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A publication of the California College of Arts and Crafts

# Design Book Review

## 40

Architecture  
Design  
Urbanism  
Landscape

### INVENTING OUR HERITAGE

**Mitchell Schwarzer**

examines Holocaust memorials

**Dell Upton**

on recent efforts to commemorate  
the civil rights movement

**Lawrence J. Vale**

on American monuments  
and embassies

**Eleanor M. Hight**

on Maya Lin

“ In addition to commemorating key events of twentieth-century America’s defining moral drama, the creators of civil rights memorials seek to define the nature of southern society....

These monuments, set in landscapes devastated by urban renewal, depict a South purged of its troubled racial past and ready to compete in a new

**Dell Upton** global economy.”

Commemorating the  
Civil Rights Movement

page 22

“ [The Vietnam Veterans Memorial] is a site of pilgrimage...where human experience—both collective memory and individual remembrance—take priority over one architect’s heroic statement.”

**Eleanor M. Hight**

Maya Lin Reconsidered

page 40

“ The lavish photographs in [Thomas] Hines’s book are both beautiful and haunting. They evoke a world that has largely faded from existence—and no faded world carries a greater romantic weight than that of

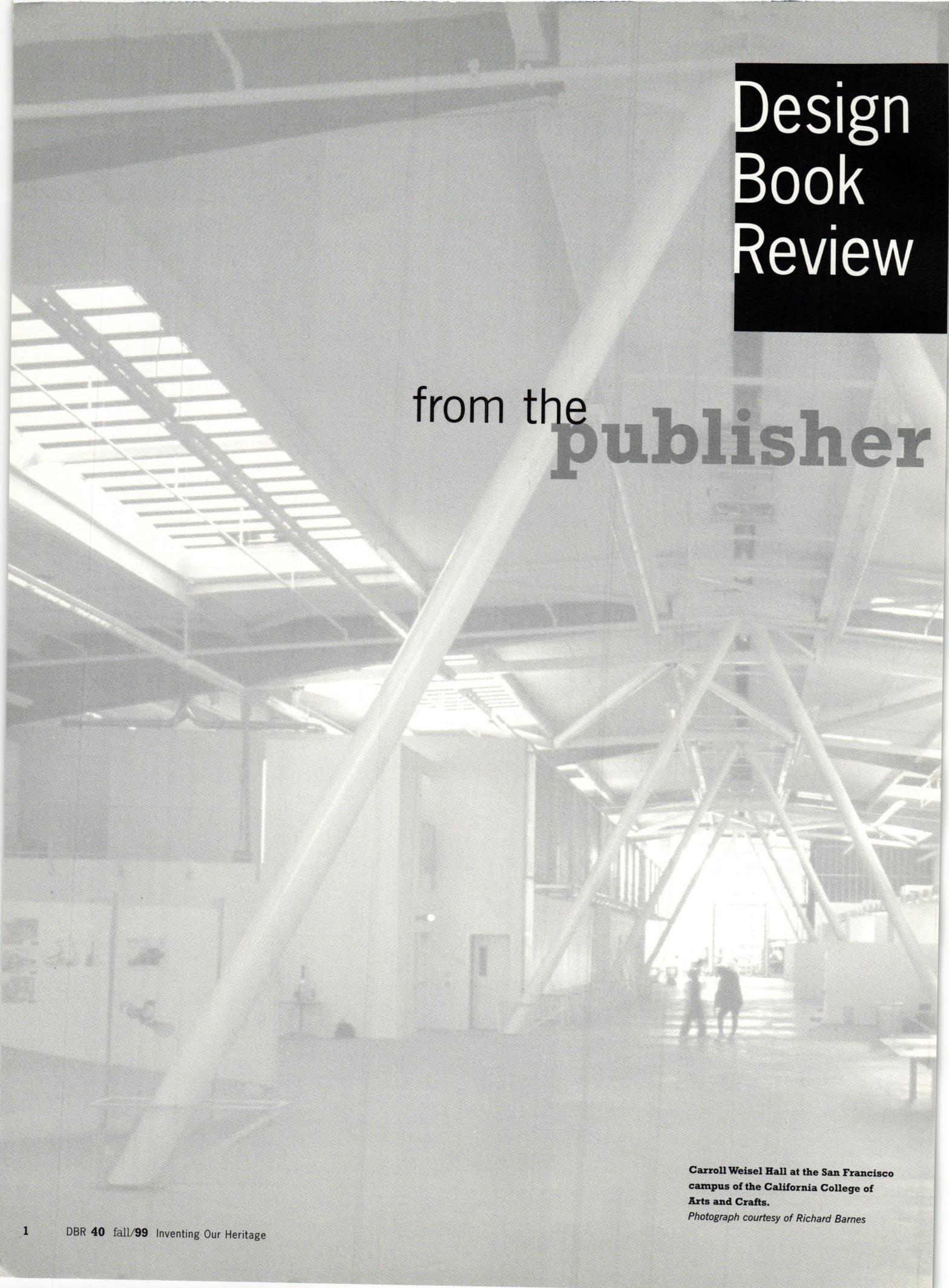
**Kendra Taylor** the American South.”

Mansions into Dust:  
Mississippi Architecture  
and William Faulkner

page 78







# Design Book Review

from the **publisher**

**Carroll Weisel Hall at the San Francisco campus of the California College of Arts and Crafts.**

*Photograph courtesy of Richard Barnes*

*This issue of Design Book Review (DBR)—*  
the first published by the California College  
of Arts and Crafts (CCAC)—

represents an exciting new partnership between this venerable publication and the College. For seventeen years, **DBR** has provided its readers with engaging writing from leading scholars and designers. Through programs, exhibitions, and community outreach efforts, CCAC has demonstrated its longstanding commitment to educating the public about architecture, art, and design. Furthering our shared goal of stimulating dialogue about design-related issues, the joining of **DBR** with CCAC is certain to benefit the College, the magazine, and its readers.

John Parman and Elizabeth Snowden began this magazine in 1982 as a way to help designers and the general public evaluate the hundreds of architecture books published each year. Through their efforts—and with help from Richard Ingersoll—the magazine quickly became one of the nation's leading design publications, winning several prestigious grants and awards along the way. In 1995, to offer just one example, the American Institute of Architects honored **DBR** with its International Architecture Book Publishing Award for the issue titled "Other Americas: Contemporary Architecture and Issues in Latin America," which was coedited by John A. Loomis. CCAC is indebted to John Parman and Elizabeth Snowden for their service to the architectural community, and is dedicated to preserving their vision for this important magazine well into the next century.

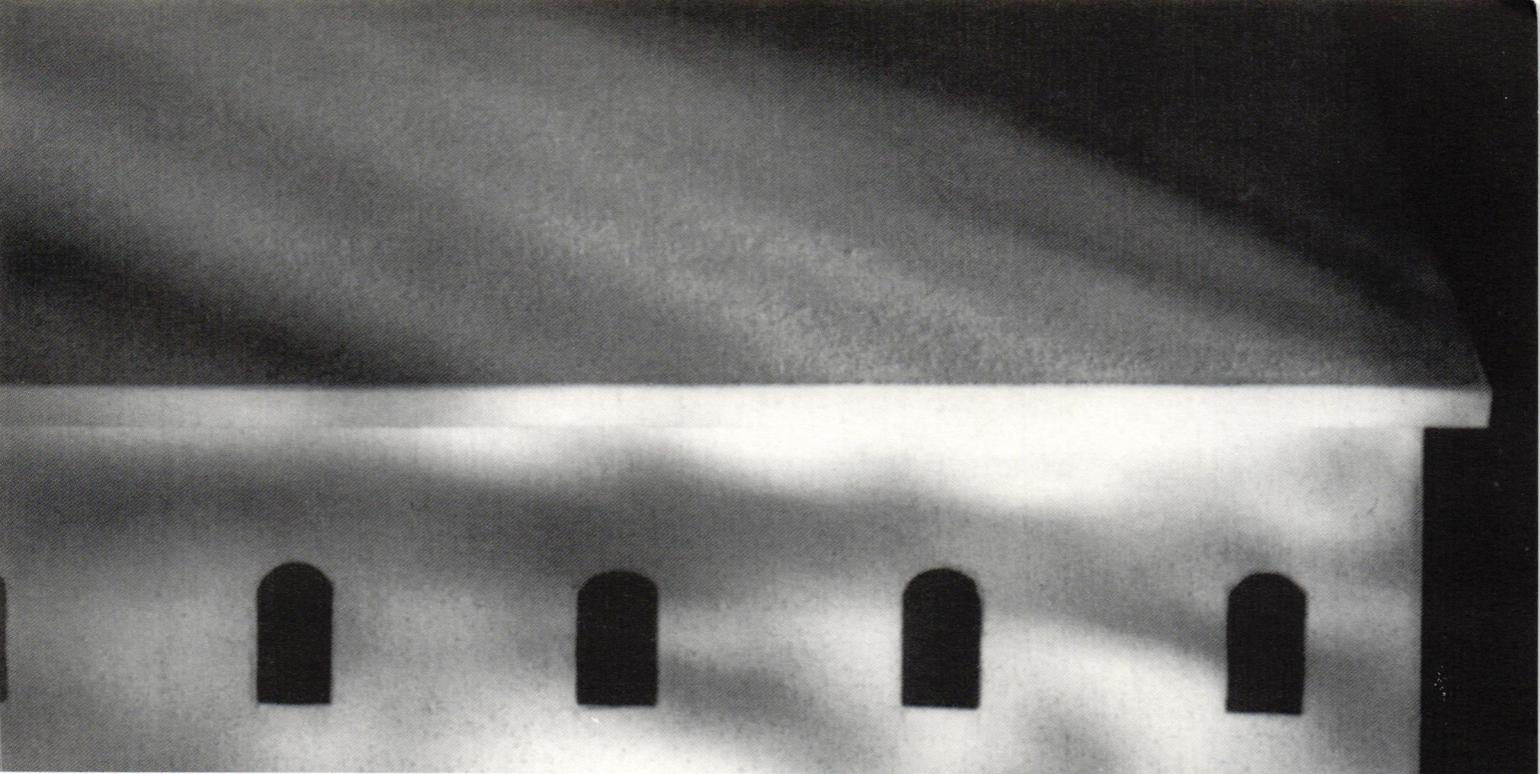
## from the EDITORS

The accelerated pace of cultural and technological change has been a defining feature of the last decades of the twentieth century. The rise of the Internet has quickened the speed of global commerce and the exchange of ideas. The design arts are more ethnically and racially diverse, while more women hold important positions as artists, architects, and patrons. Dramatic changes in scholarship have splintered the traditional boundaries that once separated academic disciplines. Enlightenment paradigms of knowledge have come under intense scrutiny and are the subject of great debate.

