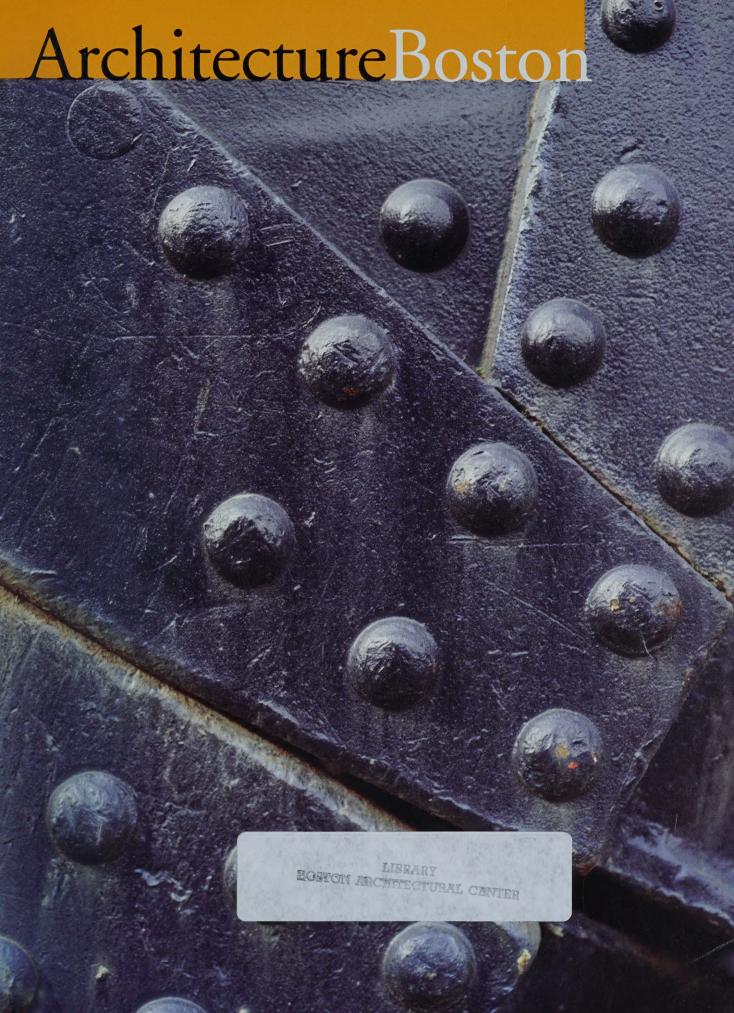




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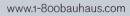
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# ArchitectureBoston

1998 No.1 Practice and Technology

**Boston's architectural community** is recognized nationally for its talent, intellectual vigor, public activism, and its astonishing collegiality. With the introduction of *ArchitectureBoston*, we have drawn upon all these resources to create a new kind of architecture magazine — one that combines the best aspects of the design press, academic journals, and general-interest magazines. We hope to earn your respect as a forum for the discussion of ideas, trends, and challenges presented in clear, jargon-free language. You will find occasional displays of wit, spunk, and passion, and we promise to avoid the pompous and the mundane.

ArchitectureBoston is a quarterly, and each issue will focus on a theme. This inaugural issue examines "Practice and Technology," covering a range of topics from the business of architecture to the details of construction. In September, we will focus on "Society," which will include discussions of public space and civic buildings, land use, housing, legislative and regulatory issues, and social activism. Our December "Design" issue will present critical discussions of design, preservation, and sustainability and will feature award-winning projects.

Despite changing themes, you will find regular features in each issue.

"Roundtable" discussions present an informal, lively exchange of ideas. In "Two Views," we introduce controversial topics by pairing contributors offering differing, though not necessarily opposing, opinions. "Master Pieces" features a conversation between an established leader in our industry and a younger architect. Book and periodical reviews ("Covering the Issues") will keep you informed of topics in the literature. "Site-Ations" lists Web sites of note. We will include regular technical articles ("Constructive Advice") and software reviews. And, on our last page, "Other Voices" features essays about significant buildings or places written not by architects, but by normal people.

"Other Voices" represents the ultimate purpose of *ArchitectureBoston*: to expand both professional and public understanding of architecture by encouraging — even provoking — a broader discussion of the built environment, one that respectfully includes all voices. This has long been the defining spirit of The Boston Society of Architects, the publisher of *ArchitectureBoston*. I would like to thank our editorial board, the BSA members and staff who have already contributed so much to this magazine, and especially BSA president Peter Kuttner AIA, who has devoted his considerable energy and talent to the success of our new venture. We welcome your comments and ideas.

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Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA Editor

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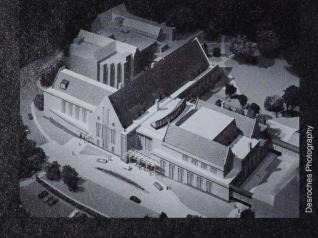




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# We're smarter now: weathering the economic cycles

Editor's Note: We all know that architecture as a profession is susceptible to economic cycles. The last recession was particularly traumatic, forcing many architects to rethink — and in some cases radically restructure — the way they do business.

practitioners to participate in an electronic roundtable discussion, using e-mail to compare notes on their own practices, what they have learned, and their recommendations to other firms struggling with a changing business climate.

#### The participants were:

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Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA, editor, ArchitectureBoston

#### sender: rgoldstein@gcassoc.com

We managed to weather the early '90s with only minor impacts on staff size due to our diversity of specialties — research, academic, planning/urban design, preservation, and housing. At that point, we were doing very little developer work anyway. Nevertheless, we did end up sustaining some short-term pay cuts for senior staff and a few layoffs. We also took advantage of the "network" to loan out several people to other firms. We took on some smaller projects, although we knew full well that they wouldn't be profitable and would take as much management time as larger ones. But they allowed us to keep key staff productively occupied.

One good thing that you can say about the last downturn:
Many of the Boston firms started talking with one another in a way I've not seen before.

Ed Tsoi

As we came out of the bad times, we reorganized our approach to marketing and business development, putting a principal in charge of those efforts, with staff support. This has made a big difference. We have deepened our commitment to our five markets, and have expanded our geographic reach beyond New England — of necessity and to export our expertise to other regions. At the same time, we turn down work more often if it doesn't match our goals (and if we're too busy).

We've developed several short- and long-term associations with other firms — some for a single project, some for multiple projects. This has enabled us to expand into different building types (e.g., schools) as well as other regions. Each one is a learning experience, and we constantly consider the pros and cons.

There are downsides to the current boom. We are all in a "talent crisis." The consequences are a real shortage of people in the job market in the five to ten year experience range, and rising salary expectations at all levels (which also applies pressure for commensurate adjustments for current staff). We had to institute a voluntary paid overtime policy for a few months to address our shortfall of staff, which worked well. No one felt taken advantage of, and people who wished could pick up extra cash.

With the growth of the senior staff from three to nine principals, we have given the associates more responsibility for oversight and for improvement of project management, quality control, and "corporate memory." We've invested in coaching for all of us involved in presentations and interviews. In order to make sure every hour is accounted for, we have a weekly project managers meeting which enables us to do "just-in-time" staff allocations; this has proven invaluable in this economy.

Looking ahead: Knowing that a downturn is inevitable, we have established a "rainy day fund." We know we'll need it, whether to cover salaries in a slow time, or whatever. In another vein, we're investing in new technology while we have the money, and have expanded our office into adjacent space.

#### sender: wpollock@addarch.com

Due to its client base, ADD Inc was hit as hard as any firm around in 1990. Our major market simply stopped. The firm responded — and succeeded — by focusing on its overriding purposes. Four components to this included restructuring the staff mix to be more competitive; reorganizing so that management is trim, knowledgeable and efficient; diversifying into different market areas with different products; and reinvesting in technology and staff training. We took a proactive, well-organized approach. Here are some of our actions:

- 1 We wrote a mission and values statement with annual marketing, human resources, and information services plans.
- **2** We have reduced our overhead rate each year since 1987.
- **3** We sold property, reduced rent, and expanded via annex space on short-term leases.
- 4 We appointed outside advisors to the firm.
- **5** We eliminated studios and streamlined management.
- **6** We committed to substantial investment in state-of-the-art user-friendly technology.
- **7** We launched a facilities management software product.
- **8** We expanded to the West Coast.
- **9**We increased our technical and communications training to all staff.

#### sender: etsoi@tka-architects.com

In the early '90s, we saw developer work come to a halt. Because the medical sector of our work kept us afloat and we were able to pursue work with state agencies to add to the mix, profitability for us did not take a nosedive. Our workload during the downturn allowed us to hire some senior staff, and these persons helped us open the door to some markets where we lacked strength. Sure, TK&A got bruised like so many other firms. We saw several sizeable projects stop cold. The downturn frightened us greatly and caused us to think more carefully about the firm's future — and in fact the profession's future.

One good thing that you can say about the last downturn: Many of the Boston firms started talking with one another in a way I've not seen before. Maybe we all had a little extra time on our hands. Maybe misery loves company. Whatever it was, I've always felt that Boston's enormous braintrust and talent-trust seemed to shake off the downturn and set new sights in many fundamentals including: a closer alliance with allied professions; a closer alliance with the construction industry; new AIA documents; a new client orientation; and tighter business practices.

Have we changed the way we practice? Definitely, but in subtle ways. Our perspective is broader. The consultant teams we form are more strategic. We hire differently. And like everyone else, we spend a ton of money on IS [information systems] and CAD in particular. I feel that clients are getting better services, faster, and better design thinking from the vast majority of design firms in the Boston metropolitan area.

#### sender: nakazawa@aol.com

As a management consultant, I see firms trying to forecast their future, but as a practical matter, "the future" beyond a very limited time frame is not predictable. Preparing for the future is a different matter. It seems to me that what Roger, Ed, and Wilson are very good at is promoting within their respective organizations:

- **1** an ability for groups within their practices to self-organize around articulated values and objectives
- 2 conditions and structures that draw upon the collective intelligence of their firms and wider networks
- 3 a keen awareness of the business environment and their clients (that provide early warning signals of change)
- **4** organizational reflexes to act rather than ponder (like the proverbial frog in hot water)

These individual and organizational attributes contribute greatly toward a firm's ability to deal with change creatively (as opposed to dealing with change defensively). A problem with most people (not just architects) is complacency, not a lack of basic intelligence. The leading practices have expunged complacency and the culture of entitlement from their organizations.

#### sender: epadjen@compuserve.com

Paul: You're in a unique position in this group. Between the range of cultures that you see in your own client firms and what you learn from other consultants and firms at national conferences, you've got a real overview. Can you give us some specific examples of things firms have learned? And do you hear architects actively discussing ways to bullet-proof themselves in the next downturn?

#### sender: nakazawa@aol.com

None of my clients is really discussing contingency plans for "bullet-proofing" their practices for the next downturn. I believe that most of them are concerned about what could happen in a serious downturn, but things change so quickly now that it is almost impossible to properly assess the causes and nature of a future downturn and to anticipate the timing, sequence, and specific actions that would need to be taken.

Let's take the Asian crisis — was it anticipated? Sort of — depending upon who you asked. Did anyone have a grip on the specific timing of the melt-down? Maybe...but probably more by country than on a regional basis. Does anyone understand how it will affect A/E practices in the US longer term, including many of the "players" in Asian markets? I haven't met anyone. We're all trying to figure it out, but after the fact.

We could go through the same scenario for a US downturn, led by the long-awaited crash of our financial markets. Nobody *really* knows what, if anything, is going to happen. And when something does happen, it's going to be sudden. Maybe there will be some rumblings beforehand, but there will be very few who will alter their course in advance of the event.

The leading practices have expunged complacency and the culture of entitlement from their organizations.

Paul Nakazawa

So, I see firms trying to become as healthy, nimble, and competitive as possible, knowing that the sun won't shine forever, but also knowing that you can't live life on the defensive. That being said, there are some practical things firms are doing to make sure that they are less vulnerable to unexpected developments:

- 1 diversifying markets and clients, both geographically and by segment (but trying to attain first or second rank in their major areas of strength)
- 2 investing in the "best people" (e.g., leaders, multi-talented individuals, etc.) and "raising the bar" in terms of expectations for individual and group performance
- 3 streamlining their internal decision-making processes (i.e., you can't be bullet- proof, but you can dodge bullets...if you just don't stand there staring into the muzzle)
- 4 strengthening the financial foundations of their practices (e.g., not "draining the pool" every year, but taking steps to build the value of the firm's equity and maintaining a strong financial capability)
- 5 strengthening the mechanisms for continuity making sure that the firm and its owners have created options for future continuity of the practice

There are many more things that firms can and are doing to make themselves less vulnerable to economic cycles, etc. I'd be interested to hear from everybody else.

#### sender: rgoldstein@gcassoc.com

I think that part of the geographic diversity/client diversity that Paul mentioned is identifying regional partners with whom one might affiliate. By cultivating such alliances, we potentially develop some resistance to localized downturns. Of course, complete immunity is elusive at best.

Our major challenge is how to march forward — how to handle growth in a superheated environment, while still protecting the rear for the retreat that will certainly come someday.

Wilson Pollock

#### sender: wpollock@addarch.com

Paul's comments are right on. Our major challenge is how to march forward — how to handle growth in a superheated environment, while still protecting the rear for the retreat that will certainly come someday. Here are a few thoughts on what we practice:

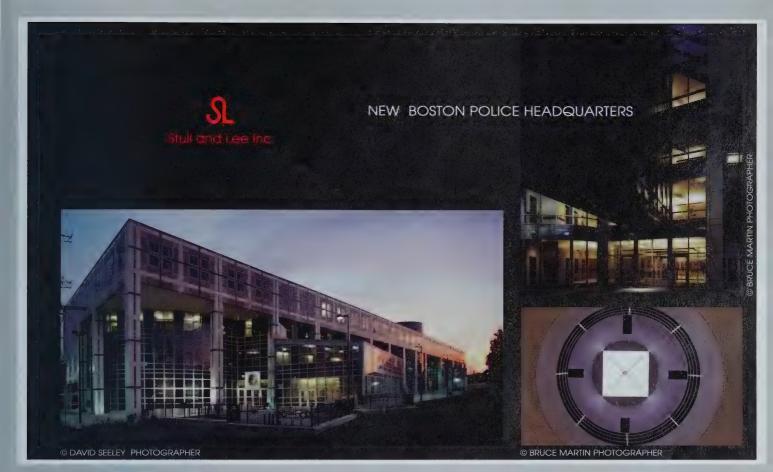
- 1 Diversify products: Our predesign services have expanded. We also have a facilities management software product on the market. Firms diversify in different ways. I only know that it is difficult to be an expert at everything.
- 2 Diversify geographically: We started a branch in San Francisco which has started up on the 128-Silicon Valley connection — our strongest market. Of course, it easily could tank nationally all at once.
- 3 Facilities: We've taken relatively inexpensive annex space with short-term leases and are living with the inconvenience rather than making the bold jump to a new, large integrated facility.
- 4 Training: We intensified our training efforts to retain the best people — and to make them more valuable in the marketplace should the awful day arrive.
- 5 Benefits: Providing exceptional benefits helps our people want to be part of our culture and will help them the most if something bad happens. We do not hire part-time employees as a rule; some of our valued staff work their own days.

#### sender: acohen@arcusa.com

Bullet-proofing anything requires knowledge of the caliper of the projectile. Armament like all other forms of protection either weighs too much or protects too little. What then does one do?

ARC has weathered many downturns in the economy since 1969, when we started the firm. Surviving this last one was certainly difficult, but a number of factors saved us from the more severe impact that some other firms suffered during this latest downturn. They included:

1 diversity of client types and a variety of building type expertise





The only solution is to keep flexible and assume that the unexpected is to be expected.

Arthur Cohen

- 2 staff stability and longevity, with diverse talents and expertise
- 3 geographic diversity of work through partnering and careful entries into foreign markets
- 4 employing technology carefully and avoiding the "bleeding edge"
- 5 conservative financial planning

Diversity of client types and building types has been one of the keys to our ability so far to ride out downturns in the economy. Starting out in the academic client arena in the late 1960s, we added corporate clients to the mix during the 1970s and 1980s, working mostly for end users and in some cases with developers building-to-suit. This work ran the gamut from corporate office facilities to very sophisticated high-tech environments. Similarly our work for university clients grew to include a wide variety of project types as well as primary and secondary educational facilities.

During the 1980s, we did very little speculative work and thus when the speculative market dried up, it had less impact on us. Interestingly, our mix of academic and corporate clients over the long term has helped to flattened out the economic cycles a bit. There have been boom times when all of the markets have moved up together and at those times we have tried (not always easily) to maintain a balance in our mix of work, thus avoiding putting all of our eggs in one market basket.

We have also developed a strong client base and as a result continue to do a large amount of repeat work. We've long understood the benefits of working with a client service focus rather than on a project-by-project basis.

Much of our senior staff has been with the firm 15 to 25 years and as such, the staff is well integrated and is expert in the areas of our practice. Education — particularly for newcomers has always been an issue, long before CEUs [continuing education units] came along, and with new applications of technology, it is an ever greater issue.

Technology can be costly but also cost effective in aiding our work. In its worst form, it can be a constant and unproductive distraction from our main focus, namely the practice of architecture. The more effectively we use technology, the harder it is to deal with failures, and it does fail from time to time. We have attempted to be both current and productive in our use of technology without leading the charge and suffering the effects of hanging over the "bleeding edge".

Geographic project diversity has worked for us since the 1970s through partnering with local firms in remote locations. The key is picking good matches with other firms and teaming to both get and then design projects of sufficient size to warrant the challenges of such teaming and distance. We have also done out-of-state work solo. Each has its pros and cons.

Foreign work is another source of geographic diversity with which we have had some success over the past five years in China and Taiwan. Agreements and commitments to such agreements vary widely outside the USA, as those who did work in the Middle East a while back learned. Issues of language, culture, business and payment terms, definitions of scope of work, the 24-hour work day (12 hours plus time differentials), and exchange-rate fluctuations are just a few of the challenges one needs to consider and understand. Again, strategic partnering with firms with suitable technical and local knowledge is also important in foreign work.

Watch cash flow and limit debt. Some might consider such practices timid, but some of those critics are no longer in business and may very well have dropped out during the last economic downturn by over-extending themselves. It could and probably will happen again.

We all hope to weather the next economic sender: acohen@arcusa.com downturn. In our business, there are limitations to our ability to predict market conditions down the road and even the timely progress of projects changes that come to mind. already on the books. These days, delays of various kinds are givens on most projects. Conversely, workloads can change unpredictably when a new project arrives with a very demanding schedule and then suffers delays. The only solution is to keep flexible and assume that the unexpected is to be

#### sender: rgoldstein@gcassoc.com

expected in this fast-paced society.

In response to Arthur: You can reduce your need for armor by avoiding the projectile in the first place — the Zen approach. Or by being the projectile. (Have I finished off this metaphor yet?)

#### sender: epadjen@compuserve.com

That makes me wonder — is this a discussion about fear? (Military metaphors always make me wonder what we're really talking about.)

#### sender: nakazawa@aol.com

I think that this group is beyond fear. If the last recession taught us anything, it is that being fearful gets you nowhere. The work of the BSA's "future search" initiative represented a couple of generations of practitioners taking back control and responsibility for their profession and professional lives. That experience was very powerful, and I think we are all better prepared intellectually and emotionally for whatever comes our way.

By the way, the stress of being overloaded with work is also significant, especially on firm leadership. There is no island of calm and stability in this business. But that's what makes it challenging and fun.

#### sender: epadjen@compuserve.com

Let's go back to Arthur for a moment. You've taken the longest view so far, going back to the beginnings of ARC in the late '60s. What are some of the biggest changes you've seen in the marketplace?

After the obvious issue of information technology, competition and marketing are the two greatest

Competition for market share and qualified staff is at an all-time high in both the practice of architecture and in all organizations which require knowledge workers. Ten years ago, there was concern that too many architects were being trained; today there is a shortage. The head-hunting business is thriving, as is the part-time employment business. Many now prefer to work as consultants, which is also appealing to many firms, as it limits benefits and long-term commitments.

Some form of design and/or fee competition seems to be more prevalent in the private markets for large projects. This is so even when qualitybased selection is stated as the prime consideration and has been used to create a select list of firms. Competition between design/build teams comprised of contractors and design firms who join forces to pursue a particular project is becoming ever more common. Design/build entities are no longer the only ones in the design/ build game.

One positive aspect of competition in the general workplace is that a greater number of clients understand the benefits of improving their environments and images. Private schools and colleges, for example, continue to develop better facilities to attract students from the finite pool of candidates.

Marketing has become an integral and continuous component of practice. The generalized brochures of old have been replaced with targeted brochures, and RFQs [requests for qualifications] and RFPs [requests for proposals] are prepared with ever improving desktop technologies, including the Web. With the trend toward more marketing, numerous opportunities for architects to expend their marketing resources have emerged. Advertisements in print, client-focused surveys of completed projects, trade presentations to perspective client groups, radio spots on public stations are just a few of these opportunities. As all of us are bombarded with all sorts of information - our clients included — there is a need for information about

If the last recession taught us anything, it is that being fearful gets you nowhere.

Paul Nakazawa

us and our profession to be clear, timely, relevant and persuasive. That is a challenge.

Much of what Roger, Wilson, Paul, and Ed have said applies to all of us. Maintaining flexibility in both staffing and our approach to markets is key. Embracing and trying to keep up with office technology and training staff is a constant challenge. Developing standard ways of doing certain tasks to free up time for more unique and creative activities is also an important objective.

#### sender: etsoi@tka-architects.com

I'd like to add to that last comment with some examples. These are a few things we started when the economy slowed down in the early '90s that have stayed with us.

- 1 Part-time workers: Our staff is about 50% women, and the interior designers are mostly women. Many of the women professionals have had children and taken maternity leave. When things slowed up, several "moms" were happy to work fewer hours and have more time at home. This policy of flexible hours for working moms is still with us. Several (about a quarter of the interior designers) are on reduced hours. Many work 32 hours a week. In return, they also come in when things get heavier.
- 2 State work: When things slowed down, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, Massachusetts Highway Department, and the Division of Capital Planning and Operations had major projects. Talk about changing hats! We learned that the decision-making process was very different for state agencies. We learned that doing drawings for filed sub-bid was very different than for construction managers who specialize in negotiated work. But there was a lesson we were perhaps getting a bit undisciplined in our documentation and we were forced to tighten up for the state work.
- 3 There was a small silver lining in the early nineties: There was time to improve systems. We encouraged our quality assurance "gang of four" to create drawing standards. We asked the CAD guru to create CAD standards. We even looked into redoing our marketing materials, although that turned out to be too pricey.

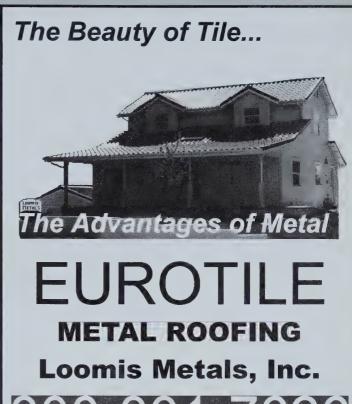
The real question now is what we should be doing today in preparation for what could be tomorrow's downturn. To be honest, I can't say that we're doing anything consciously. It's a challenge just to keep up. But here are a few thoughts:

- 1 We've added a senior marketing person to force us to think beyond the tip of our nose.
- 2 Financial management of the projects could be better. To help, we have developed some new software.
- 3 Last year we spent major bucks on info systems, CAD, and training. In spite of that, it always seems like not quite enough. And we can't afford not to spend it.
- 4 For other office equipment like copiers, plotters, print machines, we pay by the copy. Someone else owns the machines. No capital outlay.
- (5) When things were down, we actually did something smart/dumb. We rented a floor in an adjacent building, and broke though a wall to link to our existing space. But in 1992, we didn't need the space, so we sublet it for even money. Now it is ours again and thank God we have the space. If we could do that again, we probably would.
- **6** We slightly altered our compensation system to emphasize the bonus component more. The bonuses are obviously dependent on firm performance, so people recognize that if things tighten up again, there is likely to be a little less in the bonus component.

Who knows — maybe there won't be a downturn for quite a while, and we will all have retired to being beach bums!







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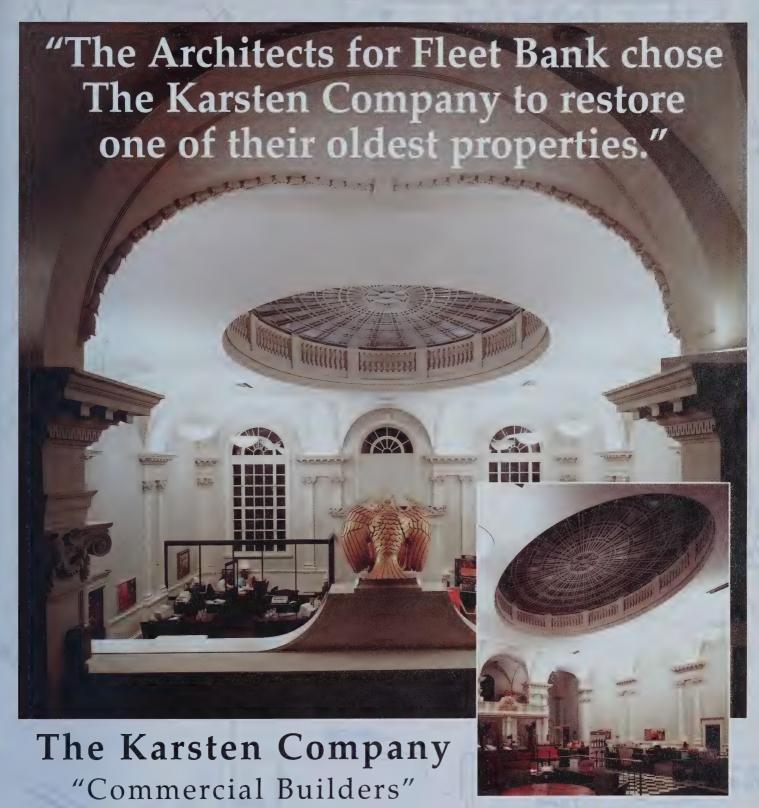
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# Stick 'Em Up

The 1997 **Designers 3-D CAD Shootout** 

#### by Geoffrey Moore Langdon AIA

**Excitement ran high** in the World Trade Center amphitheater last November for the second annual virtual reality design competition known as the "CAD Shootout." With parades of teams of architects, video features, running commentary by an emcee, and lots of cheering, the event felt like an architectural Olympics.

The Boston Society of Architects joined Architectural CADD Consultants to sponsor this competition, which is unique in the world of computer-aided design and drafting (CADD or CAD). Architects, not the software companies, compete to design a building from scratch; the actual project is not announced until the competition begins. In three hours, they must produce all the required plans, sections, elevations, and details, a dozen renderings, animated walkthroughs, and more; only one team of architects is allowed for each major CAD software developer. Thus, for spectators, it becomes an excellent way to evaluate what is possible and how one designs with, say, ArchiCAD as opposed to AllPlan. The competition is also intended to help push the state of the art — to let developers see how their products stack up against their competitors and the needs of architects. Good fun combines with fierce competition, as evidenced by the AllPlan team, who, on hearing that the still-secret project location had a Web site, spent the night before browsing the Web looking for home pages for towns that the organizer was known to frequent. They never found Watch Hill, RI — the location of the fictional Chapel and Arts Center that was the subject of this year's competition.

The 1997 Designers 3-D CAD Shootout had 12 teams: MiniCAD, AllPlan, BuildersCAD, Arc+, AutoCAD, ArchiCAD, DataCAD, Architrion, Microstation Triforma, ArchiTECH.PC, DenebaCAD, and last year's winner, ARRIS. In addition to an audience vote on the winners, this year we had a panel of 13 judges who scrutinized every move and asked very challenging questions. As was the case in 1996, every team had completed a building design by the end — some of the chapels were aesthetically surprisingly good - and most teams had finished most of the required drawings and animations, which were shown at the very entertaining final presentations.

There were 22 different categories for grading the teams' work - such as "Best Elevations" and "Most Accurate 3-D Required Model" — to help identify software that, although perhaps not an overall winner, may be excellent for a design firm that wants to offer a particular service or wants to design in a particular way. Interestingly, the teams that designed a building to fit the design requirements, the site context, and the steeply sloped building site (MiniCAD, AllPlan), tended to do much better than teams trying only to show off what their software could do (BuildersCAD, Arc+). Some teams ended up with poor ratings in categories in which their software is known to excel - such as ArchiCAD on sections, DataCAD on VRML, and AutoCAD on plans — simply because their system crashed or they ran into some other glitch.

The MiniCAD team turned in an excellent design that met all the requirements; they also showed off a schematic design parti that they were able to develop early in the competition. One of the top choices of both the judges and the audience, they thus won the competition and the Architectural CADD Cup. The MiniCAD team also won many of the other categories. Other strong contenders in the competition were: the ArchiCAD team, winning most of the judges' categories; AllPlan, which was the top choice of the judges; and Microstation TriForma, the top choice of the audience.

All 12 of the software programs represented showed off exceptional abilities and - judging by the strong advocacy of the architects using them each seems to have found a market niche in the types of design firms for which they are most appropriate. To evaluate that for yourself, and to have fun running the animations and seeing the drawing and perspective results, visit the Web site online, at http://www.architecturalcadd.com/ shootout.html

Geoffrey Moore Langdon AIA is a principal in Architectural CADD Consultants, in Beverly, MA. He is the author of Architectural CADD: A Resource Guide and is the founder and organizer of the Designers 3-D CAD Shootout. The third annual Shootout will be held this November at Build Boston '98.

# Architecture as a Spectator Sport

A report from the 1997
Designers 3-D CAD Shootout

by Evan Shu AIA

Anyone who's ever felt a twinge of skepticism at the smooth, seemingly effortless demonstrations by purveyors of computer-aided design (CAD) programs would appreciate the reallife pressures of the **Designers 3-D CAD Shootout.** The tension was palpable as 12 CAD teams of three persons each and an audience of several hundred spectators awaited the start of this three-hour competition.



9:20 a.m. The Stage is Set. After video highlights from the 1996 competition, the 12 CAD teams (AllPlan, Arc+, ArchiCAD, ArchiTECH.PC, Architrion,

ARRIS, AutoArchitect/AutoCAD, BuildersCAD, DataCAD, DenebaCAD, Microstation TriForma and MiniCAD) marched in to Star Wars background music. With each team wearing its own colors (and DenebaCAD even in cowboy hats), all we needed were team flags for the full Olympic effect.



9:50 a.m. Watch what? Watch Hill! As we watched host Geoff Langdon delineate the herculean list of requirements (plans, sections, elevations; 12 perspec-

tives; two renderings; supplemental drawing; animation/ VRML; and special 3-D elements), it seemed incredible to ask the teams to provide all those items and a cogent design package in just three hours. No wonder all the teams seemed antsy and ready to jump the gun as Geoff revealed the detailed program of a 12,000 sq. ft. new chapel and arts center for the seaside community of Watch Hill, Rhode Island.



#### 1030 mm Gimme dat Disk!

Since one of the major requirements was a model of the sharply sloping site, the teams were chomping at the bit to get

an appropriate disk with the site information. Emcee Langdon tantalized the group by staggering the distribution, starting with a bitmap disk (MiniCAD got the early jump here), followed by various DWG, and DXF-formatted disks. As we watched the teams begin to develop their site models, we noticed that the AutoCAD group was struggling with their import. They complained that their AutoCAD 14 version noted 69 errors in the site information. The audience chuckled knowingly when Geoff noted wryly that it was strange, since the original file was created in AutoCAD 13. Guess even AutoCAD users have problems with their own file format!

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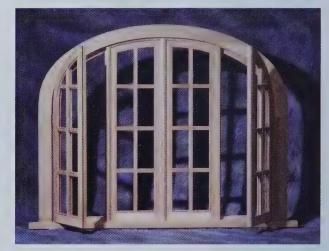
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11:15 a.m. Towering Inferno? The dreaded first design change added a tower and viewing deck to the program. By this time, most of the design approaches had been

established, but because a chapel was already part of the program, most of the teams had little problem adding a tower, so none of the designs went up in flames at this stage. Some of the teams were doing interesting program analysis and sketch modeling. Both MiniCAD and ArchiCAD had spreadsheet tools that allowed them to use square footage requirements to help develop bubble diagrams. DenebaCAD showed some nice work in massing and concept studies. Team DataCAD was working on a complex arch truss that would develop into a standard chapel cross section.



#### 11:35 a.m. Dormers on Parade.

The second design change was more problematic for some of the teams. This change required them to add roof dormers with windows.

The teams that had addressed the contextual cues of shingle-style architecture and summercolony gingerbread had come up with peaked roof concepts that had no problem accommodating dormers. However, some of the other teams that went with modernistic approaches, such as Arc+/Concept CAD with their cascading greenhouse design, had trouble following the letter of the law on this required change.



12:00 p.m. High Noon. At the halfway point, the energy was intense as teams scrambled to get their projects rolling. We noticed that MiniCAD and ArchiCAD were

comfortably advanced with their projects. Almost all the other teams were in mad pursuit.



12:15 p.m. So Long, Frank Lloyd Wright. As Simon and Garfunkel music played in the background, the final design change called for a specific Frank Lloyd Wright motif

to be incorporated in six of the required tall windows. Whether or not Mr. Wright would have turned over in his grave at seeing his design themes applied to Gothic gabled windows was immaterial here. The program requirements also asked the teams to provide a detailed pew bench with an inlaid Gothic pattern, a rose window based on a

panel from the old chapel, and a pulpit that incorporated the same motif. Many of the teams had one member "build" these details first — it was odd to see complex rendered pew benches at the same time we were seeing bubble diagrams.



1:15 p.m. Get that microphone outta my face! Most of the teams weren't too happy to see the video switch turned to display their images on the main screen, nor did many want to

talk about what they were doing at this juncture. With only 30 minutes left in the competition, the atmosphere was definitely frantic. AllPlan was doing a good job integrating site and building, but their tower was noticeably out of proportion. AutoArchitect was lagging well behind. Builders-CAD was doing impressive framing models but little else. Archi-TECH.PC was doing respectable 3-D details but otherwise scrambling. Arc+ seemed stuck in place. ArchiCAD seemed in good shape. Architrion was mired in a troublesome design scheme. DataCAD was tough to get a read on, but seemed to be at a make or break stage. Deneba had started fast with their massing model but had apparently not gone much beyond that. MiniCAD continued its steady progress.



1:40 p.m. The Mouse Trap. Geoff Langdon called an official halt to the competition at this point, and you could see the shudder that went through most of the teams as mice

were literally wrenched from hands and placed on top of the monitors for all to see. While some of the results were discernible from our frequent peeks on the big screen, an air of mystery still remained about how the teams would put it all together into cogent presentations.



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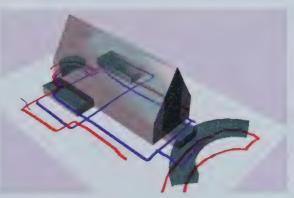
4:00 p.m. Who won? The ranking was a blend of votes by the judges and the audience, rather along the US bicameral House/ Senate model. (The procedure had been

decided before the event, after some spirited discussion on a special e-mail listserv.) Although the judges had to grade each team on some 22 different categories, their votes only accounted for a 50% weighting. The audience had a simpler form that included just six questions, but their votes also accounted for a 50% weighting on the overall winner(s) of the competition. (In case of ties, the judges' opinion would rule.) In a relatively speedy process, the voting was tallied and displayed via a spreadsheet bar chart on the big screen of the amphitheater. All the results and the designs can be seen at the Web site for the competition: http://www.architecturalcadd.com/shootout.html

The teams seemed to fall into three groups:

Crash & Burners. Due to ill preparation as much as anything, AutoArchitect/AutoCAD (\$6,500 software cost) finished dead last in virtually all estimations. They made the mistake of trying to use "new" software (AutoCAD 14) and a new team, and they had only a very rudimentary presentation with many missing elements.

BuildersCAD (\$2,500) had the most impressive supplementary drawings (rendered framing models and a full bill of materials) but little in the way of a site model, floor plans, elevations, sections, etc. the stuff you need! Arc+/Virtus ConceptCAD (\$2,900) created a cascading solarium that was impressive but inappropriately designed for the site, and they did not complete the full building envelope enclosure or any 3-D details. I would also put DenebaCAD (\$1,100) in this category, even though they had terrific schematic modeling and had the most entertaining (though less than successful) gimmick of creating 3-D stereoscopic images that the audience had to view through 3-D glasses. Unfortunately, I have a hard time with any architectural software that cannot or will not create the required basic floor plans.



Team AllPlan using AllPlan FT 12.3 by Nemetschek Systems, Inc. Middle of the Packers. ArchiTECT.PC (\$3,000), sister program to ArchiCAD, did a good job with some aspects but was graded down severely by both the judges and the audience for having trouble with sections, floor plans, and animation. Architrion (\$4,000), despite showing some powerful software capability, fell down in the area of design with a poor concept with little or no site integration. DataCAD (\$350, including use of 3DSite, 3DPowerTools & DCViewer) held its own, despite being outgunned in software power. The team presented a credible design and fulfilled most of the project requirements. Unfortunately, they tried to load an overly complex 3-D VRML

model into Netscape Navigator and it refused to display at all. Strangely enough, although they came close to fulfilling the higher-end requirements, DataCAD could have easily done better with some of the lower-end presentation requirements such as plans and elevations. ARRIS (\$4,600), as they themselves noted, had "a humbling experience for the ones who won last year." Despite some very good work, they could not show some of the required elevations and sections, due to two major hardware crashes. Their discovery that they had filled up 99% of their operating system's resource capacity was perhaps revealing of the resource-hungry nature of the software.



