each composed of two modules set side by side and built of steel-stud perimeter bearing walls on steel-joisted floors with 3/4-inch plywood subflooring covered with carpet and vinyl or ceramic tile. Once delivered to the site on flatbed trucks, they are set onto prebuilt concrete perimeter foundations in three-story stacks, where either brick-face veneer (front, street sides) or aluminum siding (rear) is applied, joints sealed, and mechanicals connected. Two units a day can be set up while two months' work is required to do the zip-up, stairs, veneer, mechanical connections, and to hook up the utilities, all for between \$40 and \$45 per square foot. The stairwells are sprinklered in lieu of a second means of egress.

The 1,200 square foot, three-bedroom units are being marketed as coops for \$66,700 to \$69,000, with about half reserved for families earning \$20,000–\$28,000 a year (below 83 percent of the median income) and half allotted to families earning \$28,000–\$36,000 a year (below 107 percent of the median), a much more affordable target than the "Brooklyn Villas" project. Also in contrast to "Villas," the ground-floor units are not only equipped for handicapped accessibility, but are reserved for buyers needing such facilities. Thirty-year resale restrictions limit the sale of units to households in the same income range originally assigned to that unit and give preference to qualifying families from the surrounding area. The lowest monthly coop mortgage plus maintenance for a three-bedroom unit is about \$530 a month. Los Sures has

sold all of the units before the completion of the project, approximately 85 percent to families from the neighborhood.

As expected, the interior spaces suffer from the narrower module. The living/dining room feels especially constricted, and the kitchen is separated awkwardly from the latter in the nineteen-foot-wide module. All units, however, do have a washer/dryer hook-up in the mechanical room. The project is more successful from the exterior. The rear yards are subdivided for use by the lower two units with access from the second via a spiral stairway. The brickface street facades have a variety of patterns and are topped with cornices that make a brave effort to respond to the silhouettes of the brownstones. Although the new units are one story below the existing roof line, this works until one turns the corner and sees the butt end of the parapet and cornice sticking up over the squared-off rear facade. On the whole, "Southside Homes" has been effective in transforming several ragged blocks into an active neighborhood without a major reworking of the existing urban fabric. In addition, through marketing plan requirements, it has allowed a fortunate few of those displaced

by earlier urban-renewal sites in Williamsburg to return to the neighborhood.

Mutual Housing

As the two competition books remind us, infill is about not only adapting new buildings to existing contexts, but also modifying existing buildings to fit contemporary space needs. The city's Ten-Year Housing Plan has (so far) rehabbed hundreds of buildings. Perhaps the most innovative city-funded rehab project, however, was not initiated by the city, but by grass-roots organizing. In 1985 (a mayoral election year), after three years of trying to get the city to stop auctioning off the many vacant rowhouses in the East New York area of Brooklyn, the local chapter of ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) led neighborhood residents in a squat of twenty-five tax-foreclosed *in rem* row houses. The city was furious and made several attempts to evict the squatters, arresting some and demolishing one building the squatters had already begun to repair. ACORN successfully generated sympathetic publicity, however, and the media and local politicians began to sup-



Sweat equity crew of MHANY homesteaders clearing rear yard of a three-unit row house about to be rehabbed in East New York. (Photograph by Joyce George.)

port the squatters. A state senator was arrested as he assisted ACORN in opening a building. The Brooklyn district attorney dropped charges against the squatters before the case was brought to court.

ACORN's successful organizing forced the city into serious negotiations. The borough asked the Pratt Center for Community and Environmental Development (PICCED) to mediate, and they, together with the nonprofit housing finance organization Consumer Farmer Foundation, helped the squatters transform themselves into "homesteaders" and members of the Mutual Housing Association of New York (MHANY). Two years later, an agreement was reached: ACORN agreed to stop further squatting and the city agreed to transfer title to the twenty-five squatted buildings (still inhabited by the homesteaders) and thirty-three other vacant row houses to MHANY. In addition, the city provided funds for rehab construction and architectural assistance for the rehabilitation of the fifty-eight buildings, a crucial step since many of the squatted units remained temporary, unsafe shelter.

This was the first time the mutual housing model, used in Europe, Canada, Philadelphia, and St. Louis, had been attempted in New York. In this arrangement, the deed for each mortgage is split:

the building deed goes to the homesteader or, in the larger buildings, to a housing cooperative, while the land is placed in a ninety-nine-year trust. The land trust removes the units from the speculative housing market by stipulating resale restrictions that maintain their affordability to future buyers. Homesteaders recruited after the original squat were screened according to need, and each family had to put in a minimum of fifty hours of supervised sweat equity work (e.g., site cleanup, painting public spaces of rehabbed buildings) to qualify for a unit. MHANY, now with a staff of four and a neighborhood-based board of directors, provides administrative coordination of the program and raises additional funds. PICCED, through its spin-off Pratt Architectural Collaborative, provides architectural plans and construction supervision, while Consumer Farmer Foundation provides bridge financing and acts as the servicing agent for the construction loans.

After the slow start typical of homesteading programs, MHANY has now begun to produce a steady flow of homeownership units for very low-income families (average family income of MHANY members is \$16,000/year). In four years' time, work has been completed on thirty-seven (with ninety-seven

units) of the original fifty-eight buildings and construction contracts have been signed for the first units of an eventual 200-unit "Phase II" of the program. Although the scattered sites and small buildings keep per-unit construction costs relatively high (\$80,000/unit) the emphasis on multiple bedroom (three and up) apartments for the large MHANY families keeps the per-square-foot cost low at \$60.

As an infill project, MHANY has several advantages. First is the long-term affordability to people living in East New York; monthly payments on a three-bedroom unit average \$360/month; if this represents more than 30 percent of a family's yearly income, Section 8 assistance is available. Second, the scale of the construction projects (average three units per building) allows small minority contractors to participate, generating a local base of employment. Third, knowing the family sizes of the MHANY members in advance enables the architects to reconfigure the buildings' unit mix and layouts to fit. In many cases this produces fewer, but much more livable, apartments than originally planned. Finally, while their layouts are being transformed, the facades are maintained, preserving the existing streetscape and the buffer zone of stoops and small front yards, which foster easy interaction between the street and the building. The urban fabric is rewoven with the same warp but a new woof.

The struggle in East New York and its resolution into a new model of homeownership has not gone unnoticed. In *Reweaving the Urban Fabric*, Ghislaine Hermanuz mentions a community land trust and a "mutual housing association" as a potential ownership structure for future low-income housing in Harlem. In the Lower East Side of Manhattan, several *in rem* apartment buildings are now being rehabbed by the nonprofit Peoples' Mutual Housing Association with cross-subsidy funds to be generated by the sale of vacant city-owned lots for market-rate housing.



MHANY homesteader at home in East New York. He squatted in the cellar of this three-unit building in 1985 and convinced drug dealers to leave. (Photograph by Joyce George.)



Nehemiah Houses in East New York. (Photograph by E. Perry Winston.)

Mass Production

The MHANY project looks even better when compared to another project impacting the neighborhood, the Nehemiah houses. In the last six years, retired developer I. D. Robbins has built nearly 1,500 single-family houses in Brownsville and East New York for a coalition of churches, East Brooklyn Churches (Nehemiah was the Old Testament prophet who rebuilt Jerusalem). Benefiting from a city donation of vacant land, a \$10,000/unit subsidy, and ten-year tax abatements, Robbins hires local contractors to build rows of two- and three-bedroom units that sell for an average of \$51,500 each, affordable to families earning \$20,000–\$40,000/year.

While the Nehemiah project has gained notoriety for providing breakthrough prices for home buyers, it has been less than a blessing for others in the neighborhood. First, with his metal frame and brick-veneer construction system relying on speed and repetition, Robbins requires almost entire blocks to be cleared. In many cases, the city has pressured longtime resident homeowners to move because their homes are among the few houses remaining on otherwise vacant blocks. In addition, by following the condemnation procedures applicable under urban-renewal guidelines, the city's

buy-out offers have often been a fraction of the city's own appraised value, further depressing surrounding property values. Since 1987, one East New York pastor estimates that 100 families have been forced to leave their homes to make way for the Nehemiah houses.²

Second, numerous complaints about the quality of construction, including leaking basements, cracked foundations, and backed-up sewers, have been lodged by homeowners against the builders. East Brooklyn Churches claims all but a few of these are due to faulty maintenance by residents. Third, although the sales prices are affordable to many working-class and minority families, they are still beyond the reach of most East New York families, whose average yearly income was \$14,047 in 1980.

Finally, the divisive effects mentioned above are accentuated by the contrasting physical nature of the Nehemiah homes. Across the street from the existing stock of two- and three-family walk-ups built with ten-foot setbacks and facades modulated with masonry trim and metal cornices are the arrow-straight rows of single-family duplexes set back twenty-five feet in order to fit two parked cars in the driveways. The tall fences quickly built by new residents add to the effect of a middle-class sanctuary in a depressed area.

Summary

A lot of infill housing has been built over the last few years in New York City, a fact that should please the editors of the two books reviewed here. Unfortunately, not a lot of it has reached those families with the greatest needs. By turning over the bulk of its new construction funds to private or privately funded developers, the city has bought into these organizations' definition of "affordable" housing. As a result of the latest modification to the Ten-Year Housing Plan, 42 percent of city funding for new construction units will go to the corporate-based nonprofit New York City Housing Partnership, which directs its units primarily to the middle class (\$32,000–\$50,000 a year), much of it for low-rise, low-density projects on increasingly scarce city-owned land. The Partnership justifies the public subsidies of 20 percent of development costs from the community development standpoint, "from filling up the vacant holes to providing an income mix to assuring that middle-income people don't have to move from the South Bronx to New Rochelle."³

Such goals may not always be shared by the neighborhoods where the partnership builds. In the words of Matthew Lee, leader of a thirty-one-family homesteading group evicted from a city-owned building later demolished to make way for a Partnership project, "When people talk about helping the South Bronx, we don't mean helping the geographical area. It's not abandoned land that's suffering. It's low-income people who are suffering." In some cases, neighborhood groups have had to fight to get a portion of Partnership units set aside for moderate- or low-income families.

Directing more of its infill housing effort toward homeless and low-income families means more subsidy, and until more federal money is dedicated to this end not much significant change can be expected. Even the new funding of the 1990 Housing Act was obtained at the expense of existing federal housing pro-



Nehemiah Houses in East New York. (Photograph by E. Perry Winston.)

grams that were cut or received no funding, including a Nehemiah homes program.

Until the federal funding picture improves, the city could increase its housing stock with measures not involving funds for new construction in two ways: by passing the anti-apartment warehousing bill now stalled in the city council, and by buying up foreclosed coop and condominium buildings now on the auction block due to the real estate recession. The former would put thousands of vacant rental units back into use, relieving the pressure on rental prices. The latter, being tried in Boston, would make available ownership or rental units to low- and moderate-income families at a per-unit cost below what it takes to build new units.

Finally, with regard to infill it is hard to fill in "missing teeth" if the gums are diseased. Housing problems are inextricably linked to surrounding social and economic conditions. It is no good to fund large new infill projects without dealing with the employment, education, substance abuse, and child-care needs of the community. As Bernard Forte, one of the participants in the Inner City Infill symposium put it, "We have a problem on a national level. Housing will not be solved until there is a comprehensive plan to solve the other problems. The problem is only partially that there is no housing that people can afford. We need to look at this

problem holistically, and we need to look at it now."

NOTES

1. Alan Oser, "The Navy Yard Hosts a Housing Factory," *New York Times*, 14 October, 1990.
2. Mildred Antenor, "A Dream Turned Nightmare," *Village Voice*, 20 February, 1990.
3. New York Partnership President Kathryn Wylde, quoted in "Suburbs in the City," *City Limits* magazine, May 1991, p. 14.

REWEAVING THE URBAN FABRIC: APPROACHES TO INFILL HOUSING, Deborah Norden, editor, New York State Council on the Arts (distributed by Princeton Architectural Press), 1988, 159 pp., illus., \$24.95.

VACANT LOTS, Carol Willis and Rosalie Genevro, editors, Princeton Architectural Press and Architectural League of New York, 1989, 189 pp., illus., \$24.95.

Daniel Bluestone

Skyscrapers: Inside Out

In the 1890s Chicago architects John W. Root and Louis H. Sullivan used sharply different narrative strategies to discuss skyscraper design. In "A Great Architectural Problem," Root focused on the "practical conditions" and refused to enlarge upon the "purely artistic side of the question." He began with a piece of land, 150 feet by 100 feet, standing at the intersection of two prominent streets in the business center of the city. The first "radical" question he considered related to light. Root worked out three different floor plans for his lot, seeking to maximize floor space while assuming that office space farther than twenty-four feet from a window could not attract tenants. He proceeded with a close consideration of systems of fireproof construction, floating raft foundations, elevators, and diagonal structural bracing. Generally bypassing questions of exterior design, Root insisted that "subtle means of architectural expression" were lost in the skyscraper and the aesthetic form should follow the ideas of modern business life in showing "simplicity, stability, breadth, dignity . . . mass and proportion."¹

In "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered," Sullivan dismissed all that Root had so carefully explored. Sullivan accepted such "social conditions" as "fact" and refused to discuss them further. These practical issues were to be resolved by the joint efforts of "the speculator, the engineer, [and] the builder." The challenge for the architect, according to Sullivan, related primarily to establishing the exterior form of the building: "Problem: How shall we impart to this sterile pile, this crude, harsh, brutal agglomeration, this stark, staring exclamation of eternal strife, the graciousness of those higher forms of sensibility and culture that rest on the lower and fiercer passions? How shall we proclaim from the dizzy height of this strange, weird, modern housetop the

peaceful evangel of sentiment, of beauty, the cult of a higher life?" Sullivan proceeded to analogize the tripartite skyscraper facade with the classical column. He concluded, "It must be every inch a proud and soaring thing, rising in sheer exultation that from bottom to top it is a unit without a single dissenting line."²

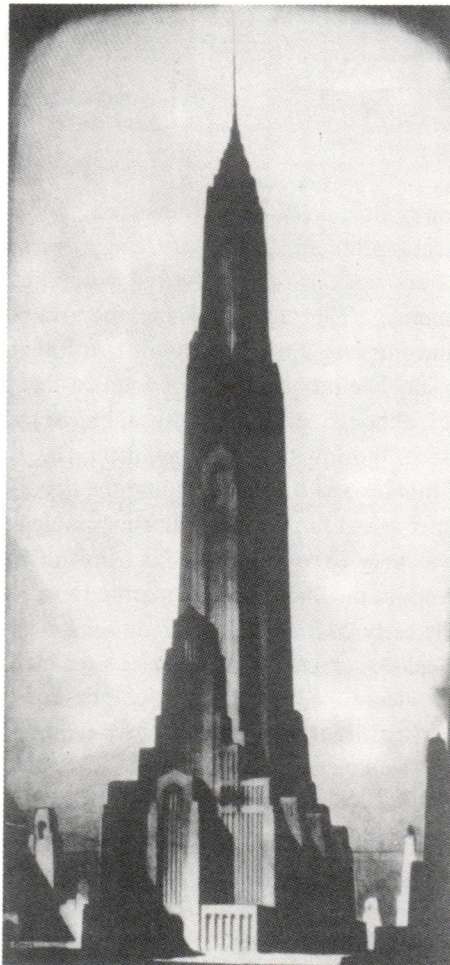
In both Root's and Sullivan's articles the architect stood close to the center of the narrative. Nevertheless, Root's "practical" approach to the skyscraper opened important lines of inquiry foreclosed by Sullivan's critical interest in the "artistic" question rather than "social conditions." For one thing, Root's sketches of alternative floor plans and his interest in natural light placed the new middle-class white-collar worker in the picture much more emphatically than abstract notions of facade organization and classical columns. In his practical approach the user of the building took on more than passing significance. Similarly, Root's focus on a building lot raised a host of important questions concerning the relation of the skyscraper to its urban context, questions Sullivan overlooked in treating the skyscraper in glorious formal isolation. The "Great Architectural Problem" spurred the Great Architectural History Problem, that is, how should the historian come to terms with the skyscraper? Architectural historians have tended to follow Sullivan's lead. They have viewed their work as explicating the skyscraper "Artistically Considered." They have generally explored how architects and designers adapted traditional stylistic language and design methods to the unprecedented scale and form of a building rising on a fireproof steel frame, with an elevator circulation core. Among the five books under review here those that synthesize the Root and Sullivan approaches are among the more useful and interesting studies.

The Sky's the Limit: A Century of Chicago Skyscrapers is a handsomely produced catalogue of 108 extant Chicago skyscrapers and 13 projects in progress. It adheres closely to the narrow concerns

with exterior form represented by Sullivan. Each entry carries a page or two of text with numerous photographs, a capsule building history, disparate observations of various architectural historians and critics and a consistent attention to the building "artistically considered." The fact that only 5 of 121 buildings are documented with even a single floor plan suggests the dominant interest in building exteriors as opposed to other elements of skyscraper form. More recent entries document contemporary architects' interest in the skyscraper's urban context, both in relation to the street and as an element on the skyline; however, the question of context is presented unevenly and is dropped entirely in the analysis of earlier designs. One of the problems with this approach is that the preeminence of

height bound up in many people's perception of the skyscraper is a relative concept defined more by the urban context than by the skyscraper itself. In Chicago and other cities the dimensions and location of skyscraper lots in the overall street grid importantly determined the exterior form and interior plan of the buildings. The primacy assigned to the visual user of these buildings seems misplaced. In the treatment of the skyscraper "artistically considered" the actual white-collar users of the buildings are rendered invisible. However, given the chronological overview of *The Sky's the Limit*, it seems a missed opportunity not to consistently discuss the structure of white-collar work accommodated in skyscrapers. The two- and three-person firms that occupied 1880s buildings placed quite different demands on the form and division of space than the much larger firms that leased 25,000-square-foot floors in buildings of the 1980s. Numerous technologies ranging from air conditioning to fluorescent lighting provided the foundation for the obvious jumps in scale over a century of Chicago skyscraper building. The chronological range of the book could also have opened the way to testing the various hypotheses of critics and historians regarding the different aesthetic character of speculative and corporate building designs.

White-collar workers, tenants, office plans, and interiors all loom much larger in Karl Sabbagh's *Skyscraper: The Making of a Building*. The book was written to accompany the five-part PBS television series that focused on the building of New York's Worldwide Plaza. More wide than worldly, Worldwide Plaza now stands on Manhattan's West Side. It is perhaps best known to viewers of David Letterman's "Late Night," where it sits prominently in the skyline behind the set's constantly crashing window. Sabbagh's book vividly portrays the dynamic relationship between the developer, William H. Zeckendorf, Jr.; the architect, David Childs of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill; and the construction company,

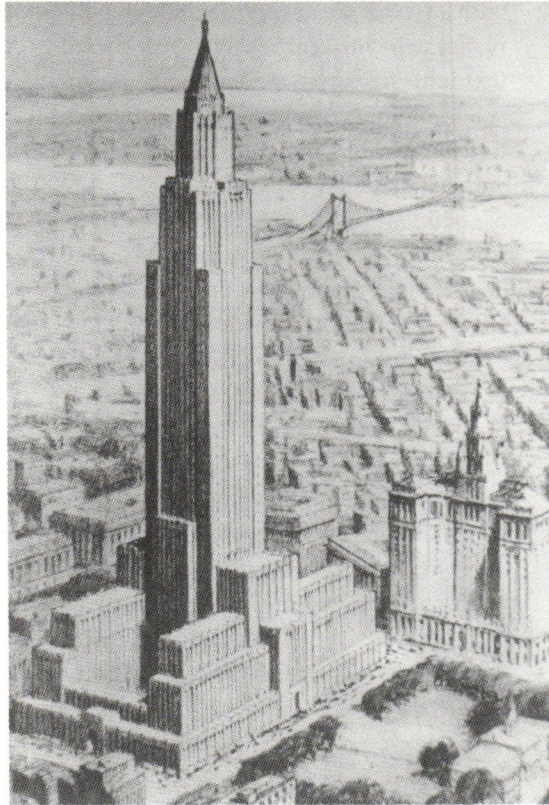


"Religion," from Hugh Ferriss, *The Metropolis of Tomorrow*, 1929. (From *The Skyward Trend of Thought*.)

HRH Construction, as they work to build this massive commercial and residential development located in the Hell's Kitchen/Clinton neighborhood on the block bounded by 49th and 50th streets, 8th and 9th avenues. The show and the book are very much in the "boys and their toys" genre; they get so absorbed in the fast-track construction drama of erecting steel, pouring concrete, laying brick, pinning up curtain walls, and all the colorful personalities of the builders and designers that they perversely slight the connection between the skyscraper and the city. When neighborhood opposition is mentioned in passing, the narrator ponderously intones, "In the end, however, it is economic reality that decides the fate of Worldwide Plaza." What precisely this economic reality is does not come up for consideration.

Part of the received economic wisdom about skyscrapers, articulated by Sabbagh, is that high land costs necessitate the construction of high buildings. More false than true, this belief inverts building logic. Nineteenth-century European builders had sufficient technology to multiply the area of single building lots many times over by building skyscrapers. Yet many European municipalities decided that tall buildings were socially unacceptable, and their land prices remained relatively low. Land prices followed from social choices rather than dictating them. New York's land market has been similarly bounded by zoning and other building regulations. In the years following the bankruptcy crisis of the 1970s, however, the city's public officials have been willing to bend or break its planning and regulatory system to accommodate overscaled developments.

In many ways Worldwide Plaza provided a perfect emblem of Mayor Ed Koch's New York. When the mayor's own expanding waistline was implicated in his health problems, he publicly touted the benefits of popular weight-reduction plans. Yet despite indications that the



Civic center proposal, New York; Chester B. Price with Thomas Adams, 1931. (From *The Skyward Trend of Thought*.)

multiplication of fat buildings may cause health problems for the city, eager developers were rarely provided with diet manuals. Their buildings are here to stay and miracle diets will never trim them back. The problem goes beyond aesthetics, although this is certainly an important issue. Worldwide Plaza's architect, David Childs, knew that the building the developer asked for was too fat. This problem was only exacerbated by his decision to work in the idiom of the tripartite form of the early 20th-century's "traditional classical skyscraper." The architect attempted to finesse the bulk issue by emphasizing vertical lines. But groping toward thinness and elegance with 30,000 square feet of space on each floor is aesthetically unconvincing, even when those floors are squeezed into traditional dress. The imposing fatness of the office tower is on the skyline for everyone to see. Nevertheless, Sabbagh evades any discussion of the propriety of building in this manner and instead dramatically portrays the

project's internal dynamics. Here, a kind of hardware formalism replaces the aesthetic formalism of previous accounts of skyscraper development.

A certain irony pervades the Worldwide Plaza development. On the one hand, it exudes cosmopolitanism and urbanity; on the other hand, its conception is profoundly antiurban. A glass pyramid lantern tops the 770-foot tower, symbolically recalling a lighthouse's comforting promise of civilization. The architect fondly refers to this design element as "the final point of light." This lighthouse romance masks the reality of contemporary greed; it parallels the hollowness of contemporary "points of light" political rhetoric. However, to the extent that the design was conceived as an element in a skyline ensemble, it shows a certain cosmopolitanism—as does its direct link to the subway system. Similarly, the scale of the granite base and the midblock plaza corresponds to the adjacent urban fabric and suggests a larger urban vision on the part of the designers.

For all of its massive display of urbanity, the recoil of the development from its neighborhood is striking. One of the largest challenges for the developer was to sell potential residents and tenants of Worldwide Plaza on the viability of their settling in the midst of a poor and working-class New York City neighborhood. The design reassures the new people on the block that the developer's decision to cash in on the relatively lower prices of marginal land has not exposed them to unpleasantness. Much of the building's retail commercial space opens onto a colonnade that encircles the base of the building. Tenants need not tread on the neighborhood sidewalks to shop. One major tenant of the building developed sumptuous, subsidized dining facilities at the top of the building to help shelter their hungry, but not their poor, from the uncertainties of the street. Similarly, the low-rise residential section encircles a private "residents only" garden and is

topped by extensive roof terraces. The advertisements promote these enclave qualities as offering "a homelike and almost suburban intimacy." There are also movie theaters on the site. Movement throughout the entire complex is closely monitored by a large cadre of security personnel and surveillance cameras. A health club with stationary bicycles and treadmills permits members to stay fit without having to power walk, jog, or bicycle in nearby Central Park.

The developers of Worldwide Plaza did not settle for a fortified island in the city. In one of the more outrageous and bizarre twists of recent New York development practice, the city required Worldwide Plaza's developer to renovate 130 neighborhood apartments as part of its project. Sabbagh presents this agreement as a victory for the city and its poorer residents. In reality such agreements put the power of the city behind developers' efforts to tidy up the neighborhood. For Worldwide Plaza the renovation agreement covered the highly visible residences that line 49th Street and that otherwise would serve as a most unfortunate reminder of the real urban and social context into which Worldwide Plaza hoped to set its "city within a city." In one of the more revealing sections of the skyscraper series, worried board members of the advertising firm of Ogilvy and Mather visit the site and are persuaded to relocate only after envisioning the complete gentrification of surrounding blocks. The city had clearly "forced" the developer to do exactly what he wanted to do.

