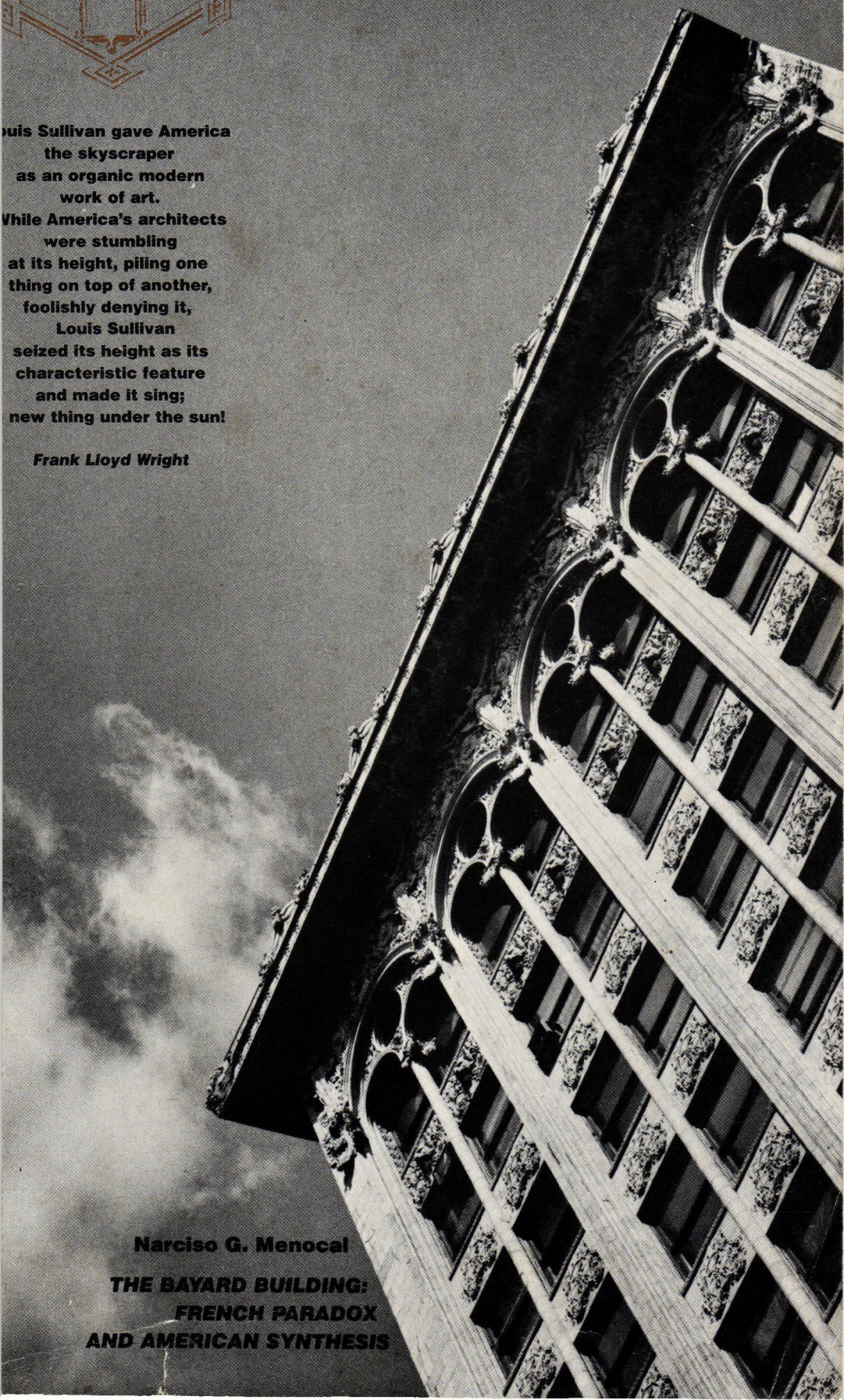
Susan Sontag • Edgardo Cozarinsky • Jorge Luis Borges $5

SITES 13

# THE BAYARD BUILDING



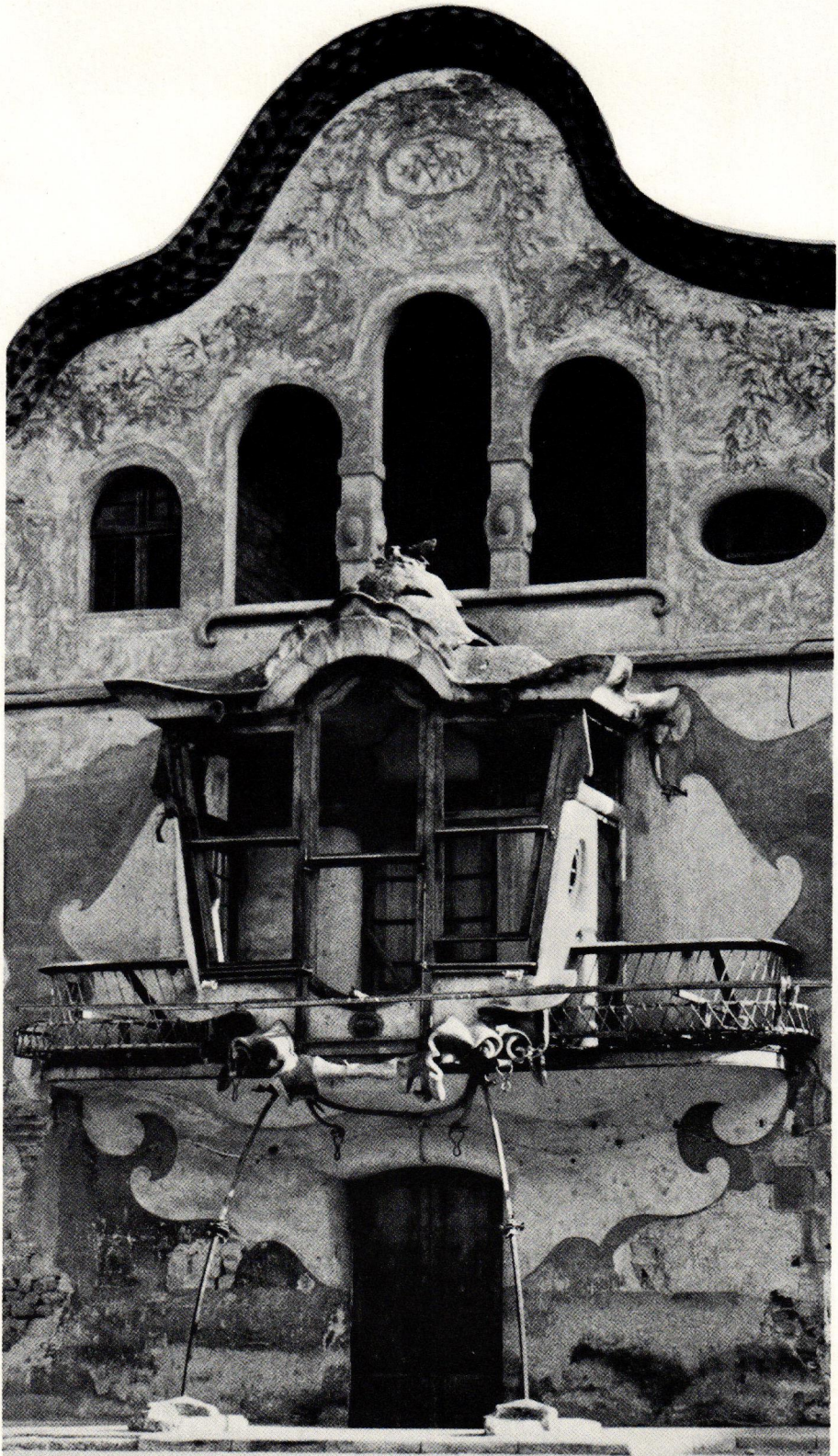
**uis Sullivan gave America the skyscraper as an organic modern work of art. While America's architects were stumbling at its height, piling one thing on top of another, foolishly denying it, Louis Sullivan seized its height as its characteristic feature and made it sing; new thing under the sun!**

***Frank Lloyd Wright***

**Narciso G. Menocal**

***THE BAYARD BUILDING: FRENCH PARADOX AND AMERICAN SYNTHESIS***

## *Photographic Exhibition:*
## *THE ARCHITECTURE OF JOSE MARIA JUJOL*



**One hopes that the exhibition, and the profile in SITES . . . will rescue Jujol's work from obscurity, for beyond the initial delight evoked by his decorative organic expressionism lies a challenge: personal sensiblity and local tradition *can* take precedence over international dogmas to create work that is strong, full of character, and appropriate to its time and place."**

**Colin Cathcart, *Industrial Design Magazine***

**Graham Foundation**
**4 W. Burton Place, Chicago, Illinois 60610**
**May 1-31, 1985**

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**COVER**
The title block "The Bayard Building" is reproduced from the real estate brochure *The Bayard Building* in the collection of Avery Library, Columbia University.

The Frank Lloyd Wright quotations on the cover, pages 2 and 35 are from *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture*, Edited by Fredrick Gutheim. Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941.


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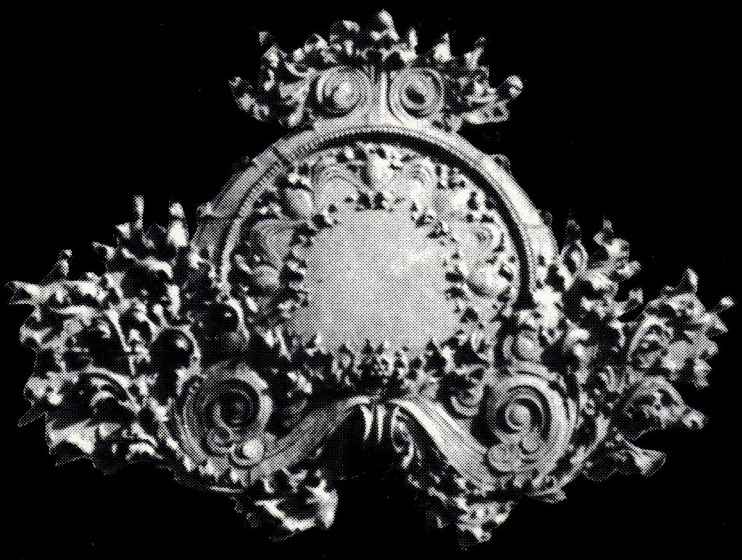


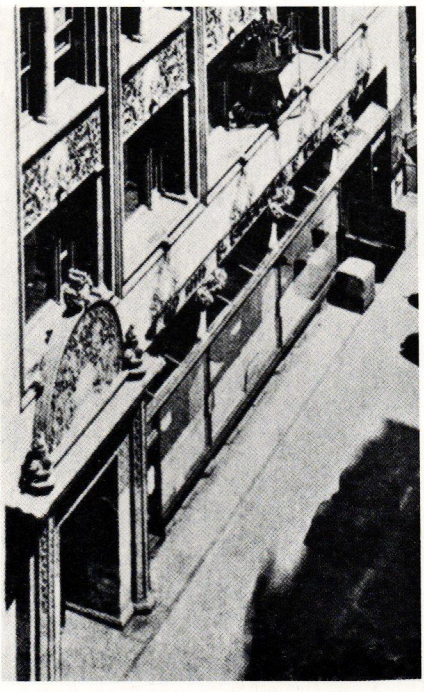
"Organic" became his God word,
as he traced form to function in foliation.
The *symbol* of growth
to him became the pattern of growth
he evolved and expressed
in ornament for plastic terra cotta.

***Frank Lloyd Wright***

# Introduction
## The Bayard Building 65 Bleecker Street New York, NY

SITES 1 presented the Bayard Building in a single pamphlet sheet, 11 X 12¾ inches, folded in thirds and punched for a three-hole binder. That premier issue included three historic photographs and a brief essay whose first paragraph stated that "dwarfed and with first-floor alterations, but certified as a landmark . . . [this] skyscraper stands unattended, its power and beauty neglected."

Since that 1979 issue, both SITES and the Bayard Building have changed. The building has been cleaned and a new lobby, in the "spirit" of the original, designed to replace a callous earlier modernization. If this current restoration has raised some eyebrows as well as serious questions about the methods used to clean the terra cotta facade and the appropriateness of the lobby design, the renovation has also delivered the building from the nearly total neglect that allowed its beautiful original ground floor to be destroyed as recently as 1964.



The building still soars. Once dizzingly high—though never a record holder, not even in its nineteenth-century context—the Bayard's grand facade still elevates a tablet to study, enjoy, and ponder. It is a facade born of transcendentalism, as American in its individualism as Emerson's essays, as ecclectic in its glorification as Whitman's poems; and it comes from the mind of one of America's notable writers in stone and on paper. Louis Sullivan expressed his literary vision in architectural forms on the Bayard's front, and he intended for users of the building and passers-by to decipher the nature of democracy along with the origin and cycle of all life in the graceful, legible script of his design. No mere towering headstone, commemorating a bygone belief, the Bayard spreads a universal, present, historic page for all to read, if they will.

Writing inspires other writing, and Sullivan's has led the art historian Narciso Menocal to compose a study of Sullivan entitled *Architecture as Nature*, which in turn encouraged SITES to invite Professor Menocal to write an essay for this focus on the Bayard Building. The resulting three-part essay explores the relationship between Sullivan's architecture and that of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of the 1820s through the 1870s. Professor Menocal first discusses the meanings Sullivan attached to the different elements composing the facade; then he draws a parallel between aspects of Sullivan's architectural theory and some of the conceptions held by French romantic architects of the 1830s and 40s; and, finally, he compares Sullivan's and Victor Hugo's beliefs about the function of architectural language.

To let Sullivan speak from more than photographs of his buildings, SITES' own recently expanded format restores to print Sullivan's 1896 essay "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered" and a section of a larger work that provides further insight into the architect's literary style: "Wherefore the Poet," originally published by *Poetry Magazine* in 1916.

We hope that this view to the Bayard Building and to Sullivan will heighten appreciation, not only of the building but also of its poet's and poetic nature. The Bayard facade and Sullivan's writing and drawings constitute one of America's most powerful examples of literary architecture.

# The Bayard Building:
## *French Paradox and American Synthesis*

**Narciso G. Menocal**

## *1. The Building*

The facade of Louis Sullivan's Bayard Building, of 1897-1898, stands like a romantic interpretation of some enormous Gothic window, complete with plate tracery and elongated colonnettes, even though it includes an anomalous *quattrocento* portal on one side (figs. 1-2). Through the work of Neil Levine, David Van Zanten, and others, we have lately come to understand that such mixing of Gothic and Renaissance styles was acceptable to most French romantic rationalist architects, and even desirable to some.[1] Sullivan's architectural education roughly paralleled the last thrust of the romantic rationalist movement, which had seen its heyday during the July Monarchy and the ensuing Second Empire. This was also roughly the time when most of the American and French architects who later influenced his professional development were acquiring, directly or indirectly, an architectural education steeped in French romantic rationalism. When Sullivan arrived at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts shortly after the inauguration of the Third Republic, many of the earlier ideas were still in force. Given such circumstances, it may prove useful to make a comparison of some of the similarities and differences between Sullivan's thought and that of French romantic rationalists, and to see to what extent such a study explains the design of the facade of the Bayard Building, especially its utilization of features derived from the Gothic and the classical.

The Gothic embodied for Sullivan the feeling of ascension he desired for his office buildings. He endorsed the romantic notion that the interior of of a Gothic cathedral was like a grove with branches interlacing to create a vault-like canopy high above the observer. Such association of pier and tree also conjured up images of life and death. According to Sullivan, "the rhythm of growth, of aspiration" inherent in a tree represented life, while "that which would crush to the earth," as for instance, the weight of branches, stood for death. The movement of growth implied a subjective tension in the pier, and he associated objective compression bearing down on the foundations with death.[2] In this manner he brought together a number of symbols. The pier represented life as much as death at the same time that it portrayed the subjective and the objective. Also, it was phytomorphic in its arboreal conception as well as anthropomorphic, because its elasticity went beyond the image of growth to represent movement as well. The polarities Sullivan ascribed to the pier established a rhythm where death supported life and evolution issued out of dissolution. In that eternal becoming lay the ultimate secret of the universe, "the strangely complex thought of rhythm—for all is rhythm,"[3] a statement that was part of Sullivan's translation of Herbert Spencer's mechanistic conception of the universe into a transcendentalist language.[4]

The piers of the Bayard Building respond superbly to the need for establishing a rhythm bringing together life and death, tension and compression, the subjective and the objective. They do this by creating a closed circuit with the moldings that decorate them. Beginning at any point on a pier, one can follow the design down, then, with no interruption, across the second-floor sill, up the next pier, and finally, closing the cycle, across the top through the arch beneath the attic. As this circuit may be established clockwise or counterclockwise, neither the subjective expression of upward movement nor the objective statement of physical pressure is compromised. The piers give the impression of carrying the weight down to the floor, while they also seem capable of a leaping gesture, like limbs in a human frame. This anthropomorphic scheme is further reinforced visually by the opposing character of the design of the first floor. The lintel there works as a summer beam in its etymological sense of *sagma,* or pack saddle, visually carrying the weight of the superstructure, while the squat columns below it translate into architecture the muscular strain of an Atlas-like feat. To establish an even greater contrast between the supportive character of the base and the springing ascension of the piers, Sullivan decreased the height of the floors as the building rises. This established an optical correction that increases the vertical perspective. As one looks up at the building it appears to grow taller and lighter than it really is.[5]

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Philip S. Kennedy-Grant, AIA

38 Highview Ave.
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1. Bayard Building, New York, Louis Sullivan, 1897-98

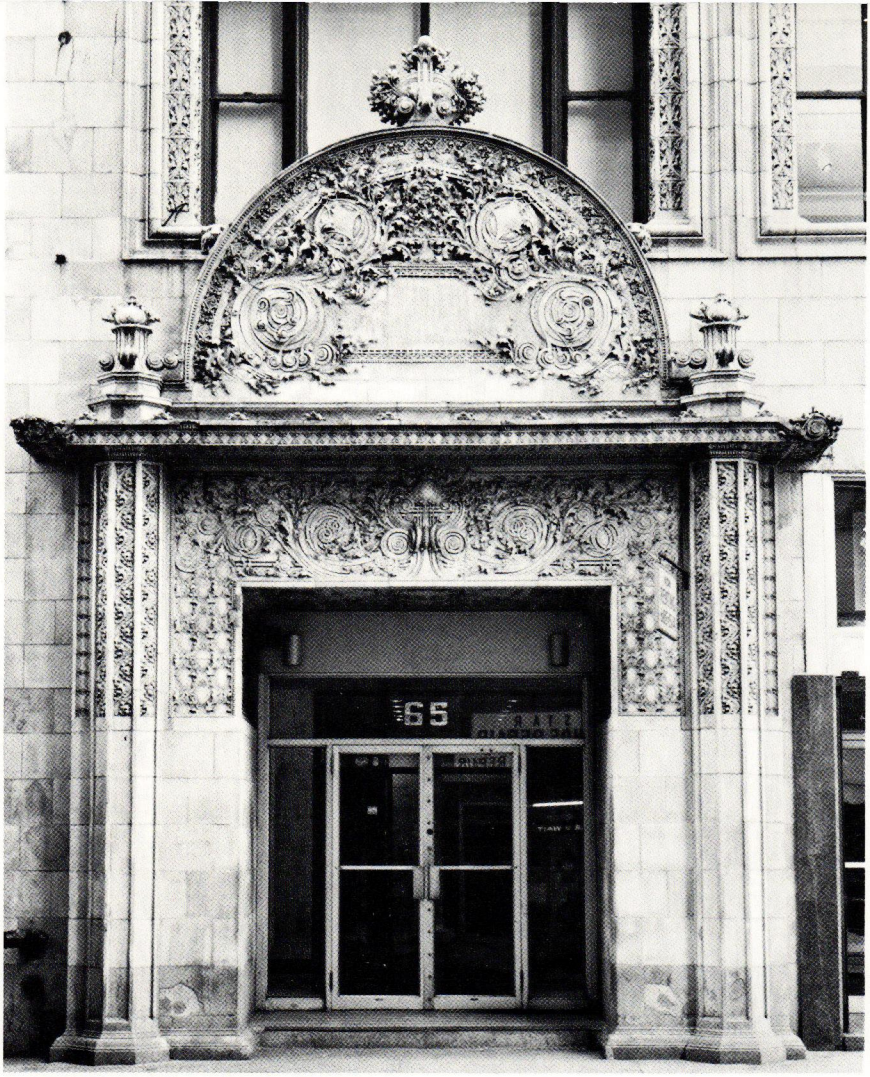



Photo: D. Dollens

**2. Entrance detail, Bayard Building**

Sullivan solved a major design problem on the facade of the Bayard by differentiating piers from mullions, while at the same time making both fully express the building's verticality. The problem had begun for him in 1890 with the design of the Wainright Building in St. Louis, where to secure a tight rhythm of verticals he chose not to differentiate between piers and mullions, and thus created an ambiguous expression of the mechanical realities of both. Shortly thereafter, in the Union Trust and Savings Bank Building Project (St. Louis, 1893) he differentiated the two architectural elements from each other, but presumably found the result unsatisfactory. Short mullions going from sill to lintel on each floor established a staccato vertical rhythm, not a flowing one. Evidently dissatisfied with that solution, he returned, in the Guaranty Building (Buffalo, 1894), to the less structurally expressive but more esthetically satisfying design of the Wainwright, giving piers and mullions an equal appearance (figs. 3-4). Finally, in the Bayard, Sullivan found a solution for achieving a clear expression of the mechanical functions of the mullions while at the same time making them contribute importantly to the building's overall effect of loftiness. The mullions are different from the piers in that their section is smaller and round, and each has a capital and base. Their appearance allows them to express exclusively a mechanical function of compression and permits them at no time to perform the more important and complex function of recording the subjective "Rhythm of Life," which was reserved exclusively for the piers. The weight of the plate tracery clearly bears on the capitals of each mullion and is transferred down the shaft to the base. On the other hand, the mullions establish a secondary and alternative rhythm of verticals that reinforces significantly the major rhythm of the piers. As a result, the facade of the Bayard could well serve as the interior elevation of the transept in an immense Gothic-like cathedral designed to delight and awe a romantic public.