**Playoff Caliber Teams.** The cream of this year's crop included AllPlan, ArchiCAD, TriForma, and MiniCAD in a very close competition. Microstation TriForma (\$5,325) did well with almost all the elements, but did a snow job, in my opinion, by ignoring any consideration of site in their design. At times it felt that we were looking at a canned demo design on a flat site, although without a doubt it is a very powerful system. Still, form without substance is my verdict here they would have been well-served by an on-board architect on the design team. AllPlan (\$5,000), after crashing and burning last year, showed enough power and style this time around to earn the judges' top marks, despite again having a hardware problem that caused them to lose their elevations and sections. They did some impressive advance work by preparing HTML (Web) preformatted display screen templates. ArchiCAD (\$4,300) turned in a very solid performance that fulfilled all the presentation requirements. They may have lost a few points with a modernistic design in this shingle-style neighborhood, but they did integrate the project with the site well,





The overall winner of the 2nd Annual Designers 3-D CAD Shootout was MiniCAD (\$500) a surprise, considering that they have taken DataCAD's approach to shelfware pricing. MiniCAD has recently expanded its Mac-based software to operate in a Windows environment, and their ability to network a Mac machine together with a Windows 95 machine was impressive. The MiniCAD team put together a comprehensive architectural presentation. Note the emphasis on the word "architectural" — their design clearly recognized site, context, and program. (Many teams basically ignored the arts center part of the program, relegating it to the church basement!) MiniCAD won the categories of best design and best overall presentation as ranked by the panel of judges. Strangely enough, although they agreed on these categories, the judges (except this one) dropped MiniCAD to second place in the overall category — perhaps sensing there might be some unrevealed limitations. (One judge observed that the program may have played to MiniCAD's "residential architecture" strengths.) In any case, with the audience's strong vote, MiniCAD garnered enough points to become this year's overall winner, although host Geoff Langdon noted that there were many winners (and many categories to prove it) in this competition.

The View through the Window(s). Many of the systems are looking more and more alike, with windows and more windows cluttering up the screen with too many choices, toggles, and switches to set. This competition was much more revealing than any canned demo could ever be, as it put all of these programs under intense pressure to perform. The hardware/software crash problems that so many of the teams experienced were probably not simple coincidence. Even though our machines are getting more and more powerful, these software packages are pushing them to the limit. Most look tremendously complex to learn — despite protestations to the contrary by the vendors. In this patchy field, it is easy to think that maybe the grass is greener someplace else. The Shootout demonstrated that every knoll has its brown spots.

Evan H. Shu, AIA is president of the architecture firm Shu Associates Inc. in Melrose, MA, and writes regularly for *Cheap Tricks*, a monthly newsletter for DataCAD users. He was a judge in the 1997 Designers 3-D CAD Shootout.

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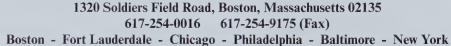
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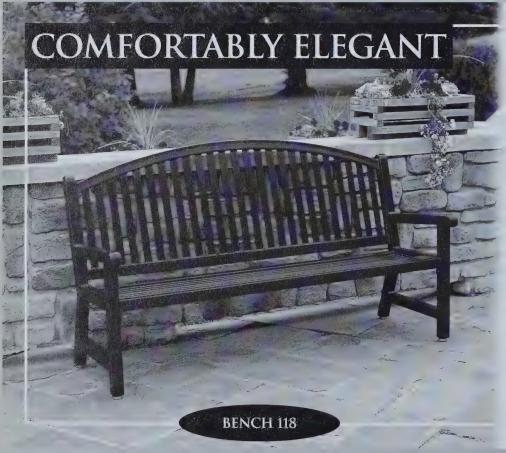
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# Interns: In the In-Between

by George A. Takoudes, Assoc. AIA

George A. Takoudes Intern

Designer

George A. Takoudes
Inter-spatial Facilitator
George A. Takoudes
George A. Takoudes

Upon graduating from architecture school, I went off to find my fortune in the profession, or what we students referred to as "the real world." I had heard stories of such a place and was intrigued by the idea of actually getting paid to work on projects that would actually be built. What I was not prepared for, however, was a series of questions that I found surprisingly difficult to answer.

# You don't know how to read a door schedule? What did they teach you anyway?

Internship is meant to fill in gaps of this nature. Architecture schools and the profession continue to circle each other like heavyweights in an ideological boxing ring. Many schools distance themselves from the trade school moniker (after all, architecture is not a trade), while professional firms rarely offer a curriculum — you learn as you go. I've often wondered what it would be like if the process were reversed and the profession were responsible for teaching us design theory and history. I can just hear my professor asking, "What do you mean they didn't have you read Lewis Mumford at work?"

So what does an intern know how to do? On any given day, we might be asked to do one of the following tasks: build a 3-D computer model; build a study model from basswood; photograph and document a building; lay out a page on PageMaker; write HTML for a Web site; draw a detail; research an architectural style; render a

drawing. Not bad for an average starting salary in the mid-twenties. Yet it is the constant fluctuation between such brash confidence and the humbling door schedule gaff that keeps the intern up at night. While the older generation wrestles with the ghosts of *The Fountainhead*'s martyr, Howard Roark, interns look to the insecure Holden Caulfield from *Catcher in the Rye* for our reality check.

# You paid tuition for your education prior to working here, so shouldn't I get paid for teaching you?

Apparently some people in the real world have lost track of the difference between "training" and "knowledge." (It's only fair to note that many schools have lost track of the concept of "professional" in "professional degree".) They've certainly lost track of the cost of education. A lot of interns will be making Mercedes-sized loan payments for 10 to 20 years. If you want to get paid for teaching me, the line forms in the back.

## We all know when internship starts, but when does it end?

It depends on who's answering the question. The Department of Education says two years — the maximum length of time you can defer educational loans for an internship (but only some of the loans some of the time). The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards says approximately three years — the length of time it should take to acquire the requisite number of "value units" or hours logged in a variety of professional training categories. Meanwhile, some of the more frugal firms will say the concept of internship doesn't exist at all; if there is no internship training period, the employee doesn't get paid overtime.

Interns ...

24 ArchitectareBoston Practice and Technology 1998

On any given day, we might be asked to build a 3-D computer model or a study model from basswood; photograph and document a building; lay out a page in PageMaker; write HTML for a Web site; draw a detail;

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#### So, what do you want on your business card?

Hmmm. "Architect" — not permitted until licensure. "Intern" — too medical. "Designer" — too unspecific. "Inter-spatial Facilitator" — too touchy-feely. "Architect-in-training" — too demeaning. Meanwhile, our society has decided that anyone who develops a strategy or a plan is deserving of the label: Bill Clinton, Bill Gates and Bill Parcells have all been deemed "architects." Perhaps the architectural profession should invent a better term for this transition. Dante has already claimed "purgatory," scientists use "metamorphosis," psychologists reference "adolescence." For now, I'm in the "in-between."

#### What have you learned as an intern?

I can put away all my shiny red apples. Learning outside school is all about self-motivation. You learn by doing. A tuition-free intern comes to learn about 401(k)'s, salary negotiation, professional jargon, how to write a business letter, and the fact

that contractors don't care for the all-too-oftenused academic term, "sort of." But more importantly, I have learned to see internship as a series of slightly open doors; we just need to decide which ones to push through. And as we learn the rules of the game, we will gain greater control over our position in the profession.

## OK, there's a gap between academics and practice. What are you doing about it?

One of my professors once said that our primary job as architects is to bring innovation at every level to each project. Innovation. You don't hear about it much outside school. "Don't reinvent the wheel" is muttered in high-design firms and production firms alike. Profitability. Now there's a term you do hear. But are these two words really that far apart? Maybe there is a better way to use the drafting software. Maybe there is a more efficient room layout. Or maybe there is a module of construction that will limit the number of eccentric details. The best thing we as interns can do is not to give up on our idealism.

## What about your future? Where do want to be in five years?

At graduation, I had yet to realize that I wasn't so much entering the profession as I was wading into this "in-between." The irony is that many of us like it here. Architecture needs its two institutional heavyweights — academics and practice — to continue a system of checks and balances. An architect, or one in training, would have reason to worry if there were no push and pull. It means we're learning. So, five years from now I hope to still be in the ring with the two heavyweights — just better equipped to counter punch.

George Takoudes, Assoc. AIA is a graduate of Columbia University and the Harvard Graduate School of Design and is currently with Payette Associates in Boston, MA. He has recently finished his internship (according to NCARB), and is now in an even more nebulous position: non-intern, non-architect.

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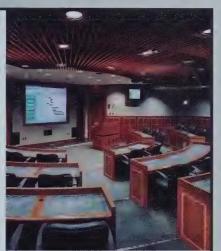
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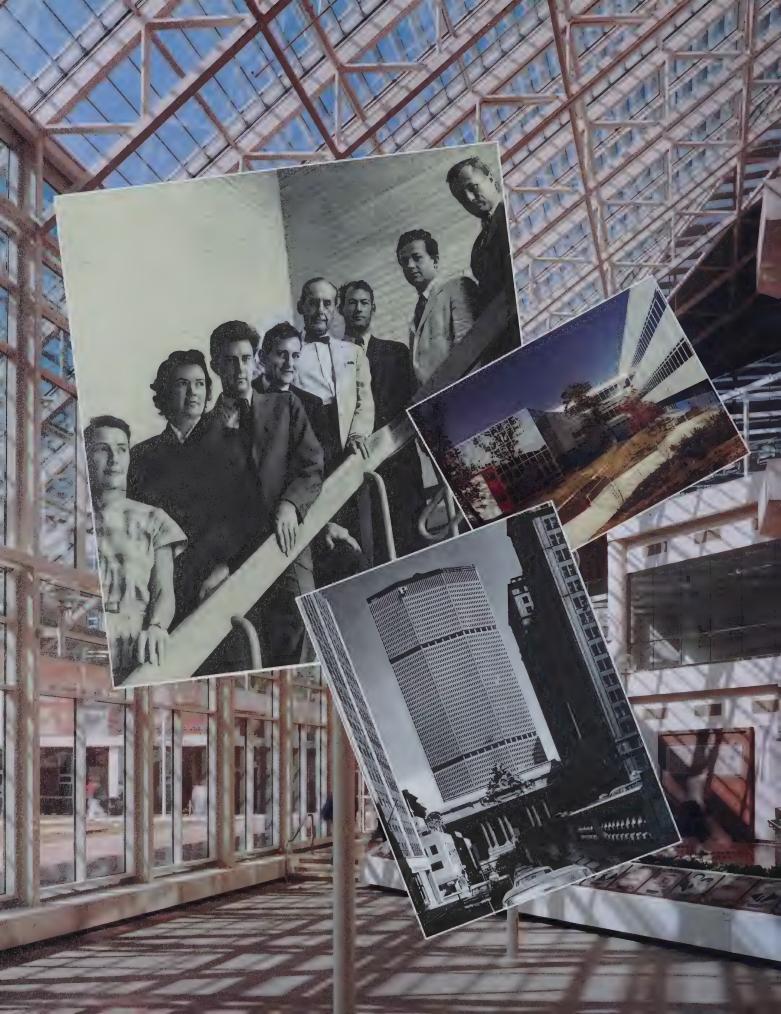
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# **Master Pieces**

# Norman Fletcher FAIA talks with Carol Burns AIA

In 1945, Norman Fletcher joined six other young **Gropius to found The Architects Collaborative** in Cambridge, MA. With the closing of the firm in 1995, he went on to establish Fletcher Harkness Cohen Moneyhun in Boston. Carol Burns is a principal of Taylor MacDougall Burns Architects in Boston and an associate professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

The culture and the ideals around the founding of TAC are fascinating in terms of both the personal relationships and their political context. How did that relate to an idea of collaboration?

NF: I was interested at the time in the idea of pacifism and working together in a socialist way. I had read Aldous Huxley's Ends and Means, which had a great influence on my life, which describes how the wrong means corrupt the ends. And I'd also read a lot about Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. [My future partner] Chip Harkness was very like-minded, and we'd all talked about coming together to form some kind of group practice, as a kind of cooperative existence.

One of the signs of that connection among the individuals is Moon Hill in Lexington, Massachusetts, where you all bought land and developed houses and have lived out your lives. It seems it's not just a place to live but a way to live.

architects — all under the age of 30 — and Walter

**Clockwise from top:** 

**Noble Research Center,** 

University, Stillwater, OK,

Background:

Photo: Nick Wheeler

**Oklahoma State** 

**TAC** founding partners (I to r): Sally Harkness, Jean Fletcher, Robert MacMillan. Norman Fletcher, Walter Gropius, Chip Harkness, Ben Thompson. Louis McMillen.

IBM administration and distribution center, Sterling Forest, NY, 1982

Pan Am building, New York City, 1958 NF: Yes. Originally, we were going to be a cooperative with the idea that the houses would be owned cooperatively. We would buy materials wholesale and thus save money, which was a big factor in building the houses. There was no provision for co-op bylaws in Massachusetts at the time, so we founded a nonprofit corporation and adopted bylaws, many of which were fashioned after Quaker communities, namely, equal votes for everybody, with two votes per household, so that the wife can vote differently than the husband. No discrimination of race or creed. Common land, that sort of thing.

And does that continue today?

NF: Yes.

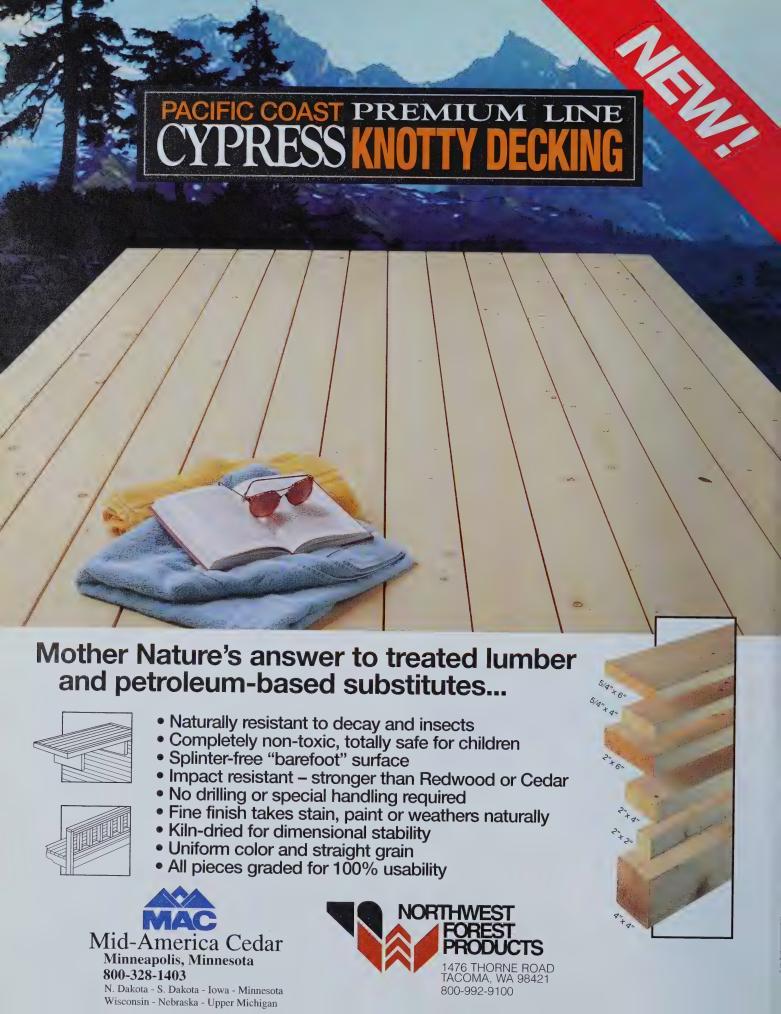
I wonder if you can tell some stories about the very early years of TAC, about a firm that didn't yet have its identity established and wasn't recognized — the upstart phase of the firm. This interests me because I have a firm that's four years old and I'm living upstart all the time. It's like a chess game — opening moves are interesting and important.

NP: Our first office was in what we called the University Theater building, which is now the Harvard Square Theater, and pretty soon we began to grow, so we moved around the Square a lot. We all had equal pay — we put in the same small amount of capital at the beginning. We got basic maintenance, which was very little at that time. We also decided that if a family had children, a new child would warrant \$50 extra per month. So as the families grew, everybody was getting \$50 more except Gropius, who didn't have any children. He began to feel a little itchy about this after a while, so we raised him and everybody was even again.

I'm sure TAC must have been very unusual at the time, founded with women partners.

NF: I've often wondered why it's so strange; I think women have had a greater struggle since then. But for us it was entirely natural. We'd worked together, so the idea of having women as equal partners was never questioned.

I do want to talk about the idea of collaboration. It was such a fundamental concept that it set the firm's identity.



The idea was that individuals could reach greater heights as an organic team working toward an end, rather than as individual artists. The principals were designated to do certain jobs. In the case of the Harvard Law School Graduate Center, which was one of our first big jobs, Gropius was the head partner, I was the principal in charge for the commons building, Bob MacMillan was in charge for the dormitories, and Louis McMillen was in charge of the site planning and landscaping. And Ben Thompson was in charge of the interior furniture.

That was the largest job that the firm had done to date?

That was one of the jobs that pushed us into another level. Before then we had been doing houses, and of course we had started Moon Hill. But we hadn't done anything very large, although at the same time, we were doing our first school, which led to a lot of schools.

In the postwar era, there were so many births that suddenly there was a need for schools.

Yes. We had an interesting commission at that time. *Colliers* magazine wanted to do a story on something they called a "universal school." We designed a classroom for them which had columns at 30 feet on center, low eaves, and a conical roof with an oculus in the center. And that classroom could be joined with others in a number of different ways. I worked on that with Gropius and it's one of the projects he was most excited about.

The concept of a flexible system of construction, as well as the industrial innovation of corporations retooling after the war, influenced Gropius' experiments with house systems.

Yes — you're referring to his work with the General Panel company. General Panel was different from most other attempts at prefabrication. At that time there were two other important versions. Carl Koch was working on one, and Ed Barnes was working on another. The market demand was for a small house — two or three bedrooms, twelve hundred square feet at the most. Nobody had enough money, generally speaking, to build a big house. The General Panel house was a system of one-meter-wide panels that

went together beautifully. And with these panels, you could design houses up to any size and vary them a great deal. It was like the universal school — aiming at the idea of variety in unity.

How do you evaluate that idea, a flexible system that could yield an infinite number of results? Why wasn't it put to use more?



Parkside Elementary School, Columbus, IN, 1960

NF: I don't know. Most schools systems were building one school at a time. To really pay off, the designs would have to be replicated a number of times, and I think those situations were fairly rare. Those were the days when we were always trying to beat the economics. A town was not going to vote a school through unless we could do it cheaply. And I remember technological things that we tried, to keep costs down — one was initiated by Fred Dubin, a mechanical engineer. One of his ideas was an under-floor duct system using galvanized metal duct — the ductwork goes out underneath the concrete slab, then comes up around the perimeter in the classrooms to heat the rooms. That was going to be cheaper than a hydraulic hot water system or radiant or other systems. So we developed that and used it in a number of schools, partly as an attack on the cost. Another one was the lift slab. We built a number of schools, again trying to save some cost on structure, by using the lift slab method.

So technological experimentation and innovation was part of your lived experience as an architect.

NF: Yes. We were actually commissioned by Rohm and Haas to come up with a new market for Plexiglas, a product which had been a great success in bomber turrets during the war. One of the ideas we came up with was skylights — it's a very strong material that can be formed and is optically very clear. Lighting is another example. One of our schools, in Needham, has a channel slab structural roof system. And we integrated that with linear fluorescents - an attempt to integrate lighting with structure.

Now these things are commonplace. It's interesting to think that they were so recently developed that you helped invent them, and that they were developed by architects who were non-specialists.

NF: Yes. We liked to think at TAC that we were all generalists, and it may have been one of our weaknesses in a sense. Although when we broke into hospital design, we had architects who were specialists in the medical area.

You're not the only person who has said that the great strength of TAC was its collaboration concept, and the great weakness of TAC was its collaboration concept. How did the firm hold onto its collaborative ideals as it grew?

NF: It's harder to collaborate with 350 people than it is with seven. We had weekly meetings where a team working on a project was invited to show their work and submit it for criticism. We invited the whole office to take part — though of course they wouldn't all be there. And there's the whole idea of collaboration within a team. We tried to give everybody a chance to express their ideas. TAC struggled to be very democratic about the participation of junior staff, and there was very little dictatorial action. Even Gropius himself was very democratic.

And what do you think were the best results of that approach?

NF: We may have spent too much time looking at options, but I think the openness of collaboration — the willingness to listen and keep an eye open and swallow your pride sometimes — has great benefits in the final analysis.

Marian And that can push you beyond your own capacities in a way. How would you characterize the weakness of the collaborative idea? Were there problems with the firm's collaborative identity?

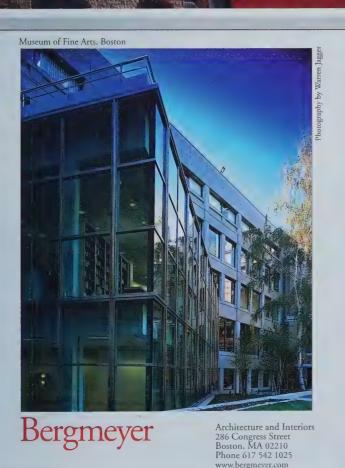
NF: It's not the best way to generate the most profit. It s too permissive. It allows people to avoid cutting through things quickly and incisively. A much more dictatorial point of view would perhaps succeed better as a money maker. I also think TAC might have suffered from too much anonymity, not giving enough recognition to individuals. Even Gropius, who was very well known, was very critical of magazines when they attributed a project to him alone. He would write letters about it to try to adjust the history.

That struggle continues even today. There's an inclination to imagine that built architecture is the work of some individual, and usually some guy, rather than acknowledging that complicated works are collective efforts.

NF: That's exactly right. Ideas come from a great many places, including clients. I've been fortunate in having the chance to work with some very good clients who appreciate architecture. One was Ed Logue. Tough, but he really knew his architecture and was not going to settle for anything less than what he thought was the best. And then there are people like Irwin Miller — the head of Cummins Engine in Columbus, Indiana — who is wonderfully knowledgeable about architecture and city planning. I was fortunate enough to do one of the early schools in Columbus — the fees were essentially paid for by the Cummins Engine Foundation, and the school department selected architects from a list prepared by a committee headed by Eero Saarinen. The site was at the edge of a park in a new neighborhood, and we were able to make the school the focus of that neighborhood and give it a civic quality. In the late '80s, we were asked to come back and double the size of the original building. The people in Columbus are very respectful of architects, and it was very gratifying to be invited back.



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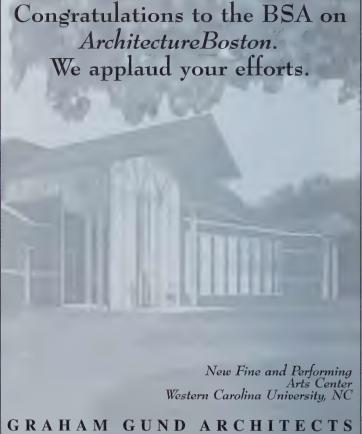
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As the office expanded, you began to work on projects around the world. TAC was the precursor to the global practices that many architectural firms have developed today.

NF: Our work in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Greece challenged us to search for the right character and the right answer to climate, geography, and culture. We were forced to think more about very harsh climate issues the effect of sun control and shading, and the permanence of materials in that kind of environment. And we were forced to think about the extent to which Islamic design could influence us. The Islamic culture of Cairo, for example, had a great impact on our thinking about the design for the US Embassy there. After the Lebanon car bombing, the State Department decided that new buildings had to be set back 100 feet behind a wall, and that windows couldn't be more than 16 percent of the building surface area. They wanted to convey that America is a friendly place, and yet we were building a fortress. But we looked around and saw that the old mosques and buildings in Cairo are mostly wall, too, but they're very handsome. That suggested a solution. We built an inside atrium, and some of the decorative elements that are woven into the building are strongly influenced by Islamic design.

The relationship of modern architecture to city fabric is a recurring theme in much of your work — especially the integration of infrastructure and architecture as a way of citymaking.

We should think more about new buildings in relation to transportation systems. The Pan Am building in New York is a wonderful example of that — it's in the core of the city and located over a transportation hub. The new South Station bus terminal here in Boston is built on air rights over the train tracks and was designed for a third phase that will include new office buildings and a new hotel. It's a model for using valuable land that makes the linkage between different modes of travel more efficient and thus takes cars off the road. I understand that Congress has put a lot of money into the ISTEA [Intermodal Surface



Transportation Efficiency Act] program recently, and I hope they use some of it to encourage this kind of project.

Given that you've seen TAC from the beginning to the end and have now formed another firm — how's your life in your new firm?

Well, it's very different. I'm a partner, but it's not the same as TAC in which the partners were all equal. Michael Cohen and Gary Moneyhun are the chief partners. We're working on interesting projects, and we have a group of people who are very bright. I'm enjoying it very much.

South Station Transportation Center, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Boston,1995



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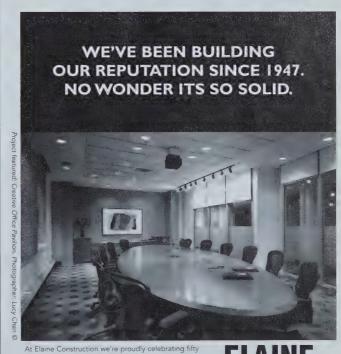


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In October of 1997, the AIA issued a completely revised edition of its B141 Owner-Architect Agreement. B141 is considered one of the flagships of the AIA documents program, and a new edition is an event of some magnitude. My work with architects across the country leads me to believe that architects who understand and use the new contract will improve their practices.

The most noticeable change is its flexibility, which is immediately obvious in the two-part format. The scope of services is separate from the initial information, terms and conditions, and compensation provisions. This allows for use of a variety of scope documents (including the official AIA version) proposals prepared by the architect, responses to requests for proposals (RFPs), and scopes prepared by owners. This flexibility will increase the chances that an owner will be willing to use B141-1997.

The second most visible change is also the best. There are now three pages of items which require the parties to document their basic assumptions about the project. We all make assumptions about each project because, at the beginning, there are many indeterminate factors. Yet the architect is asked to commit to perform services — frequently for a fixed or maximum amount of compensation. Problems arise when assumptions are not recorded. Moreover, changes in the project should lead to an adjustment to the terms of the contract. This is where B141-1997 shines — it establishes a clear baseline from which future change can be measured and promotes discussions that in themselves will have a salutary effect. The better the parties understand each other, and the more that they make mutual decisions, the less likely it is that there will be disagreements in the future.

The new B141 includes other provisions that will minimize the potential for disputes. The number of submittal reviews, site visits, and inspections can be specified. New provisions deal with requests for information (RFIs) and possible payment for time spent responding to inappropriate RFIs — a direct result of recommendations from the Boston Society of Architects under the direction of Tom Payette FAIA.

Other provisions which will tend to minimize disputes or promote early settlements at the least expense include:

Mandatory mediation before any arbitration or litigation. Mediation is informal and nonbinding and has an exceptionally high success rate. Two Views

## The AIA **Owner-Architect** Agreement, B141-1997

by Charles R. Heuer FAIA, Esq.

#### Owner's termination for convenience.

If owners can terminate the agreement "for convenience" without having to invent a cause, settlement terms can be worked out in an atmosphere that is not defensive and charged with allegations of fault.

■ Waiver of consequential damages.

Consequential damages are those that arise out of unpredictable circumstances that are the fault of one of the parties; lost profit on other projects due to delays is one example. Since these tend to involve large sums, they tend to exacerbate disputes. Both parties will now waive such damages.

Finally, the new B141 demands more accountability from architects with respect to cost estimating and control - a pervasive demand from owners. Architects should not marginalize themselves in the design and construction process, and this is a step in the right direction.

The AIA documents have almost always been more fair and workable than those of other construction industry organizations. The new B141 consciously works at balancing the need both to reflect practice and to lead practice. Many architects who have studied it tell me, "We have been doing it that way in our firm for years now." Beyond that, however, the document tries to assume a leadership role in suggesting improvements to common practices. You may have seen slogan for the accounting firm, Ernst & Young, LLP: There isn't a business we can't improve. Similarly, I think there isn't an architectural practice in the country which will not be improved by proper use of B141-1997. ■■■

Charles R. Heuer FAIA, Esq. is a principal of The Heuer Law Group, with offices in Cambridge, MA and Charlottesville, VA. He has been a member of the AIA Documents Committee since 1991, and is the author of the AIA Handbook chapters on owner-architect agreements and construction agreements.

**Two Views** 

## The AIA Owner-Architect Agreement, B141-1997

by Christopher L. Noble, Esq.

Christopher L. Noble, Esq., chairs the Construction Law Practice Group at the Boston law firm of Hill & Barlow. He is a founding fellow of the American College of Construction Lawyers and an honorary member of the Boston Society of Architects.

The 1997 edition of AIA Document B141 (the Standard Form of Agreement Between Owner and Architect) was the result of high ideals and strong forces for change — not the least of which originated in the Boston architectural community. However, it was also the product of a complex political environment within the American Institute of Architects. The result could be described as Corbusian — strong in conceptual form, weak in detailed execution.

The major strength of the new B141 is its schematic framework: generic terms and conditions, to which modular scopes of services can be attached. While not every owner, architect, or project requires this much flexibility, the restructured document will give architects a greater opportunity to market "expanded" services. It will also be adaptable to imminent changes in information technology, such as document assembly programs and Web-based communications systems.

The major weakness of the new B141 is its continuing defensiveness with respect to a number of business and liability issues, and its failure to break away from the heavily qualified and circumspect contract language inherited from previous editions. True, the contract now offers free redesign if construction bids exceed the owner's budget, a meeting with the owner at the end of the one-year defect correction period, and "evaluation" in place of "observation" of the contractor's work. However, it maintains nearly all of the construction-phase mantras that have come to symbolize the profession's perceived obsession with risk aversion, and contains a number of new provisions which, to put it mildly, will not be helpful in the struggle for the hearts and minds of potential clients. These include the following:

- The agreement provides that any change in a voluminous compendium of initial project information will constitute a change in services for which additional compensation is due. Many owners will see this as an open-ended invitation to perpetual renegotiation.
- The owner is given an illusory right to terminate the agreement without cause, whereupon the owner would be obligated to pay the architect's expected profits on unperformed services and to return to the architect the originals and all copies of drawings, specifications, and other documents. Upon termination, the owner's license to copy and use the architect's work product automatically lapses and cannot be revived unless the architect is found to be in default under the agreement.
- Both parties waive their right to collect consequential damages from one another. However, this ostensibly bilateral agreement is exclusively beneficial to architects and their professional liability insurers, because as a practical matter owners are the only ones who will have any consequential damages to waive.
- Limited numbers of submittal reviews, site visits, and project closeout inspections are included in basic compensation. These new limitations are intended to reduce architects' construction-period losses, but they will induce many owners to object even more strenuously to the AIA printed form.

Once owners and architects become accustomed to the new, more complex B141, it may begin to play the role of a contractual minivan, with a lot of cargo space but little sex appeal. Those who prefer the tried-and-true sedan version can opt for the newly enhanced B151, which is now indistinguishable from the B141 of prior model years. But what vehicles are available to take service-oriented architects into the fast lane of increased status, authority, profit, and competitive advantage? There remains to be drafted an owner-architect agreement that is free of jargon, in which less attention is devoted to the conventional management of insured risks, and more attention is given to a clear, positive, confidence-inspiring statement of what owners are getting for their money. Such a vehicle would do justice to the revolutionary impulses that started to take the architectural profession down an exciting road, only to have become stalled along the way.



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## **Constructive Advice**

Air infiltration and the wall-to-window interface

by Richard Keleher AIA

One of the most difficult elements to design and describe in construction documents is the interface between windows and walls. On many projects, architects do not address the interface at all, but instead specify the windows, flashing, joint sealers, and related conditions on a performance basis. This in effect hands primary design decisions over to the contractor.

To avoid leaky buildings, we need to develop details which provide effective and easily constructible air and water seals between walls and windows. Understanding air seals has proved to be especially critical. Differential air pressures acting through a leaky air barrier can cause drafts around windows and condensation within walls; resulting problems can include poor indoor air quality and water penetration due to water forced inward by leaking air.

A number of conditions contribute to the vulnerability of the wall-to-window interface. One is simply the number of trades that often come together at the window, such as glass and glazing, metal windows, sealants and water-proofing, insulation, and masonry. Unclear details or an inappropriate type of window can contribute additional problems. And in public work in Massachusetts, we further complicate matters with Chapter 149 of the General Laws, which requires filed sub-bids, thus increasing the likelihood of problems.

But one of the primary causes of air infiltration problems lies in the difference between the standard laboratory test for air leakage, and the way these same windows react to air pressure when they are installed in a building wall. Window manufacturers typically send sample units to a laboratory to be tested, then submit the results to the architect as evidence that their window meets the requirements of the specification.

Testing procedures make the assumption that the window is sealed to the building at the outer face of the frame. In standard laboratory tests like ASTM E 283 — which measures rates of air infiltration through exterior windows, curtain walls, and doors — leakage around or through the sides of the window is not considered.

In actual conditions, the wall adjacent to the window is often multi-layered construction, such as a rain screen or cavity wall. These types of walls have an outer wythe which acts as a rain barrier and have air and water seals located toward the interior face of the wall. In these cases, the sides of the window frame are exposed to the cavity (which functions as a pressure-equalization chamber) and can leak both air and water if barriers are not properly integrated with the window.

The figures on the next two pages show some suggested details for the two types of glazing for commercial buildings: continuous glass and metal curtain walls; and conventional punched or strip windows. The exterior rain barrier assembly is indicated in blue; the interior water, air and vapor barrier assembly is indicated in red.

Pressure-equalized curtain walls are generally designed with the air-and-water barrier membrane sealed to the "shoulder" of the section, as shown in Figure 1. (The membrane is typically rubberized asphalt; common trade names are Miradri, Blueskin, and Perm-A-Barrier.) This detail shows a standard spacer tube in the glazing channel which has openings on the outward face to allow it to be fastened against the shoulder of the section to hold the air- and-water barrier in place as a termination bar. Note that this assembly is easier to construct if the window is installed before the adjacent cladding.

Figure 2 shows a more elegant alternative to Figure 1, and is a particularly neat way of keeping water away from the vulnerable "tongue" area of the curtain wall. The manufacturer has provided an extra leg on the "pressure plate," one end of which has a gasket that seals to the air-and-water barrier membrane. The other end allows sealing to the pressure plate rather than to the snap cover which allows reglazing without disturbing the sealant joint.

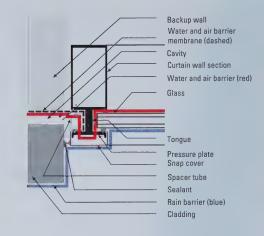
The detail in Figure 3, which allows the window to go in last, shows a conventional window. Because of the manufacturer's design, sealing the side of the window is not easy. In these cases, the contract documents should require at least the sealing of all joints on the interior of the unit so they are air and watertight. A preferred method which eliminates the need for extensive interior sealing — is to provide a continuous air and water barrier from the wall cavity to the side of the window like those shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Although water leaks can frequently be tied to air infiltration and air pressure differentials, the window-to-wall interface should also be designed to prevent water infiltration driven by other forces. Figures 4, 5, and 6 show diagrammatically how some of these forces can be addressed: gravity (slope to outside), surface tension (provide a drip), capillary action (provide a minimum 3/8" gap), and kinetic energy (provide a dam or baffle). These details are intended only as preliminary guidance.

Whatever the window type or condition, architects can take steps to minimize problems:

**Specify mockup tests:** Specify custom mockup testing, involving the window in the actual wall setting, for projects that have demanding performance requirements, a large amount of repetition, or high loads.

Although laboratory mockups and testing offer advance warning of potential problems, they can be expensive. Instead, consider field mockups and air infiltration tests per ASTM E 783, "Method for Field Measurement of Air Leakage Through Installed Exterior Windows and Doors." Such tests are not very expensive, and the mockups can be incorporated into the work if they are acceptable. Specify that field mockups of all significant conditions be built, and that the tests address the wall assembly as well as its component parts.