Despite its pervasive air of uncritical enthusiasm, Sabbagh's skyscraper book and TV series successfully introduce a host of new characters to the skyscraper narrative. In fact, the show and book at times cast the architect as a rather marginal figure in the

making of the building. Nevertheless, the candor of people involved in the making of the building can be deceptive. It is impressive to see William Zeckendorf's face scowl as he learns of the million-dollar penalty he will incur because the construction people cannot get part of the building completed on time. But you never really get more than breathlessness about the big financial stakes; you never learn precisely how much money is being made or lost once all the creative financial and tax accountants balance the ledgers at the end of the process. Thus although Sabbagh uses money as a dynamic narrative element, it is very difficult to judge what a million-dollar penalty means in the overall scheme of things.

Worldwide Plaza could easily have taken its place in Piera Scuri's *Late-Twentieth-Century Skyscrapers*. With considerably more insight and critical detachment than Sabbagh, Scuri incisively analyzes important elements of the form and meaning of postmodern skyscrapers built between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s. Like Sabbagh, Scuri casts a net that carries her beyond the issue of the skyscraper "artistically considered." Scuri's text is fast-paced, even hurried; yet the book opens many important lines of inquiry and offers useful insights concerning both the skyscraper and the process of its design and interpretation. In the first section dealing with "The Image" of the skyscraper, Scuri helps explicate the connection between media, design,

and efforts at producing a commercially successful skyscraper. She also explodes some of the more prevalent myths concerning postmodern skyscrapers. She handily dismisses the assertions that these buildings engage history, context, or issues of human scale very seriously—"Post-Modern skyscrapers relate to their context (in reality they are used as advertising images and therefore aim precisely to stand out); Post-Modern skyscrapers respect the human scale (in reality they are bigger and taller than their predecessors); Post-Modern skyscrapers establish a relationship with history (actually they are a prime example of nonconsideration of history)."

In the second part of her book, Scuri offers a provocative commentary on the relation between the architect's design methods and the mediated public reception of recent skyscrapers. In particular she views the architect's prevalent use of models in skyscraper design as a way of making more palatable the superbulk of modern skyscraper projects. Scuri writes: "The most shocking feature of the



RCA building and fountain, New York; Raymond Hood, 1931–34. (From *The Skyward Trend of Thought*.)

skyscraper is its height—the very feature that the model attenuates. That the architect planning a skyscraper makes use of a representational technique that cancels out its principal effect has to be significant . . . in shrinking the skyscraper's dimensions, the model restores to the architect's dominion something that in reality has escaped him." With the growing use of the architect's various tools of representation in the public debate over architecture, urbanism, and regulation, Scuri's self-consciousness about the utility and limitations of these methods provides important warning to participants in such deliberations. In the third and final part of her book, "Beyond the Image," Scuri provides a brief overview of the internal use and structuring of space in recent skyscrapers. Although the discussion lacks a historical framework or a sense of the changing structure of white-collar space, it provides a rare and well-illustrated glimpse of the corporate offices with their open-space plans, social and spatial hierarchies, executive suites, cafeterias and dining rooms, board rooms, atriums, and patterns of reception and circulation. It would certainly deepen our historical understanding of the skyscraper to develop a similar spatial analysis through time.

The clarity, insight, and straightforward presentation of Scuri's book is almost entirely lacking in Thomas A. P. van Leeuwen's *The Skyward Trend of Thought: The Metaphysics of the American Skyscraper*. Van Leeuwen sets out to redress the impression that the American skyscraper is simply the raw product of commerce and money making; he considers it also the product of a creative, poetic striving toward drama and transcendence. He declares in his introduction: "In order to adjust the equilibrium between the positivistic image of the American skyscraper and its metaphysical counterpart, I have decided to devote more attention to the 'vague' side than to the 'clear' side." The author's unwillingness to render the *vague* more *clearly* makes for frustrating reading. The book's five es-

says provide occasional passages of critical insight. There is, for example, an insightful reading of the Europeans' misreading of Sullivan and Chicago skyscrapers to fit their myth of the Chicago architect as a noble savage, as well as a valuable analysis of the architectural theories of Claude Bragdon. The essay titled "Sacred Skyscrapers and Profane Cathedrals" usefully considers the cultural tensions arising from the commercial skyscraper's displacement of religious buildings on the skyline of American cities.

The persuasiveness of such analyses derives in no small part from their being centered in a culturally specific framework. Despite the critical weight of such an approach, van Leeuwen's writing often slides off into opaque ahistorical positions—for example, in his suggestion that Hugh Stubbins's Citicorp design was "prognosticated a long, long time ago" by the 1682 towered city plate in Athanasius Kircher's *Mundus Subterraneus*. Van Leeuwen insists that the idea of "upward movement and the image of verticality" is among the strongest and most persistent ideas in history. This fact then helps explain the verticality of skyscraper design: "The upright position was evolution's reward to its most ambitious creature. The vertical axis coincided with the erect stature of man. . . . From the moment man discovered the need to have himself projected in architecture, he fulfilled it by giving it the only possible shape, the vertical. The vertical was the mathematical symbol of man's great achievement, that of walking upright." To designate the secret raising of the Chrysler building spire as an "atavistic ritual," a "pure act of cosmogony," sheds little light on the building's commerce or its poetry. In fact, there is here a continual disregard for a culturally specific engagement with American skyscrapers. This level of analysis leads, in less sophisticated hands, to exceedingly beautiful but rather vacuous picture books like Rizzoli's *Towers: A Historical Survey* by Erwin Heinle and Fritz Leonhardt. This

publication's premise is that building forms as disparate as Islamic minarets, Hindu pagodas, medieval fortifications, Dutch windmills, concrete transmission towers, and, yes, American skyscrapers can be yanked from any meaningful cultural context and joined as simple variations on the wondrous and divine theme of towering verticality, artistically considered. Surely the skyscraper has its poetry; nevertheless, narrowly pursuing this dimension runs the risk of mystifying the vital social, economic, and cultural role played by the skyscraper in the context of modern urbanism.

NOTES

1. John W. Root, "A Great Architectural Problem," *Inland Architect* 15 (June 1890): 67–71.
2. Louis H. Sullivan, "The Tall Building Artistically Considered," *Lippincott's Magazine* 57 (March 1896): 403–409.

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT: A CENTURY OF CHICAGO SKYSCRAPERS, Jane H. Clarke, Pauline A. Saliga, and John Zukowsky, Rizzoli, 1990, 288 pp., illus., \$60.00.

SKYSCRAPER: THE MAKING OF A BUILDING, Karl Sabbagh, Viking, 1990, 320 pp., illus., \$22.95 [accompanied the *Skyscraper* PBS television series in five parts, also by Karl Sabbagh].

LATE-TWENTIETH-CENTURY SKYSCRAPERS, Piera Scuri, Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1990, illus., \$38.95.

THE SKYWARD TREND OF THOUGHT: THE METAPHYSICS OF THE AMERICAN SKYSCRAPER, Thomas A. P. van Leeuwen, MIT Press, 1988, 192 pp., illus., \$14.95.

TOWERS: A HISTORICAL SURVEY, Erwin Heinle and Fritz Leonhardt, Rizzoli, 1989, 334 pp., illus., \$75.00.

Marta Gutman

Regarding Broadway

Ever since Jane Jacobs wrote *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, American architects and planners have recognized that the gridiron street and its counterpart, the gridiron plan, are the primary physical elements in the modern American city. Articulated by boulevards, highways and parks, they form the basic network of urban space in the United States. Jacobs's book argued persuasively that American streets are sites for vital public life, especially in the densely-built urban centers typical of metropolitan areas like New York City. Yet until quite recently only two major texts—*Learning from Las Vegas* and *On Streets*—followed Jacobs's lead to examine further the relationship between the precise form of streets in American cities and the manners in which their forms express cultural values and permit various kinds of public life.

Some of New York City's streets, including Broadway, are used as examples in *On Streets*, but it is only with the recent group of books on Broadway that either the history or present-day condition of New York City's streets in general has received any focused, in-depth attention from contemporary critics and writers. Coming to Broadway from many disciplines—architecture and history not among them—the authors of these books recognize that Broadway makes a significant contribution to New York City's public realm, in part because of its extraordinary shape and its place in the city's history. Yet, to varying degrees, their writings avoid analyzing either the form or the meaning of the street's exceptional space. Instead, they favor describing Broadway in terms of the shapes and uses of the buildings that line it, its street life, or the impact of traffic on the street's space.

In *On Broadway: A Journey Uptown Over Time*, David Dunlap narrates Broadway's history and provides an inventory of the buildings along it. A real



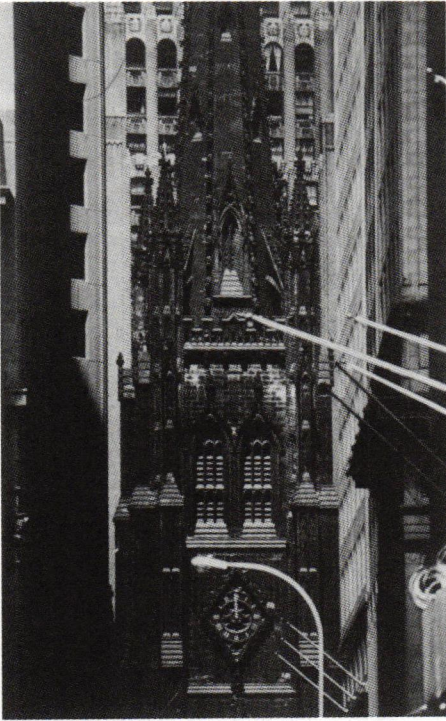
Broadway from Bowling Green, 1988. (From *On Broadway*.)

estate reporter for the *New York Times*, Dunlap appropriates the narrative convention of architectural history to describe Broadway's history chronologically even though his subject matter—the architectural history of a street—is one that architectural historians have shunned for most of the 20th century. Supported by impeccable, precise, and thorough research, his straightforward, clear, and succinct text describes Broadway primarily as the result of the histories of the form and use of its adjacent buildings, not as a spatial construct.

Yet, to many contemporaries, Broadway is best known as the canyonlike route ticker-tape parades follow through the financial district and as a shimmering corridor whose blinking electronic signs mesmerize nighttime visitors to the theatre district. Broadway is also Manhattan's longest and one of its oldest streets. Intensely used by diverse social groups, its

age, unique spatial figure, and multiple patterns of land use bring it to a civic prominence that no other Manhattan street approaches. Now some fifteen and one-half miles long, the street begins at the southern tip of Manhattan, moves through Manhattan's West Side, across the Harlem River, and into the Bronx. This promenade offers a cross section of New York City's markets in finance, commerce, industry, education, and the arts; it also presents a cross section of most of the city's social and ethnic groups. To quote Dunlap, "The path of almost everyone who lives in or visits New York must cross it at some point."

Underlying all is the extraordinary space of Broadway. Incorporating remnants of Native American paths and colonial highways, its expanding and contracting width shifts along a diagonal course that sometimes follows and sometimes breaks with the pattern of gridiron streets established by the



Trinity Church from Wall Street, 1988. (From *On Broadway*.)

Commissioners' Plan in 1811. Also articulated by a rising and falling section, a series of prominent public spaces (among them, City Hall Park, Union Square, and Times Square) and religious, civic, and educational buildings (including Trinity Church, Lincoln Center, and Columbia University) punctuate the street. Many of these have developed at Broadway's intersections with major crosstown streets.

Dunlap begins *On Broadway* by telling us that Broadway's history began modestly in the Euro-American settlement, though parts of the road were used by Native

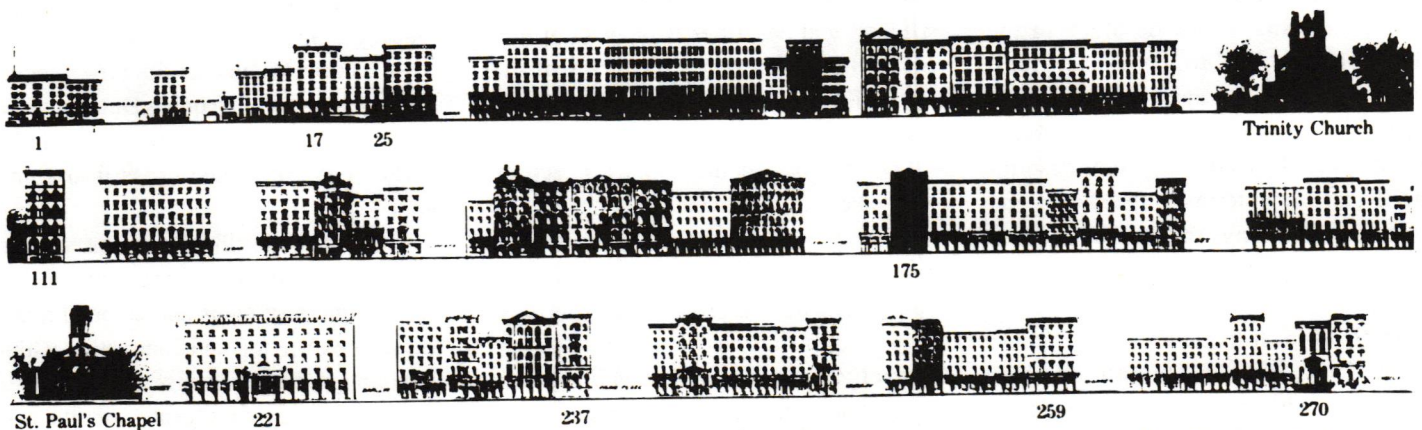
Americans to travel north and south in Manhattan Island. It played a relatively insignificant role in 17th-century New Amsterdam/New York even though the street originated at the entry to Fort Amsterdam, now approximately the site of the former U.S. Customs House. During the 18th century, the fort's prominence drew wealthy British merchants to elegant residences and shops on Broadway, and Broadway became New York City's finest street. With the draining of the Lispenard meadows—whose swamps blocked any development on Broadway north of Duane Street—and the development of the Hudson River port, Broadway's rapid northward expansion in first half of 19th century anticipated the direction of New York's growth. Increasingly, the spread of commerce chased Broadway's residents uptown as the street's pattern of land use came to reflect that of the city surrounding it: after the turn of the 20th century, most residential development occurred north of 59th Street and most commercial development remained downtown. Whether located in the financial, warehouse, or elegant shopping districts, the frantic pace of commercial exchange along the street brought an intense street life to Broadway. By the middle of the 19th century, commentators seized the imagery associated with this activity, declaring it symbolic of the street, the city, and, at times, the nation. Dunlap cites comments from Junius Henry Browne in *The Great Metropolis* (1868):

Broadway is New York intensified—the reflex of the Republic—hustling, fever-

ish, crowded, ever changing. Broadway is hardly surpassed by any street in the world. It is cosmopolitan and cosmopolitan. In its vast throng, individuality is lost, and the race is only remembered.

Though the story of Broadway figured prominently in 19th-century guides, histories, and chronicles of New York City and the images that illustrated them, Dunlap is the first writer to bring Broadway's history through the 20th century. In addition to art historical conventions, Dunlap draws on very interesting 19th-century methods of describing the street, including pictorial street directories and narrative street histories. In 1848 Jones and Newman published the first pictorial inventory of Broadway, the *Illuminated Pictorial Guide*. Issued in four pamphlets, each small volume fully documented a segment of the street with detailed street elevations and a list of each building's occupants. David T. Valentine in his *History of Broadway* (1865) and other future narrators of Broadway's history absorbed Jones and Newman's descriptive convention though their definition of Broadway's segments would change with the changing architecture of the street; all but one, Stephen B. Jenkins in the monumental *The Greatest Street in the World* (1911), included pictorial inventories.

Similarly to his 19th-century predecessors, Dunlap breaks Broadway into smaller segments, and each chapter in *On Broadway* describes the history of a segment from the Dutch settlement to the present-day. When known, information about Native American settlement patterns is



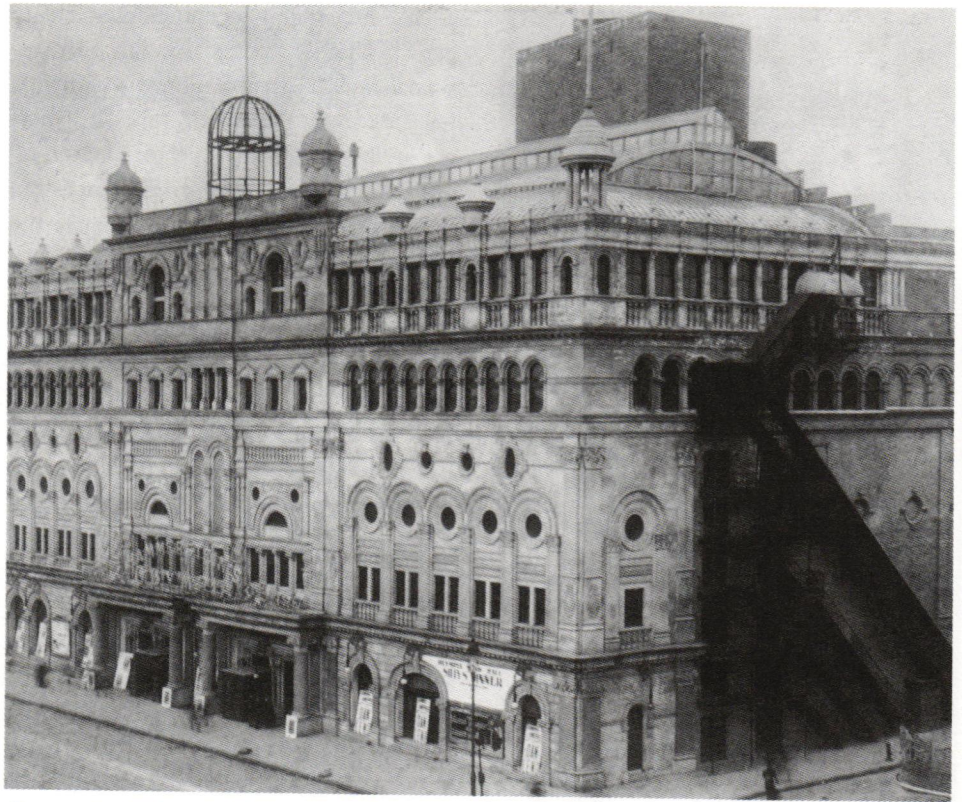
David T. Valentine's inventory of buildings on the west side of Broadway in 1865, from Washington Hotel to Chemical Bank. (From *On Broadway*.)

included. Dunlap names each segment according to its dominant features—a public space, an important building—or the district through which it passes and identifies the boundary of each segment according to cross-town streets. Usually, though not always, his boundaries coincide with important changes in land-use patterns, or the appearance of prominent public places again as they exist in the contemporary city. The building inventory, adequately though not fully illustrated, runs next to the descriptive essays. It lists all significant buildings constructed on Broadway since the Dutch settlement.

Dunlap is a marvelous writer who effortlessly brings his readers through the meticulous detail that fills this book. Building by building, he constructs the street across time and through space. He tells his readers who lived in Broadway's buildings, shopped its stores, and entered its taverns (in the 1850s Walt Whitman favored Charlie Pfaff's saloon, just to the north of Bleeker Street). Historical accounts and recollections give detailed pictures of Broadway's architecture and street life. Dunlap is also an accomplished and recognized photographer; his photographs of the interiors and exteriors of many Broadway buildings profusely illustrate *On Broadway*. Historic views, Dunlap's photographs, and the few images taken by other contemporary photographers help us see how Broadway moved uptown through time.

Yet Dunlap's method of presentation obscures important facts about Broadway's journey. Dunlap does not describe or analyze the street as a whole, with the exception of a brief introductory overview. This makes it difficult to appreciate overall patterns of continuity and change across time and space. As Dunlap's own inventory shows, Broadway has experienced dramatic changes in land use and building form over the course of its history; yet, many of the structures on Broadway are the first or second buildings to be constructed along the street. He does not discuss why this happened and what it means.

In a similar vein, Dunlap's insistence on



Hammerstein's Olympia Theatre, 1895. (From *Lost Broadway Theatres*.)

describing the street by its buildings limits our understanding of Broadway's spatial figure and its prominence in Manhattan. Rarely do we directly read about—or see pictures of—Broadway's space, adjacent public spaces, and the ways they have changed over time. Dunlap's discussion of buildings only implies these subjects. Nor do we learn very much about what changes in spatial configuration meant, and mean, for Broadway's civic stature. It is also difficult to understand the impact of cars and mass-transit systems on perceptions of the physical qualities of the street's space and its social importance, even though large-scale changes in transportation systems are mentioned. And the inventory reinforces the reading of "Broadway-as-buildings" historically because it fails to mention many of the common buildings that previously lined Broadway (as Dunlap admits). These buildings shaped the street's space then as they do now. Other problems, some of which have been mentioned in reviews published elsewhere, include a very limited index (Whitman is nowhere to be found!) and dark reproductions that make it diffi-

cult to see the detail in historical maps and drawings and many of Dunlap's photos. Despite these flaws of method and production, *On Broadway* is a welcome addition to the field and worth its hefty price; it surely will become one of the standard references to New York City's architectural history.

Richard Shephard, another *New York Times* reporter, also writes about Broadway in *Broadway From the Battery to the Bronx*. Shephard's book does not make anywhere near the contribution to scholarship as Dunlap's does; as its subtitle accurately claims, it is "an entertaining guide to the people, culture, and history of 293 New York City blocks." Shephard follows an outline similar to Dunlap's: breaking Broadway into segments defined by major cross streets, he describes the contemporary street and its relationship to historical patterns of land use and building form as he traces its route from Bowling Green to The Bronx. Carin Drechsler-Marx's photographs, many of which are in color, profusely document the street's buildings and public spaces and show how people use



Hudson Theatre, 1904. (From *Lost Broadway Theatres*.)

them. Unlike Dunlap's monumental volume, Shephard's book can easily be carried on a walking tour, though more maps would make it easier to use as a guidebook. Its only detailed map keys the location of important buildings to photographs in the book.

Dunlap and Shephard recount many famous pieces of Broadway lore; a well-known story is Oscar Hammerstein's building of the Olympia Theatre in 1895, one of the first theatres located north of 42nd Street. In the 1850s legitimate theatres started to cluster around Broadway and Union Square, moving uptown with Broadway as the street led the city's northward expansion. By the 1890s many of the city's theatres (and hotels and restaurants) were located in the "Tenderloin" district, concentrated around Broadway and 32nd Street. In the late 1890s Hammerstein and a few other impresario/entrepreneurs anticipated that the "Great White Way" would soon jump the 42nd Street barrier and tried to get an edge on the real estate market by buying property to the north of this street. They gambled accurately. It cost fifty cents to enter Hammerstein's Olympia Theatre, then the largest hall in the city; the ticket-holder could attend performances in any of the complex's four halls, play billiards, and visit the "Oriental" cafe. Throngs of people

attended the hall on opening night, and, to use Shephard's words, "ever since Broadway theatre has meant Times Square and its side streets," even though Hammerstein's theatre was up for auction by 1898. A few years later, Hammerstein opened a highly profitable theatre, the Victoria, at 42nd Street and Seventh Avenue, and as Nicholas van Hoogstraten states, the Olympia Theatre "resurfaced as three separately-operated theatres—the Music Hall, the Lyric, and the Roof Garden."

Both of these buildings were demolished during the Great Depression (1935) as were many of the other theatres van Hoogstraten describes and documents in *Lost Broadway Theatres*. Lavishly illustrated with photographs and drawings, van Hoogstraten's book will delight theatre buffs and aficionados of New York City's local history. It details individual case histories of fifty-four of the almost ninety Broadway theatres built between 1882 and 1932 for live stage performances. Though called "Broadway" theatres, the high price of property fronting Broadway forced many theatre owners, often the producers of plays, to choose less expensive frontages on side streets from 38th to 63rd streets and between Broadway and Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth avenues. Occasionally, a narrow lobby connected a theatre's auditorium to a Broadway entrance; more frequently, lobbies opened directly onto side streets enabling audiences to use the sidewalks, less-trafficked than on Broadway, as spill over space during intermissions. These buildings gave "the blocks between Times Square and Columbus Circle . . . the largest concentration of playhouses in the world."

Van Hoogstraten, a television producer, has researched the histories of these buildings since he was a teenager and first became fascinated with the subject. Notwithstanding the detail of his research, he writes more from the perspective of a theatre lover than a scholar, and his language could often stand more careful editing. He misses an opportunity to introduce his text with an overview of the aesthetic, cultural, social, economic, and technologi-

cal factors affecting the history of theatre and theatre design in the United States, although he touches on these subjects throughout the course of his book. Rather, individual case histories describe the physical attributes of the "lost" theatres, identify major productions, list critical responses to the building and performances, and tell how each theatre came to be destroyed, closed, or converted to other uses.

