

# ARCADE

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THE NORTHWEST CALENDAR FOR ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN  
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## PORTLAND CITYSCAPE, NOT LANDSCAPE

Downtown Portland is currently a busy place on Saturday nights. People are hurrying to films, eating out, and listening to music. A good reason for the repopulation is the Downtown Plan of the City, after ten years a reasonable set of tools with which to continue the development of downtown Portland.

In the middle 1960's, Portlanders saw construction of downtown buildings on a new scale and proportion. The city's unusually small blocks traditionally accommodated quarter-block buildings until the 1948 Equitable Building, designed by Pietro Belluschi, FAIA, occupied a half-block. In 1960 the Portland office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (which purchased Belluschi's firm when he moved to M.I.T.) created the city's first full block building: Standard Plaza. When the South Auditorium Urban renewal project (Master Plan by SOM) was built from 1967 to 1968, Portland stopped being a quaint, comfortable city on the Willamette River. It was growing straight up, with even larger office towers proposed. The human scale and energy of retail commerce were starting to be displaced.

Simultaneously, the city sprawled into suburbs, and shopping malls lured consumers to their convenience. A freeway system by-passed the urban core. Fueled by monumental office buildings and workers who left the city in automobiles at 5:00 p.m., downtown Portland was changing into a central business district. Civic and business leaders, city planners, and Portland's Development Commission were aware of a growing problem. But planning guidelines had not been previously formulated to deal with development issues.

**"... hard edges, hard surfaces, scale of structure, and concentration of humanity definitely foster a quicker pace than a forest trail."**

Downtown merchants wanted their customers back and insisted on more parking. In fact, Meier & Frank Department Store applied to construct a large parking garage across from the landmark Pioneer Court House. This was not a reasonable solution, but the pleas from the merchants were credible. The city hired consultants to study the parking problems, and Mayor Terry Schruck appointed a 15-member Citizens Advisory Committee to help set goals for downtown. "There were lots of vacancies in downtown," said Dean Gisvold, Portland attorney and first chairman of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). "Property owners were knocking down buildings and landbanking in parking lots for the future," he continued. "Many of us thought Portland would go the way of many Eastern cities."

"When the city was deciding whether or not they wanted downtown to remain a mixed-use downtown rather than a collec-

tion of CBD office towers, they made a choice to create and foster an urban, an urbane, if you will, experience in downtown..." remarked Michael Harrison, Chief Planner for Land Use in Portland. Portland is a perfect compromise town for people who sometimes want to live in the country and sometimes want to live in a town. But "... hard edges, hard surfaces, scale of structure, and concentration of humanity definitely foster a quicker pace than a forest trail," said architect David Soderstrom of Martin/Soderstrom/Matthewson. Like many others, he thinks Portlanders can have both.

A twelve year veteran of Portland planning, Rodney O'Hiser, the city's Chief Planner for Urban Design, cites the people's concern for the future of unguided downtown development. "We felt we needed more ground rules," O'Hiser commented.

The Citizens Advisory Committee produced a set of goals in 15 months. "These did not deal with taste," said planner Harrison. "The Goals and Guidelines say that downtown Portland is a 24-hour city, pleasant for pedestrians, where historic buildings are preserved as special and where the waterfront can be part of the city. The Downtown Plan deals with values: What kind of place do we want to live in?"

The support of Mayor Neil Goldschmidt was critical to the planning process. "The endorsement of the Mayor made city planning a priority. So for a lot of the things we wanted to get done, we had political muscle," said Dean Gisvold. And architect David Soderstrom added, "Goldschmidt was an energy source. He gathered people who liked cities around him. A lot of in-migration from back East — people who were raised in major cities, like Philadelphia, Boston, or New York, liked it here, and they didn't want to see the city fail. That was one push; the other was economic."

After adoption of the Downtown Goals and Guidelines, Mayor Goldschmidt reappointed the Citizens Advisory Committee to prepare development guidelines. "In addition to height and bulk, we made regulations which affected pedestrians. New buildings must be built out to the street with 50% of their frontage in openings to avoid blank walls," said Gisvold. "... Being able to look into buildings tends to reduce their scale," added O'Hiser. The CAC and city planners eventually eased the parking problems by siting parking structures either underground or on the edges of the retail core. The Transit Mall was developed to re-enforce the notion of an urban core with fewer automobiles.

The CAC's philosophical Goals and Guidelines had been readily accepted, but the City Council haggled for more than a year and a half before development guidelines were adopted. "The developers wanted us to give them something in black and white. They wanted a 'Rule of Law' that they could read and apply. We worked it out, but we made a lot of concessions, especially in height regulations. It's twice as high toward the waterfront as I would

have liked it," remarked Gisvold.

Looking back on it, Gisvold thinks the CAC made a mistake by writing the committee into the development process. "... Rather than dealing with the plans and general concepts of the Goals and Guidelines, we got on the other side of some pretty powerful people, like PGE. We were reviewing their plans against the guidelines. We knew what we wanted, and it was not always what they wanted." Gisvold talked about several "knock down, drag out fights" with developers. "One was a project that luckily didn't go through on the waterfront, and another was the U.S. Bank Tower (SOM - under construction on West Burnside). After the development regulations were finally adopted and Mayor Goldschmidt did not reappoint the CAC, Gisvold said he realized the committee had made another mistake. "We were responsible only to the Mayor. We didn't have a constituency with the rest of the City Council. The Mayor just couldn't round up enough support to continue the committee."

**"Portland is blessed with creative architects who can use the Downtown Plan. They respect the scale and feel the need for comfort. The new buildings have a tendency to fit."**

"The Design Review Commission was formed on the last day Neil was in office," said architect David Soderstrom, who is current Chairman of the Commission. "And he charged the commission to protect, to guard the Downtown Plan." Now, the Commission does have the power to hold building permits and grant variances, and the group deals with issues of design: light, form, texture, mass, and color. "It is easy for an architect... to accommodate the owners' wishes and ignore the city fabric around it. If you do this, you end up with a lot of independent little things happening. And the overall experience of downtown can be fragmented and stop working very quickly," Soderstrom continued.

The Commission has a composition similar to, though smaller than, the Citizens Advisory Committee. Soderstrom said he wanted only professionals on the committee, but Goldschmidt would not accept a single interest group's having that much power. Unlike most politicians who do not understand or cannot relate to the field, "Goldschmidt understood design, what it means, and how the architecture professional operates," Soderstrom concluded. As a result, the Design Review Commission is a mix of professional, private, and civic interests.

On the list of first phase projects, Portland has implemented all but a few of those requested. The Portland Performing Arts Center, including the renovation of the Paramount Theatre and construction of two

new facilities on SW Broadway, will be completed by 1985. The Waterfront Park area is slowly but steadily developing into a major focus for downtown Portlanders. Harbor Drive was torn up and the Willamette Greenway created in 1974. The Morrison Street Development has been initiated with proposals from developers now under review. Skybridges have been abandoned. There has been a slow increase in middle-income housing in the urban core.

Gisvold remarked, "Portland is blessed with creative architects who can use the Downtown Plan. They respect the scale and feel the need for comfort. The new buildings have a tendency to fit." There are some problems, however. Michael Harrison pointed to the intersection of SW 5th and Madison as a study in contrast, not in compatibility. The Standard Plaza stands on the northwest corner, the Portland Building on the northeast, the historic City Hall on the southeast and, under construction, the PacWest Building, designed by Hugh Stubbins, FAIA. "Hugh Stubbins said he couldn't sleep nights, if he tried to relate to the Portland Building," laughed Harrison. This intersection may be "the ultimate expression of contrast."

Most all veterans of the process agree that the Portland Downtown Plan is a set of policies successfully guiding the future of the city's built environment. "There are similar plans in other cities," said O'Hiser. "But this one is different because it is much more than a paper plan." The combined efforts of civic leaders, innovative city planners, and a concerned citizenry has offered Portland a rare situation as Harrison pointed out: "... a context of community goals backs up" the Design Review Commission. The Downtown Plan proves that a city's planning process is most successful when citizens are committed participants as well as beneficiaries. Upcoming challenges, as Soderstrom anticipates to height restrictions near the waterfront, may require alterations or negotiations. But Gisvold explained, "Portlanders know you can fight City Hall and win... There is a general, genuine public interest by citizens and politicians to identify a problem and solve it."

*The only district adjacent to the downtown that was not included in the Downtown Plan is the NW Warehousing Area. As development pressure increases and as business considers other types of warehousing facilities, the area is undergoing change. The Portland/AIA has commissioned a Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team Study to help begin the planning process for the "Last Place in the Downtown Plan." "In 1971, the Portland/AIA prepared a major survey on downtown as our contribution to the [initial] planning process," said Bill Church, FAIA, head of the R/UDAT. "It seems fitting that we prepare the studies for the last place."*

**Martha Bergman**

*Martha Bergman is Chapter Executive of the Portland AIA and ARCADE's Portland correspondent.*



# ARCADE

## LETTERS AND LECTURES

Dear Readers:

Each of this issue's articles takes up some aspect of design in an urban context. We think it is important for architects and designers to consider the implications of their work. In a city this includes its impacts on pedestrians, treatment of a formal building type, congruence with public planning objectives. Of the following articles, the "downtown tour" has perhaps the greatest potential to enlighten. It is a tale of the way one downtown dweller perceives elements of the urban composition and incorporates them into his daily life. His selections are instructive as to the means by which a designer's hypotheses and devices, transformed into construction, are translated into the experience of an individual who lives amongst their effects.

No fooling, The Editors

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## Rossi's scalpel is reductivist typology by which a vast literature of architectural expressions is reduced to a handful of elemental symbols.

To the Editor:

Allow me to offer these thoughts, following a lecture by Aldo Rossi at the University of Washington on March 1.

Aldo Rossi provides a valuable service to those who search within architecture for evidence of comedy and tragedy in human nature. His extreme and ruthless point of view demands that a choice be made, for he has placed himself at the boundary between architecture and the gaping void. Some may recoil and hurry on their way; others may join him in giddy vertigo. Skeptics shout, "Jump!"

Rossi does not equivocate. He has bad news, and he is not about to prescribe a palliative, to suggest light entertainment and rest. Capitalist architecture has a lingering, fatal disease; radical surgery is required. Rossi's scalpel is reductivist typology by which a vast literature of architectural expressions is reduced to a handful of elemental symbols. Deftly, he wields his flawless instrument, slicing through fatty tissues of superficial human desires, corrupt bourgeois flesh yearning for diversity, at last to lay bare a paltry soul lying still and dark below. One fears this may not be surgery after all, but an autopsy as one vital organ after another plops into the tray.

## URBAN BOUNTY

There are at this time no less than five independently-organized major events scheduled in the next two-and-a-half months with urban design and planning as their common focus.

There must be something funny in the air Seattlites and Eastsiders have been breathing recently — something emanating from all the new towers under construction. Everyone seems to be getting the same idea. There are at this time no less than five independently-organized major events scheduled in the next two-and-a-half months with urban design and planning as their common focus.

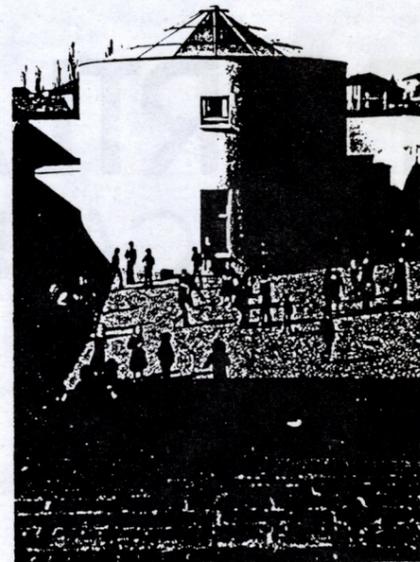
The intensity of the schedule indicates a peak of interest in the subject, although there has been a long, if not steady climb toward it via R/UDAT, Seattle's and Bellevue's downtown plans, and the scattered, but frequent architectural discussions in the local media (foremost in Seattle's *Weekly*). The recent Westlake Mall convolutions and State Convention Center site selection process in downtown Seattle have also brought about much debate.

The Henry Art Gallery's lecture series "will focus on the dynamics of urban design" and will run from March 30 to April 7 on Wednesday evenings. Locals Rae Tufts, Paul Schell and Jon Runstad, Myer Wolfe and James Parsons, Ibsen Nelsen and Gordon Walker, and New Yorker Paul Goldberger will speak. The price is \$60 with Gallery membership.

The Seattle AIA's symposium "will explore a wide range of subjects such as improving the livability of downtown, urban design issues, innovative architecture, socio-economic diversity, law, and development considerations." Each evening an out-of-towner will be paired with a local speaker. They will be Robert Campbell and David Brewster, Jacquelin Robertson and Don Miles, Dan Solomon and Chuck Davis, Stephen McLaughlin and Jerry Hillis, Allan Jacobs and Victor Steinbrueck, and

The spirit extracted by means of Rossi's analytical regression has no connection with time or place; it is anonymous, orphaned. We neither can nor want to possess it anymore than convicts hope to possess their cells. But through denial of decadent possession-fetishism we are purified, suitable novitiates for somber Marxist Truth. Dispossessed, we are at last free to embrace the dark soul — to be institutionalized. The triumphal architectural incarnations of the institution are mental wards, prisons, barracks, and mass graves. Proletarian models are most susceptible to analysis regardless of contradictions. Thus it does not matter that houses held up as paradigms of typological purity, a Marxist paradise, may have been built by landlord "padrones" in which to conveniently store their sharecropper peasants.

Romantic visions of authoritarian purity, whether by individual or mass imposition, are nothing new in architectural theory. Rossi cautions us not to regard his ideas as a break with Modernism. He appears to be somewhat vexed by inclusion in a pluralistic Post-Modernist bouillabaisse. His use of architecture as a political cleanser for our grubby, sticky, materialistic minds assures him a spot in the Modernist firmament.



Aldo Rossi's Library at the Elementary School of Fagnano Olona, 1972.

Rossi's surgical technique must be compelling for some; legitimized by copious publication, its minimalist palette affords quick, superficial mastery. Best of all, its relentless alienation and malevolent murmur tend to discourage criticism. Like the tragicomic boozier of the Blues, Rossi's followers can be heard to croon, "The doctor said it'll kill me, but he didn't say when."

