

OCULUS

on current new york architecture

The New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

Volume 42, Number 3 December, 1980



Grand Hyatt Hotel. Architects: Der Scutt and Gruzen & Partners.

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Editor: Andrew P. MacNair
 Managing Editor: Alexandra S. Morphett
 Editorial Assistant: Laura Bell
 Calendar: William Eitner

The New York Chapter of the American
 Institute of Architects
 The Urban Center, 457 Madison Avenue,
 New York, New York 10022

George S. Lewis, *Executive Director*
 Executive Committee 1980-81

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 Katherine Piesla
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 Carol Jones
 Julie Lake

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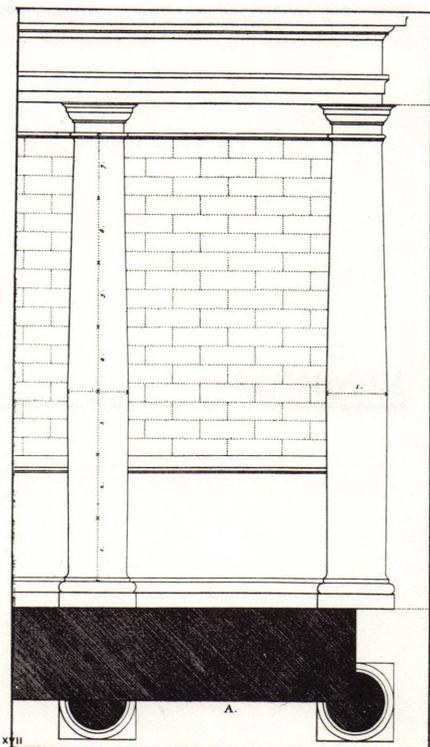
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On Monday evening December 1, 1980 at 6:00 P.M. the New York Coalition of Black Architects is sponsoring a tribute to Architect John Louis Wilson, FAIA, on the occasion of his fifty years in Architecture, for the benefit of a scholarship fund for minority students of architecture. The tribute and retrospective exhibition of his work will be held at Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture and Planning, Avery Hall, Wood Auditorium West 116th Street and Broadway.

Mr. Wilson was born in Meridian, Mississippi and very early in his life determined to be an architect. He worked his way through Columbia University School of Architecture doing a variety of jobs and graduated in 1928, becoming a registered architect in 1930. In 1935 he was appointed a member of the group of associated architects for the design of Harlem River Houses, which in 1975 was officially declared an historic landmark and which to this day is considered the finest example of public housing in the United States.

Throughout the 30's and 40's he taught at the Urban League, a WPA project, while maintaining his own architectural practice. He became an inspiration to young minority students of architecture, helping to found the Council for the Advancement of the Negro in Architecture (CANAA) which evolved into the Equal Opportunities Committee of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, of which he was chairman from 1967-70.

Beginning in the sixties, Mr. Wilson's practice began to expand in conjunction with the Civil Rights Movement. In 1960, he designed the Mount Morris Park Senior Citizens' Housing Project. Among other works completed at this time were a multi-family high rise at 193rd Street and Bailey Avenue, a joint venture with the firm of his friend and colleague, Horace Ginsbern. In 1979 for these and other housing projects Mr. Wilson was awarded the Andrew J. Thomas award for being a pioneer in housing.

DECEMBER 1980

OCULUS

CONTINUING EVENTS

WALKING TOUR: GRAND CENTRAL STATION

Learn about the architecture, history and future of the terminal. One hour tour. Meet outside Chemical's Commuter Express. Every Wed. at 12:30 pm. For more information call the Municipal Arts Society, 935-3960.

T. LUX FEININGER— PHOTO'S OF THE 20'S AND 30'S.

Feininger is known primarily as a painter. He was hired by Oskar Schlemmer to photograph for the Bauhaus, and in the early 30's Philip Johnson acquired a selection of his work for the Museum of Modern Art. Prakapas Gallery, 19 E. 71st St., 737-6066. Through Dec. 13.

PORTALS

Walter Dusenbery. Classic architectural stone sculptures. Three large marble portals. Hamilton Gallery, 20 W. 57th St., 765-5918. Through Dec. 13.

ARCHITECTURAL SCULPTURES BY GEORGE SMITH

Bronze sculptures, pyramids, geometric wall units and an African inspired Dogon shelter. The Studio Museum in Harlem, 2033 Fifth Ave., 427-5959. Through Jan. 4.

CENTRAL PARK

Fifty plans and drawings by the architectural firm of Frederick Olmstead and Calvert Vaux, from a recently discovered collection of original designs. Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St., 860-6868. Through Jan. 18.

EDWARD HOPPER: THE ART AND THE ARTIST

A retrospective of Hopper's paintings and drawings. The Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St., 570-3600. Through Jan. 18.

JAWLENSKY AND MAJOR GERMAN EXPRESSIONISTS

Paintings by Klee, Kandinsky, Munter, Macke, and others. Catalogue available. Leonard Hutton Gallery, 33 E. 74th St., 249-9700. Through Jan. 31.

20th-CENTURY AMERICAN DESIGN

Fifty objects are on show from 1900 to the 1960's, by Stickle, Noguchi, Saarinen, Eames, and others. Brooklyn Museum, 188 Eastern Pkwy., 630-5000. Through Feb. 8.