Despite the book's lack of comparative or analytical material, each of the case studies in *Lost Broadway Theatres* shows how the history of an individual building intersected with larger-scale transformations of 20th-century New York's physical, cultural, and social landscape. For example, the Hudson Theatre, designed by McElfatrick, Israels, and Harder, opened on West 44th Street in 1903. More modestly designed than either of Hammerstein's theatres, its nearly 1,100-seat house quickly achieved commercial success, although the *Architectural Record* criticized the simplicity of its appearance: "One wishes for a few notes of virility and for some big, strong masses of color somewhere in the ensemble. The theatre is pretty, but it is very tame." After its first owner, a producer named Henry B. Harris, drowned when the *Titanic* sank, his

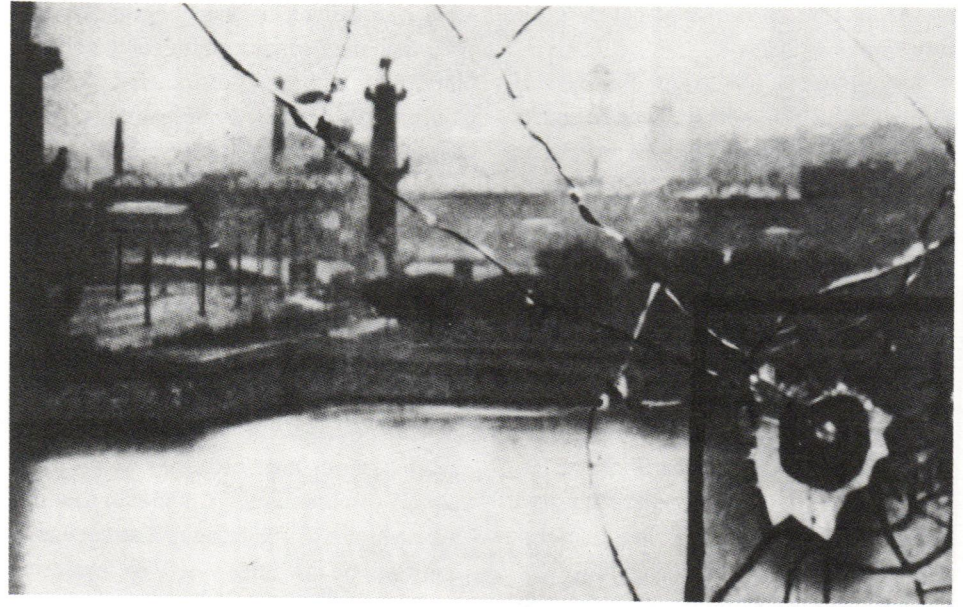


Hudson Theatre, 1974. (From *Lost Broadway Theatres*.)

widow, Rene, managed the Hudson Theatre until the Depression forced her to sell the property at a \$900,000 loss. Unlike most of the other theatres discussed in van Hoogstraten's book, the Hudson survived developers' attempts to demolish it—proposals for parking lots were typical—in part because a theatrical producer has lived in nine rented rooms in the theatre since 1942. Under many different owners, its auditorium was used to broadcast radio and television and to present legitimate theatre, burlesque, and pornographic movies. The exterior and the interior of the Hudson Theatre were given landmark status in 1987, and, according to van Hoogstraten, the developer of a recently built adjacent hotel plans to connect the interior of the older theatre to the new building and turn it into a multipurpose auditorium.

For most of the 20th century, Broadway—the street, between 42nd and 59th streets—has been the literal and symbolic thread of the theatre district, and changes in development practices, social norms, and cultural habits have dramatically transformed the shape of the street. Van Hoogstraten does not spend any time on this important subject in *Lost Broadway Theatres*; his primary concern is to document changes in buildings, not changes in urban space. By contrast, Peter Jukes's innovative *A Shout in the Street* shows how four streets, Broadway among them, typify significant aspects of modern urban culture as they are transformed by the dynamic of capitalist development practices.

Jukes is a writer, director, and producer of plays and radio shows in England, and he employs an unusual method to describe streets through “shifting and contradictory” views. Taking the book's title from a comment of Stephen Daedalus in *Ulysses*, he tries to show streets from “the involved complicit point of view of . . . pedestrians. Such a perspective has important implications. The view from the street is never single or enclosed.” To do this he introduces each street with a “montage” of quotations from other writers' texts; in other books these writings would normally be found by searching through footnote cita-



View from the Winter Palace, St. Petersburg, 1917. (From *A Shout in the Street*.)

tions. In the chapters that follow each montage, brief essays highlight aspects of each street and discuss their relationship to the previously cited texts. This volume is also illustrated with historical and contemporary photographs taken by the author and Teresa Watkins.

The montage and essay sections view each street in terms of a general political, cultural, or social theme and a corresponding physical analogue, which Jukes argues are pertinent to all modern urban situations though each is best explained by the specific example at hand. Jukes uses this technique simultaneously to picture each street at a critical moment in the modern era and to show how historic transformations continue to affect the fabric of contemporary urban society. “Nostalgia and Poverty,” with the museum as the analogue, describes the impact of the Industrial Revolution on the London “high” street and resulting nostalgias for “simpler” times. Using the marketplace analogy, “Commodities and Bodies” examines the transformation of the boulevard in Haussman's Paris and the spread of consumerism. “Crowds and Monuments and Power” shows how the Nevsky Prospect served as a kind of forum for St. Petersburg/Leningrad despite the difficulties of political discourse in pre- and post-revolutionary

Soviet Union. “Mobility and Traffic” depicts the street life of New York City's Broadway and other thoroughfares/highways in terms of the physical and social dispersal common to cities in the late 20th-century United States.

Jukes's selection of street, theme, and analogue reveal important distinctions and similarities between the four cities but discrepancies in the author's method are bothersome. Without apparent reason, Jukes switches from discussing streets as abstract situations to describing real sites as prototypical conditions. For example, there is no “high street” in London, though actual examples are prominent in other English cities and towns. Similarly he discusses the Parisian boulevard only as a generic type, though boulevards do, of course, exist in Paris. The Nevsky Prospect and Broadway are actual streets; Jukes's discussion of Broadway ignores the parts of the street that do not fit into his overall argument. Moreover, Jukes's characterizations are not entirely original; he openly states his intellectual debt to critics such as Marshall Berman, Italo Calvino, Richard Sennett, and Raymond Williams. Readers familiar with Berman's *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* will find Jukes's choice of topics and analyses derivative. Berman discusses three of the four streets pre-

sented in *A Shout in the Street* in terms very similar to Jukes's.

Though the lack of original analysis is disappointing, the montage sections make reading *A Shout in the Street* more than worthwhile. They realize Jukes's stated goal of approaching "urban life from the ground level, out on the pavement instead of gazing down from above or looking out from the inside." Using quotations from sources as varied as Charlie Chaplin and Agnes Heller, the montages give non-privileged, multiple views of each street. Terse, abrupt, compact, the quotes establish a sense of moving through urban space and historical time without literal description. This is especially true of those sections describing London, Paris, and St. Petersburg. For example, in the Nevsky Prospect montage, Jukes's filmic juxtaposition of texts from a diverse, if predictable, selection of authors—Machiavelli, Henry James, and Baedeker; Belyi, Mayakovsky, and Mandelstam; Eisenstein, Pushkin, and Reed—shows how this street gives a site for political discourse even in the context of repressive regimes.

Jukes concludes *A Shout In The Street* with the by now all-too-familiar tale of the difficulty of public life on the streets of contemporary cities, in part by taking Broadway as an example. In the final section of the book, "Mobility and Traffic," Jukes's selection of quotations and his own text acknowledge that one of Broadway's—or any street's—dominant uses is to provide a route for moving goods and municipal utilities. Over the course of the chapter he argues that this function has come to dominate the city-dweller's perception of most streets in the contemporary American city, Broadway included. Transformed by the process of modernization into a traffic artery, the modern street when "vacated . . . seems dangerous, indefensible . . . a haze of fumes and a grating of brakes."

Broadway offers a poor example of Jukes's larger point. This street manages to create a credible public realm in the center of the late-20th century New York despite, or perhaps partially because of, the fact

that it remains as it was historically, one of Manhattan's major north/south vehicular routes. The modernization of New York City has not emptied Broadway of people; to the contrary, diverse groups of people still populate most of Broadway and use its different segments and adjust public spaces in a variety of ways. To a degree Jukes recognizes the political importance of this situation on Broadway and other streets; he acknowledges that populated streets are sites where "a clash of viewpoints, a mess, a morass . . . can challenge our little orthodoxies and take us out of ourselves." His closing words are cautiously optimistic that street space can "still be the place where the most important connections are made . . . this house to that house, this street to that street, this city to all those other cities, my experience to yours." However, like Dunlap, Shephard, and van Hoogstraten, Jukes does little to illuminate how the physical form of Broadway—or other American streets—helps to make "the most important connections" and contributes to shaping a space for public discourse in the American city. But his book, as the others, stands as an articulate contribution in support of this yet to be written text.

ON BROADWAY: A JOURNEY UPTOWN OVER TIME, David W. Dunlap, Rizzoli, 1990, 327 pp., illus., \$65.00.

BROADWAY FROM THE BATTERY TO THE BRONX: AN ENTERTAINING GUIDE TO THE PEOPLE, CULTURE, AND HISTORY OF 293 NEW YORK CITY BLOCKS, Carin Drechsler-Marx and Richard F. Shephard, Harry N. Abrams, 1988, 160 pp., illus., \$19.95.

LOST BROADWAY THEATRES, Nicholas van Hoogstraten, Princeton Architectural Press, 288 pp., illus., \$39.95 cloth; \$24.95 paper.

A SHOUT IN THE STREET: AN EXCURSION INTO THE MODERN CITY, Peter Jukes with additional photographs by Teresa Watkins, Farrar Straus Giroux, 258 pp., illus., \$25.00.

Julia Trilling

The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of the City

RICHARD SENNETT

Richard Sennett is a walker in the city, and his city is New York. *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of the City*, the latest book by the peripatetic urban social critic, is the third in a trilogy that explores the relationship between urban space and society. The first, *The Fall of Public Man* (1977), is a sociological study of the relationship of public and private life; the second, *Palais Royal* (1986), is an epistolary novel about its character's social and psychological interaction with 19th-century Paris. The third, *The Conscience of the Eye*, brings social theory together with historical, literary, and architectural observation to address the failure of modern urban space to create the experience of exposure, diversity, and complexity that Sennett argues is much feared and yet is needed to develop the "eye as an organ of conscience." He contends that "Our urban problem is how to revive the reality of the outside as a dimension of human space." The city, according to Sennett, "ought to be a school for learning how to lead a centered life. Through exposure to others, we might learn to weigh what is important and what is not."

The first part of *The Conscience of the Eye* attempts to explain how fear of exposure, complexity, and difference came about. The modern city does not permit this exposure, according to Sennett, because modern culture suffers from a divide between subjective experience and worldly experience, self and city, and the blandness of modern urban space derives from that fear. Sennett develops a theory to explain this divide. Simply stated, and he is never simple, this schism in the material world of the city is a reflection of Christian theology's division between the inner and outer worlds. While the "ancient Greek could use his or her eyes to see the com-

plexities of life," modern humans cannot; our eyes no longer work that way, and what is outside is designed so as to conceal the complexity of life from the complacent gaze by separating and neutralizing space.

The roots of this division, according to Sennett, are to be found in early Judeo-Christian culture, which is "about experiences of spiritual dislocation and homelessness," about "the terrors of exposure" because "our faith began at odds with place." St. Augustine's *City of God* would manifest itself spatially in a division between the "inner" and "outer" and in the medieval world as a built articulation of the sacred and a confusing jumble of the secular. But it would take the advent of Protestantism to erect an impenetrable wall between the inner and the outer. The Protestant ethic of spiritual inwardness and isolated individualism would lead to the creation of sterile, neutral space built in a Protestant language of environment in which "neutrality becomes an instrument of power."

Surely such an argument needs a few cautious conditions attached, rather like fire escapes on an old tenement. Otherwise the reader feels too free to raise the most obvious kinds of objections: Amsterdam, as King Philip of Spain furiously raged, was an unforgivably Protestant city, but it did not consist of sterile, neutral space. And what about Christian Siena, with its great central secular space, or Venice? In brief, the reader is tempted to provide counterexamples. Furthermore, the rich urban parade of references, allusions, and examples that Sennett supplies are not substitutes for structured evidence. Sennett's theory calls for a systematic comparative analysis of Christian (and especially Protestant) places with those of other cultures, yet he does not attempt such an analysis. So one set of examples can be countered by another. The game is fun; but knowledge does not accumulate.

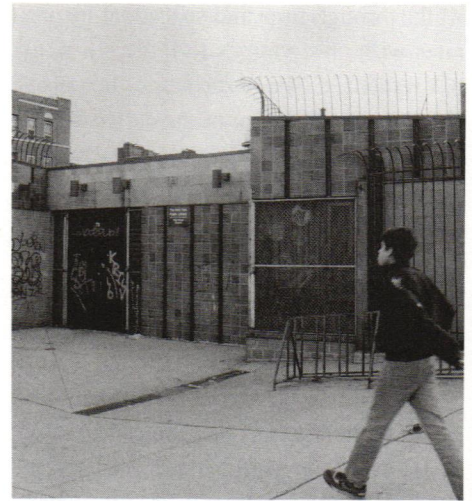
What we have grown to expect from Sennett's earlier books—brilliant observation and analysis of the cultural and social meaning of our contemporary urban landscape—is no less present in this book. His examination of the grid, both horizontal

and vertical, in its American adaptation as an example of how "neutrality becomes an instrument of power," is provocative and insightful. Following an explanation of the versatility of the gridiron and of its historical and geographical universality, Sennett interprets the 19th- and 20th-century grid to reveal how the Protestant language of self is made manifest as a space of power. The grid is "a space for economic competition, to be played upon like a chessboard . . . a space of neutrality, a neutrality achieved by denying to the environment any value of its own, and, like a Pyrrhic victory earned by the person who competes and wins only to feel he or she has not yet achieved enough, the grid disoriented those who played upon it; they could not establish what was of value in places without centers or boundaries, spaces of endless, mindless geometric division. This was the Protestant ethic of space."

He turns to the construction of Central Park in the 19th century to illustrate his assertion that American builders of that era could think only of opposing bucolic relief as an alternative to the grid; they could not conceive of a more richly articulated urban space. The grid, in its mindless repetition is well adapted to the dualities of Protestant denial: "To build you act as though you live in emptiness; to resist the builder's world you act as though you do not live in the city."

His eye for seeming paradoxes in the visual representation of the public and the private, which was already acute in *The Fall of Public Man*, is further developed in his discussions of the invention of plate glass and the creation of the glass curtain wall. "The peculiar physical sensation aroused by plate glass is complete visibility without exposure of the other senses. It is the physical sensation on which is founded the modern sense of isolation in a building." The glass wall creates a paradoxical relation of visibility in the midst of isolation, a kind of "barrier of transparency."

But there are paradoxes within paradoxes. For all Sennett's attention to the phenomenology of seeing, it is telling that there are no illustrations in the book: no photos, no drawings, no street plans. Per-



Highbridge Public Library, South Bronx, New York; photograph by Camilo José Vergara.

haps, this is because the book isn't really about seeing; it is about telling.

Halfway through the book, the reader, if he or she is a designer, might begin to feel some anxiety about the book's form. At that point, it begins to appear that the book is organized the way the author would like to see the city organized, with a highly complex street plan filled with dead ends, cul-de-sacs, back alleys, pushcarts, traffic noise. In it one encounters, by surprise, a diverse mixture of people: Hannah Arendt, James Baldwin, Antoine Quatremère de Quincy, a graffiti artist from the "Death Squad writing group," John Dewey, Andy Warhol, Le Corbusier, and Fernand Léger, among many others. The book reads more and more like a montage of finely drawn urban vignettes and sociological essays designed to be read continuously but tempting to take in snatches. This seemingly unstructured play of urban miscellany with its abrupt shifts of focus does come together kaleidoscopically in a highly original synthesis that might tempt even the sternest critic to forgive the stylistic and disciplinary license that Sennett takes.

His stated purpose in the second part of his book is to "understand how the experience of complexity might be gained in the urban environment through the powers of visual interpretation with which people are armed." With that purpose in mind, he takes the reader on several New York City

walks through time and space that he narrates with observations to illustrate many of his themes. One of the stories he tells is about the replacement of the dulled heroin addicts he used to encounter just east of Washington Square by "electric" cocaine dealers. It reminds us that the streets of New York are dangerous and scary and recasts the question of exposure ("New York," Sennett insists, "should be an ideal city of exposure to others"). In reality, it is becoming a city of efforts to insulate ourselves from others as best we can.

He seems to prefer the border spaces that bring together diverse groups, for example, the Turkish baths on the Lower East Side below Fourteenth Street that functioned some thirty years ago to bring together aged men mostly of Russian, Latvian, and Ukrainian origin, and young people from more prosperous backgrounds. It is this kind of social interface between communities that he argues urban design should somehow promote.

But how? The book does not offer any developed prescriptions for just what kind of urban design might foster the kinds of interactions that Sennett seeks. Rather it speaks vaguely of narrative space and the mutability of the grid, which is after all Manhattan's dominant street plan. Battery Park City, to which Sennett devotes one page, is a recent effort to extend and adapt Manhattan's grid to a set of contextualized public spaces. Sennett dismisses this effort as an "illustration of life rather than life itself." It would have been more useful for the urban design professional and critic if he had carefully analyzed that design effort.

The Conscience of the Eye is brilliant in the French sense of *briller*, which is not a utilitarian notion. Written for precisely that person whose absence the book seems to lament, the urban intellectual, and not necessarily the design professional or the discipline-specific academic, the meandering journey is nonetheless of real value to any persevering reader who cares to reflect upon the way we build cities.

THE CONSCIENCE OF THE EYE, Richard Sennett, Alfred A. Knopf, 1990, 266 pp., \$24.95.

Warren A. James

New Yuck, New Yuck

New York must have gotten uglier, and uglier, and uglier since 1970. As Steven Holl put it, "today there is much building, and almost no architecture"; this is especially true of present-day Manhattan. It only makes sense, but to prove it there is a recent panoramic book, a building catalogue in full color: *New York Architecture 1970–1990*. With a Rizzoli price, it is, alas, no Baedeker.

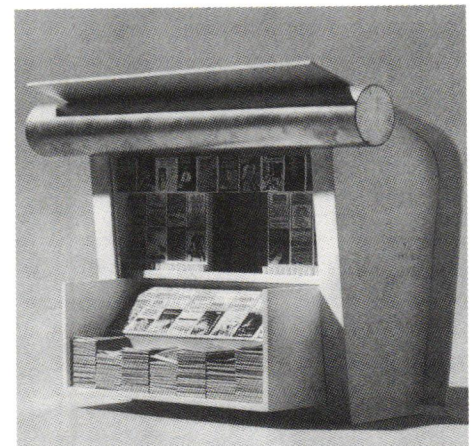
But what exactly transpired in Manhattan in the past twenty years? The city's economy rose and collapsed, and rose again and collapsed again—or at least tried to. In the architecture of the city, PoMo came and went, Decon jetted in, and old Mod Arch is still around—but style came here to stay. One had certainly heard all about it for years in places like Ithaca, Princeton, New Haven, and probably, Cambridge, too. But here at last is the printed version, the transcript of the debate, with illustrations. Without getting lachrymose, I will try to describe what *New York Architecture 1970–1990* is all about.

This catalogue accompanied a German architecture exhibition, by Germans, for Germans. It was an exhibition on some, but not all, Manhattan architects' versions of the period's dreams and reality. Anyone could send material for inclusion, if they only knew where to send it. It is known that in New York all is vanity and nothing is fair, given the post-Reagan milieu. A Mosaic dispensation? You may wonder. After bracing the glassy Mies coffee table, you will see.

An introduction by Heinrich Klotz, the postmodern expert, who was coordinator-at-large for this trans-Atlantic campaign, sets the tone with Gotham's architectural art and culture together at last. The foreword is by Luminita Sabau, who says that in New York all architectural periods are represented—from the Egyptian to the Neo-Modern. Four thousand years compressed neatly into four hundred. She

even quotes Henry James (he hated New York skyscrapers), who said that a story is only good until a better one is told. So this book on New York must be it, and no better story has been told—but one wonders why Philip Johnson did not contribute to this German campaign? One would think no book could possibly discuss New York during those years without including or illustrating at length the AT&T—soon to be Sony—building. One reads and one learns.

Bear with me. Manhattan-based architect Robert A. M. Stern writes, again, on what surely will form part of another of his New York nineteensomething series (1900, 1930, 1960, and 1990), putting the period in perspective, beginning with 1625. Two architectural historians/critics, Kenneth Frampton and Christian Norberg-Schulz, offer lengthy, enervating, interesting, critical, and at times embarrassing insights on what it means to practice in Manhattan. Then there is Douglas Davis, a critic, who flies, apparently a great deal, at the expense of *Newsweek*, with some categorizations of his own; and Michael Sorkin, a former critic from the *Village Voice*, who laments twenty years of Eurotrash crowds in Manhattan (who could not possibly carry this book around town in their backpacks). This period, obviously, has kept many critics very, very busy. But the lengthy writing



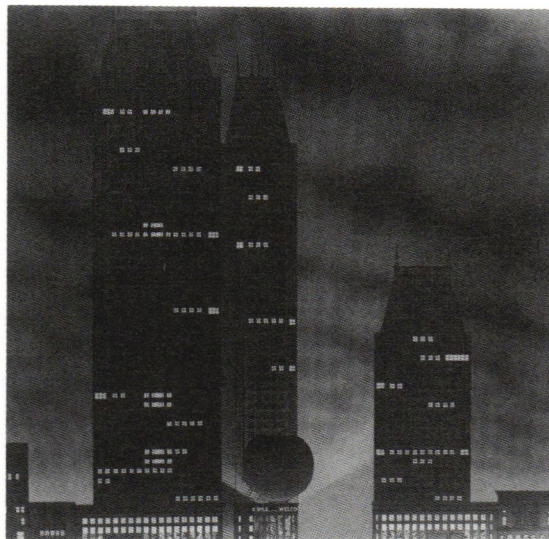
Design for a New York newsstand; Anderson/Schwartz Architects, 1988. (From *New York Architecture 1970–1990*.)

is only the beginning—the book continues on and on.

Imagine, the exhaustion one is bound to feel, a phlegmatic publication no doubt. Maybe it caught a catarrh on the voyage across the ocean. But readers may still wonder who is “in” and who is “out.” The meat and potatoes of the book. While no forthcoming *salon de refusés* has formed, it may prove more yeasty, more insouciant, more refined, but best of all more realistic, and accurate. The OTHER New York 1970–1990.

Paul Rudolph, with his James Bond triplex in Beekman Place, is out. Gordon Bunshaft, Raul de Armas and the rest of SOM is out, it must have been downhill since Lever House in the 1950s. Ulrich Franzen and Frank Williams are out, and do not forget Philip Johnson’s Lipstick building and Times Square buildings are out. Not even Emery Roth and Sons made it, the firm that has almost single-handedly built Manhattan. Among the younger generation? Hariri and Hariri, Steven Forman, Walter Chatham, Richard Gluckman, Peter Gluck, Shelton-Mindel, are all out. Out. OUT. At least they left out the houses in the Hamptons—that Newport without conviction where most establishment architects test their mettle. So, exactly who is in?

Like a mixed-up and badly edited yearbook, the seniors are mixed in with the freshmen, and a few sophomores, as it is arranged in alphabetical order by architect. Well-known, locally licensed architects, in practice, in Manhattan, who pay commercial rents, and who seem to build, and build, and build are included. Such as Zaha Hadid, José Oubrierie, Harry Wolf, Mario Botta, Oswald Mathias Ungers, and Harry Macklowe (yes, the developer!), among many others. If one were to look in the New York yellow pages under “Architects,” none of them are listed. There are Park Avenue skyscrapers, next to Madison Avenue boutiques, next to houses in Brooklyn, next to air-



Times Square Plaza Design, New York; Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, 1984. (From *New York Architecture 1970–1990*.)

line terminals in Queens, next to Columbia-type student projects. A typological orgy.

Unfortunately the period did not generate an urban vision, no grand projects à la Mitterrand, to merit a book of this kind. Paris 1900 or Barcelona 1992, Manhattan was not. Even the photographs have no captions. Uptown and Downtown, the Local and the Express, confusion and chaos. Perhaps that *is* what Manhattan is all about; if that is the case, then the book becomes a metaphor for the city. But more likely it is all about deluxe color photographs by camera sphincters that click and click.

You get the picture. New Yuck, New Yuck.

NEW YORK ARCHITECTURE 1970–1990, Heinrich Klotz and Luminita Sabau, editors, Rizzoli, 1990, 330 pp., illus., \$75.00.

Raymond W. Gastil

Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City 1890–1930

MICHELE H. BOGART

Michele H. Bogart’s *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City 1890–1930* is scrupulously devoid of aesthetic judgment. Bogart maintains a critical distance, noting that other writers have returned sculptors such as Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Daniel Chester French, and Karl Bitter to the canon of seriously considered artists. Still others, from Henry Hope Reed in *The Golden City* (1959) to Donald Martin Reynolds in *Monuments and Masterpieces: Histories and Views of Public Sculpture in New York City* (1988) have championed Beaux-Arts classical sculpture for its ongoing contribution to the urban scene.

Yet just as Bogart writes with regard to the siting of public sculpture that “no



Maine Memorial, Columbus Circle, New York; H. Van Buren Magonigle, architect; Attilio Piccirilli, sculptor; 1913. (From *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City*.)

public work can be neutral," surely no book on public sculpture can claim neutrality, especially a book with as striking a cover photograph as *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal*. This photograph, like most of the book's other nonarchival photographs, was taken by Bogart herself and shows the *Maine Memorial* (H. Van Buren Magonigle, architect; Attilio Piccirilli, sculptor; 1902–13). The winter light comes down hard on the massive pylon and its allegorical figures. At the bottom right corner, between the female *Fortitude Supporting the Feeble* and the river-godlike *Atlantic*, sit two black men, huddling from the cold. The image dramatizes the author's intent: not to redeem public sculpture as meaningful civic art, but rather to underscore the transparent elitism and unconvincing pomp of such a monument, even in its own day.