The most important role for a design arts journal is to capture the mosaic richness of its age. Since 1982, **Design Book Review** has served as a forum for the discussion and critique of recent scholarship in architecture, urbanism, landscape, and design. Contributors have included James Ackerman, Janet Abu-Lughod, Herbert Muschamp, Spiro Kostof, Esther McCoy, Edward Said, Kenneth Frampton, and Reyner Banham. Now, more than ever, it is time to continue this effort with a fresh look at new developments in cyberspace, visual criticism, ethnic and gender studies, cultural geography, and the interrelationships among the design arts.

From this issue onward, **Design Book Review** will be published quarterly by the California College of Arts and Crafts (CCAC), which has campuses in Oakland and San Francisco. Because CCAC offers education in architecture and design, as well as in the fine arts, it is an ideal site for drawing upon and integrating the accumulated wisdom and creativity of these disciplines. As we are making a new start, we welcome your comments and suggestions as well as your ideas for book reviews and essays. In subsequent issues, we will further describe the shape of the journal to come.

Thanks are in order to **Design Book Review**'s previous publishers, John Parman and Elizabeth Snowden, and editors, Richard Ingersoll and Cathy Lang Ho, for all their hard work and intelligent contributions over the years. They wisely envisioned the need for a journal to explore the intellectual frontiers of the design arts. We would like to thank our copy editor, Nancy Crowley, who read every word in this issue. And, finally, thanks to Lorne Buchman, Stephen Beal, Margie Shurgot, David Kirshman, David Meckel, and all of the staff members at CCAC, who worked hard to provide a new home for **Design Book Review**.



This issue has as its theme the creation and interpretation of historic monuments. Funded in part by a grant from the Graham Foundation, the issue explores how nations and groups use monuments to symbolize historical events and to express their own cultural heritage. The articles included in this issue suggest that the creation of a monument always involves an act of interpretation, if not the manipulation of historical events. Selecting a few key images of a heroic individual to define a culture, for instance, serves to suppress or ignore other people and events, and deny alternate interpretations of the past.

Our hope is that this issue will raise a number of provocative questions about historic monuments and heritage sites. How does the meaning of historical sites and monuments change over time? Why is it important for us to visit and even to lay our hands on authentic historic artifacts? What is the difference between authorial intention and subsequent public interpretation? Are some events, like the Holocaust, too deep and intense to be commemorated by single pieces of art?

What is striking about many of the articles contained in this issue is how they address similar themes and problems. Note how Eleanor M. Hight and Philip Ursprung each explore the role of film in capturing the essence of monuments. Consider as well the way authors Dean MacCannell, E. Perry Winston, and Eric Sandweiss explore how capitalism shapes the American landscape. At times our authors differ, as in the case of Dell Upton's and Hight's contrasting interpretations of Maya Lin's Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama. Our hope for this issue is that it reads as an animated discussion among our writers about historic preservation and monuments and leads our readers to reconsider one of today's most problematic and controversial forms of public art.

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enclosed in this issue.

2 **From the Publisher**

4 **From the Editors**

8 **Mitchell Schwarzer** **Essays**  
Remembering the Holocaust and its Aftershocks

22 **Dell Upton**  
Commemorating the Civil Rights Movement

34 **Lawrence J. Vale**  
Constructing American Values,  
at Home and Abroad

The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building  
America's Embassies  
*by Jane C. Loeffler*

The Unveiling of the National Icons:  
A Plea for Patriotic Iconoclasm in a  
Nationalist Era  
*by Albert Boime*

40 **Eleanor M. Hight**  
Maya Lin Reconsidered

Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision  
*a film written and directed  
by Freida Lee Mock*

Maya Lin: Public/Private  
*exhibition catalogue with essay  
and artist interview by Sarah J. Rogers*

Maya Lin: Topologies  
*exhibition catalogue with essays by  
Michael Brenson, Terri Dowell-Dennis,  
and Jeff Fleming*

**Reviews**  
45 **Philip Ursprung**  
Earthbound: The Land Art  
of Robert Smithson

Robert Smithson:  
The Collected Writings  
*edited by Jack Flam*

Between Landscape Architecture  
and Land Art  
*by Udo Weilacher*

Land and Environmental Art  
*edited by Jeffrey Kastner*

Land Art  
*by Gilles A. Tiberghien*

Land Art USA  
*by Patrick Werkner*

Earthwards: Robert Smithson  
and Art after Babel  
*by Gary Shapiro*

50 **Dean MacCannell**  
The Common Landscape  
after John Brinckerhoff Jackson

Understanding Ordinary Landscapes  
*edited by Paul Groth and  
Todd W. Bressi*

Architecture of the Everyday  
*edited by Steven Harris and  
Deborah Berke*

Exploring Everyday Landscapes:  
Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture  
*edited by Annmarie Adams and  
Sally McMurry*

Landscape in Sight: Looking at America  
*by John Brinckerhoff Jackson  
edited by Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz*

# Book Review fall/99

# 40

## INVENTING OUR HERITAGE: Historic Monuments and Landscapes

57 **E. Perry Winston**

Fear and Downloading  
in the City

Architecture of Fear  
*edited by Nan Ellin*

Mortal City  
*edited by Peter Lang*

62 **John A. Loomis**

Power Rangers

Harwell Hamilton Harris  
*by Lisa Germany*  
*foreword by Kenneth Frampton*

The Texas Rangers: Notes from  
an Architectural Underground  
*by Alexander Caragone*  
*introduction by Charles Moore*

70 **Eric Sandweiss**

The End of the City  
as We Know It

Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits:  
Great Cities of North America  
since 1600  
*by James T. Lemon*

72 **Sharon Irish**

Addition for Architects

The Architecture of Additions:  
Design and Regulation  
*by Paul Spencer Byard*

75 **Kathleen James**

Modernism Rediscovered in  
Eastern Europe

Competing Visions: Aesthetic Invention  
and Social Imagination in Central  
European Architecture, 1867–1918  
*by Ákos Moravánszky*

East-European Modernism: Architecture  
in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland  
between the Wars, 1919–1939  
*edited by Wojciech Leśnikowski*

78 **Kendra Taylor**

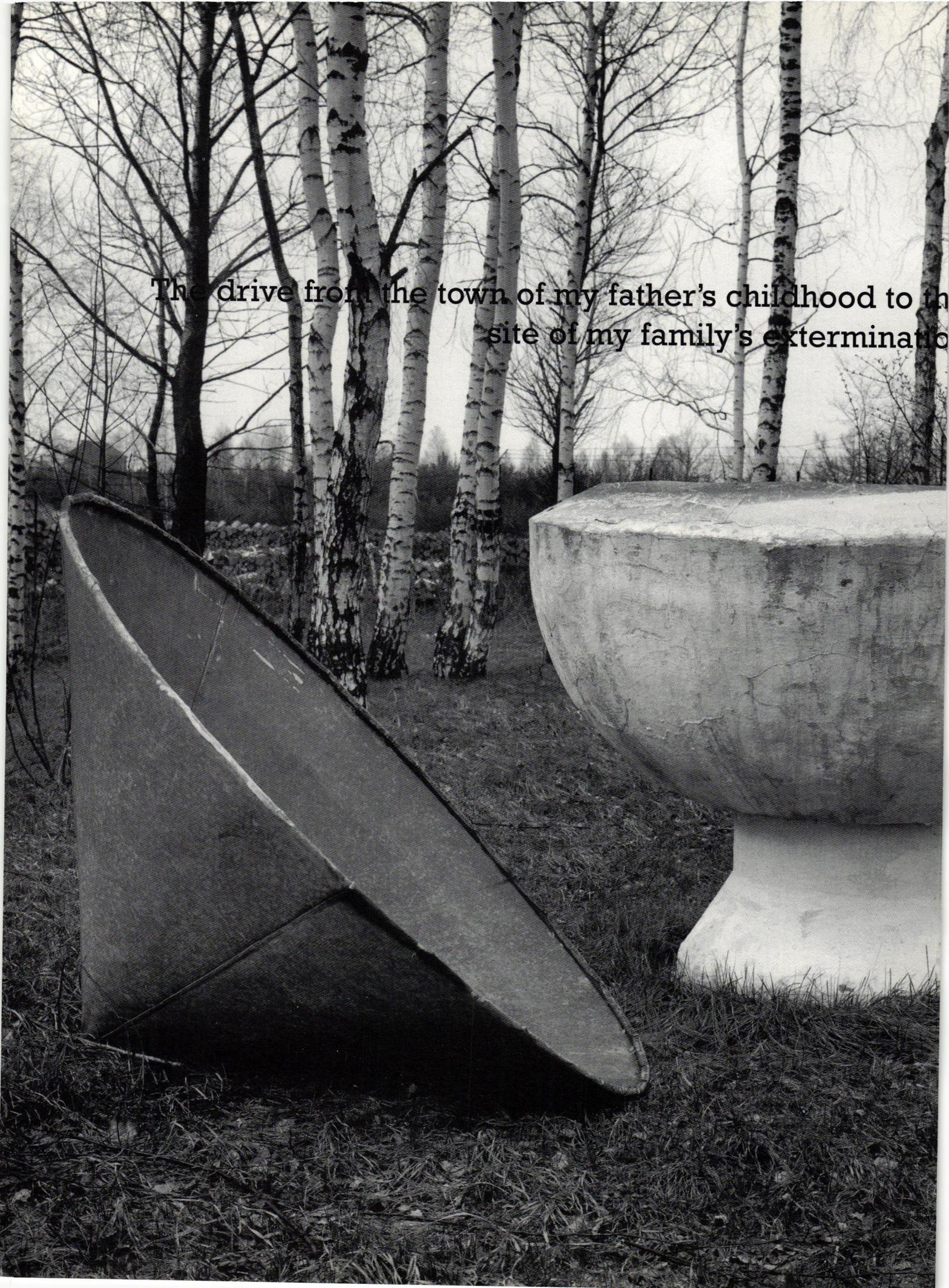
Mansions into Dust:  
Mississippi Architecture and  
William Faulkner

William Faulkner and the Tangible Past:  
The Architecture of Yoknapatawpha  
*by Thomas S. Hines*

*inside back cover*

**Richard Ingersoll**  
A Personal Note in Parting

The drive from the town of my father's childhood to the  
site of my family's extermination





## Remembering the Holocaust and its Aftershocks

by Mitchell Schwarzer

ok less than two hours.