INTERIORS

Historical works on interior design and furnishings, from the library's collection. The New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. and 42nd St., 790-6551. Through Feb. 28.

MONDAY 1

HOWARD BRANDSTON LECTURE

Mr. Brandston is a lighting designer who believes lighting can add fresh visual and emotional dimensions to an architectural solution. Part of the "Design for Living" series.

The Ethical Culture Society, 2 West 64th St., 7:45-9:15 pm. Individual admission \$10.00, 874-5200. Dec. 1.

KEITH CRITCHLOW LECTURE

Pratt Institute, School of Architecture, Higgins Hall, 200 Willoughby Ave., 6:00 pm., 636-3600. Dec. 1.

MONDAY 8

MONDAY 15

MONDAY 22

MONDAY 29

TUESDAY 2

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR: EMERGENCY ROOMS AND NEO-NATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNITS.

TWO MINI-PROGRAMS PRESENTED BY THE CENTER FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION IN COOPERATION WITH THE NEW YORK CHAPTER, AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS HEALTH FACILITIES COMMITTEE.

TO BE HELD ON DECEMBER 2 & 9, AT LENOX HILL HOSPITAL, 1086 LEXINGTON AVE., REGISTER BY PHONE. CALL 754-2080.

TUESDAY 9

HUGH HARDY LECTURE: ARCHITECTURE

Vice President's evening II. The Architectural League, 457 Madison Ave., 6:30 pm., 753-1722. Dec. 9.

TUESDAY 16

GEORGE NELSON LECTURE: LOOKING AROUND

The Architectural League, 457 Madison Ave., 6:30 pm., 753-1722. Dec. 16.

NEW YORK NOW: PHOTOGRAPHS BY PHILIP TRAGER

Fifty black and white photographs of Manhattan architecture. Very calculated and deliberate compositions. Museum of The City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 103rd St., 543-1672. Through Mar. 1. Opens Dec. 16.

TUESDAY 23

TUESDAY 30

WEDNESDAY 3

THURSDAY 4

EZRA STOLLER PHOTOGRAPHS OF ARCHITECTURE 1939-1980
Beginning with Stoller's early assignments to photograph Alvar Aalto's Finnish Pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair, and photographs of projects by Le Corbusier, Marcel Breuer, among others.
Max Protetch Gallery, 37 W. 57th St., 838-7436. Through Jan. 12. Opens Dec. 4.

ROMALDO GIURGOLA
Opening of the exhibit
The Architectural League, The Urban Center, 457 Madison Ave., 6:30 pm. Non-members \$5.00. Reservations: 753-1722.

FRIDAY 5

PHILIP TRAGER AND CHARLES PRATT: PHOTOGRAPHS (1926-76)
New York architecture including ten studies and details of Harlem houses, the Guggenheim Museum, and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. Tower by Philip Trager. Also photographs of gardens by Charles Pratt.
Witkin Gallery, 41 E. 57th St., 355-1461. Through Dec. 6.

WEDNESDAY 10

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF SMALL URBAN SPACES
A Film.
The Architectural League, The Urban Center, 457 Madison Ave., 12:30, 5:30 and 7:00 pm., 935-3690. Dec. 10.

THURSDAY 11

DAVID VAN ZANTEN LECTURE
"Gothic and Conviction". The last in the series "Beaux-Arts Gothic: Medievalism in America after 1900."
Columbia University, Avery Hall, 116th St. and Broadway, 6:00 pm., 580-3510. Dec. 11.

FRIDAY 12

LANDSCAPE SKETCHES
Landscapes and architectural drawings by Lawrence Halprin.
Spaced Gallery, 165 W. 72nd St., 787-6350. Through Dec. 13.

FILM POSTERS OF THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE 1925-1931
The posters reflect the aesthetic challenge and the ideological tumult of the 1920's in Russia. An important collection in excellent condition.
Reinhold-Brown Gallery, 26 E. 78th St., 734-7999. Through Dec. 13.

WEDNESDAY 17

FACULTY ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITION
Exhibition Gallery, 100 Level, Avery Library
Columbia University, 116th St. and Broadway, 580-3510. Through Dec. 17.

THURSDAY 18

FRIDAY 19

WEDNESDAY 24

THURSDAY 25

FRIDAY 26

BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNISM
American architectural drawings from the National Academy of design. Twenty four drawings from 1885 to 1930, by McKim, Mead, Carrere, Saarinen, Delano, and others.
National Academy of Design, 1083 Fifth Ave., 369-4880. Through Dec. 28.

WEDNESDAY 31

FROM MATISSE TO AMERICAN ABSTRACT PAINTING
Paintings by Norman Bluhm, Richard Diebenkorn, Al Held, Ellsworth Kelly, Lee Krasner, Robert Motherwell, Frank Stella, and Jack Yongerman.
Washburn Gallery, 113 Greene St., 966-3151. Through Dec. 31.

THURSDAY 1 JANUARY

JAMES TURRELL
In this installation Mr. Turrell uses light to transform and elevate the museum space. The show covers the Californian artists work from the mid-60's to the present.
The Whitney Museum of American Art., 945 Madison Ave. at 75th., 570-3600. Through Jan. 1.