To do so, Bogart first describes New York's elite of sculptors, and details their relationship to a broader civic elite that believed in public sculpture as a civilizing influence. She then advances through specific case studies, including the Appellate Courthouse (1896–1900), the Dewey Triumphal Arch (1899), and the U.S. Customs Office (1899–1907), to explicate the politics and mechanics of contracts and building that both hampered and sustained the sculptors' avowed mission. The third section is outright critique, through both analytical hindsight and documentation of the contemporary fray.

The story of the first glimmerings of public sculpture in New York is well told, culminating in the foundation of the National Sculpture Society (NSS) in 1893, an organization that included sculptors, architects, and journalists dedicated to professionalism and open boosterism.

Bogart pays particular heed to the eth-



Civic Virtue, City Hall Park; Frederick MacMonnies, 1922. (From *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City*.)

nic backgrounds of the sculptors, pointing out that the majority were Anglo-Saxon males who lived in New York, with a significant minority of Germans and a few women. For Bogart, the sculptors' class and national origins are essential to explaining their alliances not only with architects but with powerful politicians, businesspersons, and trustees.

Bogart also explains, though not quite fully, the link between ethnic background and the sculptors' adamant insistence on the "American" quality of their work, which only rarely sank to the level of the prejudice that only old-stock Americans could sculpt "American" sculpture. Considering the weight Bogart grants to class and heritage, she might have pointed out how the sculptors' rhetoric of "Americanism" often did *not* affect actual artistic production, given the "un-American" backgrounds of the prominent sculptors she discusses, including: Bitter, a Viennese who served as director of sculp-

ture for three American world's fairs; Piccirilli, an Italian; Philip Martiny, born in Alsace; and even Saint-Gaudens, a self-proclaimed American born in Dublin of an Irish mother and French father, whose childhood in the working-class district of downtown New York had nothing to do with the New England upbringing of his greatest contemporary, Daniel Chester French.

As Bogart shows, most American sculptors, regardless of their background, remained alienated from power, dependent on architects such as McKim, Mead & White who had forged links to the ruling class and who, until the collapse of their *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* values, held that sculpture was integral to public buildings. Yet these sculptors were remarkably successful, as Bogart's extraordinary rich and original research shows. She has bothered to get the story right, often for the first time, of why and how these

public sculptures were made, complementing the narrative with excellent archival photographs of sketch models, scrawled over with "approved" or "disapproved."

Bogart argues that the NSS did well by its mission and membership when the project's architect was, for instance, vice president of the NSS, as was Charles R. Lamb, the New York designer of the Dewey Arch, a temporary structure bristling with sculpture. The NSS also did well when the United States government was the client and the architect believed in sculpture, as with the U.S. Customs House designed by Cass Gilbert. Difficult times, however, came when a New York City Tammany Hall administration, fundamentally unsympathetic to the City Beautiful movement, took issue with the budgets and special status accorded to sculptors on major public works such as the Hall of Records (1899–1907).

The NSS also fared surprisingly

poorly with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, whose trustees—including John Quincy Adams Ward, first president of the NSS—balked at carrying out the full sculptural program of Richard Morris Hunt's Fifth Avenue entrance. Bogart writes that in 1900 the Metropolitan, at the time of the City Beautiful's greatest influence, was already undermining the values of the movement by refusing to support outdoor sculpture by living artists:

Because of the trustees' institutional policies, true art came increasingly to be seen by artists, critics, and the general public as an autonomous object of rarified appreciation, detached from any obligation to express common social values. Art, as associated with a museum, came to be divorced from civic concerns. But those concerns were what gave public sculpture, and even many of the artists themselves, fundamental identity and significance.

Bogart, who has a strong appetite for conflict, documents the precariousness of the civic ideal that public sculpture relied on to give it meaning. She tells the history of the *Pulitzer Fountain* and the *Maine Memorial* (sponsored by William Randolph Hearst), establishing a good taste/bad taste dichotomy between Pulitzer's gracious monument of *Pomona*

atop an elegant basin to Hearst's bombastic and crowded pylon. Bogart shows a certain sympathy for bad taste, noting that the *Maine Memorial* at least had the financial endorsement of the public it was supposed to inspire. On the other hand, when she writes that for public sculpture, "the cultivated blandness of these works . . . was necessary for them to succeed," Bogart is clearly referring to sculptures of "good taste" such as the *Pulitzer Fountain*. She argues that whenever public sculpture slipped from this dull pedestal, whether in the *Maine Memorial*—ridiculed in its own time—or in the overt parody of Coney Island, it reflected back on the earnest aesthetics and ideals of graver, blander monuments. By the time Frederick MacMonnies finally erected *Civic Virtue* (1909–22), the image of a plump young athlete astride two squirming females had become absurd and offensive, whatever the allegorical implications.

Bogart concludes that it was not the stylistic juggernaut of modernism that caused the demise of Beaux-Arts classical sculpture, but the failure of the sculptors' own "myth of civic community." The myth's weaknesses were evident from the start: the edifying spectacle of the sculpture-filled White City on the Lake in Chicago (1893) had its carnival counterpart in the brightly colored Midway, full of far cruder and more titillating distractions. For every *Pulitzer Fountain* there was a Coney Island parody, where the goddess lost her allegorical veil and became what she was at the start, a naked lady.



Purity (Defeat of Slander), Longacre Square; Leo Lentelli, 1909, demolished. (From *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City*.)

PUBLIC SCULPTURE AND THE CIVIC IDEAL IN NEW YORK CITY 1890–1930, Michele H. Bogart, University of Chicago Press, 1989, 390 pp., illus., \$39.95.

Jeffery C. Sugarman

The New Urban Landscape

RICHARD MARTIN, EDITOR

Urban Excellence

PHILIP LANGDON

I am not readily seduced by the exquisite elegance of last month's state-of-the-"art" edifice if its skyward beauty is not equaled by its earthbound civility. The city is both artifact and metaphor, operating to satisfy human needs as well as to express our aspirations. Put less artfully, such a post-postmodern assertion implies that the aesthetic grows from and services the social. It is an idea that, despite so much evidence to support it, still raises eyebrows (though woefully few buildings), and thus I greet with optimism the direct affirmation of this view in the two books under review, *The New Urban Landscape*, edited by Richard Martin, and *Urban Excellence*, by Philip Langdon. The first is a catalogue on an exhibition of conceptual artworks by architects and artists sponsored by mega-developers Olympia and York in 1988, and the second is a summary of the first Rudy Bruner Competition (1987) for excellence in urban design and planning; both books have markedly different approaches to this thesis. Two representative quotes reflect the distinction:

We continue to need cities and we continue to need cities cognitively, needing to know how they work in order to know how we and our world works. (Richard Martin in *The New Urban Landscape*)

Community is not just a sentimental feeling that may turn out to be mostly an illusion; community is an outgrowth of policies and organizational practices. (Philip Langdon in *Urban Excellence*)

Here is the rich territory that Jane Jacobs, Robert Venturi, and Denise Scott-Brown opened for our generation some twenty-five years ago, but as surveyed in

these catalogues that terrain is explored neither through pure scholarship nor smooth reportage. As catalogues, each is, to an extent, a secondhand view exploring its subject through the work (art installations/urban design projects) of others. In both, the literary transaction that takes the authors (and readers) from artifact to report greatly transforms the original objects through calculated advocacy to serve the sponsors' goals. In *Urban Excellence* the goals are stated directly, but not in *The New Urban Landscape*. As one reads past the complementary theses of these two works, their substance diverges as dramatically as the superficial beauty of their production values. It becomes apparent that beyond conceptual affinity there is very little in common between them.

Urban Excellence is a clear, almost government-memo-like exposition of its sponsors' philosophical point of view, consistently (and compellingly) revealed by example. The book's case studies (the publication of which was an explicit goal of this admirable competition) present the successes and failures of the winning entry, Pike Place Market, Seattle, and the four finalists (St. Francis Square, San Francisco; Quality Hill, Kansas City, Missouri; Casa Rita Shelter, The Bronx, New York; and Fairmount Health Center, Philadelphia). Each discussion lucidly describes the project's physical character and evaluates its significance by analyzing its "products, processes and values." These analyses are the book's greatest asset.

By definition, a competition makes judgments, and there is no subterfuge as to the Rudy Bruner Prize sponsor's very strongly argued positions. The competition jurors have little patience for decisions made on purely aesthetic, economic, or social criteria. The authors tell us that the Pike Place Market "shows us that the management of diversity is necessary" and that is the credo of this book. The necessity to balance competing urban needs and resources and to assess the relative priority of the socially disen-

franchised over those with power is the message. Each case study reiterates this message, but instructively, in a different context. For example, Quality Hill (a project to revitalize Kansas City's decaying downtown through gentrification), for example, is explicitly seen to have less value if conceived for another context such as Philadelphia, where other needs such as community-based health-care delivery are more urgent.

Beyond commenting on the social imperatives of our cities, *Urban Excellence* specifically focuses attention on the empowerment of the individual to act constructively in the social realm. The very structure of the competition embeds this admirable goal within it: "In organizing the competition, the Bruner Foundation allowed applicants to define 'product' themselves. In doing so, the award competition increased the prospect for learning more about different people's concepts of what contributes to an urban project's success." And with that goal in mind the authors of the competition report establish a style, tone, and format that should appeal directly to the community-spirited, grass-roots audience most likely to benefit from this book.

In a more subtle manner, *Urban Excellence* also projects its message and appeal to the professional design and planning audience. Through tireless attempts to treat each project fairly, to assess both successes and failures, and to examine the planning and design process

equally in five very diverse case studies, the competition jurors demonstrate how professional urban designers and planners can help empower individuals through mutual respect—the message being that the community can be a planning asset rather than an adversary. It is the refreshing candor of those involved with the Rudy Bruner Prize that truly acquits their documentary effort of some of its other shortcomings.

Urban Excellence will win no awards for visual quality, nor for eloquence. Graphically the book seems almost to devalue aesthetics beyond all other elements in the urban design and planning equation, although the balancing of resources is the authors' operative concept. Significantly, the book never attains the power to persuade it might have had were the photographs more convincing evidence of the averred urban excellence and the narrative more eloquent. While the fuzzy, snapshot quality of the majority of photos and the hand-crafted character of the drawings add to the grass-roots appeal of the book, they do not draw potential readers' attention on the bookshelf. Neither will the liberal use of catchy phrases and buzzwords help convince professional readers, whose attention must also be enlisted to achieve the Bruner Foundation's goals. In this regard the producers of *Urban Excellence* could have learned something from *The New Urban Landscape*: both the visual and verbal have their own power and efficacy and neither should be ignored.

In the end, however, *Urban Excellence* is a credit to its title, lending substance enough to each of its slogans through careful explanation (albeit placed regrettably late in the text) and abundant examples of not only what is good in our cities, but the good process that achieves admirable, and, more importantly, socially functional values. It does this in many contexts and with such consistency that it would serve anyone who seeks a basic hands-on text that tests social theory through urban practice.

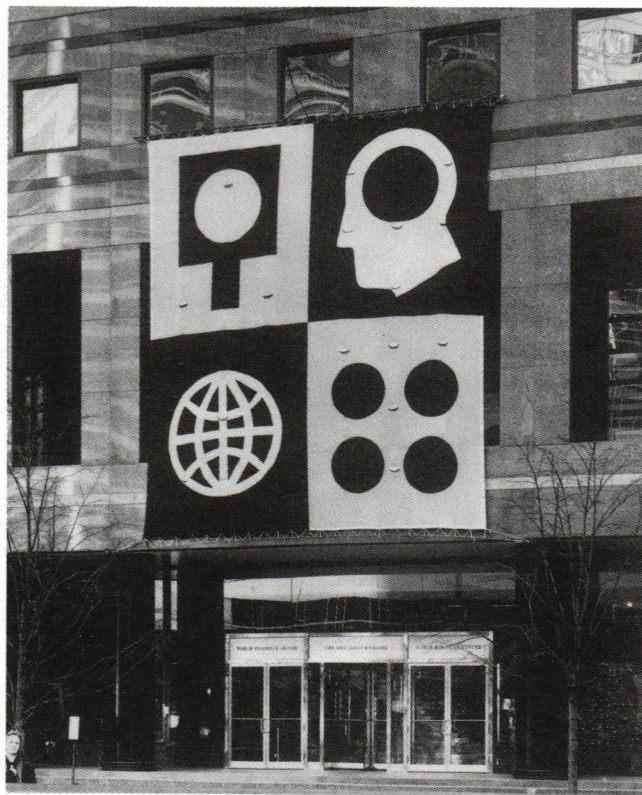
Turning from the relative homeliness



Garden with Fountain; Vitto Acconci, 1988.
(From *The New Urban Landscape*.)

of *Urban Excellence* to the sybaritic pleasures of *The New Urban Landscape* is akin to traveling west from the town-houses of New York's outer boroughs through the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel to Manhattan, a trip that conveniently deposits the traveler at the door of the World Financial Center at Battery Park City. This was the site of "The New Urban Landscape" exhibition, which along with five days and nights of high-octane pleasures (ranging from the Philadelphia Orchestra to Grace Jones), celebrated the opening of this extraordinary urban place. Although we are told in the catalogue that in keeping with the gravity of the moment, monies from these events were donated to charities such as the World Wildlife Fund's Tropical Rainforest Conservation Program, the catalogue bedazzles through less serious devices: there is little gravity in the heights scaled by this literary and photographic tour de force.

As designed by Drenttel Doyle Partners (who were also responsible for the graphics and marketing identity program for the World Financial Center), this catalogue looks like a slim, flashy fashion model selling seductive wares on a Downtown "runway" like West Broadway or cutting waves on Collins Avenue in South Beach, Miami. Inside are some of the most eye-catching graphics and typography that one is likely to see in a book of this type (the serious coffee-table book). Everything is on the edge here, holding the line between decorum and subversion. This manner of typography (eccentrically colorful and unpredictable in layout) functions well in the contemporary marketplace, but is rather terrorizing to the marketplace of ideas. The typography, while luscious, distracts, and the homogenizing sepia-toned photographs by Jon Abbott, meant to document the art, instead render it lifeless; the addition of numerous layouts that use collage



Nylon banner on the Dow Jones Building; Matt Mulican, 1988. (From *The New Urban Landscape*.)

or too small photographic prints further obscures the art on display. The incoherent form of this catalogue evokes the state of the new urban landscape as well as, if not better than, most of the essays or artworks contained within.

The glitter is accompanied by two expository essays and ten others, which, like the art in the exhibit, were commissioned by Olympia and York and are intended to explore the subject of the new urban landscape in a provocatively metaphorical fashion. There is not much here, however, to avert attention from the sensual pleasures in *The New Urban Landscape*. The first essay, by Richard Martin, is clever, but its analysis obvious. The second, by Nancy Princenthal, is lucidly written and gives some concrete idea of the exhibition. But Princenthal's reporting of many of the artists' own comments or "take" on the work, while interesting, only serves to underline the lack of resonance I felt from most of these installations when I saw them. Sadly, the hyperintellectualizing of the prose in the cata-

logue cannot communicate the full sensual power of the exhibition's most successful installations.

The remaining essays tend to follow Martin's lead; only a very few (such as those by Sanford Kwinter and Herbert Muschamp) present any provocative interpretation or vision of their subject. Several of the authors are as lavishly self-indulgent with language as the graphic designers are with form; a few present a poetic or typographic metaphor (in the manner of e.e. cummings) for the city that is as hermetic as the developer's intentions are transparent: this catalogue is about selling the city, not understanding it.

The thesis in both *Urban Excellence* and *The New Urban Landscape* is the interdependence of the social and physical in urban life, and both tell us something

about that relationship today by referring to external objects. While the immediate value of these works must be assessed on what they convey directly in their arguments (and clearly, *Urban Excellence* excels on that score), because of their referential function their most lasting effect may indeed lie in their metaphoric character. In that context, one is well advised to read these works (much as any astute observer reads the city itself) with an eye to their form as well as their function.

THE NEW URBAN LANDSCAPE, Richard Martin, editor, Rizzoli, 1990, 132 pp., illus., \$29.95 paper.

URBAN EXCELLENCE, Philip Langdon, Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1990, 212 pp., illus., \$38.95.

Richard Cleary

Claude-Nicolas Ledoux

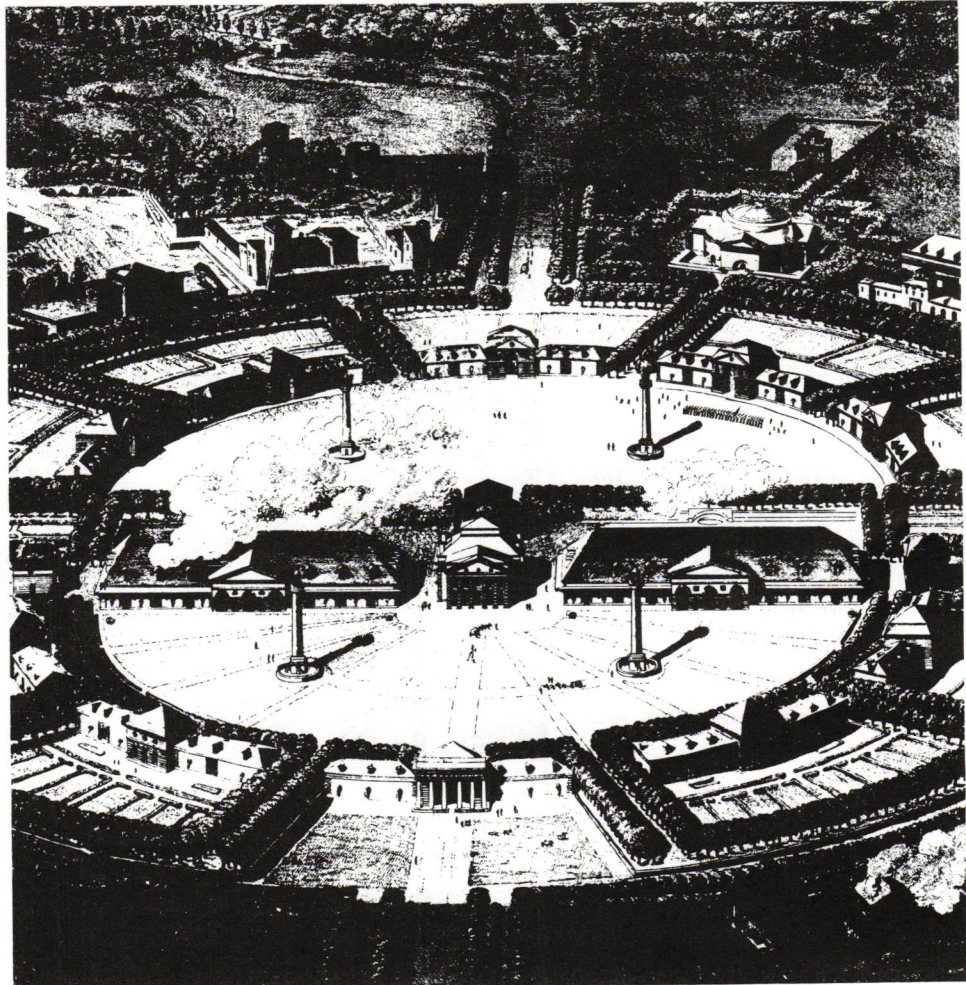
ANTHONY VIDLER

One of the sublime stations of an architectural pilgrimage to France is Claude-Nicolas Ledoux's saltworks, the Saline de Chaux (1775–78), at Arc-et-Senans. Although the smoky fires of the distillation process have long been extinguished and the hierarchic community of laborers and overseers replaced by camera-toting tourists, the reductive classicism and allusive iconography of Ledoux's buildings continue to project his intention of ennobling utilitarian structures with social and aesthetic purpose.

The Saline de Chaux is the best preserved of the architect's few extant works. His oeuvre is known primarily through the plates of his much looked at but rarely read treatise, *L'architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des mœurs et de la législation* (1806, 1846), which has recently been reissued by the Princeton Architectural Press. Long considered nearly impenetrable, Ledoux's text has been unlocked for us by Anthony Vidler, who has written an extraordinary book that more than any other biography of a French architect of the ancien régime presents its subject as an active participant of his society.

The book has six thematic chapters arranged chronologically. They examine Ledoux's education, his efforts to apply the concept of character to the design of town houses and châteaux, the history of the Saline de Chaux, Ledoux's approach to the design of monumental public buildings, the issues informing his vision for the Ideal City of Chaux, and the writing of *L'architecture*. An extremely effective device running throughout the book is the citation at section breaks of relevant passages from Ledoux's treatise that reinforce the close ties between his writing and architecture.

Vidler integrates analyses of architectural issues and social institutions with great sensitivity to his readers' likely unfam-



Perspective view of the Ville de Chaux; Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, c. 1785. (From *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux*.)

miliarity with both areas and shows a deft touch in providing background material without disrupting the flow of his primary themes. This is a book I could assign without reservation to students in history or architecture.

The book design, however, is not up to the elegance of Vidler's prose. The illustrations do not have figure numbers and often are placed awkwardly with respect to the text. The hierarchy of headings and sub-headings is not obvious, and vast zones of white space occupy the tops of the pages like polar ice caps.

Ledoux represented a new breed of architect in late 18th-century France. Unlike the leading figures of the previous generation, such as Ange-Jacques Gabriel, who typically were descended from long lines of architects and builders, Ledoux was the son of a shopkeeper or tradesman, and re-

ceived his basic instruction in architecture not through apprenticeship but in the classrooms of Jacques-François Blondel's private Ecole des Arts, which offered the most comprehensive program of architectural education available in France. Ledoux entered Blondel's school around the age of eighteen, following four years of study as a scholarship student at the Collège de Dormans-Beauvais in Paris. Vidler devotes considerable attention to the Jansenist curriculum of the college and postulates that its methods of textual study and rhetorical expression provided Ledoux with an enduring approach to intellectual questions that he applied to architectural design and to the shaping of his treatise. Vidler also notes that the college's alumni network was an important vehicle assisting Ledoux's mobility into the higher layers of French society.

Between the early 1770s and the outbreak of the French Revolution, Ledoux enjoyed a highly successful practice and moved in circles of private clients and governmental administrators who encouraged or at least tolerated thoughts of economic and social reform. In this climate, he developed a view of architecture as a practical and social art embodying the enduring values of public institutions. Vidler shows us that Ledoux shared the belief commonly held during the Enlightenment that civilization sprang from what philosopher and encyclopedist Denis Diderot termed the "principle of sociability." It fell to architects to create the physical environments in which this fundamental natural impulse could flourish. Thus, for Ledoux, the design of a theater, such as the one he built in Besançon (1775–84) was at once a pragmatic and technical problem, a matter of urban embellishment, and an expression of the new moral dimensions of play-going defined by contemporary dramaturgy. Ledoux also embraced the task of creating building types to accommodate society's newest institutions, such as office buildings, banks, and stock exchanges.

Ledoux's buildings shared certain compositional elements with the general stylistic category of late 18th-century neoclassicism, but their historicist qualities were based more on the suggestive power of allusion than the representation of specific works from the past. Such willingness to allude rather than to quote was not unique in French architecture and may be related, for example, to the practice earlier in the century of using architectural sculpture and other devices to inflect the conventionalized forms of the buildings framing *places royales* (royal squares) with an aura of ancient Roman forums.

Ledoux's Palladianism may also have a point of intersection with practice earlier in the century. Vidler demonstrates how Ledoux mastered Palladio's nine-square grid as a planning device and projected it into three dimensions. English neo-Palladianism, encountered through books and, perhaps, travel to Britain, was a likely source for these ideas, evident in Ledoux's

oeuvre from the 1760s. Attention might also be given, however, to investigating the legacy of the relatively unstudied and admittedly less doctrinaire strands of Palladianism in France evident in the works of architects such as Robert de Cotte and Germain Boffrand.

The engravings of the Ideal City of Chaux are among the most provocative images in western European architecture. Vidler suggests that Ledoux may have conceived the general enlargement of the Saline de Chaux while the complex was still under construction. Once begun, he continued the enterprise for the remainder of his life. Many observers have regarded the scheme as an example of fantastic architecture and pure imagination, and to a point they are correct, but Vidler shows us how Ledoux developed his ideas from very real concerns rooted in the economic programs of Physiocratic regionalism and the reforms of agricultural production championed by the *agronomes*. At the level of specific buildings, the project echoes contemporary aesthetic and programmatic concerns. The design of the church, for example, takes up liturgical and formal issues raised in the design and construction of the church of Ste-Geneviève (the Panthéon) by Jacques-Germain Soufflot.

Ledoux's architecture has had quite a different legacy than the ideology that informed it. While the latter has been largely forgotten, the former, in our century, has been rediscovered and reinterpreted by modernists, postmodernists, and deconstructivists, and will likely continue to challenge designers in the future. Like a skilled interpreter of Mozart performing on original instruments, Vidler has managed to serve both interests, conveying the aesthetic power of Ledoux's achievements while informing us of their original textures.