—Don Hanlon

Ron Soskolne and Harriett Sherburne. Series tickets cost \$18. Admission to individual lectures will be \$4. The symposium will be held April 16 through June 16.

From April 16 to 21 the American Planning Association National Planning Conference will be held at Seattle Center. The range of subjects covered is immense: housing, the law, planning and women, farmland preservation, writing and communication skills, earthquakes, transportation, the job market, and on and on. There are many workshops and seminars focusing on Seattle, other Northwest cities and towns, and on the region as a whole. Take a look at the program. You can get one from Bob Burke by calling 828-4095, or see one at the AIA Office. The conference is expensive: \$295 for a non-member (APA). A few passes are available in exchange for graphic work. For these contact Mark Hinshaw at 455-6864.

The Seattle Skyline symposium will occur April 28 at the Fifth Avenue Theatre. Peter Blake will moderate a panel discussion with Paul Goldberger, Richard Estes, and Grant Hildebrand. They will "look at the philosophical concept of the skyline as a dynamic creation and . . . think about how to build Seattle as the city we want it to be." It seems a difficult task to connect the very different concepts and separate functions of skyline (the distant silhouette and symbol) and livable downtown (the encompassing neighborhood), but the attempts will surely be interesting. Tickets will be \$7.50. (See the Calendar for details of all the above events.)

Finally, the Urban Land Institute will hold its Spring meeting in Seattle at the Sheraton and Westin Hotels from May 5 through 7. ULI is a non-profit land use and urban development research and educational corporation. There will be many

"mobile workshop" tours of local development; for example, Port Ludlow and Weyerhaeuser corporate offices. There will also be workshops and discussion sessions on current trends in hotel development, the future of shelter, the golf course of the future, rehabilitation and reuse (Waterfront Center and the Olympic Hotel in Seattle), and new development in the Northwest and around the country. The hefty price of attendance is \$625 for non-members, \$425 for members, but full-time students may register and attend meeting sessions at no charge. For more information write: The Urban Land Institute, 1090 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Our cities can only benefit from so much energy and interest pouring into understanding the shaping of our downtowns. It is a shame that this community (architects and planners, in particular) is so fragmented that the symposia, conference, meeting, and lecture series are not better coordinated (the Henry Gallery and Seattle Skyline shared expenses for Paul Goldberger's visit). The common goals of these events are admirable: generation of new ideas, discussion of potentials, dissemination of information to the public, opening up channels of communication between related, but narrowly-focused disciplines. We should hope for more than information-sharing and caring, better-informed individuals at the end of this. We should look for ideas that stir us to work for their realization, rather than more discussion of more ideas. And when it's all said and done, Seattle's bound to be a humdinger of a town.

Mark Ashley

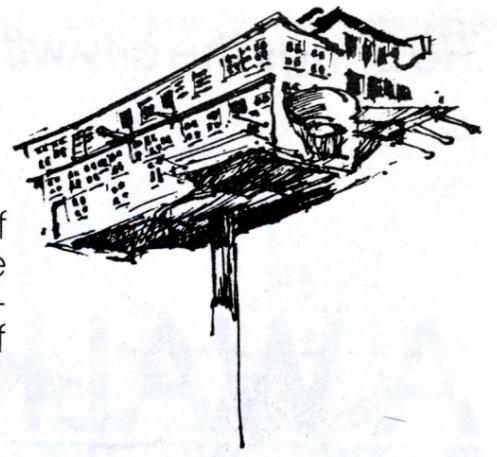
Mark Ashley is an editor of ARCADE.

# THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

## INTERPRETATION AND IMPLICATIONS

The working draft policies for the Downtown Plan will be released by the City of Seattle on May 1, 1983. The Metropolitan Governmental Affairs Committee of the Seattle Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, through this brief introduction to the major zoning changes, encourages active participation in the process of finalizing the City's policy.

Metropolitan Governmental Affairs Committee, Seattle AIA



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In May of 1982, LUTP published the Downtown Alternative Plan. During the intervening 11 months, the AIA's Metropolitan Governmental Affairs Committee and the Urban Design Committee have continued a dialog with LUTP staff reviewing proposed changes in policies and providing feedback. The following discussion of the proposed policies is based upon conversations with the LUTP staff.

To fully cover all proposed zoning changes would require more space than is permitted in this article. This discussion is limited to outlining the major proposed changes that will affect nearly all future design work in downtown Seattle. These proposed changes include: (1) Density limits; (2) Changes to the FAR bonus system; (3) Height limits; (4) Street edge definitions and upper floor setbacks; (5) Housing requirements downtown; (6) Transportation and parking changes.

### 1. Building Density Controls

The Plan proposes several districts based upon floor area ratios as a measure of density. Each district will have floor area allowances appropriate to the uses which are permitted. The floor area allowances will represent a balance among: (1) the capacity of an area for future development, (2) the objective of structuring a variety of downtown environments through the mixing of different uses, (3) the need to ensure a compatible relationship in scale and intensity of activity between different parts of downtown, and (4) availability of transit and transportation.

The number of FAR districts in the Downtown Plan will be reduced from the thirteen proposed in 1982 to ten or eleven districts similar to the existing zoning which defines ten districts. The FAR values have not been set; however at this time, in the office core the proposed base FAR is 10, as in the existing zoning. A maximum FAR of

approximately 18 is proposed regardless of the amenities or transfers of development rights that may be involved.

### 2. Bonuses and Transfers of Development Rights

Bonuses and transfers of development rights (TDRs) are mechanisms for increasing the allowed floor area on a particular site. These mechanisms attach values to public benefits that will be developed or preserved in exchange for allowing an increase in density up to a predefined upper limit.

Most of the people who have discussed the Plan with this Committee have favored revising the major land use controls that have been in effect since the mid-1960s for Seattle's Central Business District (CBD). This need for revision is especially clear with respect to the bonus-able amenities that have been the primary method of increasing the allowable floor area ratio (FAR) above the base of FAR 10. FAR 10 allows the equivalent of a 10-story building to be built over a full building site in the existing CM and BM zones in the CBD. In exchange for providing amenities that were deemed public benefits under existing zoning, office buildings have generally been developed to densities between FAR 10 and FARs in the mid-20s. These benefits included open plazas, shopping arcades, and similar spaces that are accessible to the public. Some of these amenities work very well; others are less successful. The group of amenities available as bonuses under existing zoning is considered by many to be too limited. This limitation has encouraged the development of public open spaces or retail arcades, regardless of functional implications, in order to achieve a maximum FAR. There is general agreement that a bonus system should involve a wider variety of public amenities.

The May 1982 Downtown Plan almost

completely eliminated bonuses for on-site amenities. It proposed that the inclusion of low and moderate income housing and social services would be the primary way to increase density. The May 1982 Plan also introduced the idea of transferring development rights anywhere downtown if the rights were transferred in order to preserve either an historic building or housing in the downtown. Under the May 1982 Plan, bonuses for open space would be allowed only in the vicinity of four street intersections chosen by the City's planning staff.

**In some areas such as the office core, height limits proposed in the May 1982 document may be eliminated.**

### 3. Height Limits

The existing zoning ordinance has no height limits in the downtown core (CM and BM zones). The May 1982 Downtown Alternative Plan proposed height limits over the entire downtown that would attempt to shape the overall profile of development to reflect the topography of the central city and the concentration of business activity. The draft policies to be published in May 1983 include a more simplified set of height limit zones; and, in some areas such as the office core, height limits proposed in the May 1982 document may be eliminated. Height limits for housing remain.

### 4. Street Edge Definition and Upper Floor Setbacks

One of the 1982 Downtown Alternative Plan's objectives was to integrate new development with existing patterns of continuous street fronts in order to facilitate street level retail activity. Another intention of the Plan was to assure light, air, and views for pedestrians in Seattle's CBD. The Plan proposed an extensive set of requirements for defining street edges with specific alignments of construction at ground level and upper level setbacks.

After considering the major impact of these setbacks on development potential and their minimal effect on preserving views, the LUTP staff has recently eliminated the requirement for upper level setbacks east of either First or Second Avenue on east/west streets. In another recent change, preservation of light along major pedestrian routes is to be based on light penetration to the street rather than on a specific, uniform setback.

### 5. Housing

One objective of the Downtown Alternative Plan is to encourage creation of housing in Seattle's urban environment. This concept implies relatively high population densities, a diverse population profile, and availability of residential services. The Plan proposes several districts to be specifically residential in character. The major physical identification of these areas according to the Plan will be lower height limits than neighboring commercial districts. In the opinion of this committee, the lower height limits proposed for these special character areas may discourage construction of residential units and may not provide adequate economic incentives to support the desired amenities and the variety of uses necessary to develop vibrant neighborhoods.

It has been noted in numerous background reports that a substantial population and activity level is needed to form a

**As of this writing, the Plan will require the construction of below market-rate housing or a voluntary cash contribution toward such housing by office space developers in the downtown area.**

sense of neighborhood. Population targets for the downtown approximately triple the current number of people living downtown. It is expected that 75 percent of the new housing units will be built in the Denny Regrade.

As of this writing, the Plan will require the construction of below market-rate housing or a voluntary cash contribution toward such housing by office space developers in the downtown area. This is essentially a tax upon new office construction.

In this way the Plan relies heavily upon private development to achieve its housing objectives. In a slow market this linking of housing and commercial development would bring the provision of below-market-rate housing to a halt. While some attention has been devoted to preservation of low-income housing, the Plan seems to avoid the fact that the provision of low-income housing for Seattle's citizens is a community responsibility and should not be placed upon the property owners.

There do not appear to be strong incentive mechanisms for market-rate housing. Such housing is needed to increase the housing stock and attract the amenities needed to create these new residential "neighborhoods." Application of bonus opportunities to these areas could overcome some of these problems and stimulate the uses necessary for the creation of viable in-town neighborhoods. Without incentives only very small quantities of housing for sale to the highest income markets will be feasible downtown.

Zoning, use limitations, FAR bonuses, accessory use requirements, voluntary cash payment agreements, and TDRs are proposed as possible tools to encourage housing projects downtown. Other objectives, such as open space, social services, and historic preservation, compete with housing for the benefit of these bonuses and incentive tools.

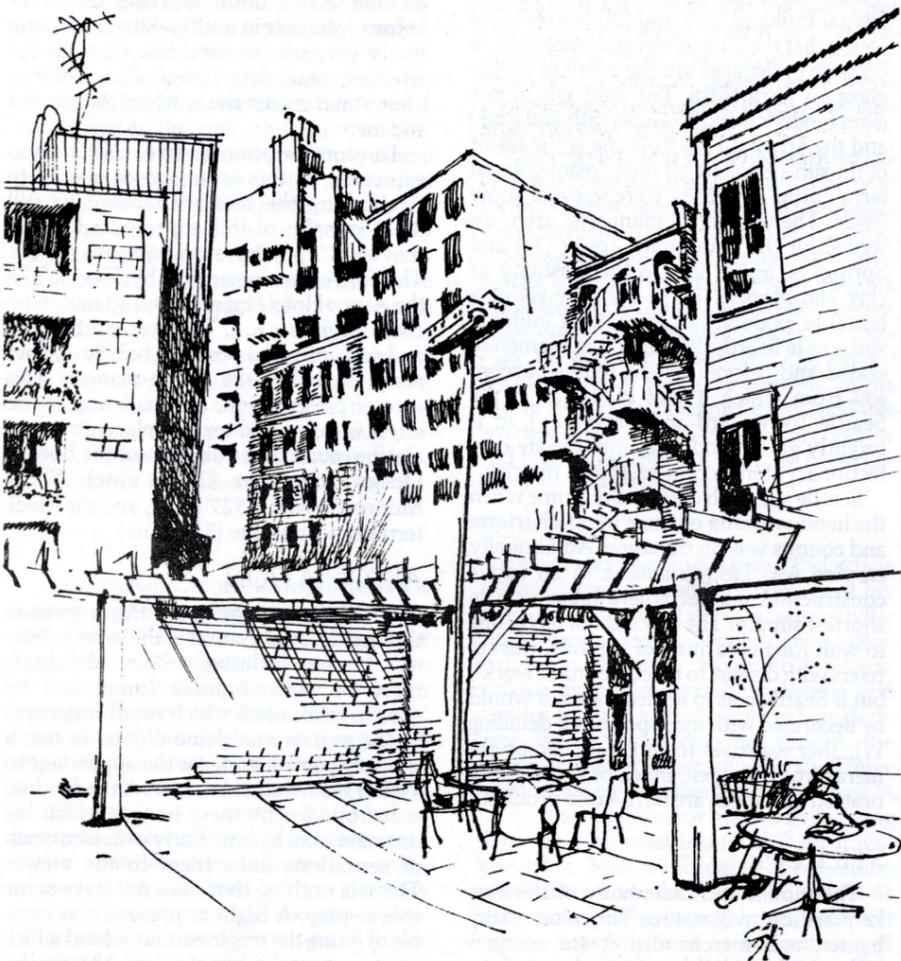
### 6. Transportation

Transportation, as a partner in the land use planning process, has been given much consideration in the 1982 Downtown Alternative Plan. The transportation element and, in turn, the land use development potential are based on a number of significant goals and assumptions regarding the design of transit systems (e.g., a transit mall on Third Avenue and Pine Street) and changes in people's travel habits (increase in average vehicle occupancy from 1.25 to 1.5 persons per car, and spreading of the peak hours).

The vehicular circulation element calls for maximizing use of the regional highway system and minimizing through-traffic on downtown arterials, especially in the Denny Regrade, Pioneer Square, and the International District. The Plan is working toward shifting commercial truck traffic and ferry traffic around the CBD.

These objectives are reinforced by encouraging higher density development along the freeway and locating peripheral long-term parking around the edges of the CBD. People using these peripheral lots

... continued on page eleven.



Stewart House: new low-income housing in the Pike Place Market. Sketch by Fred Redmon.

He brings the city with him everywhere he goes...