But while the general lines of the Bayard's facade are in a close accord with Gothic arcihtecture, its ornamentation shows affinity with classical design. Among the ornamental features on the building, six winged figures floating beneath the cornice at the attic level are important components of the composition, to the point that they have become the salient characteristic

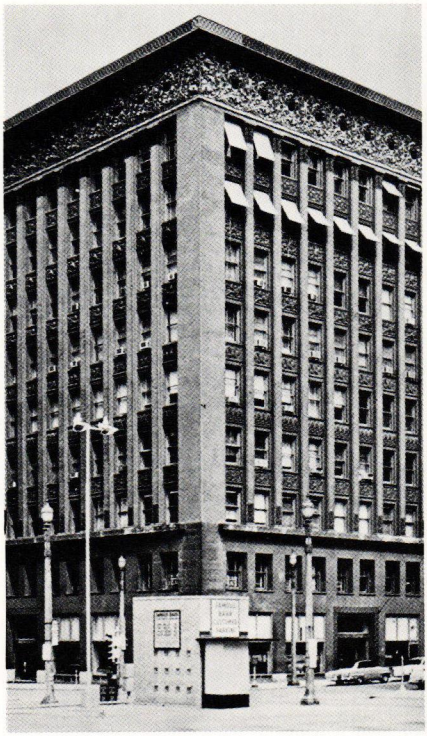
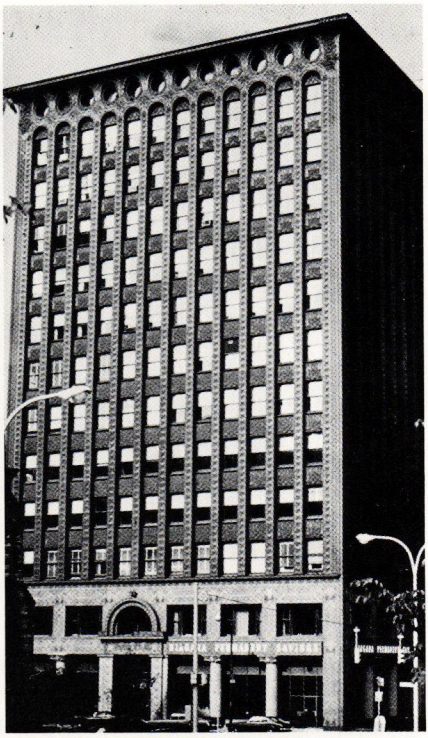


Photo: N. Menocal

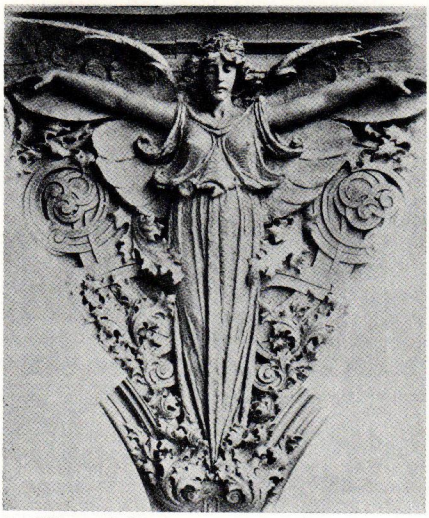
**3. Wainwright Building, St. Louis, Adler and Sullivan, 1890**



**4. Guaranty Building, Buffalo, Adler and Sullivan, 1894-95**

feature of the building. Yet a false legend surrounds them. It has been claimed that "The sextet of angels were added, over Sullivan's objections, but still by his hand, at the request of his client, Silas Alden Condict."[6] Apparently this information was first issued by Alden S. Condict, Silas' son, who related it to Meyer Berger, who in turn published it in his "About New York" column in the *New York Times* of May 15, 1957. The column stated that according to Condict, he had commissioned the building from Sullivan, and, at the same time, requested the architect to design "six angels with outspread pinions" because he wanted "every tenant and every visitor to the Condict Building to realize that the true spirit of fair dealing among men can and should prevail during the six business days of the week, as well as on the Sabbath." This charming story is hard to believe as the building was not commissioned by Condict, but by the United Loan and Investment Company, and the person dealing with Sullivan was its president, Robert Avery. The design, according to documents in the files of the City of New York, was ready by September 21, 1897. One year and nine months later, the mortgage on the building was recalled by the Bank for Savings in New York. It was from that institution, well after the design had been set, that Silas Condict and his wife Emmeline acquired half an interest. From a stylistic point of view, one remembers that winged figures were very much within Sullivan's repertory of forms. Before designing the Bayard Building he had placed similar figures on the facade of a preliminary design for the Victoria Hotel in Chicago Heights, on the Transportation Building for the Columbian Exposition, and on the project for the Trust and Savings Bank Building in St. Louis.

The figures perform a significant iconographic function. Although classical in appearance, they find their origin in medieval angels who support cornices and trusses on their wings to express an association between the roof of a church and the vault of Heaven. The Bayard Building figures translated that religious image into a transcendental one related to the subjective sense of upward tension, to the "Rhythm of Life" that Sullivan wished to represent in his piers (fig. 5). The figures seem to have been inspired by the one Félix Duban, the architect of the buildings of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and one of the founders of the romantic rationalist movement, used in the decoration of the Salle des Sept Cheminées in the Louvre in 1849-1851 (fig. 6). The room, which comprises the area of Louis XIV's former apartment in the Pavillon du Roi, today houses seventeenth-century Italian paintings. Duban, however, was charged to design it for displaying major works of the nineteenth-century French School, David's *Sacre de Napoléon* among them.[7] Following Percier's classical style—possibly to establish a reference to the First Empire that would meet with Louis Napoleon's



**5. Winged figure, Bayard Building**

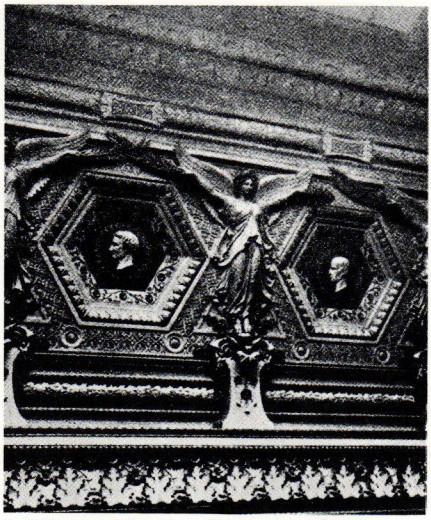


Photo: N. Menocal

**6. Winged figure, Salle des Sept Cheminées, Louvre; Félix Duban, architect; Francisque-Joseph Duret, Sculptor; 1849-51**

approval—Duban designed a frieze with medallions in hexagonal frames portraying French artists active during the First Empire or shortly thereafter, such as David, Girodet, Prud'hon, Percier, Géricault, and Granet, who would, as it were, preside over their works shown in the room. Between the medallions, winged allegories of fame *(renommée)* extend palm fronds above the artists' heads. These figures, as well as the medallions, were executed by the sculptor Francisque-Joseph Duret (1804-1865), who was also the author of the two bronze figures flanking the entrance to Napoleon's tomb in Les Invalides and of the figure of St. Michael in the fountain at the foot of the Boulevard Saint-Michel.

The similarities between the Louvre figures and those on the facade of the Bayard are indeed close. The position of the bodies and the movement of the outstretched wings and arms are very much alike; the nervous, wavy drapery of Duret's figures finds an echo in the movement of the material around the breasts and waists of Sullivan's figures; and even the movement of the wrists of the one is very similar to that of the other. There are differences however. Duret's wing feathers are long, thin, and hard, creating a serrated outline, while Sullivan's are round and broad, forming a soft profile. Since Duret's figures were designed to be seen at closer range than Sullivan's, each is different from the others in facial features and in the movement of the drapery. Sullivan's figures are all alike, cast from the same mold executed by the Perth-Amboy Company, in New Jersey. A more important difference is that the feet of Duret's figures are visible and barely touch the consoles under them. The figures in the Louvre give the impression of having descended from Heaven and of hovering in space while they honor the painters portrayed in the medallions. The feet of Sullivan's figures, by contrast, are concealed behind the drapery and the foliage at the top of the piers. These figures are not alighting; on the contrary, they are slowly emerging from the piers of which they represent the ascensional spirit.

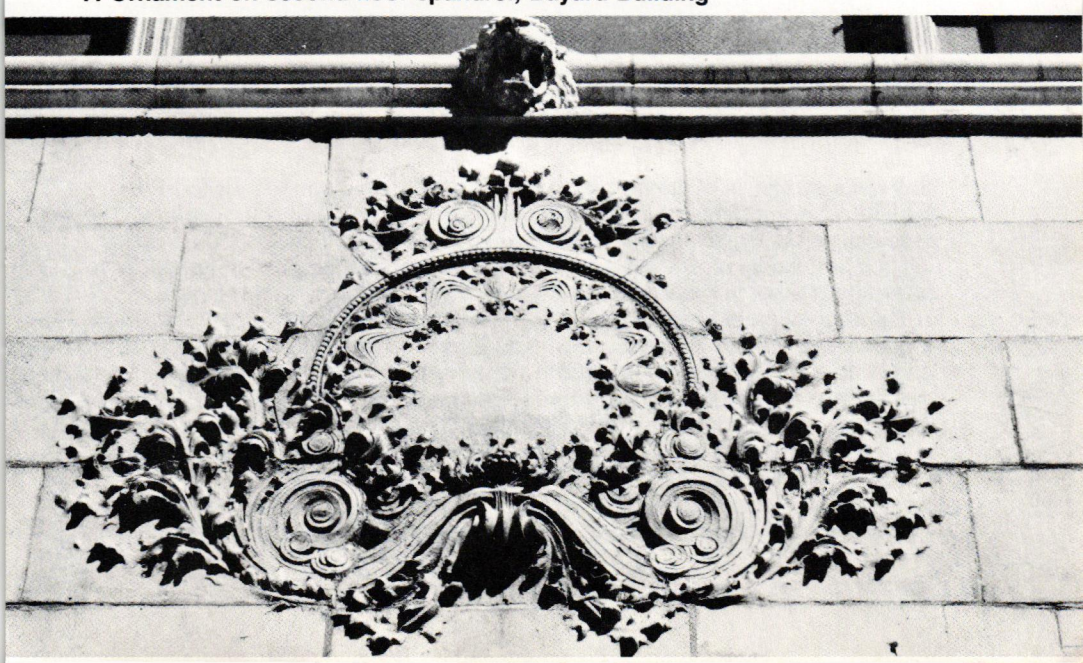
Sullivan was consistent in his use of one motif throughout most of the vegetal ornamentation of the Bayard, and, like the winged figures, it finds its source in classical design. The motif consists of a central element, sometimes an antefix, sometimes a knot in a limb, and sometimes a lion's head, out of which issues, left and right, a long sinuous branch that shoots out foliage spiraling inwards. Variations of this motif produced the hexagonal cartouches on the second floor, the lower portions of the decorations of the spandrels of the third to the eleventh floor, the decorations of the spandrels on the top floor, and also the ornament on the lunette above the main door, although in this last case the design was modified to suit the contour of the semicircle. The movement of the vegetation atop the piers, as well as that of the capitals of the mullions and the first-floor columns, follows that pattern too, seeking in these cases a very remote parentage in Ionic capitals (figs. 7-10). The ornamentation of the Bayard further asserted a shift from Gothic-inspired to classically-derived forms that had begun in the Guaranty Building in Buffalo. More to the point, the entrance of the Bayard Building, and that of the Guaranty, are definitely *quattrocento* in character, a fact that Henry R. Hitchcock noted a quarter of a century ago (fig. 2).[8]

Color, or the lack of it, is also important in the Bayard Building. This aspect of the design is intimately linked to Sullivan's increasing interest in using forms with classical undertones. In a description Sullivan declared, immediately after stating that the building "rises," that it is "cream-white, maidenlike and slender."[9] Along with the Gage and the Carson-Pirie-Scott Buildings, the Bayard establishes a chromatic contrast with the earlier Wainwright and Guaranty buildings, which are light terracotta brown.

It is possible that the shift from brown to cream-white is related to a more pronounced emphasis on the building as an ornament to the city. Sullivan believed that ornamentation, which he equated with femininity, was an important element in nature and art because it stood for gorgeousness.[10] Establishing an anthropomorphic parallel between architecture and painting, he may have remembered that the female body has often been represented with a lighter, creamier complexion than the male, practically since the dawn of Western art. Taking that fact as a point of departure, one could establish a three-part progression in the development of Sullivan's skyscrapers based on the relationship of ornamentation and color. In the Wainwright, structure and color dominated visually over the ornamentation; that skyscraper is the closest to the earlier Auditorium style, which Sullivan characterized as of "male buildings comely in the nude." In the Guaranty, of 1894, Sullivan repeated the brown—and hence male—terracotta color of the Wainwright, but now he increased the feminine or gorgeous element by covering every inch of the building with ornamentation, which he considered more important than the masculine or structural aspect. The Guaranty, therefore, stands as an intermediate stage, with masculine and feminine elements having equal importance. Finally, in the Bayard, with its cream-white complexion, he allowed the feminine to dominate through color as much as through ornamentation. In that sense, Sullivan considered the Bayard as a "cream-white . . . and slender" gynecomorphic building.

The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago may have had an influence on Sullivan's shift to cream-white buildings bearing a classically oriented ornamentation. The exhibition had made Chicagoans hungry for urban harmony and cohesion. Sullivan's heightened interest in gorgeousness, lightness, and femininity may have been his answer, his offering of new possibilities, to a society bent on "urbanizing" itself through an academic language that understood architectural elegance in terms of a revival of French seventeenth and eighteenth-century forms. Sullivan's deep hatred for such architecture is a matter of record. Nevertheless, he advanced with the times, recognizing along with academic architects that buidings were no longer to be designed as entities standing in a self-imposed isolation that disregarded their surroundings. Now buildings had to respond to the esthetic needs of the city; but, in Sullivan's mind, this was to be done without loss of individuality in the design. Hence the Bayard, Gage, and Carson-Pirie-Scott buildings are to be read not only as individual specimens of architecture, but also as parts of a statement of a new and intensely personal urban architectural style.

**7. Ornament on second-floor spandrel, Bayard Building**



**8. Ornament on third-floor spandrel, Bayard Building**

## 2. The Ecole des Beaux-Arts

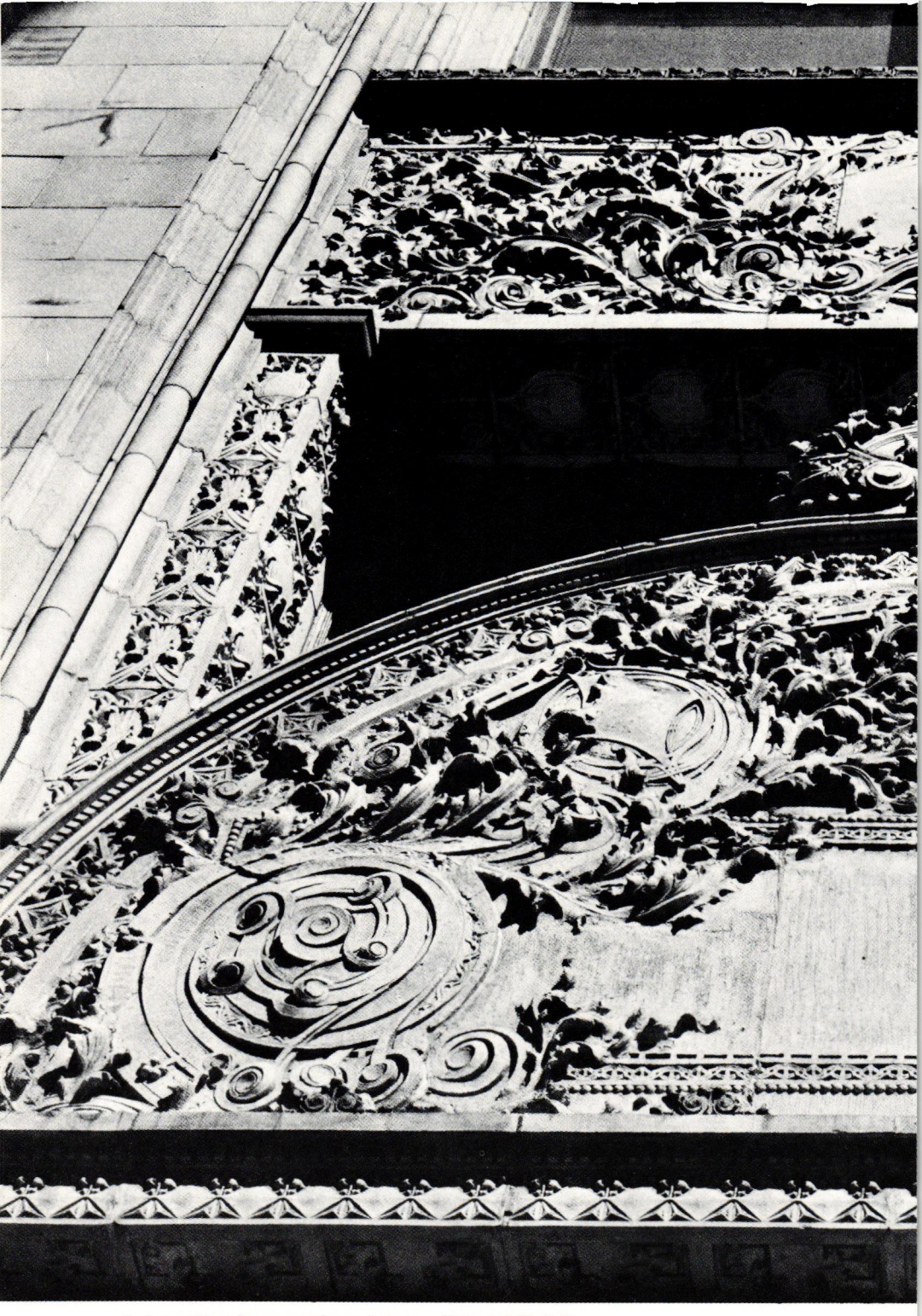
Sullivan's synthesis of Gothic and Renaissance themes on the facade of the Bayard pose questions of intellectual values as well as architectural theory. The first can be dismissed readily. Sullivan would hardly have cared to proclaim an alleged superiority of the *trecento* or the *quattrocento* over his own period, or to have any interest in passing on to the future such an opinion of the past.

The second point of view, that of architectural theory, merits closer inspection. It is true that French romantic rationalists endorsed a mixing of Renaissance and Gothic forms earlier than most in the nineteenth century, but it is also true that by the late 1860s such a mixture was commonplace not only in France, but in England and Germany as well. By the 1870s the practice became widespread in America. Richardson's Brattle Square Church, with its Romanesque masses, Italian campanile, and Bartholdi's *Frieze of the Sacraments*—clearly of Renaissance derivation—had caught the eye of the youthful Sullivan in Boston. Furness' Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, with its Gothic

Photo: D. Dollens

windows, its gigantic triglyphs and metopes, and its French-inspired roof supported on a medieval cornice, was another example that Sullivan knew well from his days as a draftsman in Furness' office (figs. 11-12). Examples could be multiplied ad infinitum. What is not known, and probably will never be known, is whether Sullivan was conscious of the French origins of this point in architectural theory, and whether he realized that its intellectual meanings in France were quite removed from those that Richardson and Furness had each given it. In all probability if Sullivan knew, he did not care. He more than likely believed that this was an appropriate way of furnishing a building with a certain appearance, and hence accepted as a matter of course that the French would also make use of a "muscular" mixing of classical and Gothic elements.