CLAUDE-NICOLAS LEDOUX: ARCHITECTURE AND SOCIAL REFORM AT THE END OF THE ANCIEN REGIME, Anthony Vidler, MIT Press, 1990, 464 pp., illus., \$50.00.

Emily Apter

Writing Style

Two recently published books dealing with the political and psychosocial interpretation of French Art Nouveau introduce new ways of looking at the theoretical controversies surrounding style and design from the *belle époque* to the 1920s. Debora L. Silverman's *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style* traces the influence of the Goncourt brothers' glorification of rococo decorative art and painting on the development of Art Nouveau, while Nancy J. Troy's *Modernism and the Decorative Arts in France: Art Nouveau to Le Corbusier* picks up historically where Silverman's study leaves off and contextualizes the paradigm-shifting work of early Corbusian modernism within an Art Nouveau culture of craft and design.

Though well over half of Troy's book is devoted to the forces and ideas that shaped the modernist interior—industrialization, the formation of craft unions, the aesthetic ideologies of colorism, purism and *esprit nouveau*, department store display, the reception of the Decorative Arts Exposition of 1925—it insists, as does Silverman's book, on the place of Art Nouveau *within* the history of modernism, refusing the standard style periods that assume a historical breach. Both studies depart from conventional art history insofar as they choose as subject of inquiry the "low" genre of the domestic artifact instead of the easel painting. "By granting the decorative arts a substantial role in the history of art from 1895 to 1925," writes Troy, "it is possible to reevaluate heretofore overlooked episodes or misunderstood aspects of such major modernist movements and figures as Cubism and Le Corbusier." Silverman, for her part, argues that a culturally specific, historicized reading of Art Nouveau's formal language of swerving line, feminine curves, and organicist figuration—one that fully takes into account Art Nouveau's accommodation of *psychologie nouvelle*, feminism, and a

modernist technology of glass and steel construction—allows for a more nuanced understanding of France's "muted version" of the European "crisis of liberalism and the reaction against positivism."

Eschewing the connoisseurial approach to the fine arts, which would consist, say, of studying the history of a collection. (Exemplary in this regard is François Chapon's biography of Jacques Doucet, which concentrates on Doucet's two collecting careers, first as amateur of the 18th century, second, as patron of surrealism and Art Deco.) Troy and Silverman instead favor interdisciplinary perspectives that emphasize the cultural politics of style. Art Nouveau emerges in both books as profoundly motivated by the wave of French nationalism that followed the humiliating 1870 defeat at the hands of Prussia, and which was fueled in subsequent decades by the challenge posed to France's hegemony in the decorative arts by the British arts and crafts movement on one side, and by German *Jugendstil* (dubbed "*l'art boche*") on the other.

The sociopolitical approach is particularly helpful in making sense of Art Nouveau's abortive beginnings in France. Troy explains the failed career of Siegfried Bing, the (originally German-Jewish) French founder of Art Nouveau in the 1890s, in terms of his promotion of "foreign" artists at the time of the Dreyfus affair when national chauvinism and anti-Semitism were at their peak. Bing, and by extension the entire custom design movement with which he and his atelier were associated, was accused of creating, as Troy puts it, "a threat to the entrenched tradition of the decorative arts that the French identified with the 'Louis styles' of the *ancien régime*." By attempting to revert, in the nostalgic manner of the Goncourts, to an idealized prerevolutionary model of aristocratized form and way of life, the French arbiters of design taste in Art Nouveau's earliest phases revealed their fundamental hostility to any form of cultural cosmopolitanism.

The work of Troy and Silverman alerts us to the highly complex local political

agendas hidden behind the evolution of stylistic fashion from the *belle époque* to early modernism. Art Nouveau proves particularly difficult to pin down because, like the Symbolist movement in literature, it encompassed vastly heterogeneous aesthetic tendencies and institutional polemics. Medievalism and Modern Style sat side by side within its rubric; multifarious orientalisms (*Japonisme*, Moorish arabesque, Byzantine colorism, etc.) cohabited with Wagnerianism (from *schloss* to mystifying stageset); the "Louis" styles vied with Empire neoclassicism and rococo revivalism for the lead in "Frenchness"; a poetics of the vague and the beautiful, typical of *Décadence*, burgeoned adjacent to machine-age functionalism; and most interesting of all for a feminist interpretation of design, misogyny seemed to spawn the feminization of form.

Silverman offers intriguing speculations on the relationship in the 1880s and 1890s between a proto-Art Nouveau stylistic lexicon of zigzags, wildly flung limbs, and fevered floral imagery, and the choreography

of female hysteria made fashionable by Doctor Jean-Martin Charcot in the course of his public "lessons" at the Salpêtrière clinic. Mimicking the dramatic passionate attitudes of religious mystics and nymphomaniacs, Charcot's (trained) female patients were, in a sense, the living embodiments of *psychologie nouvelle*, and as such they helped to code the visual representation of unconscious desires and psychic disturbances as feminine. For example—the Art Nouveau sprite, struggling against a capsule of tentacular vines or pinned to a pair of wings (as in René-Jules Lalique's female-butterfly brooch of 1902); the seated bourgeoisie swallowed up by the decorative pattern of wallpaper in a Nabi painting (Edouard Vuillard's *L'Intérieur de l'appartement du Dr. Vaquez* 1896); the *femme-fleur* elongated and incorporated into the fluted stem of a vase, her identity merged with the dark forces of a tormented nature (as in Charles-Emile Jonchery's lampstand nymph of 1897); the medievalized mad virgins posed atop cabinets or kneeling at the base of display cases (Rupert Carabin's grotesque carved-wood furniture); the proliferation of variegated butterflies and snapdragons fossilized on jewelry, cabinetry, lighting fixtures, and ordinary furniture; or the "nervous and coquettish thistle," which, according to the master Art Nouveau craftsman Emile Gallé, constituted the very "signature" of his native city, Nancy—all these diabolical transmutations of woman into hysterical artifact point to the troubling way in which the fin-de-siècle female, venerated as goddess of the foyer and erotic curiosity, was symbolically entomologized within the domestic interior. Paradoxically, along with the increasing participation of the *femme nouvelle* in craft production and professional art schools there emerged a politically retrograde endorsement of antifeminism through the marketing of hyperfeminine line, shape, and form. Trapped as a naturalist design motif inside the marquetry of a vanity table or pressed into the gilded frame of a mirror, the female species-being of Paris 1900 was, in a sense, caricatured as a force closer to na-



Portrait of Emile Gallé, by Victor Prouvé. (From *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France*.)

ture: capricious, anti-intellectual, seductive, hysterical, and erotically threatening.

Though the cipher of hysteria was invariably given a feminine gender by Art Nouveau, the source of the hysterical vision itself inevitably turned out to be male. The myth of man as intellectual colossus and sublime creator, drawing his inspiration from the turbulent undercurrents of female madness, was typified by Auguste Rodin, who seemed to transform the hypertrophied sensibilities of his mistress, Camille Claudel, into the twisting limbs of his sculpture. "Pure instinct" was taken up by the artist of genius and made into "idea," according to the poem *The Artist* dedicated to Rodin by the Symbolist poet Maurice Rollinat. The essentialist dualism of female (instinct) and male (idea) was clearly at work in this merging of art and psychology.

Perhaps male hysteria needed the proxy of female hysteria as a means to distract itself from the spectre of its own uncontrollable impulses; certainly the discovery of the unconscious must have been unsettling, and there is no doubt that many Art Nouveau designers were aware of the psychological discoveries of their epoch. Silverman identifies specific links between Emile Gallé's trancelike horticultural mysticism and the Nancy "suggestion and hypnosis" school of psychological thought led by Charcot's rival Hippolyte Bernheim: "Gallé," she argues, "hoped that the 'vibrations of my glass' would stimulate 'vibrations in the spirits' of those who saw them. He construed his sinuous art as exterior manifestations of the interior world of palpitating nerves." In an arresting portrait of Gallé by the painter Victor Prouvé, Silverman writes, "Gallé sat, rapt, completely absorbed, and insulated from the swirling matter around him by the absolute fixity of his vision on the vase before him. . . . Prouvé represented Gallé's projection of his suggested inner vision as the basis of his art." A similar communion with his own dark inner forces informed Charcot's pictography of mental instability. Relying heavily on "the visual method," he transcribed with a maze of hatched diagonal

lines the terrifying spectacles of his opiated dreams. With his collaborator Paul Richer, he plundered the archive of artistic demonology in order to distill an iconography of "pathological" contracture. These pathological forms, joining medical representation to the artistic, allow us see the plastic language of Art Nouveau as part of an earlier fin-de-siècle mentality obsessed with the visual production of hysteria.

Charcot also emerges as a key cross-over figure in the history of psychology and design because of his (until now) little-studied subsidiary career as an interior decorator. Together with his wife and daughter he set up a workshop for the manufacture of a décor worthy of Hearst's castle. Stylistically eclectic, close in spirit to a Shakespearean stage set with its sculpted bas-reliefs, massive wall-hangings, and dark *mobilier*, idiosyncratic in its museal display of family memorabilia, Charcot's apartment was perceived by his contemporaries (Freud among them) as a kind of strange domestic fantasy. Perhaps, as Silverman surmises, it was the aura of a female presence transmogrified into furniture that gave this opulent residence its oppressive evocativeness as a space of reverie and eros.

While Charcot remained a forerunner rather than an avatar of Art Nouveau, the hermeneutic play in his own home between mental and domestic interior altered, according to Silverman, "the meaning of interior decoration in the fin de siècle." It remains to be seen, however, whether Charcot's blending of style and psychology had any significant impact on architectural form. Silverman's study implicitly reinforces the sense that there was an epistemological dichotomy setting interior decoration and architecture apart. It would be interesting to see whether this dichotomy holds up by considering in more depth, say, the use of mentally "fantastic" floral and vine motifs on public facades, or the transfer of Art Nouveau subjects to architecture (was there, for example, any relationship between Raoul-François Larche's wildly swerving statue of Loie Fuller performing her famous "Dance of

the Veils" [1900] and the pavilion the architect Henri Sauvage designed for Loie Fuller in 1913?).

Troy's book, in its focus on Le Corbusier's years of apprenticeship in Paris (his contact with Art Nouveau designers such as Rupert Carabin and Francis Jourdain), takes significant strides toward dissolving sharp distinctions between decorative art and architecture, overcoming by careful historical research the more polemical reading of aesthetic rupture between Art Nouveau and l'Esprit Nouveau encouraged by Le Corbusier himself after 1918. Her publication of the young Charles-Edouard Jeanneret's designs for interiors and furniture in his La Chaux-de-Fonds houses between 1912 and 1916, first influenced by late 18th- and early 19th-century French styles, and her reconstruction of his contacts with the Coloriste circle in Paris, including the fashion designers Paul Iribe, Paul Poiret, and Nicole Groult, clarify the otherwise inexplicably sudden emergence of geometrical modernism in the Domino house projects of 1914–1923. Other material published by Troy, notably the interior designs by Francis Jourdain for Leon Werth's *Les meubles modernes* (1913) lead to comparisons with the Dom-ino interiors as drawn by Le Corbusier in the early 1920s.

By demonstrating the range of visual, cultural, and political issues touched directly or indirectly by French decorative art; by "reading" the interior as a literalized condition of lived interiority, and by making the production, marketing, and institutional assimilation of craft art into a proper subject of interdisciplinary research, Silverman and Troy open up further areas of investigation. It would be tempting to extend, for example, the substance of Silverman's title—Art Nouveau in politics, psychology, and style—to literature as well. She herself establishes the groundwork, devoting considerable portions of her book to the relationship between poetry and design, and documenting the social history of Charcot's Tuesday salon in which fashionable writers of the day were brought into direct contact with doctors

and artists. It is little wonder, then, that one finds in the Naturalist bourgeois novel such minute depictions of furniture, bibelots, and the behavior of families within a domestic setting. Indeed, one could easily construct a turn-of-the-century literary genealogy of "writing home" that would begin with the Goncourt brothers (whose *La Maison d'un artiste* constitutes a monument to their mania for collecting 18th-century fine art) and go on to include (among many others) Guy de Maupassant, Alphonse and Léon Daudet, Paul Bourget, Octave Mirbeau, Marcel Proust, and Colette.

The work of Mirbeau, an anarchist pundit, art critic, and Dreyfusard apologist whose talent for journalism laced with invective made him a controversial figure in Third Republic society, is particularly interesting in this light. Mirbeau wrote numerous texts that seem to transpose Art Nouveau into prose. In his travelogue of an automobile ride through Belgium and Holland in 1900, *La 628-E8*, his narrator characterizes the Dutch Bradenbrager-Hof as a "caravanseraï of Western art nouveau." In this palace of "Modern Style," where "nothing was round, square, oval, oblong, triangular, vertical or horizontal," but where everything "turned, circled, curved, twisted, rolled, folded, unfurled, and suddenly tumbled down," nature has run amok.¹ Hirsute nymphs, angry poppies, and sunflowers, perched on the moldings like parrots, form a monstrous frieze, while a larval excrescence spills over walls, doors, and floor. Like Colette, who describes Modern Style in her memoirs as a lapse in French taste that came and went through the period of her youth with a bevy of sirens, glutinous jewels, and tendrill-covered cabinets, Mirbeau experimented with the personified imagery of Art Nouveau. Electricity performs the



Glass hand by Emile Gallé, 1900. (From *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France*.)

cakewalk, the cancan, the Boston trot, and the dance of Saint-Guy; furniture totters on drunken legs, and the balustrades, seeming to speak, appear to be held up by "frenetic sarabands of question marks."

Just as Charcot had seemingly woven the figures of female hysteria into the zigzags and arabesques of his interior designs, so Mirbeau sets up a libidinal nexus crossing furniture and the feminine. Passion and destruction are expressed through the medium of feminized domestic objects. In an early autobiographical novel, *Le Calvaire*, the theme of woman's treachery is underscored by the way in which the protagonist's sadistic mistress hounds him out of hearth and home with an avalanche of bibelots and toilettries. In "Mémoires pour un avocat," a misogynist recit full of ire and disillusionment (Mirbeau himself was said to have experienced a depressive crisis shortly after his marriage to a former

high-class courtesan named Alice Regnault), the narrator's avaricious wife treats him like a piece of furniture, an inert and passive investment. In his novella *Dans le ciel*, published for the first time in 1990, Mirbeau conjugates the misshapen forms of Modern Style furniture with sexual inhibition. His suicidal painter-protagonist, modeled after van Gogh, diagnoses the fact that aesthetic taste in furniture has gone awry as a symptom of the fin-de-siècle crisis of masculinity: "Do you know why they make such prodigiously ugly furniture today, charged with sculptures and ornaments so hideous that they make a refined man vomit? Oh! dear God, it is simply because the craftsmen no longer know their trade. They are no more capable of fashioning an elegant line than of establishing beautiful harmony of proportion. So they opt for giving not a fig for decor. . . . I'm just like these craftsmen! It's in order to mask my own impotence that I go

looking for crazy forms that kill me, and you know, my young friend, they do kill me!"²

Mirbeau elided his phobia toward women with his phobia toward Art Nouveau, developing a language of "deviant" female forms that seemed to take their inspiration from the intoxicating arcs and swirls of the design movement he criticized. In "Mémoires pour un avocat," the description of the narrator's cruelly indifferent spouse conjures up a female figure in a Nabi screen. The woman's body seems to grow out of the wallpaper; her neck curves, a rose-colored line of light vaporizes her hair into a mysterious aureole, encircling her shoulders and outlining the rounded contours of her bust ("powerful and delicate like the bulb of a lily").³

Floral imagery gives way to the insect world in a short story entitled "Le Pont" in which the narrator's sixth wife, a

"charming little *bestiole*," hops, skips, turns, prances and zigzags on the page like a cricket.⁴ The "natural" capriciousness of the female character is conveyed through a kind of "designer" literary composition. In the story "Clotilde et moi" the topsy-turvy passion of adultery turns the bedroom into a hysterical Art Nouveau boudoir: chairs resemble guinea-fowl, and the patterned walls appear covered in "spilled intestines."⁵

One could say that Mirbeau created in the literary medium what the Art Nouveau designers had created in a plastic medium—the transmutation of a hysterical, feminized eroticism into style. In his Arcades project, Walter Benjamin noted this strange complicity between Art Nouveau and what he characterized as the "perversity" of a modern style whose theme was "the depraved woman." For Paul Morand, the style itself was a kind of "infection" that pervaded the arts and literature alike: "the pieces of furniture resembled those illnesses studied by the psychologists, clinicians of the age."⁶ And yet, as Benjamin understood, and as is borne out by the two books under review, Art Nouveau was far more than the expressive mannerism of a decadent fin-de-siècle. Rather it was, in its relations to psychology as well as to bourgeois taste and mass production, a first moment of modernism, an attempt of art, in Benjamin's words "to measure itself against technique." There was even a strange figurative copenetration between the stylistic motifs of Art Nouveau and the forms of the new technology: "One could imagine," wrote Benjamin, "that, in the characteristic line of the modern style, the nerve and the electric wire meet frequently, brought together by a montage of the imagination (and that in particular the neurovegetal system as an intermediary form brings the worlds of the organism and of technique into contact)."⁷

Art Nouveau captured the emotional collision between backward-looking historicisms and visual configurations of modernity. *Psychologie nouvelle*, *la femme nouvelle*, and *la technique*

nouvelle clashed with Catholic mysticism, antifeminism, and nostalgia for an artisanal craft tradition. With its Janus-like outlook on two centuries, Art Nouveau emerges then as a visible language of design contradiction. As such, it provides particularly rich material for what in the 1990s looks to be a rather new field: the intellectual history and hermeneutics of decorative art.

NOTES

1. Octave Mirbeau, *La 628-E8* (Paris: Bibliothèque Charpentier, 1908), p. 328.
2. Octave Mirbeau, *Dans le ciel* (Caen: L'Echoppe, 1990), p. 130.
3. Octave Mirbeau, "Mémoires pour un avocat" in *Contes cruels II* (Paris: Librairie Séguier, 1990), p. 103.
4. Octave Mirbeau, "Le Pont," in *Contes cruels II*, p. 113.
5. Octave Mirbeau, "Clotilde et moi," in *Contes cruels II*, p. 77.
6. Paul Morand, *Paris 1900* (Paris: Les Editions de France, 1931), p. 102.
7. Walter Benjamin, *Paris, Capitale du XIXe siècle. Le Livre des passages* (Paris: Le Editions du Cerf, 1989), pp. 573–75.

ART NOUVEAU IN FIN-DE-SIECLE FRANCE: POLITICS, PSYCHOLOGY, AND STYLE, Debora L. Silverman, University of California Press, 1989, 415 pp., illus., \$42.50.

MODERNISM AND THE DECORATIVE ARTS IN FRANCE: ART NOUVEAU TO LE CORBUSIER, Nancy J. Troy, Yale University Press, 1991, 300 pp., illus., \$39.95.

Leland M. Roth

The Architect and the American Country House, 1890–1940

MARK ALAN HEWITT

The American Country House

CLIVE ASLET

Among the many curiosities of life, it often happens that major books on the same subject appear at the same time. In the fall of 1983 two large studies on McKim, Mead & White, bearing identical titles, were produced by two separate publishing houses. Seven years later appear three studies of the American country house; the two reviewed here were, in fact, produced by the same publisher. Indeed, taken together, the two nicely complement each other, for while Mark Alan Hewitt's *The Architect and the American Country House, 1890–1940* is more analytical and focuses attention on selected case studies and individual architects, Clive Aslet's *The American Country House* relays revealing bits of social and personal history. Both result from careful research and are fully annotated. Both, too, are well illustrated: Hewitt's book by the superb color photographs of Richard Cheek reproduced in large format (the book measures 9-3/4 by 12 inches); and Aslet's by excellent new color photographs by Mark Fiennes that could have benefited from a similar large format (this volume is a more circumspect 7-1/2 by 10 inches).

In his preface, Hewitt explains his point of view: he writes as an architect interested in how his colleagues early in this century worked, how they obtained the enviable commissions they had, and how they worked with their clients. He notes, too, that his method and point of view were strongly influenced through his experience as a Gerald R. Walmland scholar in the Attingham Summer School

program, as well as his reading of Mark Girouard and Clive Aslet on the English country house. Hewitt's emphasis on the designers is reinforced by a most useful appendix composed of short biographical sketches of the principle architects of country houses; this is followed by small portrait photographs of many of the architects, and another appendix in which the architects are listed in three generation groups—those born from 1850 to 1870, those born 1870 to 1880, and those born in 1880 and after.

Aslet comments in his preface that his study was prompted by friends' comments while he was working on the English country house book that there were no similar houses in the United States.¹ He clearly demonstrates otherwise in the present volume, while making revealing comparisons with English examples.

Both books start by examining Biltmore, the vast estate, village, and residential complex near Ashville, North Carolina designed by Richard Morris Hunt and Frederick Law Olmsted for George Washington Vanderbilt in 1889–95; both authors see this house as the beginning of a new type distinctly American in scope and character. Whereas Hewitt uses Biltmore as a way of introducing the type and laying the groundwork for his analysis of following houses, Aslet's anecdotes tell more of the aspirations of the patron, his program of reforestation that so disturbed local residents whose forebears had cleared the forests for farming, and of his wife's promotion of furniture-making to provide income for local people, among other philanthropies. Hewitt discusses the three critical ingredients for the development of the American country house—a capitalist oligarchy, academically trained architects, and the development of the country house architectural type. This type, he proposes, passed through three distinct phases: development of the aristocratic palatial model (1890–1910), the pastoral medieval vernacular model (1900–1915), and the more regional, indigenous model (1920–1930). Hewitt also suggests a framework of five basic objectives sought in the design of the

American country house: The houses were designed to be clear manifestations of wealth and leisure; their property was to enclose and privatize the most desirable parts of the landscape; such estates were situated within commuting distance of urban centers, often in private enclaves and often around country clubs; symbolically the houses were to exemplify one of the three models mentioned above; and the comprehensive design of house and grounds was to facilitate leisure diversions of sport or agriculture befitting the rural gentry.

The successive chapters of Hewitt's study explore distinct themes—defining the gentleman architect, the style and typology of country houses, the aristocratic model, the impact of the house and garden movement in creating the pastoral medieval vernacular model, and the regional model. In each chapter, both destroyed and existing houses that illustrate the theme are examined. In the chapter on the gentleman architect, the careers of Horace Trumbauer, John Russell Pope, William Adams Delano, Wilson Eyre, Harrie T. Lindeberg, Howard Van Doren Shaw, and Charles Adams Platt are reviewed to portray the character of the designers. In the chapter on style and typology, the changing function of spaces such as the living room is explored, as is the impact of declining numbers of servants, the emergence of the automobile garage as a requisite component, the evolution of four basic plan types, the use of new materials and building technologies such as cast-in-place concrete and structural steel, and the appearance of construction firms specializing in country houses. Although the creation of the federal income tax in 1913 is noted in chapter three, limited attention is given to its long-term impact, nor to the impact of the logarithmic increase in materials and labor costs after 1913.

Chapters four through six are devoted to the three basic country house models—aristocratic, medieval vernacular, and regional. In each chapter, selected houses are examined in depth, concluding with extremely cogent summaries of the objec-

tives and success of client and architect. In the chapter devoted to the regional model, Hewitt explores the various alternatives—the Arts and Crafts and medieval fieldstone houses around Philadelphia, the courtyard Spanish adobe house of California and Florida, the Tidewater Georgian of Virginia, the French colonial model of the lower Mississippi Valley, and the Dutch gambrel colonial of the Hudson Valley. For each of these variants, selected houses are examined and regional architects discussed—Mellor and Meigs in Philadelphia, George Washington Smith and Wallace Neff in California; John Gaw Meem in Santa Fe; William L. Bottomley in Virginia; Richard Koch in Louisiana; and Dwight James Baum in New York.

Hewitt repeatedly demonstrates the strong link between house and garden, and the ease of connection between interior and exterior spaces. In chapter seven, devoted to "Modernist Experiments," therefore, the absence of this connection between house and landscape is all the more striking. The sole exception is the one house by Frank Lloyd Wright examined, Herbert F. Johnson's Wingspread, in Racine, Wisconsin (Wright's Fallingwater is not examined). Although no census is given for the traditional country houses, Hewitt does quote a figure from *Fortune* magazine that only about fifty modern houses were built in the United States between 1935 and 1940.

In his closing chapter, concerned that his preceding chapters portray his architects as too elitist, Hewitt directs attention to the many public and institutional buildings these architects built. He addresses the question of how to measure the achievement of these architects, who were clearly not concerned with pure formal invention or advancing a modernist idiom. Hewitt proposes we evaluate "the extraordinary design qualities in these houses—qualities of texture, scale, massing, proportion, light and shade, spatial modeling."

Aslet's examination of the American country house alternates between chapters presenting broad views of the social and cultural forces at work, and other chapters

devoted to specific houses, their designers, owners, and to the social roles these highlighted buildings played. The book is organized into four sections—"Types," "Inspirations," "Activities," and "Special Conditions"—but the relationship between section and individual chapters is not always evident. Having sketched the character of Biltmore and the life led there in the opening chapter, Aslet then examines the reasons for "Withdrawal From the City" in the following chapter. The next two chapters focus on two Hudson River retreats: Frederick Church's Olana, and Kykuit, the John D. Rockefeller country house that eventually developed into an enclave of family residences.