From Jaroslaw, in the southeast corner of Poland, the road cut north through fields of rye that lay tranquil green in the midday summer sun. My wife and I saw mud-plastered farmhouses and horses pulling wagons, which evoked an agrarian atmosphere that existed decades ago when small Jewish shtetls dotted these rolling hills. After reaching the nondescript village of Belzec, we lost our way. We were looking for the death camp, but we saw no signs indicating a *Pomnik*, or memorial, even though such markers crowd the roads of Poland. We asked for directions several times and finally were led to the far southeast corner of town, where a gravel parking lot was flanked by a fence gilded, as Nelly Sachs wrote on a similar theme, by “hieroglyphs of screams, engraved at the entrance gate to death.”

The Belzec extermination camp operated from March to December of 1942. Along with Sobibor and Treblinka, Belzec constituted *Aktion Reinhard*, the comprehensive and largely successful operation to annihilate the Jews of Poland. Each of the camps was located in a remote rural area and along railway lines that connected to centers of Jewish population—in this case, the cities of Lvov and Lublin. Belzec was the first German extermination camp to feature a permanent gas chamber.

As at the other *Reinhard* camps, there was no labor force at Belzec other than that of the *Sonderkommando*, the unit that disposed of bodies and was then itself executed at regular intervals. Victims (who could number up to 10,000 in a single day) were taken directly from the railway ramp to an undressing barracks and a room for cutting women’s hair. They were then herded along a short enclosed path called *der Schlauch* (the tube) into phony *Bade und Inhalationsräume* (bath and inhalation rooms) and gassed with carbon monoxide exhaust from truck engines. It took between twenty and thirty minutes for people to die. Since the camp lacked a crematorium, workers dumped bodies into open pits that could be as deep as forty feet. Because of the ongoing stench and heaving of the ground, many of the bodies were later burned with gasoline; the bones that remained were ground to ashes and scattered on farm fields throughout the vicinity.

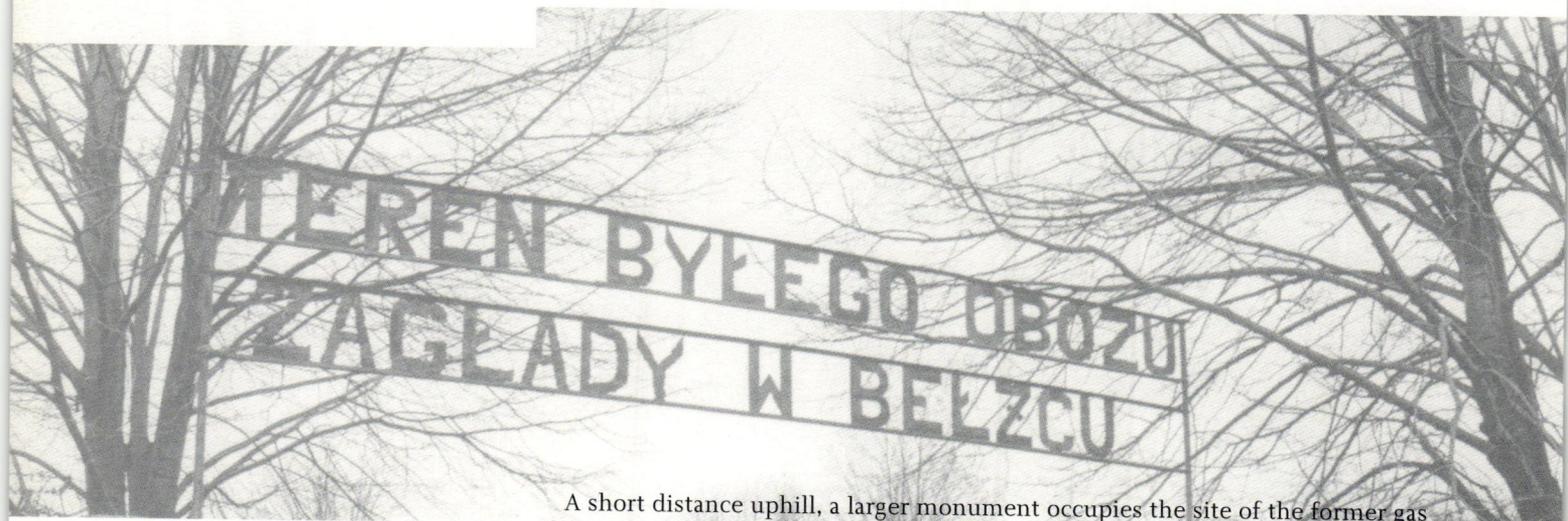
In 1942, Jan Karski—a heroic Pole gathering evidence on the death camps to convince the British and American governments to take action—snuck into Belzec disguised as an Estonian guard. He described: “the loud, sobbing, reeking camp of death...completely covered by a dense, pulsating, throbbing, noisy human mass—starved, stinking, insane human beings in constant agitated motion.”

Nowadays, the Belzec camp is notable for its legacy of horror as much as its specter of neglect. Almost nothing of the original camp survives—not the four watchtowers or the barracks or the brick-and-concrete gas-chamber building. My wife and I entered through a

All photographs are of the Belzec Extermination Camp and were taken by Ira Nowinski. Photographs depict structures built after the war.

Mitchell Schwarzer is associate professor of architectural history and theory at the California College of Arts and Crafts. He is also an executive editor of *Design Book Review*.

wrought-iron gate constructed after the war and emblazoned with the imagery of jagged barbed wire that has become a standard symbol of the Holocaust. Nearby, at the "reception area" alongside the place where the railway ramp stood, a small reddish-brown tablet told us that 600,000 Jews and 1,500 Polish Catholics were murdered on this site. Other estimates speak of several hundred gypsy deaths and an even higher total of Jewish deaths. There were, in any case, no more than five survivors. One survivor who escaped after four months in the camp, Rudolf Reder, wrote a testimony just after the war, *Belzec*.



A short distance uphill, a larger monument occupies the site of the former gas chambers. Accessed via four steps, it is shaped as a box subdivided into a grid, perhaps as a reference to the quadratic plan of the camp and the standardized operations that characterized *Aktion Reinhard*. An inscription on the monument declares acts of horror without mentioning the Jewish tragedy. Even though Belzec's victims were murdered so quickly that they had no time to starve, a sculpture of two emaciated victims, one holding the other, is part of the memorial. Aside from these markers, at the time of our visit in 1987, the death camp had no museum, no maps, and no other interpretive panels that placed it in history. All afternoon we wandered around the small site, no more than a few acres in size, alone.

At one point, we found ourselves walking along the perimeter walls of the camp, under the shade of mature pine trees. There we were confronted with a long row of abstract vessels, each placed uncomfortably on the soft, pine-needled earth. Several of the vessels resembled urns or goblets or mushrooms, capped by strange cones. A couple of the cones had fallen to the ground, apparently the result of ongoing acts of desecration by neighbors. Some other vessels were trapezoidal boxes set atop a four-part base of stairs. Strangest of all were the electric shocks we both received when we touched a couple of the boxes. Only several hours later, in the home of a local Belzec historian whom we met toward the end of our excursion, did we learn that many of these vessels stood above the open-pit graves of the camp's victims, and most likely above those of my grandparents, aunts, and uncles.

Other than my father, who spent thirteen months at Auschwitz-Birkenau, and my mother, who survived mainly in the former Polish oil town of Drogobych, where even Jews were needed for labor, almost all my relatives perished in the Shoah. On this trip, I had ventured out of a compulsion to grasp some corporeal presence of my lost family; until this trip, I had only seen one photograph of one of my grandfathers. I had hoped that the Polish lands, subject of endless and turbulent Sunday-afternoon debates among my parents and their survivor friends in New York City, would somehow vivify a world that had gone visually blank before my birth. I had hoped I could find something amid the hull of Poland's capsized Jewish culture that would begin to fill in at least part of my ancestry.

My journey, taking place many years after the *Sonderaktionen* (special actions) of the 1940s, was accompanied by an interminable succession of artifacts gruesome and orphaned: ramps that served as sites for selection, fields whose lush grasses covered the blood stains of mass shootings by the *Einsatzgruppen* (S. S. special forces), broken headstones in Jewish cemeteries, synagogues converted into other uses. These remains of my family's past mingled with memories of certain events of my childhood: my father's explanation that the scar on his buttocks was beaten into him for stealing food alongside a train track; the revelation I had upon discovering that my mother's fear of walking in the deep forests of the Catskills could be traced to the months she



hid within the murky darkness of a marsh outside her hometown of Sambor. Other memories came flooding back alongside the dusty railway lines within the Birkenau concentration camp, where my father had stood many times, and on the narrow sidewalk in front of the house in Przemysl from which my paternal grandparents were deported. And so it was all through my passage through Poland, the raw gleam of an open wound on walls, fields, and streets.

**Poland is a vast map of the Shoah,** followed haphazardly through private courtyards, cellars, and barns, or officially on processions to public statues, markers, museums, and sites of mass murder. In recent times, as Eastern Europe has joined the West and the last generation of survivors enters old age, the pace of pilgrimage and commemoration has accelerated. Tens of thousands of people journey each year to these unsettling places.

Despite almost universal condemnation of Nazi atrocities, preserving sites and memorializing the Holocaust stirs intense controversy. We have only to look at the decision made a couple of years ago by the Berlin Senate to stop funding for the Topography of Terror museum on the former site of Gestapo headquarters, or the resolution to relocate the Carmelite convent that was temporarily housed in the former storage facility for Zyklon-B gas at Auschwitz. Films like Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) point out that Jews and Poles assign very different meanings to the catastrophe. Books like Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1997) pronounce widespread German complicity in the killings far beyond the confines of the *Einsatzgruppen*.