Sullivan was characteristically uninterested in architectural theory per se, and would accept unquestioningly any combination of forms that he might find appropriate for giving shape to a vision rising in his consciousness. All of his skyscraper facades are based on Gothic architecture in order to insure an expression of loftiness, and in most of them, going from a lesser to a greater



**9. Lunette above main entrance, Bayard Building**

degree, he made use of ornamentation derived from classical precedents. But there is evidence that he came progressively to mixing Gothic and classical forms, and that the process was one of trial and error to achieve his own aims and not one of accepting preestablished forms that conveyed an a priori meaning. In his first skyscraper, the Wainwright, of 1890, classical ornamentation was practically limited to the frieze around the attic. By 1894, on the Guaranty Building, the amount of ornamentation derived from classical sources was much larger. In 1897, on the facade of the Bayard, practically all of the ornamentation was of classical origin. But Sullivan's mixing of Gothic and classical elements was by itself no dogmatic statement. In the entrance pavilion of the Carson-Pirie-Scott Building, his last skyscraper, he returned to the Islamic sources of the tombs and of the Transportation Building (figs. 13-14). The classical, as well as the Islamic, was to him nothing more than a means for evoking the gorgeousness of nature. That was the only intellectual purpose of his work. His conception of form was mostly intuitive; his adaptation of it was

Photo: D. Dollens

empirical; and his vision was consistently romantic.

Such an eminently American way of thinking establishes a contrast with his architectural training, because his professional education had been shaped both directly and indirectly by French romantic rationalism. When he arrived in Paris during the early years of the Third Republic, romantic rationalism was already almost half a century old. Still, the movement was widely endorsed by many prestigious atéliers associated with the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, among them that of Sullivan's patron, Emile Vaudremer. But with the passage of time, the rationalist aspect of architectural design had become more important than the romantic. Rationalism meant to Vaudremer a clear and logical compartmentalization of functions in plan that translated as crisp volumes in space. These volumes, in turn, were often, but not exclusively, rendered in smooth ashlar, the untextured plain walls helping to increase the abstract quality of the design. Stylistically, Vaudremer showed a preference for highly personalized mixtures of Romanesque, Early Christian, and Byzantine elements

**10. Ornament on top floor, Bayard Building** Photo: D. Dollens

for churches; a subdued classicism for public buildings not devoid at times of a Gothic structural quality; and a highly simplified Tuscan manner for villas. His stylistic choices allowed him to express the planarity of the wall as well as its supportive function. At the same time that he made evident the mechanical reality of the wall, he strove to establish a normative syntax of architectural types based on arbitrary stylistic choices. His stylistic preferences, however, were always underpinned by a consistency of expression related to function, as well as to mass and construction. Always logical, restrained, well-structured, and above all clearly readable, Vaudremer's work, although dry at times, conveys in its better moments a feeling of controlled strength.[11]

But that was not exactly the path Sullivan chose to follow. In Paris he seems to have paid more attention to acquiring an understanding of French culture than to studying architecture through imitation of his teacher's style and other prescribed academic methods. In his *Autobiography of an Idea* he devoted little more than one page to describing life in Vaudremer's atélier; he mistakenly credited the Church of the Sacré-Coeur to his patron rather than to Paul Abadie; and he wrote not one word about the design projects on which he may have worked.[12] In fact, one of his sentences suggests that he considered himself more as an observer of atélier life than an actual student of architecture.[13] This apparent anomaly in the behavior of a young man pursuing an architectural vocation is consistent with the process of self-education that Sullivan undertook between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four. Architecture seems to have been of less interest to him during those years than furthering his intellectual development. After his return from Paris he even toyed with the idea of abandoning architecture in favor of civil engineering and devoting his life to designing bridges.[14]

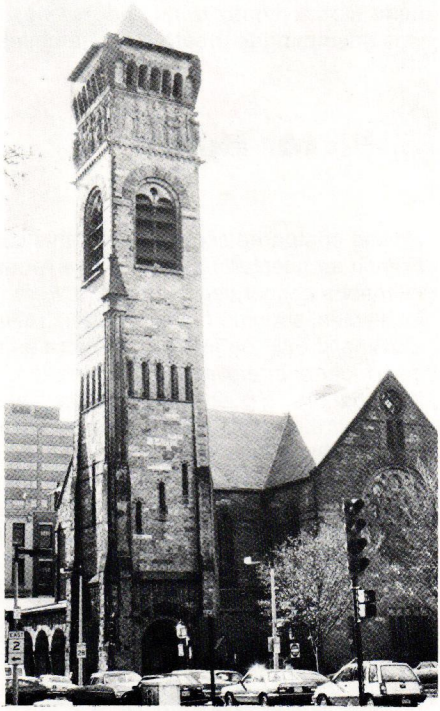
*The Autobiography of an Idea* furnishes clues explaining such behavior. Sullivan wrote of himself:

> In childhood his idols had been the big strong men who *did* things. Later on he had begun to feel the great power of men who could *think* things; later the expansive power of men who could *imagine* things; and at last he began to recognize as dominant the will of the Creative Dreamer; he who possessed the power of vision to harness Imagination, to harness the intellect, to make science do his will, to make emotions serve him—for without emotion, nothing.[15]

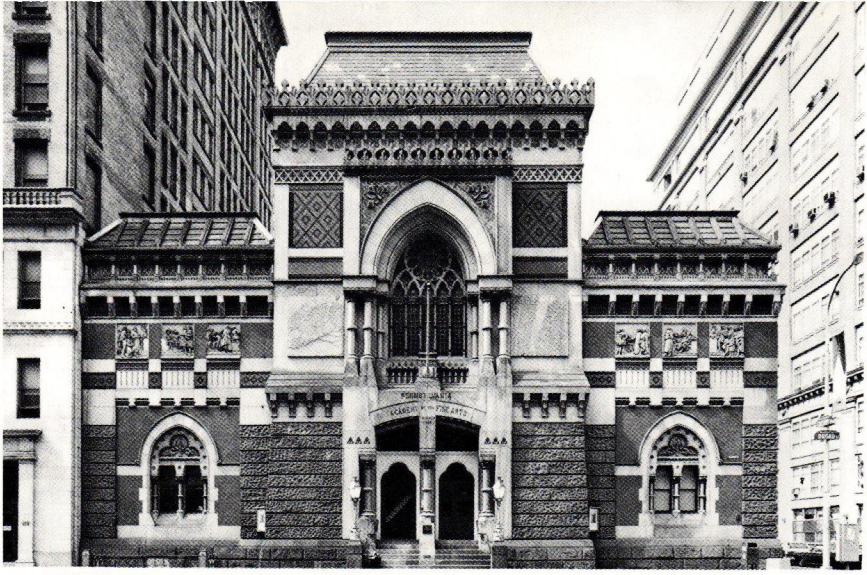
Perhaps this passage describes better than others the development of Sullivan's *Idea;* it surely explains why his father, American bridge builders, and finally Michelangelo, held such fascination for him at given stages in his life: they were men who, in ascending order, could do, think, and imagine things.[16]

Architecture in the late 1870s, as Sullivan knew it, was not an ample enough field to allow him to expand existentially while pursuing his Idea. Only in a search for an understanding of the universal would his ill-defined but nevertheless powerful yearnings find relief and fulfillment.

When Sullivan's vision matured it was much too expansive to be fettered by Vaudremer's narrower architectural aims and considerations. Vaudremer would never have accepted the idea of making architectural elements play a subjective role, and much less did he think of architecture as a proper medium for expressing a transcendentalist program. *Ars in vero* (art in truth) was his motto,[17] and this he expressed in mechanistic terms of support and in volumetric compositions that make the observer aware of the plan of a building before entering it. Sullivan was not much interested in expressing the plans of buildings. All his tall structures are either U- or E-shaped in plan, yet he makes us read them as rectangular parallelepipeds. Neither was he interested in a narrow expression of mechanical functions. He considered that the serving of physical functions, structural requirements, and the needs of clients and society were of course to be taken into account and met through design, but to him architecture was much more. Aims like Vaudremer's were but the product of a judicious selection that he took for granted every architect would make as a matter of course. Only beyond that point would architectural design enter into the picture to apply the law that "form ever follows function." To Sullivan the function of architecture was different and distinct from that of planning and construction. Architecture, properly speaking, served exclusively to portray the transcendental essence of a building as eloquently and as characteristically as life reveals itself in "the sweeping eagle in his flight, or the open apple blossom, the toiling work-horse, the blithe swan [or] the branching oak."[18] In a corresponding manner, Emerson, in his essay "On Art," had advanced the idea that the essence of each being existing in nature was best symbolized by the external appearance of that being. Sullivan identified the true function of architecture and the expression of that peculiar relationship between appearance and character, and called it *style*. Developing the idea further, he wrote about the style of a pine tree, the style of running water, the style of a cow grazing in a meadow as examples architects should study when seeking the style of the building they were designing.[19] From that point on, Sullivan's life became a search for style. Seeking analogies between the raison d'être of external appearance in natural entities and in architecture, he concluded that the only means by which a building's essential vitality could be expressed were facade composition and ornamentation, and that these were the only constituents of the art of architecture. Planning and construction, depending as they do on the physical needs of society and on technological progress, were not at all related to nature, but only to the material development of civilization. Only with ornamentation could the gorgeousness of nature be echoed in architecture. In a magnificent bird, for instance, it is its dazzling plumage, not the underlying anatomical structure, that excites the admiration of the observer. It was this sensuous relationship between art and observer that Sullivan considered to be of paramount importance. Hence, to achieve his aims, he had no qualms about concealing structure under ornamentation or, as in the case of the Wainwright and Guaranty buildings, making mullions look like structural elements. Jacques Hermant, the architect of the City of Paris who came to Chicago as designer of the French Pavilion for the 1893 Columbian Exposition, and who had been a fellow student of Sullivan's at Vaudremer's, exclaimed when shown Sullivan's work: "Our master, my dear Sullivan, would roll his eyes wildly if he



**11. Brattle Square Church, Boston, Henry Hobson Richardson, 1870-72**



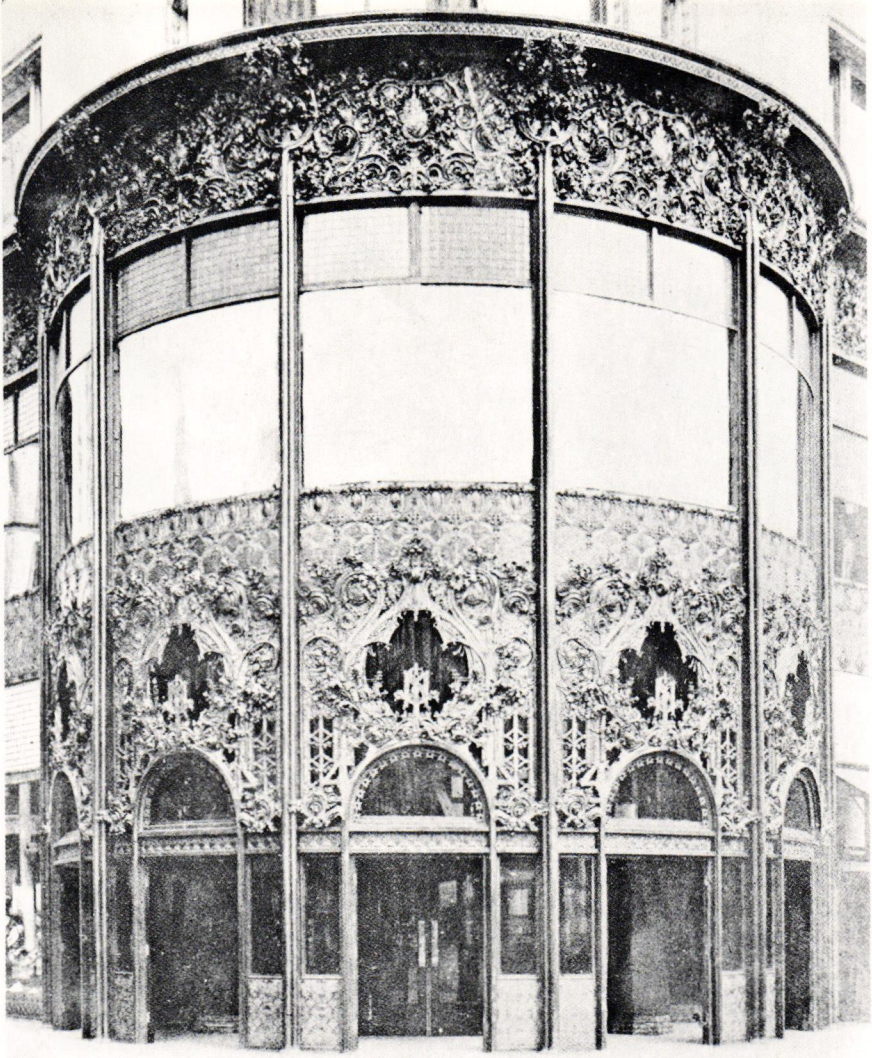
Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

**12. Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Frank Furness, 1872-76**

could see you committing such heresies and making up such lies!"[20] Hermant admitted that Sullivan's buildings were "the simplest and most beautiful" in Chicago,[21] yet to his French eyes that beauty was a product of a paradox he could not condone. On the other hand, there is an undeniable French rational logic in Sullivan's conception of how the parts fit the whole in composition, and time and again he proclaimed his endorsement of the Beaux-Arts system of design, of fixing the *parti* by an *esquisse* and subsequently developing the *rendu*. His style, however, the way in which he made a building speak, is eminently American. At no point did he endorse a French esthetic. In the *Autobiography of an Idea* he maintained that the Ecole des Beaux-Arts concerned itself chiefly with method "yielding results of extraordinary brilliancy, but which, after all, was not the reality he sought. . . . He felt that beneath the law of the School lay a law which it ignored unsuspectingly, or with fixed intention—the law he had seen set forth in the stillness of the Sistine Chapel, which he saw everywhere in the open of life."[22] Sullivan, after all, was working in the Midwest, solving problems of American architecture in a Midwestern manner, and thinking in ways that were popular in the Midwest of the 1880s, but that had been discarded on the Eastern seaboard almost a generation earlier.[23] The French academic system was for him nothing more than a means to an end. He was not trying to work within a tradition; he was attempting to create a new architecture that would supplant that tradition.

## 3. *Victor Hugo*

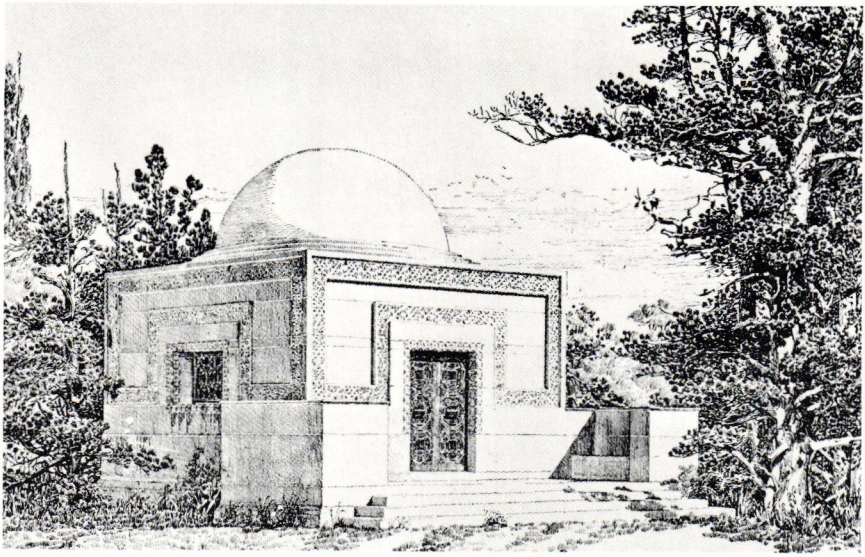
Having compared some of Sullivan's ideas with aspects of nineteenth-century French architectural theory, it now remains to see whether or not his esthetic intentions concerning the Bayard were in any way related to important intellectual sources of the romantic rationalist movement. His insistence that the building should be interpreted more as a piece of literature than as a work of architecture is relevant to the question. To Sullivan the Bayard was, specifically, "a song" or "a poem," not a mere simile.[24] Such an idea parallels some of the views on the relationship of architecture and literature discussed by Victor Hugo in *Notre-Dame de Paris*, a novel that was very well received in French romantic architectural circles of the 1830s. According to Victor Hugo, since the advent of the printing press, literature had usurped the premier role architecture had played throughout the Middle Ages as the most important means for recording knowledge. "Not only every religious symbol," wrote Hugo, "but even each human thought, has it page in this vast book [of Medieval architecture]."[25] But eventually "architecture was dethroned. To the stone letters of Orpheus succeeded the leaden letters of Gutenberg."[26] His mention of Orpheus as architect is part of a metaphor he used in a number of passages where he considered that in architecture "Daedalus is the basement; Orpheus is the wall; Hermes is the building itself—the whole"[27] Further along in the book he explained the meaning of his words. Daedalus stands for intelligence in planning, as he had constructed the labyrinth where the Minotaur was kept at Knossos. Orpheus, on the other hand, symbolizes poetry, since he had



**13. Entrance pavilion, Carson-Pirie-Scott Building, Chicago, Louis Sullivan, 1902**

enchanted everyone with the lyre Apollo had given him and the Muses taught him to play. Hugo offered no explicit meaning for Hermes in the metaphor, but several passages in *Notre-Dame* make it safe to assume that Hermes signifies universal knowledge in an allusion to Hermes Trismegistus, founder of alchemy and other occult sciences.[28] According to Hugo, before the printing press, architecture had been the repository of hidden and overt symbols, and each subsequent generation had felt compelled to seek for adumbrations of the mysteries lurking behind the beauty of buildings.[29] In the Middle Ages, Victor Hugo insisted, "whoever was born a poet, became an architect."[30] But from the moment the printing press gained power to transmit knowledge to increasingly wider circles of readers, it was no longer convenient, in fact it became impossible, to couch universal knowledge in terms of mystery and symbols. What was gained in clarity was lost in poetry, and architecture became a dry exercise of erudition on the classical orders. "Architecture," wrote Hugo, "now crawled like a pitiful beggar of the studios, from copy to copy of the Greek, Roman, and barbaric works of professors according to Vitruvius and Vignola."[31] Under the circumstances, there was only one thing that architecture could do. It could make itself useful as a witness to the passage of time; monuments would henceforth serve to tell about the civilizations that had produced them. The book of architecture, no longer serving to record universal mysteries, would become a chronicle.[32] The beauty of a city was for Victor Hugo more a product of a heterogeneous accumulation established by the passage of centuries than a result of straight avenues and important monuments.[33] Such views of Hugo's were shared fervidly by the young men who launched the romantic rationalist movement in the late 1820s and 1830s.

As recent studies point out, the main point of contention in the quarrel between romantic rationalists and academic classicists centered around the question of the origins and uses of the elements of architecture.[34] To the academicians whom the younger generation wanted to supplant, the elements of classical architecture were an extension of natural forms. The older



**14. Wainwright Tomb, St. Louis, Adler and Sullivan, 1892**

generation also believed that through the centuries those elements had been brought to a point of refinement that rendered them fixed, unchangeable, and perfect. The romantics challenged such an idea of a progressive perfecting of types. To them, local cultural, geographical, geological, and economic conditions had always altered the use, shape, and proportions of all elements of architecture. What was of interest, the romantics insisted, was the specific and the accidental; why and how departures from earlier norms had developed. Out of such studies they hoped to gain mainly three things: a knowledge of the true history of their profession, an understanding of the dynamics of its evolution, and an assertion of the importance of the specific in each project. Through the use of indigenous materials and forms they would express the unique quality of a time, of a place, and of a given architectural problem. In other instances they would attempt to portray the architectural genius of a culture or "race."[35] A logical corollary of such a proposition negated the existence of a preordained universal language of architecture expressing exclusively the ideal.

But romantic rationalists did not necessarily turn their back on the classical elements of architecture. As David Van Zanten has pointed out, in 1836 Léonce Reynaud, echoing the opinions of the group, considered desirable a synthesis of classical and medieval architecture.[36] Such a mixture would bring classical grace and harmony to Gothic clarity in the expression of plan, function, construction, and materials. For Reynaud, the Cathedral of Florence represented one such perfect moment in architecture. Van Zanten has further noted that in the mural Paul Delaroche painted in the Salle des Prix of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts (which had been designed by Félix Duban), and which depicts famous architects, painters, and sculptors in history, only one architect holds the floor, discourses on, and presumably explains, the principles of architecture for the enlightenment of the rest. This pivotal figure is Arnolfo di Cambio, the late-thirteenth-century architect of the Cathedral of Florence, who teaches the art of architecture to such of his later colleagues as Brunelleschi, Bramante, Palladio, and Mansart, who are also in the picture (fig. 15).[37] The message that Duban broadcasts through Delaroche is quite clearly the same one that Reynaud had stated earlier, one that, moreover, came to reinforce Victor Hugo's opinion that architecture began to decline in the fifteenth century, during the Renaissance, that "setting sun everyone mistook for the light of dawn."[38] It is to be noted that Alberti, the codifier of classical principles of architecture, does not appear in Delaroche's mural, and that Duban, during his tenure as architect of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1832-70, turned the buildings of that very institution, where the future architects of France were trained, into a model of Hugo's idea of the city.[39]

In spite of his romantic rationalist training, Sullivan, like most nineteenth-century American romantic architects, chose to ignore Victor Hugo's ideas because they had little to offer the New World. Victor Hugo's model of society demanded several centuries of development to determine a national cultural tradition because his romanticism was based more on history than on nature. To a lesser extent it also required a tacit or an overt acceptance of a political or a religious machinery channeling the taste of the bourgeoisie, as well

**15. Mural in the Salle des Prix, Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris, Paul Delaroche, 1837; detail**

as furnishing it with models from which to borrow ideas. In ninteenth-century France the government provided most of the buildings serving as models of style for the rest of the people, and these models, in one way or another, were based on past examples of French architecture. Thus a national tradition was both continued and assured.[40] Such circumstances were not prevalent in the New World. From a European point of view, the United States lacked a history and therefore a tradition, an opinion shared by many nineteenth-century Americans. In America, moreover, it was private enterprise and not the state that had served as the most significant provider of architectural commissions throughout the nation. This factor served to reinforce in no small measure the strong flavor of pragmatism and individuality that pervaded American architecture. In Chicago especially, from the Great Fire of 1871 to the Columbian Exposition of 1893, and even thereafter, tall office buildings comprised practically the only important type of commission architects received.