— Thomas Wolfe,

The Web and the Rock

# A WALK THROUGH THE CITY



Each of us projects an image of the city which reflects one's personal relationship with his environment. This could be the sociological city, the health-food city, the gay city, the commuter's city, or any of a myriad of others. My city is built and architectural. Whether in Columbus, Indiana, or Lisbon, Portugal, the buildings, the color of the buses, and the activity of the streets delight, intrigue, and challenge me at turns. The street is my Source: my entertainment and the supplier of both the intellectual and physical material for my work. Even the books I cherish carry the status of interpreters of the street rather than being narratives of primary experiences. Because of this, I respect and cultivate the images of my environment. The images I appreciate in Seattle are abundant and dispersed; because they form an eclectic group, I have segregated the images into several families which bear loosely or strongly upon each other depending on the specific image under consideration. These "families" are: Construction, Surfaces, Terra Cotta, Still Life, Association, and Truth. Particular sites offer elaboration on my image of the street.

## CONSTRUCTION

The dynamism of construction fascinates me. From the setting in place until the removal of the rent-a-fence, I follow a project, mesmerized by an evolution that completes its cycle before my eyes. Scale and speed of execution are at the heart of this attraction. The building of something gigantic suspends for a spectator the tedium

of measuring out one's life "with coffee spoons";<sup>1</sup> it captivates the imagination by leaping into existence on the shoulders of great machines which perform incredible feats of strength and grace. Skyscrapers and bridges are wonders contrasting markedly from the construction of modern subdivision housing where materials are the common ones of any workbench or garden. There is nothing heroic in a 2x4, but those piers supporting the West Seattle bridge! My God, what champions! They excite one as does anything that is larger than life, and as anything superhuman, they leave one incapable of rational evaluation; one's critical faculty is overwhelmed by the vicarious drama of construction.

## SURFACES

The street's infinite variety can be broken into fractions which bear only remotely on the larger whole. These surfaces are examples of images which I react to as explanations of Space, aside from their being wall fragments or paving units. The atmosphere of the Northwest provokes this response. Other skies are essentially empty tracts in which light moves undeterred in its path. In such atmospheres, buildings or trees seen against a northern sky exist in high relief and bold color; the same objects appear bleached and ill-defined against a southern sky. These "clear as a bell" skies give a sharp and colorful aspect to an environment. By contrast, the heavy and thick atmosphere over Seattle plays with light, throwing beams and rays into every corner. These beams are split and fused

into a textural matrix, neither blue nor yellow nor white but grey, a grey modulated only by densities of tone or structural patterns. The atmosphere supports a meditative relationship with these surfaces unmarred by graffiti or signage, which speaks more of Time than of History. Against the backdrop of such skies, these surfaces exist as windows on the infinite opening into the Vacuum of Laotse. Okakura Kakuzo refers to this vacuum as all potent because it is all containing. "In vacuum alone motion becomes possible."<sup>2</sup>

The Pink Wall (1530 2nd Avenue) is one of these static compositions, a magnifier against which the grey sky rubs. Its details, enlarged and set by this lens, show as scraps of blue, yellow, and fissures of black and brown. On most occasions, the sky behind the wall is full of light; but during those rare periods of transposition when there is absolutely nothing in the sky, the Pink Wall dissolves into space while the northern sky behind it solidifies into a hard plane of blue.

By contrast, the north wall of the building at 2007 4th Avenue, painted a uniform brown, is expressive more of structure than of tone. The abraded surface exposes a grainy consistency of concrete and rebar. When the Northwest sky is most turgid, it reveals this same ordered support and

## The city did not have time to wait for the turning of capitals.

texture. Both this surface and the Pink Wall are joined by many others. The skylight panels set in many sidewalks and the north wall of the Lippy building (108½ 1st Avenue S.) are additional examples.

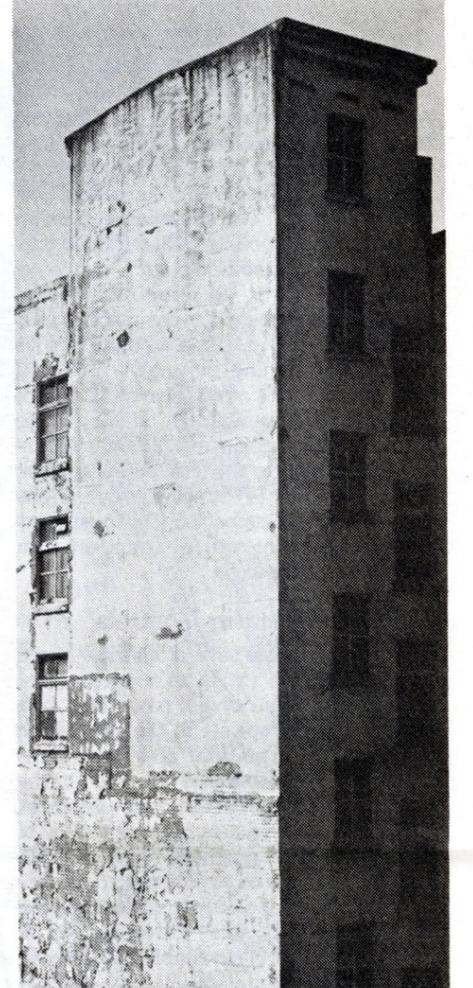
## TERRA COTTA

On a clear day the surprise and delight one feels when looking up at the Melbourne Tower (3rd and Pike), the Kress building (across the street on 3rd), or the Medical-Dental building (5th and Olive Way) and seeing that the quatrefoils and tracery have become perforated are the result of a blue glaze on terra cotta. The light which polishes Frederick and Nelson's (5th and Pine) and the 4th and Pike Building is the result of the sun's glancing off their cream-colored terra cotta, as if they were vertical snow fields. The wonderful mannerist arch preserved for the Watermark Tower (1st and Spring) is, again, due to the plasticity of clay and glazing. These are only six of a hundred examples of terra-cotta building surfaces in Seattle. Whether it is left merely sealed and colored by the reddish-brown soil from which it was taken, as in the Seattle Tower (3rd and University), or is brightly glazed and spun into ornate confectionary, terra cotta brightens the city.

Seattle's growth occurred at a time when the hand-working of stone into rich friezes and courses was on the wane. Additionally, carving was labor-intensive in an active construction market where labor was in shortest supply. The city did not have time to wait for the turning of capitals. Ruskin refers with disgust to machine-made work<sup>3</sup>; but if Seattle was to be decorated, it would be decorated with mass-produced detailing. Whether walruses from the Arctic or chimeras from Pompeii, much of Seattle's decoration and sheen are terra-cotta products.

## STILL LIFE

The tumult and cacophony of the marketplace are invigorating. The color, earthy banter, and merchandizing are energetically vivid and lie close to the heart of the community. This is as true of the Public



Market in Seattle as it is of a marketplace anywhere. The flowers, vegetables, fish, and meat fill stalls and excite a physical response to their freshness and quality. By contrast, gazing into the chef's window at Shucker's (4th and Seneca in the Olympic Hotel), one is exposed to a carefully arranged still life. In the market one is too active to savor the positioning of prawns, lemons, and a bottle of wine set on ice before a shucker in a stiff white jacket who deftly prepares oysters; but through the window, one's detachment allows him to view and consider the riches of the sea as a voyeur.

The consideration given to materials as expressed by this arrangement is vital to establishing the tension inherent in still life. Examples of this are rare, but where they exist, they have an immense impact. The flower arrangements by Neville's in the Alexis Hotel (1st and Spring) rank especially high because of great exuberance and sublimity, the posed dishabille of flowers presented in the Dutch manner. This care of presentation, a considering of the effect of color and texture placement, can also be found in the displays of the Boehm Design Associates (1213 Pine), Philip Monroe, Jeweler (527 Pine), and the Mediterranean Boutique (517 Pine).

## ASSOCIATION

Of all the categories of images given in this article, Association is the most subjective. It refers exclusively to an individual's trove of remembrances summoned by chance encounters which recall fragments of the past: a madeleine dipped in tea, a slippery paving stone, or the appendage to a letter from a stockbroker.<sup>4</sup> An individual is surrounded by these images which lay dormant until a particularly exquisite chain of sensations links them to the viewer. There is nothing that does not have some role to play. A flight of pigeons is as capable of lifting the magic curtain behind which memory rests as are, for me, the gingko trees before the Public Library (4th and



Man is incapable of remaining satisfied with anything; he will, sooner or later, come to take beauty for granted and will be bored by it. It is the inclusion of beauty among the ordinary which stimulates a healthy and spontaneous populace.



Spring). When I was a schoolboy, the custodian took each class out to a row of newly planted ginkgos in the schoolyard and explained how rare and precious these trees were and with what care they should be treated. I venerate them still. Because association represents a personal response to the images of the city, its images cannot be objectively modeled into a hierarchy. To quote Gertrude Stein: "You can never tell whether some laundry list might not be the most important thing."<sup>5</sup>

The value of association lies in the way an individual is further integrated into his surroundings through these random and chaotic meetings of sensuous images and memory; one's past experience is attached to the present. That the bunting recently removed from the Bon recalled to me a particular painting, "Flag Day" by Childe Hassam, is illustrative of one's ability to be stimulated by the images of the street. An individual's past has much to return to its possessor, but retrieving that past is outside the realm of design since memory is not ordered. But a city that is active and vital, "concentrated without being congested,"<sup>6</sup> provides a richer, more nutritive environment for this chemistry.

## TRUTH<sup>7</sup>

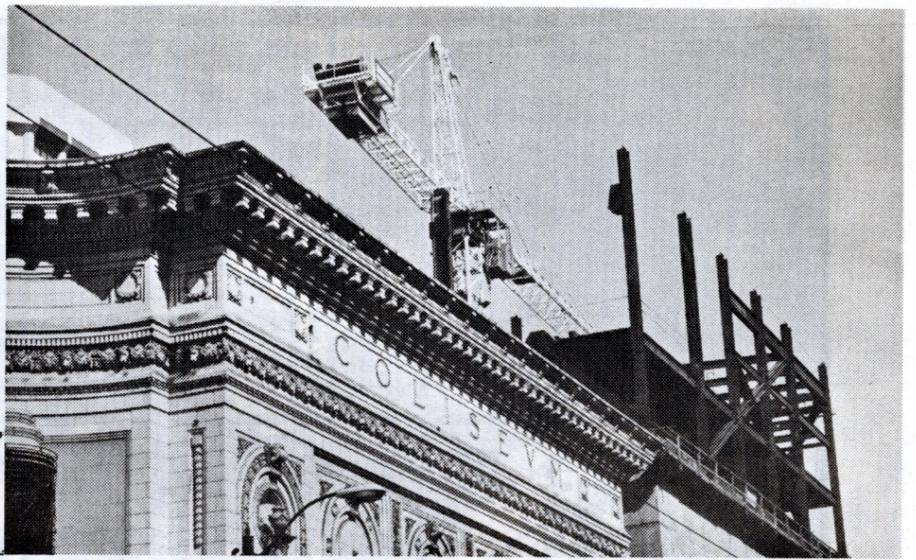
The direct and honest use of materials is fundamental to my appreciation of a completed image; this applies equally to the manufacture of a garment and the construction of a building. A pile of brick or a flatbed of girders is a static arrangement; the energy slumbering within it is secondary to the sculptural qualities of the materials. But raise these materials into position, and their abilities to carry weight is boldly asserted. The foundation of building is the power materials possess to enclose space as men desire. The load-bearing elements of a structure represent the skeleton, whether opening space through vaults or lintels, structure remains active in its service to the building. It must be broken before the build-

ing will fall. The Brooklyn (2nd and University) is an example of brick used directly to perform a task which its designers felt it could perform simply and handsomely for years. No fashionable veneer was self-consciously stapled onto the surface to disguise the honest yeomanry of these load-bearing walls. As with the wooden posts and beams of the National building (Western and Spring streets) and the old Standard Brands building (Jackson and 1st Avenue S.), the brick walls of the Brooklyn stand in the city as allegories of good government,<sup>8</sup> instructive to anyone who pauses to look at them.

When structure is burdened with ornate or clever covering, the edifying capacity of the building is sacrificed to other purposes. When structure is exposed and dignified, however, the building is enhanced with a patent nobility. The elegant steel pavilion of the United Airlines ticket office (4th and University) and the raw concrete of the Park Place building (6th and University) are examples of this enhancement. In the case of the elderly housing facility (on Western near Pike), the streamlining of concrete and brick is exceptional in its use of design, economy, and materials.

## SUMMARY

The images I have selected in this article are familiar and beautiful examples of my view of the city; they were chosen with the intent of establishing a visual context comfortable to the reader. However, other less striking examples, certain newsboxes and parking stripes, would have been as pertinent. Beauty alone does not provide the vigor necessary to keep an individual interested in his environment. To John Ruskin, "... it is not good for man to live among what is (only) most beautiful,"<sup>9</sup> for it will lose value. Man is incapable of remaining satisfied with anything; he will, sooner or later, come to take beauty for granted and will be bored by it. It is the inclusion of beauty among the ordinary which stimulates a healthy and spontaneous populace.



When I moved to Chicago years ago and first came under the spell of the Great American City, I was stunned and tantalized by my exposure to the contrast between conspicuous misery and opulence. Both were foreign to me; such a range was absent in the middle class plains city in which I grew up. But the contrast challenges one. It keeps one on his toes. Promising and threatening. "... The richness and depth of the place is visible, it is not an illusion; there is always the feeling that the earth is full of gold, and he who will seek and strive can mine it."<sup>10</sup>

## THE WALK

I have been discussing categories of images to which I respond regardless of place and illustrating my points with local examples. In laying out this walk, however, I am dealing with Seattle. By coincidence the walk highlights many of the amenities which make Seattle a hospitable environment for the pedestrian. If one begins the walk at Yesler Way and Western Avenue and proceeds up Western, he will have a relatively innocuous climb to the heights of 8th Avenue and a rapid descent (the sites have been numbered with this routing in mind). Following this path, one will find: four public comfort stations (at the hill climb, on the first floor of the Bon parking garage, in Freeway Park, and in the Public Library), several public drinking fountains, clocks, and resting areas, both outdoors and inside. The existence of these personal services confers a considerable degree of

freedom and independence on the pedestrian by relieving him of necessity to either ask or pay for them ("restrooms for patrons only," etc.) The coupling of existing amenities with the number of eateries, watering holes, and shops creates a supportive environment that encourages participation in it.