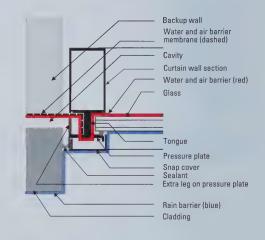
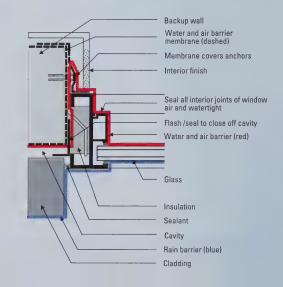
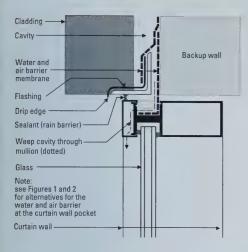


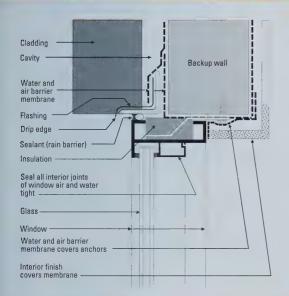
Figure 3



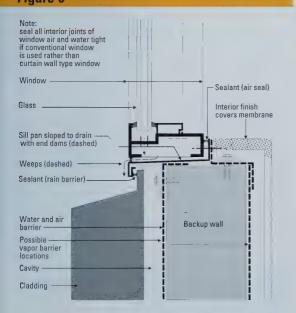
#### Figure 4



#### Figure 5



#### Figure 6



These mockups should be thoroughly evaluated, which may require going beyond the standard tests. A smoke gun, for example, can be very helpful in pinpointing specific points of air leakage in an otherwise complying assembly. Hold pre-construction conferences for each trade and perform field tests as the work progresses to verify that the field work meets the requirements of the specifications.

**Consult with experts:** Review details and specifications with consultants or contractors to verify constructibility, suitability for the project, and affordability.

**Draw real details!** Details should be drawn at a scale large enough to show how the air and water barriers really seal to the windows. Confirm that details are consistent with the manufacturer's recommendations.

Architects have been lulled by the industry's reliance on standard air infiltration tests of windows. Instead, we should insist that window and curtain wall manufacturers show where they expect air-and-water barriers to join their products. We should require them to provide tests that replicate that barrier location in addition to the conventional tests for air and water leakage. By demanding more from manufacturers — and by increasing our own understanding of the physical forces involved — we can produce better buildings.

Richard Keleher AIA has recently joined Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott and was formerly an associate at Wallace, Floyd, Associates in Boston. He is chair of the BSA's Building Envelope Committee. This article was prepared with assistance from the Committee and with contributions from Albert Harkness AIA and Thomas Schwartz PE, president of Simpson Gumpertz & Heger Inc.

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Michael Louis and Peter Nelson, "Extraneous Air Leakage from Window Perimeters," ASTM Special Technical Publication STP 1255, 1995.

"Envelope Design Guidelines for Federal Office buildings: Thermal Integrity and Airtightness," National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), Andrew K. Persily, Ed., March 1963. Has an extensive and superb bibliography. In addition to these publications, the National Research Council of Canada, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, ASTM, AAMA, and ASHRAE, all have extensive catalogs of publications dealing with the building envelope.

For more information contact: Richard Keleher Tel: 617 423 1700 or RKeleher@SBRA.com

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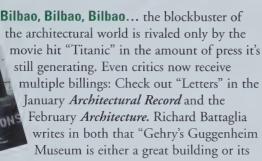
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Periodical Roundup by Gretchen Schneider

Really

Wright?



critics aren't getting much press." Somehow he's managed to remedy the situation with his own critique. And we get to read it twice.

The past is present news. How we confront our past and the existing built environment is an issue whether we're building at the scale of the small project or the scale of the city. Clifford Pearson, writing in the February Architectural Record, and Heidi Landecker, writing in the March Architecture, both focus on the regional and urban scales in articles featuring projects — military base conversions, national heritage areas, downtown arts centers — that attempt to catalyze the revitalization of entire towns, cities, or regions. At the scale of the neighborhood, "Times Square" (Metropolis, March) comments on the Disneyfication of one of our most famously messy historic places. And at the scale of the building, David Dillon ("Is It Really Wright?" Architectural Record, March) questions the resurrection of a 60-year old Frank Lloyd Wright design for a civic center, now adapted to a new convention center in Madison, WI. Past confronts present quite differently in Bernard Tschumi's Le Fresnoy National Studio for Contemporary Arts in Tourcoing, France, where a new structure for a graduate arts school embraces and envelopes an abandoned complex of 1920s amusement buildings. Karen Stein, writing in the January Architectural *Record*, examines the building in depth, noting, "For Tschumi, who sees himself as testing architecture's limits, finding himself pleading for 'preservation' was indeed sobering."

The most radical and comprehensive articles on the subject of preservation and the use of the past are in February's *Architecture*, which observes, "Good design respects the past, but isn't mired it." Through a series of editorials, interviews, essays, and featured projects, this "Transformations" issue attempts to redefine and reposition historic preservation — no small task. Now 30 years old, the preservation movement gained its stature by restoring landmarks across America. It turned the tide of the urban renewal wrecking ball, teaching us to cherish our built environment, and taking Modernism's heroics down to human scale.

But it's gone too far, these articles argue. We no longer stop at restoring forgotten landmarks; we now also make new construction mimic the look of the past. "The look" is the key. When "the look" rules over all — over tradition, over craft, over scale, over use — and we make rules to encourage "the look," we've missed the point.

"Preservation has lost touch with its ethical core," writes Paul Spencer Byard. "It lost sight of the fact that it is about reality, about the survival of real things and the lessons inherent in them, who we have been, and who we are as we try to make something of our lives." (Bryard also offers commentary on Le Fresnoy, which he calls "the most daring new approach toward preservation.") Don't invent history, these articles argue. Instead, use traditions and relics from the past to inspire things appropriate for today. Byard and his fellow contributors comprehensively and respectfully challenge the existing state of things while proposing a future direction. "Evolve!" seems to be their rallying cry.

"The meek shall inherit" seems to be the theme of the cover story of the April 12 New York Times Magazine. In "The Underdog," Suzannah Lessard describes the Museum of Modern Art's recent designer selection process and its surprise victor — Yoshio Taniguchi. MoMA, which has essentially defined Modernism as the work of the European/American elite, made a radical choice in this understated Japanese architect. Lessard argues that a separate modernism — more mindful of tradition — has developed in parallel in Japan. This outlook is particularly significant now, she notes, "when MoMA has to come to grips with being 'modern' and having a past."

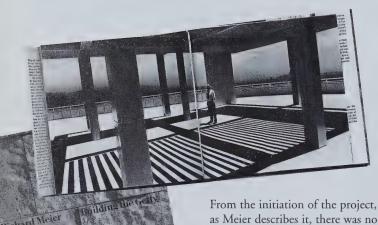
Gretchen Schneider is a designer at Bruner/Cott & Associates in Cambridge, MA

# **Books Building the Getty**

Richard Meier Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1997

Reviewed by Peter Forbes FAIA

One of the many aphorisms attributed to Winston Churchill is his challenge to his staff, when he sensed a lack of clear thinking: "What is the theme of this pudding?" Reading Richard Meier's account of the planning and design of the Getty Museum, one must conclude that this is a question that should have been put to everyone involved.



From the initiation of the project, as Meier describes it, there was no clear idea on the part of the Getty Trust as to what the Getty art complex should be. The three components — the Research Institute, the Conservation Institute and the Museum — were conceived with the intent of making the Getty unique among the world's museums for the sole purpose of being unique, rather than to further any over-arching idea about art.

The process of selecting the architect was equally diffuse. The trustees assembled a list of 33 architects, noteworthy for its bizarre catholicity of stylistic direction; from I. M. Pei to Batey & Mack, Robert Venturi to Fumihiko Maki, James Sterling to Meier himself, every imaginable architectural stripe was represented.

Even the subsequent "short list" of Sterling, Maki, and Meier — architects with wholly divergent philosophies — reveals a client with remarkably little sense of its own intentions. That the selection involved two different committees for the two stages compounded the disjointed process.

This Alice in Wonderland scenario continued with the selection committee's avowed dislike of the previous work of the architect they had chosen. Everyone on the committee had grave reservations about Meier's "white" buildings, going out of their way to make him promise not to design a white building for them. Furthermore, Meier presents museum director John Walsh, appointed after the first round of architect selection, as not liking modern architecture to start with (a function, Meier implies, of his unhappy experience with the building of I. M. Pei's addition to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts), as considering the museum building merely "a vessel into which he would pour the art," and as, principally and exquisitely, attuned to maintaining his own political position.

From this inauspicious start devolved myriad problems. Consultants were hired and dismissed with little apparent reason.

Neighborhood groups, with keen appreciation of the lack of unanimity in the Getty ranks, extracted severe design compromises from the trustees. The Getty administrators, with no clear idea of what they wanted, could budget neither time nor money to achieve it, and floundered through a series of arbitrary and unrealistic decisions.

A book about this process, perhaps by an author who was not personally involved in the project, might be worthwhile, even instructive on "how not to do it." This book, which recapitulates the circumstances surrounding the design of a building by the architect responsible for it, alerts us to the possibility that he knows the architecture is flawed and smacks of the self-serving

apologia. That *Building the Getty* is filled with Meier's autobiographical praise, anecdotal evidence of others' confusion, and angst over insensitivity to his architectural vision certainly reinforces that suspicion.

The muddle of forms and spaces that is the Getty Museum clearly speaks of confusion, of inarticulate goals and the absence of an idea that ties the program, plan and architecture together. Much of this can be laid at the feet of the trustees, the administration, and the personalities of the Getty people, and Meier does so. However, nowhere in the book does Meier articulate any idea of his own about a conceptual whole for the project. He comes no closer than a passing reference to a major and a minor axis — a design gesture that should subtend from a concept, not be a concept in itself. Nor does the author talk about his own predilection for designing buildings as isolated objects — stand-alone sculpture rather than compounds of interrelated spaces and forms. When he whines about his vision being adulterated, one must wonder whether that would have happened had his vision transcended the scenographic.

Building the Getty was not the building of the Panama Canal, for example, where sheer technical accomplishment is reason enough to marvel and to excuse aesthetic lapses. Nor can an architect ask to be judged based on the difficulty of the required routine (three triple lutzes, two triple toe loops...). Architects accept commissions knowing that they may be excruciatingly difficult. They must do the best they can under the circumstances and offer their work up to the scrutiny of the world. Ultimately, neither the client, the public, nor history cares about the problems.

Peter Forbes FAIA is an architect with offices in Boston and Southwest Harbor, Maine.



## **Green Building Resource Guide**

by John Hermannsson AIA The Taunton Press, 1997

Reviewed by Andrew St. John AIA

People interested in sustainable design tend to spend a lot of time arguing about how many molecules of recycled PVC there are in a square foot of photovoltaic film.

The Green Building Resource Guide, a catalog of environmentally sound building materials, is the work of an architect who recognized that the construction industry has an environmental problem larger than such minutiae. Rather than engaging in arguments over degrees of global warming, he proceeded to address it in his everyday work, compiling in the process a list of almost 600 products which might help the situation.

Hermannsson spends little time in defense of his increasingly accepted position, nor does he discuss his criteria in great detail. He assumes that having the guide in your hand indicates your interest in environmental responsibility, and that you are willing to accept manufacturers' claims and his own experience as reasons to change your design and construction practice. Like libraries found in most architectural offices, the compilation is idiosyncratic and geared towards Hermannsson's practice, which is largely residential — he refers to

the target for his guide as unheroic residential products and materials. Absent the kind of research required for projects for chemically hypersensitive people, this is as good a quick reference as any of us are likely to find.

The guide is notable for its well laid-out, readable descriptions. The arrangement is in the 16division Construction Specifications Institute format. For those familiar with the CSI system for organizing products and materials, finding products will be a great deal easier than finding something in a Sweet's catalogue, without having to fight through a barrage of manufacturers' hype. An additional feature is a "Price Index Number," used to compare the costs of green products to products used in standard practice.

Hermannsson's tools for evaluating green-ness are neither sophisticated nor new. A material must be nontoxic, have recycled content, be resource or energy efficient, show unusual durability, or fit into the general category of being "environmentally conscious." Like any architectural criteria, these are relative, but they are an improvement on standard practice. Most of the reviews in the book rely on manufacturers' claims, and of course, as public awareness of the environmental crisis grows, manufacturers' claims become greener by the day.

For more involved discussions of the concepts of sustainability, there are many other sources — the works of the Rocky Mountain Institute, Paul Hawken, or Donella Meadows are excellent places to start. As one of dozens of guides to green materials now available, this stripped-down version will be a valuable addition to a designer's green resource shelf.

Andrew St. John AIA is a program management consultant and writer specializing in issues of sustainable and ecological design. He is the author/editor of *The Sourcebook for Sustainable Design* and a regular contributor to the BSA *Chapterletter*.

#### Henry Hobson Richardson and the Small Public Library in America: A Study in Typology Kenneth A. Breisch The MIT Press, 1997

Reviewed by A. Anthony Tappé FAIA



Public libraries have long held a fascination for me. Their role in our society and the architectural expression of that role have produced some of our most notable civic buildings. Today, the very function of the public library is changing, responding to the challenges of technology and the rise of the mega-bookstore. Hence, it is a treat to return to the roots and read an excellent and informative treatise on the origins of the public library building and the design work of one of America's foremost architects: Henry Hobson Richardson.

In his comprehensive and scholarly review of Richardson's designs for four small libraries, Kenneth Breisch begins with an introduction to the history of the public library and its growth in America. He notes that at the time Richardson designed his first library, the Winn Library in Woburn, Massachusetts, more that 50 percent of all public libraries in the United States were located in New England.

The Winn Library was the result of a competition. In 1876, Richardson had just finished Trinity Church and had little work on the boards - the invitation to submit a proposal was indeed timely. Richardson won the competition and was asked soon after by the Ames family to design a library for the town of North Easton. This was followed by the Crane Library in Quincy and the Converse Memorial Library in Malden. The buildings won immediate recognition, exerting enormous influence on the work of other architects. Professional librarians were somewhat less impressed, however, and questioned many aspects of their functionality.

In describing the design process and the completed library buildings, Breisch provides background on Richardson's education and his training at Harvard and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris and describes the personal contacts and connections that assisted him in obtaining commissions. All of the libraries were funded by private donors, and Breisch notes that part of Richardson's genius was understanding the cultural and political aspirations of these otherwise conservative New Englanders.

This book is a wonderfully informative and scholarly work accompanied by excellent photographs and illustrations. My only complaint is that the type face is small and a bit difficult to read — an ironic aspect of a book about our society's respect of print material as a disseminator of information. That aside, Breisch offers welcome reinforcement of the view that there is a continuing role for the public library in this information age.

A. Anthony Tappé is a principal at Tappé Associates, Inc. in Boston and has programmed, planned, or designed over 50 libraries. He is the author of *Guide to Planning Library Buildings* and teaches a summer course on library design at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

## Books



#### Professional Practice 101: A Compendium of Business and Management Strategies in Architecture

Andy Pressman AIA John Wiley & Sons, 1997

Reviewed by Jean R. Valence

In *Professional Practice 101*, Andy Pressman presents over 40 essays, interviews, case studies, and cartoons with snap, simplicity, and plenty of white space. In my book rating system — Buy this Book, Borrow This Book, or Burn This Book — *PP101* merits a strong Buy. It's a good reference for young practitioners and people starting their own firms. And seasoned practitioners will appreciate its underlying thesis: the practice of architecture equals perpetual inquiry.

"Managing the Process versus Producing the Product" - an interview with Charles Thomsen, CEO of 3D/International kicks off a chapter on project management, followed by a Harvard case study that raises questions about individual leadership. Other writers continue with essays on team work, timing, and the management of production drawings in Lou Kahn's office. This is Pressman's typical modus operandi — introduce a subject and follow it up with an anthology from well-known contributors — and he deploys it to great effect. Solid information is presented conversationally and supplemented with exhibits and bulleted lists, conveying the material with clarity. Boston

readers will recognize many of the contributors, including Jeremiah Eck, Peter Kuttner, James Cantillon, Martha O'Mara, David Maister, Carl Sapers, and John Seiler.

Skip the marketing chapter. Although it is refreshing to encounter the non-word "proactive" a mere six times, only one perspective is included — an essay by Eugene Kohn, the principal of Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates who has been called a marketing genius. Unfortunately and disappointingly — Kohn relates a only few anecdotes and then lapses into obvious generalities, such as "Know the project." Later chapters on "Nontraditional Practice," "New Modes of Services and Project Delivery," and "Social Responsibilities" include lively and informative observations on new trends.

Some of Pressman's selections are a special pleasure to read. A brief essay, "Serving Up Babette's Feast: Ornament and the Practice of the Gift" by Ann Marie Borys and Daniel Friedman, presents the passion of practice through a wonderful, provocative analogy. Another must-read is "The Fifty-Nine-Story Crisis," a gripping story by Joe Morgenstern originally published in The New Yorker. From the opening moment when structural engineer William J. LeMessurier discovers that his prize-winning Citicorp tower contains a significant flaw, we follow the efforts of the remediation team as they race against the approaching Hurricane Ella. People become architects to improve the lives of others, and Pressman performs a service by including this account of a designer's worst nightmare and his ethical obligations in this very readable and informative book.

Jean R. Valence is vice president of Blackridge, Ltd., a management and marketing consulting firm in Wellesley, MA and a registered provider with the AIA/Continuing Education System.

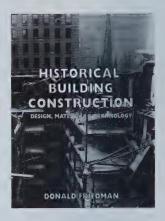
## Historical Building Construction

Donald Friedman W. W. Norton Co., Inc., 1995

Reviewed by David N. Fixler AIA

It is both appropriate and ironic that New York City — at once the archetypal American city and a place foreign to its hinterland should be chosen as the locus for documenting the evolution of the modern steel frame in Donald Friedman's Historical Building Construction. This thorough book identifies the myriad types of iron and steel framing and related wall and floor system design that evolved between 1840 and the 1960s in the quest for construction speed, economy, and fire-safety. It uses the logistical difficulties and code-driven design parameters of Manhattan construction to illustrate the incredible variety of systems and materials developed in this period. Although these conditions often seem extreme when compared to situations in other cities, they effectively illustrate the relentless pace, driven by the pressures of development, at which new materials and systems evolved.

The book is designed to assist building professionals who are faced with the task of renovating or restoring the thousands of urban structures that remain from that era. Friedman, a practicing structural engineer in New York with a long track record of work in preservation, has set himself the task of describing most of the types of systems one is likely to encounter. Of particular interest are an analysis of the development of the modern wide-flange steel section out of earlier shapes in wrought and cast iron, and the discussion of the slow but certain dissolution of the masonry bearing wall facade into the glass and metal curtain wall. Interspersed in the text is a series of renovation and restoration case studies which illustrate contemporary solutions to frequently encountered problems. Several



appendices offer additional material, including a glossary of building terms, an historical record of allowable design live loads since 1880, the history of the New York City Fire Line Location (!), and several tables on the properties of construction systems and materials. These last will be of greatest use to structural engineers. The most valuable appendix is a chronological listing of the buildings mentioned in the text, with short descriptions of their significance in illustrating the evolution of wall, floor and framing design.

Friedman has tried to create a work that is both an informative sourcebook for architects and the preservation trades, and a reference work for structural engineers. Illustrations consist primarily of schematic sectional drawings, with a few photographs of key buildings. From the perspective of the restoration architect, these leave something to be desired. Diagrams more closely resembling true construction wall sections, and especially more photographs illustrating the actual details of the systems would have been much more helpful. But these are relatively minor shortcomings, and there is no doubt that this will remain a standard reference on this subject for many years.

David N. Fixler AIA is director of historic preservation at Perry Dean Rogers & Partners, Architects in Boston.

## **Site-Ations**

Web sites of note

#### Cyburbia

http://www.cyburbia.org

Internet resources for architects and planners; includes links to mailing lists and Usenet groups.

#### My Virtual Reference Desk

http://www.refdesk.com

"A One-Stop Site for All Things Internet." Who are we to argue with that? One of the best reference collections around. They even have links to a Morse Code Translator.

#### Save Fenway Park

http://www.savefenwaypark.com What it says.

#### Dog Pile

http://www.dogpile.com

Not what you think. A multi-engine search tool. Fetches info fast.

#### Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities

http://www.spnea.org

The venerable organization is wired. Information about sites, services, and an online museum shop catalogue.

#### The Paperboy

http://www.thepaperboy.com

Links to national and international newspapers. Research that new project in Frankfurt; find out what they're saying about you in Chicago.

#### Hoover's

http://www.hoovers.com

No, not vacuums. Companies. Download summaries of basic information on that corporation that just sent you an RFP.

#### Mapquest

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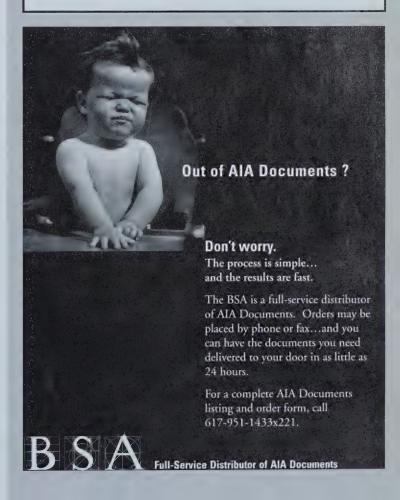
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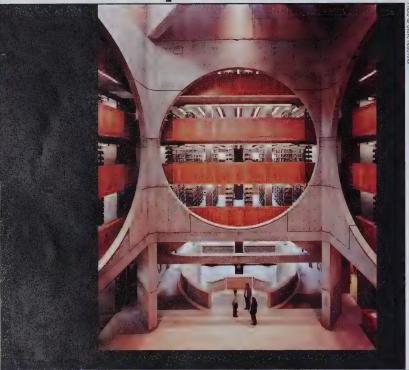




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# The Library at Phillips Exeter Academy



I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN a voracious reader, one of those guys who haunts bookstores during lunch hour, hovering over remainder bins, buying up three-volume histories of the number zero. I sneak cheap paperbacks into the house, hoping my wife won't catch me, and deposit them in a pile beside our bed that has now grown to the size of a small table. She tells me we have to pack up some of them and give them away. I smile helplessly at her and pull out the *Brothers Karamazov*, which is currently anchoring the right corner of my bedside pile.

I love reading. I love the small miracle of lying down on a sofa, holding this small rectangular object filled with paper and a random arrangement of symbols, and allowing myself, by simply opening the pages and moving my eyes, to be transported to almost anywhere that the capacious human imagination can manage — from Herodotus to Anne Frank, with all kinds of interesting detours that create connections among things as disparate as Suetonius, Boswell's *Life of Johnson, People* magazine, and the *Joan Rivers Gossip Show*.

Lately, as the father of two young boys, I've been finding myself immersed in the small, soft beauty of children's books. My favorite poems these days are *Howl* and *Goodnight Moon*. But when Allen Ginsburg died, I went into mourning for days, as if I'd lost an uncle.

Which is why I love Lou Kahn's library at Exeter. See, I've never been much of a fan of modern architecture. I kind of think that anything made out of concrete in the '60s or '70s is an abomination. And I harbor a sneaking thought that all the neo-Palladian arches that dot downtown Boston these days are going to look silly in 30 years. But the library is different. Maybe because I'm a reader. But that building speaks to me in a language I understand. It works for me like a poem — a poem crafted by someone who truly understands books and the miracle of reading.

Just look at it. You can approach it from a roadway that bisects the school. From the outside it's a large, almost featureless, brick cube — not quite a book, but booklike. You enter it through doors set beneath

overhanging exterior walls, so that your first steps are always in shadow. Again, imagine reading: the way you flip through those first few pages of any book — the title, the table of contents, the copyright and Library of Congress information - just passing through to get to the good stuff. And then, just as with any book, you climb into its center, by stairs or words or the effort of imagination, and you are suddenly in a huge and open space that takes the breath away from even an architectural philistine like me. An interior cube made of (heaven forbid!) poured concrete, all solidity and grey structure. Each wall is cut by an enormous threestory circle, which is itself banded by half walls of blonde wood, beyond which you can see on all sides of you stacks and stacks and stacks of books. The whole space is washed by light that falls downward from huge skylights in the distant roof and then swirls over you and all the students that you glimpse inside those circles, moving quietly through the stacks, looking for knowledge.

My God, it's beautiful. Beautiful in the way that books are. You walk inside and it opens up for you. Enter dark covers and find yourself inside a world of light, a space that can hold everything in the world and can take you anywhere from ancient Greece to Mars. My sons are beginning to catch that light. I can see it in their eyes when my wife and I read to them at night. I wonder what books Lou Kahn had read to him when he was four years old. This building says that he could tell you.

When he's not reading, Walter Maroney runs the Consumer Protection Bureau of the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office. He lives in Manchester, New Hampshire, with his wife and two sons.

Editor's Note: The Phillips Exeter Library received the 1997 AIA 25-Year Award, for which it was nominated by the Boston Society of Architects.

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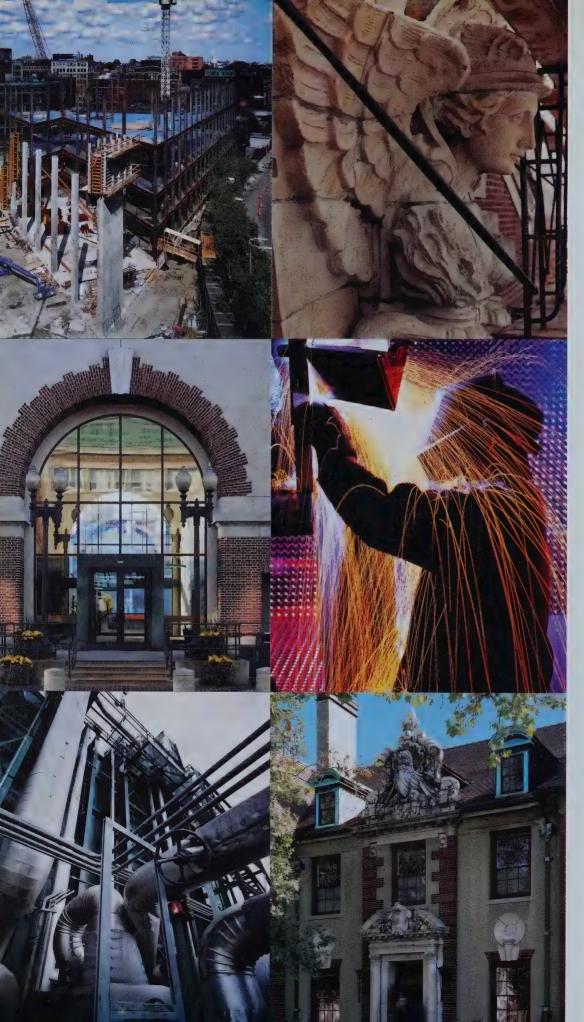
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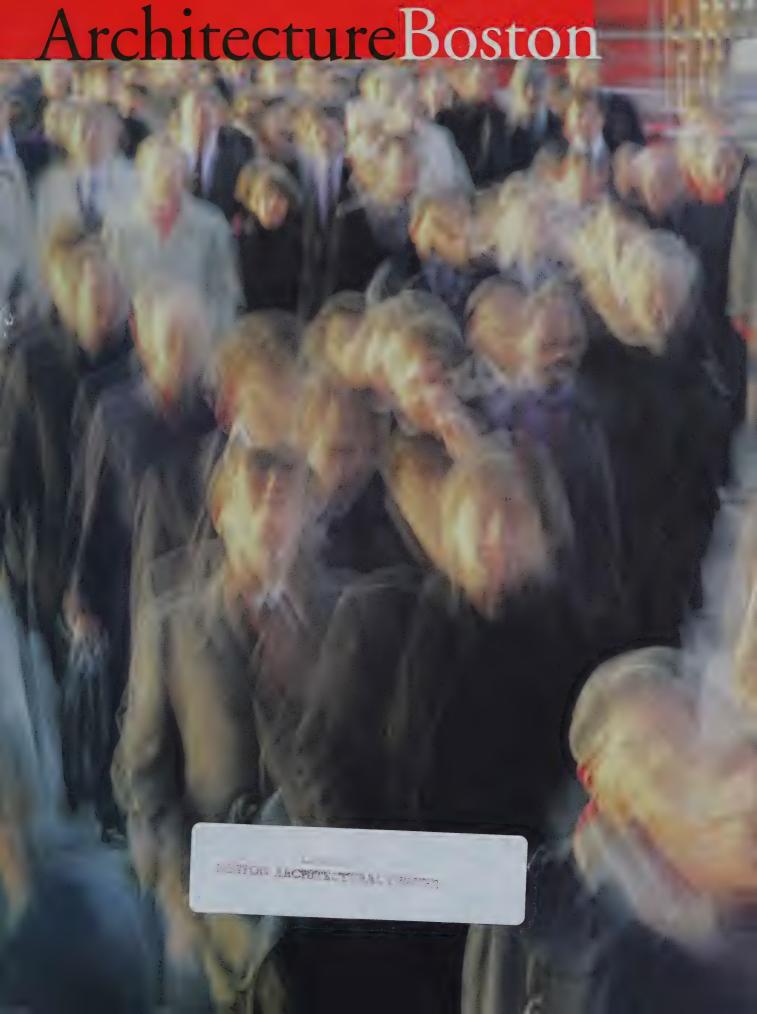
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## ArchitectureBoston

1998 No.2

Society

Be careful what you build. You never know what it might say about you.

With this issue of *ArchitectureBoston*, we explore the relationship between the built environment and society. Architecture is society's body language — a physical gesture that frequently reveals more information than is intended. Hubris or humility, self-indulgence or civility — all can be easily discerned in the design of a building or of a city. More difficult to decipher are the gestures that are so commonplace that we no longer think about them: What does it mean when we build churches along highways, put Registry of Motor Vehicles offices in shopping malls, design health clubs in office towers, construct "drive-thru" restaurants, and build corporate daycare centers? These are the gestures that reveal most about who we are and what we value.

Sometimes the revelation isn't pretty. An undercurrent throughout many of the articles in this issue suggests that growing social isolation is affecting many aspects of the built environment, and may ultimately influence the nature of the profession itself. Contributor Douglas Woodlock suggests that the loss of a collective civic identity has contributed to an expectation of — and even a demand for — architectural mediocrity in our public buildings. John Stilgoe's provocative article warns that a nation of couch potatoes will have little interest in creating, let alone enjoying, the kind of rich architectural environment that Bostonians consider their birthright. In "Civic War," our roundtable discussion reveals growing animosity in the city's public review process, as community activists appear less willing to negotiate toward a common goal. And in "Two Views," Stephen Feige and Melanie Coo report on dwindling social activism among the students who are the future of the profession.

Yet there is much to be found in these pages that is encouraging. The roundtable discussion also demonstrates how growing sophistication and increased participation by community activists contribute to stronger neighborhoods and better design. Rebecca Barnes' conversation with Ed Logue focuses on the roots of public involvement in urban design. "A Thousand Acres" features excerpts from the BSA proposal for the South Boston Seaport District which integrates a social vision of the city with a physical plan — a plan developed by over 40 volunteer architects, allied professionals, and civic advocates in an extraordinary demonstration of working *pro bono publico*. Many of our contributors to this issue are themselves national models of civic leadership who have devoted their professional and personal lives to urban and social issues. Finally, novelist Marcie Hershman offers an eloquent epilogue in her "Other Voices" commentary on the New England Holocaust Memorial.

As always, we welcome your comments.

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA

Editor

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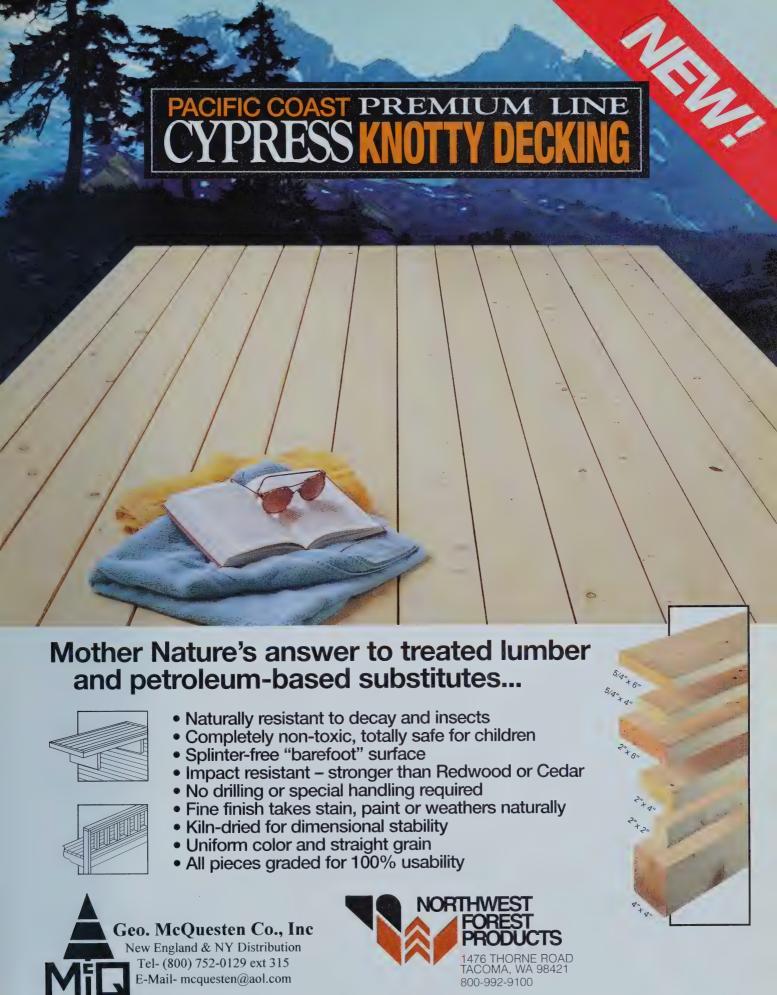
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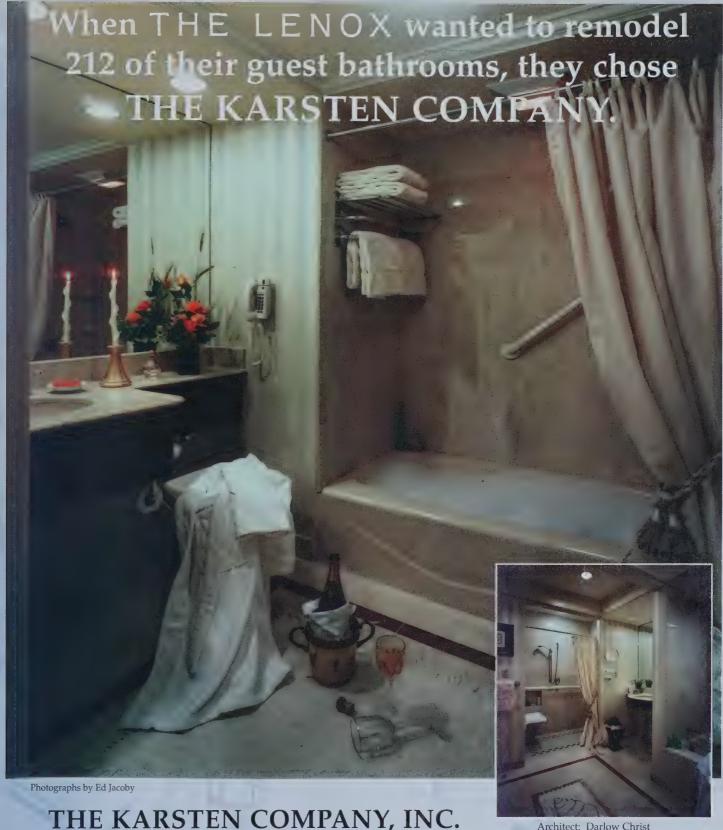
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## **Civic War Boston's public** review process

#### Roundtable Discussion

**Editor's Note:** 

As Boston's economy continues to improve and proposals for new construction projects clamor for approval, attention is focusing once again on the city's public review process. Nationally known for its complexity, considered by some in more conservative western states to be only a step removed from socialism, Boston's process has generally served it well. But many participants are detecting a change public reviews today are decidedly different from the skirmishes of the last decade. ArchitectureBoston brought together some of the leading veterans of these "civic wars" to discuss the nature and meaning of the changes underway.



William ("Buzz") Constable is senior vice president of A.W. Perry Real Estate Investment Company in Boston and is immediate past president of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

David Dixon FAIA is a principal of Goody, Clancy & Associates in Boston. where he directs the planning and urban design division. He chairs the BSA City Hall Plaza Focus Team.

Joan Goody FAIA is a principal of Goody, Clancy & Associates in Boston and chairs the Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC).

David Lee FAIA is a principal of Stull and Lee, Inc. in Boston. He was a member of the Walsh Commission during the Flynn administration, charged with streamlining Boston's review process.

Rod Macdonald, Esq. is an attorney with Meyer, Connolly, Sloman and Macdonald in Boston. He chairs the South Boston Waterfront Master Plan Committee.

Homer Russell is deputy director for design and development at the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA).

Jane Thompson Assoc. AIA is an urban designer and principal of Thompson Design Group in Boston.

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA is editor of ArchitectureBoston, and was chair of the BSA Midtown Cultural District Focus Team.

Padjen We've all observed a lot of change in Boston's design review and public participation process in the last 10 years. I'd like to explore some of the differences and what they mean. Is the process productive or is it counter-productive? Is there a difference in tone - have we raised public expectations so much that the public demands more from the process?