Sullivan, a product of that Midwestern culture, fully endorsed the American notion of progress, and believed that the present was better than the past, but less good than the future. His optimism was based on an unwavering faith in the entrepreneurial system. By extending railway lines, building bridges, putting up skyscrapers, and fostering in general the advancement of civilization, financiers clearly played an important part in nature's grand scheme of moving humanity toward the utopia. The idea of such noble strength evoked in Sullivan a heroic mental picture of titans: of "a company of naked mighty men, with power to do splendid things with their bodies."[41] Industrialists were performing beneficient acts of power; beauty, to Sullivan, was the forceful assertion of a heroic ego. And herein may be found an explanation for a fundamental difference between Sullivan's and Hugo's romantic conceptions of the city. For Victor Hugo the city was similar to a Gothic cathedral, where each capital, each altar, each statue, each portal, each feature in fact, although clearly distinct from the rest, is nevertheless subordinated to the whole, as are the parts of a paradigm. To Sullivan, on the other hand, each building in a city had the moral and esthetic duty to proclaim as clearly as possible its idiosyncratic character. To him the individual features of each specimen were far more important than a nationalistic expression of race, and the parts were more important than the whole because architecture is an individual art. To Hugo the opposite held true, because in his opinion architecture was a collective art.

There are profound discrepancies as well in the way each conceived a syntax of architecture. To construct a model to help one to understand the French position, one could consider nature as an absolute that sets in motion something akin to

Heraclitus' river. Cities, being in this case like lines stretched across the stream, become impregnated by the many ripples flowing by and retain in the process some of the flavor of each subsequent swelling of the flow.[42] In cities, for Victor Hugo, "time is the architect, the nation is the mason."[43] For him and his followers time was the active element in the equation of nature and architecture because while history was the dynamic or verbal factor in it, architecture played mostly a passive and receptive role.[44] Buildings, when regarded as works of literature, served mainly a taxonomic function that helped to identify the historical moment each structure characterized. Such a mandate required the use of a nominative syntax, one in which buildings stand more like nouns than any other part of speech. In Hugo's mind, as long as the printing press held sway, architecture, insofar as it is a language, would not become "hermetic" again. Consequently, its syntax would neither be active nor therefore verbal.

The thought that architecture was inferior to the printed word as a means of communication never seems to have entered Sullivan's mind. He often advanced the idea that architecture was undoubtedly the best vehicle for expressing the universal message of nature.[45] Another difference between the two men is that Sullivan never considered such a message to be hermetic, one that only sages could interpret. On the contrary, in a clearly American vein, he thought that anyone could understand it if he accepted the idea that he is a work of nature living within nature. By adopting such a standard American trancendentalist position, Sullivan extended into architecture an American intellectual tradition that Emerson had inaugurated to all intents and purposes in 1836 with the publication of *Nature*. Also, and in contrast with the French position of considering the syntax of architecture mainly as nominative, Sullivan brought to full maturity a verbal and therefore active conception of the language of architecture. His facades, such as that of the Bayard, are dynamic paradigms symbolizing the heroic aspirations of matter in quest of the transcendent. Time, that all-important factor in Victor Hugo's historicist program, had little or no value in Sullivan's scheme because his style was constructed on the model of nature and was therefore not contingent on historical development. The role of architecture was thus clearly delineated. It was a highly moral and didactic one, helping to carry mankind to utopia by making evident the beauty and joy of communion with nature.

The similarities of Sullivan's ideas to those of Victor Hugo are only superficial and find a common denominator only in the most general aspects of romanticism. The differences are profound. To Hugo, the message of architecture was to be based on the *Hermetica*, that is, on the corpus of knowledge sages had put together in the process of unraveling the mysteries of the universe, and which they expressed in arcane symbols.[46] To Sullivan, on the contrary, architecture was to be a celebration of the joy of nature for everyone's delight. Concerning history, Hugo looked at the past and was awed by it. Modern man, at best, could only hope to imitate the manner in which the Middle Ages had brought together architecture and learning. His view, in that sense, was revivalist, subservient, and therefore traditional. Sullivan's view was utopian. He attempted to foresee what the future held in store and thought that he was able to bring that vision of perfection into the present. By favoring American transcendentalism over Victor Hugo's romantic ideas, he broke a circle of cause and effect, and thereby established a new bond between American thought and French architectural theory. This creation was typically American at least on two counts. It was totally spontaneous, and it issued out of an amalgam of native and foreign ideas, some new and some traditional, some architectural and some intellectual.

Both Montgomery Schuyler and Russell Sturgis, the two most important critics of Sullivan's day, missed this point in their evaluation of the Bayard Building. They praised Sullivan only "for solving a modern problem in a modern way."[47] According to Schuyler, "The Bayard Building is the nearest approach yet made, in New York, to solving the problem of the skyscraper." He also noted that "the building, apart from its wealth of decoration, recalls the works of contemporaneous engineering rather than of historical architecture," and added, "that . . . is 'as it should be.' "[48] Sturgis' approach was similar. To him "the whole front [of the Bayard] is a careful thinking out of the problem of how to base a design upon the necessary construction, in slender metal uprights and ties."[49] Both men praised the logic with which Sullivan expressed the loftiness and the skeletal structure of the building, but at the same time they both consciously disregarded the seminal importance of the ornamentation in the design. Following that line, almost forty years later, Hugh Morrison concluded that the ornamentation of the Bayard was "infelicitous."[50] All three critics failed to see that the main aim of Sullivan's "modernity" was not to establish a

relationship between the mechanical functions of the parts and their form, but to project a romantic attitude into the future in "a modern way," if one should wish to call it that. For American and French critics, all the way from Hermant to Philip Johnson, Sullivan's architecture appeared to be excellent, but nevertheless marred by what they perceived as contradictions.[51] But they never stopped to think that what they saw as paradoxical was in fact a product of their forcing Sullivan into an intellectual mold that was not his but theirs. At no time, it would appear, did they pause to consider that one of the irreducible premises in Sullivan's work was that he considered architecture mainly as a language one used to convey an Idea. The building, the material object that the critics saw, was to Sullivan something like a carefully printed and luxuriously bound book. Such gorgeousness was meant to attract the "reader," but in the end, for Sullivan, it was the message that counted most. Sullivan's thought and Sullivan's art are as inextricably joined together as are the different facets of a crystal. One reflects the other and adds meaning to the other.

There was a purpose behind Sullivan's aims. He once stated: "Without sustained desire, no fruitful action."[52] Such a notion was related to Emerson's concept that ecstasy was nature's reward for the final yielding of one's self to the cosmos.[53] Sullivan interpreted that message in terms of the architect's joy, as creator, as well as the layman's, as the user of architecture. Like Emerson, Sullivan believed that man's identification with the good, the true, and above all, the beautiful, grew and developed. His "Essay on Inspiration," of 1886, possibly his most important statement of his intellectual position, may be considered as an amplification of the opening sentence of Emerson's essay "On Art." "Because the soul is progressive," Emerson wrote, "it never quite repeats itself, but in every act attempts the production of a new and fairer whole." From that perspective, Sullivan saw himself as the discoverer of the way to "true architecture," and came to consider himself almost as a new Prometheus. His conception of "true democracy" complemented these ideas. For him, democracy consisted of the final binding together of humanity and nature in a transcendent communion, as Whitman had described it in *Democratic Vistas*.[54] To Sullivan, the Bayard was "a song of true democracy and its goal," a building that was—and that attempted to make its user—as "joyous as the dawn of . . . spring."[55] By making use of a foreign grammar of architecture and by transmuting it into a personal syntax that to French eyes seemed paradoxical, the Bayard concentrated a universal message into a language that is as powerfully American as it is intensely personal. It married the lesson of Duban with the thought of Emerson, and through that mixture became vehemently Sullivanesque. The Bayard, in the midst of lower Manhattan, signifies man's quest for the transcendent; it is Sullivan's optimistic exaltation of life and its nobility.

## NOTES

1. See mainly, by Neil Levine, "Architectural Reasoning in the Age of Positivism: The Néo-Grec Idea of Henri Labrouste's Bibliotèque Sainte-Geneviève," doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1975; "The Romantic Idea of Architectural Legibility: Henri Labrouste and the Neo-Grec," in Arthur Drexler (ed.), *The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1977); and "The Competition for the Grand Prix in 1824," in Robin Middleton (ed.), *The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1982). By David Van Zanten, see mainly "Architectural Composition at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts from Percier to Charles Garnier," in Drexler; and "Félix Duban and the Buildings of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 37 (October 1978): 161-74. There are other essays relevant to the question in Drexler and Middleton. Another useful work is Donald Drew Egbert, *The Beaux-Arts Tradition in France*, ed. David Van Zanten (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

2. Louis Sullivan, "Kindergarten Chats," in Louis Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats and Other Writings*, ed. Isabella Athey; (1947; New York: Wittenborn, 1968), p. 121.

3. Louis Sullivan, "Essay on Inspiration," see Narciso G. Menocal, *Architecture as Nature: The Transcendentalist Idea of Louis Sullivan* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), p. 166.

4. To Herbert Spencer, matter, motion, and force were the constants of a universe mechanically conceived. He believed that force produced motion, that motion determined the diffusion of matter, and that, conversely, the concentration of matter slowed down motion. Fundamental cycles of evolution and dissolution grew out of each other, and this continuous creation of the universe was "the law that transcends proof." Sullivan came to believe that Spencer's concepts brought

objective validity and scientific verification to ideas that, in reality, came from the transcendentalism suffusing his romanticism. To him, Spencer's philosophy sanctioned the belief, for instance, that the subjective and the objective evolve into as well as out of each other, and that they are interchangeable because they are both reflections of the same transcendent rhythm. See Herbert Spencer, *First Principles of a New System of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Appleton, 1872), chap. 24.

5.The floor to ceiling heights of each story of the Bayard are as follows: first floor, 15 feet; second floor, 13 feet; third floor, 12 feet; fourth and fifth floors, 11 feet; sixth through eleventh floors, 10 feet; twelfth floor, 9 feet 6 inches; thirteenth floor, 14 feet 6 inches. Louis H. Sullivan, *The Bayard Building*, Real Estate Brochure (New York: Rost Printing and Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 20. According to the building permit, the total height of the building is 162 feet. I am grateful to Angela Giral, Avery Librarian, and to Marjorie Pearson, of the New York Landmarks Commission, for this information.

6. Norval White and Elliott Willensky, *AIA Guide to New York City* (rev. ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1978), p. 94.

7. For the Salle des Sept Cheminées, see mainly Christiane Aulanier, *Historie du palais et du musée du Louvre; Le pavillon du roi et les appartements de la reine* (Paris: Musées Nationaux, 1958), pp. 96-104.

8. Henry R. Hitchcock, *Architecture, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (1958; Baltimore: Penguin, 1963), p. 456 (note 23).

9. Sullivan, *The Bayard Building*, p. 7.

10. Under the influence of the Swedish mystic and philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), Sullivan had come to the conclusion that a masculine and feminine principle sustained cosmic reality in a manner similar to that of electric charges. Whatever is geometric, structural, rational, basic, and supportive was masculine. That which is organic, decorative, emotional, and supported was feminine. Wherever one principle dwelt, the other would be present also; neither could exist in isolation. In a tree, for instance, the structure of roots, trunk, and branches would stand for the masculine; the foliage and the flowers, for the feminine. In a fruit, the rotundity would be masculine; the fragrance, color, and texture, feminine. With no branches to support them, leaves and flowers form a chaotic jumble that the wind sweeps away. Bereft of foliage, a tree stands as an image of death. To Sullivan, the feminine was more important than the masculine because it established the degree of gorgeousness in a composition, whether of art or nature. The feminine always issues out of the masculine, which supports and maintains it; decorative motifs come forth from an axis on a drawing like leaves out of a branch; the vital force that flows in a plant flows also through the line on the paper. For further information on Swedenborg and Sullivan, see Menocal, pp. 24-34.

11. For Vaudremer, see mainly Jacques Hermant, "Emile Vaudremer," *L'Architecture* 27 (1914): 65-68; and Louis Hautecoeur, *Histoire de l'architecture classique en France*, Vol 7 (Paris: Picard, 1957), pp. 360-71.

12.Louis Sullivan, *The Autobiography of an Idea* (1924: New York; Dover, 1956), pp. 238-39.

13. "The intimate life of the atelier with its free commingling of the younger and the older students seemed to Louis invaluable in its human aspects, so much so that he became rather more absorbed in the work of others than in his own, for he felt to be in the position of observer." Ibid., p. 239.

14. Ibid., p. 249.

15. Ibid., p.248.

16. Ibid., pp. 207, 220-21, 232-40, 248-50.

17. Jacques Hermant, "L'Art à l'exposition de Chicago," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (troisième période), 10 (September 1893): 237-53 (November 1893): 416-25; (December 1893): 441-61; 11 (February 1894): 149-69. Vaudremer's motto in (September 1893): 246.

18. Sullivan, "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered," *Kindergarten Chats and Other Writings*, p. 208.

19. Sullivan, "Style," *Inland Architect* 11 (May 1888): 59-60.

20. "C'est notre maître, mon cher Sullivan, qui roulerait de gros yeux si'il te voyait commetre de telles hérésies, de pareils mensonges!" Hermant, (September 1893): 247.

21 Ibid., p. 246.

22. Sullivan, *Autobiography of an Idea*, p. 240.

23. For the lingering of transcendentalism in Chicago after it had been discarded in the East, see Hugh D. Duncan, *Culture and Democracy* (Totowa, New Jersey: Bedminster Press, 1965), and Helen L. Horowitz, *Culture and the City: Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago from the 1880s to 1917* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1976).

24. Sullivan, *The Bayard Building*, p. 7.

25. Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, 2 Vols. (New York: Booklover Press, n.d.), Vol. 1, p. 211. For Victor Hugo and architecture, see Ronald Bradbury, *The Romantic Theories of Architecture of the Nineteenth Century in Germany, England and France* (New York: Dorothy Press, 1934), pp. 73-74; Paul Frankl, *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 483-85; and Levine, "The Book and the Building; Hugo's Theory of Architecture and Labrouste's Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève," in Middleton, pp. 138-73.

26. Hugo, I, p. 217.

27. Ibid., pp. 205, 210.

28. See, for intance, the reference to "hermetics," in ibid., p. 203. Hermes Trismegistus was an Egyptian sage, or a succession of sages, whom the Greeks identified with the Egyptian god Thoth. He was the custodian of wisdom, learning, and literature, and was known as Thrice Greatest due to his vast learning and rank of Philosopher, Priest, and King. The teachings of Hermes deal with astrology, priestly education, temple ritual, and medicine. His writings parallel the Judeo-Christian scriptural tradition, and some Early Christian fathers, mainly Justin Martyr and Lactantius, praised him. Through the nineteenth century his antiquity was considered greater than it actually was. Recent scholarship places his writing in Alexandria at the end of the first century or the early second century, A.D. For Hermes Trismegistus, see Hermes Trimsegistus, *Corpus hermeticum*. Texte établi par A.D. Nock et traduit par A.-J. Festugière, 4 vols. (Paris: Société d'éditions "Les Belles Lettres," 1945); and *The Divine Pymander and Other Writings*, translated from the Greek by John D. Chambers (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972). For analysis of the writings of Hermes Trismegistus, see A.-J Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, 4 vols. (Paris: Gabalda, 1950).

29. Hugo, I, pp. 205-06 (conversation between Frollo and Louis XI.)

30. Ibid., p. 214.

31. Ibid., p. 220.

32. Ibid., p. 224.

33. Ibid., pp. 135-63 ("A Bird's-Eye View of Paris.")

34. See bibliography, Note 1.

35. As an example of the first, see the study of Léon Vaudoyer's Cathedral of Marseilles, in Drexler, pp. 424-27; for the second, see Neil Levine, "The Book and the Building," op. cit.; for the third, see the explanation of the site plan of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Van Zanten, "Félix Duban and the Buildings of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts," op. cit.

36. Van Zanten, "Félix Duban . . .," p. 170; for an analysis of Reynaud's ideas, see Bradbury, pp. 110-12.

37. Van Zanten, "Félix Duban . . .," pp. 170-71. For more information on the mural see Norman D. Ziff, *Paul Delaroche: A Study in Nineteenth-Century French History Painting* (New York: Garland, Outstanding Disseratitons in the Fine Arts, 1977), pp. 167-83; and Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art; Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion, and Collecting in England and France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), chapter 1.

38. Hugo, I, p. 219.

39. See Van Zanten, "Félix Duban . . ."; for a short survey on the buildings of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, see Philippe Carnac and Catherine Marmoz, "L'Ecole nationale des Beaux-Arts," *Monuments historiques* (102): 17-32.

40. In that respect, Julien Guadet wrote shortly after the turn of the century: "depuis un siècle, et dans le monde entier, les arts et l'architecture surtout sont anémiés par leur subordination à l'archéologie. . . . Seule, la France s'est enfin défendue, et ainsi il y a encore une école francaise!" Julien Guadet, *Eléments et théories de l'architecture*, 4 vols. (Paris: Librairie de la construction moderne, n.d.), I, pp. 84-85.

41. Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats*, p. 30.

42. See Victor Hugo's conception of the growth of Paris in Hugo, I, 136-37.

43. Ibid., 132.

44. "Printing. Let no one be deceived: architecture is dead, irrevocably dead; killed by the printed book; killed because . . . it was more costly. Every cathedral represents a thousand million francs. Think, then, what capital would be required to rewrite the architectural book." Ibid., p. 222.

45. The notion that buildings are superior to books appears often in Sullivan's writings connected with the Architectural League of America. See Menocal, pp. 78-94.

46. Concerning the readings of the mysteries by a priestly caste, Hugo wrote in *Notre-Dame*, I, pp. 210-11: "Solomon's Temple, for instance, was not merely the building of the Holy Book, it was the Holy Book itself. In each of its concentric halls the priests could read the Word translated and made manifest; and thus they followed its transformations from sanctuary to sanctuary, until they grasped it in its innermost tabernacle, in its most concrete form, which was again architectural—the arch. Thus the Word was contained within the edifice, but its image was upon its exterior as the human figure is upon the case of a mummy." This attitude was totally contrary to Sullivan's views, who stated his message on his facades for all to see, not in a *Sanctum sanctorum* where only the elect could enter.

47. Montgomery Schuyler, "The 'Skyscraper' Up-To-Date," *Architectural Record* 8 (January-March 1899): 231-57; excerpted in *American Architecture and Other Writings by Montgomery Schuyler*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), II, pp. 437-41; Russell Sturgis, "Good Things in Modern Architecture," *Architectural Record* 8 (July-September 1898): 92-110.

48. Schuyler, p. 441.

49. All of Sturgis's criticism of the Bayard is in Sturgis, P. 101.

50. Hugh Morrison, *Louis Sullivan: Prophet of Modern Architecture* (1935: New York: Norton, 1962), p. 192. Other critics of the period had similar opinions of Sullivan. Giedion recognized Sullivan "as a leader of his generation," emphasized the expression of the metallic structure of the Carson-Pirie-Scott Building, and said not one word about Sullivan's ornamentation. As late as 1967 Giedion saw little or no cause to alter his treatment of Sullivan's architecture. In 1936 Pevsner covered Sullivan in a similar manner. See Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941), pp. 310-15; ibid., 5th revised edition (1967), pp. 388-93; and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius* (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), pp. 133-34.

51. Philip Johnson, "Is Sullivan the Father of Functionalism?" *Art News* 55 (December 1956): 45-46+.

52. Sullivan, "Essay on Inspiration," in Menocal, p. 166.

53. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Complete Works*, 12 vols. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1903), I, p. 214.

54. For *Democratic Vistas*, see Walt Whitman, *The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman*, 10 vols. (New York: Putnam, 1902), vol. 5.