How can an event like the Holocaust, condemned as the greatest single atrocity of humankind, be so polemical? Part of the explanation lies in the fact that memorials have been constructed by victims, perpetrators, bystanders, and concerned others. As I will describe in detail in this essay, representing the Holocaust is a complex and contentious affair in which no single group has ultimate ownership over its meaning or remembrance.

previous pages

**An anonymous memorial atop mass graves that was later vandalized.**

opposite and above

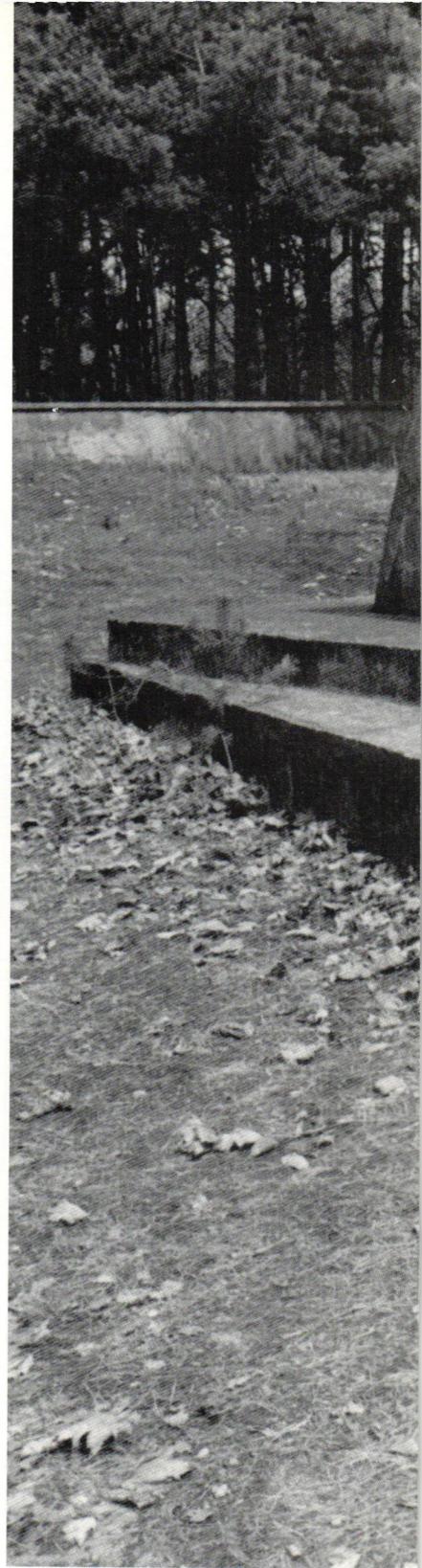
**Sign that reads: "The place that was the boundary of the Belzec Concentration Camp."**

In a philosophical sense, even the idea of representing the Holocaust is seen as problematic. The Holocaust was so ghastly an event, we are told, that it cannot be conceived in words or images. After Auschwitz, Theodor Adorno wrote, there could be no monuments. The death camps were the ultimate challenge to Western civilization, and to the ethical edifice of modernity built upon Judeo-Christian religion, classical humanism, and Enlightenment philosophy. They signal that history, as it was known, had come to an end. As Jean-François Lyotard later added, the Holocaust was an earthquake that destroyed all rational instruments of measurement.

But what if there is no option? Despite efforts by the Germans to destroy evidence, untold artifacts (ranging from skeletons and eyeglasses to the actual steel-and-concrete machinery of incarceration and slaughter) outlasted the war. They would have to be destroyed, preserved, or reconstructed—all acts of a representational nature. Period photographs and first-hand written accounts also record in great precision the past work of the Nazi regime and its accomplices. Finally, intentional commemorations were built from the time of the war onward. A memorial to the suffering at the Majdanek death camp was constructed by the Red Army during its liberation in the summer of 1944. While philosophers debate whether an event of such evil can be represented, a multiplicity of representations are produced annually.

To date, the most comprehensive inquiries into the activity of representing the Holocaust through physical memorials are James E. Young's book *The Texture of Memory* (1993), and a collection of essays by authorities on the subject edited by Young, titled, *The Art of Memory* (1994). These valuable and provocative texts provide an extensive commentary on memorials; on the responses of artists, architects, and politicians; and on the questions of representation that emerge from the perception of their visual form. In addition, other fine books, like Sybil Milton and Ira Nowinski's *In Fitting Memory: The Art and Politics of Holocaust Memorials* (1991) or Martin Gilbert's *Holocaust Journey: Travelling in Search of the Past* (1997), furnish us with an even greater visual commentary on the memorials.

In the section that follows, I will use these texts, and especially Young's *The Texture of Memory*, as a springboard for a general consideration of the cultural issues inherent in Holocaust memorials. In order to demonstrate the complex politics commensurate with memorializing the Holocaust, Young surveys a diverse group of memorials—artworks, concentration-camp sites, assemblages of tombstones, museums—in four countries—Germany, Poland, Israel, and the United States. Although it would seem that that the creation of Holocaust memorials should be an affair of all humanity, the vast majority of them, Young implies, are part and parcel of distinct discourses of scholarly investigation, of national and religious identity, of artistic expression, and of individual emotion.





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After Auschwitz, Theodor Adorno wrote, there could be no monuments.

## Cemeteries, prisons, and sites of slaughter—

the concentration camps at Buchenwald, Dachau, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück, Berge, Belsen—throughout Germany are marked by memorials and signs that argue against forgetting the terror and murder of Europe's Jewry. Whenever possible, actual buildings, pillories for torture, storerooms, and meat hooks for hanging corpses are preserved. In some cases, signs of the period are also still visible. At Sachsenhausen, a weathered wooden sign at the perimeter wall reads: Neutral Zone: [Violators] will be shot instantly without warning.

In Germany, memorializing the Holocaust is a topic of passionate debate, an interrogation of the nation's soul that questions the nature of German identity itself. These debates, as Young tells us, have given rise to a fascinating phenomenon known as the *Gegendenkmal*, or antimonument. These creations are compositions that question their statuses as monuments, and, not accidentally, Germany's status as a nation of warriors and murderers. Epitomized by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz's *Monument against Fascism* (1986) in Hamburg, or by Horst Hoheisel's *Negative Form Monument* (1989) in Kassel, the *Gegendenkmal* is a response (on the part of German artists and architects) to the fact that the Hitlerzeit (Hitler era) erected grand, permanent monuments that emblazoned authoritarian and warlike imperatives on the German people.

Hostile to the Germanic cult of pure national origins, the *Gegendenkmal* evokes the chattering underside of society, more the world of Franz Biberkopf in Alfred Döblin's book *Alexanderplatz, Berlin* (1929) than the remote divinities that populated Richard Wagner's Valhalla. Instead of promising millennial ambitions as did the Third Reich, these antimonuments are programmed for self-destruction; likewise, rather than inviting passive silence and inaction, they solicit desecration and collusion. Like many conceptual artists of the past thirty years, their designers work to deny a viewer's anticipation of emotional catharsis and resolution. Instead of consoling Germany's pain in having participated in gruesome acts, antimonuments prolong agitation.

**A memorial constructed by the Polish government that reads: "In memory of the victims of Hitler's terror who were murdered in the years 1942-1943."**



The perpetually unfinished or about-to-vanish *Gegendenkmal* is, however, more an interrogation of the tragedy of German nationalism than the Shoah. A commentary on German cruelty rather than on Jewish slaughter, it evades the precise matter of the German destruction of European Jewry. As Young comments, these installations aim to remember a vanished people by dispersing memory, not gathering it. The focus is on Germans not Jews, on German inquests into their own madness. But will Germans feel the absence of the vanished Jew by focusing on extinguishing only the obvious manifestations of their own fascist identity? What of the involvement of German industry and the German population in constructing the machinery of death? What of the specific manuals for resettling Germans on land robbed from Jews and Poles? In many cases, the chilling specifications of the Final Solution for Europe's Jews get lost in the artistry.

The *Gegendenkmal* is also poorly distinguishable from the general deconstruction of identity and art in the late twentieth century. These protestations against monumentality could stand in for any number of postmodern critiques—those of progress, truth, reason, or patriarchy.

South of the border, Hans Haacke's *Und ihr habt doch gesiegt* [And You Were Victorious After All] (1988) in Graz and Alfred Hrdlicka's *Monument Against War and Fascism* (1988) in Vienna are more direct, pointedly pursuing the advanced state of decay of Holocaust memory in Austria, despite remains like the *Todesstiege* (Steps of Death) at Austria's Mauthausen camp. Repudiating any notion of Austria as the "first victim" who somehow also produced Hitler, Eichmann, and four native-son death-camp commandants, the Austrian memorials shook up complacency and cowardliness in the alpine republic. For instance, by listing the numbers of Nazi victims as part of the re-creation of a Nazi monument, Haacke forced Austrians to deal with the contradictions at the heart of their own identity. This act, not surprisingly, resulted in a firebombing of the exhibition of which Haacke was a part, just a week before it was to close. This was a poignant reminder that the Austria of Jörg Haider, leader of the contemporary right-wing political party, bears much of the *Hitlerzeit* in its everyday life.

Hrdlicka's statue of a kneeling Jew sweeping the sidewalk, located in the center of Vienna's tourist district, refers to events that occurred on and after *Kristallnacht* in 1938, but also to Austria's ongoing tendency to brush aside the Shoah by accentuating Lipizzaner stallions, alpine costumes, and Mozart candies.

Poland is home to all six extermination camps—Auschwitz, Majdanek, Treblinka, Chelmno, Sobibor, and Belzec—and not coincidentally was home to the largest Jewish community of prewar Europe. At Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Polish government has preserved part of the barracks complex for 125,000 prisoners, five chambers with visible ducts to transport gas crystals, incinerators, and the infamous brick-arched train entrance. Where almost all traces were destroyed, as at Treblinka, in 1964 artists Francizek Duszenko and Adam Haupt designed an immense field of stone shards as a "cemetery of souls" to surround a chilling central obelisk and a set of parallel concrete slabs to represent the vanished rail spur. The obelisk resembles a helmet of suffering souls; or, in an architectural sense, two abnormally stout columns supporting an entablature of extinction.