Dixon What has really struck me is how immensely sophisticated certain communities are in using public process toward very specific ends. For example, East Boston has received something like a 10 million dollar trust fund from Massport. South Boston, I suspect, will receive more as a result of the Seaport process. I don't think these neighborhoods would have known how to do this 10 years ago. On the other hand, the redesign of City Hall Plaza is one of the best examples of where the ability to use process in a sophisticated way has really gotten in the way of accomplishing some good things. The tone of discussion became very personal and hostile, and the rationality of much of the discussion was lost.

Padjen Was that because someone lost control of the process? Or do you think we're seeing a more fundamental change, that there is something different in the ether?

Dixon There was a loss of control, but not in the manipulative sense. When City Hall Plaza was launched, people were so enthusiastic that I don't think anyone foresaw the need for extensive public process. I think the Trust [for City Hall Plaza] and others were quite surprised when the level of animosity and opposition began to rise. By then it was too late to really get control of the process and to create a process that people felt had legitimacy. And when the opposition felt that there was no legitimacy to the process, the level of civility began to dive.

Russell I agree with the notion that things have changed. Twelve years ago, when the city was enjoying its last boom, we established extensive controls and the Civic Design Commission and planning on a district-by-district basis. People professionals and community groups and advocacy organizations - plunged into this with an enthusiasm that was really quite remarkable. Throughout all the discussion was the notion that people would express a position, and then you'd negotiate through to some common end where you'd reach a consensus. Everybody gave a little



- Homer Russell

and took a little. And secretly, the architects and developers would tell me at the end of the review, that this whole, long, cumbersome process did in fact make for much better projects architecturally, socially, communally, and environmentally. What's happened recently, which is inexplicable to me, is that we're seeing some cases where the process has become quite ferocious, where there's no desire to be conciliatory or to compromise. Various parties come to the table bringing extreme positions which they defend to the death. That's a considerable change.

Thompson But people are still getting something — they're still horsetrading. That wasn't true 20 years ago - take a look at Park Plaza and the Kennedy museum proposal for Harvard Square. Believe me, there was no compromise. But it mobilized everybody. That's what taught people how to do this process — there was a new sense of empowerment.

Macdonald To me, process in this city is an outgrowth of the urban renewal days. The problem with the process these days is that there isn't a box around it - you don't know how long it's going to go on. The trick is to have someone acting as the mediator or the administrator.

Goody I agree that we're still on the rebound from the urban renewal days. There's often a hostility or suspicion that carries into neighborhood debates what are "they" going to do to "us"? People say, Look at what they did to Scollay Square. Well, "they" haven't done anything like that in years, and the people who are doing the planning are highly sensitive to local issues. From the point of view of the BCDC [Boston Civic Design Commission], I think my ideal image of public participation is that a proponent has an idea, gets an early read from the BRA [Boston Redevelopment Authority] design staff, and brings it to the BCDC, which is supposed to represent the city as a whole. We have a public hearing, and anybody from the affected neighborhood has an opportunity to throw their thoughts in early on, and then the proponent goes back and develops it. What often happens instead is that a proponent tries to pick off each of the neighborhood groups, the Preservation Alliance, the Greenspace Alliance, and ends up with a project that, by the time it gets to the BCDC, is completely mangled. The proponents say, "But we've spent months getting the community on board," when in fact, it was really a divide-and-conquer technique.

Thompson I would like to comment on what I've seen in other cities as the effectiveness of a larger

scale of planning — a real participatory master plan where everybody gets it out. You fight all these battles and then integrate them into a larger plan. It tends to have a very focusing effect and gets the participation started at the level where it should happen, which is on the bigger ideas, and it leaves the design end of the process a great deal freer. If Boston could do this in a really concerted way, an awful lot of this acrimony could dissipate.

Russell During the latter part of the '80s, the entire BRA planning and design staff spent twothirds of their time on district plans. We didn't believe in the concept of a master plan except that the master plan was the result of knitting together those individually planned districts. In Boston, because each one of those districts is so physically, socially, and culturally different from the next, it didn't make any sense to do a master plan.

Thompson Perhaps we need the satisfaction of meeting the goal, of that final effort of saying, "Here it is."

Russell But there never will be a "Here it is," because by the time you're done, the grounds rules have changed. There's nothing more out of date than a master plan the day it's finished.

Dixon We've worked on some fairly large, districtwide master planning efforts in Denver, Detroit, Chicago, and Columbus in the last couple of years. In none of those cities does any element of the community have any sense of the right to involvement that they have in Boston. Frankly, it makes things a whole lot easier — but not surprisingly, the results are not as sensitive. I was amazed when somebody in Columbus suggested removing a block of houses to expand a commercial site, and when I asked how we would do this, they looked at me and said, "What do you mean, how do we do it? We just erase them on the plan." But I think we have to pay close attention to the reality of our political environment — large and ambitious planning is profoundly difficult in this region. Public participation works best in Boston when you can get back to the scenario that Homer laid out initially, when you can make a deal. [Former BRA director] Steve Coyle was terrific at constructing a partner to deal with. But it takes a lot of leadership, and it's a real challenge in our community now to define who the negotiating partner is going to be.

Padjen We've been talking about the public's point of view and, to some degree, the government's point of view. What about the developer's point of view? Is the development community less likely to want to make a deal? And do you detect a change because we're seeing more national developers and fewer of the home-grown variety?

Constable Clearly, the ownership patterns specifically the trend toward centralization by institutional, national, and international owners has made a difference in the approach. But with a few distinct exceptions, development in Boston is still a question of individual personalities individual entrepreneurial developers making deals. Developers are more sophisticated, but the marketplace has changed, too. There's a perceived need to get projects under way, because there's been such a scarcity of them. A lot of community groups are now actually encouraging development.

Dixon Do you think the development community is more willing or less willing to engage the community? I always sense that they don't quite have the patience of the public sector.

Constable This is a business. One has to be as patient or as impatient as needed to make projects work. But I think the public process does have some culpability in driving big development outside of the urban core. In the '80s — Homer is right — the projects came out better than they went in. But they came out 24 to 36 months later. The public process in downtown Boston has made for less development in downtown Boston, and it has encouraged development along Route 128 and in other places that are not to the benefit of the urban area.

I would argue that the public process may have helped the city. Part of the reason that this town is so hot right now is because of the basics the low scale, the pedestrian character and the quality of the fabric. All you have to do is to go to a city like Charlotte, where they wiped out everything. It's like a treasure hunt to figure out where the old buildings used to be - they've got empty parking lots and high-rises and no life in the town. Somehow we've created the basic Boston-ness that makes this a place developers want.

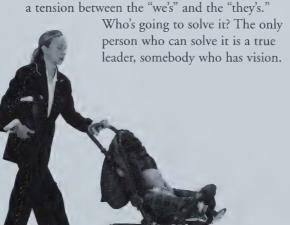
Constable Don't get me wrong, I wasn't saying we need less public process. But maybe there's a process that is more efficient, which may establish guidelines for developers but at the same time is a process which is less self-serving and more community-serving.

Lee I agree — it's the predictability of the process that is important.

Russell That's the major difference between now and the '80s. Back then, you didn't have Article 80, which in fact sets time limits for us to respond. Under the new streamlined guidelines, there are very specific time limits within which the city has to respond, or the development goes forward anyway. So I beg to differ. I think we've made the whole process much easier to get through, and if people are building in Waltham, it's because the real estate's a lot cheaper and it's probably back-office space.

Dixon I think the city's process is far more rational than it used to be and far more efficient from a developer's perspective. But over the longer term, Boston needs to find a way to be able to make these deals happen again. In the '80s, there was more square-footage built in the suburbs than in the city, but the balance of Class A office space was in downtown. Right now, there's something like 19 million square feet under construction or in the pipeline in the suburbs. There will be some development downtown, but it's not there yet. So we're clearly losing one battle, and I don't think it's a battle we can afford to lose. I think the city has probably done its job of streamlining its process. But I think we as a community need to recognize the need to draw investment into the city.

Macdonald I think it's too early to say whether the streamlining of the process is a good thing or a bad thing. We'll know in 10 or 15 years. One of the things I've noticed in the community is that there is a tension between the "we's" and the "they's."



The destructive piece is when presentations are made to each interest group separately and deals are made. and they don't all come together under one roof and hear each other.

- Joan Goody FAIA



—Buzz Constable



Goody I agree. You need someone with a bigger perspective. That's what we look to the BRA for. And that's what the BCDC would like to support the BRA in doing. The destructive piece is when presentations are made to each interest group separately and deals are made, and they don't all come together under one roof and hear each other. The developer doesn't have to say to all of them at once, "Here is what I really want." I think that is why the BCDC was in fact created — to counter all that.

Padjen Part of the point of the BCDC was also to have some kind of public voice for design, which is the one thing that we haven't talked about yet. Are our buildings better or worse for this? There are a lot of people who feel that we are falling victim to a Washington, D.C. syndrome, where things end up bland because there's so much regulation and so much process. There's the other theory, of course, that also says that designers here tend to be relatively conservative from the beginning, knowing that something is going to have to go through an extensive review process. What is your sense of that?

Goody We do see people coming to the BCDC with what they think Boston wants, and it's usually rather timid. And we are very often in the position of saying, "Try something more daring." Somebody who's trying to beat the system thinks all you have to do is throw up a few moldings and you're in. But I think both the BRA and the BCDC are encouraging people to be more creative.

Russell You can compare it to a bell curve. Any qualitative evaluation system works on a bell curve. There's a bunch that come in that are spectacular. There's a bunch that come in at the other end that are just awful. The vast majority are in a big hump in the middle. And it's our job to ratchet the whole hump forward one notch, except for the really fabulous ones which can't get any better, and the really bad ones which probably won't get any better either. I take really strong issue with the premise that the design review process tends to either homogenize or tame design.

Padjen We went through a very conservative period in design nationally, indeed internationally, which occurred at the point when Boston was doing most of its buildings. So it's hard to say how much of our conservativism reflected a larger trend in the profession, and how much reflected a condition here in Boston. But it's interesting that a lot of proposals coming in right now represent a more recent trend

toward what some people might call Neo-Modernism or Modern Revival. It means that designers are looking beyond the kit of lintels and moldings and red brick.

Dixon If you go to cities with less heavily regulated design environments, the work you see is not more adventurous. It's often sillier. You get the sense of an extraordinarily immature profession or an immature development community, and you realize how much we have protected ourselves against. And it may be the sad truth that the best we can do is to protect ourselves.

Constable I'd like to get back to the public participation process, and the extent to which community groups play an effective role in improving design — as opposed to the BCDC, the BSA, and the staff architects within the BRA. I would assert that the community process plays a very effective role in "communitizing" a project, but it doesn't play a good role in, for example, designing windows.

I would say that both the community and the developers are probably far more conservative than the architects.

Constable Architects always say that.

Roxbury, lower-income communities — Jamaica Plain, Roxbury, lower-income communities — where people don't want the kinds of things that make them stand out. They want what they think everybody else has — a much more normative architectural expression. One of the things that makes Boston unique is that it really isn't about individual "star" buildings. It's about the aggregate of buildings. I have an 80/20 rule — 80 percent of the buildings ought to be contextual in some way, and the other 20 percent can fall into free-fire zones. And that's where the BCDC and the design review process can help. They can say, "Here you've got to be quiet. But here's a spot where you can make all the noise you want."

Dixon I'm a strong advocate of design review, and I think it's done Boston a great deal of good. Having said that, I think that in many cases, communities do not care about design. Or, they only care about design that is familiar.

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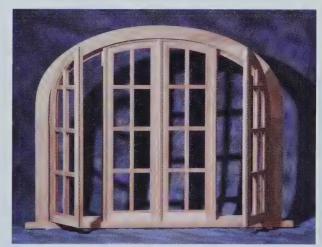
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- David Lee FAIA



become very strong advocates. The Southwest Corridor project is an excellent example of that. There was a point at which the MBTA came in and said, "Look at these silly fences that the architects wanted to put up, with all these silly details. We can build this perfectly good, basic fence and save a fortune." And the community rose up. It really shocked the MBTA. The community said, "Wait a second. We spent five years in meetings designing that fence."

A lot of community groups in the '80s became very sophisticated advocates for good design, and good design became part of the bargaining process.

The public does tend to be more conservative. And for a long time, the public got the benefit of the doubt. If a neighborhood group came and said, "Hey, this isn't a good idea," we all thought it probably was indeed a bad idea, because of some planner or designer with no sensitivity. But now I think the pendulum has swung to another direction. We started this by agreeing that the public is more sophisticated. But they're cutting deals for their own neighborhood. It's our responsibility when we are the designers or the reviewers to listen to them and to try to understand what are genuine concerns, but not to slavishly follow any direction they happen to be going in.

**Constable** I would ante up the question of whether the design community shouldn't be leading the neighborhoods as well. The BSA has done that from time to time. It certainly did in the Midtown Cultural District. I think it's doing it in the Seaport District.

plixon If we look at our profession and how effectively we engage in public debate around design issues, I would suggest that we were at our most effective in the '80s. One reason we were at our most effective then was that there was a generation who had grown up in the '60s — activists who very naturally sought out activist roles. I think people in our profession now are less schooled in effective activism.

I certainly see that happening with the students. They don't come with nearly the same commitment to neighborhood and community values, and good design grows from some sensitivity to that. I read something recently about the difference in student protests today and student protests when we were all engaged in that kind of stuff. We protested around collective issues. Now, they protest around very singular kinds of things.

Dixon If I had to look at the kind of activism our profession mounts today, I'd say it's much more personal than it was. Those who are most active tend to have more of an ideological involvement, and less community focus. City Hall Plaza has brought this out. Some of the debate has been around what makes a good public space and what the city needs. But precious little. A lot of it has been about privatization of public space. This has nothing to do with environmental quality — and everything to do with the politics of this situation. People today are active in causes that represent a very specific belief — for example, a commitment not just to preservation, but to the preservation of bridges.

Padjen You're touching on an important issue. When we talk about public process, do we have any implied sense of common values? At some point, public processes evolved to protect turf, which might in fact represent varying values. For example, it's commonly suggested that different groups of people — different ethnic groups and immigrant groups — have different values inherent in the way they perceive public open space. I wonder if that still applies in Boston, or if in fact there's more homogeneity here in terms of a shared value system than we're giving ourselves credit for. Are the arguments in the North End and South Boston and Back Bay essentially the same arguments?

Dixon I can answer that in terms of a master plan we're doing for the Charles River Basin. It's fascinating — the joggers are organized, bicyclists are organized, Rollerbladers are organized, the people with baby carriages, the dog owners, the people who use power boats, people who row, people who sail. They're all well organized. And very vociferous. The true art of the master plan has been to bring them all to the point of recognizing their shared interests. We have starved our funding of public open space, because it doesn't have a single constituency. I hope that people will emerge from this process with a whole new awareness of what their mutual goals are and the fact that it's through this awareness that they're all going to be able to achieve their individual goals. Enlightened selfinterest is the great motivating force of our era. You have to come to communities and show them how it's in their interest to cooperate.

Constable Maybe that answers my question about the role of the design community. Our first observation in this discussion was that we seem to have a more sophisticated public process, but people are participating with more narrow self-interest. When I think of the big planning processes that have been generally successful, it really has been the design profession that has played the facilitator role. Professional facilitators or mediators, in my experience, do a miserable job of that, but the design professionals have been successful in bringing people together.

Goody I think what the design profession can do is to present an idea that is so compelling that people drop some of their minor objections and say, "Oh, yes, this is better than anything I imagined could happen here."

Macdonald You bring something to the table that the nonprofessional, the lay people, just can't bring to the table. They bring their concerns. And you can design a solution for those concerns.

Padjen This process might be messy, and it might be imperfect. It doesn't have quite the structure that I suspect Jane and others would argue for. But I have the feeling we like it. Do we here at this table like it? Does the city like it? Has this evolved because it's what works for us, even though people from Los Angeles, Chicago, or Miami would say we're all nuts?

Lee I think our famous cow paths may be a metaphor for this whole process. They are circuitous, but they do lead somewhere.

Macdonald It's a process that's very difficult to back away from. Once you've got the process in place, how do you take it away from people? It's become a more sophisticated and more complicated process. But because it's also become a more inclusive process, a lot more people feel invested in what has happened in our city. And that has to be a good thing.

Thompson I absolutely agree with that. I think the more people are involved at whatever stage, the better off the end result is, both from the point of view of general acceptance and in terms of the quality of the product.

The process is good as long as people understand the goal. But people are lacking a collective spirit. Today, it's "my way or the highway."

Thompson We need to rise above personal vendettas and the profiteering that's going on within the system to what David Dixon was talking about — which is finding the level of common interest.

Dixon I think over the long term it works brilliantly. Otherwise, we wouldn't have Back Bay left. We certainly wouldn't have Newbury Street and Boylston Street left if we didn't have the kind of protective environment we have. We wouldn't have much of the waterfront that we have. There are many things that would have been lost. On the other hand, I think there are a lot of losses that we accept along the way. City Hall Plaza may turn out to be one of them. I sometimes think that more creative design is another. And I still wonder where the Seaport is going to end up. I'm concerned about whether we, as a society, are able to cross over our value differences and make deals with one another. It's something that our profession needs to take more responsibility for.

Padjen How does a community as large as this manage to cross over its value differences? Doesn't it have to happen through a process like this?

Dixon I think it happens because people make deals. And frankly, I think that's good. What keeps our city complex and exciting and interesting and diverse is the fact that we have all these forces at work on each other, forcing compromises with each other. This is a far more interesting downtown than much more rationally planned downtowns like Denver and Columbus.

Lee At least you've got something to push up against in this system, and you get some feedback. The worst thing is to go to some other cities where you put an idea out, and it's like a tree falling in the forest. You wonder if anybody heard it. But there is an energy here that I think makes us all better architects and urban designers for the struggle.

Russell It's cumbersome a lot of the time, and sometimes it's inefficient, but on balance, it works.

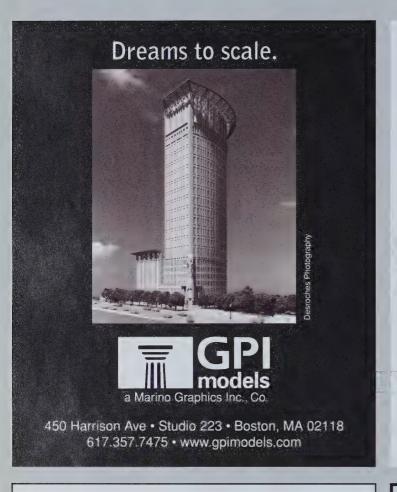
Dixon It's fascinating to look at the perspective that people from other cities have of Boston. They all fully respect what we get from our level of activism and our sort of neighborhood empowerment. But none of them want to import it.

Thompson Padjen Nor could they!

We need to rise above personal vendettas and the profiteering that's going on within the system...

— Jane Thompson





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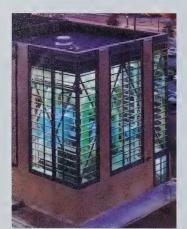
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The breathless introduction to the "I-Team" investigative report indirectly identified the status of civic buildings in contemporary society. "You might mistake it for a luxury hotel or a posh corporate headquarters," the television reporter intoned as a postcard view of a project nearing completion appeared on the screen. "But," he revealed, "you actually own this building." The idea that a civic building owned by the public-at-large might have architectural aspirations comparable to such private undertakings as hostelries or citadels of commerce seemed sufficiently newsworthy to lead his report.

At the most superficial level, the censorious tone of the TV commentator was not architectural criticism but simply a current example of the arguments democratic societies have had over the past two and one-half millennia regarding the cost of public buildings. In constructing the built environment for fifth-century Athens, Pericles was required to weather the assaults of political opponents like the one who contended, "We are building and adorning our city like a wanton woman, dressing it with expensive stones and statues and temples worth millions." The Acropolis, of course, has endured. By contrast, the arguments of its opponents can only be conjured by those with antiquarian interests and a taste for challenging contemporary suggestions of undue public expenditures with a dollop of historical irony.

But something more fundamental is at play than perennial conflicts over the deployment of the public treasury in a democracy. As a society we are becoming more accustomed to marginalizing the structures which house our civic institutions. And that is because we have become accustomed to marginalizing our engagement with civic institutions themselves.

# As Nice as a Corporate Headquarters

## **Aspirations for civic** buildings in contemporary society

By Douglas P. Woodlock

This marginalizing tendency has been aided and abetted by those who perform the public's functions in its civic structures. George Bernard Shaw observed that the professions are conspiracies against the laity. Many in the legal profession have taken satisfaction in practicing their skills at some remove from the general public by erecting an aura of impenetrable mystery about their processes. The creation of artificial mysteries separating the professional practitioners from the laity served by the law has led to a predictable alienation.

A letter to the editor regarding the new Boston federal courthouse argued that the structure is "a metaphor for the legal system itself. It is an overdone, ostentatious white elephant designed for the pleasure of the people who use it while presenting a blank brick wall to the citizens who paid for it." Once the issue was cast as "them" versus "us," the conclusion was obvious to the letter writer. "Rather than occupy prime waterfront real estate, the law should be practiced in the atmosphere it deserves: a dingy cement block building in an industrial park."



Winston Churchill

That the rights of citizens should be determined in such surroundings is indeed a metaphor, a metaphor for the debasing of civic responsibility by both "them" and "us," two groups which in a democracy share the identical status of citizen. But as Rebecca Rimel, the president of the Pew Charitable Trust, which sponsored the recently completed report of the National Commission on Civic Renewal, has observed, "Corrosive cynicism has crippled our civic spirit, and a sense of helplessness has zapped our civic strength." In such an atmosphere a civic building is just one more disposable item in a throw-away culture.

The customary anodynes for revitalizing the public life of the cities — "festival marketplaces" and "24-hour neighborhoods" — are only incidentally relevant to the problem of civic buildings. Indeed, the intense focus of a community on the delights of consumption is in many ways enervating to a civic consciousness. In a society where the benchmarks of architectural aspiration are the "luxury hotel" and the "posh corporate headquarters," the difficult and frequently inconvenient demands of a civic life marked by individual and collective democratic responsibility are lost in the glitz and the glare.

If they are to remain vital to enduring community values, civic institutions and the structures which house them cannot properly be relegated to a "dingy cement block building in an industrial park." Nor, if they are to maintain the integrity of their roles, can they adopt the posture of the festival marketplace, where the entertainment is casual and everything is for sale. Rather, the importance and character of their functions must be affirmed by both prominence and restraint in their physical presence. And the enduring seriousness of their purpose must be underscored by avoiding the plainly ephemeral and the merely fashionable in their design.

Civic structures can play a critical role in reviving responsible attitudes toward the work performed within them. Winston Churchill captured the symbiosis between a nation's buildings and the ordering of its affairs when he urged Parliament to reconstruct the House of Commons properly in the midst of World War II with the argument "We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us."

Courthouses are an important case in point. They are not destinations of choice for the general public. Yet integral to the serious business conducted in them is the direct involvement of the laity on juries. Even in a large and complex society, the jury system remains a venue where a direct civic consciousness is expressed in a governmental decision. In the legal processes of our democracy, "they" are "us."

De Toqueville identified the importance of American juries to our civic life when he observed that "Juries invest each citizen with a sort of magisterial office, they make all men feel that they have duties toward society and that they share in its government. By making men pay attention to things other than their own affairs, they combat that individual selfishness which is like rust in society."

Reinvigorating that sense of shared duty which is at the core of a society's meaningful civic life is a task of great difficulty and greater importance. Our civic institutions represent something central, if demanding and inconvenient, to the lives of the citizenry in a democratic society. Their work must be conducted in places where every member of society receives and accepts the invitation to participate seriously in the business of ordering our lives together for a greater common good. Each detail must be designed to embody that invitation and thereby contribute to the reconstruction of a vital civic life that rises above the individual selfishness which has come to suffuse contemporary life. Care and craftsmanship in construction is a medium to deliver a message of attention to detail in the work of the institution itself. Remarkable as it may seem to the caption readers of contemporary broadcast journalism, the public not only "owns" its civic buildings, it "owes" it to itself to invest in structures embodying its highest aspirations as a society.

Douglas P. Woodlock, United States District Judge for the District of Massachusetts, received the Thomas Jefferson Award from the American Institute of Architects in 1996, for which he was nominated by the Boston Society of Architect

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# **Lions and**

# **Tigers and**

# Stairs,

# Oh My!

by John R. Stilgoe

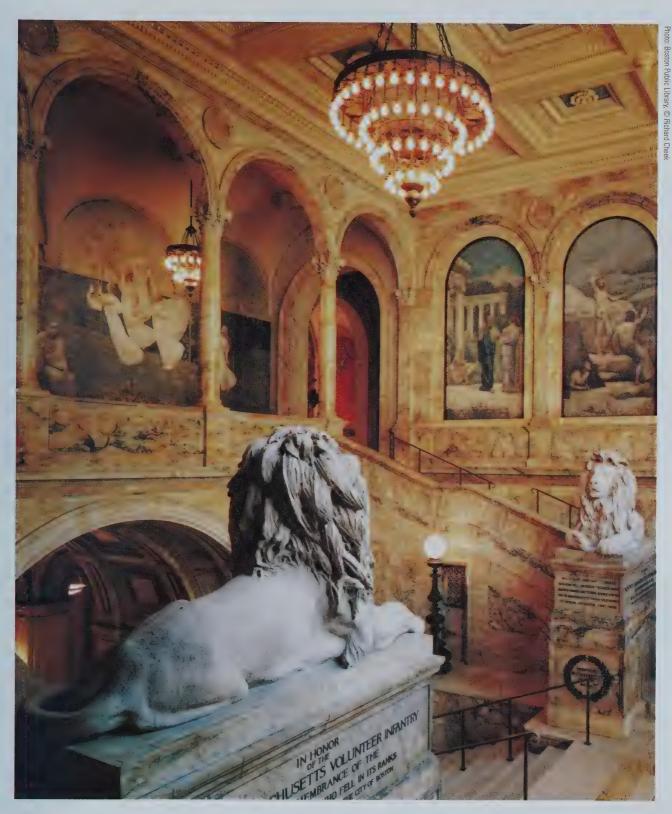
Been intimate lately? Embraced a building? Caressed it, felt its hardware, swept up its stairs? Or did you merely look and shrug and walk past — or follow indoors the yellow-brick road of least resistance, the gentle gradient along which an out-of-shape, overweight, slumped-over, tired-out American public shuffles? However well meant, the Americans With Disabilities Act and handicapped-accessibility building codes lead straight to Oz, a very nasty Oz indeed.

Americans are fat. Recent newspaper articles trumpet what foreign tourists in American cities notice at once, but are usually too polite to mention. Millions of adults — under the new federal guidelines, some 97 million adults, about 55 percent of the population — are overweight and prone to all sorts of illness. Yet the guidelines remain gentle — someone 5-foot-11 is obese at 215 pounds — and give little warning of future nightmares that medical researchers report in snappily named journals like Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Medical and social trauma lie ahead. Heart disease is now a pediatric illness. American kids eat so much junk food and get so little exercise that millions now find most exertion exacting and unpleasant. A young generation glued in front of video-game adventures proves even less capable of engaging the three-dimensional world than its parent generation reared on television. So dramatic is the change that the President's Council on Youth Physical Fitness and Sports only reluctantly releases statistics from the early 1960s. Historians

know that the kids John F. Kennedy wanted shaped-up tested vastly better than kids today, and now medical researchers suspect that academic performance suffers when kids move around so little that the flow of blood to the brain slows. Poorly fed, low-energy, inactive, tired-all-the-time adults and children terrify the health-care insurance industry and the medical profession both. And they should terrify architects, too.

Infirm, overweight, shuffling Americans not only distort the crucial issues confronting the genuinely handicapped, but also they wrench the entire practice of architecture away from what used to be reality. However turn-of-themillennium Americans have changed as intellectuals, they have most definitely changed as "physicals." The more architects try to accommodate the handicapped, and the more they build ramps and other structures that reward the shuffling kids and adults who loathe stairs, the more the built environment slouches into loweffort, homogenized mediocrity. Wheelchair ramps become the arbiter of many proposed projects, elevator shafts become the axes around which renovation and new construction take shape, and handicapped-accessible main entrances acquire an eerie sameness of gradient and angles. Architects can no longer create the physical challenges that enrich experience, the way steps and landings encourage users to pause and look around at everything from the horizon to murals to stone lions symbolically guarding entrances. What converted a flight of steps into a barrier?

Foreign tourists come from countries where laws prohibit the alteration of historic buildings, including those structures operating as museums, and where architects, landscape architects, and urban designers expect people to enjoy walking and its delights. Surgeon-general-like warnings on brochures make clear to Americans visiting Siena, Venice, and other Italian cities that historic buildings have not been modified with ramps, since the modifications would diminish the educational value of the structures. But Europeans understand, too, the propensity of American



"Many Americans prefer air-conditioned, comfy-chair, virtual reality to any three-dimensional architectural reality, no matter how rich."

tourists to shuffle along the easiest route, avoiding the Spanish Steps and other nasties, and know that providing for the handicapped is to open a route for the lazy — what Europeans call the slothful American. Foreign tourist authorities realize that American tourists impede pedestrians from countries where people walk a lot and walk fast. Vacationing in other parts of the world, American tourists rudely awaken to the fact that contemporary architecture in the United States no longer remotely resembles an "international style." American postmodernism really means ramps.

Architectural theorists ramble at interminable length about the linguistic and visual vocabulary of buildings and willfully ignore the cryptic restrictions imposed on architects practicing under the new building laws in a time of splintering public ideals. Somehow the critics' love of European linguistic analysis blinds them to social problems peculiarly visual and peculiarly American — like the Madison Avenue hyping of ultra-thin female models or the Hollywood conversion of frail, wimpy men into lesser gods. Emaciated, fragile, and above all weak, female fashion models often appear sullen and exhausted, while male models and actors pose as the antithesis of the 1950s comic-book superhero. Whatever practicing architects think of advertising and eating disorders, Hollywood imaging, and the long-gone military fitness that shaped post-war modern architecture, they know that many Americans prefer air-conditioned, comfy-chair, virtual reality to any three-dimensional architectural reality, no matter how rich. And the more these unfit Americans sit, the more they stare at advertisements and computer-game screens, the less fit they become for exploring buildings dating from the 1970s and earlier, for rambling in vast 19th-century parks, for meandering through whole cities, for striding from one end of the mall to the other.

Real estate developers know the implications of a fat, slothful American public. Already they watch people shop at one end of a large mall, then drive cars to the other end of the parking lot and get out to shop again. Already they specify drive-up windows in new suburban drugstores, and already they study how far urban office workers will walk at lunch time. And already they ensnare practicing architects in fierce, secret debates about welcoming not only the handicapped and the fit, but the vast crowd of lazy, out-of-shape, it's-a-long-walk pedestrians who want gentle gradients, parking immediately outside the door, elevators to the second floor, and above all else, short corridors. In any shopping mall, in any urban

office building, in any airport terminal, the mass of Americans move in a slow shuffle and developers must kowtow to that mass. Developers know the shuffle requires a plethora of gadgets from escalators to automatic doors, gadgets architects must shoehorn into structures already cramped by codes, and they do not care. After all, the architects will manage, won't they?

How they manage concerns everyone who loves fine building that enriches sensory experience, that exists in here-and-now reality, not in some visual facsimile. The Oz in which architects practice today is an Oz in which overweight, infirm Americans expect nothing challenging anywhere, in which they sidle up and down ramps built for the handicapped, and grouse that everything is too distant, too long a walk. Puffing, grumbling, and blaming their discomfort on anything but their own lack of prudence, they park in handicapped-only spaces and avoid the grand staircases, the uneven pavements, the juicy passageways architects once created for both utility and delight. Almost as sedentary as the new generation of magazine models, they prefer to sit, to drive their cars everywhere from urban streets to wilderness meadows, to peer through the phosphorescent screens of televisions and video monitors at a virtual reality demanding no effort, no perspiration, a virtual reality that offers no reward equivalent to a fine building. More than anything, they avoid stairs, and so they avoid the stone lions and griffins gracing flights of stairs in important historic buildings. And ensnared in political correctness, fearful of voicing opinions likely to be shouted down, abandoned by academic theorists wholly uninterested in how contemporary Americans experience buildings, working architects succumb to self-righteous building codes whose good intentions produce the most bizarre of side-effects. At the end of a road longer than the Boston park system famed as the Emerald Necklace lies the Emerald City of Oz, and too many architects know how few Americans can walk to it, let alone through it.

Author of many books, most recently *Outside Lies Magic: Regaining History and Awareness in Everyday Places* (Walker), John R. Stilgoe is Orchard Professor in the History of Landscape at Harvard Universi

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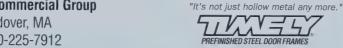
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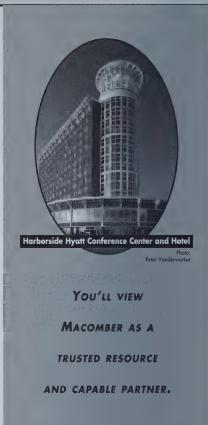


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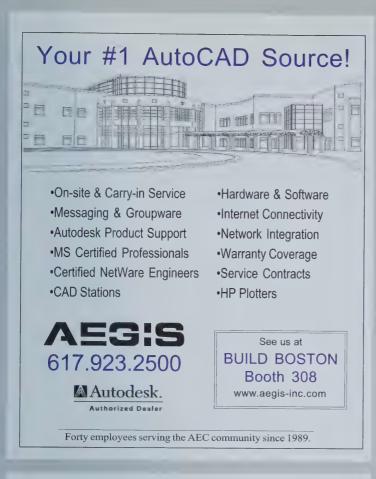
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# A Thousand Acres The BSA plan for the South Boston Seaport

by Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA

A thousand acres. It's a magical number in the American psyche — the title of Jane Smiley's best-selling novel about farming in the Midwest, the size of Montana trophy ranches advertised in the back pages of the *Wall Street Journal*. It conjures romantic images of open spaces and rugged individualism. But Boston's thousand acres constituting the South Boston Seaport District demands anything but rugged individualism. It requires public discourse, common purpose, an inclusive process, and civic vision. It requires an audience that cares passionately about how we build this city.



In November of 1997, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) issued an "interim report" on the district intended to serve as the catalyst for broad public discussion of the Seaport's future. The Boston Society of Architects responded with a "focus team" charged not only with commenting on the BRA proposals, but also with developing new ideas for a district plan. Led by co-chairs Todd Lee FAIA and Constance Bodurow AICP, Assoc. AIA, over 40 volunteer professionals have met regularly, including architects, urban designers, landscape architects, planners, attorneys, developers, and other civic advocates.

The focus team presented its initial recommenda-

tions at a public forum convened by the BRA in June. The group continues to meet and will respond to the BRA master plan, scheduled for release later this fall. How much of the BSA proposal will be incorporated in the city's plan is unknown. The core of the BSA's plan — moving building density away from the water's edge — is especially commendable and reflects growing public consensus. But even this apparently obvious public benefit is not without controversy. The focus team proposes a mechanism for selling waterfront development rights that would in effect relocate the bulk of potential new construction to sites a few blocks inland. A refinement of a planning concept called "transfer of development rights" (TDR), the team's proposal has been called unrealistic by opponents. It would certainly test not only this city's political leadership, but also the civic leadership of Boston's business community. But it is a creative and legitimate alternative that combines public interest with marketplace ingenuity to achieve the common good.

Public funds have already contributed substantially to the future of this district, through the harbor cleanup, the Ted Williams Tunnel, and the Central Artery. Future funding of the convention center, transit lines, and infrastructure improvements add up to a significant investment from which the public should expect some return. The focus team has issued a remarkably comprehensive and cohesive vision, balancing both public and private interests. The proposal represents a plan for Boston's next frontier. It is also a fascinating reflection of the evolution of city-building — of the complex overlay of politics, economics, and social values at the end of the 20th century.

Three development zones: New Congress as Main Street

#### **Excerpts from the BSA proposals:**

- Create an urban form that follows a stepped-back progression from the waterfront, with lower heights and density on the water's edge. Establish a Development Rights Marketplace or other mechanism to equitably distribute the land values that are created by public investment and the land uses permitted by the masterplan and zoning.
- **Complete the Seaport District's "Main Street"**
- New Congress Street as a double-loaded street terminating at the water. Shift density and height back to the "New Congress Street District" to accommodate hotels and commercial buildings. Extend the Fort Point Channel District fabric (the scale and texture of the industrial loft buildings) to the east and south.
- Create a vital, mixed-use district including housing at the heart of the Seaport District.

  Design for pedestrian scale, emphasizing walkability, and provide walking connections between the convention center and waterfront open space.
- Create a neighborhood that builds on the character of the existing Fort Point and St. Vincent's neighborhoods. Provide a critical mass of dwelling units (a minimum of 6,000 units, for 10,000-15,000 residents) in a mix of housing types and a range of affordability, including live/work space, so that "real people" inhabit the new area.
- Integrate the new convention center into the district through careful design of its edge conditions. At the west side, provide a boulevard continuing the street grid and a new open-space mall connecting to Fort Point Channel and future development at South Station. At the east, provide transitional uses at both sides of D Street. Connect to the St. Vincent's neighborhood at the south with a green belt and housing. Consider the design and potential uses of the "fifth facade" the 30-acre roof.