55. Sullivan, *The Bayard Building*, p. 7.

# Wherefore The Poet?

From "Democracy"

## Louis Sullivan

**Wherefore the poet? What good does he do? Is he not a trifler, and something of a nusiance?**

**Well, are not you and I triflers, and more or less nuisances? What have we to show to prove the contrary?**

**Oh, we are pratical, sensible men? You are quite sure of this? You will stand on you record?**

**Well then, if that is so, what is the poet if not a trifler and a nuisance?**

**He is a man of VISION!**

**He sees!**

**He sees Life with eyes of Life.**

**And that is something you never have done, O practical man.**

**Oh! You thought the poet made verses! Oh! You can't see what is at your elbow!**

**But the poet can.**

**True, some great poets have made verses. It just happened that way. That was all. They happened to make verses instead of doing something else—just as you happen to be sensible and practical instead of being efficient.**

**This is new, is it?**

**There is a great deal new for you, O man on the street.**

**So the poet is the man who makes words rhyme?**

**No, the poet is the man who see things rhyme. For rhyme is but the suggestion of harmony; and harmony is but the suggestion of rhythm; and rhythm is the suggestion of the superb moving equilibrium of all things.**

**You do not see yourself move, O man on the street? Tell me, what do you see moving? Do you see anything moving?**

**Do you see anything at all? Have you any vision? Do *you* see Life with eyes of Life?**

**Social reality is unknown to you. You have not caught a glimpse of it, O pratical, sensible one.**

**And what is poetry? The very soul of adventure—the going forth, the daring to do, the vision of doing and the how to do—the vision which creates a situation. Hence is the poet the pioneer.**

**The spirit of poetry is the very spirit of mastery. Hence the poets of the past have been the masters of the mulitudes of the past. And such is the case today. Why not?**

**Why should not those who see, drive those who do not see—when seeing is so easy?**

**Awake! O mulititudes; for poetry is the highest of practical powers. It is not what you supposed.**

**Awake!**

"Wherefore The Po t?", as it appears here, was taken from POETRY: A MAGAZINE OF VERSE, where it first appeared in March 1916; vol. VII; No. VI. It is from Sullivan's longer work *Democracy: A Man-Search* which remained unpublished until 1961, when it was brought out by the Wayne State University Press. In that volumne "Wherefore The Poet?" appears as "The Poet" and differs in length and puncutation.

# The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered

## Louis H. Sullivan

I

The architects of this land and generation are now brought face to face with something new under the sun,—namely, that evolution and integration of social conditions, that special grouping of them, that results in a demand for the erection of tall office buildings. It is not my purpose to discuss the social conditions; I accept them as the fact, and say at once that the design of the tall office building must be recognized and confronted at the outset as a problem to be solved,—a vital problem pressing for a true solution.

Let us state the conditions in the plainest manner. Briefly, they are these: offices are necessary for the transaction of business; the invention and perfection of the high-speed elevators make verticle travel, that was once tedious and painful, now easy and comfortable; development of steel manufacture has shown the way to safe, rigid, economical constructions rising to a great height; continued growth of population in the great cities, consequent congestion of centres and rise in value of ground, stimulate an increase in number of stories; these successfully piled one upon another, react on ground values;—and so on, by action and reaction, interaction and inter-reaction. Thus has come about the form of lofty *construction* called the "modern office building." It has come in answer to a call, for in it a new grouping of social conditions has found a habitiation and a name.

Up to this point all in evidence is materialistic, an exhibition of force, of resolution, of brains in the keen sharp sense of the word. It is the joint product of the speculator, the engineer, the builder.

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?

This is the problem; and we must seek the solution of it in a process analogous to its own evolution,—indeed, a continuation of it,—namely, by proceeding step by step from general to special aspects, from coarser to finer considerations.

It is my belief that it is of the very essence of every problem that it contains and suggests its own solution. This I believe to be natural law. Let us examine, then, carefully the elements, let us search out this contained suggestion, this essence of the problem.

The practical conditions are, broadly speaking, these:

Wanted—1st, a story below-ground, containing boilers, engines of various sorts, etc.,—in short, the plant for power, heating, lighting, etc. 2nd, a ground floor, so called, devoted to stores, banks, or other establishments requiring large area, ample spacing, ample light, and great freedom of access. 3rd, a second story readily accessible by stairways,—this space usually in large subdivisions, with corresponding liberality in structural spacing and expanse of glass and breadth of external openings. 4th, above this an indefinite number of stories of offices piled tier upon tier, one tier just like another tier, one office just like all the other offices,—an office being similar to a cell in a honey-comb, merely a compartment, nothing more. 5th and last, at the top of this pile is placed a space or story that, as related to the life and usefulness of the structure, is purely physiological in its nature,—namely, the attic. In this the circulatory system completes itself and makes its grand turn, ascending and descending. The space is filled with tanks, pipes, valves, sheaves, and mechanical et cetera that supplement and complement the force originating plant hidden below-ground in the cellar. Finally, or at the beginning rather, there must be on the ground floor a main aperture or entrance common to all the occupants or patrons of the building.

This tabulation is, in the main, characteristic of every tall office building in the country. As to the necessary arrangements for light courts, these are not germane to the problem, and, as will become soon evident, I trust, need not be

considered here. These things, and such others as the arrangement of elevators, for example, have to do strictly with the economics of the building, and I assume them to have been fully considered and disposed of to the satisfaction of purely utilitarian and pecuniary demands. Only in rare instances does the plan or floor arrangement of the tall office building take on an aesthetic value, and this usually when the lighting court is external or becomes an internal feature of great importance.

As I am here seeking not for an individual or special solution, but for a true normal type, the attention must be confined to those conditions that, in the main, are constant in all tall office buildings, and every mere incidental and accidental variation eliminated from the consideration, as harmful to the clearness of the main inquiry.

The practical horizontal and vertical division or office unit is naturally based on a room of comfortable area and height, and the size of this standard office room as naturally predetermines the standard structural unit, and, approximately, the size of window-openings. In turn, these purely arbitrary units of structure form in an equally natural way the true basis of the artistic development of the exterior. Of course the structural spacings and openings in the first or mercantile story are required to be the largest of all; those in the second or quasi-mercantile story are of a somewhat similar nature. The spacings and openings in the attic are of no importance whatsoever (the windows have no actual value), for light may be taken from the top, and no recognition of a cellular division is necessary in the structural spacing.

Hence it follows inevitably, and in the simplest possible way, that if we follow our natural instincts without thought of books, rules, precedents, or any such educational impedimenta to a spontaneous and "sensible" result, we will in the following manner design the exterior of our tall office building,—to wit:

Beginning with the first story, we give this a main entrance that attracts the eye to its location, and the remainder of the story we treat in a more or less liberal, expansive, sumptuous way,—a way based exactly on the practical necessities, but expressed with a sentiment of largeness and freedom. The second story we treat in a similar way, but usually with milder pretension. Above this, throughout the indefinite number of typical office tiers, we take our cue from the individual cell, which requires a window with its separating pier, its sill and lintel, and we, without more ado, make them *look* all alike because they *are* all alike. This brings us to the attic, which, having no division into office-cells, and no special requirement for lighting, gives us the power to show by means of its broad expanse of wall, and its dominating weight and character, that which is the fact,—namely, that the series of office-tiers has come definitely to an end.

This may perhaps seem a bald result and a heartless, pessimistic way of stating it, but even so we certainly have advanced a most characteristic stage beyond the imagined sinister building of the speculator-engineer-builder combination. For the hand of the architect is now definitely felt in the decisive position at once taken, and the suggestion of a thoroughly sound, logical, coherent expression of the conditions is becoming apparent.

When I say the hand of the architect, I do not mean necessarily the accomplished and trained architect. I mean only a man with a strong, natural liking for buildings, and a disposition to shape them in what seems to his unaffected nature a direct and simple way. He will probably tread an innocent path from his problem to its solution, and therein he will show an enviable gift of logic. If he have some gift for form in detail, some love for that, his result in addition to its simple straightforward naturalness and completeness in general statement, will have something of the charm of sentiment.

However, thus far the results are only partial and tentative at best; relatively true, they are but superficial. We are doubtless right in our instinct but we must seek a fuller justification, a finer sanction, for it.

## II

I assume now that in the study of our problem we have passed through the various stages of inquiry, as follows: 1st, the social basis of the demand for tall office buildings; 2nd, its literal material satisfaction; 3rd, elevation of the question from considerations of literal planning, construction, and equipment, to the plane of elementary architecture as a direct outgrowth of sound, sensible building; 4th, the question again elevated from an elementary architecture to the beginnings of true architectural expression, through the addition of a certain quality and quantity of sentiment.

But our building may have all these in a considerable degree and yet be far

from the adequate solution of the problem I am attempting to define. We must now heed the imperative voice of emotion.

It demands of us, What is the chief characteristic of the tall office building? And at once we answer, it is lofty. This loftiness is to the artist-nature its thrilling aspect. It is the very open organ-tone in its appeal. It must be in turn the dominant chord in his expression of it, the true excitant of his imagination. It must be tall, every inch of it tall. The force and power of altitude must be in it, the glory and pride of exaltation must be in it. 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,—that it is the new, the unexpected, the eloquent peroration of most bald, most sinister, most forbidding conditions.

The man who designs in this spirit and with the sense of responsibility to the generation he lives in must be no coward, no denier, no bookworm, no dilettante. He must live of his life and for his life in the fullest, most consummate sense. He must realize at once and with the grasp of inspiration that the problem of the tall office building is one of the most stupendous, one of the most magnificent opportunities that the Lord of Nature in His beneficence has ever offered to the proud spirit of man.

That this has not been perceived—indeed, has been flatly denied—is an exhibition of human perversity that must give us pause.

## III

One more consideration: Let us now lift this question into the region of calm, philosophic observation. Let us seek a comprehensive, a final solution: let the problem indeed *dissolve.*

Certain critics, and very thoughtful ones, have advanced the therory that the true prototype of the tall office building is the classical column, consisting of base, shaft and capital,—the molded base of the column typical of the lower stories of our building, the plain or fluted shaft suggesting the monotonous, uninterrupted series of office-tiers, and the capital the completing power and luxuriance of the attic.

Other theorizers assuming a mystical symbolism as a guide, quote the many trinities in nature and in art, and the beauty and conclusiveness of such trinity in unity. They aver the beauty of prime numbers, the mysticism of the number three, the beauty of all things that are in three parts,—to wit, the day, subdividing into morning, noon, and night; the limbs, the thorax, and the head, constituting the body. So they say, should the building be in three parts vertically, substantially as before, but for different motives.

Others, of purely intellectual temperament, hold that such a design should be in the nature of a logical statement; it should have a beginning, a middle, and an ending, each clearly defined,—therefore again a building, as above, in three parts vertically.

Others, seeking their examples and justification in the vegetable kingdom, urge that such a design shall above all things be organic. They quote the suitable flower with its bunch of leaves at the earth, its long graceful stem, carrying the gorgeous single flower. They point to the pine-tree,—its massy roots, its lithe, uninterrupted trunk, its tuft of green high in the air. Thus, they say, should be the design of the tall office building: again in three parts vertically.

Others still, more susceptible to the power of a unit than to the grace of a trinity, say that such a design should be struck out at a blow, as though by a blacksmith or by mighty Jove, or should be thought-born, as was Minerva, full-grown. They accept the notion of a triple division as permissible and welcome, but non-essential. With them it is a subdivision of their unit; the unit does not come from the alliance of the three; they accept it without murmur, provided the subdivision does not disturb the sense of singleness and repose.

All of these critics and theorists agree, however, positively, unequivocally, in this, that the tall office building should not, must not, be made a field for the display of architectural knowledge in the encyclopedic sense; that too much learning in this instance is fully as dangerous, as obnoxious, as too little learning; that miscellany is abhorrent to their sense; that the sixteen-story building must not consist of sixteen separate, distinct, and unrelated buildings piled one upon the other until the top of the pile is reached.

To this latter folly I would not refer were it not the fact that nine out of every ten tall office buildings are designed in precisely this way in effect, not by the ignorant, but by the educated. It would seem, indeed, as though the "trained" architect, when facing this problem, were beset at every story, or, at most, every

third or forth story, by the hysterical dread lest he be in "bad form;" lest he be not bedecking his building with sufficiency of quotation from this, that, or the other "correct" building in some other land and some other time; lest he be not copious enough in the display of his wares; lest he betray, in short, a lack of resources. To loosen up the touch of this cramped and fidgity hand, to allow the nerves to calm, the brain to cool, to reflect equably, to reason naturally, seems beyond him; he lives, as it were, in a waking nightmare filled with the *disjecta membra* of architecture. The spectacle is not inspiriting.

As to the former and serious views held by discerning and thoughtful critics, I shall, with however much of regret, dissent from them for the purpose of this demonstration, for I regard them as secondary only, non-essential, and as touching not at all upon the vital spot, upon the quick of the entire matter, upon the true, the immovable philosophy of the architectural art.

This view let me now state, for it brings to the solution of the problem a final, comprehensive formula:

All things in nature have a shape, that is to say, a form, an outward semblance, that tells us what they are, that distingushes them from ourselves and from each other.

Unfailingly in nature these shapes express the inner life, the native quality, of the animal, tree, bird, fish, that they present to us; they are so characteristic, so recognizable, that we say simply, it is "natural" it should be so. Yet the moment we peer beneath this surface of things, the moment we look through the tranquil reflection of ourselves and the clouds above us, down into the clear, fluent, unfathomable depth of nature, how startling is the silence of it, how amazing the flow of life, how absorbing the mystery! Unceasingly the essence of things is taking shape in the matter of things, and this unspeakable process we call birth and growth. Awhile the spirit and the matter fade away together, and it is this that we call decadence, death. These two happenings seem jointed and interdependent, blended into one like a bubble and its iridescence, and they seem borne along upon a slowly moving air. This air is wonderful past all understanding.

Yet to the steadfast eye of one standing upon the shore of things, looking chiefly and most lovingly upon that side on which the sun shines and that we feel joyously to be life, the heart is ever gladdened by the beauty, the exquisite spontaneity, with which life seeks and takes on its forms in an accord perfectly responsive to its needs. It seems ever as though the life and the form were absolutely one and inseparable, so adequate is the sense of fulfillment.

Whether it be the sweeping eagle in his flight, or the open apple-blossom, the toiling work-horse, the blithe swan, the branching oak, the winding stream at its base, the drifting clouds, over all the coursing sun, *form ever follows function,* and this is the law. Where function does not change form does not change. The granite rocks, the ever-brooding hills, remain for ages; the lightning lives, comes into shape, and dies in a twinkling.

It is the pervading law of all things organic and inorganic, of all things physical and metaphysical, of all things human and all things superhuman, of all true manifestations of the head, of the heart, of the soul, that the life is recognizable in its expression, that form ever follows function. *This is the law.*

Shall we, then, daily violate this law in our art? Are we so decadent, so imbecile, so utterly weak of eyesight, that we cannot perceive this truth so simple, so very simple? Is it indeed a truth so transparent that we see through it but do not see it? It is really then, a very marvelous thing, or is it rather so commonplace, so everyday, so near a thing to us, that we cannot perceive that the shape, form, outward expression, design, or whatever we may choose, of the tall office building should in the very nature of things follow the functions of the building, and that where the function does not change, the form is not to change?

Does this not readily, clearly, and conclusively show that the lower one or two stories will take on a special character suited to the special needs, that the tiers of typical offices, having the same unchanging function, shall continue in the same unchanging form, and that as to the attic, specific and conclusive as it is in its very nature, its function shall equally be so in force, in significance, in continuity, in conclusiveness of outward expression? From this results, naturally, spontaneously, unwittingly, a three-part division,—not from any theory, symbol, or fancied logic.

And thus the design of the tall office building takes its place with all other architectural types made when architecture, as has happened once in many years, was a living art. Witness the Greek temple, the Gothic cathedral, the mediaeval fortress.

And thus, when native instinct and sensibility shall govern the exercise of our beloved art; when the known law, the respected law, shall be that form ever

follows function; when our architects shall cease strutting and prattling handcuffed and vainglorious 'n the asylum of a foreign school; when it is truly felt, cheerfully accepted, that this law opens up the airy sunshine of green fields, and gives to us a freedom that the very beauty and sumptuousness of the outworking of the law itself as exhibited in nature will deter any sane, any sensitive man from changing into license; when it becomes evident that we are merely speaking a foreign language with a noticeable American accent, whereas each and every architect in the land might, under the benign influence of this law, express in the simplest, most modest, most natural way that which it is in him to say: that he might really and would surely develop his own characteristic individuality, and that the architectural art with him would certainly become a living form of speech, a natural form of utterance, giving surcease to him and adding treasures small and great to the growing art of his land; when we know and feel that Nature is our friend, not our implacable enemy,—that an afternoon in the country, an hour by the sea, a full open view of one single day, through dawn, high noon, and twilight, will suggest to us so much that is rhythmical, deep, and eternal in the vast art of architecture, something so deep, so true, that all the narrow formalities, hard-and-fast rules, and strangling bonds of the schools cannot stifle it in us,—then it may be proclaimed that we are on the high-road to a natural and satisfying art, an architecture that will soon become a fine art in the true, the best sense of the word, an art that will live because it will be of the people, for the people, and by the people.

This essay was first published in *Lippincott's Magazine*, March 1896. Original spelling and punctuation have been retained.

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# The American Terra Cotta Industry

## Susan Tunick

Survivors of the great Chicago fire of 1871 emphasized the horror and tragedy that the city suffered when over 200,000 buildings burned, 100,000 people were left homeless, and nearly 300 lost their lives:

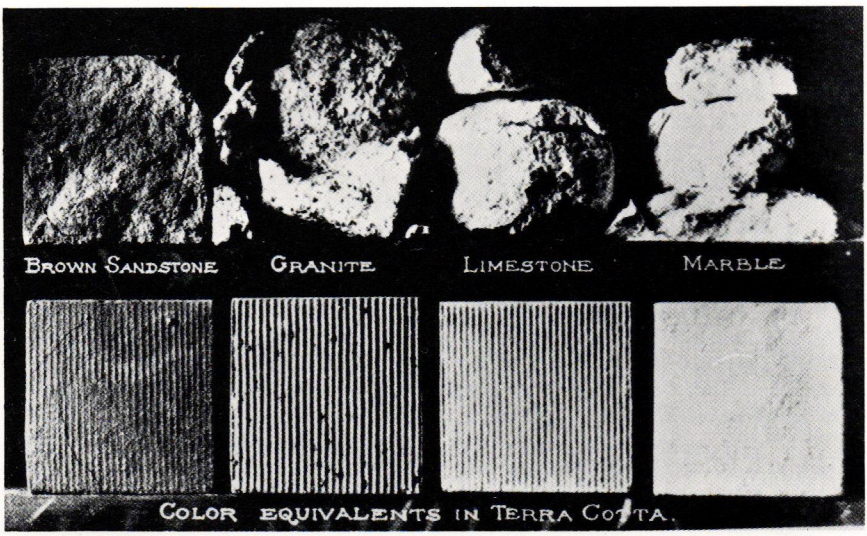
> *You could not conceive of anything more fearful. The wind was like a tornado and I held fast to my little ones, fearing they would be lifted from my sight. I could only think of Sodom or Pompeii and truly I thought the Day of Judgment had come.*[1]

Yet, this fire, the most devastating in American history, also provided the impetus for the rapid growth of the great American terra cotta industry.

Most of Chicago's architects, contractors and engineers had confidently relied on iron and stone in declaring their buildings fireproof, while only a few, such as P. B. Wight, architect and founder of the Wight Fireproofing Company, had used hollow terra cotta tile in construction. In fact, Wight had stated emphatically:

> *I reject everything but clay for fireproof structures. A great advantage that it has over concrete made of hard cement, so much used in Europe, is that it can be made so much lighter.*[2]

After the fire, inspection of ruins in Chicago confirmed Wight's argument and led to the shocking realization that whole buildings made of iron and stone had twisted, burst apart, and collapsed, while those with terra cotta or brick insulation of their framework or facade had withstood the fire.




**Cubes of building stone and their color equivalents in terra cotta, taken after they have been subjected to bright redness in kilns, and then put into cold water; the terra cotta at once and the stone after first cooling a few minutes in air. (Ries, Heinrich, *Clays of New York*, Albany, University of the State of New York, 1900).**

At the time of the fire, the manufacture of terra cotta was new to Chicago. Only two years before, in 1869, the city's first manufacturer, the Chicago Terra Cotta Company, had set up business. Because Stanford Loring, the company's treasurer, was convinced that terra cotta could become a highly successful and valuable building material if it were produced with more technical knowledge, the company imported a skilled clay modeller, Giovanni Meli, from Italy. In addition, Loring sought English advice and English craftsmen. Among the latter, James Taylor was the first to move to the United states. Shortly after his arrival in 1870, Taylor had been appointed superintendent of the Chicago Terra Cotta Company where he replaced the open-fired kilns with English muffle kilns and introduced new techniques for preparing clay and manufacturing terra cotta. With these changes and added facilities, the finished pieces were soon comparable in quality to those produced in England.