## References

1. T. S. Eliot, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, line 50
2. Okakura Kakuzo, *The Book of Tea* (Charles E. Tuttle, Co. 1956), p. 45
3. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 4 (The Kelmescot Soc.), pp. 339-41
4. Three experiences which served to recall the past for the narrator in Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*.
5. Gertrude Stein on Picasso, ed. Edward Burns (Liveright, New York, 1970), p. 119
6. John O. Simonds, *Earthscape* (McGraw-Hill, 1978)
7. This is the second of John Ruskin's seven lamps of architecture, in *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1925). Under this heading he discusses materials.
8. This refers to Ambrogio Lorenzetti's fresco series in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, Italy, the *Allegories of Good and Bad Government*.
9. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 4 (Kelmescot Soc.), p. 172
10. Thomas Wolfe, *The Web and the Rock* (Harper and Brothers, 1937), p. 231

## Jeffrey Johnson

Jeff Johnson is a painter who exhibits with the Greenwood Gallery, 89 Yesler Way, Seattle. He lives downtown.



# ARCADE

a p r i l • m a y

**Draft Downtown Policies:** available with hearing schedule in mid-April. For copies, 625-4591. Other best sellers, "The Pioneer Square Annual Report" and "The Pioneer Square Areaway Study," are also available, 625-4501.

**Mechanical Robotics and Pyrotechnics:** Watch for a fiery performance by artist Mark Pauline sometime in April. Sponsored by COCA, 621-6394.

**Expressions in Steel:** Student Design Competition, sponsored by the American Institute of Steel Construction, 4/11 is the application deadline. For information, ASC/AIA Nat'l Office, 1735 New York Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20006.

Henry Van de Velde born today 1863. Easter 3

**Radical Time/Rational Space:** A photography exhibit at the Henry Gallery and SAM-sponsored lecture series at the UW. At Kane Hall 8 PM, John Grimes talks on "Time and the 19th Century" 4/4, "Confusing Intention and Effect" 4/5, "There Is No Post-Modern Photography" 4/7. Robert Flick talks about "The Sequential Views: Process and Choices," 8 PM, 4/6 at SAM Volunteer Park. The series will conclude with an evening of discussion 4/8, the exhibit through 5/15.

**Freeze!** Washington Architects for Social Responsibility have formed to focus support of the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign. Organizational meeting 7:30 at 1022 Yale Avenue North. For information, Gary Sortun, 624-9100.

4

**Artist/Architect/Owner Collaboration:** Stained glass, fiber, wood, cast bronze, and ornamental iron works are integrated into a proposed rehabilitation project. Demonstration exhibit at The Glass Showcase, 2948 Eastlake Avenue East, 4/6-16. Preview 4/5, 6-9 PM.

**Art in Public Places:** UW Continuing Education course at lunchtime downtown, meets 9 Tuesdays beginning 4/5, with Art Historian Professor Gervais Reed. For information, 543-2590.

5

**Downtown as a Place to Live:** The Journalist's Perspective. *The Boston Globe's* Robert Campbell and *The Weekly's* David Brewster look up from their typewriters and speak at the first of the AIA's six "Living Downtown" Symposium talks, 7:30 at the Broadway Performance Hall.

**Photographs by Mario Giacomelli:** at Yuen Lui 4/5-5/7.

**Urban Design and Architecture:** Five consecutive Wednesday evening talks at the Henry Gallery through 4/27. For information, 543-2256.

6

**"Stockholm Architecture and Planning":** Lectures by Marina Botta and Bengt Edman, UW Architecture Hall Room 207, 8 PM.

**Furniture Like You've Never Seen:** California designer Peter Shire of Milano's Memphis Group makes ceramic, sculptural, very-tech furniture. Exhibiting to 4/30, opening tonight at Traver/Sutton Gallery 6-8.

**Top this competition exhibition!** Blueprint: for Architecture will be exhibiting results from the latest competition. Location to be announced. Call 583-0824 for information.

Leon Krier, not brother Rob, born today in 1946. 7

In French-speaking countries they call the jokes "Poisson d'Avril." In the Northwest, we fish for Spring-running Stealhead and call today April Fool's Day.

**Birthday of Michael Rebar,** inventor of steel reinforcing for highrise concrete construction.

**Interviewing the Audience:** Adult-storyteller Spalding Gray creates surrealistic epics of the American cultural landscape, 8 PM at SAM Volunteer Park.

**Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians 4/1-2:** On the Boards New Performance Series, 8 PM Meany Hall, UW. For information, 325-7901.

1

**The IBD Auction:** Tonight at the Design Center NW. For information, 477-5600.

**Don't Miss:** Gallery exhibits that close this month include Diane Katsiaticas' stick style megeron at Traver/Sutton to 4/2; New works on paper at Linda Farris to 4/17; "Boxes and Roses" by Marie Lyman at Cerulean Blue to 4/16; James Carpenter's architectural glass at Foster/White to 4/1. A few selected color photos of Seattle's 1st Avenue: "Street Light," by John Stamets remain at Glover/Hayes.

2

**At the Cafes - a Salon des Refusés 1983:** Works by 150 Northwest artists, organized about the themes of political/social imagery, formalism, and male figuration, at the Virginia Inn, the Belltown Cafe, and the Two Bells Tavern respectively, to 4/15. It's a feast for the palate (and for the palette!)

**Black and White:** At the Silver Image Gallery, 4/7-5/1, California artist Roger Vail shows long-exposure photographs of industrial scenes that are very black; Robert Glenn's "Winter Series" photographs are very white.

10

**Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks:** The City of Kent is seeking a brochure/booklet designer on this piece of public landscape/art. Proposal deadline is 4/11. For information, 872-3350.

**Black and White:** At the Silver Image Gallery, 4/7-5/1, California artist Roger Vail shows long-exposure photographs of industrial scenes that are very black; Robert Glenn's "Winter Series" photographs are very white.

11

**Pike Place Market Constituency Meeting:** For information, 625-5255.

**The Gang of Five,** a group of five Seattle design firms, is promoting the concept of a major, international exhibit of architectural drawings and models to be shown in Seattle. They are seeking the ideas and advice of the design community and knowledgeable curators. For information, Gang of Five, 300 East Pike Seattle 98122.

12

**Postmark Y'r Entries . . . On Your Mark:** Entry applications for the AIA-Sunset Home Awards must be mailed by 5/2. For details, Box 2349, Menlo Park, CA 94025. For those into plastic laminates, Wilsonart sponsors their First Annual Competition, due 5/1. For information: ASID/Wilsonart, c/o Ralph Wilson Plastics Co., 919 3rd Ave., NY, NY 10022. (212) 753-8689.

**Thomas Jefferson, 3rd President, Author of the Declaration of Independence, founder and designer of the University of Virginia, born today 1743.**

13

**"Modernity and Its Challenges":** Freud, Einstein, Heidegger, Picasso, and Munch are discussed by Dr. Eugene Webb of the UW's Comparative Religion and Literature Departments. SAM Volunteer Park, 5:30.

**The Modern Face:** a lecture at the Bellevue Art Museum in conjunction with the current exhibit, "500 Years of Faces." For reservations, 454-3322.

**Rich Haag on Gasworks Park:** at the Architectural Secretaries Association Meeting tonight. For reservations, Marilyn Jarmlinger at 587-5340.

14

**Post-Modern Dance: Movement Themes in an architectural manner** by Melissa Fenley. Performance at the Dome Room of the Arctic Bldg. sponsored by COCA at 9, 4/8-9.

**Creativity Celebration:** A series of "sessions" with the masters, led by Bucky Fuller, Lawrence Halprin, Judy Chicago, and others. At the Pacific Science Center 4/8-9. For registration, 625-9333.

**Kiro Kurokawa, Japanese architect of the metabolist school, born today 1934.**

8

**Seattle Art and Architecture Tours for April:** The Olmsted Legacy 4/9, Shaping Downtown 4/10, Ellsworth Storey's NW Architecture 4/16, La Conner Heritage 4/17, Art Deco Seattle 4/23, Anhalt Apartments 4/24, Three Seattle Neighborhoods 4/27 and 4/30. Tours vary in price, time, and length. For information, 522-3330.

**Regional Art: 1940-1960** at the Bellevue Art Museum, 4/9-5/6.

9

**Portraits of Seattle Artists:** B/W Photographs by Joe Freeman at Donnally/Hayes, formerly Glover/Hayes, to 4/26.

**Bumbershoot:** Applications are being accepted until 4/30 for performing and visual artists, craftsmen, and restaurant booths. For information, 625-4275.

17

**Neighborhood/Commercial Zoning Policies:** The City Council Hearing will be held tonight, 7 PM. For details, 625-2447.

**"Visual Pollution"** is the topic of a talk by AICP member Dr. Charles Floyd, 4-6 PM at the AIA office. Also on display, the "Home of the Month" exhibit, through April.

**Film: "Cities for People,"** Noon at the Seattle Public Library Downtown.

**The Politics of Housing: Government and the Law,** Part 4 of the AIA's "Living Downtown" Symposium with Stephen McLaughlin and Jerry Hillis, 7:30 PM at the Broadway Performance Hall.

**Italian rationalist Giuseppe Terragni** born in Milan today, 1904.

18

**"After 100 years, maybe some prints will survive . . ."** Black/white photos from the 1940s-1982 by Chris Staub on display at the UW Gould Court Atrium 4/25-5/6. "It is the process of seeing . . ."

**The Philosophy of Oregon Architectural Institutions:** A panel discussion with speakers from the newly-formed Oregon School of Design, Portland State, and the University of Oregon. At Portland State University, Room 333 7:30 PM.

**Edvard Munch: Expressionist Paintings 1900-1940,** at SAM Volunteer Park, 4/14-6/12.

19

**The Architectural Women's Gathering:** The professional group meets 4/20 dinner and a presentation on the National AIA Task Force on Women. For information, Marcia Guthrie, 455-3555.

**Situations:** The distinguished critic Dore Ashton, speaks on aesthetic and moral dilemmas in the contemporary art world. At SAM Volunteer Park, 7:30.

20

**Buon Appetito!** Tonight the annual Italian Studies dinner and fundraising auction at UW Gould Court 6 pm. Sponsored by recent UW student alumni of the Architecture in Rome and Hilltowns Program. Pasta, vino, and slides of bella Italia. Reservations are limited, 543-4180.

**Westlake Mall - The Selection Process:** Architects David Wright and Dave Hewitt speak at the AIA Seattle Chapter Meeting tonight. For information and reservations, 622-4938.

21

**Walter Cotten + Linda Farris: 4/21-5/10.**

**April 29 Deadline:** Entries to the juried student show, *Architecture as Art*, are due. Best of the show will be exhibited 5/4-6/2 at the Arts N.W. Student Gallery, 1500 Western Avenue, with awards reception 4/30 at UW Gould Hall Room 416, 4-6 PM. For information on this competition, prizes, and an entry prospectus, 682-4435.

**Earth Day Today.** First celebrated in 1970 with "Give Earth a Chance."

**James Stirling** born today in 1922. 22

**Depot Tour:** The Washington Trust for Historic Preservation tours the restored Snoqualmie Train Depot, trains, and trolleys 4/23. For information, 622-3538.

**Seattle Art and Architecture Tours for May:** Sensing, Feeling, Thinking in Downtown Public Spaces 5/7, Port Townsend - Victorian Home Tour 5/8, Four Seattle Neighborhoods 5/14 and 5/18, Shaping Downtown 5/15, Art Deco Seattle 5/21, The Olmsted Legacy 5/21. Apartments by Anhalt 5/22. Tours vary in price, time, and length. 522-3330 for information.

23

**Jan Saudek:** Toned and hand-colored photos by the Czech artist, at Equivalents Gallery to 5/1.

**ARCADE in the Audience:** Learning from the big boys as designers from three NW newspapers speak on newspaper design. Sponsored by the Seattle Design Association, 6 PM. For location, 322-2777.