In Warsaw, on the site of the Jewish ghetto uprising, the earliest large-scale memorial to the Shoah, a heroic portrait of Mordechai Anielewicz surrounded by other fighters was erected in 1946 by Nathan Rapoport. Nearby, at the *Umschlagsplatz* (reloading point), a 1988 memorial of stark stone walls encloses a symbolic void. Throughout Poland, thousands of sites of terror are signified by official and unofficial commemorations. The Polish response to the Holocaust has been nothing less than overwhelming.

Why has Poland gone to such great efforts to consecrate the destruction of its Jewish community? After all, the history of erecting memorials, as Zvi Gittelman tells us in an essay in *The Art of Memory*, was quite different in the neighboring Soviet Union, where the Jewish Shoah was co-opted into a larger critique of the terrors of capitalism transformed into racist fascism. But in Poland, also under Communist rule, Jewish suffering has been played up. This seems to be ironic for a country where anti-Semitism has had a considerable legacy since the end of the war, even though the country is almost *Judenrein* (free of Jews). This latter fact was not only caused by the Shoah. My mother and many other Jews returning to small Polish cities after liberation were made to fear for their lives when they looked into the status of their former homes. She soon fled west to Germany.

In Poland, almost all memorials to the Jews concentrate on sites of destruction. Less discussed are the places of prewar Jewish life and the fact that practically every *Rynek* (or town square) was encircled by Jewish homes, businesses, and synagogues. The reason for selective Polish memorial activity, as Young tells us, is that the Jewish Shoah has been memorialized as an emblem of both actual Polish suffering during the war and the potential for the complete destruction of the Poles that would have occurred if the Germans had won the war. In many of the memorials, much is made of the fact that six million Poles were murdered, even though half of that total were Jews. Despite conflicting attitudes regarding Jews on the part of post-war Poles, Holocaust memorials apparently serve as figures for Polish devastation, a synecdoche of Poland's claim (alongside that of the Jews) to tragic postwar nationhood. For better or worse, memorials represent the most fertile spot for Polish-Jewish discussions on their shared, if troubled, history.

Memorials to the Shoah in Israel, unlike those in Europe, have been exclusively designed by Jews and with overwhelming involvement by survivors. It should come as no surprise that the Jewish dimensions of the event receive central attention. As Young writes in *The Texture of Memory*: "Like any state, Israel also remembers the past according to its national myths and ideals, its current political needs." What is most striking about the Israeli responses is the way in which the destruction of European Jewry has served as a platform for the creation of new symbols of national identity as it has in Europe: in some cases, the potent Israeli images of farmer (renewal through agricultural growth) and soldier (the armed might of the Israeli Defense Forces) bear uncomfortable similarity to the most common symbols of Nazi art—heroic farm families and gargantuan warriors. As much as in Germany and Poland, Israel has memorialized the Holocaust within debates about its own preoccupations with national identity.

These Israeli responses are complicated by the fact that Jewish identity has a consummate allegiance to God's laws and commandments. Yet, since the giving of the Law (Torah) to Moses on Mt. Sinai and the destruction of the Second Temple that resulted in the formation of rabbinical Judaism (Talmud), the Shoah has become the third-most profound identity-building event in Jewish history. The culmination of two millennia of oppression in the diaspora, it even threatens at times to displace Talmud Torah (especially for secular Jews) as the essence of Jewish identity.

The founding of the State of Israel, of course, is another monumental event in Jewish history, regardless of the fact that Temple Yahwehism has not been revived. In this regard, Israeli memorials to the Shoah may be regarded as a way of working out the tension between the negative legacy of oppression that the Shoah encapsulates and the positive legacy of biblical history/religion that the land of Israel resonates. This effort to diminish such tension is evident in the numerous memorials at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. At Yad Vashem we see commemorations of vanished European Jewish

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communities, towers that resemble smokestacks, a twisted wrought-iron gate, detailed commentary on the mechanism and legacy of destruction, and images of Jewish resistance fighters. As the incredibly complex field of memorials at Yad Vashem attests, memory often takes the form of a dialectical clash between annihilation and survival that ultimately leads to rebirth. The monument to Jewish soldiers, partisans, and ghetto fighters (1985) by Bernie Fink consists of six hexagonal blocks of stone forming a Star of David that is interrupted by a steel sword blade rising to the sky. To a degree greater than elsewhere in the world, the Shoah becomes an era of nascent heroism and resistance, the time of death and destruction of the *galut* (or diaspora) Jewry that led to the final *yishuv* (gathering of the Jews) in Israel.

Upon initial consideration, United States memorials to the Holocaust seem less charged than those across the Atlantic. Yet, on further reflection, they may be seen as an integral part of the process of building both Jewish-American identity and American nationhood. The United States is home to the largest Jewish population in the world, and, consequently, embodies the greatest challenge to any belief that the life of diaspora Jewry ended with the Holocaust. For these reasons, American memorials are both a remembrance of ancestors and a commemoration of destruction. At the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., the visitor is encouraged to reflect both on the long duration of Jewish life within the European diaspora and the brisk journey of death that led to places like Auschwitz during the early 1940s.

American memorials are also expressions of the immigrant experience, and specifically of the Jewish community's successful representation of itself within the public forums of American society. The location of Stanley Saitowitz's New England Holocaust Memorial alongside the Freedom Trail in Boston, James Inigo Freed's Holocaust Museum directly on the Mall in Washington, D.C., (where the first image one sees is a huge photograph of American troops liberating the camps), and Rapoport's *Liberation* (1985) across the harbor from the Statue of Liberty reveal that the Shoah has become an integral part of a larger process of legitimizing American

identity via Jewish figures. Rapaport's sculpture, in fact, depicts a mighty American soldier carrying a limp survivor to the New World. The analogy of America as a haven for immigrants and the role of American soldiers in the defeat of Nazi Germany could not be any clearer.

Like their European and Israeli counterparts, American memorials cannot be easily grouped together. George Segal's *The Holocaust* (1983) overlooking the Pacific Ocean in San Francisco is a representational depiction of a forlorn prisoner standing alongside a barbed-wire fence, surrounded by dead bodies. Saitowitz's New England memorial is more abstract, relying on number (six towers for the six million), word (the names of the six extermination camps), and light and smoke for its impact. Finally, the United States Holocaust Museum combines a vast amount of artifactual, photographic, and testimonial information with a highly programmed itinerary that in subtle ways (e.g., the issuing of victim I.D. cards, the narrowing and darkening of the sole path as one approaches the model of a concentration camp) encourages the visitor to empathize with the victims of the Shoah.

The Holocaust Museum is situated alongside the great symbols of American government and history on the Mall in Washington, D.C. Yet, unlike the Smithsonian museums and the government buildings, which directly refer to great American events, the Holocaust Museum establishes a forum on identity through the negative polemics of persecution. Even the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, like a compacted graveyard, stresses the loss of individual American lives and not the devastation inflicted on Vietnam. Furthermore, the Holocaust Museum speaks of destruction and loss through an event foreign to the American context. The question might be asked: are Americans representing German atrocities in order to focus less on their own? How, after all, would an American feel to arrive at Berlin's Unter den Linden and see a museum devoted to the genocide of Native Americans or the slavery of African Americans? Ground has only recently been broken for a Native American museum on the Mall and no such museum for the African bondage experience is in the works.

## Holocaust memorials

**constitute an enormous network** of recordings and inscriptions that offers an extraordinary scale of reflection on the Shoah and the Nazi Final Solution. Along with oral testimonies, written journals, literature, film, and academic scholarship, these memorials wrest the Shoah from the estrangements of time. In visual and tactile ways, they embed Holocaust memory within material sites, period artifacts, and artistic and scholarly commentaries, and provide a wealth of means to understand the event's tragic dimensions. Their importance to contemporary and future generations is immeasurable.

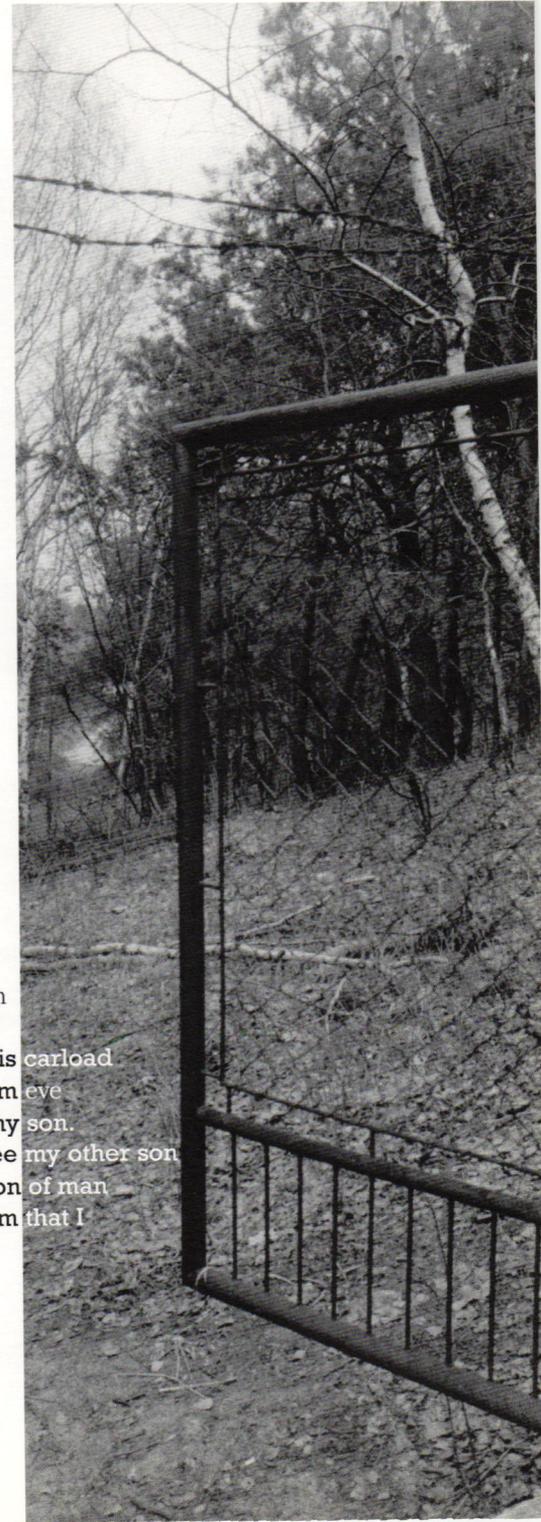
At the same time, one cannot deny the obvious fact that the means and aims of memorialization differ greatly. Memorials may evoke naturalistic, symbolic, or abstract references; they may offer artistic, educational, or moral objectives; they may emerge out of a personal, national, religious, or scientific outlook; and they may convey an intimate, cathartic, or devastating impression. In scope as well, memorials range from sculptural monoliths to labyrinthine, itemized museums of historical artifacts. Some rely on the power of words (the names of extermination camps, condemnations of evil, lists of victims); others on uneven and jarring geometries (shards of stone, plumes of smoke, or webs of jagged steel); some on perfectly regular geometries (stone pillars, repeating concrete slabs, immense gridded lattices); some others on Jewish symbols (toppled menorahs and Stars of David); and still others on painful depictions of human bodies (faces of despair, arms and feet reaching out toward escape, torsos jammed together as if in a boxcar).