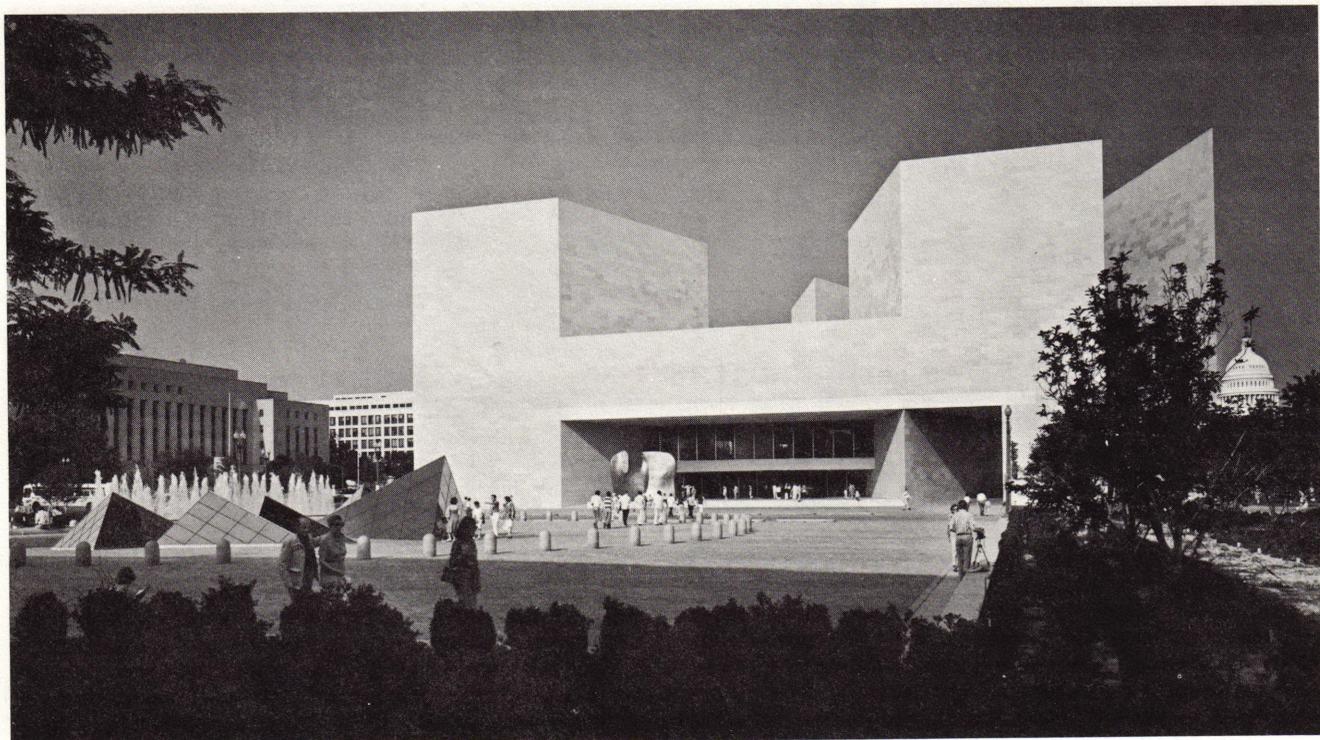
FRIDAY 2

WILLIAM KLEIN: SLIDES AND PHOTOGRAPHS
Street scenes of New York, Rome, Tokyo and Moscow.
The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St., 956-6100. Through Jan. 1.

EZRA STOLLER

This article is an excerpt from the catalogue introduction by Arthur Drexler published by the Max Protetch Gallery. It is the first exhibition on the work of Ezra Stoller.

Arthur Drexler



East Wing, National Gallery Washington, D.C. Photographed by Ezra Stoller © ESTO 1978, courtesy Max Protetch Gallery, New York. Architects: I.M. Pei and Partners.

In the years after World War II, when American optimism about modern architecture was at its zenith, architectural photography assumed a new importance. Photographs were no longer simply records of built facts, or even poetic interpretations. They became missionary tracts published into the world, teaching the people the demanding but redemptive art of looking at modern buildings. Soon architects and editors alike understood that persuasion by photography could be guaranteed if entrusted to Ezra Stoller. A building placed under the protection of his camera was known to have been "stollerized", as the architect himself might have been baptized; and with the same consequent sanctification. Human error fell away.

The age of innocence has passed, once again, and yet Stoller's photographs are still beautiful, and sometimes so persuasive as to seem definitive. How does he do it? His personal history does not explain his gift, although it does differ in some respects from that of most of his professional peers.

Stoller was trained as an architect, in Lloyd Morgan's New York University atelier overlooking Bryant Park. To earn some spare cash he began to make lantern slides; then someone saw him carrying his big Butcher British Pressman (\$15 second hand in 1936) and he was asked to photograph architectural models and drawings, and then sculpture for the class taught by Rene Chambellan. When Chambellan completed his sculptures for the Rockefeller Center mall he asked Stoller to photograph them, and these pictures were widely published. The New York World's Fair of 1939 provided a rare opportunity at a time when the Depression still blocked architectural work, and photography had already begun to absorb all his attention. His "study" was suddenly made more self-conscious through a book of photographs by Eugene Atget — a gift from his wife, Helen, herself an artist.