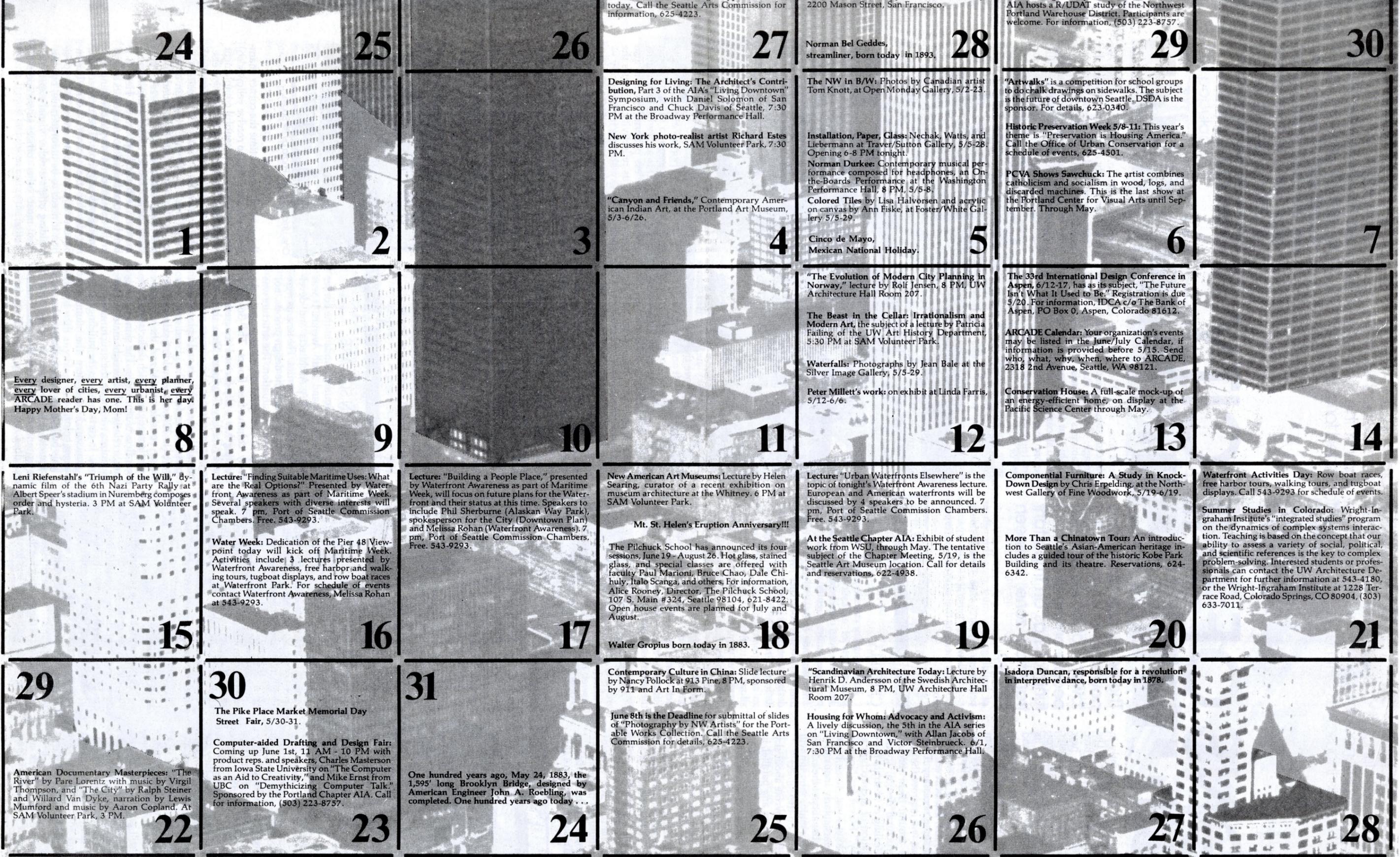
4/27 Deadline: Artist submittals for artwork

French Beaux Arts Drawings by Victor Postolle

**911 and Art In Form** present performance artist Linda Frye Burnham at 8 PM, 913 Pine Street.

**Communication Techniques for Planners and Designers,** a seminar sponsored by the UW College of Architecture and Urban Planning. Wednesday evenings, 4/27-6/1. For registration details, 543-9233.

**The Pacific NW Historic Conference** sponsored by the Idaho State Historical Society, 4/29-30 in Boise. For information, Judy Austin, ISHS, 610 N. Julia Davis Drive, Boise, ID 83702.



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Every designer, every artist, every planner, every lover of cities, every urbanist, every ARCADE reader has one. This is her day. Happy Mother's Day, Mom!

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Leni Riefenstahl's "Triumph of the Will," dynamic film of the 6th Nazi Party Rally at Albert Speer's stadium in Nuremberg composes order and hysteria. 3 PM at SAM Volunteer Park.

15

Lecture: "Finding Suitable Maritime Uses: What are the Real Options?" Presented by Waterfront Awareness as part of Maritime Week. Several speakers with diverse interests will speak. 7 pm, Port of Seattle Commission Chambers. Free. 543-9293.

Water Week: Dedication of the Pier 48 Viewpoint today will kick off Maritime Week. Activities include 3 lectures presented by Waterfront Awareness, free harbor and walking tours, tugboat displays, and row boat races at Waterfront Park. For schedule of events contact Waterfront Awareness, Melissa Rohan at 543-9293.

16

Lecture: "Building a People Place," presented by Waterfront Awareness as part of Maritime Week, will focus on future plans for the Waterfront and their status at this time. Speakers to include Phil Sherburne (Alaskan Way Park), spokesperson for the City (Downtown Plan) and Melissa Rohan (Waterfront Awareness). 7 pm, Port of Seattle Commission Chambers. Free. 543-9293.

17

New American Art Museums: Lecture by Helen Searing, curator of a recent exhibition on museum architecture at the Whitney. 6 PM at SAM Volunteer Park.

Mt. St. Helen's Eruption Anniversary!!!

The Pilchuck School has announced its four sessions, June 19 - August 26. Hot glass, stained glass, and special classes are offered with faculty Paul Marioni, Bruce Chao, Dale Chihuly, Italo Scanga, and others. For information, Alice Rooney, Director, The Pilchuck School, 107 S. Main #324, Seattle 98104, 621-8422. Open house events are planned for July and August.

18

Lecture: "Urban Waterfronts Elsewhere" is the topic of tonight's Waterfront Awareness lecture. European and American waterfronts will be discussed by 4 speakers to be announced. 7 pm, Port of Seattle Commission Chambers. Free. 543-9293.

At the Seattle Chapter AIA: Exhibit of student work from WSU, through May. The tentative subject of the Chapter Meeting, 5/19, is the Seattle Art Museum location. Call for details and reservations, 622-4938.

19

Componential Furniture: A Study in Knock-Down Design by Chris Erpelding, at the Northwest Gallery of Fine Woodwork, 5/19-6/19.

More Than a Chinatown Tour: An introduction to Seattle's Asian-American heritage includes a guided tour of the historic Kobe Park Building and its theatre. Reservations, 624-6342.

20

Waterfront Activities Day: Row boat races, free harbor tours, walking tours, and tugboat displays. Call 543-9293 for schedule of events.

Summer Studies in Colorado: Wright-Ingraham Institute's "integrated studies" program on the dynamics of complex systems interaction. Teaching is based on the concept that our ability to assess a variety of social, political, and scientific references is the key to complex problem-solving. Interested students or professionals can contact the UW Architecture Department for further information at 543-4180, or the Wright-Ingraham Institute at 1228 Terrace Road, Colorado Springs, CO 80904, (303) 633-7011.

21

29

American Documentary Masterpieces: "The River" by Pare Lorenz with music by Virgil Thompson, and "The City" by Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke, narration by Lewis Mumford and music by Aaron Copland. At SAM Volunteer Park, 3 PM.

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30

The Pike Place Market Memorial Day Street Fair, 5/30-31.

Computer-aided Drafting and Design Fair: Coming up June 1st, 11 AM - 10 PM with product reps. and speakers, Charles Masterson from Iowa State University on "The Computer as an Aid to Creativity," and Mike Ernst from UBC on "Demythologizing Computer Talk." Sponsored by the Portland Chapter AIA. Call for information, (503) 223-8757.

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31

One hundred years ago, May 24, 1883, the 1,595' long Brooklyn Bridge, designed by American Engineer John A. Roebling, was completed. One hundred years ago today...

24

Contemporary Culture in China: Slide lecture by Nancy Pollock at 913 Pine, 8 PM, sponsored by 911 and Art In Form.

June 8th is the Deadline for submittal of slides of "Photography by NW Artists" for the Portable Works Collection. Call the Seattle Arts Commission for details, 625-4223.

25

"Scandinavian Architecture Today: Lecture by Henrik D. Andersson of the Swedish Architectural Museum, 8 PM, UW Architecture Hall Room 207.

Housing for Whom: Advocacy and Activism: A lively discussion, the 5th in the AIA series on "Living Downtown," with Allan Jacobs of San Francisco and Victor Steinbrueck. 6/1, 7:30 PM at the Broadway Performance Hall.

26

Isadora Duncan, responsible for a revolution in interpretive dance, born today in 1878.

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today. Call the Seattle Arts Commission for information, 625-4223.

New York photo-realist artist Richard Estes discusses his work, SAM Volunteer Park, 7:30 PM.

"Canyon and Friends," Contemporary American Indian Art, at the Portland Art Museum, 5/3-6/26.

The NW in B/W: Photos by Canadian artist Tom Knott, at Open Monday Gallery, 5/2-23.

Installation, Paper, Glass: Nechak, Watts, and Liebermann at Traver/Sutton Gallery, 5/5-28. Opening 6-8 PM tonight.

Norman Durkee: Contemporary musical performance composed for headphones, an On-the-Boards Performance at the Washington Performance Hall, 8 PM, 5/5-8.

Colored Tiles by Lisa Halvorsen and acrylic on canvas by Ann Fiske, at Foster/White Gallery 5/5-29.

Cinco de Mayo, Mexican National Holiday.

"The Evolution of Modern City Planning in Norway," lecture by Rolf Jensen, 8 PM, UW Architecture Hall Room 207.

The Beast in the Cellar: Irrationalism and Modern Art, the subject of a lecture by Patricia Failing of the UW Art History Department, 5:30 PM at SAM Volunteer Park.

Waterfalls: Photographs by Jean Bale at the Silver Image Gallery, 5/5-29.

Peter Millet's work: on exhibit at Linda Farris, 5/12-6/6.

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Norman Bel Geddes, streamliner, born today in 1893.

AIA hosts a R/UDAT study of the Northwest Portland Warehouse District. Participants are welcome. For information, (503) 223-8757.

"Artwalks" is a competition for school groups to do chalk drawings on sidewalks. The subject is the future of downtown Seattle. DSDA is the sponsor. For details, 623-0340.

Historic Preservation Week 5/8-11: This year's theme is "Preservation is Housing America." Call the Office of Urban Conservation for a schedule of events, 625-4501.

PCVA Shows Sawchuck: The artist combines catholicism and socialism in wood, logs, and discarded machines. This is the last show at the Portland Center for Visual Arts until September. Through May.

The 33rd International Design Conference in Aspen, 6/12-17, has as its subject, "The Future Isn't What It Used to Be." Registration is due 5/20. For information, IDCA c/o The Bank of Aspen, PO Box 0, Aspen, Colorado 81612.

ARCADE Calendar: Your organization's events may be listed in the June/July Calendar, if information is provided before 5/15. Send who, what, why, when, where to ARCADE, 2318 2nd Avenue, Seattle, WA 98121.

Conservation House: A full-scale mock-up of an energy-efficient home, on display at the Pacific Science Center through May.

Waterfront Activities Day: Row boat races, free harbor tours, walking tours, and tugboat displays. Call 543-9293 for schedule of events.

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Isadora Duncan, responsible for a revolution in interpretive dance, born today in 1878.

s u n m o n t u e w e d t h u r s a t

"If I describe to you Olivia, a city rich in products and in profits, I can indicate its prosperity only by speaking of filigree palaces with fringed cushions on the seats by the mullioned windows . . . but the image these words evoke in your enlightened mind is of the mandrel set against the teeth of the lathe, an action repeated by thousands of hands thousands of times at the pace established for each shift."<sup>1</sup> —Marco Polo to Kublai Khan

# SIGNS OF THE CITY



There has been much talk recently in the eastern press about a show at The Museum of Modern Art entitled, "Three New Skyscrapers," which features new buildings by architects Norman Foster, Johnson/Burgee, and SOM. Arthur Drexler, who curated the show, states in its catalog that skyscrapers ". . . exploit land values to the point of rendering cities uninhabitable, but that is no reason to stop building them; in a free society capitalism gives us what we want, including our own demise."<sup>2</sup> Drexler is arguing against our demise in the presentation of these three skyscrapers for review. He believes they begin to work on some necessary fundamental changes that will improve the quality of life in and around them through innovations in structural design, spatial arrangements, re-scaling of abstract form, and the "manipulation of architecture as urban scenography." Except for Norman Foster's bank in Hong Kong, these buildings do not seem particularly innovative, but regardless of the banality of the exhibit, the fact that it sits in a major museum will focus public attention on the subject.

Montgomery Schuyler wrote about skyscrapers in 1909: "Is there any parallel, in the history of human building, to the rapid and revolutionary process which has raised the building of American towns . . . from a 'norm' of five stories to an uncertain and unpredictable height; so high that forty stories are already realized, and fifty are projected by a 'conservative' corporation, not as a monument of Babel, but as a 'practical business proposition?'"<sup>3</sup> There is not; we can stand at the corners of the Colman Building and the Sea-First Building in Seattle, look up, and experience the dramatic shift in scale that 200 years of building "practical business propositions" has wrought. In comparison, human beings have not changed size significantly in 4,000 years or more!



America's unprecedented building production can be rivaled only perhaps by Imperial Rome. There, the materials were stone and concrete, and the building never rose to forty stories, but the city evolved as a maze of monumental structures, rendered meaningless by their ubiquity. Piranesi's views promoted the "magnificenza" of this chaos, but he also maintained that "the pain of terror was an essential element of enjoyment."<sup>4</sup> This is a rather ruthless attitude, but Piranesi was an artist and Rome was long dead when he drew his interpretations. Our 20th Century cities have become mazes that are difficult to unravel and give meaning to, but we would surely eschew a "city of terror," and must take time to analyze our creations or hire an artist to help us in our interpretation.

One thing lacking in our cities today is a sense of uniqueness of any given large structure. Skyscrapers cannot derive strength or meaning from their contrast with humble surroundings, when they are surrounded by other skyscrapers. Architects' renderings depict them wishfully isolated, but that is rarely the actual case. Articulated skyscrapers seem a peculiarity to West Coast cities where the downtown blocks are still spottily developed. The designers are struggling with the illusion and sometimes the fact that their building will survive "alone on the hill." In Manhattan, there is little room for this crazed activity, and good buildings save their emphatic gestures for the street where they will be seen.

The thousands of people who work and live downtown cannot escape the impact

**The base ought to make a powerful answer to the tower it opposes and the people on the street, for it functions as an important transition zone between the two.**

of buildings they must pass through or near every day, and, thus, these buildings must follow some general rules of organization and meaning that address this responsibility.



## CRITERIA

Following are criteria based on the formal aspects of a skyscraper's anatomy. They have been used before as organizing principles under slightly different names. The metaphor of base, shaft, and capital that has been a construct for skyscraper design in the past is a useful tool, but relates its form directly to the column. Based on an anthropomorphic idea of structure, it allows us to think of the column = skyscraper as a magnate or personality and also implies that the building is holding something up. Now we are no longer a nation of magnates, but a world of corporations; our buildings no longer support a rich man's image of power, but instead diffuse the effects of mass production onto the palimpsest of our cities.