■ Create a diverse and fully accessible

waterfront, including destinations that anchor the Seaport and support the maritime economy. Provide a new "Fan Pier Cove" with public uses (retail, institutional, water-borne transit, display, and recreation), open space including seasonal entertainment, and mixed-use development (office, hotel, residential). Develop a plaza and public amenities at Wharf 8. Include at least three or four water-transit landings. Encourage land uses that reinforce the character and uses of the existing working port and industrial areas.

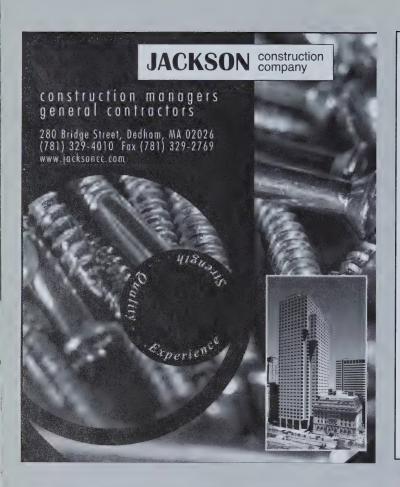
- Develop a district-wide open space system, including a "blue edge," the expanded Harborwalk; a neighborhood-park system serving residential areas; "Fish Auction Plaza" at D Street and New Congress Street; arts opportunities; and "green spokes" of tree-lined avenues.
- Provide a multi-modal transportation network emphasizing mass transit, including an extended Silver Line serving the convention center and connecting to South Station, and an extension of the "Urban Ring" proposal with a dedicated right-of-way for light-rail vehicles. Consolidate truck routes and provided dedicated truck routes to the convention center and the Economic Development Industrial Corporation. Expand the water-taxi network and pedestrian and bicycle connections.
- Create phasing strategies that ensure that the district is "whole" at each stage of development and at the end of economic cycles. Recognizing the projected 40-year development timeline of the district, provide zoning that ensures *concurrent* commercial, residential, and open-space development.





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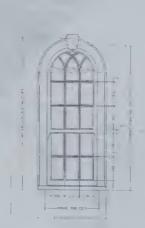
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# **Master Pieces**

# Ed Logue talks with Rebecca Barnes AIA

Edward J. Logue came to Boston in 1960 at the invitation of newly-elected Mayor John F. Collins. He created the \$90 million Boston Redevelopment Program and established the new Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), then and still the nation's most powerful local planning agency, which he directed until 1967. In 1968, he became the first president of the New York State Urban Development Corporation (UDC), modeled in part after the BRA.

Rebecca Barnes is director of architecture and urban design with Frederic R. Harris Inc. in Boston. She was formerly the manager for architecture and urban design for Boston's Central Artery project. As assistant planning director in Seattle, she produced the city's first comprehensive growth management plan in 1995.

**R.B.** You ended up building cities accidentally. You were originally a labor lawyer in Philadelphia.

Only briefly. What changed my life was two telephone calls I got between Christmas and New Year's in 1948. One was asking me to go to work for Chester Bowles, who'd just been elected governor of Connecticut. The other was asking me to go to work for Hubert Humphrey, who'd just been elected to the United States Senate. One job paid \$3,600 and one job paid \$6,200. Which one do you think I took?

**R.B.** The cheaper one.

**E.L.** Right.

**R.B.** And why was that?

Well, I figured I'm an executive type, not a legislative type. So I went to work for Governor Bowles, which was a very exciting time. He was a New Deal liberal governor, who was elected by a very thin margin, had a two-year term, and then didn't get re-elected. I went on to work for John Bailey, chairman of the Democratic National Committee. The Democrats had retained control of the the Senate by two votes. Bailey and I divided the leadership. He provided the policy leadership, and I was to provide the staff leadership.

R.B. Had you had a political upbringing? Where did this interest come from?





- home ward in Philadelphia.
- R.B. But it wasn't because you'd grown up in a political family.
- died when I was 13. My mother was a widow, and she wasn't left very much money. But we all went to Yale, and four of us continued on to Yale Law School, with the help of the GI Bill. I had a cousin who went to Yale and showed me how to get in, which was very unusual back then for a boy from a public high school. The secret was knowing how to put the financing together. Four of us bought houses through the GI Bill, too. Four and a half percent, no down payment.
- R.B. I guess that's how the country got into the homeownership business in such a big way.
- Guaranteed mortgages are probably the most socially progressive fiscal policy we have. It breaks my heart when I see what my children's monthly payments are.
- R.B. I can relate to that! Going back to your early career how long were you in that position at the DNC?
- see me in the beginning of the summer in '51 and said, "Truman is going to appoint me ambassador to India, and I'd like you to come with me." My wife's parents and my mother were horrified because it seemed very remote and very exotic, and in truth it was. But we loved it, and stayed about a year and a half.
- R.B. What did you do there?
- "I look at all the ambassador's mail. I draft responses, I take messages, I write memoranda." He said, "Oh, you're the PPS." I said, "What's the PPS?" "Principal Private Secretary." I liked that. He was a unique ambassador. The State Department thought he was much too pro-Indian, and from their standpoint, he was. He tried to tell Dean Acheson in 1952 that the Russians and Chinese were not going to be blood brothers forever.
- **R.B.** Did India's cities influence your interest in urban issues?

- I've always been a city boy, growing up in Philadelphia.
- R.B. You were quoted in an article in *Life* magazine in the '60s as saying that you loved Boston. You liked Philadelphia, and you liked New Haven and New York, but you loved Boston. Do you still see those cities in that kind of relationship?
- Yes. Boston is unique, and I had a chance to do something here that very few people get a chance to do. Boston is one of the very few cities in the United States that doesn't have an urban ring of depressed neighborhoods around it. The sad consequence of that is there's no affordable housing today anywhere near the center of the city. It's hard now to believe what Charlestown was like in 1960. The South End was the most studied slum in the United States.
- R.B. More than the West End.
- E.L. Oh yes. Much more.
- **R.B.** The economy was pointing in a different direction then than it is now.
- There was no first-class office space in the entire city in 1960.
- R.B. The article also mentioned that you were active in the downtown neighborhoods. I and I suspect most people think of you as "the downtown urban renewal person." But clearly, you were very involved in neighborhood issues.
- urban renewal in the neighborhoods. Almost anywhere else, it would have been a tragedy. I couldn't believe my eyes when I started out consulting here [in January, 1960] the entire master plan for Boston from 1950 was based on the "tower in the park" concept. That was the gospel at the time. And that's what happened to the West End it became a Corbusier tower in the park. There are secrets to what we were able to do. One is you have to have a political leader who is tough and has a vision; [Mayor] John Collins had that.
- R.B. The BRA already existed and you came up to consult with the mayor on how it ought to be shaped?

Yes. Collins asked me to come aboard. I met him, and I liked him, but I didn't know anything about him. I told my wife that I was going to walk around the city for a couple days and talk to people. I got to know the city visually. That's part of having been a bombardier in the war — it was really part of my flight training. When you're 25,000 feet in the air, not being shot at - you don't do this when you're being shot at - and you fly over Venice or Bologna, you get a feeling for how a city is put together. I came back in a couple days and went to the mayor and said, "There's no job for me here, and there's no program for me to do. But I like the place and, if you want, I'll make a program for you." The smartest thing I ever did was refuse to go to work right away — I took five months to walk every neighborhood of Boston, to see what was needed to create a program. Then I made one for him, and there it is.

R.B. The \$90 million development plan.

Yes. Nobody thought the BRA was an asset to anybody back then. It had only been around for three or four years.

**R.B.** Was it created specifically to handle urban renewal?

It was a generic statute. The pattern in the country was to bulldoze. The real reason I was invited to Boston was that I was working for Mayor Richard Lee in New Haven, and I used to keep score of how many federal urban renewal grant dollars per capita different cities were getting all around the country. And in the fall of '59, when Collins was in the initial search period for a consultant, he sent someone down to New Haven. I showed him that Boston had \$18 per capita, and New Haven, little tiny New Haven, had \$214. We had more per capita federal funding than any other place in the United States, including New York. Nearly all of it was urban renewal money.

R.B. How did you do it?

Absolutely first-class people, and no political hacks on my staff.

R.B. How did you avoid that? That's not an easy thing to avoid in city government. You could do all your own hiring and firing and you never had



Photos courtesy of Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects, Inc.

Rappaport. They were about to do the same the monument and level the rest of the town. In

- thing to Charlestown. They were going to save That was the deal. I knew the importance of the South End, they were going to save the cathedral, and the cathedral housing project, and Union Park. Period.
  - R.B. And was the plan to put apartment towers everywhere?
  - **E.L.** The plan called for industry in the South End.
  - R.B. How had you come to the conclusion that this was not the right way to go?
  - E.L. That's a good story that goes back to New Haven. We had done that once — wiping out, putting in new — at Oak Street, in the university area. The Oak Street slum was a real slum, and I'd do that again. We did that project, and then of course we wanted to do another one and another one. But the people from Wooster Square, who were Italian and all Republican, came in to see the mayor, Dick Lee. And they said, "Mayor, we don't want any of this urban renewal. We need help." And that became the first rehab project in the United States. This was 1955.
  - R.B. So they'd seen what urban renewal was and decided that it wasn't for them.
  - They didn't want any part of it. But rehab is tougher. You can't just leave the houses where they are — you have to fix them up. We invented a system to do that.
  - R.B. And you have to deal with the people who are living there while you're doing it.
  - And you have to have their consent. It takes a little longer to plan a project like that.
  - Do you think the fact that you weren't trained as a design professional enabled you to be more responsive?
  - E.L. I had no particular design ideology — I think that's an important point. After Wooster Square, the Dixwell neighborhood, which was a black neighborhood then, came to me and said, "We want some of that." And I knew that would be a problem, because the Italians in Wooster Square had had enough mattress money private money — to finance the rehab, so we didn't have to worry about the Federal Housing Administration. But Dixwell didn't have the

- pressure put on you by the mayor? Or city council people?
- hiring the talent required to do superior work and giving them the opportunity to stretch. And that became the deal when we were defining the role of what was then called the development administrator of the BRA. I said the development administrator shall have only 90 days tenure. No more. And he will hire, fire, set salaries, propose urban renewal plans and land disposition agreements, and the BRA board may approve or reject it, but they may not change anything.
- R.B. I doubt that anybody else has ever had that kind of authority.
- E.L. Nobody else had. Well, [Robert] Moses had his own way of doing it. He layered himself with security. But I'm no fool - I know why I could do what I could do. It was because Collins was right there with me all the way. He could have dismissed me without recourse at any time. We stayed in touch, not regularly, but frequently over the years afterward.
- R.B. And so you took the helm of the BRA in the midst of a Le Corbusier-inspired reshaping of the American city.
- It was Le Corbusier's idea to tear everything down and start all over again with these towers and plenty of fresh air and grass all around, and everyone would live in high-rise buildings. Highrise is the death of public housing in the United States.
- But every movement that started with an architect's idea didn't have as much impact as Corbusier. He had some other help.
- E.L. First, he had a stellar reputation, and he had completely sold MIT. This was the gospel at MIT. The master plan for the City of Boston for 1950 was made by a firm called Adams, Howard, and Greeley — an MIT firm. And that plan called for a series of West Ends. Can you believe that?
- R.B. Oh yes, I can believe that.
- E.L. The Globe was for it, Cardinal Cushing was for it. Everybody you can think of was for it. The deal for the West End had been done by the time I got here — the families had already gone and a deal had been made with [developer Jerome]

money, which meant we would have to worry about FHA. So I went to the bank where the city put all its money. And then I went to the chairman of the redevelopment agency. You might call that conflict, I call it confluence. But we got the money.

- R.B. What would you do now? There's not much federal money available these days.
- That money is still available if you have the muscle to demand it FHA insurance.
- **R.B.** What is your sense of what's going on now with the BRA?
- There's no program. There's no financial support. There's no staff. The chief doesn't have the same power. And he doesn't really have the independence. Collins never interfered.
- R.B. People have a really different attitude toward government, than they did in the late '50s, when it was considered a good thing. We've all gone through a period when people haven't trusted it. So the likelihood of people investing so much power in a single entity seems much more remote now. But you came with a sense of mission, it seems to me.
- I spent five months walking around the city. And I figured out what I could do with it, thinking about the Wooster Square experience in New Haven.
- **R.B.** People remember you for many things, good and bad. Government Center pro and con. The West End. Are there things that you'd like to be remembered for that people forget about?
- I would like to be remembered as the guy who brought planning with people to the city. When I came into the business, "citizen participation" had not been invented. It certainly hadn't been done in the West End—read Herb Gans [*The Urban Villagers*]. We started it in New Haven, and then I followed the same path in Boston and later in New York.
- R.B. You've said that you think Mayor Menino's doing a good job.
- I think Tom is a little too prone to pop off a bit, as I think he did with City Hall when he said it should be turned into a handball court. But a mayor's got a right to speak out. I think if

he asked what I would do, I'd say, "Tell [BRA director] Tom O'Brien to take three months off — the city will survive it. So will City Hall Plaza. So will the Seaport." He should take three months off and go figure out a program, bring that program back to the mayor, and get the mayor to approve it. Get the City Council to approve it. And to the extent the feds are relevant, get them to approve it.

- **R.B.** Are there other cities in the US that are doing that kind of strong planning?
- **E.L.** Maybe Portland, Oregon. Portland's the one city I'd like to know better.
- P.B. They've been devoted to methodical planning and controlling growth for the last 25 years. It's part of their political culture in a way that it's not in a lot of other places.
- because I know they've been at it for a long time. I think New York does a lousy job. I'm sorry to say I don't think Philadelphia's relevant any more. When Ed Bacon was there, he was a force to contend with, and Society Hill is one of the best single things anybody did. But I'll never forget seeing the plan. I said, "Ed, I got a copy of your new master plan. I can't find my house." He said, "You're not supposed to."
- R.B. He avoided a lot of trouble that way.
- Boston is the only city that has a comprehensive plan of action that involves so much of the city.
- **R.B.** I remember your comments at a public forum last year. You said 20 or 30 years is a long time from now. We should be doing plans for the next 10 years and then 10 years after that, and maybe 10 years after that.
- F.L. Our 1970 plan covered the 10 years from '65 to '75.
- R.B. It was comprehensive, too.
- Oh, it sure was. You know something?

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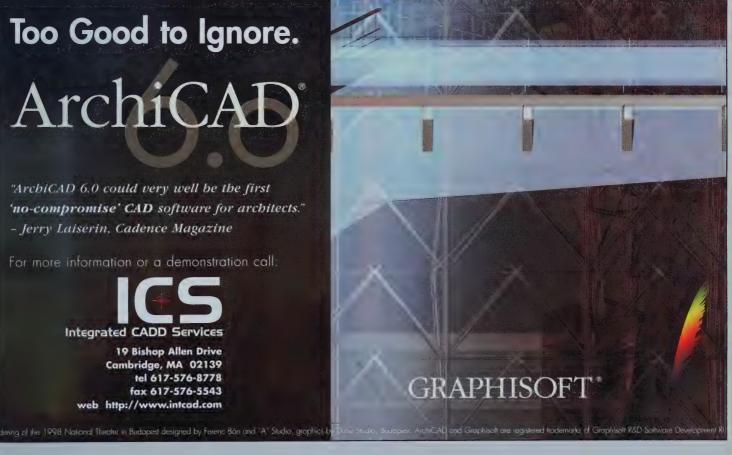
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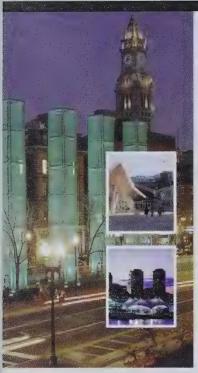
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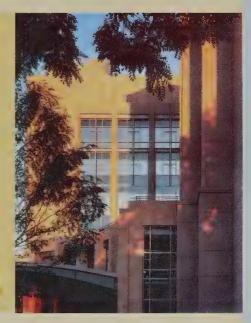




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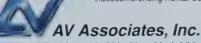
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HUMAN RESOURCES . EMPLOYEE BENEFITS . SYSTEMS INTEGRATION

INVESTMENT ADVISORY AND FINANCIAL PLANNING . BUSINESS VALUATION

A wide-ranging discussion of social forces and civic responsibility is incomplete without a look at trends in the schools — long considered the petri dishes of social activism by those who formed what was disdainfully called The Establishment. As yesterday's activists become today's Establishment, and the word itself has become quaintly passé, *ArchitectureBoston* asked two design students to comment on the social commitment of the next generation of architects.

Representing an entire generation is a daunting responsibility. Since I was not willing to go out on a limb and speak for anyone but myself, I decided to conduct an informal survey of my peers — students and young professionals — with the objective of gauging their commitment to social issues. It seemed so straightforward. The first question read, "What are your social concerns?" But in almost every case, the response was "What do you mean?"

The problem, it turned out, was not in my survey-writing skills. Even with further explanation, it was extremely difficult to squeeze out anything of substance. For whatever reasons (information overload, the fact that most of us are "transplants" to Boston and lack a sense of community responsibility, preoccupation with our careers), our generation appears to lack any strong commitment to social causes — and doesn't even seem to care about it.

Thirty years ago, my question might have been a much easier one to answer. There were common concerns regarding undeniable crises such as Vietnam, Watergate, and civil rights. But today the issues are not so clear-cut. People are not so easily shocked. Violence, crime, and corruption are all we see on television or in the newspaper. Issues that would have inspired or inflamed the generations before us have become commonplace and accepted.

With so many different people from so many different backgrounds, it should be no surprise that we cannot agree on what is wrong with this society, let alone how to fix it. "Diversity" has evolved far beyond simple recognition of cultural and ethnic groups; group identity in fact seems to be in decline, replaced by diversity of individual differences, or more precisely, individual wants. The narcissistic

attitude of the "Me Generation" seems to have infected younger generations, too. It is nearly impossible to come to some consensus when people are only concerned about themselves.

This indifference to what is going on around us is further fueled by the information age. Our attention spans have become so short we cannot focus on an issue long enough to formulate an opinion about it. The question I should have asked is, "Read any good headlines lately?" The real tragedy here is that we are content to digest whatever news is spoon-fed to us. In the absence of crisis, our attention swings to issues that have entertainment, not social, value. Instead, we wait at the edge of our seats to find out what improper or imprudent act our presidential leader will do next.

In the midst of this apathy, it is extremely difficult for architects to address social issues in their work. Many have simply retreated, enchanted by technological advances and the latest design trend. Many architects remain in their own virtual worlds, disregarding the real needs of today's society. Don't get me wrong: I'm all for creating beautiful objects, and I understand that everyone's got to make a living. But architects have opportunities to influence social change, and we shouldn't pass them up.

"Doctors, lawyers, architects." How many times have you heard those three professions in the same sentence? Traditionally they shared a commitment to uphold the public interest and to improve the common good, and their voice or opinion was well respected. The medical and legal communities are losing this status because they are chasing the dollar. If architecture is to remain a "profession," we must avoid the same perils.

Stephen J. Feige is a seventh-semester student at the Boston Architectural Center. He is with Tappé Associates, Inc. in Boston, focusing on public schools and libraries. He is co-author of Insulating Concrete Forms (McGraw-Hill).

# **Two Views**

Stephen J. Feige Melanie Coo

Melanie Coo received an M.Arch. degree in 1998 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and is a graduate of Wellesley College. She is currently employed with HMFH Architects in Cambridge, MA.

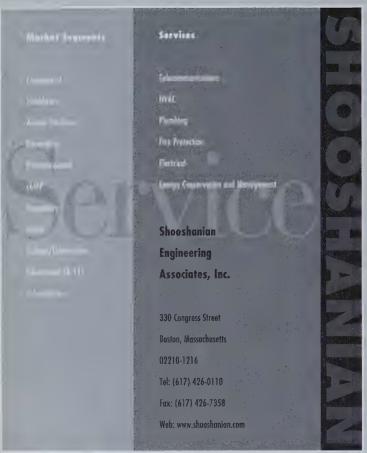
How many students these days approach an architecture education with hopes of changing the world? Keep this question in mind and take a look at the schedule of a typical architecture student. Where at one time a student's time would have been filled with courses in housing and urban issues and with extra-curricular activities related to sociopolitical causes, there is now a void. Instead, the time is filled with core-curriculum requirements and classes focussing on technology in building design. This lack of involvement in the larger community may be a result of the standardization of architectural education to meet the approval of accreditation boards. Perhaps it is a reflection of the direction in which the profession has moved. Or maybe it represents a larger societal issue: people unwilling to stick their necks out for the benefit of anyone other than themselves — and sometimes not even for themselves.

We live in prosperous times and, it seems, in increasingly isolating times, with the proliferation of technological advancements like electronic banking and Internet connections. But there will always be a multitude of social issues which require the collective power of groups of people to have an impact and to sustain change. It is a shame that in academic environments — where people have already been brought together to listen to the voices of other students and of the faculty who lead them — this opportunity is frequently lost or ignored.

MIT's architecture program was at one time, not too long ago, known for the importance which it placed on the social aspects of architecture. Much attention was given to housing and the public realm. One of the last vestiges of this tradition, design workshops about communities, demonstrates how these efforts have been marginalized. These workshops, frequently conducted overseas, offer students exposure to real clients and the opportunity to achieve real results in real communities. When the workshop program was first established, students could substitute any two workshops for one design studio, an acknowledgement of the workshops' value within a rigorous course load. Today, students can still take these workshops, but unfortunately, through the standardization of the academic program to meet accreditation requirements, they must do so in addition to the required studio, leaving them hard pressed to devote the kind of time and energy necessary to really immerse themselves in such subject matter. The department is in effect neglecting its human interests.

There are some professors who try to intertwine social issues into design studios. These professors underscore the importance of pedestrian-friendly environments and places for community use. And there is indeed a handful of students who are interested in these issues and feel strongly about the positive impact their work can have on society. But they must take the initiative to discover these opportunities, which are diminishing. The focus on buildings that reflect social concerns has given way to a focus on buildings that are purely the result of the technology used to produce them. Buildings are designed from the perspective of architects rather than from the viewpoint of the people who will actually occupy them.

This tendency in architectural education — toward buildings that are object-like rather than responsive to the needs of the users — can have a role in a designer's development. There is a need to break free from pragmatic concerns in order to openly discover and explore concepts. However, this early stage in a designer's development is also the time when a commitment to social responsibility might also be nurtured. Both theoretical and societal concerns can be addressed within the breadth of this kind of education. After all, these are the students who will one day constitute the membership of this profession. If this profession — both its students and practitioners — is unwilling to stand up for issues which can improve our world, who will?



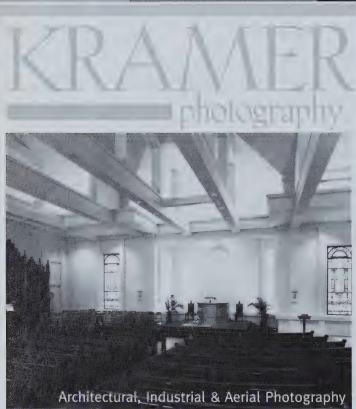
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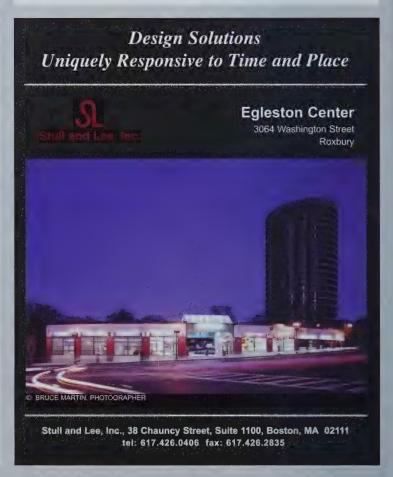


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# **Constructive Advice**

# Boston's facade inspection ordinance

by Thomas A. Schwartz PE

#### With increasing national news reports of

pedestrian fatalities due to falling building elements, recognition of the risks associated with our aging urban building stock is growing across the country. In 1996, Boston enacted a facade inspection ordinance, following similar requirements in Chicago, New York, and Detroit. Although Boston has so far escaped any fatality, there have been "near misses." The new ordinance represents a prudent, proactive approach to reducing the chance of future tragedy.

In late December, 1997, Boston's Inspectional Service Department began notifying building owners of the need to comply with ordinance 9.9-12, which requires the inspection of exterior walls of buildings over 70 feet high at least once every five years. Inspections must address significant deterioration, unsafe conditions,



Massachusetts State House, Boston A corner of the addition to the Massachusetts State House, constructed between 1914 and 1917. A ground-based binocular survey of the carved marble cornice, located 90 to 120 feet above grade, did not show serious distress. Subsequent close-up inspection, however, revealed this cracked section, which was removed by simply lifting it away.

movement of facade components, and water-tightness, and a report signed by a registered architect or engineer is required. The city has given the ordinance some teeth: Owners who fail to comply are subject to fine, and buildings may not be occupied without a valid certificate of compliance.

Although this law represents a commendable step in the right direction, it cannot fulfill its promise, because it fails to establish minimum requirements for an acceptable inspection. As a result, architects and engineers who have undertaken facade inspections have followed varying approaches, ranging from cursory ground-level surveys to thorough swing-staging and rope-access examinations. These varying approaches represent widely disparate levels of reliability in the assessment of the important life-safety issues at stake.

High-rise facades cannot be reliably assessed by ground-based surveys, even with high-powered binoculars. Such surveys may, in fact, have a detrimental effect in that the existence of a facade inspection report based on a ground-level survey that indicates no unsafe condition may placate an otherwise concerned and vigilant owner by suggesting a level of security and safety that does

not exist. In addition, the assessment of water-tightness — a good idea since facade deterioration often results from water penetration — is not possible by conducting an exterior survey alone. Such an assessment requires interior inspections to find evidence of water leakage, along with an exterior inspection to identify conditions frequently associated with water problems.

The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) is currently developing a standard for facade inspections. The final product of that effort is still a few years away. In the interim, the following recommendations establish some minimum guidelines:

- Review architectural plans and shop drawings, if available, to gain a general understanding of the facade construction, and to identify likely areas of deterioration. Interview building maintenance personnel for facade performance history and the nature of maintenance and repair work.
- Conduct a "hands-on" inspection, covering at a minimum 25 percent of each elevation. Access can be by ground-based lift (condor lifts, cherry pickers etc.), swing stage, window washing stage, or rope access equipment to gain direct access to the entire height of the facade.



High-Rise Hotel Atlanta, Georgia

This granite-clad tower had many cracked, thin granite panels, mostly at higher elevations, which were visible only when observed from a few feet away.

- For facades consisting of differing wall systems, e.g. glass-metal curtain wall and stone, include a close survey of each wall system.
- Use binoculars and other magnification equipment to scan the entire facade to check for large-scale problems and to augment hands-on inspection.
- Provide spot sounding or otherwise probe the internal cohesiveness of cladding materials that tend to delaminate or lose adhesion to framing members.
- For assessment of watertightness, spot check interior areas for signs of leakage. Interview maintenance personnel regarding leakage history, and observe the condition of sealant joints, flashing, and other visible waterproofing components of the facade.

In addition, facade inspection reports should include the following minimum information:

- The area(s) on each elevation where hands-on inspections were conducted.
- The size, number, and location of observed cracks and displacement of the facade components.

- Locations, size, and number of missing facade components, recorded on a building elevation drawing, if available.
- Condition of windows, including conditions such as broken lites or fogged insulating glass units.

The enactment and enforcement of Boston's facade ordinance constitutes a forward-thinking, prudent action by the mayor's office and Boston's Inspectional Services Division, and the adoption of minimum performance requirements can help ensure that its intent is realized. Such requirements can give reasonable confidence to building owners, insurers, and the public that potentially dangerous conditions are identified and eliminated, while at the same time avoiding an unreasonable burden on owners.

Thomas A. Schwartz PE is president of Simpson Gumpertz & Heger Inc., consulting engineers in Arlington, MA, and San Francisco, CA. He chairs the subcommittee of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) that is developing a standard for facade inspections.





High-Rise Office Building, Miami, Florida

This granite-clad tower suffered damage from Hurricane Andrew. Attempts to locate damage with binoculars from the ground were unsuccessful.

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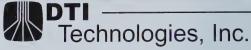
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# **Covering the Issues**

Periodical roundup by Gretchen Schneider



Changing facts, constant message... The world population growth rate has slowed in recent decades, and Bill McKibben, writing in the May Atlantic Monthly, predicts it will reach its maximum within the next century. This is no reason to abandon sound planning principles or environmentally responsible design, however. McKibben launches into a lengthy explanation of how 19th-century industrial city-building and 20th-century petroleum-based lifestyles have created unstable environmental conditions with unpredictable consequences. He concludes with the now-familiar call for sustainable city-building, environmentally sound products, and more responsible lifestyles. Of course, it's the same message delivered 30 years ago, when the baby boom was still going strong and planning experts predicted we'd build "another America" by the year 2000.

When bigger is better...Bill Sterling should have lunch with Bill McKibben. Sterling is on a global assignment for Wired magazine "to check out truly huge, truly top-line megaprojects still under construction." In the July issue, he examines "off-the-chart undertakings" that are big not only because they have to be, but because they want to be. Taking the Eiffel Tower as precedent, he visits places that enthusiastically celebrate the technological future: an underground research lab on the Franco-Swiss border, Hong Kong International Airport, China's Xiaolangdi dam, and Shanghai (with 69 skyscrapers under construction). Part travel journal, part architectural criticism, part social commentary, Sterling's account takes the reader on a fast-paced tour of the unapologetically, insanely enormous. He concludes, "It may be that none of them ever surpasses the mega status of the Eiffel Tower. Because, you see, while big is indeed a thrill, it's not enough just to be big. If anything is to last for the long term, it has to be loved."

But wait, there's more... Sterling should head for Greenwich, England, site of the "Millennium Dome," which is currently under construction. Paul Goldberger, writing in *The New Yorker* (May 4), notes that the world's largest dome, enclosing 20 acres, will cost the equivalent of 12 Bilbao museums. He predicts that "the Dome will be the world's most spectacular empty space."

Please do that in my back yard... US News & World Report features "Cities that Work: Six Cities that are Showing the Way," the cover story of its June 8 issue. Writer Brendon I. Koerner points out that many so-called "model" cities are reinventing themselves as cultural showplaces or tourist traps, while residents continue to move out to the 'burbs. Instead, he argues for real, working cities and outlines six criteria, each illustrated by a city: affordable housing in the downtown for families with children (Vancouver); safe, wellmaintained, and easily-accessible public parks (Minneapolis); cleaned-up industrial areas (Chattanooga); efficient public transportation (Curitiba, Brazil); responsible, business-like public government (Tilberg, Netherlands); and inspired, inspiring design (Melbourne, Australia). Twothirds of his examples are not American. Even though Koerner writes "if [cities] can work, they can flourish — as economic powers and as centers of American life," in the end he seems to say that we still can't quite get our act together.

A shoe-in... It's getting to be that time of the century when magazines are pulling their "Best Of" lists together. Witold Rybczynski carries the banner for Le Corbusier in Time's June 8 special issue on artists and entertainers of the 20th century. Who else could possibly be the choice for the most influential architect of the last 100 years? With buildings from Cambridge to Chandigarh, designs from chairs to cities, Corbu "maintained that this new [industrial] age deserved a brandnew architecture." The father of the free plan and the grandfather of American urban renewal, Corbu wrote, "We must start again from zero." For better or for worse, he was a leader who forever changed our approach to building by instilling in us the belief that we can clear the slate and start anew. While we began the century embracing him and close the century tearing him down, Rybczynski is right that no one has influenced us more.



Gretchen Schneider is a designer at Bruner/Cott & Associates in Cambridge, MA.



# Books Boston's "Changeful Times"

Origins of Preservation and Planning in America

by Michael Holleran The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998

Reviewed by Hubert Murray AIA Take a leisurely walk from Copley Square over to Commonwealth Avenue, through the Public Garden to the Common, up to the State House and down past the Park Street Church.

Continue down to Washington Street and head north, passing the Old South Meeting House and the Old State House, finishing up at the base of City Hall. In less than an hour you have walked the battlefields of modern-day planning and preservation, where the struggles for this city's past, present and future took place over a critical period of 50 years between 1870 to 1920.

This is the subject of Michael Holleran's book in which he documents city building in Boston as a progression from the ravenous culture of growth that characterized the decades before the 1870s, through a period of abstinence in the 1880s and '90s in which "permanence" became the prevailing doctrine. By the beginning of the new century, these cultural changes matured into a legislative framework and ethos of controlled urban management, in which a new sense of history embraced the notion of preserving icons from the past while building well for the future.

Boston's population, growing mildly through the 18th century, took off in the 19th. From a city of 58,000 (a football stadium's worth) in 1825, it grew to 137,000 by 1850 and 342,000 by 1875. Expanding the land on which they stood, shoveling hills into bays, replacing factories with offices, houses with shops, green fields with new suburbs, Bostonians lived in a self-generated vortex of growth and change. Newness and impermanence were central to the spirit of the New World. "Whatever is old is corrupt," said Emerson.

There was a change, however, in the culture of change itself. The trauma of the Civil War created a desire for stable domesticity as a refuge from national turmoil, a tendency to retreat from urban engagement that was compounded by the Brahmin fear of the new wave of urban immigrants, mainly Irish, later Italians and Jews. The desire to maintain class integrity was directed both to the future and the past — to preserving class distinctions and ensuring their survival.

This need for stability and permanence was realized in new construction by establishing easements and covenants around residential developments as a means of increasing value and controlling undesirable change. While South End residential developments in the 1840s through the 1860s employed deed restrictions applying only to the first generation of owners, Back Bay housing in the post-Civil War era incorporated restrictions in perpetuity, governing height, setback, materials, and use, in order to uphold both private and communal value. The future thus secured, a corresponding interest in saving the fabric of old buildings developed, as much to preserve icons of Yankee patrimony as to document the material evidence of a shared past. In this light, Holleran documents in gripping detail the closely fought battle in the 1870s to save the Old South Meeting House, the first historic confrontation between preservationists and demolitionists.

The subsequent battle over preservation of the Old State House, extended debates over the correct approach to restoring and expanding Bulfinch's State House, and the refinement of legislation relating to building heights in Copley Square and the Back Bay — all in the 1890s — were contemporaneous with what had by then become a national trend. The first historic preservation policy for the country was enshrined in the Antiquities Act of 1906. Boston inspired other communities to adopt zoning ordinances as early as 1915, although the city did not pass zoning legislation itself until 1924.

The preservation movement already begun in Boston matured in 1910, when William Sumner Appleton founded the Society for the Protection of New England Antiquities. SPNEA concentrated on preserving individual buildings as "documents of material culture," creating the basis for James Marston Fitch's definition of preservation as the "curatorial management of the built world."

As we walk today, book in hand, through this battlefield from Copley Square to City Hall, the noise of modern conflict comes alive. Whether we are talking of rebuilding Fenway Park, preserving Malcolm X's house in Roxbury, or redeveloping Government Center, we are following in the footsteps of a tradition pioneered in this city. Holleran has given us a critically important and wellresearched account of Boston's role in the foundation of the preservation movement in America. By relating the movement's focus on built form back to its social and economic context, he reminds us that we realize our cultural and political aspiration not only in what we build, but also in what we preserve. In the interpretation of history is our blueprint for the future. So it is with our buildings.

Hubert Murray AIA is an architect and urban designer in Cambridge, MA.

Books

#### We'll Call You If We Need You: Experiences of Women Working Construction

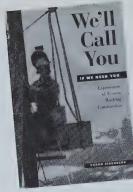
by Susan Eisenberg ILR Press/Cornell University Press, 1998

Reviewed by Melissa B. Bennett AIA

For centuries, the opportunity to leave your mark on the skyline has been available primarily to men. Employment opportunities for women in construction were ultimately opened up in 1978 following a suit by women's organizations against the Department of Labor for its failure to follow the Civil Rights Act prohibiting workplace discrimination. As a result, a quota was established for female employees on all federally funded construction projects.

This highly personal collection of interviews with women who entered the construction trades at that time includes stories of challenge, courage, and emotional and personal change. Their struggles and triumphs are revealed through candid narratives describing experiences common among women entering trades and professions including architecture — that had previously been the domain of men. None of the women thought of herself as a pioneer or activist, but ultimately they became both.

Although some of the women had always been naturally curious about how mechanical things work, most started their union apprenticeships already two steps behind the men, who had typically grown up with fathers or brothers who taught them to use tools and do repairs. Because of their small numbers, tradeswomen worked in relative isolation from one other, and in many cases were ignorant of the fact that there were other women in their trade.



Although union training programs were well regarded, there was virtually no formal followthrough on the job — the quality of on-site training was determined primarily by the journeyman or foreman. Many tradeswomen received poor training due to ostracism on the job and at the union hall, where they were typically assigned tasks that limited their ability to learn a range of skills. Others were able to find supervisors who supported and encouraged their training, usually men secure in their own ability, and sometimes older men who had worked with women during World War II.