Aslet's second section, "Inspirations," comprises chapters that examine the English roots of the American country house life-style, but even more the uniquely American emphasis on practical and comfortable efficiency. He examines the group of medieval houses "along that green embowered bank," the Philadelphia Main Line, and the DuPont estate, Winterthur, whose distinction lies less in its architecture than in the art collection that shaped the building. Aslet is at his best when discussing those qualities that the American reader takes too much for granted: open plans, the peculiar American fascination with large and sumptuous bathrooms, and the ingenuity with which American owners exploited kitchen appliances and all sorts of mechanical contrivances to compensate for a far smaller servant work force than common in England.

Aslet's next section, "Activities," comprises chapters treating "The Farm Beautiful," the enclave of reserved country houses in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts, "The Architecture of Sport," and a final chapter that surveys the sporting camps and rustic country lodges built in New York's Adirondacks. Again the most revealing portions are those that highlight differences between English and American practices. He observes that many country dwellers, seeking to retire to the country and get away from business in the city, simply redirected their competitive ener-

gies to running their dairy, horse, and poultry farms. A side result was the improvement of cattle and other stock that soon spread into commercial agriculture at large. Specially deserving of rediscovery are such architects as Alfred Hopkins, who specialized in nostalgically picturesque but efficient model farms, as noted by Aslet.

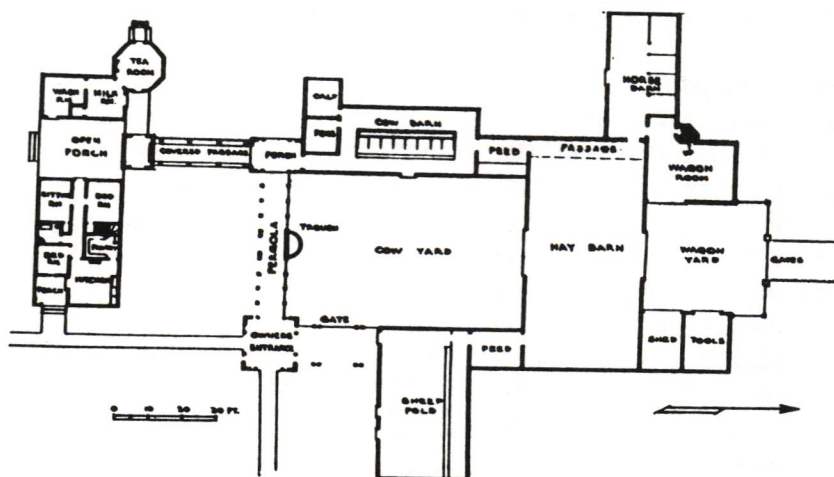
Whereas some English country houses might claim an outdoor plunge, Americans, Aslet notes, seemed obsessed with creating elaborate indoor swimming pools, enclosed in casinos or play houses replete with lounges, game rooms, indoor tennis courts, and bowling alleys (then considered a rather low game in England). This discussion of sport leads naturally to horse sports and their attendant buildings, whether for fox hunting or polo, and, by extension, to motoring (considered a sport at the start of this century) and its attendant garages, and beyond to those few country house builders who were flying enthusiasts. Whereas Hewitt shows us a formal close view of the Ionic portico of Edward T. Stotesbury's Whitemarch Hall, Philadelphia, Aslet lets us see the estate from the air, an autogiro making a flyover.

Deviating from his defined type somewhat, Aslet then directs our attention to the summer lodges built in the wild fastnesses of the Adirondacks, many of which were built or owned by the same capitalists with estates outside New York or Philadelphia. He also explores resort life in the favorite

water holes of the wealthy, touching on Newport, Rhode Island, but spending more time on the more refined atmosphere of Bar Harbor, Maine; Cushing Island, New Hampshire; and the little-known and once supremely exclusive club and cottages on Jekyll Island, Georgia.

Aslet is also fascinated with the outdoor life that shaped the country houses of California and Florida. Unlike Hewitt, who focuses on seldom-discussed architects and their adaptation of regional models, Aslet directs our attention to the American craze for sleeping porches, the popularity of sun rooms and solariums whose brightness differed so from dark, shrouded Victorian interiors, and the patio houses of California and Florida. By reading these two books in tandem, one discovers the striking contrast between Edward T. Stotesbury's classical estate outside Philadelphia by Trumbauer, and his more florid Spanish winter residence in Palm Beach, Florida, romantically called El Mirasol, designed by Addison Mizner. The interest in rigorous outdoor life in California prompts Aslet to discuss several of the "gentlemen ranches" built around Los Angeles in the 1910s and 1920s. As he notes, these became remote retreats; "the great outdoors provided, ironically, the vehicle for a flight of introspective nostalgia and escapism."

Aslet's concluding chapter, "Death in Venice," like his opening chapter, is devoted to a single house. In this instance it



A group of farm buildings by Alfred Hopkins; Scarborough, New York.
(From *The American Country House*.)

is Vizcaya, the dreamlike evocation of northern Italian lakeside villas built in 1912–21 for James Deering in Miami, Florida. Its impresario designer Paul Chalfin directed a remarkable team comprised of architect F. Burrall Hoffman, landscape architect Diego Suarez, ironworker Samuel Yellin, and sculptor Stirling Calder. Although Hewitt tells us more about the organization of the grounds, the arrangement of the three major facades, and the relationship of the facades to the adjoining landscapes, Aslet reveals more about Deering's participation and Chalfin's difficult relationships with the other designers whose contributions he consistently claimed as his own.

It is no accident that these two books should appear at the end of the decade now being called "The Roaring Eighties." With modernism's suppression during the glitter of the Reagan and Thatcher decade, it ought to be expected that a reawakened sensibility would be directed to the residential architecture of another era equally characterized by private lavishness. The early 20th-century moguls who brought these lavish houses into being were just as impelled by cupidity as the brokers of unprincipled ambition of the 1980s; for all of them the credo was greed is good. The country house of the 1910s and 1920s was the idealized retreat in which to savor the sybaritic pleasures of avariciousness. Hewitt notes in his preface that "the Reagan era made aristocratic life and domestic artifice an issue of popular culture."

This said, it is nonetheless regrettable that so many of these houses have proven too large to be maintained by heirs who do not share the passion, the inclination, or the taste of the builders. Many of these houses, like Clarence and Katherine Mackay's palatial Harbour Hill on Long Island, were demolished long ago, and more seem destined to follow. Aslet makes no mention of this dilemma, perhaps because in England the families who built such houses made provision for their transfer into the public realm. American country houses were created as

institutionalizations of their builders; but as Hewitt observes, despite the evident expenditure and care in their erection, "even hollow palaces of stone could crumble if a society did not institutionalize the wealth and patrimony behind them. Unlike England, America tended to resist such edification." Accordingly, Hewitt appends an epilogue, "Preserving the Country House," which summarizes the problems such houses face today. Can they all be turned into museums? Is the probity of such a house destroyed when converted into condominiums or a conference center? Hewitt concludes by making a strong case for retaining as much as we can:

The extent to which the achievements as well as mistakes of an entire era have been covered over is borne out by watching history repeat itself. The irony is that our forebears did wish to make an integrated world in which romance coexisted with expedient and functional architecture. Preserving their houses, and some of the land on which they stood, reminds us of their achievements and teaches us to do as well, if we are unable to do better.

NOTES

1. Clive Aslet, *The Last Country Houses* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), examines English Edwardian examples, exactly contemporary with the residences he examines in *The American Country House*. Aslet is also the author of *The National Trust Book of the English House* (Harmondsworth: Viking, 1985) as well as numerous essays concerning American and English houses in *Country Life*, of which he is deputy editor.

THE ARCHITECT AND THE AMERICAN COUNTRY HOUSE, 1890–1940, Mark Alan Hewitt, Yale University Press, 1990, 312 pp., illus., \$55.00.

THE AMERICAN COUNTRY HOUSE, Clive Aslet, Yale University Press, 1990, 302 pp., illus., \$45.00.

Carl W. Condit

Holabird and Roche/ Holabird and Root

ROBERT BRUEGMANN

Chicago is noted for its architectural dynasties. Among those of the front rank none has enjoyed a longer life, produced a greater number of designs of completed projects, and played a more important role in establishing the architectural character of the city than the successive offices of Holabird and Simonds; Holabird, Simonds and Roche; Holabird and Roche; and Holabird and Root. The original was established in 1880. The firm of Holabird and Roche became that of Holabird and Root in 1928, following the death of Martin Roche, and has maintained a flourishing office to this day, more than a century after its founding year. The local reputation of the architects in the early years had expanded to national scope before the end of their first decade. They were not only exemplary in the conduct of a large architectural office, and among the leaders of their profession who were particularly knowledgeable in the complexities of urban building, but they also played a leading role in the creation of works that represented the chief manifestations of two major phases of modern commercial and public architecture. The first placed Chicago in the front rank of large-scale commercial building, and the second brought the brief but potent Art Deco movement to its highest level of expression. The Holabird offices designed every kind of building and organized space, from the landscape planning of cemeteries to the interior decor of railroad cars, with a steady flow of the nation's foremost office and hotel structures along the way.

In the quarter century from 1885 to 1910, the firm produced a series of designs for large commercial buildings that drew international attention and eventually led to designating the chief works of this period as the Chicago School. This

term is no longer defensible among architectural historians, but it has served to distinguish a coherent body of work marked by characteristics that were dominant in the heroic age of Chicago building. The conspicuous features were the articulated wall, windows filling the entire bay, and a largely open base, which together represented a formal expression of the underlying iron and later steel frame. What was equally important, however, was the firm's frequent use of classical motifs skillfully integrated with the ruling geometry of the cellular wall. The first and most sensational of the Holabird designs was the Tacoma building (1886–89), the street elevations of which had the characteristics that were to become the hallmarks of Chicago architecture at the time—the cellular or articulated wall, the sharp-edged angularity of projecting bays, and the visual dissolution of the wall into glass. The masterpiece of this twenty-five-year period of innovative design is the Marquette building (1891–95, 1905–06), standing in full use as an official architectural landmark of the city. The vigorously articulated walls of the street elevations exactly express the rectilinear geometry of the underlying steel frame, but this expression is subtly combined with formal elements that can be traced to classical antiquity. The relatively heavy yet open base, the intermediate stories of offices, and the two-story attic form the traditional three-part division of the classical column, with its clearly demarcated base, shaft, and capital. The corner bays are given added weight by means of the broader pier and the more heavily rusticated terra-cotta sheathing, the “strengthened” corner that has had a continuous history since its origin in Vitruvius. The continuous piers or pilasters between the corner bays, another hallmark of the



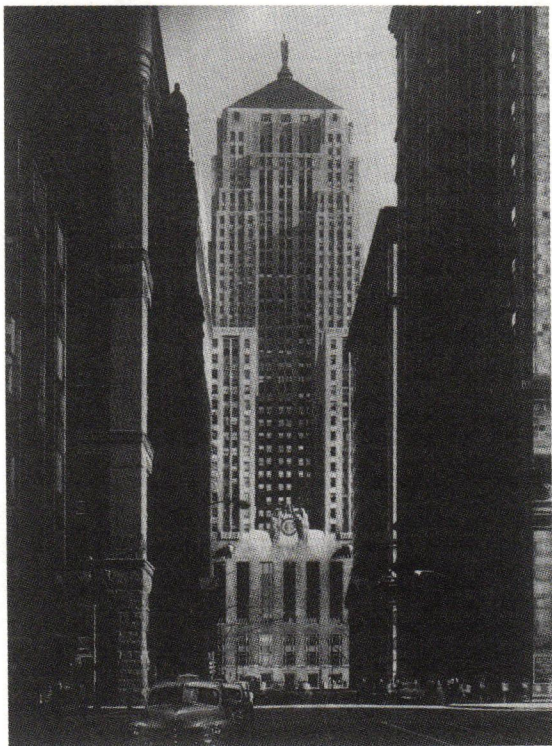
Marquette building, Chicago; Holabird and Roche, 1891–95.

Holabird office, suggest the rising columns that most distinguish the ancient Greek temple. The Marquette, in short, represents the transformation of correct architecture into a powerfully expressive form.

Some thirty years later, near the end of the first Holabird office, which came with the death of Martin Roche, the firm launched the Art Deco skyscraper in Chicago with the 333 North Michigan Avenue building (1927–28). Only the northernmost three bays of this long, narrow slablike form constitute a true skyscraper, various details of which were deliberately derived from Eliel Saarinen's second-prize design submitted for the Tribune Competition of 1922. The Holabird office unquestionably improved Saarinen's admirable work by virtue of the slender elegance, the delicate yet powerful verticality, and the subordination of the simple

low-relief ornament to the vividly kinetic envelope. The high level of design established in the 333 building was continued by the new office of Holabird and Root in three prize works of Chicago architecture—the Palmolive, the former Daily News, and the Board of Trade buildings—which brought the Art Deco movement to its high point in the United States. Of the three structures, the Palmolive and the Board of Trade best exemplify the slender tower-like form of the genuine skyscraper, “the proud and soaring thing” of Louis Sullivan, given its potent kinetic emphasis by the strong vertical pattern and the multiple setbacks of the best 1920s architecture. Along the way the members of the Holabird team demonstrated their consummate skill in the design of the two leading hotels of Chicago, the Palmer House and the Stevens (now the Chicago Hilton and Towers, both 1925–27). By this date the firm had demonstrated that they were the leading hotel architects of midwestern America. The depression that began in 1930 was a double tragedy for the nation's architecture: by the mid-thirties it had both virtually stopped construction of any kind and ended the potentiality of the Art Deco style. Indeed, buildings like the Board of Trade in Chicago and the RCA in New York marked the endpoint of the great age of commercial architecture, which flourished throughout the forty-year period of 1890 to 1930.

Professor Bruegmann's huge and meticulously detailed catalogue covers little more than a decade of work produced by Holabird and Root because the Holabird archives in the possession of the Chicago Historical Society end with the year 1940. But one can hardly avoid the conclusion that by 1940 the quality of architecture everywhere had begun the long decline that has now left it in a state of



Board of Trade building, Chicago; Holabird and Root, 1929–30.

confusion, a kind of anomie that is a sad falling off from the standards that once marked the highest level of commercial building in the world. Robert Bruegmann and his team of research assistants covered the sixty years of 1880–1940 in a work that is a paragon of its kind. In the 1,530 entries that constitute the substance of this catalogue, Professor Bruegmann covers the history and the aim of each project, total documentation of the designs produced by the offices, remarkably detailed accounts of the genesis of all major works, descriptions of the general form and internal planning of all commissions, contemporary descriptions and evaluations, the urban role and the subsequent history of the buildings, the contractors, illustrations (including floor plans and contemporary perspective drawings), the cost of construction (supplemented by a table giving the changes in the price index over the years), and an account of the clients as investors and actors in the urban economy. The catalogue is an enormous, conveniently organized body of valuable

information on the character of modern urban building and how it came to be in the age since the introduction of the multistory iron- and steel-framed structure.

The only elements in this intricate process of design and construction that might have usefully received more attention are the names of structural, mechanical, and electrical engineers, subcontractors, and the details of structure and utilities without which a building cannot function in the urban world. With data of this kind it is possible for the historian to understand the unified, interdependent organization on which the successful realization of any building enterprise depends. Financial institutions and developers, property owners, architectural and engineering designers, contractors, subcontractors, foremen in the field, skilled and unskilled

workers must cooperate according to a precise schedule of events. About the time the Tacoma building was erected, drawing up such a schedule was the responsibility of the George A. Fuller Construction Company, the prime contractor for many of the major works described in these volumes. It is the task of the architect to be the ruler in this little principality, and much of the success of great offices like those of Holabird and Roche and its successors follows from this fact. They entered into the architectural scene about the time when the architect's former role as master builder had yielded to a new integrated complex of multiple talents in which the architect is coordinator more than creator. In no written work has this been more thoroughly explored than in the massive catalogue prepared by Professor Bruegmann and his assistants.

HOLABIRD AND ROCHE/HOLABIRD AND ROOT: AN ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE OF WORKS, Robert Bruegmann, Garland Publishing Company (in association with the Chicago Historical Society), 1991, 3 vols., 395, 425, 431 pp., illus., \$750.00.

Judith R. Blau

Exit the Studio: The Exigencies of Real Architecture and Real Clients

When insiders write about their own tribe members—a scientist on scientists or a lord on English nobility—the product is often cheerily celebratory, primly fault-finding, or plain and cranky. Insiders, of course, do write objectively and succinctly about their own history, frames of reference, and knowledge. In architecture, there are many examples, in the tradition of Christian Norberg-Schulz and Andrew Saint.

Architecture: The Story of Practice is altogether another genre. Architect Dana Cuff scrutinizes the daily lives of contemporary architects—the way they study, converse, work, and teach. With an insider's knowledge and an outsider's perceptiveness, she discloses and makes comprehensible what is not readily apparent from official accounts of the profession. For example, she discusses how architects' rituals and myths help to justify practice and how traditions and symbols underlie power and prestige. She also draws attention to the likelihood that the central values stressed in schools of architecture to instill motivation can also foster discouragement. But Cuff is by no means the garrulous faultfinder. As she criticizes prevailing traditions in schools of architecture and contemporary firms, she does so with unusual empathy and identification with practitioners and an understanding of the profession and its history. Cuff is the member of the tribe turned anthropologist, but she avoids all of the usual pitfalls along the way. While being constructively critical of the profession (for example, by pointing out discrepancies between what architects think they are doing and what they actually do), she provides rich understanding of the textured lives of architects in daily



For final reviews, schools invite nationally respected critics to evaluate students work. (From *Architecture: The Story of Practice*.)

practice. Her analyses of the problems of collaboration, of authority relations, and of the difficulties of reconciling the humdrum of office work with the excitement of solving design problems are perceptive and original.

This book offers insights for outsiders as well. It was easy for me to find useful parallels between her observations of architects and the nature of collaborative work in research teams and in other professional settings in which interaction is intense and there are subtle problems of authority relations and maintaining commitment to long-term cooperation. In this sense, she has provided a theoretical analysis of professional work that has implications beyond architecture.

Cuff explores three main arenas of action: the official profession (that is, its

public tradition and history, and architecture's professional organization), the academy, and the firm. These three arenas are analyzed in terms of "dialectical dualities" or the contradictory forces that pose dilemmas for architects. To wit, architects are pushed hither and yon by the contradictions between practice and the core values of the profession. Specifically, these contradictions relate to whether architecture is business or art, genius or collaboration, a specialty or a premier profession. She argues that the culture of the official profession and of academic architecture are highly discordant with architecture as practice.

In discussing problems that official architecture creates for practicing architects, she emphasizes the tension between the idealized version of practice (AIA's

version) as managed control and predictability, on the one hand, and, on the other, the open-endedness and uncertain contingencies of practice.

Its singular emphasis on design puts the academy out of synch with practice. Although this has been observed by others, Cuff unpacks this generalization as she contrasts the importance of mentor-student relations, "the crit," the excitement of learning to be a designer, with the first tedious job. While not totally discrediting the emphasis on design and creativity in architecture schools, she observes the stark contradiction between the realities of practice (for example, the way that clients get the upper hand, and the daily compromises architects make in the office) with the idealism and tradition-bound pedagogy of studio work.

In these analyses, she draws on social science theory to help make sense of why the official profession sustains a particular rhetorical line inconsistent with actual practice, and why academic architecture persists in sustaining conventional knowledge and understandings that fail to mesh with real life experiences in office work. Let me be explicit. Schools inculcate values that center on the individual designer, the project in vacuo, and unidimensional criteria of architectural excellence. While unrealistic for the novice architect, this training selects for the most creative and dedicated, and reinforces core values among them. It will pay off in the long-term for 1 in 100 (or 500, or perhaps 1,000) who later have the luck, the opportunities, and the discipline to put those core values into practice. A high cost? Cuff allows the reader to decide.

The finest chapters describe practice. She reminds architects what they probably already know but do not admit. In the early stages of their careers, contrary to what they learned in school, architects spend most of their time as "gofers," doing tedious work for which they are far overtrained. In the later stages of their careers, still contrary to studio experience, they find that the real juries are clients, engineers, users, contractors, and consult-

ants. There are hordes of participants, so that the art of persuasion and the skills of compromise are requisite to success. In other words, architecture is a social process far more than it is an unfolding of creative ideas.

Instead of sketching out Cuff's entire argument about the implications of these contradictions in architecture, I want to focus on a particular example, the unpredictable process that a project undergoes from commission through construction. This topic engages many of the other themes of the book, and also leads to a set of proposals that Cuff makes for changes in the official profession and academic architecture. A real-life project is much more complex than any studio project or an AIA's paper project since

there are more contingencies (for example, lot size, zoning, budget changes, untimely shortages of materials). The AIA has codified the process as an irreversible flow diagram, while in practice, it is dynamic and highly unpredictable. In fact, there are excessive contingencies and "crowds of participants." Cuff's point here is that architects can—and often do—view this situation as a nightmare, but they could benefit immensely if they instead took this situation as a challenge for enhancing the quality of the final outcome.

False preconception about practice is a major reason architects are buffaloes by the maddening crowds, and for the most part, blame for this preconception can be traced to the academy and the official

professional association. The design process, when successful, is a careful courtship that involves negotiation, delineating a "bottom line," establishing rapport, "well-timed explosions," the avoidance of outright conflict, and improvisation. Cuff urges architects to recognize that bad clients are educable, that there are often beneficial unanticipated consequences of compromise, and that some special projects and clients are worth financial losses for they reap much in terms of learning and future commissions.

Architecture: The Story of Practice is a very fine contribution, and I not only encourage architects to read it but to have copies on hand to lend to their clients. If there are criticisms to be made here they would deal with Cuff's failure to address the relation of architecture to the larger society. The clients Cuff describes are (and, in a declining economy, will increasingly be) both affluent as well as connoisseurs of art and design. And, the architects that Cuff describes are those who have struggled to achieve exceptional design solutions that enhance the quality of lives of the members of the middle and upper class, and the images of corporate clients. Perhaps because of the constraints of private practice and the paralysis of public planning offices, American architects have largely been silent about the most challenging design problems that face America in the next decades—those relating to the accelerating deterioration of communities, indeed, entire cities, if not metropolises. The irony is that the forces that have promoted tragic urban outcomes are indistinguishable from the forces that continue to shape the practice of architecture in the private sector.



Creative isolation: a student who has found that late-night hours are one way to achieve privacy. (From *Architecture: The Story of Practice*.)

ARCHITECTURE: THE STORY OF PRACTICE, Dana Cuff, MIT Press, 1991, 330 pp., illus., \$24.95.

Folke T. Kihlstedt

Wheel Estate

ALLAN D. WALLIS

For many Americans who have chosen to live in trailer homes since the 1930s and for the organizations that promoted mobile homes after 1945, trailerites were seen as inheritors of the mythic American pioneering spirit. In Allan Wallis's words, "The combination of mobility with shelter seemed to touch a vital chord." In his analysis, the trailer is unique in offering affordability, availability, and mobility—it is the least expensive single-family dwelling, easily available through a network of dealerships, and rapidly transportable to a prepared site.

Yet the mobile home probably has more detractors than champions. One need only recall J. Edgar Hoover's 1940 article in *American Magazine*, "Camps of Crime," which castigated trailer parks as "dens of vice and corruption, haunted by nomadic prostitutes, hardened criminals, white slavers, and promiscuous college students." Even an architect like Ezra Ehrenkrantz found the mobile home a threat to the more traditional system of prefabrication he was promoting, so he exhorted fellow architects to work uncompromisingly "if for no other reason than to meet the trailer threat." This was in a 1969 issue of the *AIA Journal*.

These examples of misoneism, that less-than-noble trait of human nature, expose the dilemma of the mobile home—it is threatening precisely to the extent that it differs from traditional housing. Wallis gives the reader insights into the nature of the difference as well as the threat in this enlightened and sensitive study of the mobile home and the social, cultural, and public-policy housing issues that surround it.

He also gives us a good summary of mobile-home history—its birth out of the autocamping movement of the 1920s and its evolution, beginning in the very late

1920s, from homemade travel trailer to factory-produced house trailer, mobile home, and manufactured house. Throughout the approximately half-century covered by this history, we are introduced to the complex interplay of governmental and market forces in which each change in the evolution of this new housing form embodied a new "equilibrium between the institutions involved." Among those institutions, the manufacturers, park developers, and occupants play the more inventive, expansive role, while the building agencies, mortgage bankers, and insurance companies restrict and regulate.

Wallis offers four categories in his history of the mobile home. The period from 1920 to 1939 is the "travel trailer period," dominated by individual designer/manufacturers. From 1940 to 1953 is the "house trailer period," where the mobile home becomes industrialized housing, one of a number of attempts to build a house like a car. The 1950s through the 1970s is the "mobile home period," in which a major issue concerned the hybrid quality of the product, the degree to which it should be car-like or houselike. Since the mid-1970s, the mobile home has entered the "manufactured housing period," one dominated by federal regulation. These are appropriate and helpful categories, but I think the first two categories should overlap, as the theoretical literature on mobile homes (and other forms of prefabrication) has called for building the trailer like a car ever since 1934.