Ezra Stoller's photographs are now a part of history of modern architecture in the United States. If he made some

buildings look a little better than they were, the improvement provided an image for aspiring architects. For better or worse, his photographs have been more real to architectural students, and more intensely experienced, than most of the buildings they memorialize. Their instrumental value in spreading the good word may now yield to their more durable value as art.

ROOFS

NEW YORK NOW

"Temples, Tombs, and Angels: Tops of Buildings in Lower Manhattan," an exhibition of photographs, elevations, plans, and models of top of buildings in Lower Manhattan, will be on view at the Downtown Branch of the Whitney Museum of American Art from November 19 through December 31. In conjunction with the exhibition, a series of special tours will be conducted from high vantage points. Represented in the exhibition are the Greek polychromed temple on the roof of the National City Company Building at 52 Wall Street, the Egyptian stepped pyramid atop the Banker's Trust Building at 16 Wall Street, the Gothic-revival ornamentation of the Woolworth Building, and the Art Deco gargoyles of the First National City Bank at 20 Exchange Place. Also included are the Renaissance tempietto and statue of Civic Fame on the Municipal Building, Cunard Building's nereids (nymphs on serpent-tailed horses), the Greek-derived tripod or olive oil burner on the former Standard Oil Building at 26 Broadway, A. T. & T's angel, the Spirit of Communication (now removed from the building at Fulton and Broadway), and the World War I biplane on the roof of 77 Water Street.

As New York architects became more comfortable with steel-frame construction, they were able to meet the demands of rivalrous businessmen who sought to dominate the skyline through ever-higher buildings. These skyscrapers in New York's financial district are topped with a brilliant profusion of forms borrowed from historical periods as diverse as ancient Egypt and the Italian Renaissance — all but invisible to the pedestrian. The exhibition explores this ornamentation in the period of its efflorescence from 1900 to 1930, with some later examples dating after the hiatus in construction caused by the Great Depression and World War II. Photographs of upper stories and their decorative details offer the opportunity to appreciate the variety of design and ornament used to meet the challenge of capping skyscrapers prior to the emergence of the International Style which brought the absence of ornament into vogue.



Pulitzer Fountain, Grand Army Plaza, 1979. Photograph by Philip Trager from the exhibition "New York Now" at the Museum of the City of New York. © 1980.

"... but it is only in Manhattan, where masonry is so tightly packed that it seems to explode into the sky, that the true soul of our City resides. It is possible to imagine the other metropolises, but Manhattan could be only what it is and where it is."

Louis Auchincloss

The Museum of the City of New York will present "New York Now: Photographs by Philip Trager" on December 16, 1980. The exhibition is composed of fifty black and white photographs of Manhattan architecture. These photographs are part of the Museum of the City of New York's extensive photographic collections.

Philip Trager is a lover of buildings. His subjects include sections of buildings, overall views, street scenes and skyscrapers. Trager has eliminated the intimate detail in his work — people rarely intrude on his scenes. His focus is on the architecture. He can isolate a building's "personality" and

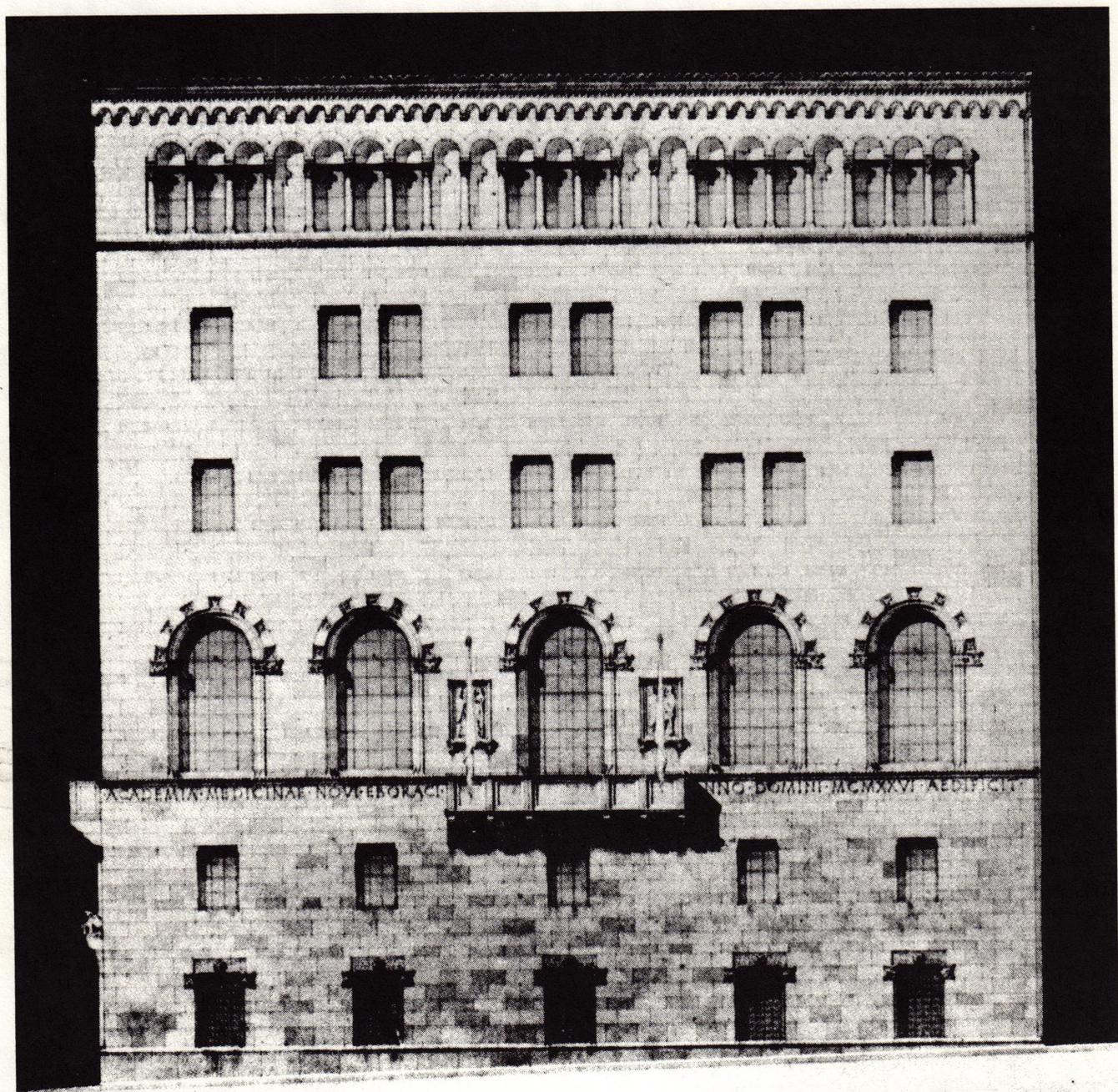
to some extent create that essence, simply by framing what he likes best. These are very calculated, very deliberate compositions.