Wherever they have been built, memorials impose particular (and often political) viewpoints. They do not coalesce into any universal formal, moral, or historical statement about what the Holocaust means. How could any visual object or image possibly stand in for the infinite events of the war years, the acts of killing and cruelty, the

pangs of hunger and thirst, the dulled emotions felt daily by millions? Far from reducing the Holocaust to a converging message or form, memorials create a dense network of representation nourished by and nourishing any number of contemporary debates. Their incommensurability tells us that memorializing the Holocaust is a conflicted and active process, a set of gestures devoid of the pinpoints of initiation or completion that one comes to expect in a traditional memorial.

This absence of universality and fixity very much accords with Young's intent in writing about memorials: to argue against their ossification into single meanings, against their fixation into form. For Young, the acts of memory making and memory debating—what may be termed inter-memorial discourse—are the greatest testimonies to the Shoah. As he writes in *The Texture of Memory*:

The back gate of the site of the Extermination Camp.



Perhaps the only lasting memorials to the Shoah will come not in finished monuments at all, but in the perpetual activity of memory: in the debate over which kinds of memory should be preserved, in whose interest, for which audience. Instead of allowing the past to rigidify in monumental form, we would vivify memory through the memory-work itself—whereby events, their recollection, and the role monuments play in our lives remain animate, never completed.

In Young's view, memorials to the Holocaust should correspond to the event's incalculable dimensions, but also to their own genesis and their open-ended status as memorials. After all, memorials stand for the actual events of the Holocaust, but speak also of the intentions of their creators; they reflect the expectations of those who view them as well as the overall discourse of building memorials. It is inevitable that memorials to the Holocaust refer to the long tradition of commemorating war, victory, and destruction, and to long-standing traditions of exhibition design and collecting.

Similar perspectives of representations of the Shoah have been argued by another historian. Lawrence Langer, in *Art from the Ashes* (1995), describes the uncommon and irresolute circumstances surrounding Holocaust literature: "The closure we expect of narrative—in the form of insight, reconciliation, maturity, or moral triumph—never appears....Hence the rhythms of this literature remain cropped, jagged, and unresolved, and its endings signify no arrival but merely another invitation to depart." This lack of closure is illustrated in a famous poem by Dan Pagis:

Here on this carload  
I am eve  
with Abel my son.  
If you see my other son  
Cain, son of man  
tell him that I

We are not told, although the implications are there, where the journey leads. We have come upon a genre of writing and monument making whose threads can no more be pulled together than those of the vanquished European Jewish civilization.

**I would like to conclude** with some observations on how Holocaust memorials relate to memory. Because of their capacity for representing objects of the past and reviving events of the past, collective memorials are linked to personal memory. Yet, memorials and memory differ in several respects. Memory is only the initial, unformed, and fleeting aspect of memorialization. Inasmuch as memorials extend into the world and are built of materials, memory is stored in the neural fibers beneath the consciousness and is built of experiences. Memory is a function of the sedimentation and turbulence that make up the inner mind, a power that roams the outer mind uncontrollably, a force that from time to time ripples and swells to rearrange the substance of consciousness, and a mechanism that works as much in the interests of the survival of consciousness as in its ability to understand. The greatest Holocaust memorial, in a sense, is the edifice of actual lives informed by personal memory after the events of the Holocaust.

In his essay "Monument and Memory in a Postmodern Age," Andreas Huyssen addresses the link between memory and distance and forgetting. He writes:

Is it not rather, that, paradoxically,  
each and every memory inevitably depends  
both on distance and forgetting,  
the very things that undermine its desired stability  
and reliability  
but which, at the same time,  
are essential for the vitality of memory itself?  
Is it not a constitutive strength of memory  
that it can be contested  
from new perspectives,  
with novel evidence,  
from the very spaces it had blocked out?

By no means a library of past experiences, memory is a constructive and selective engine, bound up as much with shielding as revealing. In *Auschwitz and After* (1995), Charlotte Delbo writes of an underlying memory where sensations and physical imprints remain intact: "Auschwitz is so deeply etched in my memory that I cannot forget one moment of it.—So you are living with Auschwitz?—No, I live next to it. Auschwitz is there, unalterable, precise, but enveloped in the skin of memory, an impermeable skin that isolates it from my present self."

Similar to a memorial, then, memory is an accumulation and complication of life experiences beyond a historic event. If the discussion about Holocaust memorials indicates that they are as much about moving forward as backward, as much about structuring a past event through aims relating to the present, the same can be said of personal memory.

For many survivors, such as my parents, memory of the Shoah was a process of deflection and sublimation, a refraction of present moments through the difficult densities of the war years. Creating a new life in Germany and the United States after the war demanded that they see the world in hues and textures grounded in memories other than those of the loss of parents and home, of starvation and imprisonment. Both of my parents romanticized through memory the years they spent in Germany after the war, when my father was a medical student in Heidelberg and when they met and married. Many of my parents' friends with whom they kept in touch long after the war were from those Heidelberg years, despite the fact that those years were spent in Germany. The postwar years in Germany became a memorial to the Shoah constructed not just out of memories of blood and anguish but also out of memories of learning and renewal.

When I was growing up, my parents' conscious memories of the Holocaust were similarly wide ranging. I heard stories of the blackness of sealed railway cars, but also of ironic salvation at the hands of Josef Mengele; of the excruciating moment of separation from parents during an *Aktion*, but also of the intense reconstruction of family through me and my sister. My father spoke often of all aspects of his survival, of his life in prewar Poland, and even of his old romances. My mother has always been reticent to talk of the precise details of those years.

Even more powerfully, unconscious Holocaust memory was the volatile presence that often split my parents apart from others, each other, my sister and me, and themselves. It was the flood of recriminations that came from their tongues as we watched political events on the television, or the violent screams from my mother at the most minor interruptions of routine, or my father's grandiose analogies between mundane conflicts of the present moment and Hitler.

**For my father**, memories of the Holocaust frequently stretched his personal saga of survival into the present day and into my life. His staggering acts of bravery, cleverness, and luck by which he survived death in Poland became allegories for his wisdom on how to negotiate the world. This was a man, larger than life, who arrived in New York with fifty dollars and created a prosperous existence for our family. His memories of the Holocaust were always present, but always within a melody of extraordinary tales and edifying lessons.

**For my mother**, whose nerves were frayed in her teens, memories of those years hardened into an almost hysterical pursuit of normalcy. The details of the past upon which my father thrived were shoved underneath concrete events of the day to day. But her memories of the Holocaust manifest themselves in ongoing fears of loss, a mistrust of others, displaced anger, and an overriding protectiveness of our small family.

**For myself**, having grown up in a family foreshortened, the Shoah strikes deep chords of historical memory. My life sits atop the dead end of hundreds of years of European Jewry. In waking and in dream, I am perpetually knocked out of moment and place, forced back into landscapes in which I never lived. At times, I wander the boulevards of Jaroslaw, admiring the solid stone buildings where my family resided, engaging with people whose faces I have only seen in photographs.

ore often, I am in a state of flight,  
pursued by enemies.

Frequently, I come back to Belzec. Recently I read that after the extermination camp was closed in December 1942, numerous neighbors from the area dug up the open-pit graves to search for gold and other valuables on the rotting corpses. The practice resumed after the Germans were forced out of Poland in 1944, and only ceased years later when the Polish government turned the site into the wretched memorial I visited.

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Books Discussed in this Essay

**The Texture of Memory:  
Holocaust Memorials and Meaning**

by James E. Young  
Yale University Press, 1993  
384 pp., \$25.00

**The Art of Memory: Holocaust  
Memorials in History**

edited by James E. Young  
Prestel, 1994  
194 pp., currently out of print

**In Fitting Memory: The Art and  
Politics of Holocaust Memorials**

by Sybil Milton  
photographs by Ira Nowinski  
Wayne State University Press, 1991  
341 pp., currently out of print

**Holocaust Journey: Travelling  
in Search of the Past**

by Martin Gilbert  
Columbia University Press, 1997  
480 pp., \$29.50; \$16.95 (paper)

**Art from the Ashes:  
A Holocaust Anthology**

edited by Lawrence L. Langer  
Oxford University Press, 1995  
689 pp., \$28.95

**Auschwitz and After**

by Charlotte Delbo  
translated by Rosette C. Lamont  
Yale University Press, 1995  
354 pp., \$35.00; \$17.95 (paper)



# Commemorating the Civil Rights Movement

by Dell Upton

In the spring of 1999, twenty members of Congress traveled to Alabama to visit sites and monuments associated with the civil rights movement.<sup>1</sup> The organizer of the 1999 tour was Georgia Congressman John Lewis, a veteran of the Freedom Rides and sit-ins of the early 1960s. Lewis asked Republican and Democratic members of Congress to join with him on the pilgrimage to inspire them with the "spirit of the movement that transformed the law and to start them talking together about race and reconciliation."<sup>2</sup>

The tour included visits to Kelly Ingram Park in Birmingham, where police attacked children with fire hoses and dogs in the spring of 1963, and to Montgomery to see the site of Rosa Parks's arrest and the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, where Martin Luther King Jr. once served as minister. The climax was a reenactment of the infamous Selma-to-Montgomery march of March 7, 1965. During that historic protest, more than 500 marchers were clubbed, whipped, and tear-gassed by state troopers as they crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge leading out of Selma. The attack on the protestors by law enforcement officials helped galvanize public support for civil rights.

