Milano 1930

Competition Results

The latest on competitions from Los Angeles to London
Plus reviews of events, symposia, exhibits, books
And the Skyline list of best-selling architectural books

Palazzo Fidia building estate, Milan (1924-30); Aldo Andreuś (photos: Gabriele Basilico)
We're Jumping

SHAW·WALKER
On October 19 the City Council of Beverly Hills unanimously voted to endorse a jury recommendation to award Charles Moore/Urban Innovations Group of Los Angeles the commission for the Beverly Hills Civic Center. In one of the most widely discussed competitions in recent years, six architectural firms had been invited to submit proposals for the design and planning of the ten-acre civic center site in Beverly Hills. The site, occupied by the Spanish Baroque-style City Hall designed by William Gage in 1932, also includes a police station, fire station, and library, all of which are in need of expansion, renovation, or reorganization of functions. A new cultural resources center and additional parking were also called for.


The City Council's support of the Charles Moore/Urban Innovations scheme was based not only on the jury's recommendations, but on staff reports and citizen comments, as well as cost estimates, projected maintenance costs, possible funding sources, and preliminary construction schedules. According to the competition organizers, the winning scheme seemed to pose the fewest problems with regard to production, disruption of utilities, and phasing of construction.

While the jury purportedly ranked the runners-up, their list has not been released. Nevertheless, the arrangement of entries on these pages happens to coincide with unofficial reports of that list. Skylinc has also asked Philip Johnson and John Burgee, architects for numerous cultural and civic centers, to give their own separate and candid assessment. Due to lack of space, only general urban design and architectural issues could be addressed, and not all of Johnson and Burgee's comments could be printed in full.

Commentary by Philip Johnson and John Burgee

P.J.: Ninety percent of the work that went into the schemes cannot be discussed by us because it involves the agonies of how many square feet of parking are needed or how library functions should be organized, and so on.

J.B.: The work that went into all these schemes is staggering.

Charles Moore/Urban Innovations Group

P.J.: Moore has not paid much attention to the separation of functions and clarity of planning that you see in others, like the Eisenman/Robertson scheme or Gwathmey/Siegert's. This scheme denies the axes already existing to set up an entirely new urbanistic axial system. Moore even jerks the ovulars. So strong is his sequential procession of spaces through the oval that it pulls you all the way from one end to . . . what?

J.B.: To a garage. He takes a "lump" and makes it an architectural element. But the actual function doesn't matter; he uses that garage ramp like a piece of sculpture.

P.J.: Moore has made a totally new pedestrian city in the middle of the most un-pedestrian city in the world. He has created a pedestrian sequence of spaces that is in its own, adding something entirely new to the landscape. Hardy any other architect would dare do that. He doesn't mind cutting corners off buildings, adding corners to other buildings, or ending in an enormous access to the back of a garage ramp.

J.B.: By putting the garage on Alpine Drive and the pedestrian entrance at Santa Monica Boulevard, Moore has made it so that anybody coming here has to experience a processional sequence.
Winning scheme by Charles Moore/Urban Innovations Group (photo: Robert St. Francis) plan: Police dept. top right, library bottom right, fire dept. left.

Proposal by Moshf Safdie and Associates (photo: Peter Vanderwark) Plan: Fire and police dept. bottom left, library bottom right.

Above and below: proposal by Eisenman Robertson Architects (photo: courtesy architects) Plan: Fire dept. bottom left, police dept. bottom right, library and cultural complex top right.

Existing site plan.
None of that makes a difference because the design glories in a mixture of styles that ranges from Islam to Lutyens's war memorial at Thiepval (even though Moore claims not to have heard of it).

Yet the architecture takes off on the old City Hall, too—the side along Santa Monica Boulevard especially continues it.

Moore's architecture is rich enough and strong enough to withstand anything you might put next to it, like the City Hall. And look at the relationship to the front entrance of the hall, based on the architecture of the City Hall itself.

The entrance to the oval sequence splits open in a way that repeats the architecture of the City Hall.

The way it lets the old building melt in is glorious. It is a most unusual approach to city planning. It is extraordinary for a jury to pick this scheme, with all the sensible ones around.

This is not related to the scheme—look at the gaiety of the area. Nobody else did that. You can also enter it in many different ways.

It has a more formal organization around the pool area, but it is not very exciting—except for the pavilions, which don't really enclose the square. But the park does allow access from Santa Monica Boulevard.

This is excellent urbanistically because it respects the streets.

It is very good in its planning.

The scheme makes the difference between the functions perfectly clear. The architects moved around some of the functions very sensibly, such as putting the police station and jail across from the court house. Then this [Rexford Drive] becomes a street/piazza where cars thread through. If you are in an automobile visiting the library or the police station, you know where to put your car, or drop people off. There is clarity in the entrance to the library, the police station, the court house, the parks. And yet there is still a piazza. Architecturally it is dull. I think they spent most of their time on the piazza/street—which they should have done.

The architecture is a backdrop to the inner street, which in turn makes and defines the architecture.

I like very much the clarity of the piece. The basic part keeps the street [Rexford Drive] the way Eisenman/Robertson's did, but they put in a little more "architecture," as in the dome over the auditorium or the barrel vault over the arcade.

There is a definite urban feeling to it, although the scheme needs a stronger sense of frontage along the park edge.

The thing does leak out at the top [the park]. But the axis is important. They knew, as Gehry did, where to put the auditorium—on axis with City Hall.

Arthur Erickson Archives

Arthur Erickson emphasizes both axes in his scheme, but they remain two axes. This scheme by Erickson meshes them together.

The great formal axis is broken by the counter-axis. There is no minor or major axis any longer. The conflict between the two axes tends to weaken the organization of the whole scheme, and for that matter the architecture does not relate well to the feeling of the City Hall—or to the architecture of Southern California.

Frank O. Gehry & Associates

Gehry's idea is to take this area in the back of City Hall, and have an axial movement that goes right through, that flows right from the lobby on down this Spanish Steps-style plaza over the street. He is looking at this ensemble from the ground and creating a Beuys center that will splash forth in a glorious burst. And he has created some very decent incidents. The question, of course, is what sort of relationship the incidents have with each other. And where does the axis lead? Where do the Spanish Steps go? The interesting part of the scheme is that it honors the City Hall by making it as Baroque as possible, since it is the only landmark Beverly Hills has.

However, the Spanish Steps form an axis that never is terminated. And you could enter the complex and never see the Spanish Steps.

I'm not one little bit surprised that the architecture came out of Gehry's office; I'm just surprised at the shapes he chose.

He chooses very contradictory shapes—look at the cube of the museum in contrast to the curved auditorium.

It is a transitional space, as he himself has said. I'm being a psycho-historian, but I think he felt that the "aw, shucks" approach of chicken wire wouldn't quite do and therefore he jumped into the historical bath. He wanted to show, "I, too, believe in Beaux." You might question the way it is all combined. The elements are not woven into the fabric—in the total design—as they are in Moore's scheme. He has relied on the axis—the enormous stair—to carry everything, and he could never get over that. This is the most interesting of the lot, however, because it is so unexpected.
(According to an announcement made in late October, the assessors of the competition have recommended to the Secretary of State a short list of architects to take the scheme to another stage of design development before the final winner is announced. The three architects on this new list are: Arup Associates, Ahrends Burton & Koralek, and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. — Ed.)

Rarely does the London architectural scene ignite into such a frenzy of debate as that provoked by the recent competition for an extension to the National Gallery. The scheme by Richard Rogers and Partners will be remembered, not only for its intrinsic outlandishness, but also for the broodhags that erupted when the President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, Owen Luder, gave it his outspoken support.

Rogers' design was one of seven architect-developer entries shortlisted from a field of 79 in the government's Property Services Agency competition for an extension on the vacant site in Trafalgar Square's northwest corner. The financial deal is such that the successful developer gets a 125-year lease on the site at peppercorn rent (after which it reverts to the Crown). The developer also has planning permission to build 70,000 sq. ft. of prime office space in return for providing a daylight gallery floor of 20,000 sq. ft. to house the National's 230-old Renaissance picture collection. The estimated value of the gallery extension is £1.15 million.

An exhibition of the shortlisted schemes was held at the National Gallery from August 24 until September 12. In the first two weeks 60,000 visitors had scrutinized the models and drawings, and 8,000 had filled in ballots papers of their first three and least favorite. The jurors, including Sir Hugh Casson (President of the Royal Academy), Lord Annan (Chairman of the Gallery trustees), and Sir Michael Levery (its Director) — took this poll into account before making their recommendation to the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Of the seven schemes presented, three were so dreary as to be safely dismissed, at least on architectural grounds. A rhomboid of cantilevered overhangs (Sheppard Robson), a monolith crushing a bronze-tinted atrium (Sprattley and Cullearn), and a sandcastle-in-the-square (Cowell Matthews Wheatley) were more maunderous than museums, and disinterested ideas that should have been laid to rest long ago.

The serious contenders, aside from Rogers, were Ahrends Burton & Koralek, Arup Associates, and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. ARB offered a barrel-vaulted gallery in a three-quarter drum around a sunken courtyard with heavy-handed post-modern facade modelling and obvious references to Stirling, Wright, and Isozaki. Arup Associates' design was derived from a Florentine palazzo, with projecting gridted windows, rusticated base, steps, stonework and statues. Influences here include Michaelangelos and Mackintosh, SOM's stony-faced post-modern classicism was so self-effacing as to hide its own ground floor, and half its elder neighbor's with a public thicket of trees.

Any of these three would satisfy the faction that cherishes, above all, the proverbial "harmony with surroundings" and inconspicuous completion of the square. Bored, audacious, and uncompromising in its modernity, Rogers' was the only proposal to challenge the existing architecture. Faced with this design, critics were torn between a sentimental reverence for the square as a sacred civic landmark, and the recognition that it is actually a weaving corner surmounted by rather mediocre public buildings (the existing National Gallery has been described as William Wilkins' worst work).

Presented in two stunning models, Rogers' building initially appeared a rather disjointed kit of parts, owing as much to Centre Pompidou and the Lloyds headquarters in Leadenhall Street (under construction) as to Fritz Lang. It was called "brilliantly ugly" by London's evening paper. Although "futurist" was an adjective commonly applied, it is only quaintly so, inspiring more a nostalgia for that heedful faith in the future which is now out of fashion.

Entry by Ahrends, Burton & Koralek

Entry by Arup Associates

Entry by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill

Entry by Richard Rogers and Partners

Entry by Sheppard Robson

Entry by Cowell Matthews Wheatley

Entry by Speasly & Cullearn
Halfway between Baton Rouge and New Orleans is the small town of Thibodaux with a population of some sixteen thousand people. Although Nicholls State University lends it an air of urbanity, it is a definitely Southern small town, where several varieties of alligator are observed on local menus, along with omnipresent white bread and Dixie beer.

While the Women’s Club of Thibodaux has taken an active role in raising funds for expanded and improved library facilities, not until Merrill Utley, a private donor, arranged to donate funds according to his recently deceased wife’s wishes, did the program begin to take shape. An existing 200-by-50 foot warehouse was found on a two-acre site on one of the main streets near the bayou. The building, dating back to 1900, has a gabled roof with a heavy timber interior structure and brick load-bearing walls. It was programmed to house 28,000 sq. ft. of space for the library, plus a theater, community meeting room, art gallery, craft center, and tea room.

A competition for the project, which Ron Filsom, Dean of Architecture at Tulane University in New Orleans, helped develop, was organized charrette-style: Each of three teams was led by an architect of national stature and a faculty member from a regional school (Tulane, Louisiana State, and Mississippi State), with a mix of students from the three schools. The competitors were Charles Moore (Los Angeles) with Bruce Goodwin (Tulane), Allan Greenberg (New Haven) with Gary Shafter (Mississippi State), and Alan Chimacoff (Princeton) with Kevin Harris (Louisiana State). Over Labor weekend the teams worked on site in the warehouse, spending evenings in further discussion with community groups. Each team then presented its project to a jury composed of Jim Barker and Chris Risher, Jr. (Mississippi), Charles Colbert and Peter Oppermann (Louisiana), Ron Filsom, and E. Ewan McNaughton (Tulane), and Merrill Utley, Jr.

Charles Moore’s team added several new vernacular-style sheds to the Center. These outlying support structures were to house the small theater, meeting room, and tea room, leaving the art gallery and branch library inside the renovated warehouse. The ensemble was connected by open arcades. Moore’s scheme was ultimately judged as ill-defined, especially since it presented no site plan, and required extensive new foundation work.

The Chimacoff team developed the central bay of the warehouse into a cross-axial composition, which resulted in a broad interior transept at the ground level and emphasized what Chimacoff characterized as the basilican order of the existing timber pier structure. The scheme, however, presented a confusing choice of three entrances to the transept space, thus using valuable interior floor area for access to various functions, and necessitating a large addition to the rear.

Allan Greenberg and his team offered a clearly classical solution, with conscious employment of symbolic and traditional elements predicated on a conception of “civic hall.” His team’s proposal was the most pragmatic of the series, for no serious changes were made to the existing structure, and only a simple block-like appendage was attached to the rear. A porch—“veranda” was clipped onto the old lateral facade, and each function had a separate, clearly marked entry. The library was raised to the second level, with public access from an open veranda in part sheltered by a two-story portico. This, in turn, related to the rear section, and was integrated into the scheme as a cross-axial gable that involved little reworking of the roof structure. The simple symmetries and axes of Greenberg’s scheme created clean formal groupings of spaces on the site itself.

The winner was the Greenberg team’s solution. But due to internal conflicts among jurors and the vagaries of architectural taste, as yet there has been no formal acknowledgement of Greenberg’s winning design by the competition’s sponsors; nor has there been any initiative for definitive follow-up. The winner is clearly practical and buildable; moreover, it embodies a synthesis that might be called “cultural resonance.” Greenberg’s design would be most likely to fulfill Merrill Utley, Jr.’s desire to “build a famous building.”
The Fort Lauderdale Riverfront Plaza Design Competition came to an end with the announcement of three quite divergent schemes by young, not-too-well-known architects as prize winners. The competition, sponsored by the Downtown Development Authority, was for a multi-use complex on an irregularly shaped site between the New River and a major urban thoroughfare that would include not only a plaza but also an outdoor stage, open seating, and "an architectural feature or environmental sculpture"; a banquet and commercial space; a 4,000-s.f. restaurant, a food court and bar, and 8,000-s.f. of office space. The plaza forms the core of the DDA's plans for the revitalization of the downtown area, and a new art museum is planned for a site across the road. 195 projects were submitted; winners were selected by the jury of Mario Botta, James Stewart Polshek, and William Turnbull.