A skyscraper's BASE ought to be public property, so that the public can interact with it freely. It ought to make a powerful answer to the tower it opposes and the people on the street, for it functions as an important transition zone between the two. The base is also a logical place for the celebration of the Mass of Merchandizing — for the priests of retail and restaurant trade to court and spark the lunchtime passers-by. Here is the opportunity for diverse and unsuspected forms: "The city subjected to the reign of merchandizing is anarchy: in it all familiarity is a lie, and the only thing that counts is maddest chance."<sup>5</sup> Smothering "retail arcades" below ground in blankets of brick and granite belies cruelly the exuberance that is relegated to twenty-foot wide marquees inside. The walls come relentlessly down, a cloak of respectable technology wrapped around our orgiastic spending habits.

In Chicago the Rookery is an early example of an indoor "lobby" that introduced a new relationship ". . . between edifice and urban morphology. The hall (lobby) became a public plaza in the true sense, a place for social encounters not encouraged elsewhere by the ruthless, speculative practice of the city. . . ."<sup>6</sup>

It is appropriate that our public plazas be located inside our city buildings, either in exterior courtyards removed from the street or in the lobby spaces themselves. The domination of vehicular traffic in our cities generally makes streetside "plazas" unpleasant places, but buildings that house 4000 people or more all day must have areas for shared relaxation.

The base must also be responsible to the buildings in the neighborhood. It is at the street level that dialog between buildings can best be understood; thus the base must take into account local traffic patterns, uses, cornice-lines, and fenestration.

If we continue to build buildings without bases, we shall have a city described thus: "Nothing of the city touches the earth except those long flamingo legs on which it

rests and, when the days are sunny, a pierced, angular shadow that falls on the foliage. There are three hypotheses about inhabitants of Baucis: that they hate the earth; that they respect it so much they avoid all contact; that they love it as it was before they existed and with spyglasses and telescopes aimed downward they never tire of examining it, leaf by leaf, stone by stone, ant by ant, contemplating with fascination their own absence."<sup>7</sup>

The SHAFT of a skyscraper is most appropriate as a simple extrusion when the tenants and their spatial requirements are unknown but their basic functions are predictable. Here is the opportunity to make the most of technological innovations: to achieve greater height or to display new materials systems. This is best done in the simplest way possible, not by arbitrarily paring the building away so that it takes on the appearance of a half-eaten apple.

The SKYLINE of a skyscraper is the point where it meets the sky, and though these buildings are immense, they are still rooted in the earth, and require some gesture at their tops to bring our eyes to a pause. We know they are finished products, and they do not fool us that they are waiting for their next ten floors to arrive — must they always rebel against their height limits? A building's skyline is also a point of identification on the city's skyline, an element that helps it to "soar above the city as a pure sign."<sup>8</sup> Often the shaft and skyline are the only elements visible, so it is critical that the skyline answers the question, "Who are you?" 19th century cornice lines are no longer appropriate, but let us consider some contemporary interpretations; some technological bristling or punctuation similar to Borromini's S. Ivo alla Sapienza perhaps. Let us leave our cranes in place.

Now let us look at two very different new skyscrapers in Seattle with respect to these criteria: One Union Square and Watermark Tower. Though they differ in height by 270 feet, each make a skyscraper-scaled mark on their surrounding environment, and each is outstanding in its own way. The exemplary aspect of One Union Square is the suitability of its expression of function, although the value of the function itself is questionable; whereas Watermark Tower promotes a healthy set of functions in a building whose expression does not seem entirely suitable to its use.

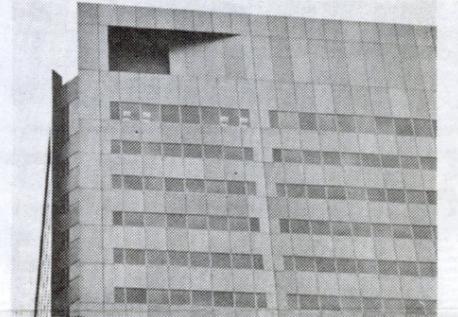


## ONE UNION SQUARE

One Union Square stands at the corner of Union Street and Sixth Avenue. It was designed by TRA Architects and developed by Unico Properties. The tenants were unknown through the design process, not an uncommon situation. The structure was designed for speed of erection and relatively column-free floors. The 36-story building has a slip-formed concrete core and a nine-bay floor plan. Since there are no corner columns, the corners were "removed" by the architects and replaced with recessed chamfers. The glazed area was limited to 30% of the building skin area for energy considerations, and the windows are reflective glass which deflects sun glare regardless of sun angle. The skin is aluminum, a relatively lightweight material that minimizes weight on the structural framework. In certain places the building's skin is punctured, and here the aluminum changes color.

This building is appropriate to the city of Baucis: it has no base. It springs from the ground as a blade of blue aluminum, and does not offer any opportunity for

public interaction. This block of Sixth Avenue is not exactly a stroller's paradise, but there are about 4,000 people who enter and leave this building everyday — surely they count for something! The base could have enhanced the shaft here in a healthy formal opposition; instead the arcade monitors are the only break in the ground plane. There is an underground "retail arcade" here, but one really has to search to find it. The plaza at the lobby entry level is raised from the street slightly, and that is not altogether a bad thing. Its bare sweep and silly wooden benches perched on the edges make it rather uninviting, but if there were formal elements which encouraged approach and activity in the building lobby, it could be a very pleasant outdoor space, nicely segregated from the street traffic by its elevation.



One Union Square. Photo by Catherine Barrett.

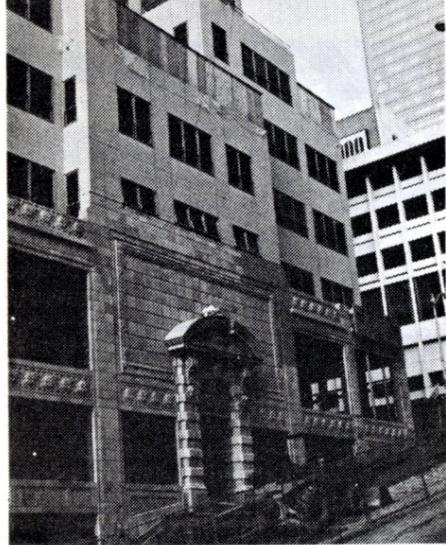
The shaft, by virtue of its color and panel break-up, seems to spring right out of a computer. It is somewhat fearful in its size and relentless pattern, but it is also fascinating in its reflectivity. At times the color of the sky absorbs it completely — there is no other tower in Seattle that "disappears" like this one — and at other times the sky dramatically opposes it. The lightness and tautness of the skin might enable it to take off flying like a box kite, but there is no framework at the corners! We are in an age of metal and glass, and it is a relief to see high-rise cladding that does not imitate materials associated with weight and depth. Chrome yellow, the accent color used to punctuate the building, has minimal associations which tie the building to



One Union Square. Photo by Bill Booth.

the ground, (at one time the corner chamfers were scheduled to receive yellow also) and also provides a beautiful complement to the mutable blue-grey everywhere else.

The skyline of this building has depth which provides a valuable opposition to the diffusion of the shaft: the skin breaks for the first time since the ground floors and folds back to reveal the three-dimensional object inside, which is the housing for the mechanical apparatus. Here is a building that has acknowledged its arrival in the domain of the sky, and it stands out amongst its neighbors. The architects did not develop the accents of One Union Square fully enough to create the opposition it needs to be unforgettable, but this building offers a richer visual experience than most other office skyscrapers in Seattle.



Watermark Tower. Photo by Catherine Barrett.

## WATERMARK TOWER

Watermark Tower, still under construction, is located at the northwest corner of the First Avenue and Spring Street intersection. The architect is the Bumgardner Architects, and the developer Cornerstone. The design of the building evolved slowly and carefully in response to its physical context, conditions of the site, and the interests of various political groups. These design considerations are in marked contrast to those of One Union Square, whose developers were interested in getting the fastest and highest possible return on their dollar and had no interest in questioning the building's use. Watermark, on the other hand, is situated in a "neighborhood" that is being created by the developer, who is also interested in financial return, but realizes the importance of the existing physical context and the value of diversity of use therein.

The answers to the questions of use are not always immediately clear. Watermark began its history as a 12-story residential building on the north end of the site. Problems of providing adequate air and light to the units were solved by substituting office and retail space in the lower floors. Air rights were borrowed from the neighboring buildings, the Colonial and the Grand Pacific, to construct a residential tower that, because of its location in the Cornerstone neighborhood, will boast protected views for a long time. It is one of the first buildings in Seattle to combine retail, office, and residential uses.

Like One Union Square, it has a slip-formed concrete core surrounded by a steel frame; its sheathing is something new in Seattle. The architects chose to use a panel system hung on steel framework, which offered infill options of lightweight stucco,

fiberglass-reinforced concrete, or tile. Both architect and developer thought the tile would project an image of quality better than the other options, so even though the cost was considerably greater, tile was selected. The choice was adventuresome, as few buildings in the United States, and none in Seattle, have been clad in this material.

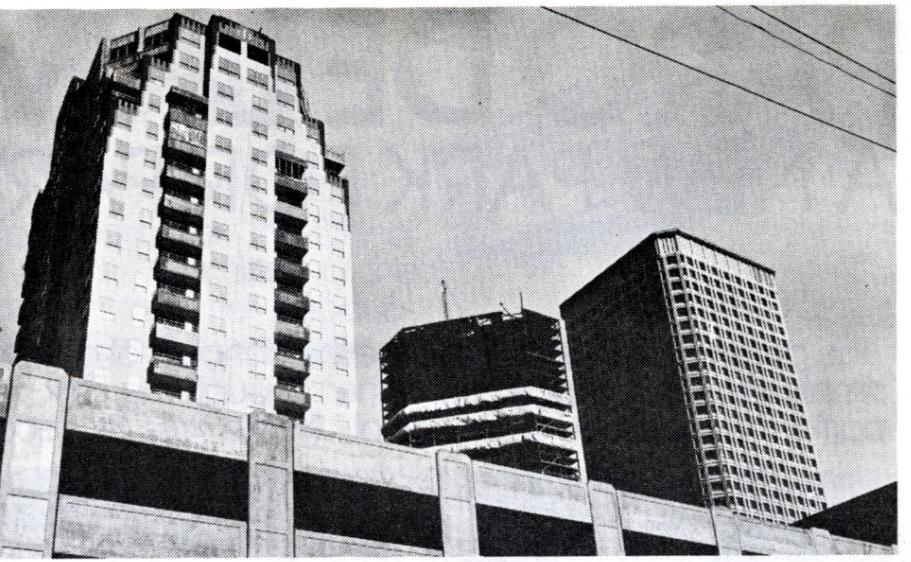
The base cannot be judged fairly in its unfinished state, but we know that considerable effort was made to preserve the southeast corner of the Colman Building and designate it as an historic structure, so that it might finally receive what Earl Lehmann and the Seattle Landmarks Board considered its long-awaited tower. The bold arch on the Spring Street elevation is indeed more suitably scaled to the new tower than it was to the old building. Unfortunately, the tower comes down rather ruthlessly on this venerable base, more so on First Avenue than at Spring Street. It seems the effort to adhere to the existing cornice lines too tightly and to squeeze the last possible square foot out of the retail floor has compromised this marriage of old and new. As this is a retail base, it is due credit for serving as public property, and it will probably do so in much the same way as the other buildings along First Avenue are doing, without much alteration to the decorative elements of the existing facade. These facades are rich in diversity already and provide a strong framework within which the retail functions can ply their wares.

The shaft of Watermark Tower contains the residential units, which project and recede from the surface according to varying floor plans and in order to fill the zoning envelope completely. The result is an arbitrary diversity of shape, which is logical in the marketing of residential space, but would be less maddening if the building skin weren't so taut and firm. This thin



tile skin is indeed more beautiful than "Dryvit" panels, but it lends this building a two-dimensional appearance that fights with the minute balcony projections. We might look to Waterplace One and Two, also by the Bumgardner Architects, to provide a better solution to the dilemma of the tile panel 2-D problem. These two office buildings, under construction on Western Avenue behind the Watermark, combine concrete frames with tile-panel infill.

High-rise residents are exposed to fiercer weather than those of us at lower elevations, and they are also vulnerable by virtue of the heights at which they live, so it seems important that they be provided with



**In some ways each of them furthers our demise, but in other ways they improve our understanding of the city.**

some protection, of at least a visual nature. Beware the tenant of Watermark who sits on his or her window sill!

Watermark's skyline makes it absolutely identifiable, for this is where the building begins to dance and sing with color and form like no other new building on the horizon. Although the architects hesitate to affix any stylistic label to this decorative explosion, they wanted to associate the top with the tops of two nearby towers, the old Federal Office Building and the Seattle Tower Building, each strikingly Art Deco in surface decoration. The setbacks do relate it to the Tower Building, especially when seen from the ferry terminal, but this comparison also points out that Watermark is perhaps too squat for such a grand hat. This choice of models is also curious as these buildings are office, not residential, towers. The diversity of form that the penthouse units lend the top of Watermark Tower is lively and exciting, and the idea of providing decorative elements that speak to both inhabitants and the city is admirable, but there is not enough that is really new here. We must do more than "relate" to the past or admire it. We have a responsibility to interpret and express the reality of our present situation. "Architecture might make the effort to maintain its completeness and preserve itself from total destruction, but such an effort is nullified by the assemblage of architectural pieces in the city. It is in the city that these fragments are pitilessly absorbed and deprived of any autonomy, and this situation cannot be reversed by obstinately forcing the fragments to assume articulated, composite configurations."<sup>9</sup>

## CONCLUSION

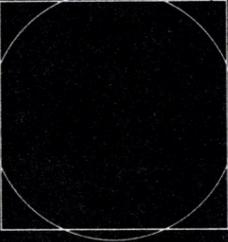
Having looked at these buildings with this tripartite set of formal criteria, what can be said about their place in the city in a general sense? Are they any more or less innovative than Drexler's choices, and do they deserve an exhibit themselves? They have been exhibited here verbally, and their innovation springs from the fact that they speak with louder voices than other Seattle buildings to some basic issues that skyscrapers face in any city. In some ways each of them furthers our demise, but in other ways they improve our understanding of the city. One Union Square unequivocally states the nature of our relationship with a technological age, and Watermark Tower, regardless of its confusing historical pastiche, stands as a beacon for a neighborhood that will not let us forget the importance of our past.