Despite the setbacks and frustrations, none of the women interviewed regretted her decision to learn a trade. Many are now active in union leadership as training directors or stewards, expanding the roles and perceptions of women in the work force. Those who left the unions found that their training and experience were valuable preparation for positions in private industry as estimators, contractors, inspectors, or instructors in technical colleges. All found that there are compelling reasons to join the construction industry: the pay and benefits, the daily camaraderie, the opportunity to learn a craft — and, of course, the chance to leave your mark on the skyline.

Melissa B. Bennett AIA is principal of Butler Bennett Architects in Medford, MA. She established the BSA Women in Architecture Committee in 1983, serving as chair until 1987, and has also served on the AIA Women in Architecture Committee and the AIA Diversity Task Force.

#### A Prayer for the City

by Buzz Bissinger Random House, 1997 Reviewed by David Dixon FAIA

A PRAYER FOR THE CITY

BUZZ BISSINGER

Maybe only die-hard urbanists could ever think that an in-depth chronicle of Edward Rendell's first four years as mayor of Philadelphia is a lot of fun. But Pulitzer Prize-winning Buzz Bissinger is a skillful storyteller, and he has infused his fascinating account of the state of modern American cities with humor, irony, and even suspense to create a thoroughly enjoyable pageturner.

Bissinger had unprecedented access to the mayor beginning with Rendell's election in 1992. The author integrates his observations over this period with compelling trends and facts to illustrate the economic and social dynamics threatening to make America's great cities its once-great cities. Vivid anecdotes describe the transformation of American liberalism (Rendell explains his own dilemma: "I don't want to be anti-labor, but I can't grow hair and I can't grow money"), and sketches of real people convey the tensions of urban life, demonstrating the pain spawned by competition for shares of a diminishing pie.

A Prayer for the City is eerily relevant to Boston today, despite the glitz of our current boom. Philadelphia's plight may be more visible, but the same destructive dynamics are at work in Boston. Philadelphia — like Boston —

has determined that its only hope of replacing manufacturing jobs is travel and tourism; one Rendell advisor wonders if the city's labor pool should be more aptly described as an "audience pool." This same advisor notes that "dozens of cities [are] hoping to reconstitute...themselves on the basis of shiny, new block-long [convention centers] dedicated to the preservation of...spaces for Shriners and software vendors." Bissinger reminds us that it is almost as enjoyable to be rich in Philadelphia as it is in Boston and about equally devastating to be poor. Like Philadelphia, Boston has lost the battle with its suburbs for control of the service, retail, and manufacturing economies: More than 19 million square feet of office space is coming on line in Boston's suburbs today, with almost none in the Financial District. The pace may be slower, but Boston, too, continues to lose its middle class, driven away by poor public schools and racial tensions.

In his 1992 inaugural speech, Rendell warned that as Philadelphia continued to lose its tax base, "the costs of unsafe streets, of dirty neighborhoods, of struggling schools, of shut-down health clinics and recreation centers...are simply incalculable ... The cost of our failing is unthinkable." Cities as we have known them — vital places where ideas, arts, diversity, and opportunity flourish - can die. Did Rendell turn the tide? Will Philadelphia become a model of urban renaissance? It is a credit to Bissinger's narrative skill that he keeps the reader turning the pages to find out.

David Dixon FAIA directs Goody, Clancy & Associates' planning and urban design division. He studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania and, like so many in Philadelphia, maintains a love/hate relationship with that city.

#### Sports, Jobs and Taxes: The Economic Impact of Sports Teams

Roger G. Noll and Andrew Zimbalist, editors Brookings Institution Press, 1997

Reviewed by Lawrence Bluestone AIA

You can fool some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time, but when it comes to wringing public subsidies from cities and states to build stadiums for professional sports teams, team owners have clearly mastered the skills to fool most of the people most of the time. That, at least, is the strong message that this book delivers about the real economic benefits of sports facilities.

In recent years, the United States has seen an unprecedented spurt of new stadium construction around the country. With new sports venues costing upward of \$150 million a pop, teams can ill afford such large expenditures themselves. And so, almost without exception, team owners seek large public subsidies to construct these sports palaces. Promising that these glistening new facilities will create jobs, increase consumer spending, revitalize central business districts, and practically cure the common cold, the owners have convinced cities that they must compete aggressively by courting teams with generous offers. The central question that the editors ask is whether these proclaimed public economic benefits justify the large public subsidies sought. In a comprehensive economic examination of the complex financing issues involved, including in-depth case studies of seven recent facilities ranging from Camden Yards to Candlestick Park, the authors answer a resounding, "No!"

The authors show how professional sports leagues, acting as monopolistic cartels, artificially constrain the supply of professional teams to a number



well below the demand for these franchises. The results are competitive bidding wars that cause rival cities to give away the kitchen sink to attract these teams. Furthermore, in example after example, they show how the number of new jobs, tax revenues, and secondary economic benefits actually generated by new stadiums fall far short of the inflated claims the team owners originally tout.

In an intriguing chapter that examines whether new downtown sports stadiums spark centercity revitalization, the authors show that stadiums rarely have substantial, if any, positive net economic effect. Only when sports stadiums are part of a much larger center-city revitalization strategy or are a part of a multi-purpose convention center facility do they potentially contribute to city rejuvenation.

So, if the public benefits rarely justify the public subsidies, why do cities continue to trip over each other to compete for professional teams? The answer can only lie in psychic benefits—local pride, image, and status. Given what else cities could accomplish with the public monies offered to sports franchises, we must all ask ourselves if this is the best way to spend our tax dollars.

Lawrence Bluestone AIA is an urban designer and principal of the Bluestone Planning Group in Cambridge, MA. He has prepared downtown master plans and plans for center-city visitor attractions in over 30 communities throughout the country.



#### **Songs from the Alley**

by Kathleen Hirsch Noonday Press (an imprint of Farrar, Straus, & Giroux), 1998

Reviewed by John L. Wilson FAIA

This is a powerful book that ranks with Walter Muir Whitehill's A Topographical History of Boston, and J. Anthony Lukas' Common Ground in its ability to reveal Boston's character flaws and strengths through its history, institutions, and the individual lives of its citizens.

The narrative quilt is patterned around the separate lives of two young women, Amanda and Wendy, members of Boston's homeless community. Hirsch describes well the inhabitants of their world — their families and fellow travelers, and myriad counselors, attendants, priests, nuns, social workers, doctors, and van drivers. Complementary pieces are added: from Boston's Dickensian history of dealing with the poor and the mentally ill; from more contemporary institutions and people whose names are familiar, such as Pine Street Inn, Rosie's Place, Paul Sullivan, Richard Ring, Kip Tiernan, and Ray Flynn; and from the network of hidden places and very public spaces that forms the homeless map of the streets and buildings of the Boston we know. The Homeless Trail, like the Freedom Trail, is marked in red - the red of blood and cheap wine — and it is littered with broken glass, bones, promises, and dreams.

The most disturbing aspect of the book is its narrative of violence

and sexual abuse, and their poisonous transmission from generation to generation. In the epilogue, as Amanda is on her way to joining our world, and Wendy is still trapped in the cycle of past failure and low self-worth, Hirsch discusses what is needed to end homelessness. It requires the public and private sectors to fund and foster a support infrastructure of crisis centers, transitional housing, affordable housing, social and health services, education and jobs, and community centers in every neighborhood. And it requires each of us to recognize our accountability to and for every other person. As Hirsch notes, this starts with the family, the next-door neighbors, the neighborhood, the workplace, and the people we meet on the street.

In the decade of homelessness since the first edition of this book, we have learned some things. We know that the money spent on prisons and the justice system would go many times further if it were instead invested in our streets and in our communities. We know that our society is becoming less communal, with its gated communities, government by ballot propositions and initiatives, and welfare "reform" that is headed for the same tragic result as the de-institutionalization of mental patients. And we now know that multi-disciplinary research is needed to break the generational cycle of sexual abuse and violence against women and children. Kathleen Hirsch's extraordinary book conveys the immediacy of homelessness and gives real voices to a clamor that is growing every day.

John Wilson FAIA is a principal and studio director of Payette Associates Inc. in Boston, and is the 1996 recipient of the Whitney Young Jr. Award from the AIA. He is the founder and currently co-chair of the BSA Task Force to End Homelessness.

Editor's Note: This review was based on the original edition published in 1989 by Ticknor & Fields. The new paperback edition, released in August, 1998, by Noonday Press, includes an updated epilogue.

# **Site-Ations**

#### Web sites of note

#### Center for Understanding the Built Environment

http://www.cubekc.org

"Building kids, building community, building the future." Nifty site by folks who understand the subversive value of influencing young minds through education. Sample curricula, the renowned "Box City" program, and links

#### **Amazing Environmental Organization WebDirectory**

http://www.webdirectory.com

"Earth's biggest environment search engine." Almost as amazing as the fact they nabbed this Web address.

#### **Community Design Opportunities**

http://www.bbll.com/designcorps/designcorps.html For architects, students, and community activists, an excellent overview of the issues.

#### **HUD** User

http://huduser.org

HUD gets user-friendly. Info on policy, programs, and research related to housing and urban development.

#### **US Census Bureau**

http://census.gov

Who says statistics are dry? Not with features like a realtime population count, "Just for Fun," and "Conversations with America - My Government Listens." All this and social, demographic, and economic info, too.

#### **National Housing Institute**

http://www.nhi.org

Valuable, no-nonsense info on affordable housing and community development, and an online version of NHI's Shelterforce magazine.

#### **Americans with Disabilities Act Information**

http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada

Go to the source for information, interpretation, and text of settlements and consent agreements.

#### **American Farmland Trust**

http://www.farmland.org

Common ground for environmentalists and farmers, the AFT is dedicated to the preservation of farmland.

#### **Small Town and Rural Planning Forum**

http:/www.arch.buffalo.edu/pairc/wwwboard\_rural\_planning.html The place to explore exotic planning concerns like hog farmers and Right to Farm laws.

If you've found a Web site that might interest our readers (an admittedly broad definition), please send us the address: architectureboston@architects.org

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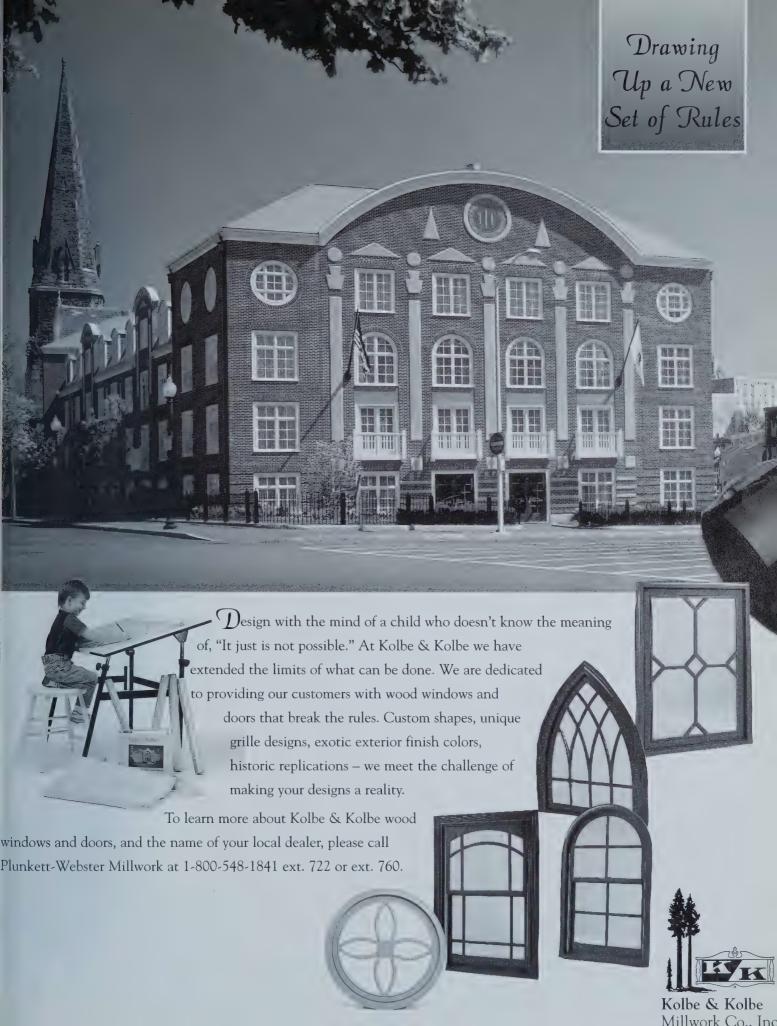
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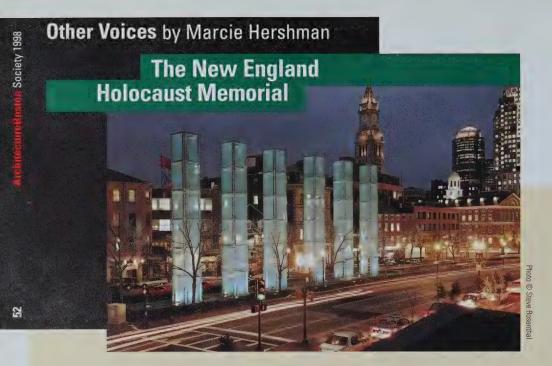
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I LOVE GOING INTO BOSTON early on Saturday mornings, when the city is still quiet but already alert. When strangers grin like conspirators with the same secret: *this* is when our city is a joy, *these* moments, when everything seems possible.

The marketplaces are wide open then. Haymarket's pyramids of produce are precisely topped, the gleam still on the fruit. Vendors make jokes — no need to hurry. My partner and I stroll, and when the sacks are full to bursting, we carry them to the car, parked between the massive buildings of Government Center. Then we recross the plazas and streets. In Quincy Market's echoing food court we buy coffee and bagels before climbing to the second story, where all is quiet as a library. We eat beneath the Rotunda's balmy splendor, looking out huge windows toward the Financial District.

Not until I read a furious letter in *The Boston Globe* did I add another stop to these lazy, productive sojourns. The writer was angry about the New England Holocaust Memorial. Was it necessary, he demanded, to remind us of history's most vile atrocity in the middle of America's most historic city? The "atrocious, contemporary" architecture marred the unity of colonial brick.

I was jolted by his ferocity; more, I didn't hold with his idea that Boston is best tagged "City as Still-Life." But what dismayed me most? I had separated the Memorial from the city surrounding it. Though it was sited near the markets, I hadn't gone yet. The Memorial honors the millions terrorized and murdered by the Nazis — among them members of my own family. Still, I'd told myself it was sacrilegious to visit when filling bags at Haymarket. Better to glance at the six glassy towers from a distance. Better to see it — sometime — on a separate visit.

Sometimes the truth is what we hide best from ourselves. The truth? The Holocaust occurred in the marketplace. It happened amid daily life, busy lives. You couldn't *not* see how other people — Jews, usually — were ordered through the center of town. Sometimes they were locked inside warehouses before being forced into freight cars headed to the death camps neighboring other towns.

History happens in the center of things. It happens when you are buying flowers.

One bright Saturday morning, I stepped across the Memorial's boundary. Carved into paving stones, in Hebrew, one word, *Remember.* And then: *Chelmo*, a death camp. And then I was crossing a grate, which made my footing seem insecure. I was aware of the airy vacancy beneath me, aware of electric embers flickering beneath the grate. These are ashes we stand upon. Or they are stars.

The eloquence of architect Stanley Saitowitz's symbolic language is such that it can sustain and enrich the dualities of emotion and reality. Each of the six towering glass chimneys, named for death camps, might also be candles. They might scatter ash to blacken the sky or tap light against a heaven too dark, might defile or bless us. The numerals from 1 to 6,000,000 etched on the glass walls can recall the anonymity of human arms tattooed, or they can account for individual beings: Take from the crowd this living soul. Then there are the open stretches between the chimneys or candles, where the weather is what it is, and the path is clear. In each direction one turns, there is testimony, simple human speech. Engraved on glass, on stones laid flat or stood upright are the words of survivors, soldiers, philosophers, words that can make you aware you've just caught your breath. Or theirs.

For all the horror of the Holocaust's historical scale, this is a profoundly contemplative work. What is most poignant and at the same time most unrelenting about the Memorial is that it is surrounded by movement. Which marks the choice citizens of great cities and modest villages have always had in relation to history. It's as quiet as this: Will you pass by — or, finally, stop?

Marcie Hershman is the author of the novels, *Tales of the Master Race* and *Safe in America*, both published by HarperCollins. She teaches at Tufts University.

Editor's Note: The New England Holocaust Memorial received the 1998 Harleston Parker Award from the Boston Society of Architects. **Build Boston** 

the Trade Show and Convention World Trade Center Boston Nov. 17-19, 1998

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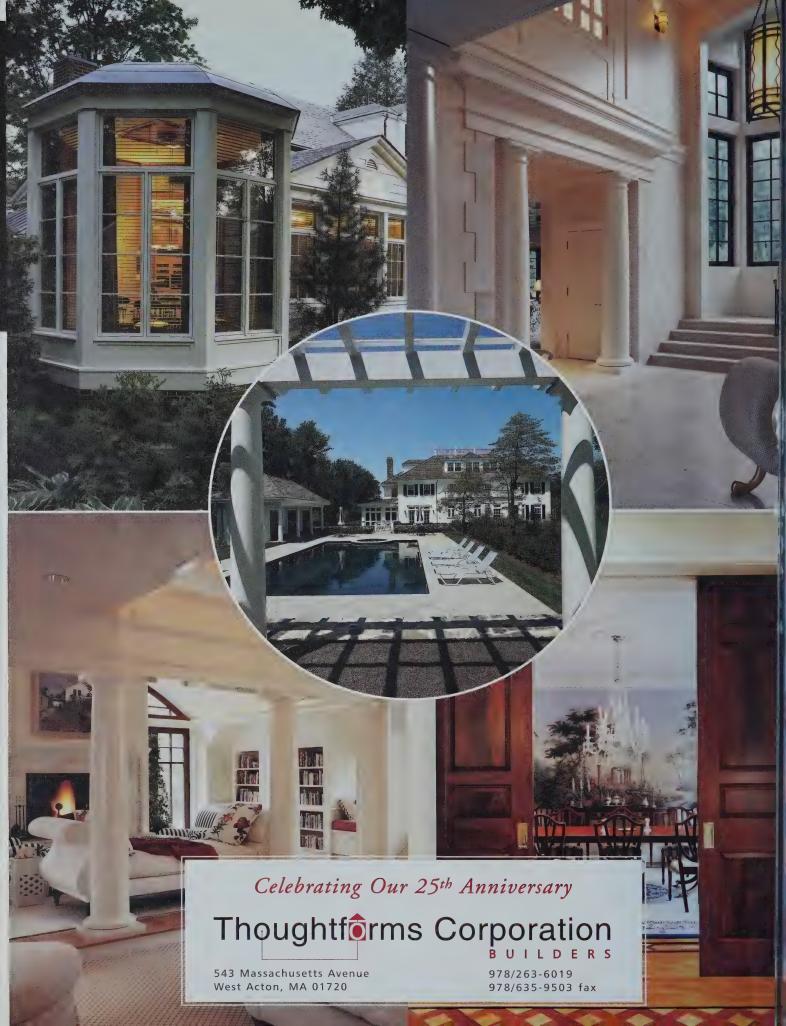
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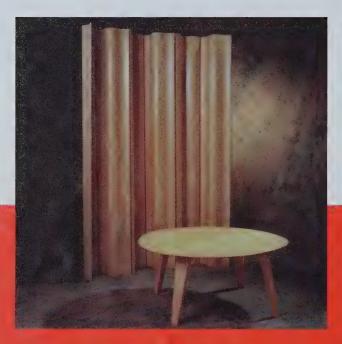
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# ArchitectureBoston

1998 No.3

Design

"Have we moved from our perception of architecture as fine art to the perception of architecture as a social art?"

It's a deceptively simple question and therefore received scant attention when it was posed at the recent BSA leadership retreat. But its suggestion that architects are moving between polar extremes goes a long way to explain the current search for a stabilizing moral and aesthetic center — which for now seems to be reflected in a resurgent interest in Modernism. Whatever the obvious failings of the Modern Movement, many architects still respect its aesthetic integrity and its roots in socio-political ideologies.

Architecture was once commonly called "the mother of all the arts" — a phrase that today is repeated with a chuckle if it's remembered at all. Many architects now proclaim regularly that they have turned away from the notion that they are fine artists, citing the need to maintain our relevance in a changing society, to hone our business skills, to master new technologies. After all, it's the archi-artistes among us who created the bad-boy (we have yet to see a genuine bad girl) Howard Roark image of architects.

And yet it is the art of architecture that retains the power to move, delight, and inspire us. Despite all protestations to the contrary, respect for design excellence is still the most enduring value in the profession. The question posed at the BSA retreat urges us to re-examine our criteria for excellence, to re-evaluate the balance between architecture as an individual expression and architecture as a collective expression.

This issue of *ArchitectureBoston* responds to that challenge. In our roundtable discussion, we examine the United States Courthouse by Pei Cobb Freed, and the New Chardon Street Courthouse by Kallmann McKinnell & Wood — buildings that express their social purpose through the artful manipulation of volume and surface. Critic Deborah Dietsch provides another way of considering the fine art/social art balance in her provocative overview of recent award winners. If sensitivity to context and community suggests a swing toward architecture as social art, our region seems to say, "So be it." Contributor Henry Moss describes some of the tensions between the social meaning of Modern buildings and their function as cultural relics. And in "Other Voices," Roger Paine reminds us of the glory of a building which surely meets all definitions of fine art: Trinity Church.

We welcome your comments.

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA Editor

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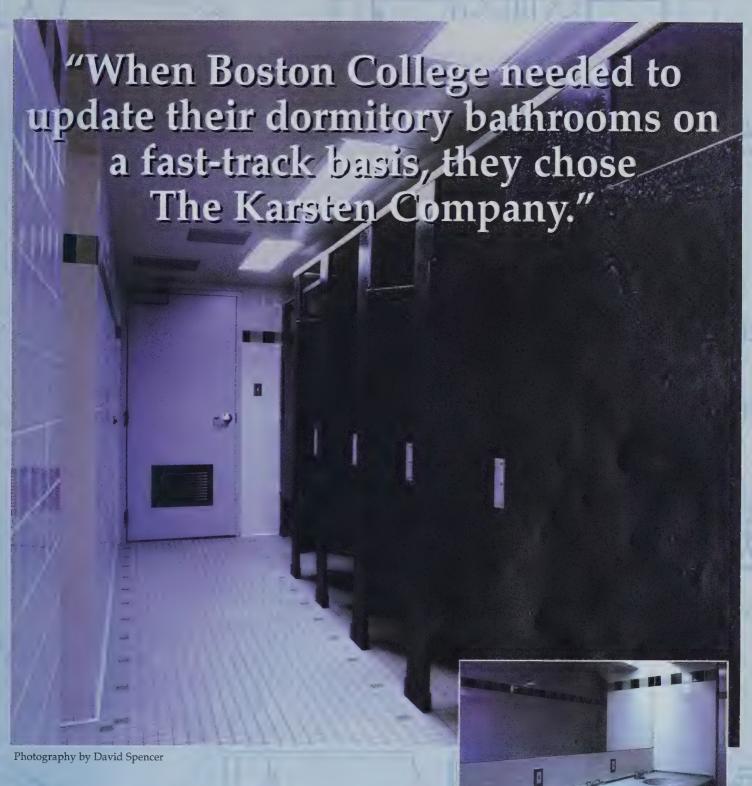
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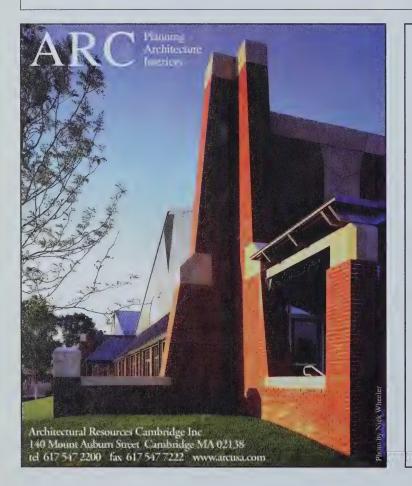


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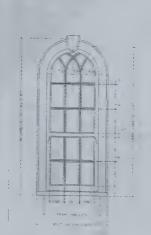
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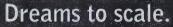
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# Courts of Appeal

# **Boston's new** courthouses

**Editor's Note:** 

Two important buildings have been completed recently in Boston: the United States Courthouse by Henry **Cobb FAIA of Pei Cobb Freed & Partners** in association with Jung/Brannen Associates, and the New Chardon **Street Courthouse (formerly the Suffolk County Courthouse) by Michael** McKinnell FAIA of Kallmann McKinnell & Wood. One sets the precedent for the future development of an entire district; the other marks the completion of a district plan and of a building, Paul **Rudolph's Lindemann Center in Government Center. Each was designed** by an architect with long Boston roots, known for other significant structures within the city. ArchitectureBoston assembled a panel of distinguished **Boston architects and community** leaders to assess the impact and success of these two remarkable buildings.

Participants

# Robert Brown AIA is co-chair

of the BSA Design Committee and is a principal of CBT Architects in Boston, which is renovating the former Suffolk County Courthouse in Pemberton Square.

## Suzanne de Monchaux

behavioral scientist and social planner in the fields of architecture and physical planning. She lives in Brookline, MA.

Fred Koetter FAIA is a principal of Koetter, Kim & Associates in Boston and is the former dean of the Yale School of Architecture. He serves on the courthouse design peer review panel for the General Services Administration (GSA).

## Theodore C. Landsmark

the president of the Boston Architectural Center and has practiced law.

Andrea Leers FAIA is a principal of Leers Weinzapfel Associates in Boston, and has designed courthouses for the District Court in Newburyport, the US District Court in Worcester, the Judicial Center in Lawrence, and the US District Court in Portland, Maine.

# Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA is the

editor of ArchitectureBoston.

# William Rawn III, FAIA is principal

of William Rawn Associates, Architects in Boston and is a recent appointee to the GSA National Register of Peer Panelists. Before his career in architecture, he practiced law in Washington, D.C.

# Warren Schwartz FAIA is a principal

of Schwartz/Silver Architects in Boston. architect of the Chelsea District Courthouse in Chelsea, MA.

**Padjen:** At a time when we are all talking about the disintegration of civic life and civic identity, we have two major public buildings that are trying to address those concerns through their architecture. Both of these buildings take their symbolic functions very seriously, but these symbolic roles are addressed in very different ways, with very different results. The New Chardon Street Courthouse (top) achieves its civic purpose in a very representational way, by creating a building that somehow looks like a civic





building. The United States Courthouse (bottom), pulling from its very different context of a warehouse district, accomplishes its purpose in a more narrative way, by creating a series of anecdotes spaces and details — that together suggest the story of the justice system. It even does it in the most literal fashion, by the device of carved inscriptions on the building's walls. So let's start by talking about their symbolic purpose, which is to say their civic purpose. Do they work?

de Monchaux: I think they are civic buildings in the sense that they represent a function which, from time immemorial, has been a community function — the administration of justice. But I think the idea that they should somehow have an old-fashioned community presence is mistaken in many ways. A recent op-ed article by two of the federal judges suggested that the federal courthouse has the same kind of function as an 18th-century courthouse. That was very troubling to me. It denies what's happening in society. Crime is different, society is different, community is different, technology is different. All of that together says that an 18th-century courthouse is not a correct model for today's judicial system. On the other hand, I think when you say that a building has a civic purpose, then you can consider the way in which the community is tied into its function. For example, particular efforts have been made to bring the public into the federal building. I'm uncomfortable with that as a goal in itself. There should be as much attention to preventing the isolation of the occupants from the outside community. The job of a judge is very isolating. The job of many of the people who administer the judicial system is very isolating.

Rawn: But the right to a public trial lies deep in the culture of this country. The historic reference is in fact the idea that the trial is held in the middle of town for all to see, whether it's the small courthouse in Maine that was a model for Harry Cobb or a courthouse square in Alabama. And if that's the reference for these big courthouses, how do you bring in the public so the public has immediate access to the courtroom door?

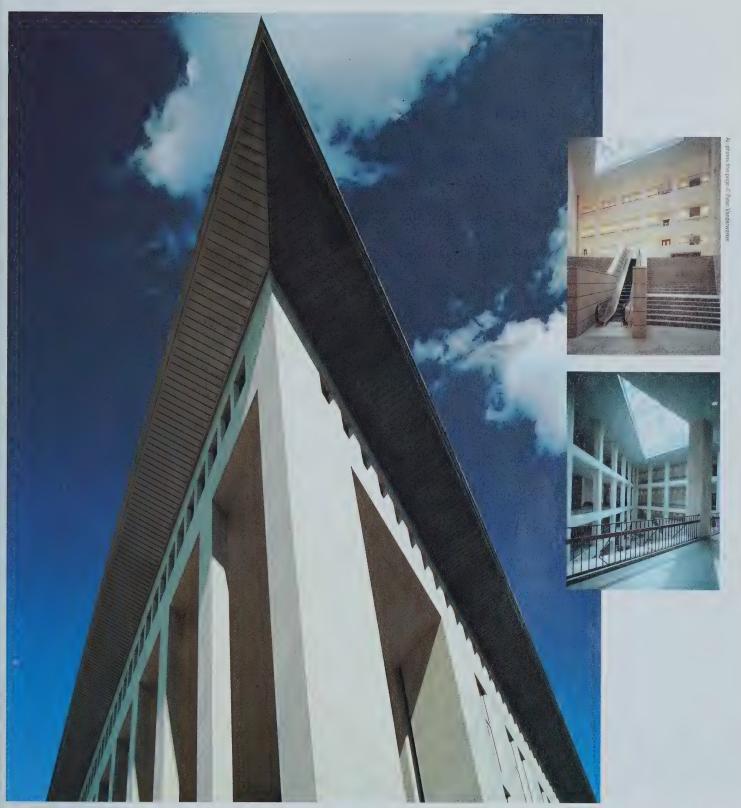
de Monchaux: I'm not arguing that it shouldn't be public. But I do think that some of the issues surrounding the judicial system are very different from the time when the 18th-century courthouse tried people, maybe the occasional murderer. Certainly, there were not the security measures, there was not the pressure on the courts. A small community would have had a far greater interest in the defendants because they may have been relatives or people who were locally known. The judicial system has become much more abstract, much more impersonal. The right of public access has to be maintained, but I don't think it should be the main design imperative or indeed the model.

Rawn: One of the bold strokes of the federal building, quite frankly, is allowing the public to walk right in — although the New Chardon courthouse does that very well, too. But it's a particularly bold stroke for the federal building, because we live in a culture that is focused on heightened security consciousness, especially since Oklahoma City and Nairobi. But Boston is an unusually accessible city. You can walk down the street in Boston and see the CEO of a major company walk out the front door of his building. In most cities in this country, that CEO goes directly to the underground garage and goes on his way in his limousine. Boston is proud of the sense that the street is at the front door of everything. That degree of accessibility in a courthouse is a forward-looking statement in a very fearful culture.

Leers: Courthouses do have a symbolic task, but it is not their only task. They also have the obligation to be part of the city, their context, and their locale. But certainly, without a symbolic task, a courthouse is like any other public building. These two buildings represent enormous efforts to address that question. We need to define symbolically a courthouse for our time and the future. We haven't done this for a long while. The last time we built a lot of courthouses was 1930, almost 70 years ago.

Padjen: Before Court TV.

Leers: Before Court TV. There have been three durable models for courthouses that emerged over time. There was the early 1800s courthouse, which was the one-room courthouse on the second floor with a porticoed front. It was the courthouse of the early Republic, and it reached to ancient Greece for a model. The next durable model was the singlehanded invention in the late 1880s of H.H. Richardson — the Allegheny Courthouse. It was an act of genius. And it spawned a whole generation of courthouses all over the country. They were robust and colorful. They were the courthouses of the New Frontier, of the expanding America. They captured the public imagination immediately, and they were clever, because they were multiple-courtroom courthouses. And that was a durable model for a long time, because there was room for variety. They could be adapted to any locale. Then from the beginning of the century up to World War II, there was what came to be called the Federal Style of courthouses. That was a kind of Italianate, Neo-Renaissance, palazzo style that evolved when the



New Chardon Street Courthouse (formerly the Suffolk County Courthouse) by Kallmann McKinnell & Wood

I think New Chardon draws a symbolic presence from a series of familiar elements that grow out of a language of public architecture — the arcade at the back, the large windows, an important

portal, a continuous street wall. They're familiar, but they're transformed; their language is more modern.

Andrea Leers FAIA



One of the bold strokes of the federal building is allowing the public to walk right in....

That degree of accessibility in a courthouse is a forward-looking statement in a very fearful culture.

William Rawn FAIA

federal government started to build courthouses. They were a testament to a new federal image of this country. That was pretty much over by the 1930s. But I do believe that right now, the task we're faced with is finding that equivalent symbolic expression for courthouses, for our time and for the next 60 years. We're just starting. There's only a handful that have been finished. These two courthouses are two very early tries at it.



Padjen: Let's look at them. How would you characterize the symbolism of the New Chardon Street Courthouse?

Leers: I think New Chardon draws a symbolic presence from a series of familiar elements that grow out of a language of public architecture - the arcade at the back, the large windows, an important portal, a continuous street wall. They're familiar, but they're transformed; their language is more modern. I think the United States Courthouse draws much more from its site for its form and its understanding. Although its architect has thought very seriously about the way to symbolize a courthouse in this time, in fact the building is much more a response to that particular site than it is a durable, recognizable model for other places and times. For me, the New Chardon Street Courthouse begins to address that issue more directly. One could imagine that it might lead to a recognizable courthouse form.

Schwartz: Each of these buildings reflects the mission of not just the architects, but also of the judiciary, which is to somehow express through architecture the basis on which this country operates. Without this country's foundation in law, nothing else would exist the same way it does today. This goes to the question that Suzanne first asked. What is our response now to both the form and the tradition of the judiciary system?

Brown: Each of these buildings has a very specific architectonic expression. New Chardon is very heroic, almost beyond heroism. God must live there. And then there's a meek-and-mildness that I find in the federal courthouse, which has picked up on the warehouse tradition. But if we are looking toward the future, why hasn't the building program changed? Why aren't there more functions that are "of the people"? Each has the requisite daycare center. There was a cappuccino bar in the federal courthouse. Little else. Yet they are in locations that are devoid of retail activities, and they are small cities in themselves. It's the same controversy that we see in public libraries, where there is the stateliness appropriate to a repository of books, but at the same time we want to have a more userfriendly learning center.

Landsmark: The programs for both of these courthouses may be fundamentally anachronistic in relation to the way issues are now adjudicated and

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Wairen Schwartz FAIA

Robert Brown AIA

disputes resolved. In some respects, both of the programs are like building a Maginot line of courthouses. They seem to be responding to a previous generation's concepts of what a courthouse should be, in that both are attempting to create edifices which refer iconographically to a system of authority. The buildings are massive and built of materials which are essentially impermeable from the street side. And they create a sense of the law as an authoritarian system. In fact, most disputes are increasingly resolved not in those kinds of edifices, but through arbitration and mediation and conferencing, and even virtual systems where people often don't have to be in the same room with each other. So the concept of a courthouse, even a central courthouse, as a large, impermeable, physical edifice representing a height of authority, may not in fact represent the direction that the law is moving in. It feels to me much more like those courthouses of the 1930s than what dispute resolution may call for in the 21st century.

Leers: Ted, that's a really good point that's been talked about a lot among designers of judicial facilities. And you said something else that is very true, which is that these buildings are really big leaving aside for a moment the question of their feeling of impermeability or solidity. The sheer size of them is in itself a difficulty to grapple with. Not only are they large and seemingly impersonal, but in fact those places within them that are the seats of deliberation are small by comparison with the building as a whole. The courtrooms in the federal courthouse are maybe 10 percent of the volume of the whole building. But I think you're quite right that the move toward resolving judicial matters through means other than gathering in a single place is certainly increasing, and suggests at the very least much smaller buildings. I have said many times, and I'll say it here again for the record: I think we're building courthouses that are much too big. Unnecessarily big for their sites, and much too overwhelming for serving as a place of justice in today's much more diverse society. Size alone is a real difficulty in both these buildings. Both architects tried to do the best they could with it. And they both achieved something that really needs to be commended, and that is they have insisted on making buildings that are horizontal rather than towers. That's not often the case when you look around the country at large courthouses. Towers most certainly look much more like office buildings. And the architects here insisted on giving these buildings a kind of identity. There are an awful lot

of courthouses being built that look like corporate office headquarters.

**de Monchaux:** But even though there is a move toward dealing with many cases through mediation and through non-court appearances, there has been a steady rise in criminal cases that have to come before a judge and be tried through the legal system. Even if you project a fall in criminal statistics, you still have an enormous number of cases to deal with. And if you don't have one large building to cope with them, you have to have many small buildings.

Brown: Perhaps you could have a courthouse district of small buildings.

de Monchaux: I don't know. I understand that the determination of the buildings, in terms of their program and functional requirements, comes from the Space and Facilities Committee in the Federal Judicial Conference. And that their guidelines specifically put all the functions together. It seems to be a non-negotiable brief. I don't know how far an architect can go, for example, to suggest that very solution, which seems to me to have a great deal of merit.