Just as the car was a major agent of social change in America, so, to some extent, was the mobile home. Wallis calls it "an option that forces us to reconsider what we understand about the character of American housing." But then, who in our society bothered to reconsider that character? Wallis's answer would be the mobile-home occupants, manufacturers, and some of the developers of mobile-home parks. I would also add architects—for even if architects' responses to the mobile home may not have contributed any clearcut success to the develop-

ment of mass-produced housing, they did generate significant ideas regarding new approaches to architecture and housing.

Wallis, a professor of public policy at the Graduate School of Public Affairs at the University of Colorado, dismisses architect-designed mobile homes as examples of "the high cult of design," and only makes a brief reference to one project—the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation prototype made for National Homes in 1971–72. Nevertheless, the mobile home, this indigenous, "low art" (sometimes artless) dwelling, has inspired architects to reconsider the social, formal, and technological parameters of housing.

To cite some examples from the 1960s on: Bob Lee and David Klages produced very pleasing designs for manufactured housing built to mobile-home standards; Barry Berkus has been designing mobile homes on which he receives a royalty for each sold; Jon Vredevoogd has proposed interesting "high-tech" mobile-home units of urethane foam sandwiched between a prestressed aluminum skin and a high-density inner plastic surface that can expand and contract as well as be dismantled and moved; and Sim Van der Ryn has designed some unusual mobile homes from which he developed theories on the need to perceive the house as a replaceable consumer product judged by performance codes. Since the mid-1960s, he has championed a social role for mass-produced housing that leaves room for personal expression.

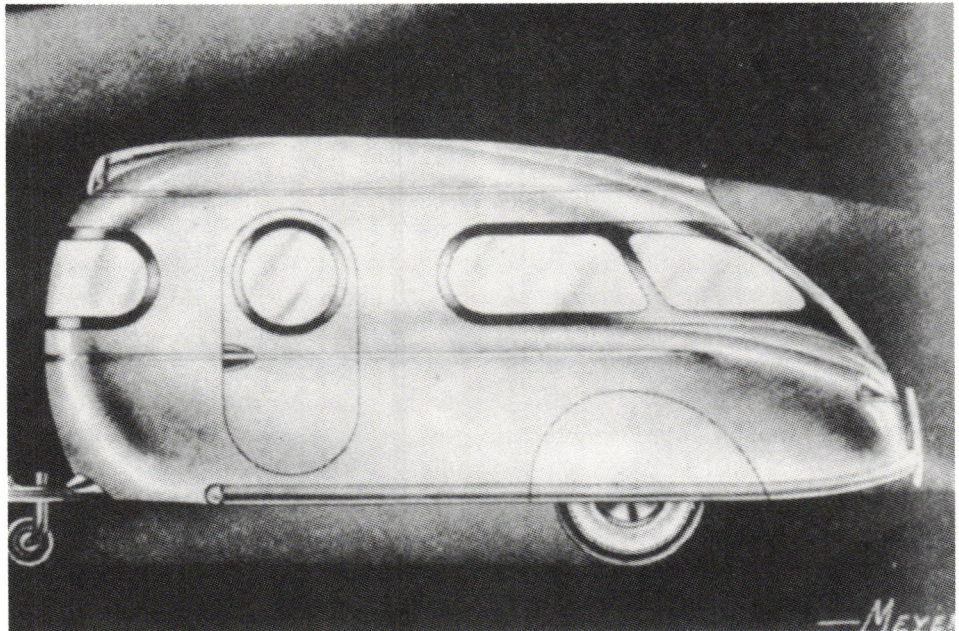
Architects whose names are more widely recognized also have been attracted to the potential for inventive solutions to housing inherent in the mobile home. James Rossant has been interested in the mobile home as a solution to housing ever since he was at the University of Florida in the late 1940s, and he began to design units with the mobile home in mind from 1951 on to his later poured-in-place, vertically stacked apartments. The advanced technology of mobile-home manufacturing also shocked Rossant into realizing that the separation between industrial design and architecture in

America has insulated architects from a wealth of technical and formal solutions.

Moshe Safdie, of course, has developed an entire thesis on humane and flexible mass housing in which private and communal activities are integrated into a total environment for modern life. The module for this concept, as at Habitat in Montreal, is a reinforced concrete version of manufactured housing, or the "twentieth-century brick," to use Paul Rudolph's term for the mobile home.

In a very brief reference to Paul Rudolph, Wallis refers to a New York State project for stackable mobile-home units that had to be torn down because of maintenance problems. There may have been such a project, but more likely he is referring to Rudolph's Oriental Masonic Gardens in New Haven, Connecticut—the best known of that architect's early forays into adapting mobile homes to denser architectural housing aggregations. Wallis never mentions Habitat. Yet, here Safdie uses an assembly concept that derives from the mobile home—the plug-in. In every park, the mobile-home unit plugs in to the utilities hidden below ground. Even the tall "megastructural" framework into which individual mobile homes were hoisted and inserted was to be found as early as 1938, proposed in an *Architectural Record* cartoon by Alan Dunn.

By the 1960s, many younger architects had begun reassessing architecture in light of the concepts of mobility embodied in the mobile home. Archigram is among the best known of these. French architect and theorist Michel Ragon is another. As one reflects upon the architectural implications of the mobile home, one can look at the development of the trailer in the United States as the practical side of a system of architecture predicated on mobility. The theoretical side, particularly in the decades before the proposals of Archigram and Ragon, was formulated chiefly by European architects. Of course, their reference was not to mobile homes but, more generally, to industrialized housing.



The "Trailer of Tomorrow," designed by Carl X. Meyer. (From *Wheel Estate*.)

Practice and theory need to reinforce each other, and in a brief section on theory, Wallis appropriately mentions Le Corbusier's analogy of the wine rack, in which the megastructure of the Unité d'Habitation is the rack and the individual apartment is the bottle, slipped in. He quotes Corbu: "And, having made our bottle, the dwelling, we can plump it down under an apple tree in Normandy or under a pine tree in Jura . . . [or] on the fifth or seventeenth floor of a steel framework." The author finds the parallel between Le Corbusier's ideas and mobile-home placement remarkable, but attempts no connection. Is there one?

If Corbu's dwelling can be found anywhere, can go anywhere, it certainly fits into what had been termed International Style modernism. Can one connect the International Style with the later Corbu work in reinforced concrete and with the mobile home? I think so. The connections are found partly in Le Corbusier, partly in the concept of the machine, and partly in the modernist aesthetic that characterized the International Style. The mobile home and the Villa Savoye are dissimilar siblings of the same parentage, both *machines à habiter*. Only they were nurtured on different sides of the Atlantic, so alter-

ing their family resemblance beyond recognition.

Now, Le Corbusier's concept of geographical ubiquity, quoted above, is encountered earlier in his proposals for multiplying the prototype of the Villa Savoye (and of course, even before that, with the Dom-ino houses). A theoretical construct links all these projects. The theory harks back to the concept of the machine age and, more particularly, to the machine itself. Machines, as Princeton engineer David Billington observes in his analyses of technology, are differentiated from structures by their ubiquity and universality. A machine is mass-produced and is intended to be used anywhere. The same machine can be found in use throughout the world. This aspect of the machine forms a theoretical underpinning of International Style modernism, and Le Corbusier intuitively understood this and applied it to his *machines à habiter*. The ubiquity of the machine, of course, is inherent in the mobile home—an association graphically demonstrated by the phenomenon of Airstream world tour caravans, the first of which was in 1951. And so, the work of a major designer and theorist like Le Corbusier finds kinship with a vernacular

product of our machine-oriented civilization—the mobile home.

Among the aesthetic issues of International Style modernism was the formal concept of the exterior surface of the building appearing to be like an integument, a skin pulled taut around a frame, negating relief and texture. Another issue was the associative concept of the building resembling an ocean liner, a paradigmatic machine, beautiful in its engineered efficiency. In his analysis of the mobile home, Wallis brings up both of these aesthetic issues, although he doesn't connect them to International Style modernism. In describing a typical mobile home, he notes that the exterior wall is "remarkably flat" with almost no relief. "It is a thinness justified by the need to optimize the container . . . a thinness which constitutes an aesthetic of its own."

Wallis sees "thinness" as a major aesthetic characteristic of the mobile home and finds its roots, aided by J. B. Jackson's essay on the movable house in America, in earlier American architecture (Virginia slab houses, balloonframe houses). Notwithstanding the validity of this connection, the mobile home (or its earliest manifestation, the travel trailer) also has a separate parentage—the automobile that pulls it. Surely these kindred products of this new technologically oriented machine age have as much in common as the mobile home and the Virginia slab house of the 18th century. To cite an example mentioned by Wallis: the 1938 Klesla "Tourhome" outdid any example of European modernist design. It boasted a Nicraluminum skin, the material used in dirigibles. Here is Mies's concept of a "skin and bones" architecture to a vengeance!

As to the associative concepts of the ocean liner in International Style modernism, Wallis observes that the trailers of the 1930s often were referred to as land yachts. In fact, many of their features were described in yachting terms and were duly appointed: kitchen gal-

leys, compact bunks, staterooms, mahogany paneling, porthole windows, etc. One might be tempted to conclude that modernism is a hidden dimension of the mobile home, were it not for the fact that the aesthetic connection to high European design theories was lost on the builders of these American machines for living.

Interesting as these independent observations may be, this is not a book about the connections between the mobile home and architectural theory, but a book about the mobile home and housing, and about the impositions placed on affordable housing in the United States. Wallis writes that one out of ten dwellings is a mobile home, and mobile homes have composed one-quarter of the new housing produced over the past two decades, yet today "fewer than twenty percent of young households not currently in a site-built home can afford to buy one." Within this dynamic, the mobile home continues to be ignored, especially by housing institutions, even as it has and could continue to satisfy many of our housing needs—a point the author frequently emphasizes.

One of Wallis's chief contributions is the realization that the mobile-home park must be understood as an integral part of the housing innovation of the mobile home. A mobile home without a park to locate in loses 75 percent of its value. As Wallis visits mobile-home parks, whether housing-oriented parks like Freedom

Acres in Muncie, Indiana, or service-oriented parks like Trailer Estates in Bradenton, Florida (the first mobile-home subdivision), he discovers that the park offers not only a guaranteed destination for a mobile home, but also provides community. In fact, there is often more community in a mobile-home park than in a traditional suburb in this country.

The main housing challenge to the community of the park came from vertically integrated merchant builders like Levitt. Unlike normal prefabricators, who "sought to provide housing; Levitt tried to provide community." Mobile-home manufacturers had paid little attention to the destination of their product, and since people considered this hybrid product with suspicion, it is understandable that they might seek community along with a more acceptable, conservative (and expensive) image of the house as packaged by our merchant builders.

One gets the sense that the mobile home, because of its untraditional form and its location in parks on the outskirts of towns, was treated in a similar manner to blacks before legislated integration—as separate but equal. It was accepted as housing, yet never assimilated into the general system of housing in this country. Because the mobile home emerged from the autocamping movement and its industry developed during the Depression, it remains associated with transiency and substandard dwelling. Even the Reagan administration, champion of a nonregulatory individualism, demonstrated its antagonism towards the mobile home, as Wallis reveals.

To the extent that the mobile home, which now includes sectional units, has become a more acceptable form of housing today, it has also lost some of its competitive edge. How can that edge be reinstated? Promote performance-based building codes that encourage innovation in the building industry. Demand government regulations that offer incentives



The mobile home as an expression of the aesthetic of process: adaptable and unceremonious. (From *Wheel Estate*.)

for new technology (where the mobile home historically has excelled). Develop new housing-oriented parks that, even if not as lucrative as service-oriented parks, will best fill the gap of affordable housing. Change the economic regulations that discriminate against single-wides and multisectional mobile homes, which cannot secure comparable financing to sitebuilt homes even though they can be built, delivered, and set up for 30 percent less. Encourage the mobile-home industry to diversify into areas ignored by conventional developers, areas such as Park Models, ECHO housing, and componentized mobile homes. And diversify the siting of homes by encouraging cooperative parks, subdivisions rather than parks, and the inclusion of modulars and manufactured homes in other communities.

These are social imperatives that should drive the considerations of everyone concerned with the problem of housing. In Wallis's words, "the only form of factory-built housing which met all of the theoretical characteristics of industrialized housing . . . was the ensemble of house trailer and trailer court." Or, to cite Arthur Decio, chairman of the board of Skyline Corporation: "It is within our power to resolve the paradox that the richest nation in the world is unable to provide . . . housing for its people."

If I may return to architectural issues by way of conclusion, it would be to encourage an examination of the mobile home as a springboard for new technical and social approaches to affordable housing. The architectural press has given extensive coverage over the past few years to the concepts of technology transfer, but its focus has been on large-scale, high-tech projects issuing out of the international offices of architects like Richard Rogers and Norman Foster. Such glitzy coverage obscures the more accessible examples of technology transfer to be found in the mobile home, a structure whose strength comes from its tubular shape and not from its steel chassis, and whose mode of assembly has used the most advanced systems and materials for

decades. Buckminster Fuller's call in 1929 for a house that would be installed rather than built could be commonplace by now if we had been inclined to take the mobile home and its assembly methods seriously. But as Wallis has shown so clearly, government housing agencies, financial institutions, the conventional building industry, and even the Reagan program of deregulation have all ignored and undermined the contributions of the mobile home.

This book is a serious and committed study of the mobile home and its place in our society. It should be read by architects and designers precisely because it has not been written by an architect or historian of architecture. Wallis gives us a different take on the subject, and one that is likely to prompt many new ideas and questions among its thoughtful readers.

One minor criticism of this book is that either Wallis or the publisher chose not to include a bibliography (it does have a note section). Material on mobile homes ranges widely from trade and promotional literature to the architectural, the technological, the legal, the social, and the governmental. The mere diversity of this literature cries out for a bibliography. After all, in the author's assessment, "the mobile home may well be the single most significant and unique housing innovation in twentieth-century America."

WHEEL ESTATE: THE RISE AND DECLINE OF MOBILE HOMES, Alan D. Wallis, Oxford University Press, 1991, 283 pp., illus., \$24.95.

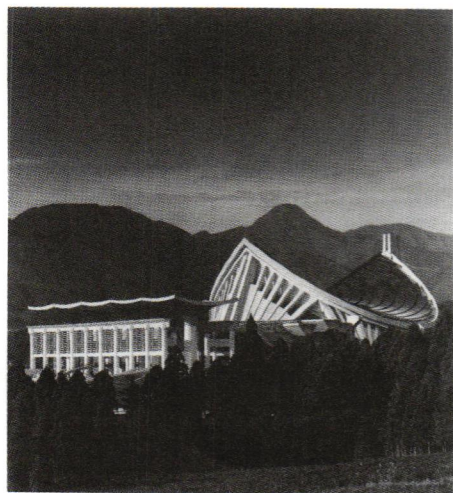
Jennifer Taylor

Marketable Images: Recent Japanese Architecture

Japan has relayed its strong challenge to the Western world's dominance in modern architecture primarily through the visual image. While image-consciousness is not peculiar to Japan, it particularly influences the transfer of knowledge about that culture because of Japan's location and the relative inaccessibility of its language and economy to westerners. Further, as Botond Bognar comments in *The New Japanese Architecture*, in Japan "the megalopolitan market-place is restless and anxious to gobble up all things, especially easily identifiable styles and products in order to convert them into marketable images"—and nothing is more sought after and easier to swallow than the image of the image. The value system that gives rise to the often radical originality of Japanese design may not always be readily accessible to the western view, but seductive depictions of the products are easily absorbed. The emphasis on visual representation has made books on Japanese architecture particularly appealing to the appetites of the image-devouring architectural profession.

Books on Japanese architecture are, as a rule, like Japanese architecture itself—visually captivating, superbly produced, and exquisitely wrapped. In form and content they are the art objects that make present the chosen aspects of the original created works. As André Bazin wrote, "The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it."¹ The architecture serves as the raw material for these secondary productions from the combined efforts of architect, writer, photographer, and book designer.

It is primarily the photograph, with its two-dimensional rendition of the desired interpretation and representation of the artifact, that enters the arena of communication. The emphasis on form and image has always been a highly-ranked con-



Exterior view, temple complex, Fujinomiya, Shizuoka; Kimio Yokoyama, 1972. (From *Contemporary Architecture of Japan*.)

sideration in Japanese architecture. Historically, Japanese design has given priority to sensory concerns over expediency and function, and art has presented a disciplined, ideal version of a re-created reality. In addition, as Roland Barthes observed in *Empire of Signs* (1982), so much of Japanese life revolves around the readability of culture through sign. The loss to architecture through the photographic plate comes from the reliance on frozen vision as the means of communication. This relegates the work of architecture to the status of object alone rather than object plus experience, which is (was) the particular nature of the art. Perhaps the transformation is now appropriate, if, as Hajime Yatsuka contends in his essay in *The New Japanese Architecture*, "In the 'city of consumption' architecture tends to become a flow of images rather than a stock of buildings."

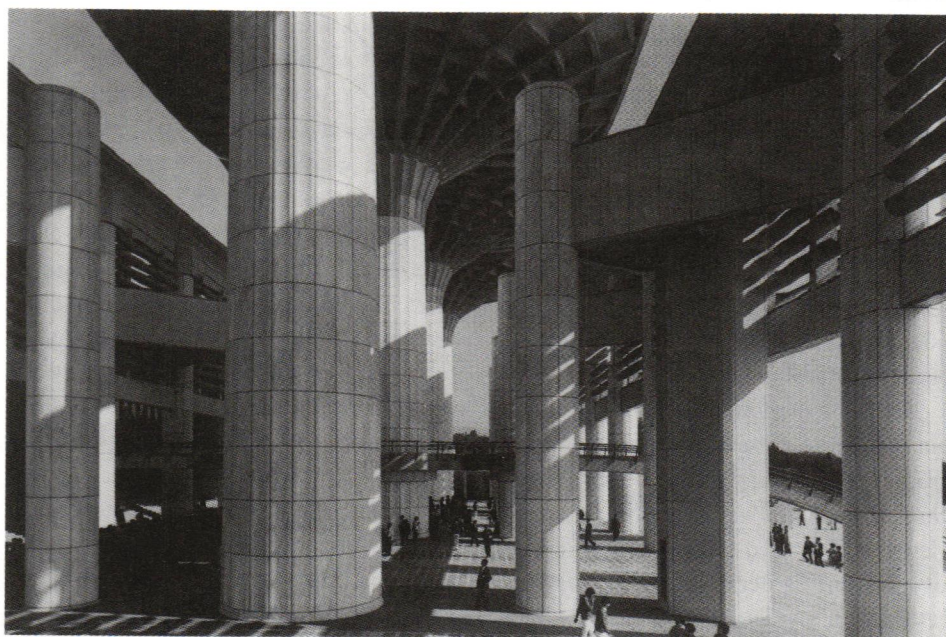
But current Japanese architecture is intensely polemical and the photograph is a weak medium for continuing discourse. Rosalind Krauss has referred to photographic realism as a sign that is an "index" directly tied to its cause and, drawing on Barthes, cites the photographic image as "message sans code."² Thus, photography, in order to acquire further signification, requires supplementary captions or text. Given Japanese architecture's controversial nature, and accept-

ing Krauss's argument regarding the strict limitation of the "index," photographs of Japanese architecture require an accompanying written statement to make the point. It is necessary that such text be directly tied to the image as each is incomplete without the other. Hence successful books on Japanese architecture are generally loosely structured around bundles of photographic plates bound with their supporting theories—the binary unit of the artistic product and its polemic.

Fitting the formula and therefore enjoying, or destined for, success are Rizzoli's *Contemporary Architecture of Japan 1958–1984* (1985) and *The New Japanese Architecture* (1990), and Columbia University's recent publication *Emerging Japanese Architects of the 1990s* (1991). In content and style of presentation all three books testify to the continuing preoccupations of Japanese design. Even the covers and formats signal the contents. The silver glow of the covers of the Rizzoli publications reflect Japanese designers' obsession throughout the late 1970s and 1980s with silver and the noncolors in all types of Japanese design from lipstick cases to city centers.

With *Contemporary Architecture of Japan 1958–1984* such metallic-toned sophistication is indicative of the publication date, and for *The New Japanese Architecture*, it accords with the content. Decidedly liberated and heralding the new is the white dust jacket and black hardcover of *Emerging Japanese Architects*.

Contemporary Architecture of Japan 1958–1984 presents a conventional historical approach, with informative introductory essays by Hiroyuki Suzuki and Reyner Banham. Banham's "The Japonization of World Architecture" provides the fresher appraisal with its reversed view of the material. The remainder of the text is a series of brief descriptions by Katsuhiro Kobayashi that accompany the illustrations of the ninety-two selected buildings that make up the bulk of the book. These works are logically grouped under the three major phases of postwar Japanese architecture, rather clumsily and questionably designated as belonging to "the Aureate Generation" (including the heroic works of Tange and Mayekawa), "the Taking-off Generation" (the post-Expo '70 era that saw the prime intellectual and physical



Entrance pavilion, temple complex, Fujinomiya, Shizuoka; Kimio Yokoyama, 1972. (From *Contemporary Architecture of Japan*.)

richness of Maki and Isozaki), and “the Superficial Generation” (with the defense against the urban environment, and the interpretive and imaginative designs of such diverse figures as Hara, Ito, and Takamatsu). An inexplicable selection of five large buildings by establishment architects (hardly likely to prove visionary with the exception of Isozaki’s Tsukuba Center) finally heralds “Design towards the ’80s” in the last section. Useful biographies wrap it all up.

In accord with its title, the material in *The New Japanese Architecture* is more contemporary and so too is the nature of the text. Three introductory essays by Botond Bogner, Hajime Yatsuka, and Lynne Breslin discuss the conceptual frameworks conditioning architectural production, and primarily address theories on consumerism and the city.³ The architects Shinohara, Isozaki, Maki, Ito, Hara, Ando, and Hasegawa figure highly. Most instructive is Breslin’s essay, “From the Savage to the Nomad: Critical Interventions in Contemporary Japanese Architecture,” which analyzes Shinohara’s structuralism, his reductivist search for essences, and the connected yet diverse themes that evolve from these to appear in the work of others. The seemingly inevitable stunning plates of projects (this time including color) are organized to illustrate the work of twenty-three architects who have been given the option of speaking for themselves—making available, if one is interested, the “whys” as well as the “whats” of architectural production.

Not to be outdone by Rizzoli, Columbia has released a high-quality photographic study in *Emerging Japanese Architects of the 1990s*. The book’s use of plates with limited text is born of necessity as well as desire, as the book, together with a video, was produced to accompany the 1990–91 exhibitions of this work held at Columbia University in



Aerial view, house at Nakano Honcho, Tokyo; Toyoo Ito, 1976. (From *Contemporary Architecture of Japan*.)

New York, and the Canadian Center for Architecture in Montreal. Editor and curator Jackie Kestenbaum has challenged future judgment in proclaiming six of the younger generation as emerging talents in Japanese architecture (Kiyoshi Sey Takeyama/AMORPHE, Norihiko Dan, Hiroyuki Wakabayashi, WORKSHOP, Hisashi Hara, and Atsushi Kitagawara). Kestenbaum’s introductory essay sets forth her views on each of the exhibitors in a clear text heavily laced with quotations from interviews. This sets the scene for the “Architects” section, in which graphic and creative illustrations of projects are “made whole” by the designer’s accompanying theory. The breadth of material on each architect, made possible by such a restricted selection, has resulted in highly revealing pictures composed from the critic’s and the architect’s views. Together the six studies provide a splintered but penetrating insight into creative discourse within the consumerist context of contemporary Japan.

The picture of current architecture in Japan that emerges from these three books is one of increasing confidence, originality, and independence. From the heroic period of the postwar era to the sensuous phase following Expo ’70, and

on into the 1980s, Japanese architecture grappled with such issues as the East/West interface, tradition and modernism, the craft/technology relationship, and the city. Today some of these have lost their imperative and, as within the western world, a new and dominant preoccupation has become manifest—the view of architecture as an article of trade and the entanglement of the architect in the feeding of demanding and artificially stimulated appetites.

Due to the underlying values and priorities of tradition, Japanese modern architecture, for all its western inspiration, remains intensely Japanese. As Banham

comments, “It is the marginal minor differences in the thinkable and the customary that ultimately make Japanese architecture a provokingly alien enclave within the body of world architecture.” It continues to disdain the western preoccupations of function, comfort, and the rational dominance, and remains an architecture of extremes. The needle swings violently between universal metaphysical preoccupations, and singular tangible technological solutions. In the past this obsession with the sensory qualities of architecture has presented a major hurdle for the western appreciation of Japanese design, but with the postmodern challenge to the priority of functionalism, Japanese design has become more understandable and acceptable to those with a European perspective. The connection between Japanese architecture and western postmodernism has not been adequately explored and could prove enlightening.

The periods of self-conscious assimilation and hesitant, sometimes heavy-handed, borrowings and adaptations from the West are represented in the pages of *Contemporary Architecture of Japan 1958–1984*. But change is evident in Bogner’s book and for the present (and the new, what Kestenbaum calls the

fourth) generation, the striving, even painful phase, appears to be over and Japan is producing its own distinct version of what must now be called a global architecture. Such oppositions as the local and the foreign, traditional and the new, are now relatively meaningless. "In a world of architecture where everything was now awash in relativism, the immemorial and solid certainties of the West—masonry and geometry—were dissolved and seemed liable to flow away in the general flux of interchangeable and interpenetrating concepts. The architecture of the West, it seemed, had been almost Japonized out of existence," writes Reyner Banham.