Like the Lewis tour, the large number of civil rights monuments erected in the last decade mark a new stage in a struggle to define the movement's legacy. While politicians, museum curators, and filmmakers increasingly celebrate the goals and results of the movement, a new generation of younger scholars has begun to reassess the movement unsentimentally, offering complex and not-always-flattering accounts of the motives and actions of its dominant figures. In addition to commemorating key events of twentieth-century America's defining moral drama, the creators of civil rights memorials seek to define the nature of southern society at the end of the twentieth century and the South's place in the twenty-first. These monuments, set in landscapes devastated by urban renewal, depict a South purged of its troubled racial past and ready to compete in a new global economy.

## Martyrdom and Human Rights

One of the most celebrated of the new monuments is Maya Lin's Civil Rights Memorial (1988–89) in Montgomery. Conceived by its designer as a contemplative site with a "tranquil, soothing character," the memorial sits on a small terrace above Washington Street near the state capitol.<sup>3</sup> A convex wall of black marble inscribed with King's words "until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream" projects from the lower story of an ordinary 1980s suburban-type office building, the headquarters of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), which commissioned the monument. In keeping with the imagery of King's quotation, this curved wall is washed with a continuous stream of water. The wall functions as a kind of theatrical

All photographs by Dell Upton.

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backdrop for the memorial's centerpiece, a freestanding inverted cone of black marble that Lin calls a "table" and that is bathed in water that bubbles up near the center and spills over its edges. The small memorial plaza is enclosed by a low wall that encircles the terrace and doubles as seating, encouraging visitors to turn away from the view of King's Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, which stands a few hundred yards northeast, and of the antebellum state capitol beyond it.

Through their design choices, Lin and her patrons inscribed civil rights history within a very tight compass. Lin chose to represent the movement using techniques she developed while creating her Vietnam Veterans Memorial, whose fame and popularity earned her the Montgomery commission. On the black marble tabletop, the names of forty men, women, and children who "lost their lives in the struggle for freedom" radiate from the center "like the hands of a clock." They are arranged in chronological order of their deaths. Inscriptions recording the dates of the landmark civil rights case *Brown v. Board of Education* and the assassination of King, as well as other texts that tally prominent civil rights demonstrations, court decisions, and national legislation, are interspersed among the names of the victims.

page 22

**Ronald S. McDowell,**  
*Dogs, 1995,*  
**Kelly Ingram Park,**  
**Birmingham, Alabama.**

above

**Maya Lin,**  
**Civil Rights Memorial, 1988–89,**  
**Montgomery, Alabama.**

Because the memorial brackets the movement between *Brown v. Board of Education* and the death of King and represents the movement's achievements in terms of judicial decisions and legislative acts, it lifts this period out of the long-term context of African-American struggle. In fact, black Americans began working for human and civil rights before emancipation, and the record of individual and organized opposition to incidental and structural injustice is unbroken since 1865. In the years following the Civil War, they challenged segregation in public accommodations and participated in local, state, and national governments until driven out by violence and political subterfuge. With the passage of the Jim Crow laws at the turn of the century in response to such black assertiveness, and with the articulation of accommodationist and separatist ideologies by black intellectuals, direct, organized confrontation abated but never disappeared. Such hostilities peaked again after the First and Second World Wars, as returning African-American veterans chafed at the limitations white Americans placed on their enjoyment of the freedoms they had ostensibly fought to defend. Particularly after World War II, demands for housing and voting rights were common and sometimes effective, as when black voters integrated previously all-white Democratic primaries in Texas in 1944, Georgia in 1946, and South Carolina in 1947.

In contrast to the tight chronology of the monument, Lin and the SPLC chose to be catholic in their selection of "martyrs." The inscriptions record the murders of black and white civil rights activists such as Medgar Evers, Vernon Dahmer, Viola Liuzzo, and James Reeb, but also those of Willie Edwards Jr., murdered in 1957 by Klansmen who believed that he was dating a white woman; Mack Charles Parker, lynched in 1959 after being accused of rape; and Lt. Col. Lemuel Penn, shot by Klansmen as he was driving home from military training in 1964. By including these men, Lin and her patrons enlist them as martyrs to a specific political cause and separate their deaths from the long history of random and routine violence inflicted on African Americans.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, the chronological record of deaths in plain, sans-serif capital letters on funereal black marble erases hierarchy and difference among victims, crimes, and motives within the movement and reduces conflict to abstracted sacrifice and loss. The limited, specific advances of civil rights—the rights of citizenship in a state—achieved through the judicial and legislative actions recorded on the memorial's table rise to the universal, more abstract plane of human rights.

Like the narrow conception of the civil rights movement in the memorial's inscriptions, its siting in a radically transformed urban landscape excises the movement from the context of southern, African-American, and American history. The Civil Rights Memorial stands just off Dexter Avenue, a six-block-long street formerly lined with some of the city's most prosperous retail businesses and finest churches. The avenue links the state capitol on Goat Hill to the city's commercial and industrial district near the Alabama River. The 1885 construction of the black Dexter Avenue Baptist Church on this street, next to the capitol, was a gesture of great daring in a white society hypersuspicious of black overachievement.

Like other capital cities, Montgomery was transformed by the vast expansion of state governments in the 1960s and 1970s. New public buildings spilled out of Goat Hill and consumed the residential neighborhoods near the capitol. The SPLC headquarters is one of the many offices of lobbying and political-action organizations that feed off the state government and add to the sprawling landscape of bureaucracy. The law center's neighbors include the enormous new headquarters of the state retirement system, a new state courts building, and a Colonial Revival mansion that survives from the site's earlier incarnation as an upper-class residential street.

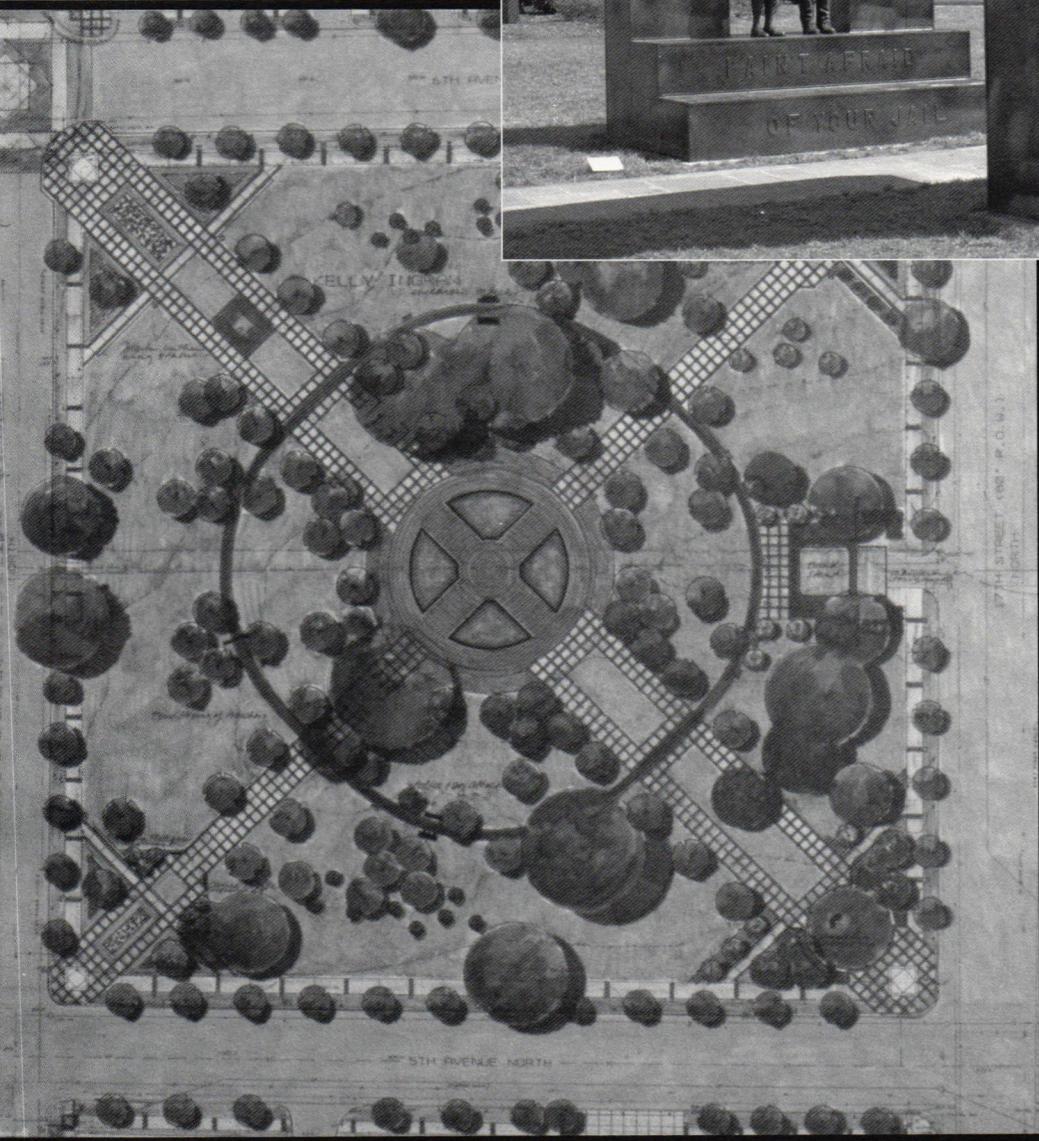
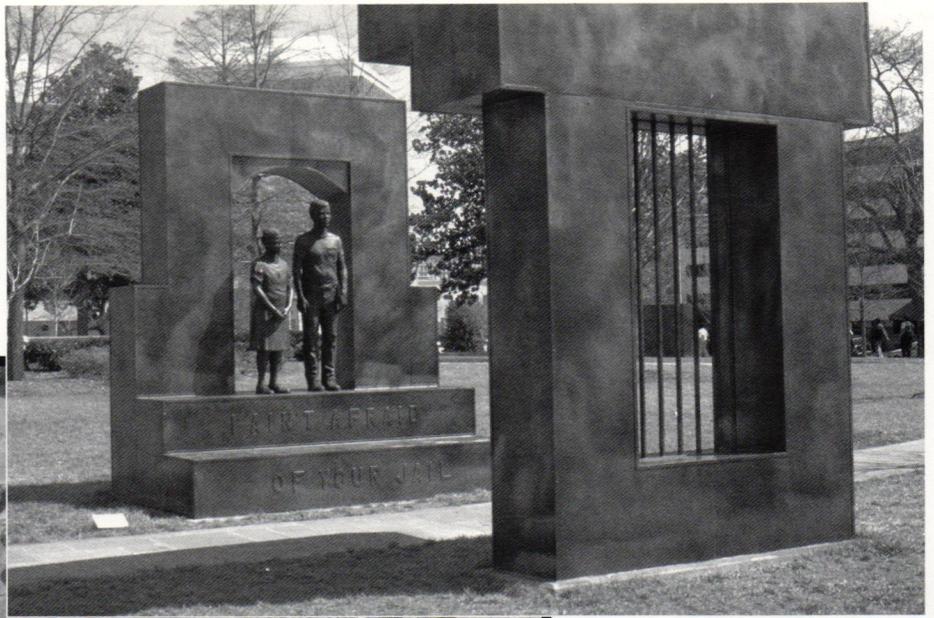
From one perspective, Lin's Civil Rights Memorial, barely visible from the street, is underscaled for its setting. From another, however, it fits right into a commemorative landscape of monuments great and small clustered around the capitol that includes the rechristened Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, statues of George Wallace and other custodians of white supremacy, the inevitable Confederate monument, and plaques galore—to the inauguration of Jefferson Davis, to the first performance of “Dixie” “in a band arrangement,” and, down the block from the memorial, to deceased presidents of the Alabama Association of Realtors. Each monument expresses a claim on the state, a stake in the political world. The SPLC's Civil Rights Memorial, modestly scaled and occupying an inconspicuous site, assumes a place as another such claim.