The first-place project by Aragon Associated Architects of Coral Gables—with John Ames Stefanoff and Armando Montero as principals and Jorge L. Trellis, Rafael Portuondo, Rolando Llanes, and Luis Trellis on the design team—is composed of elements on a terrace surrounding a lawn open to the river; a colonnade marks the edge facing the city. Turnbull asserted that "the strength of this project is the simple bold stroke of dealing with urban space as an extension of an urban park and the riverfront park itself as the beginning of a riverfront walkway." He remarked, on the other hand, that more opportunities for "people to pause, sit, and enjoy" ought to be provided. Botta, while praising its function as a "filter," criticized the project for its formal arrangement. In this he was joined by Polshek, who noted particularly that the ends of the west building could be strengthened in relation to the riverwalk and the portal arcade. He continued that although he was impressed by the variety of architectural expression, "the unity of the material is not enough to compensate for the excesses of the massing." The jurors obviously felt, however, that these problems could be overcome, and Polshek concluded: "This scheme is probably going to have problems with the budget (81.7 million). I can only view that as positive. The constraints of the real world will force the architects to reconsider the excesses of the architecture."

A more startling contrast to the first-place proposal was the second-place scheme—by B. Mark Sognin, Jr., president of Heery & Heery, Architects & Engineers of Atlanta. The jury commented on this proposal as "clearly the most provocative and intelligent" concept they had seen, but that the forms would lose power in the execution. The essence of the scheme is the use of a number of unusual elements in the plaza: The programmed space is enclosed by a series of buildings along both borders of the site; several small bleacher-theater "sandcastles" line the edge between the plaza and the river; and topiaries in all imaginable forms and configurations are central in creating what the architects termed "a potpourri of places." Botta felt that the proposal was exceptional because it "chose to define definite episodes, ultimately to define the urban problem."

The jury's choice for third — by Thomas K. Davis and Marilyn Kay Davis, of Cortland, N.Y. — is very different from the others. A formal plaza is enclosed within a more solid frame. All the jurors concurred on this project's essentially urban quality with Botta calling it an "intervention" and Turnbull reflecting that "it is a miniaturization of an urban square." However, he continued, opportunities were missed in both its landscaping and the definition of inside and outside spaces. Polshek summarized the feelings of the jury in saying that "it is an elegant scheme, predictable in its perpetual ambitions, but one whose architecture is in no way reflective of the nature of Fort Lauderdale. It is an architecture that is without regionally." The winners will receive $10,000, $6,000, and $4,000 respectively. In addition, the first-place firm has been commissioned to proceed with design development while the DDA proceeds with funding; the plaza is expected to be under construction within the year. — MGJ
The competition for a new City Hall and Civic Square to be built in the Toronto suburb of Mississauga has been won by the firm of J. Michael Kirkland, Architects, of Toronto. The design was by Kirkland in collaboration with English architect Edward Jones. The project was selected from 246 entries by a jury of James Stirling, Phyllis Lambert, Jerome Mackinnon, Russell Edmonds, and Douglas Kilner; George Baird was the professional advisor and chaired the jury, but did not vote. Second place was awarded to Toronto architects Barton Myers Associates while third place went to The Thom Partnership in association with Harvey Cowan, also from Toronto.

The Jones/Kirkland design, which the jury termed "superior by a significant margin to any other entry," was one that Stirling felt merited international renown. It consists of a monolithic-clad, concrete frame structure on the north half of the 19,200-square-meter site and public space on the south — facing a block designated for future development in plans for a City Center. The composition of volumetric parts reflects the traditional idioms of both symbolic civic buildings and the vernacular farm clusters of the surrounding area. The connective element of the scheme is a low, narrow, sloped-roof structure stretched across the site. Behind this symmetrically organized facade with its ceremonial entrance several distinct volumes make up the 32,000-square-meter complex. A twelve-story tower block rises on the northeast corner of the site. Next to it stands a still taller clocktower, providing an identifiable reference point for the complex when seen from a distance. The Council Chambers are located in a semi-attached cylindrical form placed on a plinth in the other corner. A large court/lobby directly behind the main entry forms the central volume — an interior counterpart to the Square. On either side of the formal plaza, with its trees and reflecting pool, are a less rigorously composed walled garden and an amphitheater. Organizational coherence is provided by an arcade that borders the Square; it is also intended to connect with a future pedestrian network. Proposed materials are granite — for restoration of the main sections — and possibly brick or stone; the canopies and canopies to be steel and glass and pitched roofs will be copper. The proposal has not yet been approved by the City Council because of the November elections, but the architects hope to be able to start design development early next year. The projected cost is about $57 million (Canadian).

The jurors were impressed by the Jones/Kirkland design's response to the conditions of the program in the ordering of its internal elements, by the integrated relationship set up between the City Hall building and the Civic Square, and by the richness of the spaces offered. They also felt that it set a "masterful" precedent for future planning.

The proposal by Barton Myers, with Bruce Kawabara as associate in charge, gained the attention of the jury because of a strong sense of presence manifested in the scheme, like that of the winner, despite a very different parti. In this project the offices are located in a horseshoe of curved buildings whose inner edge takes on an octagonal line as it intersects with the "commons" spaces that border the Square. The circle is interrupted not only by the opening on the south side of the square, but also by a rectangular volume jutting through into the glass and holding a smaller circular one. These pieces contain the major public spaces and the meeting rooms for the Council. While the jury applauded the assertiveness of the architecture, they did have reservations about the "spread-out" nature of the plan and its ability to meet cost and energy conservation requirements.

The scheme by Ronald Thom and Harvey Cowan in a sense inverted the Myers scheme by placing a cube within a square. The block of three office buildings, also a U open to the south, is curved at the north end to accommodate the circular arcade and plaza. As in the winning scheme, a clocktower was chosen to provide the necessary symbolic element. In addition, the Council Chamber is distinguished as a cube partially attached to the office block and suspended over the arcade and reflecting pool. While this project is similar to the one by Myers, the jury still found it less well developed formally.

— MGJ

Chicago Architectural Club: The Event

Stuart Cohen

On August 3 Chicago's architectural community turned out at the Art Institute. They came to celebrate architectural culture: to attend the opening of an exhibition of work by members of the Chicago Architectural Club; to inaugurate the museum's newly founded Department of Architecture; to hear a lecture by Robert Stern; and to preview two new Chicago publications just off the press—the second volume of the Chicago Architectural Journal and the first Threshold, a new student publication of the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois at Chicago (both published by Rizzoli, $15.00 each).

The evening marked the reestablishment of a tradition dating from 1934, the year the Chicago Architectural Club began holding its members' exhibitions at the Art Institute. These yearly exhibitions were documented in an annual catalogue and continued until 1931 when the club disbanded. In addition to its exhibition, the club's purpose was to foster discussion and to educate its members. John Root read his translations of the writings of Semper and his own essay on "style," Dankmar Adler presented papers on foundation engineering, and Sullivan—a guru to the younger architects in the club—seems to have lead discussions of the papers presented. Frank Lloyd Wright, while he was not a regular participant, contributed work to the club's exhibitions and published articles in its catalogue.

The Chicago Architectural Club was reorganized in September of 1979 with the goal of creating a dialogue within the architecture community. The club is comprised of eighty members—architects, historians, and critics—who gather monthly. Meetings alternate presentation and discussion of members' projects currently under design with papers by members and invited guests. The first issue of the Club's annual publication, edited by Anders Nordin, contained papers presented at meetings. This year's journal, edited by Deborah Doyle, contains previously unpublished work by members. The material on exhibit at the Art Institute through September 19 was selected from among these projects; they were chosen by James Stirling, Peter Eisenman, Daniel Libeskind, Evans Woollen, and Farid Yargouchnia.

The club's first exhibit was held at the Graham Foundation, the location of the club's monthly meetings; this year's exhibit was held at the Art Institute at the suggestion of John Zukowsky, the head of the Institute's new Department of Architecture. Zukowsky came to Chicago in 1978 to take over as the architectural archivist for the Art Institute's Burnham Library, which, along with the Avery and RIBA libraries, has one of the world's greatest collections of architectural materials. Zukowsky initiated a program to display selections from the library's holdings—some 40,000 drawings. Among the shows that resulted were "The Plan of Chicago," an extraordinary exhibit of the original Jules Guerin renderings of the Burnham Plan, and "F.B. Wight: Architect, Contractor, and Critic," exhibited in Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and at the National Academy of Design in New York. A measure of Zukowsky's success was Art Institute Director James Wood's positive response to an internal report recommending the establishment of a new curatorial department in architecture.

The uniqueness of the Art Institute's Department of Architecture was pointed out by Robert Stern in his August 3 address. He noted that while almost every museum in the country has a department of photography—medium only recently acknowledged as an art form—the Art Institute of Chicago was only the second museum in the country to have a department of architecture. Thus, he speculated, was because architecture can not be collected like painting and sculpture, but must be exhibited in the form of representations—drawings or models. Thus the dilemma of collecting architectural representations: to what should the criteria of judgment be applied? Should one exhibit beautiful drawings of undistinguished buildings or fanciful drawings which do not represent actual architecture? Stern also raised the question of the relationship of an architecture department to an institution's overall objectives. He compared the highly focused, often proselytizing attitude of the Museum of Modern Art to the Art Institute's more broadly based and "synoptic" view. Contrary to his characterization of the Institute's intentions, however, he recommended that the architecture department continue to build a concentrated collection of material from the Chicago area. He praised the exhibitions mounted thus far and jokingly cautioned Zukowsky against the meddling of architect-critic-curator types, only to admit that he had prepared a list of suggested exhibitions. He mentioned specifically a show assessing the impact of Chicago—Burnham's planning proposals, the work of the Prairie School—on the architecture of the rest of the country, as well as one examining New York's influence on Chicago.

Among the exhibits already scheduled and presently being prepared by the Art Institute's new "Chicago Architects Design," a show of twentieth-century architecture drawings in the Art Institute's collection (October 21-April 10, 1983); "New Chicago Architecture" (May 9-August 7, 1983), a reorganized version of the show mounted at the Castelvecchio Museum in Verona last year; and "Chicago and New York: Architectural Interactions Over the Past Century" (February-June 1984), which, like several major art shows of recent years, will explore the reciprocal influences between two centers of culture. And judging by the enthusiasm of the Art Institute and the crowd there on August 3, the Institute's schedule will also include the next annual Chicago Architectural Club exhibit.

The Chicago Architectural Club, an exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago organized by John Zukowsky, was on view from August 4 through September 19. The work in the exhibit also appears in the second volume of The Chicago Architectural Journal, edited by Deborah Doyle (Rizzoli, $15.00).
The Exhibit

Joan Yanchewski Jackson

A recent exhibition entitled "The Chicago Architectural Club" was on view from August 4 to September 19 in Chicago at the Art Institute of Chicago; it was organized by John Zukowski (see article by Stuart Cohen). Although the latest exhibit may have "displayed a great deal of common spirit" similar to that of the original Chicago Architectural Club, one is first overwhelmed by the diversity and plurality of the architecture scene in Chicago. Peter Eisenman observed, "I don't see a kind of eclecticism of a school of ---" Indeed, it was hard to draw any conclusions as one went from the intricate analysis of detail by Thomas Beeby and John Syvertsen, to the personal mythologies in the drawings of David Woodhouse, Michael Gelick, and Tenny Langton, to the small-scale projects of Stuart Cohen and the many new young architects on the scene, to the slick mock-ups and designs of large-scale projects by Helmut Jahn, to the madness of Walter Netsch's nightmarish field theory. It was difficult for the jury of outsiders to make judgments, except for the emphasis on "beautiful drawings," which indicated that many of the projects were chosen for the appearance of the drawings and not necessarily for the ideas behind them.

In most cases James Stirling's observation that the small-scale work was more attractive than the large-scale work held up. An interesting juxtaposition could be seen in the work of two very different Chicago firms: Murphy/Jahn, who produce a huge amount of highly crafted models and drawings, all held within a tightly controlled framework of ideas; and Hammond, Beeby and Babka, whose work exhibits a more personal and historically connective search. In any case, it was apparent that many of the drawings shown were from the younger architects whose work has not had a great deal of exposure.

The variety of efforts exhibited in the show is well displayed in the yearbook-like second volume of The Chicago Architectural Journal, edited by Deborah Doyle. Each of the 80 members of the club was invited to submit one project, the only requirement being that the project had not been published elsewhere. "It could be a building, an object, a written piece, etc."

The preponderance of buildings and the lack of written pieces further the common myth that Chicago architects, unlike architects in the East, don't theorize, but build. Also included in the journal were jury comments which, for the most part, were ambiguous because they were taken out of context.

The quality of the drawings shown in the journal and the exhibit is not as important as the nature of the dialogue. An important connection to the past is being made through the efforts of the Chicago Architectural Club and the Department of Architecture of the Art Institute.

Houston's Classicism Symposium

Stephen Fox

"Speaking A New Classicism: American Architecture Now," the exhibition organized by Helen Searing and shown at Smith College in 1981, came to Houston on September 13. Circulated by the newly formed National Building Museum in Washington, D.C.,...the show was on view for five weeks at the Fresh Gallery, in the School of Architecture at Rice University. In conjunction with the opening of the exhibition, a symposium, "The Future of Classicism," was held at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, on September 13. The participants were Peter C. Padenetoros, moderator, Robert A. M. Stern, Neil Levine and Allan Greenberg.

It was intended that the symposium consist of three brief presentations by Stern, Levine and Greenberg, followed by a summary discussion of the designated topic. Stern spoke first, on the tradition of Modern Classicism. He discussed a selection of buildings by McKim, Mead and White, Bernard R. Mayeck, Josef Hoffmann, J. M. Olbrich, H. Van Buren Magonigle, Bertram Goodhue, Arthur Brown, Jr., Paul Philippe Cret and Eliel Saarinen, emphasizing the themes common to these architects' work. These included the investment of familiar, vernacular forms (both industrial and pre-industrial) with condensed images of classical order; the retention of "classicizing" planning and compositional techniques in non-classically detailed buildings; the search for an aesthetic, elemental classicism free of conventional classical ornament; and the cultivation of nature to provide a setting for classical fragments, suggesting a dialogue between the natural and ideal.

Neil Levine proposed that post-modernism first stirred in the architecture of Louis I. Kahn. Levine sought to demonstrate this provocative thesis with a series of juxtaposed images, intended to bear out his contention that it was architecture's own past that Kahn used as a source of formal determination rather than functional distribution or engineering, the typical determinants of modernism. Levine mentioned that Stern had already raised the issue critical to understanding Kahn's buildings as harbingers of post-modernism — the relationship between nature and history. Kahn's project for the Jewish Community Center at Trenton, New Jersey (1955—59), was compared to Men's Crown Hall in Chicago (1955) (a comparison, Levine reminded the audience, that Colin Rowe had first pointed out). By this comparison he was able to show the similarities and differences between the vestigial classical composition of the Community Center and the latent classical articulation of its component parts, and the "classicizing" but in all other respects undeviating modernism of Crown Hall. Levine called the Community Center's Bath House, one of two components of Kahn's design that was actually built, an icon of post-modernism. He juxtaposed it with an illustration of the Primitive Hut from the English edition of Laugier, the Harvard Graduate Center by TAC, Men's 50x50 House project, Boullee's design for a Temple of Hercules, and Soufflot's Saint-Genevieve. He used the example of these buildings to illustrate how the Bath House design deviated from the "cliché" of that of 1960s-era architecture: the primitive, abstracted, elemental forms of its composition; the internally focused, five-square, Greek cross plan; the vertiginous verticality and the focus on the righting of the exterior. Levine saw the Bath House as reconstituting a primordial classical, typologically analogous to Soufflot's Parisian monument to neoclassical theory, and circumventing the development of modernism. To substantiate the new formal system he brought up the now familiar argument that Kahn's conception of the room as the basic unit of architecture was fundamentally classical. He then showed how the curvilinear importance of the facade in classical architecture was not carried through in Kahn's project, but was overwhelmed by Levine, deprived the facades of its buildings of "representative" power, offering an opportunity for poetic expression because the exteriors were conceived as ruins. Comparing the Essex Library (1967—72) to one of Piranesi's Vedute di Roma, Levine remarked that in both "history rediscovers a state of nature." He concluded with three projects by Michael Graves — a gateway, a house and the Portland Public Services Building — in which the typological elements of the Trenton Bath House reappeared, insinuating a renewed relationship between architecture, history, and nature which, Levine stressed, was essential to classicism.