**Advertisement for the Wight Fireproofing Company, from *Inland Architect & News Record,* February, 1888.**

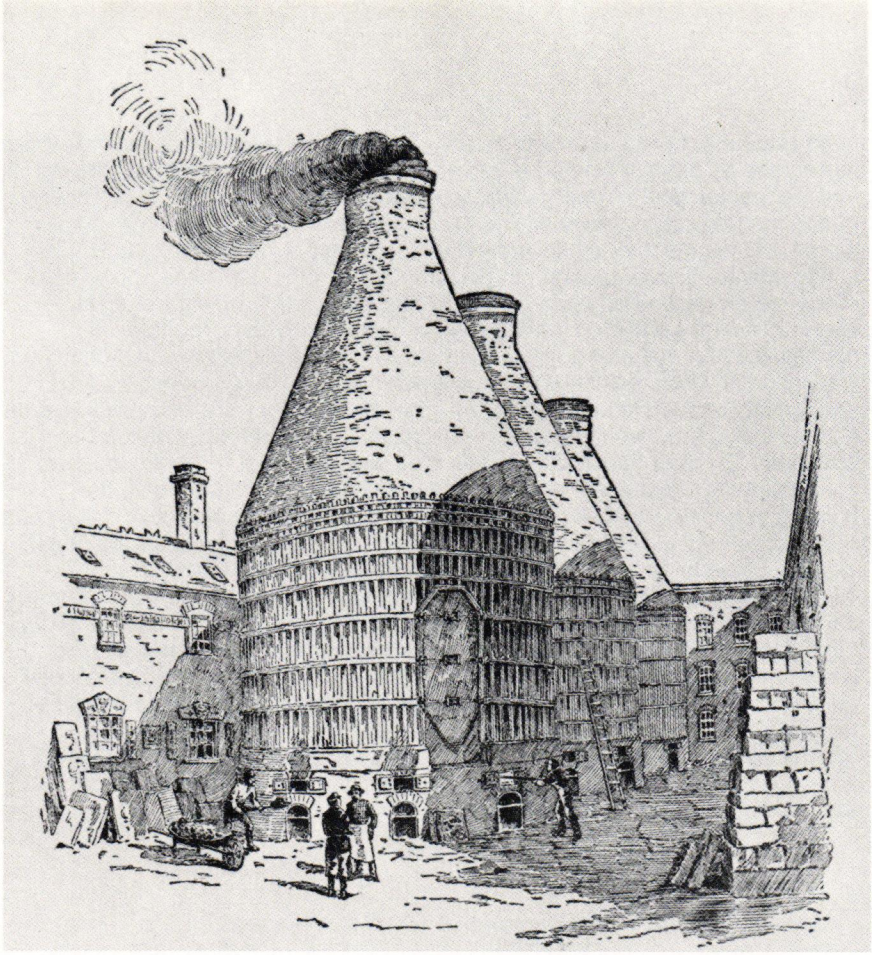
Fortunately, the Chicago Terra Cotta Company was one of the few businesses left untouched by the great fire, and with municipal rebuilding, the company received large orders for its product to be used in fireproofing. Complementing this widespread use during the 1870s, terra cotta entered into lively competition with stone and iron as a material for architectural ornament. This opportunity to broaden the range of its production encouraged the Chicago Terra Cotta Company to develop a variety of items that could be manufactured more economically in terra cotta than in either stone or iron. As a result, the company grew with astonishing speed. By 1876, it employed more than seventy-five men and had facilities which included a modelling room, a throwing department, and a fifteen horsepower steam engine to grind materials for glazes. With the 1877 formation of a second company in Chicago (the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company), it became clear that development of an important and far reaching building-trade industry was securely underway.

Nationwide production of terra cotta doubled between 1890 and 1900, then quadrupled between 1900 and 1912. With such rapid growth, some kind of quality control became desirable, and the National Terra Cotta Society was founded in 1911, partly to help maintain qualitative standards. The society eventually included twenty-three firms in ten states across the country.

According to Waler Geer's 1920 history, *The Story of Terra Cotta,* no other building material offered such a good reflection of the architect's personality, because, unlike any of the other materials, terra cotta could be readily and directly impressed with the artist's conception—like "clay in the hand of the potter." As a matter of fact, terra cotta *is* a clay body, both porous and resistant to warping at high temperatures, frequently incorporating sand or pulverized, pre-fired clay to reduce shrinkage and subsequent deformity.

After the architect's approval, each design passed through the hands of dozens of workmen varying in skill and background, from the finest European sculptors to untrained day laborers. Drafstmen redrew the architectural renderings to a size that would allow for the shrinkage of the clay (one inch per foot). Then, from the newly enlarged drawings, a modeler would sculpt the object to be used in the preparation of a plaster mold. Except for these modelers, who achieved recognition on account of their unique skills and the visibility of their efforts, most factory workers labored in anonymity, especially since pieces were not signed by individuals nor stamped by the companies that produced them. Anonymous workers prepared the molds, pressed clay into them, hand-smoothed the unmolded pieces and set them to dry. After sufficient drying time, the pieces were glazed, stacked, and fired, finally to be marked and packed for their journey to the building site.

Trade publications of the period carried advertising from leading terra cotta manufactures boasting a production time of only seven days for stock items. Fulfilling this promise required a highly organized and efficient factory with draftsmen, estimators and bookkeepers fully involved in the operation of the company. Still, as mechanized and industralized as the terra cotta industry may sound, the product was essentially hand-made. In contrast to other industries, the role of machinery in producing terra cotta remained peripheral since to



**Terra Cotta Kilns & Works, Perth Amboy, New Jersey, (Davis, Charles, *A Practical Treatise on the Manufacture of Bricks, Tiles, & Terra Cotta, Etc.,* Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird & Co., 1884)**

manufacture terra cotta successfully it took trained workers who, like potters, understood the nature of the material and its foibles. (A true terra cotta worker, it has been claimed, had clay in his veins.)

Terra cotta has the potential to mimic other building materials. This flexibility proved useful to architects who wanted to use expensive material but could not afford to do so. Although the initial cost of a piece of terra cotta may have been comparable to stone, this cost was greatly reduced when identical pieces were mass produced. In 1877 the cost of a piece of stone ornament was ten times greater than that of a similar one in terra cotta. For this reason, traditional masonry structures of the period began to utilize terra cotta for decorative elements such as course belting, window spandrels, and cornices.

The popularity of terra cotta continued to increase with the rapidly developing building phenomenon first dubbed "Cloudscraper" and subsequently known as "Skyscraper". These new, taller structures, whose economic viability relied on the development of the elevator, signaled the architectural wave of the future. Skyscrapers introduced a new concept, the "curtain" wall: a non-loadbearing enclosure of the skeletal structure. Terra cotta was the ideal material for covering the building's metal skeleton.

As well as serving the practical needs of new architectural styles, terra cotta yielded new solutions to esthetic problems in the skyscraper; for example, the development of various repeating patterns and motifs consisting of differing ornamental elements. As a result of new terra cotta production methods, repetition with variations was easy to achieve on a vast scale. Leading architects such as Louis Sullivan, D.H. Burnham, Ely Jacques Kahn, Cass Gilbert, and Stanford White found unprecedented freedom in the design options terra cotta offered.

Louis Sullivan's Bayard Building was one of the eariliest examples of terra cotta cladding in New York. Using buff-colored terra cotta manufactured by the Perth Amboy Terra Cotta Company (founded in 1879), Sullivan encased the building's underlying structure at the same time realizing superb decoration through repetition and variation that clearly illustrate his theories of architecture and ornament.

Near the end of the 1920s, many of the new and spectacular buildings constructed in our cities employed colored and metallic glazes developed for

large scale use by the terracotta industry. Building's facades and rooflines were highlighted by brightly colored terra cotta. This flamboyance often overflowed into the lobbies and elevators. Although these areas are the first to be altered during modernization, the surviving examples attest to the vast range of colored glazes that served the fanciful imagery of designers, who predominantly used strong colors—yellow, orange, purple, lime green, pink, and cobalt blue—and chose metalic lustres of silver, gold, and copper to emphasize lavish detail. Flights of fantasy reflected in these buildings soared highest in the exotic themes used for stage and movie theaters as well as for temples and churches.

In the later 1920s building design began to develop a new geometry and sophistication of line that came to be known as Art Deco. The emphasis was on flatter, more linear, two-dimensional decoration rather than on sculptural ornament. Of major importance to this style was its use of rich color, texture, and patterning, sometimes achieved by combining terra cotta with varied building materials such as stone, metal, and brick. But the economic collapse of 1929 brought an extreme change of mood: all the exoticism, dazzle, color and imagery came to an end. Few new contracts were placed with terra cotta companies, and by the middle of the 1930s many firms began to close. Some did managed to produce wares for the Works Progress Administration projects, but the emphasis was no longer the same. The color and ornamentation so basic to terra cotta of the period was too labor-intensive to be affordable. New buildings were designed to stress economy and utility, while the rapid pace of technological development in building materials once again created new options. The availability and popularity of glass and concrete block reshaped architectural style, thus contributing significantly to a steamlined America, as well as to the continued demise of the terra cotta industry.

1. *The Great Chicago Fire* (Chicago Historical Society: Chicago, Illinois, 1946), p. 39.

2. Wight, Peter B., "Fireproof Construction & The Practice of American Architects", *American Architect & Building News,* August 19, 1893, p. 114.

Bayard Building third-floor spandrel: exploded view illustrating individual pieces of terra cotta.

Photo: D. Dollens

**Louis Sullivan's exuberant, sensuous nature and brilliant imagination took terra cotta, and terra cotta lived. . . . In it this great master created a grammar of ornament all his own. . . . The Sullivanian motif was efflorescent, evolute, supported by tracery of geometric motives bringing up through the clay forms so delicate and varied and lively that no parallel in these respects exists even in ancient times.**

***Frank Lloyd Wright***

# The Exile's Cosmopolis

**An introduction to Edgardo Cozarinsky's *Urban Voodoo***

## Susan Sontag

*Urban Voodoo* is an exile's book. An eminently cosmopolitan—therefore, transnational—book. And yet, in its proud bookishness and its self-conscious relation to the notion of a native language, it seems very Argentine—Argentina being something of a transnational country, with its chronically displaced cultural ideals administered by an Anglophile upper class and generations of Paris-based writers and artists. The modernist tradition of Argentine letters has been gleefully erudite, fanciful, rigged: literature about literature, which presumes the universal library. The greatest Spanish-language writer of our time is an Argentine who learned to read English before Spanish, and read *Don Quixote* first in an English translation; who, though he decided to become Jorge Luis Borges instead of George Borges, never stops insisting that he is an epigone of English literature.

Cozarinsky is a late Borgesian whose presiding literary models are—with the exception of Borges—not Spanish either, but French, German, Russian, and who has taken even further the principle of linguistic duplicity and the art of cultural displacement. *Urban Voodoo* is a displaced book first of all in that it does not have a single "original" language. Only the first part *Sentimental Journey,* was written in the author's native Spanish. (I can't help hearing in this title a displaced homage to the author of the single most influential work of English literature upon modernist Spanish-language, as well as Eastern and Central European, writers—*Tristram Shandy*.) The second part of his book, as Cozarinsky explains in a note at the end, was written in a language he calls "foreigner's English." Although expertly trilingual, he is not one of the tiny number of linguistic virtuosos like Beckett, Nabokov, and Cabrera Infante, who write equally (and ardently) well in two or more languages. The literary appeal to Cozarinsky of his second and third languages, English and French, is partly the degree to which they retain the sediment, the impurities of foreignness.

*Urban Voodoo* belongs to several strong modern meta-genres. One, the older, is the rueful, semi-hallucinatory depiction of the irreducible strangeness of modern city life. Another is the treatise on exile. The urban promenades of the refined solitary consciousness used to be mainly a form of slumming. But since the moral opprobium attached to savoring kitsch and to seeking instant sex has been lightened, the contemporary *flâneur* no longer has "low" experiences—merely "fast" ones. The standard literary form for the consumer of fast experiences, experiences that one passes through, is the postcard, which is what Cozarinsky calls the short units of his book. Not stories but postcards—the tourist's screed.

Besides these ironies something else is suggested by *postcard*: that a postcard is usually both word and image. Like a film. Cozarinsky, who is a filmmaker turned writer, or a writer turned filmmaker, has produced here an album of postcards made of words only. But his postcards might well take visual form; indeed, the possibility is already adumbrated in the boldest sequences of his first (fiction) film, made in Buenos Aires, *Dot Dot Dot*, and his recent montage-film, *One Man's War*, about Nazi-occupied Paris.

The writer's sensibility has been, it seems fair to assume, reinforced by that of the filmmaker formed in the era of Godard. Like Godard, who said he wanted to make fiction films that are like documentaries and documentaries that are like fiction films, Cozarinsky wants to write (autobiographical) stories that are like essays, essays that are like stories. His lavish use of quotations in the form of epigraphs reminds me of the quotation-strewn films of Godard. In the sense that Godard the cinéphile director makes films out of, and about, his romance with movies, Cozarinsky has made a book out of, and about, his romance with certain books. Some of these evocations of a phantasmagorical city are prose poems, like Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris*; some are novels, like Biely's *Petersburg*, or prose fantasias, like Breton's *Nadja* and Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris*; some are essays, like the ruminations on the arcades and big department stores of Paris by Walter Benjamin—the Benjamin inspired by Baudelaire and the Surrealists; the connoisseur of montage and of quotations.

Cozarinsky's Buenos Aires (the local past) and Paris (the cosmopolitan present) are both capitals of retroactive as well as anticipated longing. The vulgar or illicit avidities and carnal achievements of the contemporary *flâneur*

are largely a mental transaction, a kind of lived literature (or cinema). While the modern city continues to be an emporium of desires, these impure enchantments are saturated with a foretaste of their own finitude. All the more need, then, for the writer's voodoo: by conjuring up the past, to heighten unappeased desires and also to exorcise them.

# Three Postcards

## Edgardo Cozarinsky

**Of these cities will remain only**
**what blew through them—the wind.**
**Bertolt Brecht, *Manual of Piety***

### Shanghai Blues

In Buenos Aires the days grow longer when you reach September. You never thought about it, why should you? Then, one evening, you happen to be in the street around seven and you notice there is still some light left in the sky. It is a very peculiar light—it wears off slowly, it leaves the dour office buildings and the high window panes, as it were, shade by shade, until a last moment comes when it stands still, a faint rose color interfering with the blue already turning to iron gray. That stillness is of course a deception. While it lasts, while you think it lasts, it seems to suffuse angry traffic and vociferous record shops with a kind of suspended magic. To what purpose? Before you can find an answer, or suspect there is one, it is gone; the sky is ink blue, the people around you have changed.

It's a die-hard delusion. Late in October, early in November, before you can get the real feeling of summer, you may be walking down Corrientes and notice the impatient housewives, loaded with shopping bags, queuing for buses, or the bank clerks, exhausted by overtime and defective air conditioning, their shirts adhering to both body and jacket in one intensity of malaise. Then the bus arrives. A teenager steps out—short-sleeved shirt in full wash-and-wear splendor, head graced by haircut too expensive for the social context that comb and identity papers, detectable under the pressure of insolent buttocks, spell out from the back pockets of his jeans. And you realize what they ignore, or take for granted in unformulated acceptance—that it is shift time. Day people call it a day. Night people get ready to take over. Perhaps you also realize you are in-between—you've awakened at any hour, you've been in and out, now you may be heading for a movie or to meet a friend at some café, heedless of the well-regulated caesura that in a few hours will see the lady watching after-dinner TV, a silent husband by her side, both changed into something more comfortable to suit the hour, and the boy having yet another espresso at the counter of Tazza d'Oro or Caravelle while listening to a carefully groomed gentleman, impeccably tanned even though it is so early in the season.

But it's not as easy as all that. It starts with the light, of course, but then, if you are to stick to those blocks of Corrientes that run down from Florida to Alem, so unaffectedly colorless that the city can show little else so typical of itself, there is the breeze. With one breath, it relieves the afternoon of the slowly receding heat. Though not salty (How could it be? Astonished by the breadth of the river, the discoverers called it the Sweet Sea.), you can smell the waterfront in the breeze, heavy with the rust of old iron, with promises of departure.

Over the years you became used to it. Walking down Viamonte, you approached a section of the city that seemed so rich in excitement: bookstores, the Facultad de Filosofia y Letras, art galleries, the Café Florida, even the odd convent with its lonesome palm tree at the corner of San Martin. What did you read in this decor of sorts? By a deceptive limelight you missed the writing on the wall meant for you—a teenager, eager to read and write, to be reassured that he was not wrong, that there was no worthier adventure to be pursued.

A few months after leaving, you went back to Buenos Aires for two weeks, vaguely aware of seeing the familiar places for the last time. You ventured inside what had been the Facultad in order to get an authenticated photostat of a diploma whose original had slept for too long, among seldom-aired tablecloths, in a drawer at your mother's. The plainclothes policemen (or were they members of some paramilitary force?) searched you with expert pats along ribs and legs, while their faces wore the ingratiating smiles that movies of earlier times cast on the faces of banana-republic customs officers. (The Facultad itself had long ago moved to a less exposed section of the city; nevertheless, the government security advisors had deemed fit to call off its activities indefinitely.) As you found your way out of a brand new labyrinth of brick-and-mortar partitions, compartmentalizing what had once been a charmingly inadequate belle-epoque cadre for academic pursuits, the old smell hit back at you. An odor

that had been filed away for years, like a footnote misprinted pages away from its original asterisk. Between facades on the opposite side of Alem—brief, sudden disclosures of the painted backdrop for another play—there appeared fragments of masts, rectangles of ship hulls, an ill-defined assembly of signs that confronted you with your own figure, walking down those same steps, fifteen years younger, yet wiser, with an unspoiled gift for leisure. Time of course was already keeping its steady pace, but then you could afford to ignore the winged chariot hurrying near. Why is it that you, who have never travelled by boat, should attach to their visual or fragrant neighborhood such a Baudelairian pregnancy? Baudelairian indeed! Too used to contradictio-in-adjecto, you neglected the simple evidences of explicatio . . . (Books can only lead, like unfailing go-betweens, to the desire that preceded the reading.)

And by eight in the evening you would be sitting at a streetside table, waiting for somebody who had obviously forgotten about the appointment—or given it a realistic second thought. Yet you didn't care. The dimming brightness granted the concrete blocks an unexpected nautical grace, as if any minute now they would sail away and whisk you out of a city that so stubbornly turns its back to the water, yet so painfully depends on what the far-away shores once promised in a long-ago forgotten moment of recklessness. As the supporting characters around you changed, you felt the impending threat of having to enjoy a good book in the quiet of home.

And, later, there were the bars. You were fourteen when you produced the throatiest possible falsetto to order a Cuba libre: a rather innocuous mixture of brandy and Coca-Cola whose name, in those drowsy middle 50s, sounded uncorrupted by the political overtones that a few years later would make it the campiest choice for a drink. The lady behind the counter appraised you cursorily, and after a while handed you a glass of the brownish, syrupy drink. You turned your head to encompass the whole range of exotica you had been allowed into: by the multicolored light of the Wurlitzer, endlessly chaining one Nat King Cole tune to another, two tired looking girls, not even heavily made-up, were exchanging tips about the current discount sales; a few men sat quietly at their tables, in suits that might well have been bought at those same sales; an occasional sailor concentrated on his beer and only seemed to come alive to ask, in broken English, for a refill or to proceed with surprising assurance to the men's room. The names themselves of such places (May Sullivan's, Helen's, Texas, First and Last) seemed unaccountably glamorous, headier than anything they had to offer: the girls, not allowed to function as plain whores, were really full-time hostesses, kept awake on massive doses of tea, which they sipped with a relish usually reserved for whiskey. Their greater talent was to postpone for uncheckable after-hours whatever other interests their customers might entertain.

(How shabby those slices of a low life that plainly existed elsewhere! If by those same hopeless 50s you hadn't read Durrell's travelogues, you'd never have expected to find here a glimpse of the fast decaying prestige of harbor life. When not naive, you would be careless. Your grandmother, the solitary link between your faithless, wholly gentilized parents and a mainly gastronomic Jewish persuasion, used to invite our family to overwhelming dinners that celebrated (what for you was) a bonus New Year. At one of those occasions, you offered by way of table-talk the ultimate blunder: to more observant cousins, back from kibbutz holidays in Israel, you remarked that the place you really cared to visit in the Near East was Alexandria. Coming only a few months after the Suez war, the remark cast a frozen spell over the table. The old lady, displaying admirable sang-froid, showed you a possible way out: "Alessandria in Italy, I suppose. . . ." How could she know about that town in Piedmont? You were to find out much later, driving between Genoa and Venice, those ports where symmetrical ships used to leave her on her way from Argentina and take her on her way to Israel. The Alessandria road sign was there, a cue line to a belated repartee.)

Late spring evenings were the most intoxicating. At that elusive time of the day when light hesitates before making a langorous exit, when night is announced, even before you can speak of a breeze, by a certain unassuming lightness in the air, you really enjoyed sitting there, absorbed in the just discovered though yearly repeated intimations of approaching summer. How engorssing to feel those barely tangible changes taking place around you, while the city staged undistinguished crowd scenes. How easy to stay there.

To watch. To feel. To stay.

**This city of indulgence need not fear**
**The major sins by which the heart is killed,**
**And governments and men are torn to pieces:**
**Religious clocks will strike; the childish vices**
**Will safeguard the low virtues of the child;**
**And nothing serious can happen here.**
**W. H. Auden, "Macao"**

## One for the Road

Today I feel like writing about Buenos Aires.

The saga of vanished wealth feeds on the swindles of History. When I first saw the Alexandre III bridge it was unfashionable to like it and, long before it became acceptable, I grew attached to it. I failed to see it only as the less arrogant, more graceful companion piece to the Grand Palais and the Petit Palais, its gilded garlands, majestic matrons and pompous *putti* charming remnants of the 1900 World Exhibition. For me, its rusty greens and grays preside over a ghostly assembly of Russian bond holders. Lulled by the legendary breadth and visible riches of an empire that, on such a cosmopolitan occasion, would present the city of Paris with a durable monument, a host of eager bourgeois subscribed to an issue of bonds launched by the magnanimous, friendly power. Wasn't the bridge at the same time fancy and solid?