Landsmark: It's interesting to consider the possibility of not building one massive building on one site, but instead building a campus that would bring different kinds of people together to resolve disputes. The resolution might come from a judicial building, but at other moments it might come from a group of social service professionals or medical professionals or other kinds of people who now are increasingly involved with resolving differences. Not all of what goes through here is about criminal law. Some of it is about civil resolution. And it would be a very different proposition if one were to build, in effect, a dispute resolution center distributed on a campus-like setting.

Koetter: This is an important point because a lot of buildings have been proposed under the courthouse construction program. Many of these decisions are made for reasons of economy, shared resources, or efficiency, and they're determined through processes that don't have anything to do with design. Perhaps we have courthouses following a model that eventually stretches to a point where it can't stretch any further. These buildings suggest a scale of operation, which by its very nature is mysterious. And in some cases it's alienating not just Accounting, Auditing and Taxation - Litigation Support

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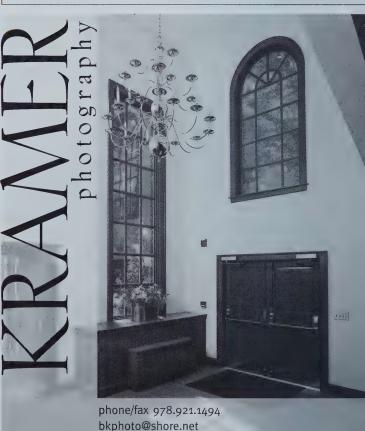
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to the people who are subjected to these processes, but to the community at large. This question of how the building actually interacts with the larger community in human terms as well as physical terms becomes a continuing issue. In both these cases, there's an effort to do that. The problem is more acute in the case of the federal courthouse, because it's located in a projected part of the city which doesn't yet exist.

Padjen: How well do you think that building sets up the opportunity for the kind of integration with the community that you're talking about?

Koetter: I think on a long-range basis, it sets it up quite well. Because you see it across the water, you know exactly where it is. I don't know the answer to the question of whether courthouses should look like courthouses. Should law seem like law? I think so. But should a courthouse look like a courthouse? I don't know what that means exactly. This building could be a hotel, it could be a courthouse, it could be a lot of different kinds of buildings. But it suggests accessibility and permeability. And it demands the completion of the city around it. We can only speculate how the city will grow, and how the building will relate to the fabric of the city around it. The other building, the New Chardon Street Courthouse, already has a city around it. I was surprised by that building when we approached it. It looks like a public building. It's a fairly formidable piece of stuff sitting there. But as you move into the building, you register the surprise of the space. All of a sudden, it's a building that has a life to it. It engages its surroundings in quite a wonderful way. But it presents itself to the street with a sort of a decorum that doesn't reveal its actual accessibility. It's an interesting building — far more interesting, far more provocative, than its appearance from the street would initially suggest.

Schwartz: I was struck by the similarity of the two buildings in terms of their program. I think they have similar numbers of courtrooms. They're each about the same height. One — the federal building — is really much larger than the other in terms of its square footage, maybe double the size. But the New Chardon Street Courthouse is embedded in the city. When you go inside there is a sense of streets or corridors which lead to all of the courtrooms, and they are all very visible from what could only be called a public square or public piazza. I think there was a very conscious design decision to make it such, because it has stairs that

come up into it, and other stairs which flow down into it and spill into a very large triangular space, which is then lit with a spectacular, triangular skylight. The United States Courthouse, on the other hand, does have what's been referred to as streets - actually, they're promenades, brick-walled promenades with doorways that open to the courtrooms. And whatever their success might be, it seems that the public plaza is instead traded for and I'm not making a value decision about this the most spectacular view of the city that you can imagine. It's an attempt, I think, to place the civic nature of the building into the public realm and not in the commercial realm of newspaper stands and food vendors. Both buildings have a civic presence. I agree, though, with Fred that there's a certain lightness, which I was surprised and delighted about, in the New Chardon courthouse. The federal courthouse is a bit darker in the spaces leading up to the great window.

Rawn: Both of these courthouses express a real confidence in the city. They are not afraid of it they want to be part of the city. They've chosen the low-rise solution. Likewise, both buildings relate directly to park space that was part of their programs. And in fact, the park spaces in both buildings have a wonderful combination of being highly public, yet contemplative.

Padjen: They're both secret gardens, in the sense of a magical place that's meant to be discovered.

Rawn: They are hidden to some degree. Harry Cobb fought long battles to keep the federal building as close to the water's edge as he got it. And yes, that does make that park seemingly more private, though I think the arcade encourages the public to come there. But if he had not fought that battle, that building would be 200 feet back from the water, surrounded by green space that would have isolated it from the city and everyone else. Instead, it anchored itself in the harbor. One could say the harbor is as much about Boston as the Common.

**Brown:** One thing both courthouses have in common is the entry sequence. You walk along a city street. You walk through the front door. All the clues say you really shouldn't be walking here. There are a lot of steps to climb, and once you get to the top, you still aren't "there." Maybe you've heard of this great window at the federal building, but you really have to make a tremendous effort. And so I

I don't know whether courthouses should look like courthouses. The federal courthouse] could be a hotel, it could be a courthouse, it could be a lot of different kinds of buildings. But it suggests accessibility and permeability. And it demands the completion of the city around it.

Fred Koetter FAIA

Theodore Landsmark

light in the federal

courthouse was an

epiphany.

think that's one aspect of these buildings that's not responsive to the users — though once you find the central spaces, they feel like very public places that are quite enjoyable.

de Monchaux: I think we overuse the term "user-friendly" these days, and we tend to interpret it as meaning something akin to entertainment. So I'm a little nervous about that. But I do subscribe to the notion that a building which has a public purpose should give an immediate sense of comfort, ease, and readability, so that the public function is easily understood and accessible. I did not find that in the federal building. It was intimidating. I think the idea that the courtroom corridors are streets is a mistaken metaphor, because they're not streets. First of all, you don't have free access to them; you have to go through a security system. You can't have spontaneous activities; you couldn't have a snake charmer there. So they are only streets in the way they might look from a distance if you squint your eyes. As public places, I find them intimidating, because I don't know what I'm supposed to do there. I know my instinct is to turn around and look at the view. But I'm not told to do that by this so-called street pattern. The New Chardon Street building, on the other hand, didn't give me the same reaction.

Rawn: But the New Chardon security apparatus wasn't there. When that is installed, your comparative reaction will change.

Koetter: I had a similar reaction. I'd seen the federal building and the glass wall across the water and never been over there, and so I went with great anticipation. But I walked in the building and found a room, which is a nice room, but it's heavy and dark and slightly forbidding. And I wondered where the space was that I was anticipating. It takes a long time to materialize. My question for that building would be: If this is the most wonderful aspect of the building, could it have been made much more literal? Because I'm a literal guy, I want to go in that building and say, "This is something that's never been realized in a courthouse before.' And yet, there are things in the way — a couple of big columns, a bunch of elevators, and stairs, which maybe could have gone somewhere else.

Leers: Permeability, the sense of being able to penetrate from the city into the building, is one of the hardest things to achieve in a courthouse. I think both of these architects did an incredibly good job given the barriers inherent in the program. We've coped with the same thing and had the same problems, frankly, of not feeling immediately "there." You want to feel "there" sooner. I agree that you feel like you might get "there" sooner and in a more satisfying way in New Chardon, but the building is smaller. Which reminds me: You might remember that the New Chardon Street site was considered for the federal courthouse. That would have meant twice the volume of building on that site. Can we even imagine that? It would have been a high-rise courthouse.

**Landsmark:** From the perspective of a former litigator, both of these buildings take a significant step toward user-friendliness and a perception of accessibility. And that is that both of them let a lot of natural light in, which I'm not used to in courthouses. Both architects are to be commended because, from a lawyer's perspective, a courthouse is a place where you gather in dark corners. Both of these buildings will no doubt have some useful dark corners, but the sense I had walking out of a courtroom into natural light in the federal courthouse was an epiphany. It was very moving for me, because so often when you walk out of the courtroom, you and your clients feel so unsatisfied by what happened, and so prepared to move from one sense of darkness into another sense of darkness. Stepping out of those rooms and seeing the harbor was inspirational. It would be my hope that that is a precursor of a set of architectural values that will help reshape the way lawyers interact with each other and their clients in this kind of facility.

Another way, and that was in the courtroom in the New Chardon Street building. Not only is there natural light, but also you can see across the street and into another building. I think that's fantastic. I think that sort of transparency in the relationship of the building to the city is an extremely good thing, because it goes beyond conventions of courthouse imagery, and says there's something else going on here, which is the transaction between the building and the setting. I think the same thing occurs with that big window in the federal building.

Padjen: Let's talk more about the courtrooms and jury rooms. The architects and the judges talk about the sanctity and meaning of those spaces as the core of the judicial system. I was surprised to see the federal grand jury room, to find out how small it was. There were no windows, for security reasons. One skylight above. The intention apparently is to encourage an intimacy between the jurors and witnesses. I had another surprise: seeing a holding cell outside a courtroom. In just those couple minutes, I had an overwhelming sense of fear come over me, as I imagined being a defendant sitting there and then walking through that door into the courtroom. It was one of the most powerful experiences I've had in terms of an almost visceral response to an architectural surrounding.

Chardon Street building are palpably different from the ones in the federal building because of the natural light condition that Fred mentioned. The effect is so extraordinary that I think the program for these kinds of buildings in the future ought to include natural lighting in the courtroom and hearing rooms.

Leers: I found the New Chardon courtroom absolutely wonderful. The light quality is enormously powerful in that room, but also the breadth and size of the room are well-proportioned with respect to its height. Another quality that I like very much is its spareness. There is a restraint in the woodwork, which is I think very beautifully done. The room is very plain — it's old New England in that way. I think when you spend a lot of time in courtrooms, you understand how full of normal life they are. And I find the New Chardon courtroom to be a wonderful framework for that. The federal courtrooms, on the other hand, have a different clientele. There are more white-collar crimes, there are more people in suits with their lawyers, and they're more formal in their proceedings. The people who come are all dressed up. So it's a really different environment. And that is reflected in those courtrooms, which have a more conscious sense of formality.

de Monchaux: It was only when I did jury service that I became deeply conscious of the seriousness of the functions of the courtrooms. They determine the course of lives and move the community according to its values. It's instantly palpable in a courtroom.

Rawn: It's the power of the collective and the individual — the legal system really personifies that. The courts are about the resolution of economic and social issues. Society, or the collective, is very interested in that, and that's a public function. But the courts are also about the resolution of an individual's complaint against another entity, and so the system is also about the individual, which is also something we care a lot about.

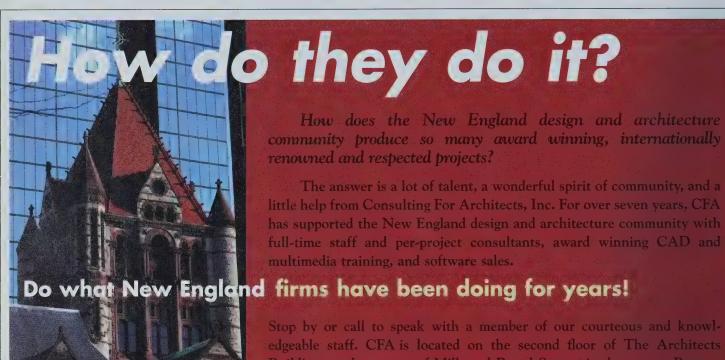
Leers: I think both these buildings demonstrate a greater degree of exploration on the interior than the exterior. There's not a courthouse anywhere that has a space like the gallery in the federal courthouse. And the central space at the New Chardon building is also quite wonderful. The interiors seem to be freer of everyone's preconceptions about what a proper symbol of justice might be. There actually have been some efforts in other places to define a kind of modern monumentality - civic modernity, shall we say, in which the language was less constrained. The language was more adventurous, frankly, than we have here. But we're not looking at buildings here that are engaged in that particular search right now. There are reasons for that, apart from their own preferences. Both of these architects have done other buildings in which they have tried a greater departure from tradition. But I think that the pressures of this building type, of the client requirements, of influences within the city, all of these things have absolutely impacted the potential for invention. I've experienced it, too, and I know Warren has. I think there are very real constraints here.

Rawn: We're talking about creating a civic architecture in a populist era. This is a decidedly non-hierarchal time in our culture.

Leers: We need to find a new model, a new language. We're creeping toward it, but we haven't found it yet. I think it's going to take a generation of making these buildings to do it. We need to be as bold, as imaginative, and as inventive as Richardson was.

I think we overuse
the term user-friendly
these days... But I do
subscribe to the notion
that a building which
has a public purpose
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readability, so that the
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Suzanne de Monchaux



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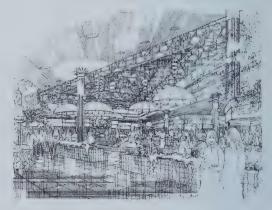
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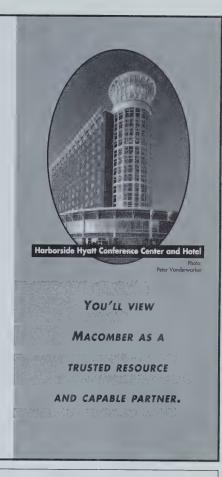


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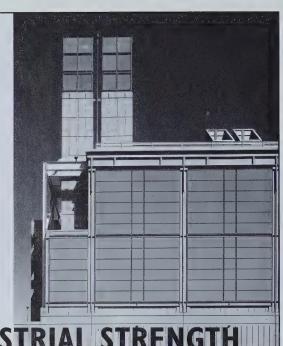
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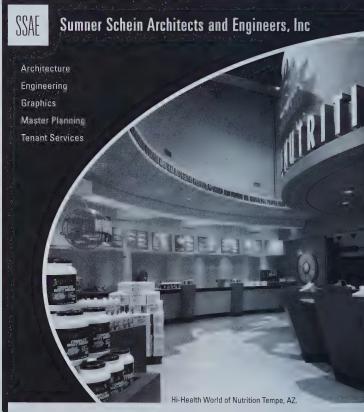
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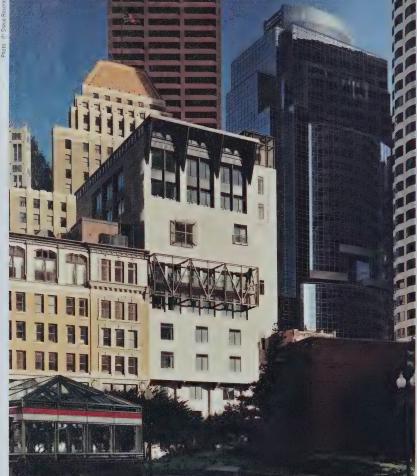
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# Playing It Safe

# Awards programs in context

by Deborah K. Dietsch, Hon. AIA





- (left) Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Operations Control Center, Boston Leers Weinzapfel Associates Architects, Inc.
- (right) Vent Building #7
  Logan Airport, Boston
  TAMS Consultants/Joint Venture of
  Gannet Fleming/URS/TAMS
  (design development and final design);
  Wallace, Floyd Associates, Inc.
  and Stull and Lee, Inc.
  (preliminary and system-wide design)
- (above) Photonics Center, Boston University Cannon, Inc.

It's the context, stupid. That is the consistent reminder sent by the diverse winners of the Boston Society of Architects honor awards, awards for interiors and housing design, and the AIA New England design awards. As these 41 projects demonstrate, architects in this region pay homage to their surroundings, whether they are designing a switching station in downtown Boston or a house on a windswept beach.

This contextualism assures buildings that are civil and urbanistically responsible, but not innovative. Boston architects seem to care neither about setting design trends nor following them. The profession's resurgent interest in Modernism, for example, is barely perceptible in most of the award-winning projects. Many of the house designs suffer from a Postmodern historicist hangover.

While the region's recessive approach to architecture is refreshing amidst the hyperactive, indulgent expression that passes for architecture these days, it makes for dull designs when there's no real context to speak of. Most surprising is the conservatism of interiors and houses — building types that traditionally serve as laboratories for experimentation and individualism. The freshest site-specific design to emerge among the award winners is applied to the building type least expected to receive it — utilitarian infrastructure. One example is the operations control center in downtown Boston, which dispatches orders to public transit systems ..... But by adding a metal balcony, a cornice and a stair tower, Leers Weinzapfel Associates tied the building to its neighbors and gave it civic dignity.

Another is the ventilation building at Logan International Airport , a winner of both a BSA honor award and a New England design award. Designed by a team headed by TAMS, its striking form celebrates the mechanical ducts required to aerate the adjacent tunnel. The architects of both



these infrastructure projects manipulate tough materials and muscular details to achieve urbanity without masking the buildings' true industrial nature.

The center for photonics research at Boston University 3, designed by Cannon, also gracefully overcomes the challenge of an awkward site. Located next to the Mass. Pike, this nine-story laboratory exemplifies the best of the region's brick contextualism in its crisply composed bays, which are sympathetic to nearby housing. But the design fails to convey the building's experimental purpose — investigating the generation of light and energy — in a meaningful way. If there ever was an opportunity to install photovoltaics or other energy-harnessing devices, this is it.

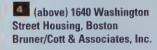
Of all the awards categories, affordable housing benefits the most from the region's close attention to context. Reflected in these projects is the national trend to downsize public housing and weave it into the city's fabric. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), for example, is replacing its aging housing towers with new low-rise, mixed-income units. This approach is reflected in the award-winning urban design proposal by Goody, Clancy & Associates for the notorious Cabrini-Green public housing in Chicago.

Boston neighborhoods are already profiting from community-sensitive housing as a result of local initiatives. Stellar examples are the affordable, multi-family houses in Roxbury, designed by Domenech Hicks & Krockmalnic, and Bruner/Cott's Neo-Victorian Washington Street housing — the renovation of a bakery into apartments and services for the elderly homeless. HUD secretary Andrew Cuomo could learn a thing or two about site-responsive design from these grassroots efforts.

It is no surprise that Boston architects excel in the art of historic preservation, given their respect for context. Awards from several programs reveal the exacting standards of





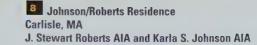


Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory of Music, Boston Ann Beha Associates



United States District Courthouse
Worcester, MA
Leers Weinzapfel Associates Architects, Inc.

Nordberg House
Surry, ME
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quality that few practitioners in other regions can match. (The honor awards jury proposed that the BSA sponsor a separate awards program for preservation, a wise suggestion that should be considered.)

Two notable examples underscore the unflinching respect for historic integrity and the remarkable technical skill that supports it. Beha Associates' faithful restoration of the 1903 Jordan Hall at the New England Conservatory of Music and Bruner/Cott's phased renovation of the 1962 Peabody Terrace housing at Harvard show the same attentiveness to authenticity, even though the architects confronted the vastly different esthetics and building technologies of the Beaux-Arts and Modern eras. Bruner/Cott's project offers valuable lessons in restoring aging Modernist structures, which has become the latest preservation frontier.

Awards for additions to historic buildings also reflect current preservation philosophy in clearly drawing the line between old and new. The large, glassy bay inserted by Leers Weinzapfel Associates into the US District Courthouse in Worcester, Massachusetts and Anmahian Winton Architects' wheelchair-accessible extension of a Federal Revival house are rendered in simple, contemporary lines. While these designs are sympathetic to the scale and proportions

of their hosts, they don't pander to the past with historical imitations.

The awards that disappoint are the very buildings free to ignore the constraints of historic neighborhoods — single-family houses in rural and suburban locations. Instead of striking out in new directions, the architects of these winning houses predictably draw on the vernacular of New England's houses and barns. The best offer a few new variations on traditional prototypes. In Little Compton, Rhode Island, William Rawn FAIA jazzed up the saltbox with expressive curves, while in Maine, Peter Forbes FAIA stripped it down to a Modernist essence 7. In Carlisle, Massachusetts, J. Stewart Roberts AIA and Karla Johnson AIA updated their quirky Shinglemeets-Stick-Style house with jaunty angles 8.

Other winners literally borrow from history. In constructing a new home on a salt marsh outside Newbury, Massachusetts, Keith Moskow AIA recycled steel, timbers and other components from an old barn and a Boston Whaler plant. The housing jury characterized the design as "an innovative and imaginative response to a recycler's sensibility," and the combination of disparate parts from the demolished structures suggests architecture filled with eccentricities. But the result is a big, bland shed that lacks personality.

Like the houses, residential interiors also suffer from regional restraint, with the exception of the custom furniture created by Machado Blake Design/Build (it would be interesting to see this level of crafted intensity applied on a large scale). The dated Postmodern design of Gary Wolf AIA's 1991 house renovation, curiously chosen by the honor awards jury as the "finest" interior, should be enough to convince the awards organizers to limit entries to projects less than five years old.

"We do not seem to be thinking profoundly about interiors in any new way," maintains the interior architecture jury, a sentiment also shared by the judges of the AIA New England design awards. "We saw too few innovative, scrappy projects." Indeed, restaurants, stores, and the other small spaces where cutting-edge design usually occurs are completely missing from the awards.

In most of the winning commercial interiors, elegant details abound, but spatial excitement is lacking. The investment firm by CBT, the toy company headquarters by Lindsay Associates and corporate offices by Spalding Tougias Architects boast metal screens, handrails, and other finely tailored elements, but their pleasant spaces fail to express the changing nature of today's businesses in a provocative way.

The most exciting, investigative design to be found is by Boston architects working on projects outside New England. Stunningly simple, Kyu Sung Woo AIA's award-winning terraced stone house in Seoul, Korea 9, offers an elegant take on the modern courtyard house. In contrast, the Long Beach Island, New Jersey, house 10 by Brian Healy AIA and Michael Ryan may contain one too many ideas, but its eclectic, Modernist collage of glass and cedar-clad volumes exudes an energy missing from the majority of winners.









- (far left) Beach House Long Beach Island, NJ **Brian Healy Architect with Michael Ryan Architects**
- 11 Bartholomew County **Veterans Memorial** Columbus, IN Thompson and Rose **Architects**

Similarly invigorating is the Bartholomew County Veterans Memorial in Columbus, Indiana 11, by Thompson and Rose. Challenging the traditional notion of a war memorial, its cluster of limestone columns, poignantly inscribed with soldiers' letters, offers an intriguing play of rough and smooth, solid and void, inside and outside. "It is the most powerful memorial we have experienced since Maya Lin's masterpiece," asserts the honor awards jury.

These winners represent a more daring direction for the region, but are the exception among the 412 projects considered by the four juries. While there is "no bad work," as pointed out by the interior design awards judges, this year's entries showed "nothing that we could cite as groundbreaking in significant ways," according to the AIA New England awards jury. The juries' selections suggest that New England architects lack imagination and that the only way they can possibly rev up their designs is to leave the region...

Still, the awards prove that the region's architects excel at making the most of design opportunities that practitioners in other parts of the country might overlook, particularly in the areas of preservation, infill housing, and urban infrastructure. As the honor awards jury notes, "It is encouraging to see lots of attention being paid to buildings that are often neglected elsewhere." This mastery over the mundane affirms that Boston architects should continue to carefully consider the context. But their uninspired designs for houses and interiors also argue that they should move beyond the familiar and take more risks.

Deborah K. Dietsch, Hon. AIA, was editor-in-chief of Architecture from 1989 to 1997. She served on the BSA's 1994 honor awards and unbuilt architecture juries. She currently writes for the Washington Post and other publications

(left) Stone Cloud House, Seoul, Korea Kyu Sung Woo Architect, Inc.

# Unwanted, Unloved:

# **Protecting 20th-Century Architecture**

by Henry Moss AIA



People hate postwar buildings. Architects who were once narcotized by Modernism now claim never to have inhaled. Older preservationists whose loathing of bulldozer redevelopment and Modern architecture was forged and tempered by 30 years of fiery propaganda are antagonistic, while their Gen-X counterparts are indifferent to postwar buildings, or at best see them as retro film sets. Protecting good 20th-century buildings presents technical and emotional difficulties — difficulties that worsen as these buildings stand closer to us in time. Members of the public don't stop to intellectualize; they just find most recent buildings unsightly and distasteful. Ask anyone.

Some very significant post-World War II buildings — including many icons of Modern, or International Style, architecture — have no statutory protection and few advocates. Age alone is not enough to protect them, even if they are now more than 60 years old. Although the historic preservation movement has gained broad popular support over the past three decades, many of its constituents are opposed to the protection of buildings constructed during their own lifetimes. Dispassionate arguments suddenly become personal: "If that structure is historic, then what am I?" Or, "I thought that building was awful when it was built, so why should I care about it now?"

In the United States, two distinct constituencies for historic preservation have emerged. The first takes a curatorial stance toward cultural resources. Its members care about the object. The second is emotionally aligned with a general cultural pessimism and is fueled by a deeply rooted and irrational nostalgia. For this group, and its antecedents down the millennia, the Golden Age was always two generations ago. This second strain can claim respectable precedent. Early advocates of historic



### **Walter Gropius**

**Gropius House** Lincoln, MA 1937

A polemic doubling as family house, the property is now cared for by its owner, the Society for the Preservation of **New England Antiquities, and** protected by layers of statutory landmark designations. Many contemporary buildings of similar significance have no statutory protection.

**Paul Rudolph with Shepley Bulfinch Richardson** and Abbott, Desmond & Lord, and others

**Lindemann Center for** Health, Education, and Welfare Boston 1970

A sprawling, Piranesian catastrophe of a building with a sunny, elevated courtyard and pyrotechnic display of exterior staricases. With few fans and many detractors, an assault on this remarkable building cannot be far off.

preservation and formulators of its theory, such as William Morris and John Ruskin, were similarly horrified by the Industrial Revolution. These theorists linked their brilliant attacks on architects who were unapologetically trashing medieval cathedrals to an artistic program of craft-based historicism.

The political clout of contemporary preservationists relies on our ability to combine both constituencies. Successful advocacy requires curatorial demonstrations of buildings' significance coupled with popular political support from people whose primary interest in the preservation movement is their opposition to the eradication of environments built before mass production, traffic jams, Beavis and Butthead. This latter group is unlikely to contribute to the effort to protect serious Modern Movement and post-World War II buildings, yet mustering their support is essential to counter the lack of statutory protection. Aalto's Baker House at MIT and Kahn's Yale Art Gallery are two scary examples. Today, their owners' admire and respect these buildings. But what if they did not?

The challenges are not merely political. Technical issues abound in 20th-century structures: stone curtain walls hang on corroding steel frames; rusting steel is embedded in solid brickwork; terra-cotta and cast-stone cladding systems envelop high-rise buildings; steel windows (that transmit heat or cold in whichever direction is wrong at the time) and their descendants, early aluminum curtain walls, are single-glazed, corroding, and hard to sell to prospective tenants. Last November, a small group of Boston architects and conservators, in association with Technology & Conservation magazine, organized a national symposium that brought together architects, architectural historians, conservators, engineers, building owners, and government agencies to tackle this material from each of their colliding perspectives.

That symposium led to the creation of a Bostonbased chapter of the international organization, DOCOMOMO. Founded in Holland, DOCOMOMO is an active, interdisciplinary network dedicated to the documentation and conservation of the Modern Movement (hence the bizarre acronym, pronounced "DOCK-oh-MOH-moh"). The goals of DOCOMOMO/ New England include creating a building registry, studying technology and conservation,

educating both specialists and the public, and acting as advocates when, for example, the mayor suggests demolishing Boston City Hall. Part of the chapter's initial success has been to attract both practitioners and academics an especially important connection in this early phase when assembling a well-documented registry of Modern Movement structures is the primary task. DOCOMOMO focuses on central characteristics and values of Modernism that are not only stylistic but that also demonstrate progressive, often revolutionary, 20th-century attitudes toward transportation, public health, industry, urbanization, and public education. (What, by the way, were Postmodernist or Deconstructivist positions on these subjects?)

But DOCOMOMO's Modern Movement focus is a bit limited, both chronologically and stylistically. There is a twilight zone of 25and 30-year-old buildings that are even more vulnerable. Some of these are exceptional pieces of architecture and are probably still featured in their firms' brochures. With no visual or symbolic links to reassuring images of the 18th and 19th centuries, many of these buildings lack both popular and statutory support. They are unfashionable among architects, obsolete in terms of building systems, and physically deteriorating; they no longer comply with an evolving building code or accessibility requirements. Who spoke up in defense of Kallmann McKinnell & Wood's 1970 Government Center Garage when outrageously incompatible office stories were added 20 years later? Who would defend Paul Rudolph's virtuoso but richly loathed Lindemann Center or Philip Johnson's wing of the Boston Public Library from unsympathetic alterations?

A handful of local architects and architectural historians has identified this new set of preservation questions and begun to grapple with them on several fronts without limiting the discussion to International Style buildings. Architects who specialize in historic buildings are increasingly working with other 20th-century architectures, from the historicist masonry-and- steel fantasies of architects such as Charles Adams Platt, James Gamble Rodgers, and Guy Lowell, to the successor buildings of the Modern Movement such as José Luis Sert's Peabody Terrace marriedstudents housing at Harvard, Pietro Belluschi's Clark Museum in Williams- town, and Mitchell/ Giurgola's South End



Sert, Jackson & Gourley

Peabody Terrace Married Student Housing Harvard University Cambridge, MA 1963

Harvard recently renovated these dormitories to improve accessibility and and energy retention. The project architects, Bruner/ Cott, encountered the technically demanding conservation problems of matching exterior concrete finishes and altering pre-ADA skip-stop elevator circulation.

Branch of the Boston Public Library. And now, preservationists are faced with a whole new set of ironies, such as Harvard's recent rehabilitation of Benjamin Thompson's 1959 reworking of Boylston Hall and the Cambridge Historical Commission's careful consideration of proposed changes to the Picture Frame Style facade of the Harvard Coop.

These interests and activities provoke a host of new questions about architectural preservation.

They force us to reexamine the values built into our preservation ethic more self-consciously than we do when dealing with an 18th-century mansion or meetinghouse. Part of the challenge (and much of the fun) is that we are pushed to look at buildings on their own terms and to think critically — often against the strong current of our most cherished and most useful contemporary design prejudices.

Surprisingly, there are federal guidelines in place that can actually help us.

"The Secretary of Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation" presents a powerful framework for thinking about 20th-century buildings, even the most recent. The standards are curatorial and are devoid of nostalgia. They are style-blind, purposely written to apply to any period. Their central tenet is to protect original material and architectural configuration in significant buildings. The significance may be because of architectural quality, but it is often because of an association with important events or historical figures. This "repair, don't replace" core philosophy often runs counter to the desires of owners and architects who are rehabilitating existing buildings in which improved performance and an altered appearance are primary aims.

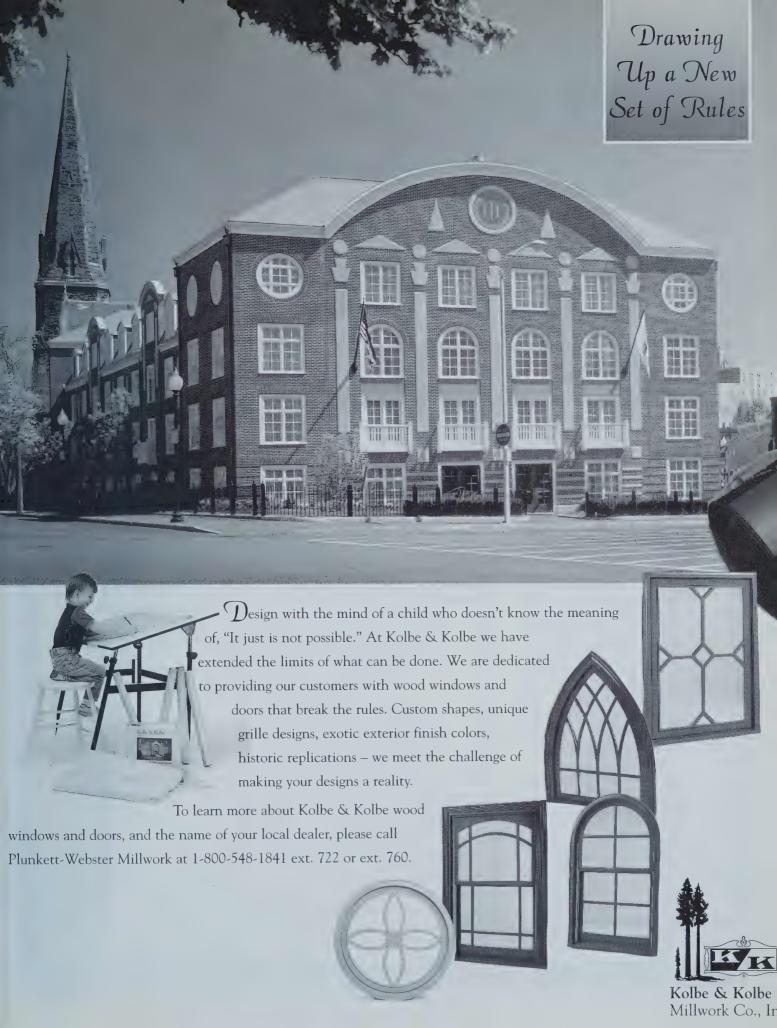
Many architects still see historic preservation as little better than a harmless sideline, not to be confused with "real" architecture where either pro-formas or art critics set the criteria for appreciation. When they encounter historic structures as part of their projects, they view "The Secretary of Interior's Standards..." as a bewilderingly vague system of constraints — in effect, another building code, but one enforced by people who have no connection to the building industry, who are architectural historians at best, and industrial archaeologists and social historians at worst. Even more distressing, these external enforcers have statutory powers in their arsenal and a lot of investment tax credit money for leverage.

The preservation ethic that underpins "The Secretary of Interior's Standards..." is derived from museum standards for the conservation of fine arts. This ethic seeks to define authenticity and to protect works of architecture from the unsympathetic, subjective depredations of successor generations whose judgment will necessarily be altered by the passage of time, no matter how wellintentioned. This is why "The Secretary of Interior's Standards...," in force for almost 30 years now, is such an effective curatorial instrument. It is an intellectual tool that should be applied by design professionals, both architects and engineers, from the outset of every rehabilitation project, because we are likely to be these buildings' main advocates. For recent 20th-century buildings, we may well be the only advocates.

We have increased responsibility where recent structures are involved. The best of these buildings are still misunderstood. Even when their performance is satisfactory, their symbolic impact remains unwelcome. As designers and educators committed to advocacy for significant 20th-century structures, we will be called upon to exercise greater leadership in increasingly controversial projects. Above all, our expertise and advocacy is essential to the unmaimed survival of good, unprotected buildings from the twilight zone, 1955 to 1975. Look at them again — as architecture, rather than as a momentary collapse of civilization.

Henry Moss AIA is a principal of Bruner/Cott & Associates in Cambridge, MA. He chairs the BSA Historic Resources Committee and is a founding member of DOCOMOMO/New England.

"The Secretary of Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation" is available from the BSA.



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### **Master Pieces**

# Hugh Stubbins FAIA talks with Charles Rose AIA

In 1949, Hugh Stubbins established an office in Cambridge, MA, that grew to become one of the most prominent architectural firms in the world, producing such landmark structures as the Federal Reserve Bank in Boston, Citicorp Center in Manhattan, Congress Hall in Berlin, and the Landmark Tower in Yokohama. Locally, his firm's work also includes smaller structures such as the Loeb Drama Center, the Countway Medical Library, the Pusey Library in Harvard Yard, as well as houses and academic buildings.

Charles Rose is a principal of Thompson and Rose Architects in Cambridge, a firm established in 1988 that has already received wide recognition for innovative projects such as the Atlantic Center for the Arts in Florida, the Barn at Straitsview Farm in Washington State, and the Bartholomew County Veterans Memorial in Indiana.



- CR: One of the surprising details in your résumé is that you went to work for Royal Barry Wills right after finishing at the Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1935. He was best known for traditional houses.
- **HS**: All of his work was Colonial architecture — he was the best Cape house designer in the country. It was a lucky break for me. Just before graduation, Wills put up a notice in the school — he was looking for a young architect who knew how to do Modern architecture. He had some clients who wanted Modern houses, and he didn't know how to do it. I worked for him for about three years. I learned a lot, and I learned it very quickly. He became a good friend. I used to go to his house on Sunday for dinner. He'd let me borrow his car to go out on dates. And one time he said, "Hugh, I think my wife Marguerite needs a car. Will you help me select one for her?" So we went to a second-hand parking lot, and we looked around at cars. We came up to a Peerless Roadster — one of those cars that has a back like a motorboat turned upside-down. And he said, "What do you think of this car?" I said, "That's pretty good." He said, "Do you think Marguerite would like it?" I said, "I don't know. I do." We bought it for \$50. Two weeks later, he said, "Marguerite doesn't like the car, Hugh. I'll sell it to you for ten bucks." So he gave me a car.
- CR: You later returned home to work in Birmingham, Alabama. But you didn't stay long.
- **HS:** One day I got two telegrams from Harvard. One from Walter Gropius, whom I'd never met, asking if I'd come to talk to him about being an assistant in his master class. And the other telegram said that I'd won the Wheelwright Fellowship for traveling in Europe.
- CR: That was a pretty good day.
- **HS:** That was a pretty good day. I didn't know what to do. But I decided to go up and talk to Gropius. I told him right away, "I'm not sure that I want to be influenced by you or your architecture because I believe in regional architecture, and you have certain definite ideas." But he was very persuasive, and he convinced me that I should teach with him. I never regretted it. He was a good teacher, not a great designer by any means, but a good teacher. The only thing that Gropius did that I thought was very wrong was to discredit all of history. He thought everything should start over from nothing, which is wrong. I never accepted that idea.
- CR: In terms of the body of work you then went on to create, how did history affect your work as a designer? How did you tend to view history?