Allan Greenberg's presentation was more relaxed than either Stern's or Levine's.ocusing on the subject of Traditional Classicism, he commented on Kahn drawing referred to by Levine. The drawing's inscription, "A society of noises is a place good to live work learn," led Greenberg to remark that architecture is social in nature — a common undertaking — and consequently bears a responsibility to represent "the highest aspirations" of a society and its institutions. To do so effectively, however, architecture must be put to work. All things that can be comprehended in both a simple and a sophisticated manner. Classical architecture fulfills this obligation. Having established this point, Greenberg proceeded to demonstrate that classical architecture is American architecture. He showed that the classical Madura architect was on a par with any of his colleagues in Classical America, but remained faithful to its version of architectural history.

Speaking of his own work, Greenberg expressed disillusionment with his earliest large-scale building, a project submitted some years before to O. M. Burgelle's Johnson/Burgee. Somers' design for American architecture. He discussed his week before, for remodeling The Casacade Hotel at Battery Park, based on Lutysens' Monument to the Missing of the Somme at Thiepval.

The exhibition was mounted by Dresel Turner, who wrote a comprehensive essay on the collection, including contributions by some of the architects in the show. Drawing and models of Graves' Portland Public Services Building, Humana Corporation Building, and his project for the Federal Courthouse in Alexandria, Virginia, were also on display. The Casacade Hotel site were the centerpiece of the show. The structural columns that Sterling and Wilford left in the Fresh Gallery to punctuate the new space and "remember" the old were crowned with full-scale mock-ups of columns capitals from the Piazzas of Italy. The only Houston project represented in the show was a perspective drawing of a Johnson/Burgee's Sugar and Office Park, a putatively Shieknekside suburban office building that is now completed.
The following represents only a brief sampling of the architecture exhibits in New York in October and the images that captivated the public.

### Le Corbusier Sketchbooks on Display

**Daralice Boles**

Le Corbusier used his sketchbooks as travelogue, diary, doodle-pad, and alter ego. For over fifty years the architect carried the small, spiral-bound cardboard-back volumes, recording his ideas and impressions in rough pen sketches occasionally colored with crayons. The publication of these sketches in four volumes and their display at the National Academy of Design (through November 14) in an abridgged exhibition entitled "Fragments of Invention: The Sketchbooks of Le Corbusier" together offer rare insight into the workings of this undisputed genius of twentieth-century architecture.

While the four volumes (to be reviewed in December Skyline) are comprehensive and chronological, the exhibition as curated by William J.R. Curtis includes selected material organized thematically in an effort to make it accessible to a more general public. The sections on early work illustrate the origins of ideas that became cornerstones of Le Corbusier's architectural philosophy: the city of towers (begun in 1922), the Dom-ino system (1915), and the Algiers "urban aqueduct" (1930) all appear as flashes of almost eerily instantaneous inspiration. Travel sketches from this early period are often reportorial in nature, recording the architect's impressions of cultures and places visited from 1929 to 1935.

Other drawings document the development of an idea from its impressionistic "birth" through its resolution into architectural form, as in the case of the Chandigarh collection. Still another sequence of casual doodles studies the metamorphosis of form, the literal sleight of hand that transforms a tree into the figure of a woman or an upturned parasol into the famous image of an open hand.

Just as he recorded and analyzed the vernacular architecture of other nations, so Le Corbusier would return to his own works, sketching his completed buildings repeatedly. In one of his prints he compares the United Nations complex (1947-53) with his project for the Palace of the Soviets (1931). In another, the architect's Pages from the sketchbooks of Le Corbusier (photos: courtesy Fondation Le Corbusier)

adds an autobiographical note to a sketch of the familiar modular man, writing "It is in this cabin of a cargo-ship that I invented the Modulor sign."

Such self-conscious commentary earns curatorial criticism. Writes Curtis of the strange death-bed sketches Le Corbusier drew of his wife Yvonne in 1957: "We are forced to become voyeurs of a private moment but have the uneasy sense that the scenario has been prepared, that this particular pep beyond the curtain of an artist's consciousness was intended." Did Le Corbusier have posteryty in mind as he filled the pages? And if he did—does it matter? There is some evidence that the master edited his own efforts; mysterious gaps appear for the years 1919-29 and 1936-45, and contradictory dates suggest an attempt to rewrite the course of history.

But these are curatorial questions only, and the mysteries do not diminish the power of the whole. The sketches remain extraordinary witnesses to the instinctive workings of imagination, testifying to the creative process at work. Le Corbusier himself celebrated these imaginative powers of the mind: "One day," he wrote in 1964, "out of a spontaneous initiative of the inner being, the click is produced. One takes up a pencil; a piece of charcoal, a colored crayon and one gives birth on the paper."

### Hector Horeau at the Alliance Française

The Director of Cultural Activities at the Alliance Française, J. Chamhord, liked the French publication of Hector Horeau's drawings so much that she decided heretofore obscure architect needed exposure in this country and in English.

Horeau's dramatic drawings are exhibited at the Alliance through November 27, and will be one of the few chances this fall to see nineteenth-century drawings on display. Horeau's importance, however, has less to do with his century than with the imagination his schemes show with regard to transportation, sewage control, and public monuments in Paris and London.

Hector Horeau (1801-1872) was an idealistic French architect, a self-proclaimed "professor of existence." His projects for connecting Paris and London by a 21-mile-long underground railway, proposed in 1831, and for a sewer system for the Thames, proposed in 1858, were part of his grand view of the role of architecture in "combating the plagues of ignorance and poverty" which would bring about the "degeneration of mankind."

Like many architects of his period, he was swept into the golden age of Victorian Europe, with its taste for colossal monuments and new inventions and materials. Horeau claims to have had his design for the 1851 London

The Drawings of Hector Horeau is on exhibit at the Alliance Française through November 27.

Exposition's renowned Crystal Palace studies by Sir Joseph Paxton, who won the commission in spite of the fact that Horeau won first prize among 233 competitors.

Horeau's interest in monumental projects seems to have come about as a result of a similar incident from ten years previously, in which he claimed someone stole his designs for a marketplace and chapel at Versailles. He came back from a supposedly calming trip to the Nile to propose a monument to Napoleon, 98 feet high and built out of a single slab of granite, in the manner of the Colossus at Rhodes. Although this project was not accepted, he continued to submit proposals to Baron Haussmann for the redesign of Paris. Occasionally, Horeau would work without a site in mind, but in an effort to crystallize his urbanistic theories. His Universal Exposition Hall (1869) brings out his use of iron and glass for grandiose effects of circulation and display.

During the last year of his life, with Haussmann's work largely complete, and with many of his books barred in a hotel fire in 1870, Horeau executed his final ink drawing of the plan of Paris, consisting of buildings he admired as well as a collection of most of his project proposals made since 1833 and a few of his actual realizations. His ambitions lie in his drawings, for none of Horeau's work exists today. — Peter Rossbach

Universal Exposition Hall (1869), Hector Horeau (photos: Atelier Dufau)
Robert Maxwell

Some 114 drawings of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown are on view at the Max Protetch Gallery in New York. They have been hung above and below a thin red line that stretches all around the space of the gallery, the larger ones fixed below the line, where the eye can go in close to inspect the detail. The layout works as a visual arrangement, but there is no systematic relation between raw sketches and finished drawings. There are a few interesting comparisons of the raw and the cooked, but these are almost fortuitous. This is no didactic exposition of the firm's philosophy, but a fairly random sampling of its stock-in-trade, which includes unsigned drawings made in the office as well as the sketches that bear Venturi's own signature or that are unmistakably from his hand.

There is an intriguing imbalance about the selection: Some drawings are already well known and a scatter of familiar projects extends back to 1960. But the great majority of the sketches come from the years 1977, 1978, and 1981. That these richer vintages reflect an inner progress is doubtful; but the quickening pace over the five years since 1977 seems almost to point to Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown jumping on the post-modern wagon. Robert Venturi's own scandalous inventions go back at least to 1966, but 1973 was, coincidentally, the date of Charles Jencks's book Post-Modern Architecture.

As always with the production of this office, the projects in the show divide sharply into mannerist and populist categories. The broad split follows the different emphases of the two books, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture by Robert Venturi (MoMA, 1966) and Learning from Las Vegas by Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour (MIT, 1972). In the populist schemes, the image is a sign that a child can read (such as the dinosour on the Charlotte, NC, Science Museum of 1978). In the more recondite schemes, the image is an emblem of a lost architecture (such as the flattened silhouettes of Ionic capitals). Like a latter-day Libenc, Robert Venturi sometimes leaves blank and hits a musical set in full octave chords; he seems at his most characteristic, though, when investigating at close range the juxtaposition of figures in fine counterpoint.

The passages that reveal this more intensive mode of work are the best corners of the exhibition. Behind the easy graphic gesture we sense a difficult search. The sketches best conveying this insistence are the series for the houses in Absecon, NJ (1977), Delaware (1978), and Long Island (1981). All show a preoccupation with mannerist composition a la Potta Pia, with classical motifs reduced to flat cut-outs and applied in vernacular timber construction. All are bold, incisive, commanding — both as manual gesture and as an exploration of the reality of simple peaked-roof structures. It is fascinating to glimpse a process by which graphic arrogance is countered by constructional acumen.

In the offices for County Federal at Stratford (project) and at Fairfield (1977) these motifs are developed at a slightly larger scale. At this scale a question begins to form as to the degree of liberty that can be taken with classical propriety before it turns into scenic make-believe. What seems witty allusion in a small private house now begins to suggest a game of market manipulation. The "Serlio" panel at Butler College in Princeton (1981) is an example: A building that on the whole is made to savor its ordinariness is suddenly found wearing a paper mask, as if undergraduates had had a go at brightening things up.

These are strictures on Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown's architecture, but they are bound up with our response to the drawings as drawings. In the case of the house based on Mount Vernon, a remarkable unity is evident — a loose but firm line in the general silhouette and coursework extends effortlessly to take in the classical detail. It is a technique that establishes a unity of concept, at least at the level of drawing. Whether the classical details would appear integral in the built work is another question. In the same way, the boldly delineated ground floor columns in the sketch of the Long Island House are graphically and conceptually clear. But in the work-up drawing the capitols disappear behind the eaves, and one has to imagine the extent to which the shadow-line of the applique silhouettes, so bold in the drawings, would be visible at all over a long weekend. Least convincing of all, as architecture, are the graphic presentations for Hennepin Avenue, dependent as they are on a lefite night-life that never materializes. Depicted of Venturi's own angular personal handwriting, the drawings emerge as boardroom documents.

The full trajectory of ideas, first transformed into graphics, finally built and embodied, is evident only in a few cases, such as the Institute for Scientific Information (Philadelphia, 1976). What is schematic and artificial in the drawing is (we happen to know) in real life understated and quietly effective. With the Bagdad Building (1981), the reverse appears to be true. The drawing makes links at once to Le Corbusier's schema of the silted infrastructure at Marseilles and also to the jokey infill to the infrastructure in his Obus scheme for Algiers. Expressionist pistols are transformed into Arabian Nights arches—a witticism that works as drawing but . . .

Given the premise that the flat freeware image is now all we have, one ought not to feel any pain when flatness is extended to include the classical order. If the Ionic capitals are styled as drawing, isn't it true that we can now only retrieve the antique by abstracting it? In the Wyings (Houston, TX, 1981), the antique reappears also in the hierarchy of the orders (Tuscan below, Ionic above), making us aware again of Alberti's rules at the very moment of lamenting their loss. Almost as a last word, Venturi has shown us his 1960 aerial perspective for the F.D.R. Memorial competition—the earliest work in the show. This freeing drawing demonstrates a wonderful mastery of pictorial and real space. Remembering the revolution in architectural representation in the 1960s with Le Corbusier's squiggly line, emphasizing judicious massing rather than elegance of profile, we come here in contact with an older tradition that demanded (as Labatut did in his teaching at Princeton) surface skill combined with conceptual parti. This dual demand, we may reflect, could well be the source of Venturi's insoluble dichotomy.
Area Events

On Japan and Mass Culture

In a recent symposium entitled "Metropolitan Locus of Contemporary Myths," a revealing comparison of the merits of urban life in New York and Tokyo led to a discussion of the effect of consumerism on contemporary culture. The public debate, held on October 4 at the Japan Society in New York, culminated a series of closed weekend workshops among sociologists, architects, and consultants sponsored by the Institute for Research Advancement in Tokyo and the Japan Society.

Stuart Ewen, professor of media studies at Hunter College, commented that the Japanese seem to view "mass culture" and myth as "positive and identity-building," while Americans view them as destructive and illusory. The Shinjuku district of Tokyo was used frequently as an example of the Japanese preference for entertaining and socializing outside the home. Shinjuku's "pedestrian paradise," referred to in a film that concluded the symposium, was heralded by the Japanese for its discos, sushi bars, and several hundred nightclubs and movie houses, and promoted as a "happily indifferent society" where the Japanese spend their "cushion time"—a loose sociological term that describes time spent neither at home nor at work, but more active than "leisure time."

William H. Whyte, renowned urban studies expert with the Conservation Foundation, praised "leisure time." He spent time in areas where the pedestrian experience is illusory. "One comment about New York City was worth noting for the future, however. Following a question on gentrification, panelist Richard Sennett of the New York Institute for the Humanities commented that current trends would make Manhattan "entirely gentrified by the end of the century," in a manner similar to "the displacement of lower income groups out of Paris in the eighteenth century," Tokyo architect Fumihiko Maki responded that the future of New York lay less in people moving in and out than in the development of the waterfront as both a social center and the island's boundary. Developers take note.—Peter Rossbach

Rykwert on Style

In a recent lecture presented at Princeton University, historian Joseph Rykwert speculated that the nervous eclecticism of post-modern architecture parallels interestingly the situation at the turn of this century and that the year 1900 had "a catastrophic effect on architecture." Designers in the 1980s felt that a radical change was in order, one that would produce an architecture qualitatively different from that of any past era. The basis of this new style was Nature. After describing the various manifestations that this style has taken in various countries, Rykwert stressed that Art Nouveau was not forcibly replaced by an opposing aesthetic, but rather withered away due to its inherent insubstantiality.