Philip Trager, a lawyer by profession, took these photographs with 4 x 5 and 11 x 14 view cameras.

The exhibition "New York Now: Photographs by Philip Trager" will remain on view through March 1, 1981 in the Print and Photograph Gallery on the ground floor of the Museum.

A book of Philip Trager's work, entitled *Philip Trager: New York*, with a foreword by Louis Auchincloss, President of the Museum of the City of New York, is available at the Museum. It includes eighty-eight photographs.

Louis Ayres. New York Academy of Medicine, undated. Reproduction of elevation and plan. From the catalogue "Between Tradition and Modernism" by Deborah Nevins for The National Academy of Design.



ELEVATION OF FIFTH AVENUE
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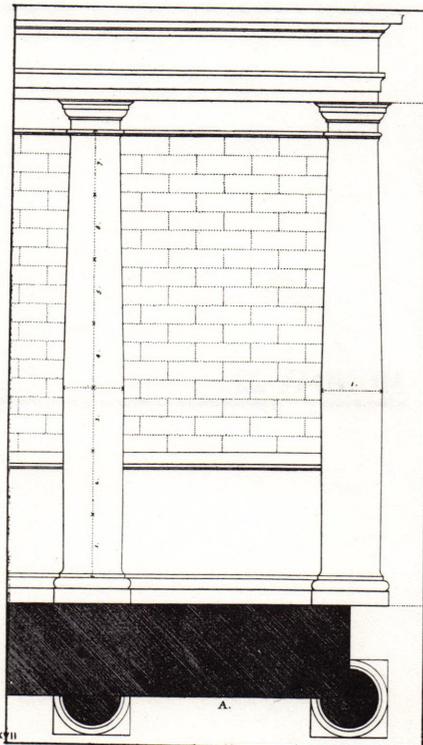
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On Monday evening December 1, 1980 at 6:00 P.M. the New York Coalition of Black Architects is sponsoring a tribute to Architect John Louis Wilson, FAIA, on the occasion of his fifty years in Architecture, for the benefit of a scholarship fund for minority students of architecture. The tribute and retrospective exhibition of his work will be held at Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture and Planning, Avery Hall, Wood Auditorium West 116th Street and Broadway.

Mr. Wilson was born in 1898 in Meridian, Mississippi and very early in his life determined to be an architect. He worked his way through Columbia University School of Architecture doing a variety of jobs and graduated in 1928, becoming a registered architect in 1930. In 1935 he was appointed a member of the group of associated architects for the design of Harlem River Houses, which in 1975 was officially declared an historic landmark and which to this day is considered the finest example of public housing in the United States.

Throughout the 30's and 40's he taught at the Urban League, a WPA project, while maintaining his own architectural practice. He became an inspiration to young minority students of architecture, helping to found the Council for the Advancement of the Negro in Architecture (CANA) which evolved into the Equal Opportunities Committee of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, of which he was chairman from 1967-70.

Beginning in the sixties, Mr. Wilson's practice began to expand in conjunction with the Civil Rights Movement. In 1960, he designed the Mount Morris Park Senior Citizens' Housing Project. Among other works completed at this time were a multi-family high rise at 193rd Street and Bailey Avenue, a joint venture with the firm of his friend and colleague, Horace Ginsbern. In 1979 for these and other housing projects Mr. Wilson was awarded the Andrew J. Thomas award for being a pioneer in housing.

DECEMBER 1980

OCULUS

CONTINUING EVENTS

WALKING TOUR: GRAND CENTRAL STATION

Learn about the architecture, history and future of the terminal. One hour tour. Meet outside Chemical's Commuter Express.

Every Wed. at 12:30 pm.

For more information call the Municipal Arts Society, 935-3960.