As Banham recognized, Western *architecture* has become something to be taken up, dropped, played with, rather than current Japanese architecture being but one fringe expression of modern architecture. Yet evident in the two publications of the 1990s is the continuing dependency on Western *thought*. Post-structuralism underpins much of current theory, and it appears to have been more thoroughly and thoughtfully studied and digested by the Japanese than by their counterparts in the West. The shift from interest in Western physical form to Western metaphysics is echoed in an increasing interest in the ephemeral. While the physical barrier of the concrete wall once served symbolically and functionally to escape from the outside world (notably the Japanese city), the uselessness of physical defense is now recognized. Privacy barriers and information control are rendered inept by the mass media, which invades the physical bulwarks that have protected the urban dweller's sanity in the past. As Kestenbaum's book reveals, this presents a different scenario for architectural production, rendering previous solutions obsolete.

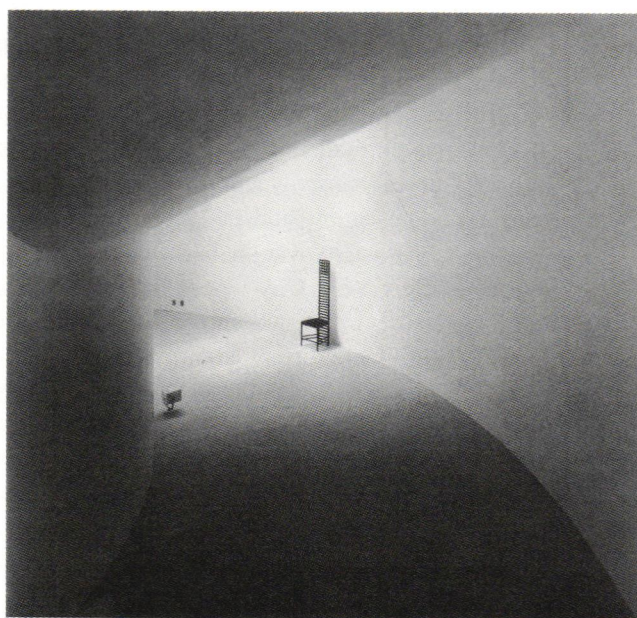
The specter of Japan's rampant consumerism becomes a major

topic in the essays in *New Japanese Architecture*. "Architects not only produce consumer goods but become, themselves, subjects of the process of consumption, in as much as they too have to obey, even if not consciously, the rule of the capitalist society. This is to say they have to accelerate the most basic condition of consumption, which is an eternal desire for something new," writes Hajime Yatsuka. Contradictions of resistance and acceptance are jostled between words and buildings as architects struggle with the dilemmas of this trap. The most commonly adopted tactic to avoid the production of images that can be destroyed in this way is to deny or undermine the production of objects. Tadao Ando aims for "architecture based on experience rather than appearance," Kazuyo Sejima for "architecture as action or event," and Akazunari Sakamoto for "building-as-environment." The reductivism of Shinohara and Ito can be seen in a Zen sense as antidotes to materialism. In the case of Shinohara the attempts to reduce to "degree zero," with Ito to dematerialize, render ephemeral and temporary, and with Hiroshi Hara to crumble and dissolve the edges of the object to erode its singular-

ity, all express a position of resistance to visual resolution. Yet at the same time the very lack of concreteness and permanence in such products would seem to feed obsolescence and through that, fashion.

The theme of consumerism is even more strongly present in the work of the younger architects, indeed it can be said to be the subject of Kestenbaum's book. For the most part, the attitudes are those of acceptance, if not always approval. For Kestenbaum the reality is that "for this generation, there is no life apart from commercialism" as "there is no public life in Japan apart from commercialism" and "commercial buildings are not separate from the public life in Japan: they *are* the public life." Given the clamor of the Japanese intellectual and physical environment, the conscious striving for survival through originality, the distinctive solution, the new view—the controversial precept—is comprehensible. The shifting desires and consequent demands of current society make a virtue of the temporary and its promotion, and, in agreement with Yatsuka, Kestenbaum contends that "architects . . . run the risk of being used as commodities themselves." This seems

a risk most are willing to take and the younger generation appears more prepared to "sell out" and add further goods (notably imagery) to the export market. Lacking moral direction in a tempting scene without "ethics regarding any other value except money" (Kestenbaum quotes Norihiko Dan in her essay), the new generation agonizes between WORKSHOP's pragmatic acquiescence to architecture as a service to advertising and Kitagawara's critical, ironic play on novelty as virtue. But from the hands of the gifted (and there were many), the prosperity and indulgence of the 1980s endowed Japan with unprecedented, refined, and elegant works. Maki's *SPIRAL*, superbly reflective of the rich tapestry of its



Hall, house at Nakano Honcho, Tokyo; Toyoo Ito, 1976. (From *Contemporary Architecture of Japan*.)

spiritual and physical milieu, is as much the epitomizing building of the decade as Kitagawara's *RISE* is its antidote.

The redemption of architecture from its fate as merchandise is a currently fashionable preoccupation. The ultimate irony is that the concern itself has become marketable (evidence these books and this review). The consumerist critique may likewise be subject to a cycle of demand and obsolescence. That said, one can gingerly propose that these three books on Japanese architecture are delectable items of consumption. They are evidence that while the dominant concern of the production of architecture remains visual it will be subject to exploitation, and the transformation of architecture from primary to secondary artifact will continue to deprive it of its reality.

NOTES

1. Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, translated by Hugh Gray (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), p.14.
2. Rosalind E. Krauss, "Notes on the Index Part I and Part II," in *The Originality of the Avant Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986).
3. These essays previously appeared in *Architectural Design*, 5/6 (1988) pp. 7-31. Surprisingly, these publications are not cited in the book.

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE OF JAPAN 1958-1984, Hiroyuki Suzuki, Reyner Banham, Katsuhiko Kobayashi, Rizzoli, 1985, 224 pp., illus., \$45.00.

THE NEW JAPANESE ARCHITECTURE, Botond Bognar, Rizzoli, 1990, 224 pp., illus., \$50.00 cloth; \$35.00 paper.

EMERGING JAPANESE ARCHITECTS OF THE 1990s, Jackie Kestenbaum, editor, Columbia University Press, 1991, 120 pp., illus., \$49.50.

Robert Wojtowicz

Makers of the City: Jacob Riis, Lewis Mumford, James T. Farrell, and Paul Goodman

LEWIS FRIED

In a series of thought-provoking essays, Lewis Fried has presented the disparate views of four important American writers about the modern city: Jacob Riis, Lewis Mumford, James T. Farrell, and Paul Goodman. Significantly, none of these individuals was a professional architect or city planner. Thus, as Fried argues, their contributions to our knowledge about the urban experience are not quantifiable. They were all human observers, concerned with how the physical and economic structure of cities maintains or thwarts cultural development, community values, and individual fulfillment. In each essay, Fried offers a succinct, critical summary of each author's writings about the city, and thus the book serves as a good introduction to their respective ideas. Unfortunately, the group as a whole is not a cohesive one, and Fried is not clear about what applications their works have in our present urban crisis.

Most readers have a passing familiarity with the writings and photographs of Jacob Riis, perhaps the most important investigative journalist of his day. When his ground-breaking study *How the Other Half Lives* was published in 1890, the ensuing public outcry over the living conditions of New York City's poor led to the improvement of tenements and the introduction of playgrounds and parks into the slum areas. The author traces the development of Riis's attitude toward urban life all the way back to his childhood in the village of Ribe, Denmark. According to Fried, "Ribe—the Ribe of Riis's memory and no doubt desire—served as the model for the fraternal, Christian community when Riis looked aghast at the filth and chaos of New York's tene-

ment districts and suggested grafting rural values upon an urban mass wretchedly living in lower New York."

Upon immigrating to America as a young man, Riis found himself homeless for a while on the streets of New York, and this experience provided him with a unique slant on urban poverty. In later years, he continued to empathize with the plight of the poor, believing that salubrious changes in the slum environment could redeem its inhabitants, and it was to this end that he directed his pen. Yet at the same time, Riis was wary of the most recent waves of 19th-century immigrants: the Jews, Catholics, and Asians who in their refusal to relinquish their ethnic ways seemed to defy his vision of a ideal Christian community. As Fried notes insightfully, "*How the Other Half Lives* is the last great nineteenth-century sermon taking as its principle of organization the fall of the harmonious community: from brotherhood to fratricide." One wishes, however, that Fried had been able to include some of Riis's well-known photographs, which even more than his writings captured the horrifying conditions that prevailed in the Lower East Side at the turn of the century.

Following his discussion of Riis, Fried turns to Lewis Mumford, a figure long familiar to those in the architecture and planning professions. While Fried does not add anything new to our understanding of Mumford, he neatly summarizes Mumford's voluminous writings about the city from the youthfully optimistic *The Story of Utopias* (1922) to the profoundly pessimistic, two-volume *Myth of the Machine* (1967, 1970). The central, regionalist influence of Patrick Geddes is discussed in detail by Fried as is the formative effect of Ebenezer Howard's garden-city model. More than a plan or a collection of buildings, Mumford's city was an organism whose fragile existence was increasingly threatened in the 20th century by overcrowding and by the machine in its many guises.

Fried provides an especially careful reading of Mumford's two key books on

urbanism: *The Culture of Cities* (1938) and *The City in History* (1961). Mumford's belief in the human capacity for renewal is the central theme in both books, and it was this belief that pervades even the bleakest passages of *The City in History*. "The city-as-hell can be replaced by a city that is as truly cosmopolitan as it is decentralized," Fried writes. "For Mumford, the physical nature of decentralization embodies its moral value: resources and production, culture and technics can be matched so that a world culture, fraternal and unimpoverished, can truly make man a species being." Curiously missing from Fried's discussion, however, is an adequate analysis of Mumford's view of New York. Manhattan always remained at the core of Mumford's urban criticism, even after he withdrew from the city to live in the countryside. Fried also incorrectly locates the Lewis Mumford archives at the New York Public Library, when they are, in fact, deposited at the University of Pennsylvania.

The novels and short stories of James T. Farrell form an interesting counterpoint to the writings of Riis and Mumford. Farrell's working-class protagonists, forever caught in limiting circumstances,

present the reader not with an idealized view of what the city could be, but with what it was. Growing up in Chicago, Farrell knew its streets firsthand, and his keen observations of ethnic and racial strife during the middle decades of the 20th century are a stark reminder of the realities of urban life in an era often romanticized.

As Fried notes, Farrell was greatly influenced by the writings of George Herbert Mead, John Dewey, and the members of the Chicago school of sociology. Farrell, in fact, studied at the University of Chicago during the 1920s. The concentric model of outward growth proposed by the Chicago sociologists was particularly evident in Farrell's treatment of racism in the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy (1932, 1934, 1936). Fried provides an engaging analysis of this seminal work and Farrell's other writings, including the O'Neill and the Carr novels. As Fried notes, "[Farrell's] attention to the mundane and the seemingly pedestrian is his presentation of how the self grows within the city." What relevance Farrell's work has for readers today, however, Fried does not make clear.

Fried's study concludes with a discussion of the writings of Paul Goodman,

best known for *Communitas*, a book co-written with his brother, Percival. According to Fried, Goodman "wanted to return the city to its inhabitants by making it libertarian, if not communally anarchistic." Like Mumford, Goodman greatly admired Patrick Geddes, and Goodman espoused a regionalist perspective in his own writings even though he rejected the garden city as an ideal form. Fried sheds light on some of Goodman's early architectural writings, which expressed a rationalist viewpoint. *Communitas*, first published in 1947 and revised in 1960, remains his most important work in its utopian scheme for regional self-sufficiency through communal participation. "The Goodmans argue that urban planning is less an account of urban history than it is an account of human nature," Fried writes. "By offering plans to renew life, *Communitas* challenges the tyranny of the conventional city." Less interesting, in my opinion, is Fried's discussion of Goodman's experimental fiction, in which the city played a key role.

A comparative study of various authors should expand our understanding of their work by drawing parallels or contrasts in their writings. Riis, Mumford, Farrell, and Goodman are all interesting subjects for individual essays, but why Fried chooses to treat their diverse writings as a group is not apparent, nor does he develop his subjects as particularly effective foils. Subsequently, they make strange bedfellows on a sprawling mattress. While each writer provides a human perspective on the city, it is Mumford who clearly emerges as the most profound and prescient thinker in the group. This is not to point out the shortcomings of the other writers, only to question the formation of such a group in the first place.



Mulberry Bend, New York. (Photograph by Jacob A. Riis.)

MAKERS OF THE CITY: JACOB RIIS, LEWIS MUMFORD, JAMES T. FARRELL, AND PAUL GOODMAN, Lewis Fried, University of Massachusetts Press, 1990, 244 pp., \$30.00.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

EMILY APTER teaches in the French and Italian Department at the University of California, Davis. Her book entitled *Feminizing the Fetish: Psychoanalysis and Narrative Obsession in Turn-of-the-Century France* has recently been published by Cornell University Press (November, 1991). She is co-editor, with William Pietz, of *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse* (forthcoming, Cornell University Press, 1992). She has published articles on French visual culture in *October*, *Assemblage*, and *Ottogano*.

JUDITH R. BLAU's work on architectural practice and architects include her co-edited volume, *Professionals and Urban Form, Architects and Firms*, and sections in a recent book, *The Shape of Culture*. Her current research deals with historical transformations of American cultural organizations, including baseball teams, museums, and newspapers. She is professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

DANIEL BLUESTONE is the author of *Constructing Chicago* (Yale University Press, 1991). He teaches architectural history and preservation at Columbia University and directs the seminar "Skyscrapers: Art, Technology, and Commerce."

M. CHRISTINE BOYER teaches architecture and urbanism at the School of Architecture, Princeton University. She is the author of *Dreaming the Rational City: The Myth of German City Planning 1890-1945* (MIT Press, 1983); *Manhattan Manners: Architecture and Style 1850-1890* (Rizzoli, 1985); and the forthcoming book *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*.

SUSAN CHRISTOPHERSON is an associate professor in the Department of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University and is currently a research fellow at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin.

RICHARD CLEARY teaches architectural history at Carnegie Mellon University where he is Associate Head of the Department of Architecture. He is the author of a forthcoming book on the *places royales* of Louis XIV and Louis XV published by the Architectural History Foundation.

CARL W. CONDIT is Professor Emeritus in the Departments of History and Art History at Northwestern University.

MICHAEL R. CORBETT is an architectural historian in Berkeley, California.

ROSALYN DEUTSCHE is an art critic and historian who teaches at the Cooper Union in New York City. She has written extensively about art and urban theory.

RAYMOND W. GASTIL writes frequently for *Blueprint*, *Metropolis*, and *Progressive Architecture*. He collaborated with Robert Stern on *Modern Classicism* (Rizzoli, 1988).

MARTA GUTMAN is associate chair of the Department of Environmental Design at Parsons School of Design and teaches and practices architecture in New York City.

WARREN A. JAMES is a practicing architect in Manhattan. He is the author of several essays and books on architecture and urbanism.

FOLKE T. KIHLESTEDT is chairman of the Art Department at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. His special interests include the architecture of world's fairs and issues in the interaction of the automobile and architecture and technology and art.

LELAND M. ROTH has taught architectural history at the University of Oregon since 1978, with an emphasis on the 18th century onward, especially American high-style and vernacular architecture, and Native American architecture.

D. GRAHAM SHANE is a writer in New York City.

JEFFERY C. SUGARMAN is an architect and urban designer at the New York City Department of City Planning working on large-scale projects and the city's comprehensive waterfront plan. He is concurrently a student in the graduate architecture and design criticism program at the Parsons School of Design.

JENNIFER TAYLOR is an architect, architectural historian, and critic. She teaches architectural design, history, and theory in the Department of Architecture, University of Sydney.

JULIA TRILLING directs the Center for Western European Studies at the University of California at Berkeley and teaches in the department of City and Regional Planning. She is currently working on a book on post-World War II planning and urbanism in Paris, which is scheduled for publication in 1993 by Alfred A. Knopf.

E. PERRY WINSTON is an architect with the Pratt Architectural Collaborative in Brooklyn, New York. He also teaches architecture at the Parsons School of Design in New York.

ROBERT WOJTOWICZ is an assistant professor of art history in the Art Department of Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia.

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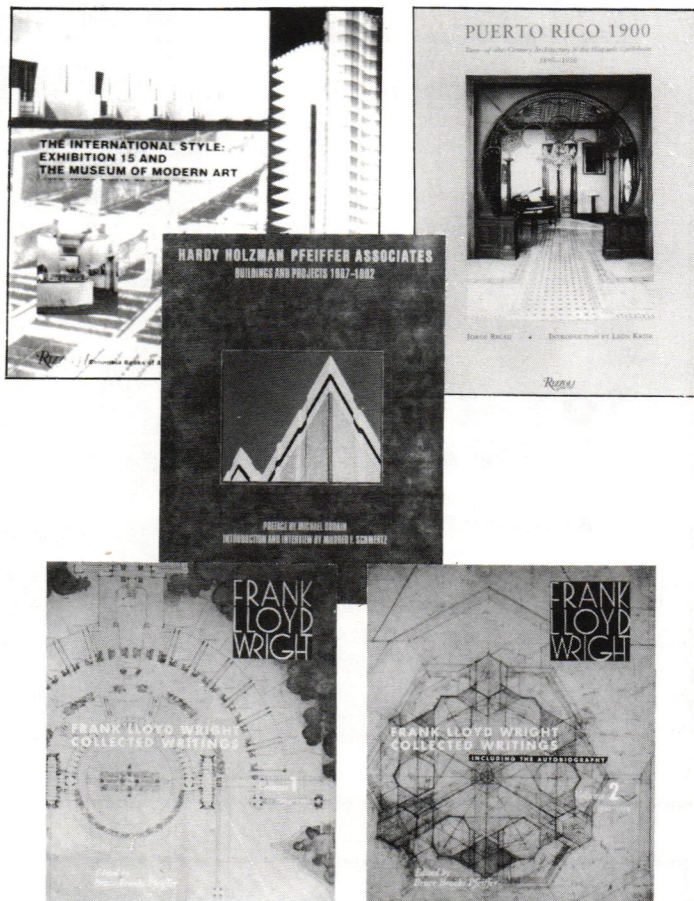
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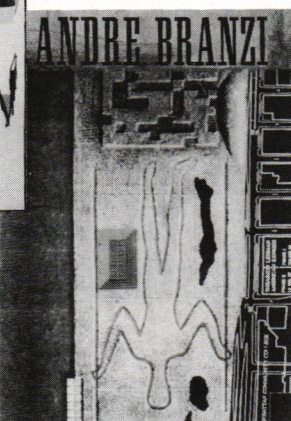
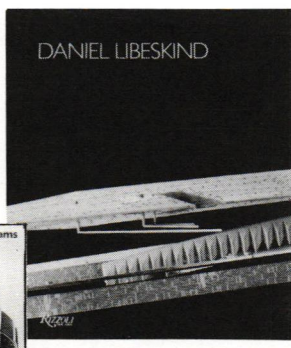
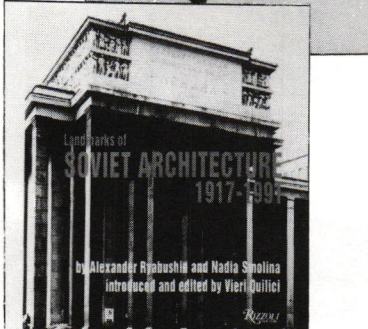
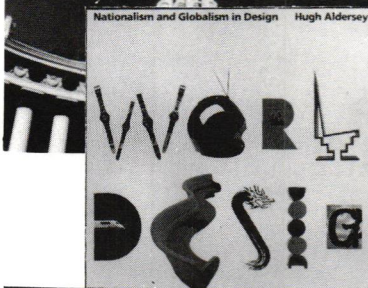
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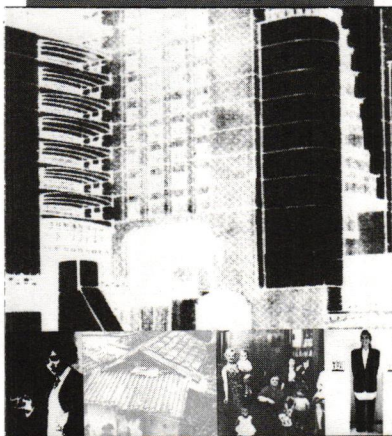
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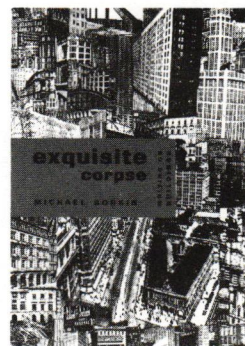
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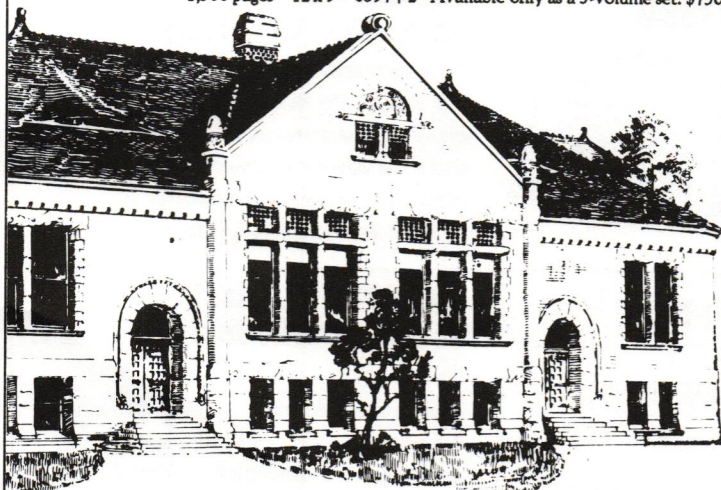
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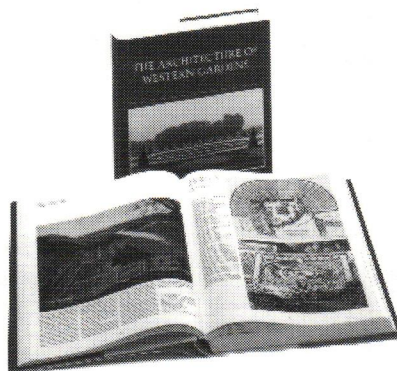
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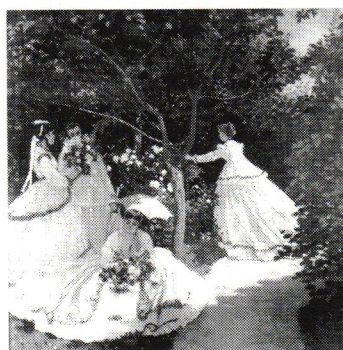
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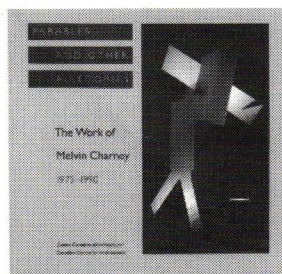
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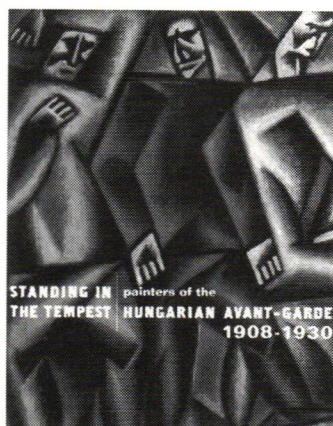
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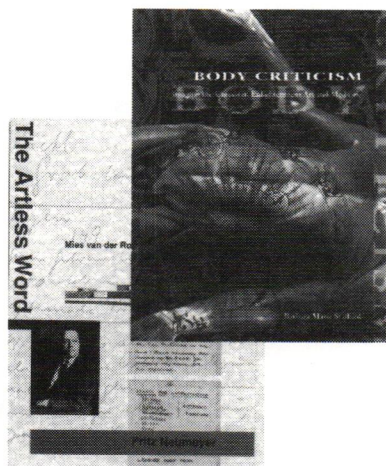
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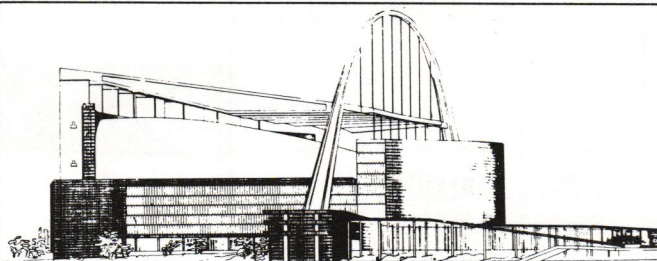
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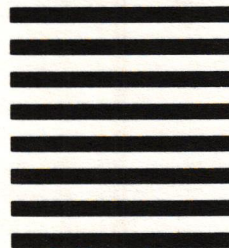
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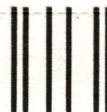
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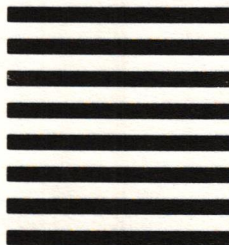
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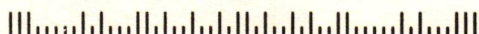
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