Contemporary designers, Rykwert contended, can learn something from this failure, for they look to history for solutions in much the same way as Art Nouveau architects turned to nature. But neither history nor nature can provide a totally satisfactory aesthetic, Rykwert advised, stressing that artists must deal with the contingent—with actual construction—rather than with contrived aesthetic systems. "Some of us see [reverting to history] as a distraction from the real issues before architecture," he added, for it makes the history of architecture into a succession of styles that pigeonholes the past.

On Showroom Design

Left to right: Marjorie O'Hare, C. Ray Smith, James Wines, Massimo Vignelli, Lella Vignelli, Robert A. M. Stern, Betty Fiebrly, Edward Mills, Paul Haugh (photo: Dorothy Alexander)

In an evening that borrowed heavily from the Anvil Chorus of II Trionfo, a discussion of showroom design took place in New York last month just before "Designers' Saturday," sponsored by the Architectural League. It was held in Cooper Union's nineteenth-century Romanesque-style auditorium. Moderator C. Ray Smith, using halls of different pitches to "remind" each speaker of the time limit to his or her showroom presentation, pulled the event off with wit and grace. The panel included Paul Haugh (Solo, New York, showroom for Knoll International), Ed Mills of Voorhanger/Mills (Janovic Plaza paint store in New York), Robert Stern (Shaw-Walker showroom in Chicago), Massimo and Lella Vignelli (Hauserman showroom in L.A. with Dan Flavin lighting installation, and Andazat Center in Chicago), and James Wines of SITE (Willis Earl showroom, New York).

The basic issue discussed — whether showroom design should highlight the goods or the architecture — was not fully resolved. Robert Stern argued, on one hand, that the showroom should be the framework for the displayed items; Massimo Vignelli took the other view, saying that the showroom is a three-dimensional brochure. Resolution of debate aside, the musical quality and theatrical staging enhanced the entire production. It was quite a show in a very good room.

Consumption and display were underlying themes in a number of lectures and panel discussions in New York last month.

On Japan and Mass Culture

Fumihiko Maki (photo: Dorothy Alexander) consumption of Shinjuku reminded some panelists of the worst parts of Times Square and Dusseldorf; this exemplified Professor Ewen's observation that many Americans would react to myth and "mass culture" as destructive and illusory. The Japanese, by contrast, focused on the benefits of Shinjuku to the masses, rather than to culture.

Indeed, American urban theorists were equally uncomfortable ten years ago, when the rapid growth of the urban Hispanic population presented planners with the values of plaza culture, in stark contrast to the promenade traditions of Olmsted and Moses. Americans may value privacy and individuality more than Hispanics or Japanese.

One comment about New York City was worth noting for the future, however. Following a question on gentrification, panelist Richard Sennett of the New York Institute for the Humanities commented that current trends would make Manhattan "entirely gentrified by the end of the century," in a manner similar to "the displacement of lower income groups out of Paris in the eighteenth century." Tokyo architect Fumihiko Maki responded that the future of New York lay less in people moving in and out than in the development of the waterfront as both a social center and the island's boundary. Developers take note.— Peter Rossbach

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On Museums

Daralice Boles

The sheer quantity of design and construction now underway makes the museum a hot topic for architects and critics alike. As one of the institutions about to expand its facilities, the Whitney Museum of American Art has a sizable stake in the matter, and its interest has been made manifest both as an exhibit of New American Art Museums curated by Helen Searing and in a symposium held in the Whitney's downstairs cafe on September 27.

The program's participants included a curator, an architectural historian, and a critic. The brief introduction by moderator Suzanne Stephens outlined the major issues facing the museum system, among them the question of contextualism (an issue of special significance for museum additions), the museum as museum, the public purpose of art — is it object of contemplation or consumption — new additions to museum programs, and antiques equating museum with shopping mall or theater.

Harvard Professor Neil Levine then proceeded to consider museum typology, focusing on the two models of the centralized room and linear gallery. Levine's brief historical analysis was followed by a more specific discussion of the Whitney by Louis RHK. The speaker Edmund Pillsbury, formerly curator of the Yale Center for British Art and now at the Kimbell Art Museum of Fort Worth, discussed the numerous strengths and inherent weaknesses of the two museums. Kahn's synthetic architectural historian, emphasizing the idea of infinite space, because the prototype against which efforts by other architects were measured. Thus Pillsbury criticized Edward D. D'Souza's museum addition at Harvard was not included in the exhibit due to its uncertain status at the time.

The evening's entertainment was provided by an unlikely performer — Paul Goldberger, the panel's third participant. The New York Times critic, typically in the press, was unusually upbeat. When prodded by moderator Stephens to evaluate the exhibit's museum, Goldberger lamented the "banal and bland" Mondrian aesthetic of MoMA's tower designed by Cesar Pelli and worried that the addition would obliterate the original, a concern seconded by fellow panelists. Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer's addition to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts was termed "punitively anti-contextual, whatever the rhetoric." We are, says Goldberger, "grateful that this addition is not the rule." His final tour de force was a request that Michael Graves design his addition to the Whitney in such a manner so as to appear that the existing building is the later addition and Graves's the stately original.

Such criticism, while valid, remains tied to particular projects and fails to address more substantive issues of type and style. Concerns which are equally absent from the specific projects on display. Just as the projects are open questions of formal expression or symbolic contrast with uniformly mediocre modernism, so too was the panel, while acknowledging advances made in museum design since the Himbara, still failing to carry its analysis that final step to comprehensive criticism.

Ann van Zanten: 1952-1982

Architectural historian Ann van Zanten was among those killed in the terrorist attack on Goldberg's restaurant in Paris during August. A graduate of the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle, Van Zanten, who received her Doctorate from Harvard in 1980, served on the architecture committee of the Chicago Architecture Foundation, and was president of the Chicago Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians. She had recently been named curator of the architecture collection at the Chicago Historical Society. Her husband, David van Zanten, also an architectural historian, was injured at the time of the attack.

Richard Etlin

"Perhaps, you've already heard," the letter began, "Muzio died in Mar." Giovanni Muzio, premier architect of the Milanese Novecento, the first modern movement in Italian architecture after World War I, is dead. Search for Muzio's name in the comprehensive 20th-century architecture collections and you will find a silence that is only partly explained by the fact that his first major project was not completed until 1923. And, yet, literally, the Ca' Brutta (1919-23) or "ugly house," Muzio's seminal work, was admired and respected by Giuseppe Terragni, a leader of the Rationalist movement that rejected the architectural style this building espoused.

The Ca' Brutta. Just one year ago in the spring, I listened as Muzio explained how he had returned to Italy after the war to take a job in a Milanese firm that was designing a large speculative apartment block. All of the windows had been purchased before Muzio was assigned to the project. How could he avoid the monetary of a modern building that all the floors were the same height and width and the size of the openings already had been predetermined? In a sense, the decorative architectural elements were an expedient to give variety and rhythm to the façade. Was there irony or humor in their use? No, the architect was attempting to infuse his work with a timelessness that these decorative features seemed to offer.

Muzio was proud of the way his architectural had aged or rather, had escaped from aging. In addition to expropriating the durability of the stone he used in various projects, he shared his enthusiasm for the Romanian manner of scavenging that had employed in the middle area of the Ca' Brutta. Muzio also claims to have introduced the German klinker into Italy, a dense large brick he used to cover the reinforced concrete skeleton of both the residential buildings on the Piazza della Repubblica and the earlier Palazzo dell'Ars. This large building, a masterpiece in space planning, was a work that satisfied few when it was constructed in 1923-24 to host the Triennale. To the conservationist, its abstract rhythms lacked the imperial and classical references they relied on. To the rationalists, the failure to expose and thereby celebrate its true structure made it ineligible to represent the spirit of the Machine Age. Like so much of Muzio's work in this period, the Palazzo dell'Ars achieved a balanced expression of modernity and tradition that failed the test of the more radical ideologies of the moment.

Muzio's apartment in the Ca' Brutta held many delightful surprises. The young architect and his wife, Isotta, had moved into the maid's quarters under the roof, and gradually expanded his space as he married and had children. Muzio laughingly pointed to his "anti-rationalist" feature on the upper floor in the living room, a generous horizontal window that he designed for what was originally his studio at a time when Terragni et al. were just beginning architectural school. Nearby in the hall was a lovely marble sculptural base which, I learned, was the work of Pietro Lingeri. This discovery only increased my admiration for the two great Italian Rationalists, Lingeri and Terragni, who had begun their careers as fine Novecento artists. Muzio invited me to return and tour through his library. Several days later, I found myself paging over his extraordinary collection of rare books. I had come expecting to find a complete library of 1930s architecture. Instead, I was treated, for example, to folio editions of Vitruvius and Palladio. As we looked at Mannerist drawings of ceilings that seemed to me to have provided the basis of the decoration for the Ca' Brutta, Muzio gestured emphatically while asserting that this was "metaphysical" and "absolute." I recalled a similar encounter between Muzio and Vincenzo Cardarelli, editor of La Ronda, in the same apartment around 1953. Writing in 1936, Cardarelli reminisced about his meeting with the architect who had the ingratiations of radio to lecture him about absolute values in architecture.

I feel privileged to have known Giovanni Muzio, in a manner of speaking, at the beginning and the end of his career. The passion and commitment to transmit values as well as enduring structures I found in the man of eighty seemed to have the same intensity and conviction that had so impressed others sixty years ago.
In their relentless pursuit of Utopian models, the architects of the Modern Movement engaged in a Long Journey they believed would lead, in the course of generations, to social justice and a humane world. The price paid for such a single-minded quest was the neglect of the Short Journey—the twenty-four hours of the day, the many daily routines and rituals of which Long Journeys are composed. In order to see the future clearly and run toward it lightly, these pursuers of Utopia unburdened themselves of architectural memories. Seeking to achieve purity as they approached their ever-receding goal, they also deprived themselves of the pleasures of ornament and texture. Hence, the Day, as the measurement of an individual’s existential cycle, was sacrificed to the Generation as the earliest due date for social reckoning.

The tragic realization that for the sake of long-term dreams whole generations have rejected the heritage of their architectural forefathers has lately dawned on us—and with different degrees of response. As the anti-historical mist dissolves, we are beginning to perceive that there were architectural enclaves in time and space that actively fought to preserve their roots. Whether it was due to a deep intellectual understanding of architecture as an historical continuum, or whether it was, as this exhibition may suggest, the result of an overwhelming longing for metaphysical images dwelling in para-historical domains, is not the smallest question raised by this remarkable body of work. To these architects working in Milan in the 1930s, Utopia seems to have existed not in the Future, but in a period before the emergence of our consciousness of the Past; an Olympian realm somewhere in the Surrealistic recesses of the mind, populated by ethereal beings strolling along porticos casting eternal shadows.
An exhibition opening at The Architectural League of New York this month resurrects the work of a forgotten group of Italian architects. Precursors of Post-Modernism: Milan 1920s/1930s was curated by Fulvio Irace; photographs are by Gabriele Basilico. The show, made possible by a grant from Alessi, will be on view from November 4 to December 18. It is accompanied by a catalogue published by The Architectural League ($6.00).

There is in the work of these architects a will to conceive the city as a series of metaphysical De Chirico-like stage sets. But such a quest is not unique to their work. The pursuit of surrealistic imagery seems to be a constant aspiration of the architectural spirit. It reappears throughout history in different garments and diverse forms. Some of the distinctive features of this imagery have been evoked by the use of fragments and ruins; the creation of secluded spaces and barren plazas suggestive of absent presences; and the treating of solid matter as if it were endowed with an empty core, or as if it were made up of innumerable layers whose different meanings can be revealed only by a careful peeling away. Thus, walls come about by stratifying cut-out planes, and facades are revealed as meta-geological strata of overlapping masks.

To us the phenomenon of these architects is interesting on many levels. Not only did they anticipate current concerns with history and bricolage, but also their methods foreshadowed some of our contemporaries’ experiments. That their results still intrigue us today may be credited to the fact that their wager was placed on a conception of architecture as a magic theater, rather than a treatise of wittily juxtaposed architectural references.

Perhaps at high noon, when the political circumstances of the 1930s that provided a context to their meanings are more closely examined, the shadows painted on these Milanese stage sets, however aesthetically seductive, may not allay our sense of moral discomfort. But what a magical setting they have provided while the mental arc spanning from twilight to dawn has dwelt between their arcaded promenades.

Emilio Ambasz
"Young Muzio would meet with a group of like-minded architects in a studio on Via San'Orsola. The work of this coterie is well represented at the Architectural League."

Richard Etlin

The show about to open at the Architectural League of New York entitled "Precursors of Post-Modernism: Milan 1920s/1930s" brings to an American audience, perhaps for the first time, an entire modern movement that has been largely ignored for half a century. The show is particularly timely since the buildings represented are remarkably similar to what passes for "post" modernism today. In effect, if post-modernism represents an attempt to recover traditional and timeless values through the use of indigenous architectural motifs along with the classical vocabulary of architecture, then "post" modernism began in 1919 and, at least for the leading practitioners, ended in 1930.

Much space has been deservedly given to the masterpiece of the Novecento, Giovanni Muzio's Ca' Brutta (1919-23) (photos this page and opposite page left), which gave birth to the new style. Returning to Italy after the War, Muzio found work in the firm of Barelli & Colonnese. There he was assigned the task of designing a speculative apartment building on a large, irregular terrain. Instead of attempting to design a building in the guise of a large palazzo as would have been expected, Muzio wrapped two buildings around the perimeter of the site and divided them by a new private street. The larger
“Much space has been deservedly given to Muzio’s Ca’Brutta, which gave birth to the new style of the Novecento.”

The exterior of the Ca’ Brutta gives little indication that this is a reinforced concrete frame structure. Actually the oversized columns that appear to support the structure are of an interior courtyard. With this unusual design, Muzio was able to give street frontage to 95 per cent of the main rooms. Other features, according to Muzio, included the first use of both central heating and underground parking in a Milanese apartment building.

The combination of the seemingly amorphous shape and the unorthodox decoration caused the structure to be dubbed the “Ca’ Brutta” or “ugly house.” Of course, a close examination reveals that Muzio organized his facade around a series of local centers often developed like the great Mamertist urban compositions. The convex portion of Ca’ Brutta, for example, makes reference to Baldassare Peruzzi’s Palazzo Massimo alle Gonne (1532-36) just as the interior street closed by the arch owes much to Vasari’s Uffizi.

Young Muzio would meet with a group of like-minded architects in a studio on Via San’Oroso—Giuseppe De Finetti, Mino Fiacchi, Emilio Lanci, and Gio Ponti. The work of this entire coterie is well represented at the exhibition. The most closely mechanical building is Mino Fiacchi’s own house on Via Cereria (1924-1925) (top right). Ponti and Lanci’s early work appears in the form of the Palazzina (1924-1925) on Via Randaccio where they lined the roll with tiny obelisks and modulated the spaces between the windows with raised panels and sunken niches. While Muzio praised Gio Ponti and Emilio Lanci’s Casa d’Abitazione (1926-1930) on Via Domenichino (right, bottom) for the contrasts in color and materials, it seems to be a minor building when compared with the magnificent Palazzo Borletti (1927). About De Finetti, the faithful student of Adolfo Loos, Muzio would write that his Casa della Meridiana (1929) exhibited “a schematic and intrinsig

nudity,” Like Ponti and Lanci at the Palazzo Borletti, De Finetti solved the problem of monotonous in the modern apartment block by the varied and hierarchical pattern of windows and by the stepped massing in this agglomeration of “superimposed villas all with open terraces facing the garden,” according to Muzio. De Finetti’s debt to Loos’ Schöss House in Vienna (1912) was particularly appropriate here, for the Casa della Meridiana steps back in response to a majestic cedar of Lebanon at its southeastern corner.