T. LUX FEININGER— PHOTO'S OF THE 20's AND 30's.

Feininger is known primarily as a painter. He was hired by Oskar Schlemmer to photograph for the Bauhaus, and in the early 30's Philip Johnson acquired a selection of his work for the Museum of Modern Art. Prakapas Gallery, 19 E. 71st St., 737-6066. Through Dec. 13.

PORTALS

Walter Dusenbery. Classic architectural stone sculptures. Three large marble portals.

Hamilton Gallery, 20 W. 57th St., 765-5918. Through Dec. 13.

ARCHITECTURAL SCULPTURES BY GEORGE SMITH

Bronze sculptures, pyramids, geometric wall units and an African inspired Dogon shelter.

The Studio Museum in Harlem, 2033 Fifth Ave., 427-5959. Through Jan. 4.

CENTRAL PARK

Fifty plans and drawings by the architectural firm of Frederick Olmstead and Calvert Vaux, from a recently discovered collection of original designs. Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St., 860-6868. Through Jan. 18.

EDWARD HOPPER: THE ART AND THE ARTIST

A retrospective of Hopper's paintings and drawings.

The Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St., 570-3600. Through Jan. 18.

JAWLENSKY AND MAJOR GERMAN EXPRESSIONISTS

Paintings by Klee, Kandinsky, Muntser, Macke, and others.

Catalogue available.

Leonard Hutton Gallery, 33 E. 74th St., 249-9700. Through Jan. 31.

20th-CENTURY AMERICAN DESIGN

Fifty objects are on show from 1900 to the 1960's, by Stickleby, Noguchi, Saarinen, Eames, and others.

Brooklyn Museum, 188 Eastern Pkwy., 630-5000. Through Feb. 8.

INTERIORS

Historical works on interior design and furnishings, from the library's collection.

The New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. and 42nd St., 790-6551. Through Feb. 28.

MONDAY 1

HOWARD BRANDSTON LECTURE

Mr. Brandston is a lighting designer who believes lighting can add fresh visual and emotional dimensions to an architectural solution. Part of the "Design for Living" series.

The Ethical Culture Society, 2 West 64th St., 7:45-9:15 pm. Individual admission \$10.00, 874-5200. Dec. 1.

KEITH CRITCHLOW LECTURE

Pratt Institute, School of Architecture, Higgins Hall, 200 Willoughby Ave., 6:00 pm., 636-3600. Dec. 1.

MONDAY 8

MONDAY 15

MONDAY 22

MONDAY 29

TUESDAY 2

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR: EMERGENCY ROOMS AND NEO-NATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNITS.

TWO MINI-PROGRAMS PRESENTED BY THE CENTER FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION IN COOPERATION WITH THE NEW YORK CHAPTER, AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS HEALTH FACILITIES COMMITTEE.

TO BE HELD ON DECEMBER 2 & 9, AT LENOX HILL HOSPITAL, 1086 LEXINGTON AVE., REGISTER BY PHONE. CALL 754-2080.

TUESDAY 9

HUGH HARDY LECTURE: ARCHITECTURE

Vice President's evening II.

The Architectural League, 457 Madison Ave., 6:30 pm., 753-1722. Dec. 9.

TUESDAY 16

GEORGE NELSON LECTURE: LOOKING AROUND

The Architectural League, 457 Madison Ave., 6:30 pm., 753-1722. Dec. 16.

NEW YORK NOW: PHOTOGRAPHS BY PHILIP TRAGER

Fifty black and white photographs of Manhattan architecture. Very calculated and deliberate compositions.

Museum of The City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 103rd St., 543-1672. Through Mar. 1. Opens Dec. 16.

TUESDAY 23

TUESDAY 30

WEDNESDAY 3

THURSDAY 4

FRIDAY 5

EZRA STOLLER PHOTOGRAPHS OF ARCHITECTURE 1939-1980

Beginning with Stoller's early assignments to photograph Alvar Aalto's Finnish Pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair, and photographs of projects by Le Corbusier, Marcel Breuer, among others. Max Protetch Gallery, 37 W. 57th St., 838-7436. Through Jan. 12. Opens Dec. 4.

ROMALDO GIURGOLA

Opening of the exhibit
The Architectural League, The Urban Center, 457 Madison Ave., 6:30 pm. Non-members \$5.00. Reservations: 753-1722.

PHILIP TRAGER AND CHARLES PRATT: PHOTOGRAPHS (1926-76)

New York architecture including ten studies and details of Harlem houses, the Guggenheim Museum, and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. Tower by Philip Trager. Also photographs of gardens by Charles Pratt. Witkin Gallery, 41 E. 57th St., 355-1461. Through Dec. 6.

WEDNESDAY 10

THURSDAY 11

FRIDAY 12

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF SMALL URBAN SPACES

A Film.
The Architectural League, The Urban Center, 457 Madison Ave., 12:30, 5:30 and 7:00 pm., 935-3690. Dec. 10.

DAVID VAN ZANTEN LECTURE

"Gothic and Conviction". The last in the series "Beaux-Arts Gothic: Medievalism in America after 1900."
Columbia University, Avery Hall, 116th St. and Broadway, 6:00 pm., 580-3510. Dec. 11.

LANDSCAPE SKETCHES

Landscapes and architectural drawings by Lawrence Halprin. Spaced Gallery, 165 W. 72nd St., 787-6350. Through Dec. 13.