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**Catherine Barrett**

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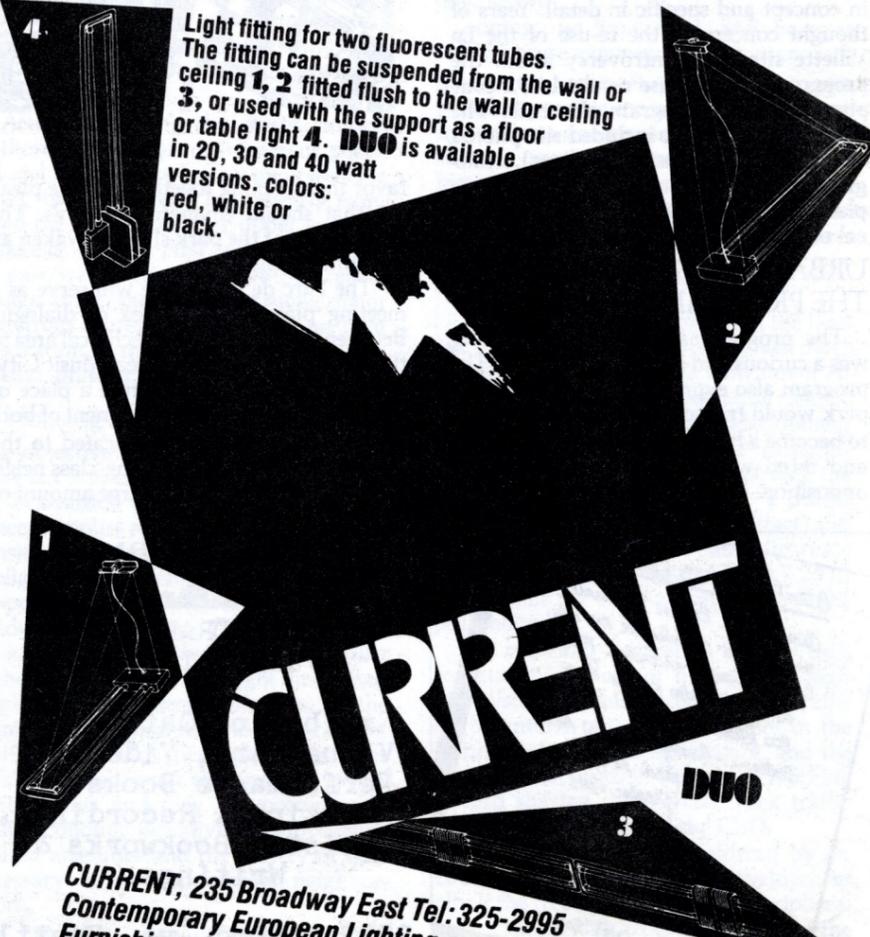
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# PARC DE LA VILLETTE

## A NEW PARK FOR PARIS

"The goal is to successfully devise the concept of a park of the twenty-first century . . . The goal of the project is not simply to create a park, but rather, through the Park, to successfully carry out an operation of urbanism that is particularly complex and original." Noble? Yes. Practicable? That is unknown.

Paris' first major park since Baron von Haussmann's nineteenth century masterworks was the subject of an international design competition last year. The 75-acre Parc de La Villette site (comparable in size to Seattle Center grounds) is envisioned as an indoor and outdoor cultural complex which will respond to local community and international visitors long into the future. The program was ambitious and immodest in its challenges: "The goal is to successfully devise the concept of a park of the twenty-first century. . . . The goal of the project is not simply to create a park, but rather, through the Park, to successfully carry out an operation of urbanism that is particularly complex and original." Four Seattle landscape architectural firms responded; Rich Haag and Associates, Jones & Jones, Lee and Associates, and Sugio, Kobayashi, Ullman Inc. entered, but did not win the competition.

### THE COMPETITION: WHO AND WHY

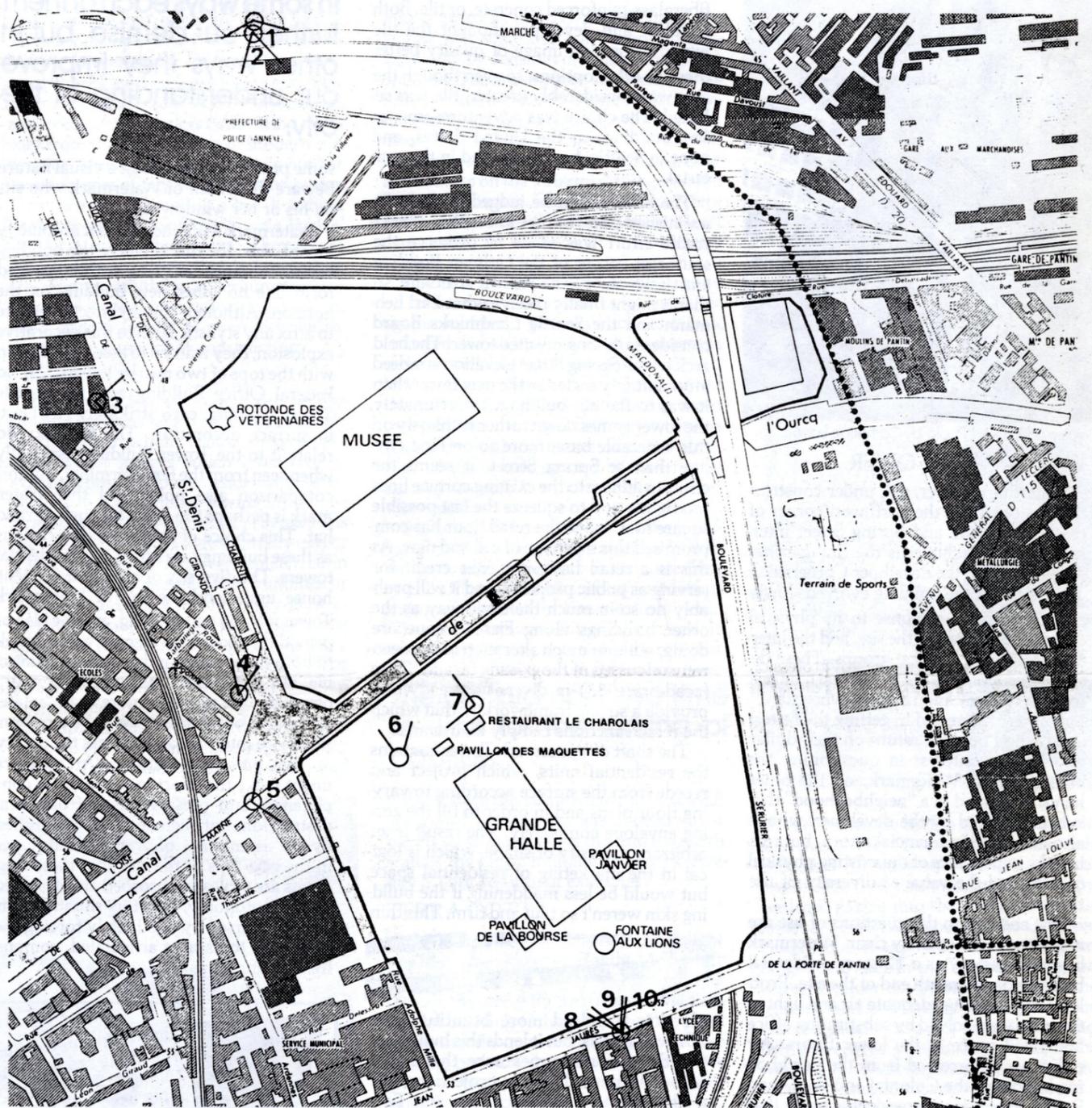
The 1982 competition, third for this site, was billed as an open, one-step, anonymous competition. The first place winner was to receive the commission of Park Designer. Winning plans were to be refined and immediately implemented.

The appeal of the event was far reaching; more than 800 teams from 43 countries registered. Some were drawn by the opportunity to design for an unusually diverse group of users, others by the imaginative, even whimsical ideas incorporated within the program elements. This was not a typical sports-fields-and-picnic-shelters park, but a grand idea in a romantic city with an international jury.

Each team received an impressive four-book package of background, site, and program information in French and English. Between June and October 470 teams prepared the required three 3-foot by 6-foot drawings. (All drawings are on display at the Place de Beaubourg Museum.) The competition package materials were broad in concept and specific in detail. Years of thought concerning the re-use of the La Villette site and controversy about the proper adaptive re-use resulted in a complex variety of program elements. The information package included site photos, detailed site data (decibel readings), demographic information, a history of Paris planning, and descriptions of philosophical objectives.

### URBAN DESIGN AS POETRY: THE PROGRAM

The program, a dense 78-pages long, was a curious and inspired document. The program also expressed the hope that the park would transcend its trees and plazas to become a living work of art. "The body and mind will never be separate or in opposition. On the contrary, the park will



SITE PLAN for this international design competition.

favor their coming together and the pleasure that should emanate from this. The atmosphere of the park should awaken all the human senses."

"The Parc de La Villette will serve as a meeting place and an area of dialogue. Between the scientific and technical area to the north and a 'sensitive' area (Music City) to the south, it will constitute a place of interaction and mutual enrichment of both parts of Western culture. Located to the northeast of Paris in a working-class neighborhood which includes a large amount of

foreigners, open to everyone regardless of income or origin, the Park must distinguish itself as one of mixture and integration. The symbols of this park will therefore be ones of pluralism. . . ."

There were seven key elements to the Park. 1) The Museum of Science and Technology, an amateur research center, is nearing completion in the re-designed 1950's slaughterhouse, now a shiny glass and steel structure. 2) The Music City complex containing a performance hall, music institute, research center, and museum, is not yet

designed and may be ripe for a later competition. 3) Open-air and sheltered areas to accommodate programmed entertainment such as a circus and world's fair activities are to be integrated with a series of areas where entertainment can occur spontaneously. 4) A series of garden rooms will be designed to engage visitors in play situations in which they will be involved with scientific or artistic ideas in informal learning experiences. 5) Thematic gardens will provide a series of experiences that will be indirectly informative about plant growth

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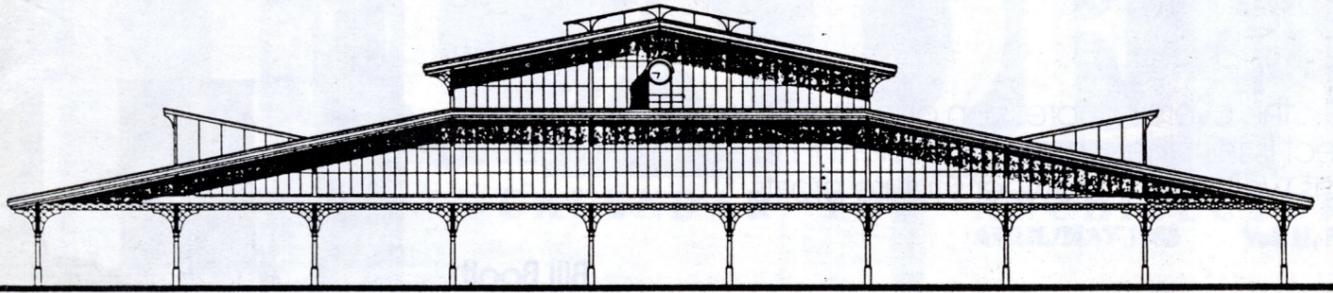
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# PLAN . . .



— a scent garden, a weed garden, an orchard. 6) Outdoor and indoor recreational facilities range from thermal baths to sports fields. 7) Food, in the form of cafes, restaurants, little markets, has a place in this Park justified in the program's statement that "in France, cooking exists as a veritable art in accomplishing a skillful task upon Nature and, in this respect, is undoubtedly close to the art of gardening."

Having established this enormous and complicated program, the sponsors made it the design team's responsibility to rationalize the program as a coherent design.

## "The symbols of this park will therefore be ones of pluralism . . ."

"A pluralistic garden is not a simple hodgepodge of assorted fragments. The designer must give an indispensable poetic and sculptural unity to it." From a strictly functional point of view, it would be possible to achieve a unified park under these conditions only if design control is firm. Based simply on the outcome of the competition — the jury could not agree on a single winner — the reality seems to be more like that which produced the Seattle Center grounds for Seattle's World's Fair, in which numerous well-respected design professionals controlled small portions of a disparate whole. Parc de La Villette seems fated to be a conglomerate of designs at the expense of an overall unity.

## REDISCOVERING THE PORTES AND CANALS

The site is the former location of a discarded meat processing plant in a rundown industrial district on the northeast edge of Paris. Originally just a flat spot in the hilly area between old Paris and the route to Flanders, the La Villette site became a toll gate and one of the main entries to the capital city. The traditional entries, Les Portes, have been neglected. Where they remain, they have been relegated to an existence as traffic circles and have lost their ceremonial role. Paris city planners have officially recognized the symbolic value of the historic Portes; the creation of Parc de La Villette between two of the old Portes is part of a current City-sponsored effort to upgrade these entryways and re-activate them.

Two canals within the Park site (one runs along the edge, the second bisects the site) are used daily for transportation of goods, but the parallel towpaths where mules used to haul barges, and the adjoining rights of way are currently being converted for use as bicycle paths as part of a network of such paths. The canal system is the focus of attention in a plan to make better use of Paris' urban waterfronts for recreation. The long under-used canal sys-

tem is being transformed into an extensive greenway network throughout the auto-congested streets; it is hoped that ultimately it will be a common pastime to meet friends for recreation along the canals.

## GREENSPACE PLANNING

Paris, a city of many formal public open spaces, has a critical paucity of usable greenspace. In the La Villette district, only 11% of the population has easy access to a park. The French have long been constrained by limits of etiquette which allow them only to walk on park paths and sit on park benches. Lately, however, Parisians are often seen "abusing" their formal parks by sitting on the lawns — another impetus for the development of a large public greenspace like La Villette. In 1977 regional planners decided to create a greenspace network (the Croissant Vert or Green Crescent) leading to a wooded buffer between the urban fringe and the rural landscape. Parc de La Villette will be integrated into the network through the canal pathway system.