Three other architects from this period also deserve special mention. One is the slightly older Giovanni Greppi who was already executing mature works in Milan by 1919. Greppi’s designs for the Casa Collini and the Villa Gaglione were favored by Paolo Mezzanotte in an article of 1921 on the first exhibit that Muzio and his colleagues organized in Milan. Greppi had studied under and then had collaborated with Raimundo d’Aronco, whose conversion in 1901 to the Secession was to have a profound influence on his pupil. Greppi’s work was characterized by the elegant line of triangular projecting roofs, window bays, and balconies and by the thin layering of his window reveals.

The most plasticly exuberant Novecento architect was Aldo Andreani, who designed a series of residential
"The most plastically exuberant Novecento architect is Aldo Andreani; the most splendid of his buildings is certainly Palazzo Fidia, where Novecento meets the Amsterdam School."

Finally, there is the special case of Piero Portaluppi, who developed a decorative technique expressive of "electricity" and applied it to the hydroelectric power stations he designed in 1924-25 for the Società Edison. He then employed these motifs in Milan to decorate the grand mixed-use building with shops, offices, and apartments on the Corso Venezia (1926-30). One of the finest urban compositions of the Novecento, this massive structure bridges over a nearby perpendicular side street with a giant barrel vault framing the view of a large, pedimented Novecento building to the far end. The expressive articulation of spoino on one surface and the interlocking pattern of windows with rounded arches or niches found here and elsewhere, such as the office building on Via Case Rotte (1927), were typical of his style.

PortaIuppi constitutes a special case not only because of the eccentricity of his "electric" decorative patterning, but also because he was one of three panelists convened by the municipality of Como to decide the fate of the second modern Italian building that caused a major public scandal. Like the Ca' Brutta before it, Giuseppe Terragni's Novocomum (1928-29) prompted an outcry for its demolition as an aesthetic affront to the city. The jury decided in favor of Terragni's rationalist prism, and from that point onward Novecento architecture was never the same.

By 1929 the Novecento architects accepted the criticism the Rationalists made in late 1920 that their decorative patterning had fallen into a sterile formula. While most of the Novecento architects did not convert to Rationalism, they responded by developing one of the most fascinating styles for urban facades in the history of modern architecture. Still maintaining their interest in decoration, they abandoned the superficial application of classical motifs in favor of an abstract geometric patterning integral to the structure of the facade. This second phase, beginning in 1929 and lasting until World War II, might be called the geometric Novecento.

The shift from the picturesque to the geometric Novecento varied from one architect to another. With the Palazzo d'Abitazione on Piazza Duca (1933-34) (this page, top

...
"The League's exhibition presents a wide spectrum of what might be termed the 'picturesque' phase of the Novecento. Later they developed what might be called 'geometric' Novecento."

and bottom left), the metaphysical painter and architect Gigiotti Zanini was moving in this direction. On the other hand, the combined shops, offices, and residences at the intersection of Corso Matteotti and Via Monte Napoleone (1934) by Emilio Lancia (this page, bottom right) represent one of the finest realizations of this later style.

Perhaps the most ironic example is Portaluppi's corner building on Via Aldrovandi (1929). Here Portaluppi adapted the stepped parti of his earlier Casa Crespi (1927) to his new interest in Terragni by adding "racing stripes" to the base in the form of parallel stringcourses and by dramatically rotating a projecting bay out from the corner in a direct parallel to the famous glass corner of the Novocomum. In the end, though, this is a transitional piece. Like Muzio, Ponti, and Lancia, Portaluppi was soon very successful in designing in the geometric Novecento style.

The implications of the current discovery of these precursors to "post" modernism are considerable. The idea of modernism was obviously more pluralistic in the 1920s and '30s than many historians have been willing to admit. "Post" modernists will lose their profits. What they sacrifice in originality of image, though, they gain in legitimacy by being able to claim predecessors. Since the first "post" modernists soon abandoned the picturesque phase with its pastiche of classical motifs, then perhaps the shift into the geometric Novecento constitutes the true challenge to the "post" modernists of our own era.
Emilio Ambas' Fables

La Citta del Design:
Italy has remained a federation of city-states. There are museum-cities and factory-cities. There is a city whose streets are made of water, and another where all streets are hollowed walls. There is one city where all its inhabitants work on the manufacture of equipment for amusement parks; a second, where everybody makes shoes; and a third, where all its dwellers build Baroque furniture. There are many cities where they still make a living by baking bread and bottling wine, and one where they continue to package faith and transact with guilt. Naturally, there is also one city inhabited solely by architects and designers. This city is laid out on a gridiron pattern, all city blocks are square, and each city-block is totally occupied by a cubic building. Its walls are blind, without windows or doors.

The inhabitants of this city pride themselves on being each radically different from the other. Visitors to the city claim, however, that all inhabitants have one common trait: They are all unhappy with the city they inherited; and moreover, concur that it is possible to divide the citizens into several distinct groups. The members of one of the groups live inside the building blocks. Conscious of the impossibility of communicating with others, each of them, in the isolation of his own block, builds and demolishes every day, a new physical setting. To these constructions they sometimes give forms which they recover from their private memories; on other occasions, these constructs are intended to represent what they envision communal life may be on the outside.

Another group dwells in the streets. Either as individuals or as members of often conflicting sub-groups, they have one common goal: to destroy the blocks which define the streets. For that purpose they march along chanting invocations, or write on the walls words and symbols which they believe are endowed with the power to bring about their will.

There is one group whose members sit on top of the buildings. There they await the emergence of the first leaf of grass from the roof that will announce the arrival of the Millennium. As of late, rumors have been circulating that some members of the group dwelling in the streets have climbed up to the building's rooftops, hoping that from this vantage point they would be able to see whether the legendary people of the countryside have begun their much-predicted march against the city, or whether they have rather opted for building a new city outside the boundaries of the old one.

The Mythological Foundation of Buenos Aires

It seems to me a tale that Buenos Aires ever started: I judge her as eternal as the water and the sky.

Borges, Cadausen San Martin

Limits

Buenos Aires has as limits the Rio de la Plata to the East, the Río de la Plata to the West, the Vicinity to the North. Two sides of water, one past, one of future.

...Sides? She has only four, for there are only four cardinal points. Four faces and two doors. Through the door of earth the country enters, through that of water, he goes out.

Martinez Estrada, Las Cuatro Caras

Sky

The Argentine sky? Yes, the sole great consolation. For I have seen this sky from the limitless Pampas, punctuated here and there by a few weeping willows, solemnized, shimmering in the day as in the night with a blue transparent light or swarming with stars. This celestial courtyard is on the four horizons.

Le Corbusier, Precisions

Pampa

Pampas, Indian voice for space, land where man stands alone as an abstract being who would have to reconstitute the history of the species—or to conclude it.

Martinez Estrada, Los Seniores de la Nada


La Pampa

The Memorable Horizontal

All at once, above the first illuminated beacon, I saw Buenos Aires. The uniform river, flat, without limits to the left and to right; above your Argentine sky so filled with stars; and Buenos Aires, this phenomenal line of light beginning on the right as infinity and fleeting to the left toward infinity. Nothing else, except, at the center of the line of light, the electric glitter which announces the heart of the city. The simple meeting of the Pampas and the river in one line, illuminated the night from one end to the other.

Mirage, miracle of the night, the simple punctuation regular and infinite of the lights of the city describes what Buenos Aires is in the eyes of the voyager. This vision remained for me intense and impressive. I thought: nothing exists in Buenos Aires; but what a strong and majestic line.

Le Corbusier, Precisions

Fables

The roofs

London and New York are metropolitan symbols of two islands. Buenos Aires has been engendered and conceived by the plains. Horizontal surface is this key word. New York is all facades. Buenos Aires is all roof. From the sky New York is a honeycomb of masonry silhouettes. Buenos Aires is plains and sky. In the same manner as one has to see the Pampas from below because it continues until it fuses with the firmament (and it can be said that it is more sky than land), one has to see the city from 1,500 kilometers high (for the real facade of Buenos Aires is its roof).

The city is an immense roof, carefully gripped, as if it were a pavement. A floor was laid over the earth, on top of this another, and thus the land gets built resembling the layers of pampas earth.

Martinez Estrada, Desde el Cielo

Streets

Buenos Aires is the faithful image of the great plain that, encircling her, has its straightness continued in the multitude of the streets and houses. The horizontal lines overcame the vertical. The perspectives—of one and two story dwellings lined up and facing one another for miles, and miles of asphalt and stone—are too easy to be believed. Each crossroad intersected by four infinities.

Borges, Las Calles

Streets of Buenos Aires, designed for the long vistas, all the way to the horizon. Through those straight infinite streets, along those gutters, the country empties into the cities, the cities empty into Buenos Aires, and all of them empty into the river.

Martinez Estrada, Pampa y Techos

Ideal City

The man on the interior has stripped Buenos Aires of any materiality and transformed her into a formidable empire of the best that exists in our reality and in our imagination. Thus, Buenos Aires is the center of a circumference formed by the most populated points and cultivated by the interior. They are all at the same distance. They are peripheral as she is center. As in Borges’ "Ficción," where nature is space, Buenos Aires remained, "an infinite sphere with a center in all parts and a circumference nowhere."
Bellow'sords.

Ross Miller

With his latest novel, The Dean's December, Saul Bellow reaped a dividend on the enormous debt he has already incurred. Bellow's description of Bucharest, he makes architecture prominent. As a famous author, Bellow's readers—like Gogol and Kafka, in whose work the built environment was as much a character as the torturous protagonist. Bellow—like his predecessors—clearly relates the narrowing of personal and political possibilities to the architectural liberalness of the urban setting.

He suggests disquieting relationships between man and the products of the mind. In this sense, the modern city—be it manifested in the architecture of Bucharest, Chicago, or New York—is the modern mind projected and objectified. The city is man. If contemporary Bucharest, under a rigid control, shrinks the human spirit, Chicago stretches the framework of social expectations in its grandeur. Chicago is often considered as inevitable extremes of contemporary life. Irrespective of their particular political structures, both are ultimately destructive environments. One contracts, folds in upon itself, and implodes; the other expands, dislocates, is an archipelago. Architecture, like a face revealing psychic weariness, is in the public expression of things too disgusting to discuss.

But through their architecture cities do talk and sometimes even reveal secrets. Albert Corde, Bellow's principal character, speaks of Bucharest's "air sadness." Corde, dean of a Chicago college, is in a city seven thousand miles from home to attend his dying mother-in-law. He and his wife Minna are pressed into a typically bleak Eastern European room as they await official letters to list the death of his mother. The architecture seems to be a conspiree—yet another emanation of the solid bureaucratic mind. "December brown" sets in at about three in the afternoon. By four it had climbed the stupefied of the walls, the gray of Communist residential blocks; brown darkness took over the pavements, and then came back again from the pavements more thickly and isolated the street lamps.

The physical and spiritual darkness of Eastern European architecture is present in Bellow's view, by its society's all-too-human pettiness. Studying the architecture, one can understand the culture in a palpable way. Bellow interposes scenes of Chicago with those of Bucharest, suggesting a comparison on two unlikely cities. The "air extreme"—Dean Corde's wife is a celebrated astronomer—these wildly different places, separated by a huge distance, appear together at the same moment in Corde's mind. For Corde, the two cities begin to mirror each other until the physical results of Romanian oppression are indistinguishable from those of American freedom. The defiled and gritty Baroque palace and the dilapidated triple-decker apartment are merely two corners of modern architectural ruins. Both have come to be associated with a progressive limiting of human freedom. In Bucharest, one cannot comfort a dying mother; in Chicago, a student seeking relief from the grim routine of study is killed by a man he thought to be a friend.

Saul Bellow's vision over the past twenty-five years has unquestionably grown darker. In Henderson the Rain King (1958) and earlier stories the problem was more "nature going to extremes" and the built environment doing so. In The Dean's December, Bellow sees with the astronomer's cold eye the world man has made. From this vantage point it is now the City, as well as the Heavens and Nature, that has somehow moved beyond man's control. As an ironic response, Bellow argues, it is better to observe coolly than to pretend you are in control. Architects must understand that they do not define the city's condition; rather, they work boldly around it.

The modern city acts as a giant mirror, reflecting man's extremes. In Bucharest the architecture is heavy, ornate, and bleak. The newer architecture of Chicago, or the other hand, gleams in a tight metallic skin as older sections sprawl in decay to the west.

The modern city acts as a giant mirror, reflecting man's extremes. In Bucharest the architecture is heavy, ornate, and bleak. The newer architecture of Chicago, or the other hand, gleams in a tight metallic skin as older sections sprawl in decay to the west. The Eastern European feeling of claustrophobia. But in America, unlike Rumania, human possibilities are not limited by the State. Instead, freedom here constitutes more slowly as human beings lose all sense of a solidified destiny. Nature is literally trashed until it is stunted; the city is overworked until it is barely able to support life. Yet in spite of this, we all still work the soil. In a city like New York man feel this failure most acutely. He can be habitually frightened on the street not by a Soviet bureaucrat, but by his own paranoia affirmed by experience. Paradoxically, because the built environment encourages a stimulating anarchy, even Sammler, who has survived the Holocaust, can now in his "pathologic life" enjoy the spectacle, suspended between the cold deadness of an Upper West Side gloom palace and the lure of the street. After observing the pickpocket elegantly plying his trade on a bus, Sammler is momentarily transformed. He sees vividly. He "received from the crime the benefit of an enlarged vision. The air was brighter—late afternoon, daylight saving time. The world, Riverside Drive, was wickedly lighted up."

In The Dean's December Saul Bellow has trouble admitting as much of this vision into the Bucharest/Chicago cityscape. Unlike his view of New York in The Victim (1947), Seize the Day (1956), and Mr. Sammler's Planet, or of Chicago in Humboldt's Gift (1975), Bellow's perceptions are now more those of the astronomer, passionate feelings? Carry them into what setting?" Neither contemporary architects nor Saul Bellow yet have the answer.