FILM POSTERS OF THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE 1925-1931

The posters reflect the aesthetic challenge and the ideological tumult of the 1920's in Russia. An important collection in excellent condition. Reinhold-Brown Gallery, 26 E. 78th St., 734-7999. Through Dec. 13.

WEDNESDAY 17

THURSDAY 18

FRIDAY 19

FACULTY ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITION

Exhibition Gallery, 100 Level, Avery Library
Columbia University, 116th St. and Broadway, 580-3510. Through Dec. 17.

WEDNESDAY 24

THURSDAY 25

FRIDAY 26

BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNISM

American architectural drawings from the National Academy of design. Twenty four drawings from 1885 to 1930, by McKim, Mead, Carrere, Saarinen, Delano, and others. National Academy of Design, 1083 Fifth Ave., 369-4880. Through Dec. 28.

WEDNESDAY 31

THURSDAY 1 JANUARY

FRIDAY 2

FROM MATISSE TO AMERICAN ABSTRACT PAINTING

Paintings by Norman Bluhm, Richard Diebenkorn, Al Held, Ellsworth Kelly, Lee Krasner, Robert Motherwell, Frank Stella, and Jack Yongerman. Washburn Gallery, 113 Greene St., 966-3151. Through Dec. 31.

JAMES TURRELL

In this installation Mr. Turrell uses light to transform and elevate the museum space. The show covers the Californian artists work from the mid-60's to the present. The Whitney Museum of American Art., 945 Madison Ave. at 75th., 570-3600. Through Jan. 1.

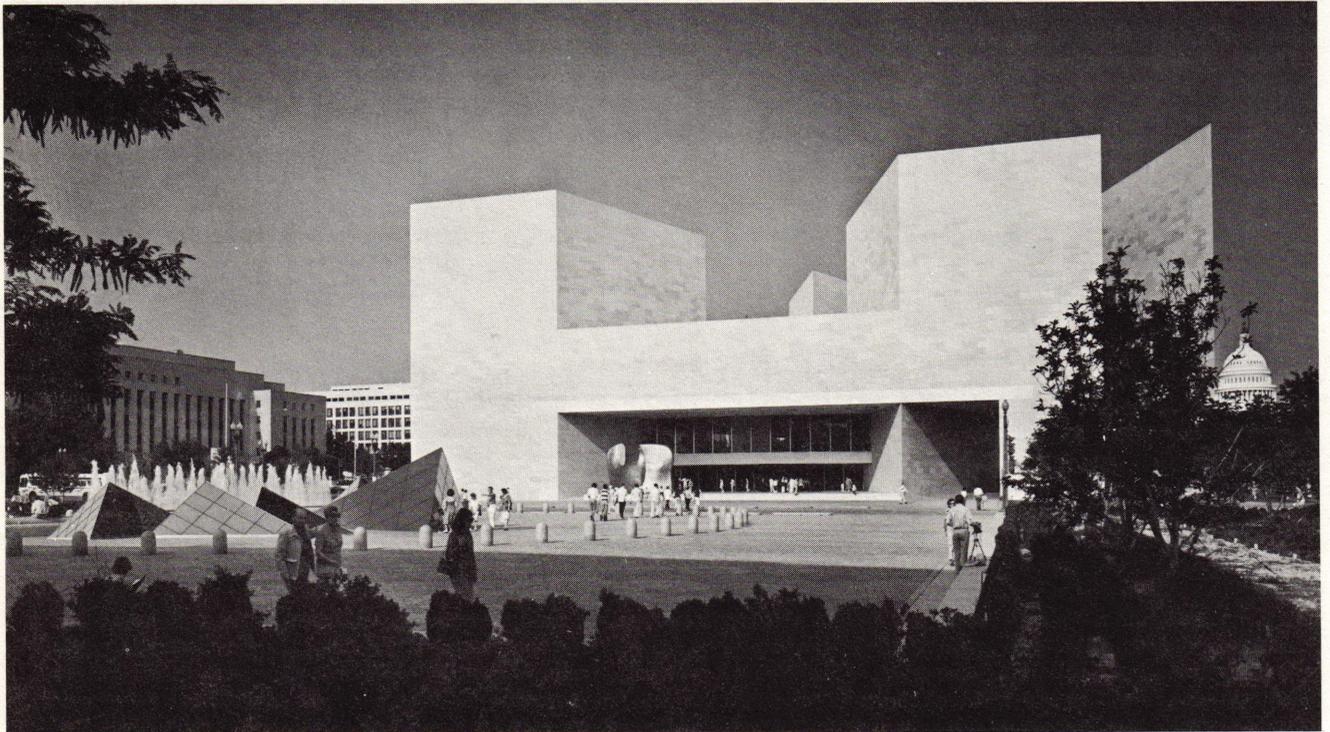
WILLIAM KLEIN: SLIDES AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Street scenes of New York, Rome, Tokyo and Moscow. The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St., 956-6100. Through Jan. 1.

EZRA STOLLER

This article is an excerpt from the catalogue introduction by Arthur Drexler published by the Max Protetch Gallery. It is the first exhibition on the work of Ezra Stoller.