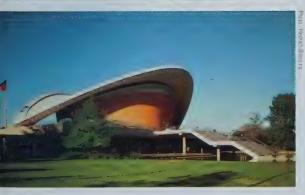
- **HS:** Well, history is the beginning. You can't erase history. I admired the great things that had been done, and used them as examples of accomplishment but not as things to copy.
- CR: What, if any, effect did Gropius have on your work? You rejected certain parts of his approach, but were there qualities in his thinking, or issues within his thinking, that you learned from and appropriated in your own work?
- **HS:** I would say none.
- CR: And yet you learned architectural history at Harvard.
- **HS:** I had learned architectural history at Georgia Tech.
- CR: But they still offered it at the Graduate School of Design?
- **HS:** No. No history at all. In fact, Gropius took the entire archive of student work and destroyed it.
- CR: Just obliterated it?
- HS: Oh, yes. Including mine.
- CR: Do you think history had a technical influence on your work, in the sense of learning about construction or materials from history?
- **HS:** Yes. Materials and structure are the architect's tools. The architecture of the past was determined by the materials that were available, like stone during the Gothic era. Steel later influenced the construction of modern buildings. But we in our age can build with almost anything we can conceive of. Not just steel, but plastics, too. It's hard now to create a regional architecture, because these materials are international. I thought that regionalism should come from the culture of an area, the landscape, and the climate. For instance, when I built Citicorp in New York, I thought the building should look like it belonged in New York.

A very tall building in New York has a unique top to it — that's the genre of New York buildings. Citicorp has a different kind of a top. And when I did a building in Yokohama, I thought that it should look like it belonged in Japan.

- **CR:** How did you manipulate the design of these buildings to accommodate their place?
- HS: During the time we were doing the Citicorp building, a lot of buildings were built with aluminum as a skin. They were steel-framed buildings, and they were light. And this was a problem structurally. For instance, the Empire State Building is steel with a poured-concrete fireproofing, and that is a big asset in a tall building. But lighter buildings tend to sway with the wind, and that has to be compensated for in some way. Citicorp has a tuned-mass damper at the top to compensate for that. Most aluminum buildings back then were dark-brown buildings and cereal box in shape, and that was the thing I wanted to avoid. I wanted to have a building that was light in color, because light-colored buildings reflect the sun, and you can see the shadows of the shape that you've created. That's a reason to use bright aluminum. The other thing I tried to do was to open up the space in the bottom of the building, so it wouldn't be like a canyon. The reason the building is up on stilts is because of the church down below. We couldn't put a column right down through the nave. And that led to the solution of columns at the midpoint of the facade. But the form of the building opened up a whole block, which was urbanistically a great advantage.
- CR: You established Hugh Stubbins and Associates in 1949 after working as an assistant professor at Harvard.
  What led to that? Was there a particular project?
- **HS:** I had been in practice doing housing all the time I was teaching at Harvard. Gropius encouraged all his professors to practice which I think was the right approach. If you weren't in practice, a student would know more than you did after two weeks. But as you take on more work, you need people to help you, and to get people to help you, you've got to take on more work. It snowballs. And that's the reason I started the firm.
- CR: You began the firm, then, as a residential practice and it grew from there.
- **HS:** We did some schools, which led to high schools and universities and later to office buildings.
- CR: When you look back at your professional life and the growth of Hugh Stubbins and Associates [now The Stubbins Associates] into a truly international firm, were there major steps forward that are represented by certain projects? Or was it a more gradual transition?

**HS:** There were projects that catapulted us, definitely. The first one was the Congress Hall in West Berlin in 1955. There was no competition, there was no interview -- I was selected by a blue-ribbon committee of the AIA. It was a wonderful experience. The job was really a building for propaganda. Instead of building a housing project as most of the other countries did, we decided to make something that was a gift to the city of Berlin. It was a hall for conventions or congresses — the exchange of ideas - and it was dedicated to freedom of speech. We could have put an auditorium into a box, but the idea was to find a form that was evocative of freedom. It was built very near the Berlin Wall.





CR: Who was the engineer on the hall?

**HS**: Eric Severud. He was a famous engineer, and his specialty was pre-tensioned roofs. The engineers who had to approve the structure in Berlin would not accept Severud's method of construction, which was to use woven-wire cables criss-crossed with pre-cast concrete slabs between them. They said they had never used woven-wire cables and didn't know anything about them. We said we could send them over from the United States, and they wouldn't rust, and we would paint them and make them accessible. They still wouldn't approve it. So they had the contractor keep the same roof shape, using normal reinforcing rod. Severud said he didn't think it would work, but they did it anyway. And 24 years later, one arch collapsed.

CR: What happened?

**HS:** It collapsed because the arch was going up and down with heat and cold over that period of time. It's like bending a paper clip back and forth. It broke. I found out about it when a reporter from the *Miami Herald* called me early one morning and said, "The Congress Hall has collapsed." Well, *that* got me out of bed. The next call I had was from the Center for Building in Berlin, a fellow who said he'd like to come to see me in Boston. We had lunch together at the Ritz, and he asked if I would be willing to be a consultant on the reconstruction of the Congress Hall. There was no blame on my part.

CR: That must have been a relief.

**HS:** They knew that they had refused to use the original design. We selected an engineer in Berlin who designed the new roof using exactly the same construction that we had proposed in the first place, with woven-wire cables.

**CR:** You mentioned that the building was a big steppingstone for the firm.

**HS:** It was a unique building, and it was published all over Europe and this country. Publicity and publication of your work is the most important thing you can have.

CR: What other projects helped to push the firm forward?

(top) Citicorp Center New York 1977

Hugh Stubbins and Associates. Inc.

LeMessurier Associates/SCI and The Office of James Ruderman structural engineers

(bottom) Congress Hall West Berlin 1957

Hugh Stubbins and Associates, Inc. with Werner Duttmann, Franz Mocken **HS:** The first office building we were involved with was the State Street Bank in Boston. Tad Stahl had that job, and he asked me and [structural engineer] Bill LeMessurier to collaborate on it. I think the next major building was the Federal Reserve Bank, which we finished in 1977. That was a real pleasure to do. As a matter of fact, I've had fun doing every single one of my projects.



The Federal
Reserve Bank of
Boston 1978
Hugh Stubbins and
Associates, Inc.
LeMessurier
Associates/SCI,
structural

engineers

- CR: As the firm developed, how did your role evolve within the larger organization?
- **HS:** I was the manager of the company and the chief designer. I managed by getting good people around me, and then leaving the management side of it in their hands so I could spend more time with design, because that's what I really wanted to do.
- CR: You collaborated with Bill LeMessurier's office on a number of occasions and even occupied the same building at 1033 Mass. Ave. It almost seems that the successes of both firms were interdependent. I think a lot of architects feel that the structure is subordinate to architectural ideas. But in your work, I imagine that structural engineering played a much more vital and important role.

- HS: Very important. Whenever I first started a job, I would have a meeting with the structural engineer and the mechanical engineer to go over the program of what the building was going to be. Usually, I already had a general idea whether it was going to be a fat building or a skinny building or a tall building. We would do some imagineering I would tell them it didn't matter whether they had a silly idea or not, they shouldn't hesitate to talk about it. These three things have to go together. You can't design a building without structure and without the mechanical equipment to run it, and they have to be integrated. And that's what we tried to do. And I think we did, fairly successfully. I've always said that a designer has to think with an eight-track mind. You have to think of all these things at once.
- CR: When you look at the body of work you have produced, do you see consistent underlying themes or approaches to architecture?
- **HS:** One underlying theme is appropriateness. Build a building that is appropriate for its purpose and its place, wherever it's built. That gets back to regionalism.
- CR: When I think of your work, I see a consistent commitment to a Modernist language. What was your reaction when Postmodernism came along?
- **HS:** A very negative reaction. It was a pastiche that didn't appeal to me at all.
- CR: A pastiche in terms of a lack of integrity?
- **HS:** Yes. Especially between the form and the skin of the building. It was fake.
- CR: Was there anything about that movement that you took away, that somehow made you re-evaluate the work you were doing?
- HS: No.
- CR: As a younger practitioner, I'm excited by the state of architecture today, now that we are beyond Postmodernism. And I think we've made it through Deconstructivism.
- **HS**: I hope so.
- CR: From my own perspective, there seems to be an acceptance now of a very broad range of sensibilities about architecture. You've practiced for a good 60 percent of this century what is your thinking about the current state of affairs?
- **HS:** I would say that I'm happy that I'm not in practice right now.
- CR: Why is that?

- **HS:** I think the best time in this century for architects was the 1930s through the 1980s. We had a lot of freedom. We had a lot of respect as architects. And today I find that architects are not respected the way we once were. The developers have just about taken over, and the architect is working for the developer. There are exceptions to that, of course; there are some architects that are still carrying on. But there are so many obstacles in the path of building today. The cities, the building codes that are more restrictive, and the interference of so many committees and people. I'm glad that I don't have to deal with them. And as a result, the architecture gets homogenized.
- CR: You're depressing me a little. There's no doubt, from a financial perspective, that architecture is a much less profitable business than it was 25 years ago.
- **HS:** I would think so.
- CR: Your early houses, in the 1940s and '50s, are classics now. There's care given to every moment, every detail. They're beautifully executed and crafted. When I look at work from this period, I think that there must have been a kind of euphoria about Modernism and architecture and design. It seems so different from today.
- **HS**: Oh, it was.
- CR: What was that like to design back then? Were clients in synch with the way you were thinking about architecture?
- **HS**: Yes. And most of the magazines were promoting Modernism at that time, even the so-called "shelter" magazines. I got to know all the editors; all my houses were published. It was a great time.
- CR: So what you were trying to do aesthetically was widely accepted.
- **HS**: I'm not so sure it was accepted by the public. But by a certain portion of the public.
- CR: Things are definitely very different now. A lot of us today are trying to do work where it feels like a small victory if we can get the client behind us, let alone anvone else.
- **HS:** We had the freedom to do exciting work and to have fun doing it.

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#### by George Thrush AIA

Most architects are familiar with the design studio. It has long served as the basis of architectural education in this country and is often the cathartic, formative experience around which all others revolve in one's early years. Students work tirelessly in order to excel in the design studio, which is seen as the true measure of talent and potential in our field. But it is also an exercise in synthetic thinking, an example of creative problem-solving that is an essential part of a liberal arts education — and an invaluable skill when working in a new economy that demands ever greater facility in organizing and processing complex information.

Nevertheless, there are today many architects who feel betrayed by the design studio format of architectural education and its partner, the jury system of evaluation. They argue that studio projects are too detached from "real life." Moreover, these architects argue, as the technical skills necessary to practice increase, there is something a little indulgent about designing, say, a floating headquarters for Greenpeace in Boston Harbor (one of my own students' projects). It just doesn't happen that way in practice, they say. The design studio no longer bears sufficient relation to the "real world."

The studio jury system is intended to strengthen the presumed parallel between the worlds of academic and professional life by assembling a collection of professors and practitioners to serve as critics and "clients" of student projects. The criteria for evaluating student work bounce from practical to technical to philosophical to social and ideological issues; this variety is often misunderstood as an attempt to replicate the precise complexity of actual practice.

The work that results from this hybrid of professional and academic evaluation has often been interesting, but seldom has it mirrored directly the actual practice of architecture in professional offices. Indeed, I would argue that it is not intended to do so. Instead, the work of the architectural studio is part of an education in synthetic thinking that is essential to any practicing designer, but which is also a fundamental trait of the educated person. The design studio is not intended merely to serve as a kind of farm system to the profession. Design studios do, as it happens, cover many issues that students will face in practice, but they do not address all of them — nor should they.

### George Thrush AIA TWO

Traditionally, design has been taught in the studio, a model that is undergoing increased scrutiny as the profession re-examines its educational assumptions.

The critics of today's architectural design studios (usually practicing architects at some remove from their own academic experiences) charge two crimes: (1) studios address compositional, aesthetic, or social concerns that have nothing to do with contemporary practice, and (2) they don't adequately train students in the skills necessary for contemporary practice. Even among those who acknowledge the need to train young architects in synthetic or conceptual thinking, there is concern that the full range of practice issues is not addressed. If one is teaching synthesis, the argument goes, why not include more HVAC and egress issues? These, after all, often end up playing decisive roles in the real design process.

The answer to these critics is simple. The design studio, like architectural education in general, addresses the education of the mind as well as the education of the professional. A design studio that seems unrealistically pure to some may be just the right mix of issues to stimulate synthetic thinking in a young student. And does anyone really think that requiring students to address the full range of HVAC issues with the same depth as they address conceptual ones will make them better architects in the future? Moreover, does anyone really think that HVAC and say, issues of urbanism, are equally important to developing an understanding of why architecture is important? I hope not.

George Thrush AIA is head of the architecture program at Northeastern University and a principal of SmartArchitecture in Cambridge, MA.

### Views Don Brown AIA

Practitioners often argue that the studio is too pure, too isolated from real-world constraints. ArchitectureBoston asked two educators to comment on the fusion of practice and theory in the studio experience.

#### by Don Brown AIA

The studio has its origins in the French Academy. Firmly established in the first half of the 19th century at the West's leading design school, l'Ecole des Beaux Arts, studio continues 150 years later to drive environmental design education, through its unique combination of critique, atelier and devoir. This mixing of crit, workshop and homework emphasizes intense socialization based on shared experience: l'esprit de corps. (The French were among the first to discover that there is no real learning without emotion.) Today in the United States, approximately 120 architecture programs and a like number of interior design schools depend on the studio model, which accounts on average for 55-60 percent of all curriculum credit.

But something happened in the last quarter of the 19th century that deserves reflection. A variation of the traditional studio model emerged, with a different kind of socialization, one we might now identify as a form of distance learning. Workers throughout the West demanded access to the better life, including the opportunity to practice architecture, the gentlemen's profession. The response in Europe and America to this demand varied, ranging from the establishment of the Dutch "academies" and the English "associations" to the founding of the American "architectural clubs."

Up until World War II, the architectural clubs in Boston, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco served draftsmen who were determined to combine daytime practice with evening professional studies. Here in Boston, aspiring individuals such as Ralph Walker, Louis Skidmore, and Edward Durell Stone took advantage of the opportunity to develop their talent at the Boston Architectural Center (BAC).

Each club featured another element of the era, the spirit of volunteerism. The employing instructors felt they had happier, more productive employees, while their staff felt they could pursue their professional dreams more formally. Now, after a century or more of service.

this alternative model is changing, as are the dreams. The BAC, for example, now offers first professional degrees at the Bachelors and Masters levels in both architecture and interior design.

The human brain has its own kind of studio structure. Greatly simplified, the left hemisphere tends to be the realm of experiential or practice-based learning, while the right hemisphere tends to function as the academic or theory-based center. Bridging the hemispheres is a synaptic bundle known as the corpus callosum, the component that makes whole-brain activity possible.

We are now entering a period when increasing emphasis will be placed on our need to better understand this connecting element of our consciousness — and its role in things such as the studio experience, learning styles, and life-long learning. Institutions of higher learning around the world are now dealing with the post-industrial educational revolution. Through a variety of responses, they are busy constructing their own versions of whole-brain studies in recognition of the need to prepare for a non-linear future. Distance learning and video conferencing, "externships" and work-study, service-learning and concurrent-studies models are emerging to help redefine the tenets of the curriculum and the studio.

The need to adapt intellectually to accommodate new models has been recognized for a long time. In 1949, the structuralist/designer Eugene Freyssinet noted the conceptual simplicity of prestressed concrete, commenting: "But it does belong to a universe unknown to classical structural materials... and the difficulty for those first coming to the idea of prestressing is to adapt themselves to this new universe." At the BAC we are pressing to better understand holistically our corner of this universe, within a concurrent design studio tradition that daily enjoins our students to seek new connections between the experiential and academic components of their studies.

Don Brown AIA is the director of the practice curriculum program at the Boston Architectural Center, where he also directs the Community Design Center and the Center Summer Academy. He serves on the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Designer Selection Board.





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# **Covering** the Issues

Periodical roundup by Gretchen Schneider



The power of positive designing... Can design bring America's schools back from the brink? Yvonne Abraham answers with an almost-resounding, "Yes!" in October's *Metropolis*. She cites the Cambridge, Massachusetts, "Jerusalem Architecture Project," in which seventh- and eighth-

grade students each design a public building for Jerusalem, applying their knowledge of history, geography, religion, politics, literature, and current events. "Learning through design," she observes, "cuts across disciplines and reaches kids with talents of every variety, including those not often fully recognized in conventional education." Abraham calls on design-reliant corporations — Disney, Adobe, Silicon Graphics — to support design-based education. But she ignores the most obvious constituency: designers! Although she worries

aloud about the expense of training teachers, not once does she call on architects, landscape architects, or urban designers to lead the way, even though her article appears in a magazine read by design professionals. Ironically, this omission makes the strongest case for how much teaching our professions need to do.

Holl-istic thinking... Steven Holl's competition-winning design for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki has at last been completed. For a general report of the competition, public reaction, and building process of the project now known as the Kiasma Museum, turn to Karen Stein's story in August's *Architectural Record*. Or, for an eloquent, comprehensive discussion of Holl's design, try instead August's *Architectural Review*. In this issue on "Modern Institutions," Annette Lecuyer weaves together a thoughtful interpretation of Holl's design intent, a clear description of the spatial experience, and a critical evaluation of the realized project. In the obvious comparison, Lecuyer argues: "Aalto's architecture reflected the complex character of a

newly independent nation forging an identity coupled with an underlying mystical, almost primeval communion with nature. A generation on, Holl's 'fresh chiasma of phenomenal architecture' is well matched with this duality; the new museum is as much mythical narrative as national monument." Lecuyer is a perceptive, lyrical writer.

Brownfields go green... The July-August issue of *Abitare* focuses on the "study, conservation, and remediation of natural landscapes." In "Parks, Gardens and the Creation of New Landscapes," Bianca Bottero presents five French parks that she dubs the "new generation" of European parks: They are all built on abandoned factory sites in strategic locations between old city centers and new sprawling suburbs. As we begin to struggle with our own acres of derelict brownfields, Bottero's survey presents some encouraging examples of what can be accomplished.

The stuff that surrounds you... No overview of design magazines could be complete without mention of the hottest new design mag to hit the shelves since ArchitectureBoston was just a glimmer in our editor's eye. It took a search through eight sold-out magazine shops until I finally found a copy of Wallpaper\* and it was the last one. Part MTV, part Metropolis, part Vanity Fair, Wallpaper\* is to Record what Wired is to MacWorld. More newsworthy than any individual article is the object as a whole. Based in London, Wallpaper\*combines European urban ultra-hip with intelligent writing, luscious graphics, and a dose of cheeky British humor, resulting in category headings like "Hot Sheet Architecture." What other architecture magazine can boast more ads from the likes of Tommy Hilfiger, Cartier and Land Rover than from Philips Electronics or Duravit bathroom fixtures? But don't let the ads, the fashion-model glamour, or the sound-bite-length articles distract you - it's all part of the image. For example, the cover article "Mumbai Masala" masquerades as a frolicking travelogue, but it also presents a multilayered examination of the city formerly known as Bombay, equal parts social commentary, architectural observation, and urban experience. Wallpaper\* is global in attitude, approach and style. While we're accustomed to magazines by category — academic or professional, landscape or interiors or industrial design, American or Italian or Japanese — Wallpaper\* ranges freely across all, bridging scales, cultures, and disciplines. Its focus can only be characterized as "the stuff that surrounds you." ■■■

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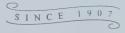
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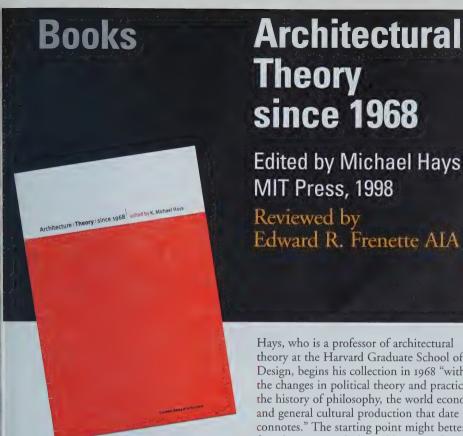
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The turn of the century finds philosophers, theoreticians, critics, and commentators hard at work summing up recent cultural production. Presumably, there is a need to understand this century before venturing into the next millennium. The Modern Library's list of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20th century and the American Film Institute's list of the 100 greatest movies are popular expressions of this trend. The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy suggests in 10 volumes and 8,680 pages that academics are also summoned to the same task. Within this milieu, Michael Hays' anthology of 47 texts and 12 drawings, Architectural Theory since 1968, purports to include the most representative and important texts of contemporary architectural theory. His purpose is to show the evolution of architectural theory and its role as mediator between our society and its architecture, thus opening architecture up to other disciplines of thought. The sum of his efforts is intended to constitute the necessary history on which new theories will be built. With a few reservations, Hays book exceeds expectations. Academics, however, may find it more useful than practitioners.

Hays, who is a professor of architectural theory at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, begins his collection in 1968 "with all the changes in political theory and practice, the history of philosophy, the world economy, and general cultural production that date connotes." The starting point might better be found in 1966 with the publication of Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture by Robert Venturi — a book that is emblematic of many of the issues chronicled by Hays: dystopia, meaning, sign and symbol, high and low culture. Even though these issues are amply covered later in the anthology by Denise Scott Brown's "Learning from Pop," a broader discussion of them in the context of that early period of upheaval would have been both helpful and appropriate.

Any dissatisfaction with the start of Hays contemporary architectural theory is soon relieved by his selection of essays and excerpts, which are indeed representative of the most respected thinkers of our time. George Baird and Charles Jencks' *Meaning in Architecture*, Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter's *Collage City*, and Jacques Derrida's *Point de folie — Maintenant l'architecture* are some of the texts that shattered the intellectual peace of the last three decades.

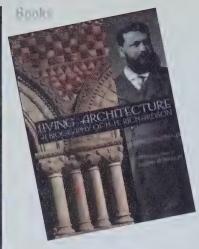
These discussions examine the relative autonomy of architecture from other worldly pursuits, such as language and communication, tradition and the city, politics and dogma. Central to the debate is whether architecture has developed a language that exists outside of time, place, or function, or if it is inextricably connected to all aspects of culture: historical, physical, social, political. Hays' selections correctly illustrate little consensus on the relative autonomy of the language of architecture from its cultural context, some consensus on architecture's obligation to its physical context, and a drift toward an architecture which can mean

more things to more people. His introductions to each section manage to elucidate the densest prose and to place each essay in chronological and evolutionary context. His clear and provocative introduction to Jeffrey Kipnis' "Twisting the Separatrix," for example, demystifies Deconstruction in three easy lessons.

Michael Hays has done a great service for academics and practitioners by charting the configuration of contemporary architectural theory. Now that such an important and comprehensive work exists, however, it calls attention to the voids in the theoretical underpinnings of our profession. Serious architectural theory represents well those architects who work down from theoretical positions, but not those who spring up from everyday, grassroot experience.

The very comprehensiveness of Havs' work makes it possible to ask some difficult questions about how "new theories will be built." How, for example, does orthodox contemporary architectural theory address the energy conservation movement, which matured in the same period and changed the literal and figurative ground of architecture? As theory, rather than philosophy, shouldn't it have some empirically verifiable predictive power? As the field of architectural theory matures it may need parallel and competing theories such as those in psychiatry to explain matters of belief versus matters of fact. Or, it may need a knowledge hierarchy such as that existing in theoretical and applied physics to deliver theory in a form usable by practitioners. Until then, Architectural Theory since 1968 will stand as a valuable text to those many academics and perhaps fewer practitioners seeking answers to basic philosophical questions as a premise for architectural design.

Edward R. Frenette AIA is senior vice president for design at Symmes Maini & McKee Associates in Cambridge, MA. He is co-chair of the BSA Design Committee and the author of numerous articles on design.



#### **Living Architecture:** a Biography of H.H. Richardson

by James F. O'Gorman, photos by Cervin Robinson Simon & Schuster, 1998

reviewed by William Morgan

The star of Henry Hobson Richardson — that iconic designer of Trinity Church, those stonier-than-stone New England libraries, and the Marshall Field Warehouse — has always been in the ascendant. It is difficult to think of any other architect who has been so universally and uninterruptedly admired. Whether praising him as part of the apostolic architectural succession that embraced Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright or embracing him as a backwardlooking romantic of the William Morris stripe, nearly everyone acknowledges the clarity of conception behind Sever Hall and the raw power of the Allegheny County Courthouse.

Despite such an unassailable reputation (aided by some excellent studies on his work, including those by Professor O'Gorman), there has been no satisfactory biography of Richardson until now. Architects generally make poor biographical subjects long, lonely hours spent at a drafting table are hardly the stuff of steamy story lines. Scandalous private lives, like those led by the oft-married Wright or by Richardson's satyr-like protégé, Stanford White (who was murdered by his paramour's husband), are ultimately irrelevant to the art of architecture. Richardson led an exemplary Victorian-gentleman's life: There is no dirty linen to air and only a tragic early death from kidney disease to add pathos.

James O'Gorman, who teaches at Wellesley College, has provided a gracefully written, often droll account of the Rabelaisian architect's life. We tend to accept Richardson's greatness on faith, but O'Gorman reminds us why the buildings are so good, what they meant to contemporaries, and what they mean to us. Just as the suave and persuasive Richardson "would charm the bird out of a bush," O'Gorman deftly weaves cultural and architectural history together into a seamless whole with a seductive logic worthy of his subject. Richardson is not depicted as an isolated genius, but is instead properly placed in the American pantheon along with Mark Twain, Emily Dickinson, Thomas Eakins, and Winslow Homer.

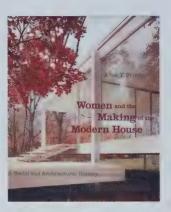
O'Gorman has long known how to write readable architectural history - architecture can be exciting, but writing about it rarely is. His splendid text is complemented by Cervin Robinson's stunning color photographs. Bostonians are probably unfamiliar with the surprised delight experienced by Richardson fans weaned on the somber photographs of the Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer monographs when they discover that the Romanesque buildings are not black and white. Robinson's photographs are revelations, reminiscent of the first glimpses of the cleaned Sistine Chapel ceiling; the details are worth the \$50 price of the book alone. These luscious images could easily lull the casual reader into mistaking Living Architecture for yet another glossy coffee-table production with a tag-along text. Fortunately, they reinforce James O'Gorman's remarkable accomplishment in giving us the life of Richardson.

William Morgan is Distinguished Teaching Professor of architectural history at the University of Louisville. He wrote the introduction to the reprint of Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer's Henry Hobson Richardson and His Works (Dover) and is the author of The Almighty Wall (MIT), a study of Boston architect Henry Vaughan. His monograph on Heikkinen + Komonen is forthcoming from Monacelli.

#### Women and the Making of the Modern House

by Alice T. Friedman Harry N. Abrams, 1998

reviewed by Missy Sittler AIA



Six houses by world-renowned architects, six non-traditional building programs and, most important to this treatise, six architect-client relationships form the basis of Alice T. Friedman's Women and the Making of the Modern House. The home is women's place of power, argues Friedman, who suggests that these houses, all commissioned by women, established a new pattern for residential architecture because they were commissioned by women.

Aline Barnsdall, her architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, and the resulting 1921 Hollyhock House occupy a weighty first chapter. Barnsdall's independent thinking (she chose, for example, not to marry the father of her daughter) is carefully documented in the construction of Friedman's case. Much ink is given to the disagreements between the architect and client. In a letter, Barnsdall accused Wright: "You judge me by a deep rooted conventionality within yourself. You are free in your art but not in your relation to life." In many ways, the two were too much the same powerful, egotistical, stormy. She offered him a remarkable building program for the 35-acre Hollywood site, including a never-completed open-air theater; he responded with a revolutionary expansion of public and community spaces into the private domain.

Friedman uses Barnsdall's progressive feminism and unconventional life to set the stage for a series of women as non-traditional clients demanding non-traditional houses: Rietveld's Schroeder House, Le Corbusier's Villa Stein, Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House, Neutra's Perkins House, and Venturi's Vanna Venturi House. Within the chronological collection, Friedman examines the design implications of each house, identifying an evolving flexibility in residential program, but always returning to the significance of the personal relationship between client and architect.

According to Friedman's thesis, these projects "alter[ed] the conventions of domestic life by expanding the definition of home, shifting the balance between public and private spaces," and "highlighting the importance of ... the home as representation of the activities and values of its occupants." But aren't changing demographics and a changing society the real basis for the evolution in the way we view and use houses? And before overattributing such results to female clients, surely the talents of the designers, all architectural giants, should be considered more. Each instinctively pushed every known limit in form, material, and program; they were progressive architects, producing progressive houses. How similar would these projects have been if their clients had been single men? Nevertheless, Friedman constructs her case carefully. The photographs are excellent, and her impressive documentation is fresh and fascinating. Friedman occasionally sounds like a feminist looking for an argument, but her book is a delight to read — even if the reader occasionally feels provoked to argue back.

Missy Sittler AIA is a principal of Abacus Architects & Planners in Boston and Wareham, MA. She is chair of the BSA's Growth Management Task Force.

#### Do It Yourself: Home Improvement in **20th-Century America**

by Carolyn M. Goldstein Princeton Architectural Press. 1998

reviewed by Jeremiah Eck FAIA

Do-it-yourself. Sounds easy, doesn't it? It also sounds very American, and as Carolyn Goldstein demonstrates in her new book, it certainly is. Last year alone more than \$140 billion was spent on home repair and remodeling projects. According to the National Association of Home Builders, there are now approximately 70 million owneroccupied homes in this country, and about one million are added each year. Sixty percent of homeowners report having done some work on their houses. That's a lot of potential projects. As Goldstein rightly points out, the do-it-yourself phenomenon is therefore not just a personal journey for many middle-class Americans, but also a cultural one in which manufacturers. retail companies, and the media play a role in defining the needs and tastes of our domestic environments. Witness "This Old House," the ultimate mediadriven, seems-easy-doesn't-it, doit-yourself exposé. Even



Goldstein's own book seems tainted by the ever-present commercialism of our age: The foreword was written by the CEO of the American Hardware Manufacturers Association.

Do It Yourself is more entertaining than it is educational. Easy to read in just a few sittings, it is filled with numerous illustrations that clearly describe the history of do-it-yourself over the last hundred years. Still, the author's statement that "The origins of the do-it-vourself idea can be traced to around 1900, when home improvement began to assume a self-conscious character and to play an active role in American culture" is only partially true. Granted, more and more advertising and products were directed to the American homeowner, but 1900 was not the beginning. From colonial times, Americans have always wanted, and in many cases, had to do it themselves. My sense is that Americans have never been very comfortable with professionals, especially design professionals. Why hire a designer, when a builder will do? Or, why hire a builder, when I can do it myself?

Do-it-yourself is perhaps the inevitable product of a culture that prefers image to reality, a phenomenon based on a created image of ourselves as rough-andready individuals — somewhat at akin to the idea that driving sport-utility vehicles makes us all cowboys. But the reality is that we are overworked and overstressed, with little meaningful time to ourselves. We are a highly educated, materially well-off culture that needs to understand that our hands, mind, and heart are one. I doubt that do-ityourself ever did or will lead us to that conclusion.

Jeremiah Eck FAIA is a principal in Jeremiah Eck Architects, Inc. in Boston, specializing in residential and academic projects, and is a lecturer in architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

#### **Housing Ourselves:** Creating Affordable. Sustainable Shelter

by Richard Burnham McGraw-Hill, 1998

reviewed by Andrew St. John AIA



In 1972, my friends and I built a house in rural Maine using roughsawn local pine at 11 cents a board foot. We referred to the wood as "dried in transit" and used it for structure, sheathing and trim. The windows and skylights were salvaged from a house being demolished nearby; the chimney was old brick bought from a second-hand store. The cost of materials was \$3,700, and the project consumed the better part of a year, proceeding as time allowed between other carpentry jobs, cutting firewood, and raising children.

Richard Burnham is convinced that this building process and lifestyle is healthier, more economical, and easier on the environment than the fast-paced, wageearner existence that most of us experience. I can't say I disagree. Learning to produce your own food, build your house, and repair your car builds self-reliance and competence that is directly transferable to any field of endeavor. Housing Ourselves is a primer for those who want to move in this direction.

Aimed at the first-time ownerbuilder, the book encourages the reader "to go out into the countryside to find land, locate a good building site ... and gain the confidence to design and build affordable housing." The process and the resulting aesthetics are in the direct tradition of Ken Kearn's Owner-Built Home and Maine's Shelter Institute, with a healthy dose of the Handmade Houses series.

It would be easy to dismiss Burnham's view of modern reality as naïve or '70s retro. Those of us who had alternative sensibilities in our hearts in those days often had them worn out through constant friction with a powerful dominant culture. Younger searchers for an alternative to the consumer society have tended to bite off smaller pieces of the change-the-world apple. Accepting all the consequences of our lifestyle choices is a hard task, and Burnham is eloquent in clarifying the connection between the way we house ourselves and the overall structure of our lives.

The book's presentation reminds me of House Carpentry Simplified, a deceptively complete tome that guided some of my early construction efforts. In content, however, it is part of a tradition of architect-philosophers that includes Wright and Corbusier. On the largest scale, it advocates social change and a move toward a more integrated and earthcentered way of life. The transitions between philosophy and how-to are sometimes smooth and logical, sometimes give you whiplash, but the concepts are solid. Higher publishing production values would probably improve the book's reception. In any event, it is refreshing to find an architect with a coherent vision of social improvement using his craft to support his beliefs.

Andrew St. John AIA is a program management consultant and writer specializing in issues of sustainable and ecological design. He is the author/editor of The Sourcebook for Sustainable Design, published by the BSA.



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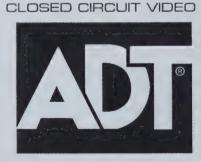
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It's amazing — readers are actually sending us their favorite Web site addresses. You can, too: architectureboston@architects.org



When it comes to churches, I'm a clearwindows guy. I love the classic New England look: white steeple against blue sky, clean lines, white woodwork, unadorned dove-gray walls, and the transcendentalists' notion that God starts getting nervous after more than a few minutes inside buildings of any kind, so if we have to go in, let's make sure we can see the sky and a tree or two from our seats. Why, then, do I love Boston's Trinity Church?

When I overheard a tour guide in Trinity's sanctuary tell a group that the architect, H.H. Richardson, was born in New Orleans, it all made sense. Trinity is like a Southern novel in stone and stained glass, designed in the extravagant, hold-nothingback tradition of all great storytellers from the South. And it has Copley Square for a front yard.

Copley Square gives you the room to stand back from Trinity's massive stone presence, as if from a masterpiece at the MFA, and take it in. Her exterior is more matronly than majestic, more wide than tall, dressed in homely shades of brown, gravitas in gingerbread hues. The color scheme and the twin conical towers would fit well in the land of Oz, and if Boston were Oz, you'd know as soon as you saw Trinity that this must be the home of the wizard.

With her long front portico, Trinity presides over Copley Square like a matriarch with a large, friendly lap. I feel a fresh

wave of gratitude every time I see her reflection in the ice-blue glass of the Hancock tower across the street, the old world and the new, framed in a single vision. The urban oasis of plaza and lawn in front of the church provides a perfect place for summer concerts, and there's something marvelous about watching an old rock-androller like Leon Russell, looking like Jesus might have had he lived into his fifties, playing his amplified grand piano with Trinity as a backdrop.

Inside the sanctuary, that same tour guide tells the group that Trinity, like everything else in the Back Bay, was built on what was once a swamp, and lest it suffer the fate of Jesus' proverbial house built on the sand, it is supported by 4,500 wooden pilings driven down into the ground. Suddenly, the Skinner organ sends a full, rich practice chord up into the dark gold dome and down

to the bottom of every visitor's feet, and a young man in a Hard Rock Café tee shirt who has just stopped by for a quick look sits down, obviously stunned. For a long time, he gazes up into the dome that seems to rise straight to heaven, letting the music wash over him. I look up at the high pulpit and imagine that the experience of preaching from it is both heady and humbling. The Rev. Mr. Phillips Brooks held forth from this very pulpit; in passing, the guide tells us that he stood six feet four and weighed over 300 pounds. That seems about right.

In December, with Christmas only a week or so away, I will come here with my wife on a Sunday afternoon, arriving two hours early for the candlelight carol service. After choosing our seats, I will welcome this time to sit quietly and reflect in such a beautiful sanctuary. There will be organ preludes, standing room only, and then the grand processional, liturgical pomp and circumstance at its finest. A young crucifer will lead the way, carrying the processional cross, and soon all 1,200 people in the room will know that the choir is a match for Mr. Richardson's mountain. A few days later I will gaze out the clear-glass windows of my own church, the flame of a single candle on the sill, hoping for the sight of snow falling softly through bare trees. And my heart will fall open with gratitude that I live in a town that gives me both of these sacred places.

Roger Paine is the minister of The First Parish in Lincoln MA

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