The park is also tied into the planning for the Paris World's Fair, 1989. Several exhibition sites along the Seine River, plus La Villette to the east and Tete de la Defence (another competition) to the west, are expected to house the upcoming "Exposition Universelle." The politics of the situation were discussed in *Progressive Architecture* (February 1983) by Helene Lipstadt. Architects on the La Villette jury are winning plum commissions for various other Expo projects, the Mayor is setting the stage for his 1990 Presidential candidacy, and, because of the current financial crisis in the

residential neighborhoods (a noisy eight-lane arterial borders one edge of the site). The Parc de La Villette is thus a demonstration of current French open space planning, in direct contrast with the traditional, 18th Century formality. "The goal of the project is not simply to create a park, but rather, through the Park, to successfully carry out an operation of urbanism that is particularly complex and original."

The La Villette competition had its problems. The program was so complex and rigid that it constricted the imaginative flow needed to achieve the lofty objectives of the planners. Politics, jealousies, and the bickering and indecision of the jury — between architectural and landscape architectural schools of design thought — has resulted in not one, but nine first place design awards, and the decision to somehow combine all nine into a "real" first place award. Tom Atkins, of the Jones & Jones design team, expects that the follow-through will be "total disaster." The outcome also raised a design communications question. Joe Lee, after reviewing the jury's selections, so radically different from his approach to the solution, wonders whether "we are really talking about landscape architecture as a universal language," as he had once presumed. This participant faults the competition administrators for apparently submitting to outside and internal pressures, for not holding the jury to the intent of the competition to select one winner for immediate implementation, and for not relentlessly standing behind the high ideals which prompted the event originally.

In spite of the confused dénouement, the

. . . continued from page three.

will then board shuttle transit service to enter the CBD. It appears that these garages fall outside the ride-free zone so people will need to pay for transit between their parking lot and office. The long-term parking on the edges of the Downtown is assumed to be provided by means of "developer contribution," since the new proposals call for including parking as part of the FAR for downtown buildings (the latter is expected to discourage development of long-term parking in the downtown). It could be that office space with remote parking may be difficult to market.

As noted, parking policies are designed to discourage development of long-term parking in the downtown. This is consistent with the objective of controlling peak-hour congestion. In contrast, one should consider that there are competitive markets in the region which provide substantially more accessory parking for less expensive, but comparable office space. This could have a severely negative impact on the rate of development in Seattle's downtown.

## Summary

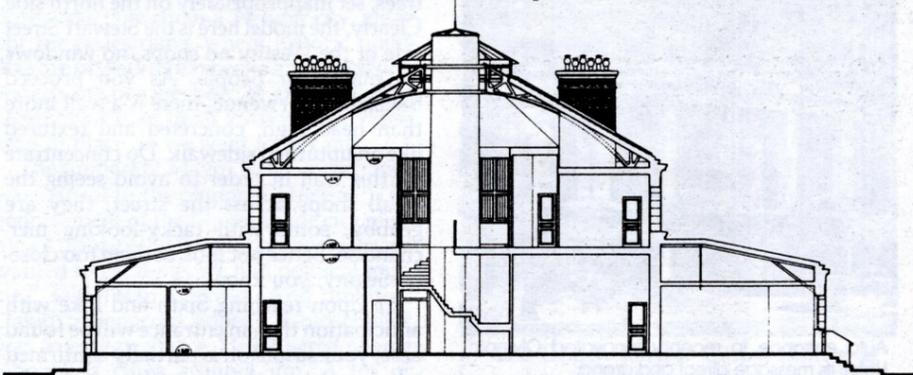
One of the Committee's major concerns is that the cost burden of some aspects of this Plan may discourage commercial development to such an extent that the goals of the Plan may not be met. For example, below-market-rate housing is almost completely dependent upon the development of commercial office space. Due to the possible negative impact on construction that may occur as a by-product of these new policies, the economic analysis currently underway by the City is vital.

Because of the urgent need to inform the design community of the potential implications and allow maximum response time, this article was prepared to be published simultaneously with the Revised Policies originally scheduled for release April 1. May 1 is now the expected release date, further shortening the public review period.

You may obtain a copy of the working draft policies for the Downtown Plan by phoning 625-4591 or by writing to: Land Use and Transportation Project (LUTP), James Parsons, Manager, City of Seattle, Executive Department, 200 Municipal Building, Seattle, WA 98104.

The revised Draft Policies to be released April 1 will be subject to a rapid review process. The schedule is as follows:

- EIS — mid to late May 1983.
- Public review period — mid-May to late July 1983.
- Mayor's recommendation to City Council (with new zoning code) — August 1983.
- Council begins deliberations; vote expected early 1984.



ROTUNDA BUILDING cross-section

country, it is thought that the Expo-related adaptive uses of the sites provide "the only budgetary hope that the monumental ambitions will be realized."

## PITFALLS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

This site is a good one for an international competition because the problems are familiar to urban designers everywhere: the desire for waterfront access in an urban setting, the concept of greenbelts as connectors, the need for noise screening in

competition did accomplish some valuable results. It raised the issue of recycling obsolete urban spaces to a global level and it focused the world design community's energies on seeking solutions to several common urban problems. Undoubtedly, some of the solutions developed for the La Villette exercise will be successfully applied in other contexts.

## Marcha Johnson

Marcha Johnson, a landscape designer with Lee and Associates in Seattle, participated in that firm's entry to the Parc de La Villette competition.

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# A TASTE OF SHERATON

... the overall impression one should receive from a project is that there is an investment in the public well-being as well as in the owner's future profits.

**Bill Booth**

The only pedestrian entrance: beneath the clipped corner, a void. All photos this article by Bill Booth.



## OPINION

A large structure on Sixth Avenue between Union and Pike Streets in Seattle recently opened with a grand reception which was reported to have cost in excess of \$200,000. A major hotel chain is the tenant, the one which advertises, "... the taste of Sheraton. . . ." The structure, as part of the urban environment, seems to advertise itself with a taste more like gall.

Each citizen, each ordinary architect, ought to think how s/he responds to a building without regard for the owner's program, the architects stated objectives, or material generated by public relations agents. A building, like a symphony, must be judged on whatever is there to be heard or seen by everyone. Architects' works are all public affairs, particularly those in the most vital part of our city, the Central Business District. The Sheraton project as-

**Can the citizens of Seattle . . . protect themselves . . . against projects which are inimical to the common standards of decent design?**

saults Seattle's CBD in an act of calculated murder or at least mindless annihilation.

### THE SETTING

There are many things about Seattle's CBD that almost any pedestrian appreciates. In particular, Seattle is composed of buildings and places scaled to pedestrians by means of shopping windows on the sidewalks, smashing views downhill to the harbor, a few well-considered public resting places, a very few buildings with elevations which fully respond to their sloping hillside sites, and many older building facades made with fine materials detailed to invite investigation by eyes or hands. These examples are in the long tradition of worldly urban design that considers and cares about us, the anonymous pedestrians.

### STANDARDS FOR JUDGING

Seattle's citizens have long been involved in defining criteria for the design of their city. More than a decade ago the Seattle 2000 Commission proposed goals for the physical development of the CBD. These goals were stated in generalities and accepted by Seattlites as readily as Motherhood and Apple Pie. Since then some goals have been translated into strategies embodied in zoning codes with such parameters as standard bulk, height, orientation. There are bonuses for going beyond the standard in the pursuit of design which provides substantial public benefit. Currently, new design studies offer examples of reconsidered and new ideas for making the CBD a richer and more vibrant place for people. Among these are some principles which one ought to apply to the Sheraton, because it is the latest and greatest challenge to the common sense of these design criteria.

Any project constructed in the public domain along its streets should do the following:

- Maintain the visual definition of street-edge and thus contain the street space or have a good reason for not doing so.
- Provide easy accessibility to quiet, slow-paced sanctuaries adjacent to the street. These places should have comfortable seating and offer a glimpse of street activity.
- Design entrances and transitions for pedestrians that have meaning as an

extension of existing or new pedestrian paths.

- Plan for handicapped access in unobtrusive and safe ways.
- Provide retail services (functional relief) and visual relief along the sidewalk edge.
- Utilize arcades for shelter and connections between buildings; they will enhance retailing located along them.
- Reduce conflicts with autos by minimizing drives cutting across sidewalks.

In general then, the overall impression one should receive from a project is that there is an investment in the public well-being as well as in the owner's future profits.

### A CRITICAL TOUR/ WALK OF ANGUISH



Auto entrance to Sheraton: almost every criterion for courtesy to the city is violated.



Auto entrance to recently renovated Olympic Hotel: its message direct and grand.

Here is Seattle, a provincial capital, made livable for people. Its sidewalks are places from which to view the humanity and tradition of its urban form. Let's take a walking tour, not a drive, around the Sheraton, for to walk is to receive changing images

1) Start at Sixth and Union. Look east along Union. On the right you'll see a finely-scaled two-story commercial structure that contains services and eye-catching shops. Farther along is a garage which isn't all that bad because it continues the building mass. On the left is . . . nothing, or nearly so. The Sheraton project is barely recognizable as an urban entity because there is no street frontage. Instead, there is a suburban-style earth berm, punctured by a driveway that leads, of course, to a parking lot. Is this Bellevue or Phoenix or another suburban auto-center? In the foreground at the corner of Sixth and Union is a pompous stair and landing affair that offers promise as an entry to the principal lobby. The promise gives way to a lie as you find yourself in a cavernous, upper-level circulation space. The grandeur of the approach seems to be consistent with the hollow quality of the building.

2) Walk along Union Street now and enjoy the blankly "detailed," three-story structure on your left, thoughtfully set well back from the street. It is rumored that this is only a temporary wall awaiting an adjoining base below a clone of the tower to the

north. (Remember the Westin!) Feeling bereft, hurry along to Seventh Avenue, and for a moment look back down Union Street as though you have just entered downtown from the freeway. Do you see the "gateway" to the city?

3) Turn to look down Seventh Avenue. On your right is the venerable Eagles Auditorium Building. The aerie contains shops along the sidewalk in addition to the auditorium. The building is a little dirty, but its finely-detailed terra cotta is rich nonetheless. Ponder what the Sheraton's parking lot across the street offers to support these struggling merchants. Farther on, the new champion of blankness, the Sheraton structure, four-stories high, grossly takes away from the pace and panache of the streetscape. It seems the merchants must bear the price of such insensitive development.

**The Sheraton project epitomizes an approach to design which ignores the pedestrian's existence.**

4) Hurry along to Seventh and Pike. Look around; is something missing? A connection through the site? Another entrance? Hell, no! What you see is just two yawning service entrances across the sidewalk. You're standing at a level about one floor above Sixth Avenue. The sidewalk slope is comfortable for walking and window shopping, but there is no sheltering arcade; the pedestrian amenity here is a double row of trees, set inappropriately on the north side. Clearly, the model here is the Stewart Street side of the Westin: no shops, no windows, no places for people. As you proceed toward Sixth Avenue, there is a wall more than head high, concreted and textured like an upturned sidewalk. Do concentrate on this wall in order to avoid seeing the small shops across the street; they are grubby, some with tacky-looking merchandise. Better not look at them too closely. Seamy, you know.

5) Upon reaching Sixth and Pike with anticipation that an entrance will be found here, your suspicion is partially confirmed when you see that beneath one of the clipped corners is a void. It holds some curiously angled stairs and a confusing column. Obviously not a handicapped entrance. Actually, it is the only pedestrian entrance to the hotel lobby, although you cannot see the lobby to verify your hunch. Nor does the stair reach out to invite you in. If you do hazard an approach, you will be confronted with anonymous carpeted space and . . . an escalator. If you take the escalator, a likely choice, it will not deliver you to the hotel lobby, but to the cavernous upper convention lobby. This actually is the back entrance, although your best guess would be that it is the primary entrance.

6) The prize view is to the south along Sixth Avenue. At last, something really big is happening at the Sheraton. Buses and cars come and go across two driveways which slash the sidewalk where pedestrians once walked. Beyond the vehicles, there is an entrance to the lobby, right at grade! Here is the Westin Hotel drive-in solution, matured to full expression and dimension, serving drivers and defeating pedestrians. Once again the setback destroys the definition of the street edge as effectively as on Union Street. The conflict between pedestrians and autos could hardly be more intense. It seems that here at the portal of the hotel, where it receives the world, almost every criterion established for courtesy to the city is violated.



Pedestrian entrance at Alexis Hotel: the void reveals a remote court and signals entry below, scaled to people.

### SYMBOLISM

Notice that little attention has been given to the triangular tower rising from a nearly rectangular base, even though the special, triangular shape is usually employed in symbolically important structures. The tower is innumerable stories high with huge spans of glass which do not attempt to express the individual guestroom. From a distance, the sloped roof, derivative of the Federal Office Building, is nice, but lacks the grace of a terminating parapet or cornice. One wonders what is so special about this hotel tower that warrants our attention with this unique form and finish. What do the visual symbols mean? I'm sure I do not know. The question is irrelevant because the damage done at the street level is so profound.

### SOME QUERIES

This walk reveals that the Sheraton project epitomizes an approach to design that ignores the pedestrian's existence and thereby commits a crime against its context. Consequently, it seems the Sheraton is begging us to ask:

Can the citizens of Seattle, through legislation or outcry, seek to protect themselves and their investments in the urban infrastructure against projects which are inimical to the common standards of decent design?

Having asked that question, one must also consider available means of protection:

- Are current ordinances too permissive or inappropriately structured?
- Does the concept of fulfilling the public trust have validity for contemporary designers? Is responsibility for discharging the public trust implicit in holding license to practice design?

Projects of this dimension and permanence shape our city and affect the viability of the urban fabric. This project and some precursors raise these general questions.

### THE CHALLENGE

We ought not to be surprised by this project which so grossly misses the mark of common design objectives. We citizens (and architects in particular) have not been vigilant in calling attention to solutions that are insensitive to those objectives. We allow designers to go unaccountable for their transgressions in the public domain, as the citizens of Florence would not. Would legislated design guidelines have prevented yet another project of missed opportunities? Probably not, as long as architects are silent, citizens are disinterested, and developers are rewarded for their crimes.

*Bill Booth is a consulting architect and energy conservation specialist in Seattle.*