Saul Bellow's subject remains the relationship between man's mind and the urban world. To his credit he has always strained to make great connections. His latest novel, however, too often looks and lurches under the burden. The narrative cracks as it tries to carry its tremendous weight: Bellow is never able to achieve a smooth integration of the plot with the motivating ideas. But the novel is still provocative, especially when considered with his other work. Bellow addresses people who find themselves, in the midst between stark gloom—the actual end of possibilities represented by a city like Bucharest—and the anarchy of Chicago. He tries to reassure those who cannot achieve an "adequate" attitude that in the world of fiction, passion and withdrawal. Architecture, too, must build more for that middle ground, for in the tension between these extremes lies the passion of life and the achievement of art.
Gino Valle has designed a new building in downtown Manhattan for the Banca Commercial Italiana, which is moving its New York branch office into the old Lehman Brothers building at One William Street and the site next to it. The existing 11-story building was designed by Francis M. Kimball and constructed in 1907. Valle's structure for the "annex" on the adjacent site is not only the same height as the older building, but will also be faced in limestone, as is the existing one, with black granite coursing. A tower at one corner, with an aluminum "binnacle" rising at the top, echoes the form of the Kimball design on the opposite corner of the building. Valle's detailing creates a minimalist mirror image of the main building in an individualistic yet sympathetic relationship to the styles and proportions of the older neighborhood. His addition appears as the second half of a single building with a dual identity, both traditional and modern. According to BCI, the foundations for the new building are in and they expect to begin construction of the steel structure during the last week of October; Valle is working in association with Jeremy P. Lang & Associates and Fred L. Liebmann. Plans for the new branch also include a complete interior remodeling of the Kimball building. The bank does intend to keep the original banking floor with its travertine entrance hall and gold-leaf coffered ceiling, but designs are not settled on the rest of the project. The bank hopes to move in by early 1984. — MGJ
Armchair Notes

Three furniture design lauds timed to precede and end Designers' Saturday activities on October 14 to 16 in New York attracted much attention this past month. First several thousand architects, designers, journalists, and people in the furniture business flocked to Knoll International's Soho showroom to see the new line of nine wood tables and chairs designed by Richard Meier. The elegance and craftsmanship of the 27 tables and chairs in different finishes — black lacquer, white lacquer, and natural wood — with

Cassandra sideboard by Ettore Sottsass (photo courtesy Furniture of the Twentieth Century)

Richard Meier and Van Swid, Design Manager of Knoll (plaque: Dorothy Alexander)

marble and tenon joints drew much praise, along with questions about price ($400 to $6,075) and specifications about comfort. The furniture was developed over a period of three years with Knoll's Design Manager, Van Swid. Other furniture also introduced — Lucia Meretti's granite tables and elliptical sections and Carlo Ratti's rocker — will get even more attention, judging from comments, didn't seem to spark as much jealousy and desire.

Appropriately, the second event focused on the wood chair, with a very crowded book party at the Urban Center for The Wood Chair in America, published by Estelle Braddock and Stephen Braddock. The book features succinct and useful historical texts and a glossary of wood chairs as well as a section on the design and craftsmanship of chairs designed by Ward Bennett, sold through Braddock Associates, Inc. The book, thus could be accused of being promotional, but the text by C. Ray Smith and Marian Page and the design and production by Michael Donovan and Nancy Green make it educational.

The third event terminated Designers' Saturday festivities. "Memphis at Midnight," a party given by Furniture of the Twentieth Century, displayed new designs of the Milan furniture group by Ettore Sottsass, Marco Zanini and George James Snowden among others. The furniture, executed in humorous, vigorous, fifteen-gash style, was upstaged only by the costumes of the hundreds of guests.

Oak Barrel Chair (1964), Frank Lloyd Wright

Projects and People

In San Francisco, John Portman & Associates is the architect for a pair of towers totaling 600,000 sq. ft. on two parcels recently acquired by the Rockefeller Center Development Corp. adjacent to the Embarcadero: BCDC has also bought the adjoining Federal Reserve Building which it plans to renovate... In New York. Dee Scott, Architect, has been commissioned as both architect and interior designer for the Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corp. American headquarters, which will occupy the former Playboy Club Building on 59th Street. The 10-story structure will be stripped to its frame and a penthouse will be added. Scott is currently exploring several facade approaches and reports that the program should be fully developed by the end of the year. Construction will probably not start before next spring...

In Hastings-on-Hudson: A group of developers that includes golfer Jack Nicklaus is building 200 condominium units overlooking the oldest golf course in America (1890) at St. Andrews Country Club. Robert A. M. Stern is the design architect for the project and is working with Davies & Poe of Tulsa, Okla. White Nicklaus is redesigning the course. Stern will also be renovating the Clubhouse — built in 1891, reputedly by Stanford White, and expanded by Hoppin & Koen in 1913 — and remodeling the Andrew Carnegie Mansion on the property as a recreation center. Construction of the model units is now underway; construction of the first group of about 75 units should begin in the spring...

In Cambridge: Ian Woodman, a New York based architect, developer, art collector and 1927 recipient of an M.Arch from Harvard has endowed the Ian Woodman Professorship in Architecture at his alma mater. The third named professorship to be created at the GSD, this is also the first fully endowed chair in architecture to be established there at the specific request of a donor...

Myron Goldsmith, institute research professor at IIT and partner of SOM in Chicago, has been appointed the Eliot Noyes Visiting Fellow at Harvard's GSD for the fall term.
New York's subways are known for many things, good as well as bad, but they have surely been associated with culture. This could change under a pilot program that seeks to give their platforms a "live" presence (see next week's story) and make them stations a "vivid presence" underground by redesigning the stations themselves. The program, jointly sponsored by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the Municipal Art Society with Alesia Lalli as design consultant, involves two stations for which a total of $87 million in renovation funds have been allocated—Fifth Avenue/53rd Street and Astor Place—and two for which money is still being sought—66th Street/Lincoln Center and Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn.

The IND's Fifth Avenue/53rd Street station is near four museums, the Urban Center, and Donnell Library. In a scheme seemingly inspired by the Louvre station in Paris with its platform reproductions from the museum above, Pomoy, Ledbetter Associates and Pentagram Design call for illuminated "culture boxes" containing exhibits and displays from the nearby institutions and possible television exhibits from the Museum of Broadcasting.

For the Astor Place station on the Lexington Avenue IRT, Prentice and Chan, Oldhausen, together with Milton Glaser Associates, were retained to renovate the station serving Cooper Union, NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, and the Public Theater, as well as galleries, off-off-Broadway theaters, and movie houses. But the Astor Place renovation has sparked a controversy. The Landmarks Preservation Commission reviewed the plans of the landmark station—and rejected a portion of them. The agency objects to Oldhausen's proposal to cover up the badly damaged original glass tile encasing the walls. While the renovation proposal says no material matching the original tile is readily available, the Commission says it has found a Beau fron making such tile—at a price much less than the new glazed tile. As a government agency, the MTA is not legally bound to follow the Commission's recommendation, and so far the MTA has not agreed to make changes. But design consultant Lalli does not believe the MTA would overlook Landmarks, and presumably the Municipal Art Society would also find any such overruling an embarrassment.

For the 66th Street station on the Seventh Avenue IRT, architect Richard Dattner would install large, well-lit posters from Lincoln Center's institutions, a three-dimensional model of the neighborhood, and closed circuit television to show passengers what is being performed above. And at the IRT's Eastern Parkway station in Brooklyn, which abuts the Brooklyn Museum, the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, and the Brooklyn Public Library, posters, signs, and other displays would inform passengers about the three institutions; the design team selected was Edwin Schlossberg Inc. and Twelve Associates. Private and government funds will be sought to implement these plans.

The "Culture Stations" program raises the question of whether these scarce capital funds could be better spent directly on improving service. Carllyn Meyer of Straphangers, a subway monitoring group, said she could think of many alternative subway projects that deserve priority and would actually increase ridership. But consultant Lalli argues the MTA intends to make many other improvements, too, and that the "Culture Station" program is only one part of a major attempt to "turn around" the subway system.

Peter Freiberg

Subways

Fifth Avenue/3rd Street subway station

New York’s subways are known for many things, good as well as bad, but they have surely been associated with culture. This could change under a pilot program that seeks to give their platforms a "live" presence (see next week's story) and make them stations a "vivid presence" underground by redesigning the stations themselves. The program, jointly sponsored by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the Municipal Art Society with Alesia Lalli as design consultant, involves two stations for which a total of $87 million in renovation funds have been allocated—Fifth Avenue/3rd Street and Astor Place—and two for which money is still being sought—66th Street/Lincoln Center and Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn.

The IND's Fifth Avenue/53rd Street station is near four museums, the Urban Center, and Donnell Library. In a scheme seemingly inspired by the Louvre station in Paris with its platform reproductions from the museum above, Pomoy, Ledbetter Associates and Pentagram Design call for illuminated "culture boxes" containing exhibits and displays from the nearby institutions and possible television exhibits from the Museum of Broadcasting.

For the Astor Place station on the Lexington Avenue IRT, Prentice and Chan, Oldhausen, together with Milton Glaser Associates, were retained to renovate the station serving Cooper Union, NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, and the Public Theater, as well as galleries, off-off-Broadway theaters, and movie houses. But the Astor Place renovation has sparked a controversy. The Landmarks Preservation Commission reviewed the plans of the landmark station—and rejected a portion of them. The agency objects to Oldhausen's proposal to cover up the badly damaged original glass tile encasing the walls. While the renovation proposal says no material matching the original tile is readily available, the Commission says it has found a Beau fron making such tile—at a price much less than the new glazed tile. As a government agency, the MTA is not legally bound to follow the Commission's recommendation, and so far the MTA has not agreed to make changes. But design consultant Lalli does not believe the MTA would overlook Landmarks, and presumably the Municipal Art Society would also find any such overruling an embarrassment.

For the 66th Street station on the Seventh Avenue IRT, architect Richard Dattner would install large, well-lit posters from Lincoln Center's institutions, a three-dimensional model of the neighborhood, and closed circuit television to show passengers what is being performed above. And at the IRT's Eastern Parkway station in Brooklyn, which abuts the Brooklyn Museum, the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, and the Brooklyn Public Library, posters, signs, and other displays would inform passengers about the three institutions; the design team selected was Edwin Schlossberg Inc. and Twelve Associates. Private and government funds will be sought to implement these plans.

The "Culture Stations" program raises the question of whether these scarce capital funds could be better spent directly on improving service. Carllyn Meyer of Straphangers, a subway monitoring group, said she could think of many alternative subway projects that deserve priority and would actually increase ridership. But consultant Lalli argues the MTA intends to make many other improvements, too, and that the "Culture Station" program is only one part of a major attempt to "turn around" the subway system.

Theaters

The Cart Theater (1912); Edward B. Carey
The Booth Theater (1913); Henry B. Herts (photos: New York City Landmarks Preservation)

Final bearings on the proposal to designate 45 Broadway theaters as landmarks were held last month, with the expected cast of players showing up to testify. On one side were activists who became aroused during the unsuccessful fight to save the Helen Hayes and Monoseo theaters from John Pomeroy's wreckers' ball saw Skylan, October 1981, p. 4; November, p. 5; February 1982, p. 3; March, p. 5; April, pp. 3 and 6; June, p. 4); and who are determined to avoid further destruction of theaters. On the other side are the theater owners, who at minimum are opposed to landmark designation of the interiors of their buildings, and who may eventually oppose exterior designation unless City Hall gives them substantial economic benefits in return. The October 19 hearing continued for nine hours, and it is likely to be many months before the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) makes any decision.

The LPC, which was criticized by a number of activists during the Portman Hotel fight for not having landmarked the Helen Hayes and Monoseo theaters, has proposed designating the interiors of all 45 theaters as landmarks, along with the exteriors. Underlying the proposal is fear that the theater district will be faced with escalating pressure for development, particularly in view of the new midtown zoning that seeks to spur construction on the West Side and the projected 53rd Street redevelopment project. At this point, most of the theaters are protected under a midtown zoning clause that requires a special permit before any theater can be demolished—but this clause expires next May, and the theaters have no permanent protection.

Supporters of landmarking were buoyed by strong backing from Community Board 3, which includes the midtown business area and often favors real estate interests; Board 5 had supported the Portman Hotel, but last month came out in favor of landmarking most of the theaters. The Committee to Save the Theaters—the group organized by Actors Equity Association during the Portman battle—marshalled an impressive array of actors, playwrights, preservationists, and citizens who urged the LPC to act decisively to preserve the theater district. Initially, the Committee had sought landmarking for the entire district on grounds of its cultural and historic as well as architectural value (see Skylane, July 1981, p. 3; October, p. 4), but when the LPC indicated it was not enthusiastic about a landmark district, the Committee went along with landmarking the individual theaters.

Theater owners strongly opposed interior landmarking, arguing that it would keep them from mounting creatively innovative productions like Cats. While the owners have not yet taken any stand opposing exterior designation—they have commissioned Hardy, Holzman, Pfeiffer Associates to study the proposal—they emphasize that any such designation should be tied to economic help for the theater industry. The theater owners contend that no landmarking should occur before the City Planning Commission (and the Theater Advisory Council appointed under the new midtown zoning) come up with a "comprehensive plan" for the theater district, including economic aid.

The owners' arguments do not hold up under close examination. Interior designation would not preclude altering interiors for shows, as long as the interiors are returned to their original condition. As writer-activist Roberta Brandes Gratz pointed out, the fact that "so many of the splendid interiors still exist" testifies to their flexibility. It is not the job of the LPC to devise economic incentives for the theater industry; that is the responsibility of other city agencies. LPC's job is to decide whether the theaters deserve to be landmarked; if the Commission decides in favor, the theater owners, like other property owners, can always seek relief under the hardship clause if they find it impossible to make a profit.

The theater owners are aware of the hardship clause, and, in any case, none of them appears to be contemplating demolition at this point. What the owners are really seeking, in addition to tax benefits, is "floating air rights" that would allow them to transfer air rights over their low-rise theaters to anywhere within the theater district; as of now, designated landmarks are only allowed to transfer air rights to property that is contiguous, across the street or under common ownership down the block. But if the city does allow "floating air rights," that would open a Pandora's box for the theater district: architect Lee Pomeroy estimates there are 4 million s.f. potentially transferable from the theaters, and even a portion of this amount could radically change the ambiance of the district. Landmarking the entire district—as producer Joseph Papp advocates—would bar any air rights transfers, but the owners seem to have enough political clout to fight this.

The LPC will probably not make a decision on any of the 45 theaters before mid-1983 at the earliest. In the meantime, it is certain that both sides will continue to lobby behind the scenes.
Spurred by the seemingly intractable market for housing in Manhattan, developers have been showing a great deal of interest in one of the borough's largest ethnic enclaves—Chinatown (see Skyline, July 1982, p. 3). The area's proximity to the financial district, the City Hall area and Battery Park City make it a potential goldmine for new construction as well as co-op conversions. But Chinatown residents and business people, fearful that a gold rush by real estate speculators will drive out the very people and businesses that give Chinatown its character, have been fighting back on the legal and political fronts—and have been winning some battles.

One legal victory came on the special Manhattan Bridge Zoning District pushed through by the Koch Administration last year. The district, which allows luxury high-rises to be built on several sites along the eastern fringe of Chinatown, was challenged by community groups on grounds that the predominantly Chinese-speaking population was not adequately informed of public hearings. A State Supreme Court justice agreed, and while the city is appealing his decision, it could call one project that was approved by the City Planning Commission and was ready to go to the Board of Estimate. That project, a 21-story luxury condominium (architect: Daniel Pang and Associates) was a building by a group called the Henry Street Partners, which includes two officials in Helmsley-Spear Inc. (The developers assert the giant real estate firm is not involved in the project and that they are investing as individuals.) The project generated some community support because the developers promised to provide space for a new Chinatown YMCA, but opponents charged that it would accelerate the rise in property values in the low-rise, working-class heart of Chinatown—and thereby encourage displacement.