The Soviet government, of course, would firmly decline to honor engagements of a regime it had abolished. The original holders, later their children, more recently a steadily dwindling number of their grandchildren, renew every so many years their claims at the International Court of Justice, in The Hague. In 1978, in a dilapidated *appartement bourgeois* in Passy, I discovered the original bonds, decorating in the way of faded wallpaper the children's room, probably feeding with their administrative small print a nocturnal, grim fairyland.

I used to imagine Manaus as a maze of run-down mansions and cracked-up boulevards around an upstart cathedral. Most often I pictured to myself the haughty Opera Theater—the yellow and white neoclassical Teatrao Amazonas where Caruso sang on the opening night—its original masonry now rusticated by cracks and chips, its moldering velvets embroidered by fungi and dampness, creeping jungle weeds insinuating themselves into the boxes, a stage set of lianas drowsily waiting for an unwritten score or occasionally visited by a coral snake from the orchestra pit.

Hadn't the city itself been a willing stage for the wishful thinking of the Brazilian rich? Fed on the rubber boom that barely survived the First World War, its ruling reckless class was uncommonly helped by Nature to live up to their imaginary characters: wasn't the Amazon the only practicable way of transportation, wasn't it impossible to reach Rio de Janeiro across the jungle, wasn't it easier, once on the Atlantic, to head northeastward to Marseilles or Genoa, even Southampton or Le Havre, than to try south, sailing around the obese coastline?

Thus, dry cleaning would be performed somewhere on the Mediterranean, while British tailors and haberdashers made their way up the river, to take measurements for custom-made goods to arrive by mail months later. A godfatherly, well-wishing British corporation built an impressive stone quay, capacious storing facilities and, most spectacular, the floating wharves that would keep step with the unpredictable rises and falls of the river waters. Come the war, they also transplanted samples of the rubber plants to colonial Malaysia, where, under British rule, they grew healthily, judiciously and profitably—to be transported and commercialized all over the world at dump prices.

I know, of course, that today Manaus has been reborn as a thriving state capital, but its university or the Trans-Amazonian highway entice me less than the visions of sleepy, unending decay my father had in 1934. I used to listen to his tales, some fifteen years later, with the same absorption aroused by his memories of earlier calls at Punta Arenas, once the final destination for boats sailing from Trieste and a far outpost of Austro-Hungarian trade. Its expensive hotels, opulent stores and Mittel-Europa whorehouses were struck dumb by the opening of the Panama Canal, which came to monopolize the greatest bulk of Atlantic-Pacific crossings. Such amenities slowly faded into the ever-shabbier

garb of a Patagonian free port, only seldom graced by international traffic. By 1931, father told, the Sacher torte he had at the local Grand Hotel was stale, and a number of Chilote Indian girls were already boarded at Madame Crepusculescu's.

And what about Trieste itself, left quivering between blurred borders when the empire that backed its commercial splendor disintegrated into hopeful, short-lived democracies? And what about Alexandria and its polyglot miscegenation of greedy minorities, to be dispersed by the Islamic renaissance? They are on the map all right, and maybe among the brand-new housing developments and all-native population a vestige of the old rapacious city is still visible. For me, however, their plots have thinned beyond retrieve. They remain cities of the mind—their cartographers are called Svevo, Saba, Cavafy.

Behind the splendor of great capitals I enjoy detecting a ghost town struggling to be released: to see in the facade not so much the extravagant shopwindows and dazzling lights as the moldering spot, a crack rich with menace, the desert underneath; to see through the assertive presence the impending shadow. Were it not for a resilient allegiance to ports, Rome would be my city, if only because it has evolved a modus vivendi amid its ruins. There, the dead and the living have perfected a mutual indifference during centuries of daily intercourse. Its riches are fragments of ever-renewed, ephemerous despotism, scraps of devaluated pride; before Mussolini's revivalist folly, they amounted to a haphazard decor where life was candidly conducted: archeologist and whore performing side by side, regardless.

I think it's the proper thing for ports to look away from the mainland they are supposed to serve. Imported goods are invested with the feeble/forcible magic of foreign language and exotic custom, and the exports paying for them are so many bottled messages sent out, yearning for unexpected answers, for sheer possibility.

Incantatory names: Lloyd Triestino, Compagnie d'Assurances de Trieste et de Venise, Banque de Shangai et de Hong-Kong . . .

For years I repressed a guilty infatuation with this dubious literature of commerce. Later I came to accept it as an innocent side show in the Marxist canon. Today I feel like writing about Buenos Aires.

**Freedom's just another word**
**For nothing left to loose**
**Kris Kristofferson, *Me and Bobby McGee***

## Painted Backdrops

Palms, for instance.

Unavoidable in tourism posters, they can convoke by themselves a dazzling sky like no combination of blue and yellow so far available in printing: a slight stoop of their trunks tells of the benign breeze, the unconcerned sway of their leaves conveys better than any choreography the casual bearing of tanned bodies by the sea.

They are meaningless, of course, unless enhanced as objects of desire from the industrial socialscapes of temperate cities. Each society dreams its doom, and the sun *is* that ill-defined circle of oily yellow among chemical greens and oranges, printed on paper and pasted on the walls of the Stockholm subway. It is available too: in Istanbul or Tunisia, in Ibiza or Rhodes, packaged with Swedish-speaking hotel personnel and round-trip weekly fares into tour, itself subsumed in that stark burst of printed sunshine, in the black-on-white figures that spell its prize to welfare-state inmates.

Those are tamed palms, obviously. They may stand on an oasis beyond reproach, they may cast growing shadows on sand where the day's warmth lingers, but any erotic intercourse associated with their image has been translated into terms of a deferred exchange. Hard currency and underdeveloped economy stage now a play of rape and only the willing suspension of disbelief in historical feedback stands for gratification. Though not transplanted, they are as alienated as the token palm trees at La Croisette, facing exhausted strips of sand once brought from a nature elsewhere, and dumped from trucks on the sea front.

It may be the expensive vicinity of boutiques and hotels, casinos and film festivals that keeps them alive. (Shorthand for them, dwarf potted palms have lost the fantasmatic tropic they may have projected once; blooming suddenly, like Japanese paper flowers in a glass of water, they propose instant winter gardens or breakfast lounges—the hushed, mildly obsolete glamour of names like the Ritz or Maxim's.) If excised from that second nature, the one money can pay for, they would wither or harden, like the sturdy, yellowy, crusty trunks in Plaza de Mayo, facing a government house painted pink, or their facsimiles in the duplicated greenery of Palermo lakes: yes, Buenos Aires palms are the saddest. Closer to the real landscape, closer at least than those in London or Frankfurt, they have been misprinted—they illustrate not the tropics, the gaudy laziness of Bahia or the polyglot, epicene fascination of colonies, whether Macao or Surabaya, but a no-man's land of displaced identity. Like the city dwellers, they belong to the zombie-like industry of some urban voodoo.

Maybe because they have always seemed to stand for something else, and to do so for somebody else, I find black-and-white defiantly two-dimensional palm trees the most fulfilling, blinking, for instance, in back-projection behind cabaret girl and sailor boy-friend on their day off. There can be no exoticism in nature unless doubled by a social or cultural eroticism, they tell us, and it is the smell of the pineapple being cut in four, while I fumble for cruzeiros inside my wet bathing trunks, that spells Ipanema for me, as it is the labored typewriting of this sentence, watching rows of unrevealing windows from my own fenetre-sur-cour, that spells Paris for me.

Ras El Khaima, then.

I had never seen those words, at least together and in that order, when I discovered them printed under a pair of Comedy and Tragedy masks linked by intertwined ribbons, over an even more profusely ribboned lyre, all crammed on one side of a series of stamps. Such dramatic and lyrical effusion was justified by a brightly colored, minutely drawn picture on the other half of the rectangle. A bedaggered Othello, for instance, shrinks in terror at a limp Desdemona, both under a honey-colored canopy, with the words Verdi-Othello printed underneath, as a subtittle, on the 20 Dirham piece. Thus, Gunod-Faust go with the 40 Dirham stamp, Verdi-Aida with the 60 Dirham one, Puccini-Madame Buterfly with the 80 Dirham special, while Wagner-Lohengrin have been chosen for the 1 Riyals command performance, and Mozart-Abduction on the Seraglio (*sic*, in English) reserved for the 2 Riyals gala.

Having never been an opera fan or a philatelist, I was neither pleased nor outraged by the coincidence of those two passions—one for excess, therefore

bound to extasis and stasis, the other for passivity and therefore prone to connotative frenzy. In one of those reference works only the English dare publish, dauntingly titled *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Places* (of which the back cover states that its primary object is to answer such questions as "Where in the world is X?"), I found out that Ras El Khaima was one of the "trucial states," a group of seven British-protected Arab sheikdoms on the Persian Gulf, between Qatar, Muscat and Oman, with a joint population of 180,200, of which one tenth are nomads. Unassuming information ("the coast was once known with some justification as the Pirate Coast") quickly replaced every fact on the safe shelves of fable from which they had been momentarily threatened to be disloged.

Charmed by a style of illustration that called to my mind Lebanese film posters, the pictures on the lid of Turkish Delight boxes, or the illustrations of Washington Irving's *Tales of the Alhambra* in their Argentine edition of the 40s, I lingered to notice a much draped curtain folding on one side of the picture, a discreet reminder of the stage where those rich summing-up postures and stage props attained their epiphany. But the tiny, unmistakably Islamic, over-dressed glossy figures also belonged on another stage—one where Liberia can issue stamps portraying highlights of Napoleonic history, where the best-known sights of Venice grace in full color a series from Burundi, where a lone skier glides down a snowy slope with Paraguay's flagrantly foreign name printed underneath, or Jesus Christ is made to reenact his evangelic career on an effort from Togo. Maybe they all inhabit the boundless limbo of collectors, bent over their albums in the self-sealed seclusion of Umea or Cali, dreaming of the ever-elusive other.

Maybe nobody in Ras El Khaima has ever seen those stamps I discovered one winter morning at the Philatelists' Corner, on the ground floor of the Bazar de l'Hotel de Ville, more attracted by the incongruity of this short-lived development of a department store best known for its hardware basement than by any possible promise attached to the stamps themselves. They have always failed to entice me, even when I walked by shop windows filled with tiny scraps of countries I had only read about, on my way to English lessons and back. Was it 1949? We would sing "My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean" before leaving, as the first evening papers filled the stands with Peron's word that the railroads were now ours.

From *Urban Voodoo,* a Lumen Book, to be published with an introduction by Susan Sontag in 1985.

# Certifying Set for Site

## *Jorge Luis Borges*

*In Walker Percy's novel* The Moviegoer, *Kate declares a moviehouses' neighborhood as "certified" once it appears in* Panic in the Streets, *the film showing at that same moviehouse. The narrator explains:*

> *She refers to a phenomenon of moviegoing which I have called certification. Nowadays when a person lives somewhere, in a neighborhood, the place is not certified for him. More than likely he will live there sadly and the emptiness which is inside him will expand until it evacuates the entire neighborhood. But if he sees a movie which shows his very neighborhood, it becomes possible for him to live, for a time at least, as a person who is Somewhere and not Anywhere.*

*From the movie-maker's point of view, however, such "certification" has often presented an opposite emptiness and a reverse problem: how to make the Anywhere set seem a definite Somewhere.*

*One of film's earliest and most persistent observers of this problem, Jorge Luis Borges, commented on von Sternberg's* Morocco:

> *Here, the terse photography, exquisite organization, and oblique yet suitable methods of* Underworld *have been replaced by mere hordes of extras and broad brushstrokes of local color. To indicate Morocco, von Sternberg has thought up nothing less vulgar than an over-elaborated forgery of a Moorish city in the Hollywood suburbs, with a superabundance of burnooses and fountains and tall guttural muezzins who precede the dawn and the camels in sunlight.*

*Of course, Borges' attack on local color in von Sternberg was only a skirmish in his career-long war against excessive, arbitrary detail—either geographic or psychological. Readers of Borges' well-known fictions recognize his tactics for erasing local color—all the more fascinating given his success at precisely though unintentionally (he says) rendering Buenos Aires in the metaphysical detective story "Death and the Compass"—but they are less apt to know how he conducted his campaign in the series of film reviews he wrote for the Argentine literary magazine SUR during the 30s and early 40s. The stab at* Morocco *appeared in the first of those reviews, from the year 1931; but a more comprehensive statement of his esthetic stragegy, with implications for all his work, showed up in his 1935 notice of John Ford's* The Informer.

*These reviews have been collected, edited, and studied in Edgardo Cozarisnky's* Borges in/and/on Film, *which has been translated by Gloria Waldman and Ronald Christ and will be published by Lumen Books next year. SITES is pleased to introduce this volume by previewing Borges on* The Informer:

### *The Informer*

I am not familiar with the well-known novel from which this film was adapted: a *felix culpa* that has allowed me to watch it without the continual temptation to superimpose the present viewing on the recalled reading in order to test for coincidences. I have watched, and I consider it one of the best films offered us this past year. I consider it too memorable not to provoke a discussion and not to merit a reproach. Several reproaches, really, since it has run the beautiful risk of being entirely satisfactory and, for two or three reasons, has not been.

The first is the excessive motivation for the hero's actions. I recognize that verisimilitude is the goal, but film directors—and novelists—are in the habit of forgetting that many justifications—and many circumstantial details—are counterproductive. Reality is not vague, but our general perception of reality is, and here lies the danger in over justifying actions or inventing numerous details. In this particular case (that of the man who suddenly becomes Judas, the man who denounces his friend to the police, who hunt him down with their deadly machine guns), the erotic motive invoked seems, in some ways, to diminish the baseness of the deed and its heinous miracle. From an artistic point of view,

infamy committed for amusement, for the mere brutality of infamy, would have been more impressive. I also think it would have been more believeable. (Marcel L'Herbier's *Le bonheur* is an excellent film invalidated by its excessive psychologizing of motives.)

Obviously, the plurality of motives in itself does not seem bad to me. I admire the scene where the informer squanders his thirty pieces of silver because of his triple need to confuse, to bribe his short-tempered friends (who are perhaps his judges and will be his executioners at the end), and to rid himself of those bank notes that dishonor him.

Other weaknesses of *The Informer* are its beginning and end. The opening episodes do not ring true. In part, this is due to the street, altogether too typical, too *European* (in the Californian sense of the word), which is presented to us. Undeniably, a street in Dublin is not absolutely identical to a street in San Francisco, but it looks more like that street—since both are real streets—than like an obvious sham, piled high and freighted with local color. More than universal similarities, local differences seem to have made a great impression on Hollywood: there is no American director, faced with the problem, let us say, of showing a railroad crossing in Spain or an uncultivated field in Austro-Hungary, who does not solve that problem by building a special set to represent it, a set whose only merit has to be the ostentation of its cost. As for the ending, I fault it for another reason. That the audience is moved by the horrifying fate of the informer seems appropriate; that the director of the film is also moved and bequeathes him a sentimental funeral accompanied by Catholic stained-glass windows and organ music seems less admirable.

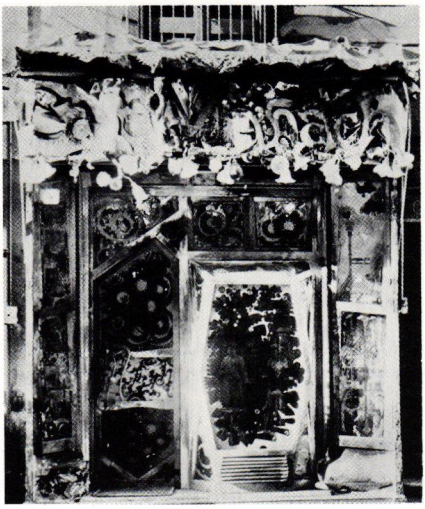
In this film, the merits are less subtle than the faults and require no emphasizing. Nevertheless, I want to stress one very powerful touch: the dangling man's fingernails grating on the cornice at the very end and the disappearance of his hand as he is machine-gunned and falls to the ground.

Of the three tragic unities, two have been observed: the unities of action and time. The neglect of the third—unity of place—can be no cause for complaint. By its very nature, movies seem to reject this third norm, requiring, instead, continuous displacements. (The dangers of dogmatism: the admirable memory of *Payment Deferred* cautions me against the mistake of generalizing. In that film, the fact that everything takes place in one house, almost in a single room, is a fundamental tragic virtue.)

# Jujol CHAIRS

## Dennis L. Dollens

Obscured in these cloudy photographs of Casa Mañach—sort of three-dimensional study notes—clues to the later work of José María Jujol additionally offer insights to his design process and esthetic intention. Specifically the furniture—tables and especially the chairs—suggest that in experimenting with space Jujol had moved further and in even more radical directions than his mentor, Antonio Gaudí. Of course, by the time of this small 1911 store, Jujol had worked with Gaudí for a number of years; he had become associated with, and trusted by, the older architect to the point that mutual influences are apparent, not only in Gaudí's buildings but also here in Jujol's. Maybe Jujol witnessed or actually participated in the design process of Gaudí's now famous furniture and later used that experience as a point of departure for his own pieces, which have largely been neglected. Yet neither Gaudí's furniture for Casa Batlló nor his benches for Colonia Güell, both completed before Jujol's furnishings for Casa Mañach and probably the initial stimulus for the Mañach chairs, achieve the dynamic movement or special sophistication realized in Jujol's small metal and wood chairs.



**Casa Mañach (1911)**

**. . . a chair is in no way**

**a work of art;**

**a chair has no soul;**

**it is a machine for sitting in**

***Le Corbusier***

The Mañach chair's invitation is, ironically, its inducement to think. Its sculptural quality invites cerebral activity before its function as a resting spot invites leisure. It's more a refuge of thought than of physical retreat. It demands consideration as an object alien to the traditional chair even while attending to the task of seating.

By destroying the grid and the rectilinear structure most common to chairs, the architect transformed the grammar of furniture design from modular, post-and-lintel construction—the standard of furniture, architecture, and urban design—into a syntax of fluid space, more akin to natural shapes. Taking our clues from Jujol's later

**Casa Mañach: interior (1911)**

Courtesy: Jujol Archive, Barcelona

architectural work, we scarcely speculate in thinking that the structural inspiration for these chairs derives, in part, from natural forms easily observed in shells, rocks, and vegetal growth.

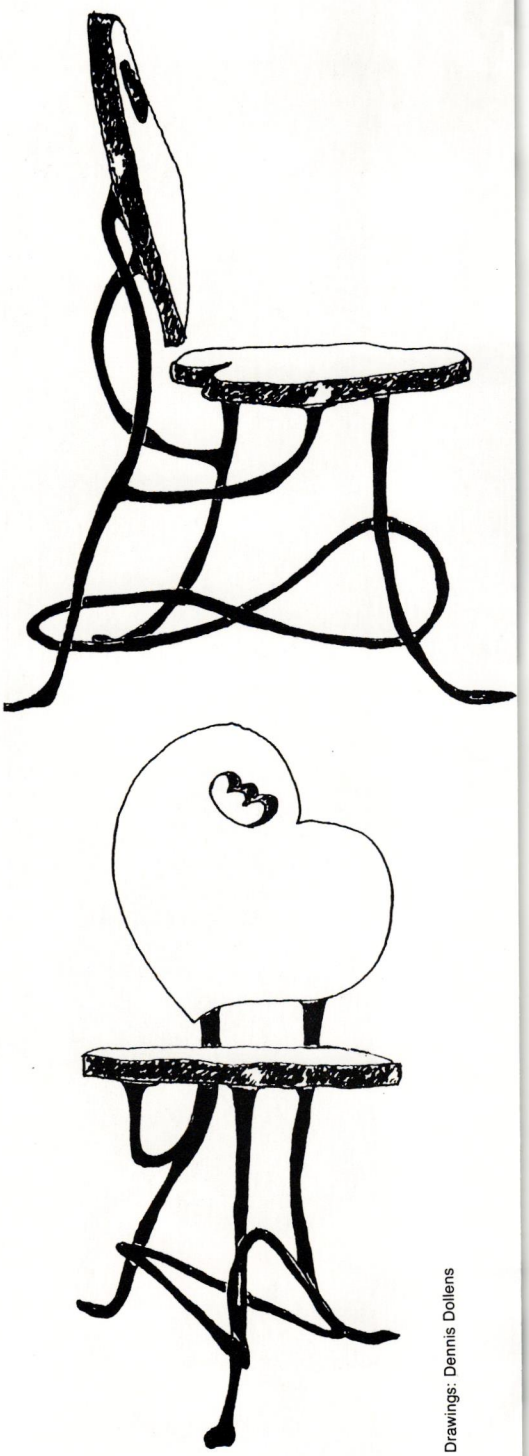
The components of the metal frame are joint-welded, hand forged, and hammered nearly round in section; at close inspection flat spots become very apparent, almost like large facets, continually breaking and refracting light. I suspect that the prime function of these facets is to physically alter the metal bars, thwarting any regularity or preception of symmetry—just as the assembled frame falsifies any spatial regularity. Taken as a unit, the chair interrupts traditional modulated space and reorders it polymorphic, leaving the impression of prepetual flux within the chair's structural confines. The experience of viewing one of Jujol's


chairs is unsettling. Their pre-ordained form bursts with life. Static, they seem alive with movement, evolving in time and space, revealing an undefined organic unit that seems to change with each viewing. In sculpture a parallel may be drawn between the chair and Umberto Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (1913). Both are static—in a state of aerodynamic flutter—while both seek to establish propulsion. As inanimate objects they attempt animation by hurling into the future; linearly forward for Boccioni, helicodially up for Jujol. Both structures remain in a state suggesting continual flux.