Arthur Drexler



East Wing, National Gallery Washington, D.C. Photographed by Ezra Stoller ©ESTO 1978, courtesy Max Protetch Gallery, New York. Architects: I.M. Pei and Partners.

In the years after World War II, when American optimism about modern architecture was at its zenith, architectural photography assumed a new importance. Photographs were no longer simply records of built facts, or even poetic interpretations. They became missionary tracts published into the world, teaching the people the demanding but redemptive art of looking at modern buildings. Soon architects and editors alike understood that persuasion by photography could be guaranteed if entrusted to Ezra Stoller. A building placed under the protection of his camera was known to have been "stollerized", as the architect himself might have been baptized; and with the same consequent sanctification. Human error fell away.

The age of innocence has passed, once again, and yet Stoller's photographs are still beautiful, and sometimes so persuasive as to seem definitive. How does he do it? His personal history does not explain his gift, although it does differ in some respects from that of most of his professional peers.

Stoller was trained as an architect, in Lloyd Morgan's New York University atelier overlooking Bryant Park. To earn some spare cash he began to make lantern slides; then someone saw him carrying his big Butcher British Pressman (\$15 second hand in 1936) and he was asked to photograph architectural models and drawings, and then sculpture for the class taught by Rene Chambellan. When Chambellan completed his sculptures for the Rockefeller Center mall he asked Stoller to photograph them, and these pictures were widely published. The New York World's Fair of 1939 provided a rare opportunity at a time when the Depression still blocked architectural work, and photography had already begun to absorb all his attention. His "study" was suddenly made more self-conscious through a book of photographs by Eugene Atget—a gift from his wife, Helen, herself an artist.

Ezra Stoller's photographs are now a part of history of modern architecture in the United States. If he made some

buildings look a little better than they were, the improvement provided an image for aspiring architects. For better or worse, his photographs have been more real to architectural students, and more intensely experienced, than most of the buildings they memorialize. Their instrumental value in spreading the good word may now yield to their more durable value as art.

ROOFS

NEW YORK NOW

"Temples, Tombs, and Angels: Tops of Buildings in Lower Manhattan," an exhibition of photographs, elevations, plans, and models of top of buildings in Lower Manhattan, will be on view at the Downtown Branch of the Whitney Museum of American Art from November 19 through December 31. In conjunction with the exhibition, a series of special tours will be conducted from high vantage points. Represented in the exhibition are the Greek polychromed temple on the roof of the National City Company Building at 52 Wall Street, the Egyptian stepped pyramid atop the Banker's Trust Building at 16 Wall Street, the Gothic-revival ornamentation of the Woolworth Building, and the Art Deco gargoyles of the First National City Bank at 20 Exchange Place. Also included are the Renaissance tempietto and statue of Civic Fame on the Municipal Building, Cunard Building's nereids (nymphs on serpent-tailed horses), the Greek-derived tripod or olive oil burner on the former Standard Oil Building at 26 Broadway, A.T. & T's angel, the Spirit of Communication (now removed from the building at Fulton and Broadway), and the World War I biplane on the roof of 77 Water Street.

As New York architects became more comfortable with steel-frame construction, they were able to meet the demands of rivalrous businessmen who sought to dominate the skyline through ever-higher buildings. These skyscrapers in New York's financial district are topped with a brilliant profusion of forms borrowed from historical periods as diverse as ancient Egypt and the Italian Renaissance—all but invisible to the pedestrian. The exhibition explores this ornamentation in the period of its efflorescence from 1900 to 1930, with some later examples dating after the hiatus in construction caused by the Great Depression and World War II. Photographs of upper stories and their decorative details offer the opportunity to appreciate the variety of design and ornament used to meet the challenge of capping skyscrapers prior to the emergence of the International Style which brought the absence of ornament into vogue.



Pulitzer Fountain, Grand Army Plaza, 1979. Photograph by Philip Trager from the exhibition "New York Now" at the Museum of the City of New York. © 1980.

"... but it is only in Manhattan, where masonry is so tightly packed that it seems to explode into the sky, that the true soul of our City resides. It is possible to imagine the other metropolises, but Manhattan could be only what it is and where it is."

Louis Auchincloss

The Museum of the City of New York will present "New York Now: Photographs by Philip Trager" on December 16, 1980. The exhibition is composed of fifty black and white photographs of Manhattan architecture. These photographs are part of the Museum of the City of New York's extensive photographic collections.

Philip Trager is a lover of buildings. His subjects include sections of buildings, overall views, street scenes and skyscrapers. Trager has eliminated the intimate detail in his work—people rarely intrude on his scenes. His focus is on the architecture. He can isolate a building's "personality" and

to some extent create that essence, simply by framing what he likes best. These are very calculated, very deliberate compositions.

Philip Trager, a lawyer by profession, took these photographs with 4 x 5 and 11 x 14 view cameras.

The exhibition "New York Now: Photographs by Philip Trager" will remain on view through March 1, 1981 in the Print and Photograph Gallery on the ground floor of the Museum.

A book of Philip Trager's work, entitled *Philip Trager: New York*, with a foreword by Louis Auchincloss, President of the Museum of the City of New York, is available at the Museum. It includes eighty-eight photographs.

Louis Ayres. *New York Academy of Medicine*, undated. Reproduction of elevation and plan. From the catalogue "Between Tradition and Modernism" by Deborah Nevins for The National Academy of Design.