Another luxury project approved by the Board of Estimate — a planned luxury hotel development—may be dead. After City Hall gave the go-ahead to developer Thomas Kohn, of Metropolis, Inc. (two 21-story buildings on Madison Street designed by the too-Chinese, too-Asian, too-Peruvian, too-Plataners), former tenants and lawyer Joyce Moy brought a lawsuit saying the buildings will have increased traffic to move into so he could demolish a building on the site. While a statement of inflation verified many of the allegations, the City Planning Commission rescinded Lee's permit; he must now decide whether to sue in court for permission to build. And in another tenant battle—this one over an attempted co-op conversion in the apartment building at 50 Bayard Street—residents defeated the co-op effort. "I would say that developers are now aware that this area's going to resist, in one form or another," says Moy. "The tenants know that organizing can be successful."

Nonetheless, there is no question that Chinatown remains under threat. If anyone doubted that real estate values are escalating in Chinatown, the building in on a 20,000-s.f. city parcel under the Manhattan Bridge should convince the skeptics. A glittering December 15 auction, the city started bidding at $40,000,000 for what would up with a winning bid of $50,000 a year by Short Division Realty Inc. The 30-year lease will require the developer to build retail stores or offices, which probably will go no higher than two stories. "We'd be happy if the city would be satisfied at the bidding," says Stuart Fischer, spokesman for the city's Department of General Services. "There's definitely a great deal of interest in Chinatown." And while there was no known opposition to the mall, the fact that bidding was so high is another warning that rather than encouraging luxury development in Chinatown, the city should be trying to devise ways of preserving the neighborhood—a neighborhood that is not attractive to the people who live and work there, but is important to the city's economy as well.
The Mayor's mansion has long been allowed to drift into doddering dotage. A group of concerned citizens has organized to strengthen the historic and emblematic roles of the house.

Gracie Mansion on the Mend

Last July New York's Mayor Edward Koch officially announced the formation of the Gracie Mansion Conservancy and plans for the restoration of the house. Originally a modest country house, the mansion has weathered two centuries of New York history, becoming the mayor's residence only forty years ago. In contrast to the requirements of its function as the city's "first house" (President Carter slept there), however, the mansion's character has never quite achieved that of "Mansion." It has never acquired the same status as, say, the Morris-Jumel Mansion, a house of similar origins in upper Manhattan that is now a house-museum. The Conservancy, under the direction of Joan K. Davidson, is intending to change this. Its goal is to renovate the house in such a way that it will be able to satisfy more efficiently and appropriately the conflicting demands placed upon it as both private residence and public symbol.

Under the control of the park department the building was used as a refreshment stand and a storage shed. In 1923 it became the first home of the Museum of the City of New York with certain portions redecorated in the Federal style. At the end of the thirties, at the direction of then Park's Commissioner Robert Moses, the house was designated the official residence of the mayor. Fiorello La Guardia moved into the house in 1941. Since then the mansion has been occupied by six other mayors and redecorated by each, although the house has had few structural changes during this period—the only major ones being the addition of the Wagner Wing for receptions and an elevator.

The house's condition is the result of a history with a minimum of continuity and a maximum of abuse. Architecturally, the decor of the house "is not even close to the average in Westchester." Much of the building's original fabric, both historic and structural, has been obscured and records are amazingly scarce. A working group for the Conservancy has already spent a year gathering physical and historical data on the house by means of archaeological digs, infrared scans, archival searches, wallpaper and paint samples (the house, now white, was originally a pale yellow ochre similar to that at the restored Boscobel Mansion in Garrison, N.Y.), and other extensive tests and explorations. The group has done a complete analysis of the existing conditions and requirements of the house and outlined a program concentrating on several different areas.

The first and most important task faced by the Conservancy is that of making the mansion work; this will include repairing the roof and mechanical systems, reorganizing the facilities for entertaining (until recently the only connection from the formal reception area to the rest of the house was through the kitchen), and expanding the warrenlike staff quarters in the basement. Action is also being taken on rebuilding the porch, which is in danger of collapsing, and repainting the exterior.

More conceptually difficult is the task of enhancing the historic and symbolic qualities of the mansion. The Conservancy is proposing a solution that is neither a traditional period restoration nor a continuation of the comfortable home with little stylistic character. They hope to modify the house's interior rooms that reflect the spirit of different periods of history, showcasing fine art, furniture, and decorative objects—all made in New York, of course—by importing some of the elegance or quality that one might expect of the mayor's house. To ensure its efforts the Conservancy has established an arts advisory committee, which is already assembling a loan collection as well as a permanent one of furniture, artwork, and objects; they will also be appointing a full-time curator.

The Mayor's mansion is a multi-faceted institution created by the Mayor, and given its shape by Joan K. Davidson, president of the J.M. Kaplan Fund, who, with the Mayor's Office, organized the undertaking and is its overall chairman. A not-for-profit corporation, the Conservancy has as members, in addition to the Mayor and Mrs. Davidson, Mrs. Vincent Astor, president of the Vincent Astor Foundation; Kent Barwick, chairman of the Landmarks Preservation Commission; James R. Brigham, former budget director of the City of New York and chairman of the Public Development Corporation; Gordon Davis, commissioner of parks and recreation; and Richard Salomon, former chairman of the board of the New York Public Library. Adrian W. DeWind, of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton, and Garrison, is pro bono counsel.

The project is expected to be completed in 1984 at a cost of about $5 million, most of which will come from the private sector. —MGJ

Gracie Mansion Main Hall c. 1900 (photo: courtesy New York Historical Society)

The professional working group is under the Conservancy's supervision; its members are: Charles A. Platt of Smoluch and Platt, the coordinating architect; Robert Meadous, preservation architect; Dianne Pilgrim of the Brooklyn Museum and David McFadden of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, decorative arts advisors; Albert Hadley and Mark Hampton, interior designers; John Ahier, mechanical engineer; Robert Siliman, structural engineer; and Judith Winslow, curatorial assistant. Also included are Dianne Coffey, the Mayor's administrative assistant, Linda Gehill, and Joan Tucker, all from the Mayor's office. The Public Development Corporation will oversee construction; Arthur Andersen Company is providing financial and auditing services on a pro bono basis.

In addition to the working group, there is an arts advisory committee, consisting of directors and curators from the City's museums, libraries, and historical societies; the chairman is John Doklin, director of the National Academy of Design. A Friends committee is also in formation. The project is administered by one lone staff member: Deborah Kraisewich from March and McLennan, where she was manager of public affairs. Mary Black of the New-York Historical Society is working on a history of the mansion that will be published next spring. The Conservancy is also developing programs of lectures, tours, and special events that will increase public access to the mansion.

Gracie Mansion今天 (photo: Holland Wesp)
Finally, Skyline brings you its own best-selling book list. Not quite as scientific as that of The New York Times, it is nevertheless revealing.

Daralice Bole

Those observers of society who believe that history moves in cycles must have smiled at the publication of the inaugural issue of The Von Crenrier in September. We have apparently swung so far to the Left that the Right (or the middle) appears radical by contrast. As in politics, so belatedly in architecture and criticism. Ruminating on politics and particularly leftist politics as the great computer of the independent life of the mind, editrix Hilma Kramer, formerly the New York Times' senior art editor, reaches in speech and sputter to the right, ending in his introduction with the following democratic speech that is both doctrinaire and nostalgic: "It is imperative that we recognize, as the first condition for any serious criticism of the arts in the contemporary world, that it is now growing into a democratic society like ours that the value of high art can be expected to survive and prosper."

Kramer as critic: rebels against the general decline in critical standards, rejecting contemporary journalism as "hopelessly ignorant, deliberately obscurantist, commercially compromised, or politically motivated."

Together with contributor Joseph Epstein, the editor calls for the genuine apolitical criticism free from polemic bias. His introduction does not live up to this criticism, but there is a deeper contradiction between aesthetic and political positions. związane includes both an introduction and the essay "Postmodern: Art and Culture in the 1980's." While praising modernism as the "only really vital tradition that the art of our own time can claim as its own," Kramer fails to acknowledge the heavily political—and presumably postmodem—the style to which he critic is adhering.

Epstein goes further in his essay "The Literary Life Today," blaming the leftist milieu of the university for the fall of criticism from art to politics. The twin threats of populization and politicization have combined in his view to destroy independent intellectualism. Epstein's nostalgia is of the sunday school; our literary culture has been reduced to mere propaganda and publicity stunt, and the literary intellectual is a breed extinct.

Polemics aside, the "dissenting critical voice" of The New Criterion as it speaks in the September and October issues is indeed notable for its scholarship, clarity, and erudite. We were therefore interested to discus about sources ranging from Polish film to modern-day English manners as reflected in the writings of Barbara Pym. Whether we accompany William Arrowsmith on his detailed exploration of T.S. Eliot's poetry, travel with Elias Canetti to Berlin, or attentively follow the Colorado's "On the Road Conference" with Andy Stark, we are in select critical company.

Not all the essays, however, reach the standards of critical excellence articulated in the editor's essay. An essay on the subject of "The New Museum" by William H. Jordy does more than merely describe in sloppy and shallow terms the exhibit of New American Art Museums shown at Whitney Museum of American Art. The historian, usually so detailed and specific in his writings, is here vague and non-critical, his essay an exercise in cataloguing, not criticism. Likewise, Roger Sertan, in his "Reflections on a Candlestick" muddles a review of the recent Royal College conference on design with impressionistic musings.

The essays contained in The New Criterion are clearly addressed to the cognoscente.

Press Notes

Two new tablets with familiar parentage have recently appeared on architects' horizons: cite, a publication of the Rice Design Alliance edited by Gordon Wintzigen, and Design Architect, published by Architectural Arts of Washington, D.C., and edited by Richard Elfen. Although the primary focus of each is on local events and issues, these are approached in a way that will make them of more general interest. Design Action will appear bi-monthly—with continuing support from the National Endowment for the Arts. Cite reports that its schedule is somewhat less certain—they do not expect to appear more than three times a year. Welcome to the fray!
Progress and Primitivism: The Roots of John Soane's Style

Anthony Vidler

John Soane: Pencil drawing by N. Dance, 1774

Among those late eighteenth-century architects whose work exhibits a tendency to "return to the origins" of building to generate an enlightened and rational design, John Soane has always presented an ambiguous but intensely engaging case. Ambiguous because he refused the utopian idealism and the political commitment of the French "visionaries"; engaging because he, more than anyone—French, German, or English—managed to weld a personal and powerful aesthetic out of a sense of abstraction on the one hand, and a nostalgia for the great ruins of classicalism on the other. More than Piranesi, whose fantasies he echoed many times in the commissioned paintings of his designs as ruins, Soane brought together a strict, geometrically controlled formalism with a sensuous play of motifs, reminiscences, and actual fragments of antique monuments. Perhaps it is for this reason that his works are now so eagerly studied.

For many years, however, the lack of serious scholarly studies of Soane has hindered assessment of his work as a whole. Yet the popularity of his house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, London (1812-13) has sustained itself as a place that, like the ruins of Palmyra or the Acropolis to Soane's generation, might be visited as a kind of museum of the romantic sensibility. The memory theater of romantic neoclassicism, with its embedded fragments of caryatids, sarcophagi, statues and decorative friezes, might have provided the repository of an architect's life work, but the separation between romantic image and accurate knowledge has been absolute. The artifacts of the architect have been seen more as part of the seamless dreams of Soane's student and painterly interpreter Joseph Gandy than as a record of his life, professional formation, and completed works. What Piranesi was for Thomas de Quincey, Soane has been for the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries. A distinctly "old fish" had evidently lived there—as that was evident. But beyond his famed pseudo-antiquity—a trait common to many architects of the Revolutionary period—and his now-destroyed Bank of England Complexes (1792-1823), little was known, or even liked.

This is at first perplexing, largely because the obvious interpreter of Soane, in contemporary historical terms, lived daily in the Museum as its curator. But John Summerson has preferred to study the development of English architecture in general, or the careers of other architects, such as John Nash or Sir John Jones, or the emergence of London itself. His remarks on the center of his preoccupation, Soane, were confined to a short essay-length monograph (London, 1952) and a few articles. Dorothy Strozz's successor as curator, has in turn been daunted by the subject, offering her own monograph (London, 1961)—full of facts, but hardly the study, architectural and historical, that Soane's complex life demanded. Add to this the intriguing aside in George Teyssot's good analysis (Bome, 1974) of the

The bank facade to Lothbury, London (1796); John Soane (aquatint by T. Malton, 1799)

urban and institutional works of Soane's first employer, George Dance the Younger, and the available offerings on Soane are almost complete.

With the publication of Pierre de la Ruffinière Du Préy's meticuluous thesis on the early years of Soane's career, however, a new standard of Soane scholarship has been established. Conceived at first, as its subtitle indicates, as a record of the professional formation of an interesting late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century architect, the available documentation rapidly led the author to address themes central to the history of building types, style, and antipartisanship in this period. The result, entirely rewritten out of an earlier doctoral dissertation, is one of the best—certainly one of the most exhaustively researched—studies of an eighteenth-century architect, rivalling that of the more monographically complete study on William Chambers by John Harris (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971). (London, 1970; Du Préy's emphasis is double: to the one hand he is concerned to exemplify the daily working life of an architect—his training, self-education, designing, and building; on the other, he builds up a sense of the institutional and conceptual discourse of design, involving new programs, like the asylum and the prison, as well as new philosophies of form like primitivism and rationalism, that determined the manner of a well-read and ambitious practitioner of the period. With admirable economy the final book manages to join both concerns in a readable but complex narrative, illustrated with hundreds of well-reproduced sketches, finished drawings, engravings, and photographs of built works. There can be no better introduction to the first years of Soane's life, 1768-1784—that is, from the entrance of Soane into Dance the Younger's office in London to his marriage and establishment of a full private practice.

The groundwork, then, has been completed or rather outlined (for factual description has correctly outweighed interpretation in this preliminary study) in a way that may enable us not only to gauge the importance of Soane's education and early contacts in his later extensive practice, but also to situate Soane among his predecessors, peers, and followers: Does he fall somewhat uncomfortably between Ledoux and Barry, for example, or does he stand as a theoretical and stylistic innovator in his own right?