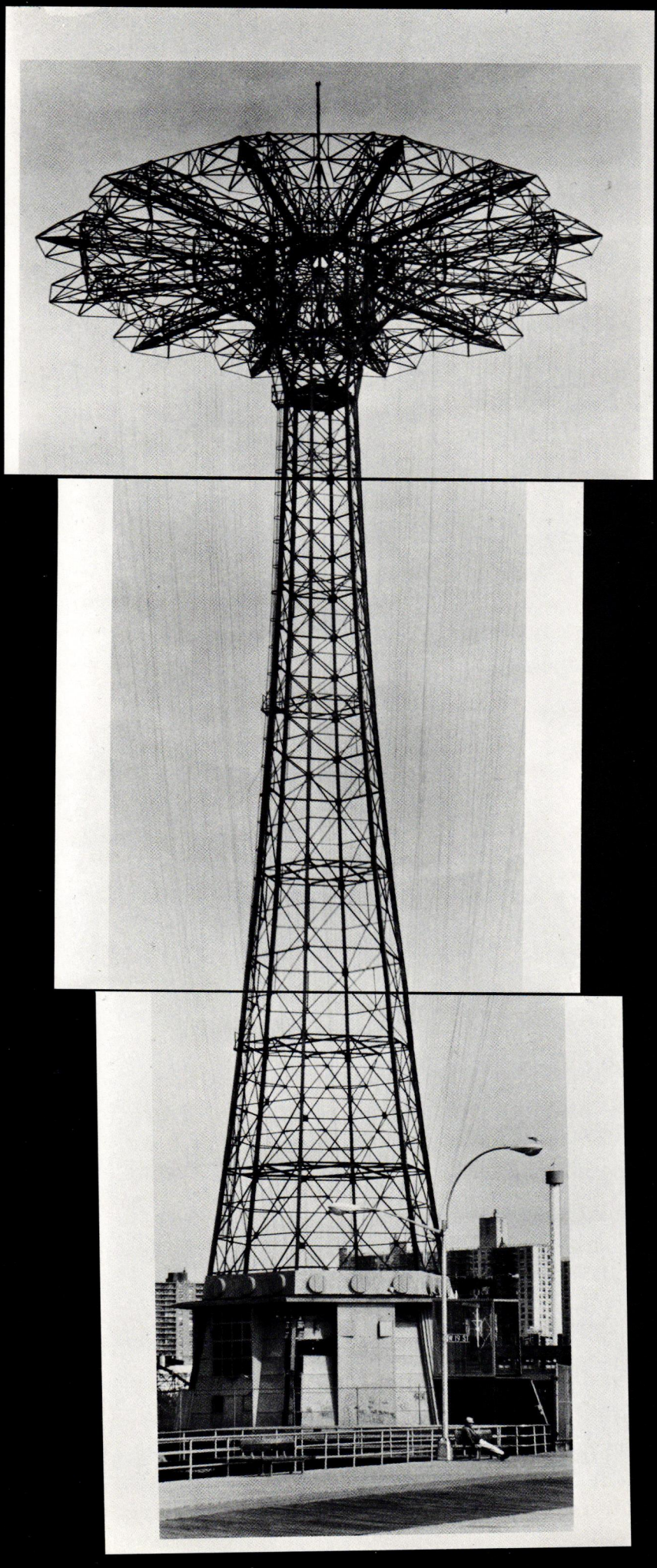
Jujol mobilizes the space within the confines of the chair to act in conjunction with the fluid hammered metal—in effect making a metal cage described by near hysterical sine curves. This frame rests on unarticulated, flat, hammered paws, then rises as a tripod: the front leg to the seat; the rear left directly to the back-rest, with a small appendage reaching out to brace the seat; the rear right leg, doing just the opposite—reaching directly to the seat with a welded appendage branching up to support the back-rest.

Looking selectively at the chair's front elevation suggests the possibility of a callibrated, triangulated system behind the design; even the wooden-heart shaped seat and back may be inscribed easily within a triangle. But other elevations belie this simple categorization. From these profiles the downward and curved trajectory of the legs—bound by a metalic serpentine lasso—reveals the triangular and triangular-like shapes and components as elements, not plans of the design.

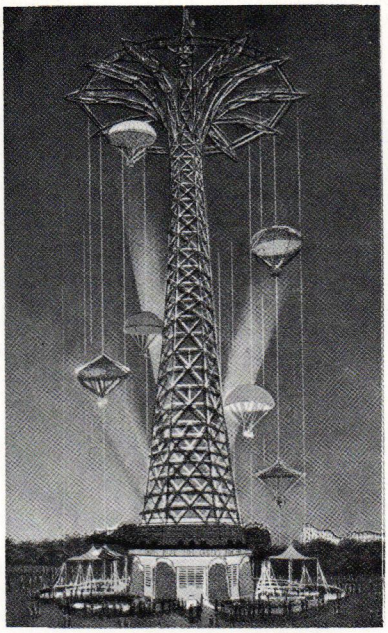
Only two Mañach chairs exist. Each slightly different from the other. They, along with a surviving table evidence Jujol's break with turn-of-the-century spatial relations. As experiments in form, if inspected as architectural models, these works may prepare the viewer for Jujol's later buildings, especially Iglesia de Vistabella, begun seven years later in 1918. Their form whispers some of the plastic frontiers scouted by the thirty-two year old architect. Their overall sculptural effect denies rational space and traditional building systems. The immediate product is a chair, the ultimate is *unique furniture of continuity in space.*



Drawings: Dennis Dollens



# Jump in Limbo



The Coney Island Parachute Jump's life had been glorious, then neglected—now derelict. Engineered and erected for the 1939 New York World's Fair, after the successful operation of a smaller version in Chicago, the Parachute Jump today stands forlorn and rusting, its guide wires dangling, windswept at its boardwalk site. And though no longer attracting lines of eager amusement park goers, it still dominates the skyline—the only landmark of structural integrity and beauty left at New York's—the nation's—most famous, pre-Disney amusement park. From its beach site, the Jump, unchallenged, commands the skyline, beaming its location to all sea-going vessels entering or leaving the Verrazano Narrows. Even from approaching subway trains (above ground at this point) the Parachute Jump's graceful silhoutte announces Coney Island. It's a *landmark,* preservable, superbly designating it location, historically attesting to its former use as well as its community's life. Today a memorial of the common man's quest for adventure: in the future a historic cultural monument.

Moved to its current site after the closing of the World's Fair in 1940, the Parachute Jump has now presided over Coney Island for nearly half a century. Initally prospering at its seaside location, where even as late as 1965 reports state that it attracted half a million jumpers a year, the Jump remained in working condition, it seems, until 1969 when, because of increasing maintenance costs and closed time due to weather, the owners decided not to reopen it.

For a moment, seven years ago, the Jump seemed destined for preservation. After attempts by the city first to sell the structure and later to demolish it (demolition costs were too high) the City of New York Landmarks Preservation Commision, on July 12, 1977, designated the Parachute Jump a landmark, declaring this "Eiffel Tower of Brooklyn," as the Jump was sometimes called, "a splendid feat of engineering and an object of beauty." Quoting from an official guidebook, the commision reported:

Eleven *(sic)* gaily-colored parachutes operated from the top of a 250-foot tower, enable visitors to experience all the thrills of "bailing out" without hazard or discomfort. Each parachute has a double seat suspended from it. When two passengers have taken their places beneath the chute, a cable pulls it to the summit of the tower. An automatic release starts the drop, and the passengers float gently to the ground. Vertical guide wires prevent swaying, a metal ring keeps the chute open at all times, and shock-absorbers eliminate the impact of landing. One of the most spectacular features of the Amusement Area, this is also a type of parachute jump similar to that which the armies of the world use in early stages of training for actual parachute jumping.

The Landmarks Preservation Commision, then under the direction of Beverly Moss Spatt, also rhapsodised: "This intricate structure with its variety of framing and bracing produces a gossamer web of steelwork, creating an object of great beauty as seen against the sky." Unfortunately, the city's Board of Estimate prosaically refused the landmark designation, again leaving the Jump unprotected. Now it stands in limbo.

The days of the Jump's hoisting riders up in 57 seconds only to free them for the 11- to 15-second breathless descent are past. Today this superbly engineered tower functions as an unofficial urban landmark, but its "gossamer web" should preside over the inevitable redevelopment of Coney Island. (Already, the site of Steeplechase Park has been transformed into parkland.) Its once young riders, now governing adults, must jump to its aid. The Landmarks Preservation Commision needs encouragement to face the Board of Estimate once again. And the Department of Parks of the City of New York—the tower's owners—need to hear public support, not only from the Coney Islanders but from all New Yorkers. SAVE THE JUMP.

**Peter Behrens, Architect and Designer**
by Alan Windsor
Whitney Library of Design
$23.95

*Kieran Bartley*

In his biography of the German designer Peter Behrens, Alan Windsor unwittingly writes two stylistically different books, neither of which tell us what we want to know. The first comprises the hyperbolic introduction that equates Behrens with Picasso and then leaves readers wondering why such an "inexhaustibly prolific" pioneer running along "a knife-edge of innovation and tradition" is rarely the subject of articles or studies, and was never before the subject of an English biography; why this "cynosure of all eyes" has remained out of sight. The second, comprising the biography proper, listlessly and unemphatically presents a few salient features of Behrens' works without making clear their significance for Behrens or us.

Windsor supposes that the work justifies and explains the man. Not so here because Windsor does not provide enough information or enough of the works for us to make coherent conclusions. Windsor warns us that he will sketch as "fairly and as briefly" as possible. Brief yes; fair no. Behrens' decision in particular designs and his changing styles over time appear more a matter of whimsy than of plan or experience. Admittedly, Windsor's approach to biography is a matter of degree. The reasoning and circumstances responsible for and accompanying men's acts cannot all be recorded or discovered. Yet Windsor stands guilty of aiding and abetting false implications because he knows more than he tells, which is clear from his acknowledging the analytic and detailed dissertation of Sanford Anderson as one of his primary sources. For Windsor, the implications of telling only part of a story were less a concern than the absence of any Behrens biography. Thinking half a loaf, or a half-truth, better than none, Windsor opted for half and left us to imagine the rest.

Early in the biography occurs a sampling of deceptive description. Windsor writes that Behrens became artistic consultant for *AEG,* a burgeoning industrial concern that ambitiously aimed to control all aspects of production—from mining raw materials to selling a wide variety of appliances and machines. We read that Behrens redesigned catalogues and their contents, and that sales increased for arc lamps that he streamlined. Unfortunately we learn little else about Behrens' role there or about *AEG.* The scant emphasis and few explanations in Windsor's prose imply that *AEG* hired Behrens as a sort of fop to prettify products left ugly by engineers, and that Behrens' streamlined designs resulted from his desire to make form represent function.

Anderson, on the other hand, finds Behrens' and *AEG's* aims more complex. To some extent Behren's designs were sensible merchandising, as when he replaced an advertisement's photograph of a bulbous light bulb crookedly stuffed into a tiny socket, with a well-proportioned drawing of a lamp. Yet certain details of designed illusion, later to become characteristic of Behrens when writ large on factory walls, show him adverse to equating form and function. Anderson's more discerning eye notes that the streamlined arc lamp's rim is unnecessarily bevelled and darkened to give an illusion of a thicker, more substantial steel casing. The reason for this variation, according to Anderson, is involved. Behrens had come to believe that the artist's role was to represent the "spirit of the times." His definition of this spirit, refined in the employ of *AEG*, was not precise, yet revolved around the idea that modern culture and its increasing rate of change were based on industrial and corporate power. The products he designed, therefore, should represent modern industry's potential to control culture. In the case of arc lamps, Behrens decided that this power should be manifested as an appearance of solidity, regardless of the thin casing.

The directors of *AEG,* like Behrens, were after more than mercenary gain and saw themselves as directors of German culture. *AEG* had grown so vast that their decisions affected Germans' daily lives. They could raise the cost of lighting a room, riding trains, or determine which region would be insustrialized next. Concious of their influence, they wanted to be a beneficial, leading force in the culture, and, as importantly, to appear so. Their *Turbinenfabrik*, that is, the factory producing giant turbines, was to occupy the southeast corner of their industrial complex in northern Berlin. It would probably become the facade most often seen and associated with *AEG*. It had to be impressive.

Windsor's description of the *Turbinenfabrik* compounds distortions started earlier. For example, ignoring the building's symbolic importance for *AEG* and for Behrens, Windsor presents the backhanded compliments of Karl Bernhard, an engineer whom Windsor claims "collaborated" with Behrens. The remarks suggest that Behrens, by bungling an attempt to have form represent function, produced an accidental masterpiece. Behrens supposedly did not anticipate that the concrete "filler" sealing up the building's corners would appear as massive supports for the roof. Well, they do, but this kind of "knife-edge" innovation is more a liability than genius.

Anderson straightens out the details. Bernhard and Behrens collaborated by working apart. Behrens designed the building's public facades, and Bernhard the walls facing the complex. Behrens thought of the *Turbinenfabrik* as one of the primary monuments of modern culture because the giant turbines produced there would power the factories that would in turn create the culture. To manifest monumentality in its design he decided to use the materials of modern architecture, steel and glass, in a manner that would

suggest the massive corporeality of ancient temples, the monuments of past cultures. On the long *Berlichingenstrasse* side of the building, large sections of glass slope back as they rise between girders whose inward surfaces veer inward to match the glass slope. The visible expanse of steel expanding in "V's" to the roof creates an appearance of massiveness not usual to steel girders. Anderson then, presuming that Behrens had other intentions than equating form to function, explains the concrete corners' illusion of weighty support as consistent with Behren's monumental plans.

All artists work within limits of their chosen medium. Behrens, who considered himself an artist designing factories, had the additional limitation of function—his factories had to profitably produce things. His attempts to find in architectural structures a cultural signifance beyond functionalism, make him interesting. Windsor's introduction depicts Behrens as greater than he was, yet Windsor's biography does not do Behrens justice. Readers wishing to learn more about Peter Behrens should turn to the chapters of Sanford Anderson's dissertation on Behrens' early career that were published in *Oppositions,* Winter 1977, Summer 1980, and Winter 1981.

## The New Jersey House

by Helen Schwartz
Photographs by Margaret Morgan Fisher
Rutgers University Press
paperback, $14.95, cloth, $25.00

Even if doomed, almost from the start, to be a place you go through—a "corrdior" state or as Benjamin Franklin said it better: a barrel with holes at both ends—New Jersey has attracted enough people long enough for them to build houses, some quite interesting. So it is understandable that the state university press, following the nationwide trend of such publishers to remind us of local history and heritage, should tempt you to pause long enough to see some of these houses, ranging from colonial to current.

*The New Jersey House* pictures a surprising variety of houses in 120 straightforward (mostly head-on), black and white photographs coupled to pellet captions and divided into historical periods by wafers of commentary, all intended, according to the dust jacket, "for people curious about architecture but with no specialized knowledge or training." In addition, there's a midget glossary, a map of towns in the state with houses of special interest, and a descriptive lisitng, at the back, of fifty communities that deserve special attention. Spread out on this intersection of time and space, the photographs—both the overall and the appealing details—necessarily emphasize New Jersey's riches in Victorian structures, from the cover's trio of three-story gingerbreads at Ocean Grove through the two sections labelled "Romantic Victorians" and "High Victorian Variety." Of course other types are presented, including a view of Gustav Stickley's widely influential bungalow in Morris Plains (which literally published itself and its philosophy through Stickely's *Craftsman* and *Craftsman Homes*, both issued from the designer's and editor's own home) as well as a squint at one of Wright's two houses in the state, and a snap of Robert Graves' pre-post-modern addition to the back of a Princeton house; but the book emphasizes, squarely and quite properly, earlier, more typifying buildings.

The pictures stop your eye at many almost commonplace houses and quite a few noteworthy ones, and the text's comprehensive overviews ought to lure many a corridor runner off the Turnpike or Parkway to see these cheering beauties for himself. Trouble is, the map indicates no roadways at all, the captions ignore street addresses, the missing index mutes any connecting clues; so, while it's nice to know, say, that New Brunswick (the publisher's hometown) still hosts "the Italinate Bishop house in the center of Rutgers University," the book isn't about to tell you how to find that "exceptional" house. (Four individuals, questioned while walking through that center of the university, were no more informative.) Consequently, *The New Jersey House* stays curiously outside its subject for most of its audience, offering neither instructions on how to get anywhere, nor floorplans, even simplified ones, that might make the street-side facades, which is about all the photos show, comprehensible in relation to the interior, if you do manage to find the house you're looking for. Which is too bad, since *The New Jersey House* handsomely surpasses any of the press' earlier attempts at painting in local color. R.C.

# SITES
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*(Format enlarged beginning with #5)*

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12 pages with 2 B&W illustrations, 8 color detachable postcards. 1982, staple bound. $3.00

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All postcards are black and white photographs.

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2. *The Bayard Building* (photographic detail of Louis Sullivan's only New York building)
3. *The Portland Breakwater Lighthouse* (cast-iron lighthouse, Portland, Maine)

**Jujol postcard series**

4. *Casa Negre* (view of the mirador) Sant Joan Despí, Spain
5. *Torre de la Creu* (general view) Sant Joan Despí, Spain
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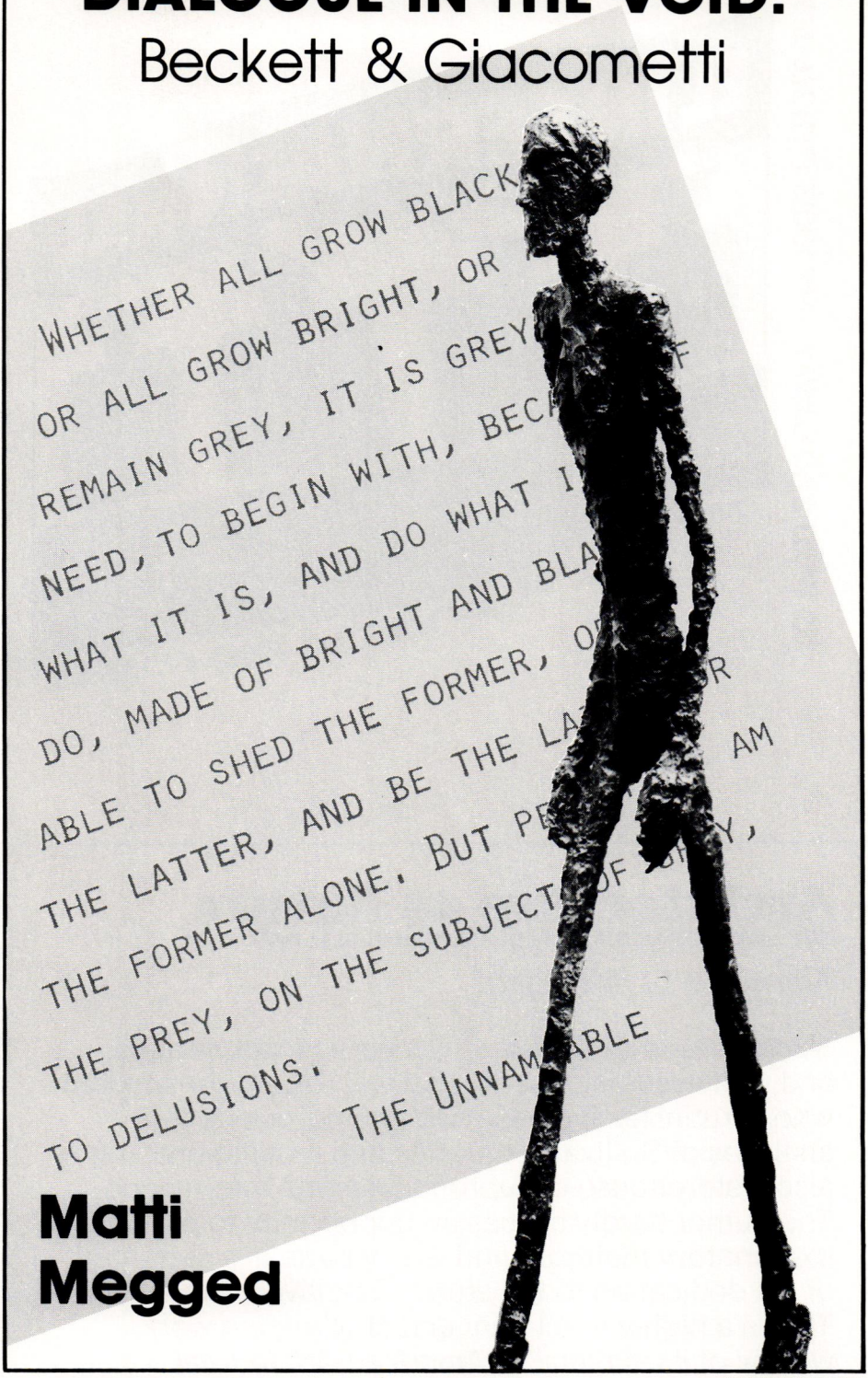


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