The answer to this question is implicit in, but not wholly described by Du Préy's study. Painstakingly uncovering the varied influences and early responses of Soane as he developed a practice through competitions both public and academic, Du Préy nevertheless wavers in his assessment of the importance of Soane's developed style. Certainly it is clear from every chapter that Soane is aware of theoretical influences, quick to catch a stylistic innovation. But Du Préy hesitates to conclude, for

But if the imperative to demonstrate the use of different types of building was marked in Souze's work, another aspiration, that of revealing the essential nature of architecture itself, was equally evident. The "return to origins" had been a favorite cry of the mid-century philosophers as they tried to distinguish fact from fiction, certainty from myth, essential nature from civilized accretion. The celebrated model of the primitive hut, described by the Abbé Le Breton and repeated as if by rote throughout the century, was one such return, corresponding to that proposed by the Abbé Condillac as a means of reducing the structure of language to fundamental elements. The frontispieces to Laugier's immensely influential essay, published in 1753 and 1755, and translated into English almost immediately, were the bases of so many "primitive" fantasies of architectural origins for the rest of the century. Du Puys, Baudelaire and the Abbé Le Breton were given a sense of symbolic form in antiquity. Although Du Puys does not emphasize it enough, Souze took his cue from their example. In this kind of "radical classic" architecture, the surface of the building, stripped and polished, exhibited the play of a pure Neoclassical principle, and represented not only the basic volumetric elements of the composition but also their process of assembly.

For many architects, these returns to the origin were reconciled with antique precedent only with difficulty. Ledoux was certain only when both might be represented diagrammatically; Boulle, only when geometry and symbolism came together, as in the pyramids of his cemeteries. But for Souze, the demands of antique precedent and radical form were easily joined together, and under the sign of architectural character. In his personal and developed manner, emblem — in the form of classical fragment — and root — in the form of primitive allusion or primitivism — were literally superimposed on each other. The building, with its abstracted surfaces, became a sort of page on which allusion might be deployed as on the white surface of a book. And he went further, abstracting in plane beyond receding plane all the panoply and apparatus of the classical orders and their extension into three dimensional spaces and vaulting. The segmental arches, disconnected and disconnected, and his motif sometimes phenomenally, from their supports; the stripped pilasters with linearly inscribed bands and flutes, the apologies for classical forms; the spaces themselves, each encapsulating a "type" of antique room without quoting it — all lent an air of premeditated removal and self-consciousness to its looming presence. The "lines" of classical motifs were, so to speak, inscribed like writing in the planes and volumes of the building itself. On top of this the literal encrustations, the implantation of the collector's passion, were simply a mass of clues to what had already been abstracted.

This type of architecture, represented at its height by the Bank of England Complex and the Souze Museum itself, signs the return to a primitive root and an intensely sophisticated elaboration on the root: at once both primal and decadently modern. Invested with all the despair of the historically conscious mind, it yet retained traces of a utopia of pure form. In this sense, Souze is the Adolf Loos of his generation. Resisting stylistic eclecticism to the last, he nevertheless understands that a pure and abstract "philosophical" language must be beyond the competence of modern man to decipher. Only in a text and sometimes deliberately ugly compensate, inventing "solutions" with all the will of a self-conscious decadent, a disdainful withdrawals from his public in order to preserve his couture for another day. In Souze as in Loos we recognize that type of modern man described for the first time by Baudelaire — he looks in the mirror for a key to pure autonomy, yet always fears that what is behind the mirror is in some way more authentic.
Dateline: November '82

Exhibits

Atlanta
Rob Krier Drawings
Nov 12-30 Material from the recent book Urban Projects 1960-82, Whistle Gallery, 328 Omni International; (404)688-9065

Boston/Cambridge
Skowhegan School Charette Competition
Nov 9-12 Drawings and models, Harvard Graduate School of Design, Gund Hall, 48 Quincy Street, Cambridge; (617)495-4122

Chicago
Scandinavia Today 

Houston
Dreams and Schemes, Visions and Revisions 
Through Nov 14 New proposals for the expansion, renovation, rebuilding, or conversion of the existing Contemporary Arts Museum structure. Contemporary Arts Museum, 5216 Montrose Blvd.; (713)526-3129

H. H. Richardson
Through Nov 28 Photos and drawings of residential projects by noted architects. Fatich Art Gallery, Rice University; (713)527-8101

Jofel Hoffmann Design Classics
Nov 17-Jan 9 Furniture, decorative arts, drawings. Fort Worth Art Museum, 1309 Montgomery Street; (817)738-9215

La Jolla
The California Condition
Nov 13-Jan 2 Exhibition by 12 contemporary California architects, curated by Stanley Tigerman and Susan Grant Lewis. La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, 700 Prospect Street; (714)454-3541

Mies van der Rohe
Nov 20-Jan 2 Mies. Barcelona Pavilion and furniture designs. Organized and sponsored by Knoll International, the exhibition includes a scale model of the Pavilion. La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, 700 Prospect Street; (714)454-3541

Los Angeles Area
Daniel Libeskind
Through Nov 10 Drawings by the designer, Southern California Institute of Architecture Gallery, 3201 Olympic Blvd., Santa Monica; (213)829-3482

SITE: Transformed Houses
Through Nov 19 Exhibition of schemes. UCLA Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning, 705 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles; (213)825-8950

Patou Kouloumous

Arata Isozaki
Through Jan 1 Isozaki's proposals for the Museum of Contemporary Art. The Schindler House, 835 N. Kings Road, Los Angeles; (213)651-1510

Lawrence Halprin
Nov 17-Dec 10 Drawings by the landscape architect. Southern California Institute of Architecture Gallery, 3201 Olympic Blvd., Santa Monica; (213)829-3482

Miami/ Coral Gables
Le Corbusier's Saint-Pierre de Fermoey
Nov 20-Jan 2 Exhibition of the church scheme. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 121 Anastasia Avenue, Coral Gables; (305)442-1448

New Haven
Helmut Jahn 
Nov 3-Dec 3 Recent work: Art and Architecture Building, Yale University, 188 York Street; (203)436-0853

New York City
The Drawings of Hector Horeau
Through Nov 27 Drawings by this visionary architect. French Institute/Alliance Française, 22 East 60th Street; (212)355-6100

Scandinavian Modern 1880-1980
Through Jan 2 Retrospective of Scandinavian design. Cooper-Hewitt Museum, 2 East 91st Street; (212)680-6686

Precursors of Post-Modernism
Nov 4-Dec 18 Work by Milan architects of the 1920s and 1930s, sponsored by Alessi. The Architectural League, 457 Madison Avenue; (212)753-1722

Top of the City
Nov 18-Dec 6 Photos from Laura Rosen's book Top of the City: New York's Hidden Rooftop World. The Urban Center, 457 Madison Avenue; (212)935-3955

American Picture Palaces
Nov 23-Feb 27 Photographs of movie houses. Cooper-Hewitt Museum, 2 East 91st Street; (212)680-6686

Philadelphia
Quaini and Secret Places
Nov 2-Dec 31 Photographs of Philadelphia, 1906-1982. AIA Gallery, 117 South 17th Street; (215)569-3168

San Francisco
Urban Obsessions
Through Nov 14 Drawings by Lars Lentpar, Stanley Saitowitz, Mark Mack, and Barbara Stadtfacher Solomon. Philipps Busch Gallery, 2280 Mason Street; (415)781-8986

Italian Re-Evolution
Nov 15-Jan 16 Design in the '90s, a travelling exhibition curated by Iano Sarto. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Van Ness Avenue at McAllister Street; (415)956-8800

Stamford
Furniture by American Architects
Nov 12-Jan 26 Designs by Richardson, Farness, Wright, Saarinen and Meier. Whitney Museum of American Art, Fairfield Branch, Champion Plaza, Atlantic Street and Tresser Blvd.; (203)386-7562

Washington, D.C.
Rhode Island Architecture

America's City Halls
Nov 16-Dec 30 Photos of 50 city halls spanning two centuries. AIA Building, 1735 New York Avenue, NW; (202)626-7464

Athens, Greece
Paris-Rome-Athens

London, England
E. C. P. Monson
Three Years 1966-1972. A architectural practice in local authority housing, Islington 1919-1965. Royal Institute of British Architects, 66 Portland Place; 050333

Oxford, England
Ernest Trobridge
Nov 2-28 An exhibition of Trobridge's work; third in the series "Extraordinary Mainstreams." Museum of Modern Art, 30 Pembroke Street

Paris, France
La Construction Moderne 
Through Nov 15 Biennale de Paris architecture section, Institut Francais d'Architecture, 6 rue de Tournon; 6538906

Tudao Ando
Through Nov 20 "Minimalism," recent work by the Japanese architect. Institut Francais d'Architecture, 6 rue de Tournon; 6538906

Rome, Italy
James Stirling
Through Nov 20 Works of the English architect. American Academy of Rome, Via Angela Massia 3; 6358963

The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies
The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies has recently modified and strengthened its internal structure and has increased its membership to that of its Board of Trustees. Edward L. Saxe and Kenneth Frampton have been named President and Director of Programs, respectively, while Peter Eisenman will serve in the future as Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees and in a senior advisory capacity in program and academic related matters. At the same time, a number of nationally and internationally prominent architects have been added to the Board, including John Barton, Henry Cobb, Gary Pells, Jaqueline Robertson, Kevin Roche, Arata Isozaki, Aldo Rossi, and James Stirling, bringing the present board membership to a total of twenty-six. Bruce Branckenridge will continue to serve as Chairman of the Board of Trustees and Charles Gwathmey will remain actively involved as Vice Chairman of the Board. Other additions at the staff level include the appointment of Edith Morris, formerly Budget Director at the Museum, as Administrator and Development, and Barry Goldberg, formerly Development Officer at the American Council for the Arts, who takes up the post of Development Officer.

Mr. Saxe has most recently served as Deputy Director and General Manager of the Museum of Modern Art. He brings with him twenty-six years of managerial and organizational experience at CBS, where he was President of CBS-TV Services from 1969 to 1972. Kenneth Frampton, in addition to serving since 1972 as a tenured faculty member of the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture and Planning, has been affiliated with the Institute since 1970, serving in various capacities and most recently as Director of Publications. Aside from being responsible for the programmatic content of the IAUS, he will also serve as Chairman of the Board of Fellows. Both Frampton and Saxe envision several new undertakings as part of the Institute's efforts to broaden its civic role and reputation as a center for advanced research and a forum for architectural debate.
Events

Boston/Cambridge

Dutch Architecture Between the Wars
Nov 2 American Institute includes speakers: John Hakelton, Stanislaus von Moos, Richard Poumier, Helen Searin, Stanford Anderson. Room 9-130, Department of Architecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; (617)253-7791

Harvard GSD Lecture Series
Nov 8 Myron Goldsmith Nov 17 Christopher Alexander Dec 8 Emilio Ambasz. 9:00pm, Gund Hall, Harvard Graduate School of Design, 40 Quincy Street; (617)495-4122

Skowhegan School Jurorship Competition
Nov 18 Symposium chaired by Graham Gund. 7:30pm, Gund Hall, Harvard Graduate School of Design, 48 Quincy Street; (617)495-4122

Charlottesville

University of Virginia Lectures
Nov 2 Alexander Cooper Nov 9 Leon Krier Nov 23 Jim Heeson Dec 2 Joseph Comores. 8:00 pm, Room 153, Campbell Hall, University of Virginia; (804)924-0311

Chicago

Graham Foundation Lectures

Houston

Dreams and Schemes, Visions and Revisions

Ithaca

Cornell University Lecture Series
Nov 11 Ex,,ektive Architektur Fly Nov 16 Claus Hering Nov 30 Leon Krier Dec 2 Nick Wittenburg. 8:15pm. Olive Tjaden Hall, Cornell University; (607)256-5236

Los Angeles Area

Califonia Connections
Nov 6-Dec 12 Lectures by Frank Israel, Michael Ross, Anthony Lumsden, Moore Ruble Yudell, Eric Moss, Morphosis, Frank Gehry, Rob Wellington Ogilvy, Ted Smith, Tom Gredona, William Turnbull, Dan Solomon/Barbara Staatsicher, Thomas Gordon Smith. La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, 700 Prospect Street; for details (714)454-3351

New Orleans

Tulane Lecture Series
Nov 15 Steven Hall, “The Alphabetic City and Projects” Nov 22 Ralph Knowles, “The Polar Landscape: An Interpretation of the City.” 8:00pm. Room 403, Richardson Memorial Hall, Tulane University; (504)865-5809

New York City

Architecture and Interiors of the ’80s
“A Decade of Challenge,” lecture series Nov 6 Stephen Jacobs Nov 8 Thierry Poirier Nov 9 Kevin Wilmott Nov 16 James Wines Nov 15 Georges Bataille; Curator: Ian Lumiester Nov 18 Yuri Veersen Nov 22 Kent Barnick Nov 23 Sam de Santo Nov 29 Wrap-up on preservation Nov 30 Jack Dumas. 6:00pm. Lectures will be held at the Pratt Manhattan Center, 160 Lexington Avenue, and various studios; for information call (212)665-3754

Architectural League Lectures

Interior Design Lectures
“Evocative Forms and Concepts.” Nov 2 Salvatore LeNuna Rosa Nov 9 Jan Michel Schwarting Nov 16 Beverly Russell. 6:00pm. Hugues Hall, Pratt Institute, St. James and Lafayette, Brooklyn; (212)666-3900

Architecture: The State of the Art

Urban Center Books

American Architecture Series

Le Corbusier Sketchbooks

Columbia Lectures

Tekez Lectures
Series of lectures on “Form in Furniture.” Nov 4 Richard Artschwager, “The Cup: The Useful and the Useless.” Nov 11 Frank Gehry, “Latest Pieces.” Nov 18 Scott Burton. 8:00pm. 8:30pm for the series, 8:50 at the door. The Open Art of Design, 12 West 29th Street; for reservations (212)660-8968

Royal Oak Lecture

Pratt Lectures

Bauhaus Dances
Nov-7 Reconstruction of Oskar Schlemmer’s “Six Bauhaus Dances.” 8:30pm. 179 Varick Street. Call The Kitchen for information; (212)625-3614

Twentieth Century American Culture
Lectures sponsored by the Whitney Museum of American Art. Nov 18 Fredric Jameson, “Post-Modernism and the Consumer Society” Dee 1 Anneite Michelson, “Transformation and Artistic Invention in Architecture.” 8:00pm. $5. Bruno Walter Auditorium at Lincoln Center; for tickets call (212)570-3652

Philadelphia

University of Pennsylvania Lectures

San Francisco/Bay Area

University of California Lectures

Calgary/Canada

Public Library Lecture Series
Nov 12 Diana Agnew, “Recent Work.” Central Library, Calgary; for details (403)264-5015

Dusseldorf, Germany

Architectural Trends

London, England

RIBA Lectures

Paris, France

Festival d’Automne

La Modernite: Un Projet Inacheve
Oct-Nov Series of conferences with speakers Meier, Chermayeff, Burchardt and Schmidt, Lubetkin, Van Eyck, Smithson, Francop, Gregotti, Stirling, Baulot, and Hollein. For information call Ecole des Beaux-Arts, 2003547

Skyline November 1982

Contrary to an report in Skyline last month, Richard Meier and Charles Moore will not be among participants at Columbia University’s Symposium on American Architecture scheduled for the coming spring.

The photograph of Bruce Goff that appeared in last month’s Skyline was wrongly credited to the estate of Bruce Goff; we apologize for this error. The picture was taken by Donald Hoffmann (Kanau City Star).
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