## Foot Soldiers

The circumscribed nature of the Civil Rights Memorial's interpretation becomes clearer if we turn to Birmingham and examine a collection of memorials assembled in the city's Kelly Ingram Park. These monuments, statues, and tablets in the park are closely linked to Birmingham's history rather than attempting a synoptic representation of the entire era, and they offer a less abstracted view of the movement than that found in the Montgomery memorial.

A declining white population in Birmingham allowed African Americans to take control of the city's government during the 1970s. The city elected its first black mayor, Richard Arrington, in 1979, and his administration commissioned a redesign of Kelly Ingram Park. Originally West Park, Kelly Ingram Park was one of the open spaces included in the 1871 plan of Birmingham. As the city's twentieth-century racial geography developed, the park, restricted to white use only, became a buffer between the black and white business districts and for that reason was the storm center of the 1963 civil rights demonstrations that rocked the city.





above  
**James Drake,**  
*Children's March, 1992,*  
**Kelly Ingram Park.**

left  
**Grover and Harrison,**  
**Kelly Ingram Park, 1992-93.**

far left  
**Raymond Kaskey,**  
*Ministers Kneeling in Prayer, 1992,*  
**Kelly Ingram Park.**  
**The Sixteenth Street**  
**Baptist Church is**  
**visible behind them.**

The Birmingham landscape architecture firm Grover and Harrison renovated the park in 1992, furnishing it with a series of monuments to the civil rights movement and to African-American history in Alabama. In conjunction with the redesign, a museum, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, was built adjacent to the park. In the reworked park, diagonal walkways divide a circular central pool into quadrants. Three of the four approaches are embellished in ways that comment on the parts of the city toward which they are oriented. All four entries pass through low walls with inscriptions that declare the park a "Place of Reconciliation and Revolution." The principal, southwest entry, which faces the former black business district, is marked by four stone stelae commemorating Alabama African Americans of pre-civil rights movement generations.

Visitors entering the park at the southeast, coming from the white downtown, encounter Raymond Kaskey's *Ministers Kneeling in Prayer* (1992), depicting three robed clergymen kneeling on the pavement, as demonstrators did during their forays into downtown Birmingham in April and May 1963. The sculpture is framed by the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, rising behind them at the far end of the diagonal axis, and by a circle of stone bollards, four of which are broken off in memory of the four young girls who were murdered in the notorious bombing of the Sixteenth Street church on September 15, 1963. Those who enter the park from the direction of the church, at the northwest, are greeted by a conventional and somewhat crude standing figure of King. (Carlo Roppa, 1986).

The placid images that mark the three principal entrances to the park contrast with those that line the circular "Freedom Walk" inside the square. Three large, blue-steel installations (James Drake, 1992-93) evoke renowned events in the Children's Crusade, in which more than a thousand young men and women were arrested in civil rights protests in April and May 1963. Each straddles the walk in a manner intended to engage visitors viscerally. On the west, *Children's March* consists of a pair of stepped niches. In one niche, two black children, a boy and a girl, stand on top of the steps, which are labeled "I Ain't Afraid of Your Jail." The other niche is inverted, its openings closed with bars, and the overhanging steps labeled (upside down) "Segregation is a sin." A viewer can look through the bars at the children, like a jailer, or look out through the bars from the children's side, as a marcher. Farther along the circle, on the north side, a wall straddles the path. By passing through the opening in the wall the visitor becomes the target of a pair of water cannons stationed on the lawn beyond. To the left of the wall are figures of a man who has been knocked to his knees by the water and a woman who turns away to deflect its force. From two walls set parallel to the walkway on the south side of the Freedom Walk, snarling, steel German shepherds lunge across the path, their attack barely restrained by leashes labeled "Birmingham Police," their bared fangs close enough to force walkers to swerve around the dogs. A fourth monument, by Ronald S. McDowell, was added in 1995. Standing near the southwest entrance to the park, McDowell's work reproduces more literally than Drake's installations a canonical image of the demonstrations, when a police officer seized the sweater of a youthful onlooker, allowing his dog to bite the man.

As the landscape and sculpture in Kelly Ingram Park suggest, the civil rights movement in Birmingham was the product of decades of open conflict between the city's government and its African-American communities.<sup>5</sup> Birmingham was a steel-manufacturing town founded in 1871 and run according to the dictates of the Tennessee Coal, Iron, and Railroad Company, a subsidiary of United States Steel since 1907. To keep wages low and workers pliant, the company worked successfully to exclude competing industries from the area and actively aggravated racial divisions among black and white workers by encouraging rigid enforcement of residential- and public-accommodation segregation and by countenancing violent police and vigilante repression of the black population.



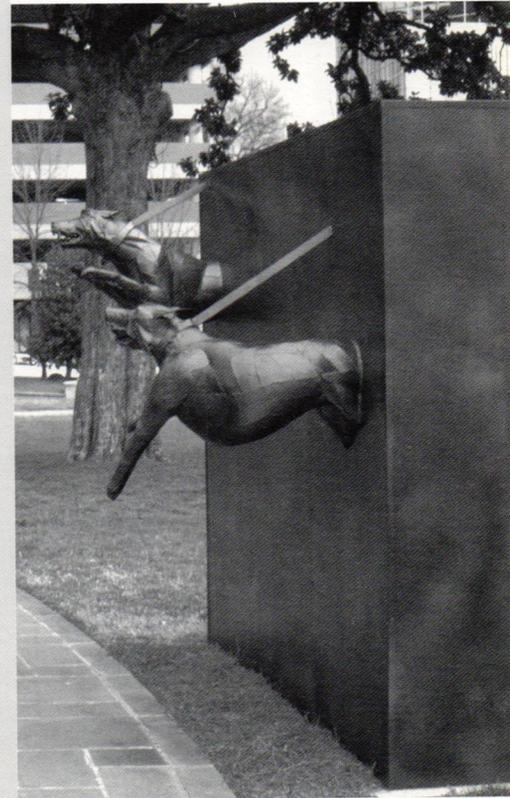
The hardening of legal and customary segregation throughout the South after 1890 stimulated the development of a thriving African-American business district centered on Eighteenth Street and Third and Fourth Avenues North, just west of Birmingham's white downtown. A writer for *Travel* magazine, visiting the city in 1929, described the black main street as the "Happy-Go-Lucky Harlem of the South," a landscape of "carnival and gaiety... [where] dignity and diffidence vanish"; but keener eyes would have noted a landscape of bourgeois achievement in the district's many architecturally ambitious stores, offices, churches, and lodges.<sup>6</sup> On the cornerstones of churches and lodges, exhaustive lists of bishops, deacons, Grand Masters, trustees, donors (though rarely architects or builders), founding dates, and the dates of preceding buildings graphically emphasized the arduous road to such tangible achievement.

This small but energetic black middle class (together with an even smaller elite), made up of people who provided goods and services otherwise unavailable to blacks in the segregated South, coalesced in the post-Civil War decades.<sup>7</sup> For most of the twentieth century, African-American business in Birmingham was dominated by A. G. Gaston (1892-1996), who built an empire that included a business college and an insurance company (both named for Booker T. Washington), as well as a bank, radio stations, construction and realty companies, funeral homes, a cemetery, and a motel that offered the only first-class lodging available to black travelers in segregated Birmingham.<sup>8</sup> In fact, there was enough large-scale building among black Birminghamians to support an African-American architectural firm, Wallace A. Rayfield and Co., architects of the elite Sixteenth Street Baptist Church (1909), and a firm of black contractors, the Windham Brothers, who built that church as well as the eight-story Alabama A.F. & A.M. Prince Hall Masonic Temple (1922), designed by the black firm of Taylor and Persley.

The civil rights agitation that arose in Birmingham in the mid-1950s had been prefaced by working-class blacks' demands for the desegregation of public transportation as early as the 1930s. By the 1940s and early 1950s realtors of both races and city officials attempted to negotiate a loosening of tight residential boundaries to allow middle-class blacks to move out of traditional black districts. These negotiations were met with violent resistance. The white-black frontier in the Smithfield neighborhood became known as "Dynamite Hill" for the number of terrorist attacks on black houses in the 1940s and 1950s, earning the city the nickname "Bombingham."

In this turbulent atmosphere, black Birminghamians debated how to react to these attacks, and tensions developed within the community. On one side of the debate were those members of the elite who were able to live lives relatively insulated from all but formal contact with white society, and who were reluctant to jeopardize the stability of their lives and the power they wielded as white-recognized "wise leaders" of a black population that had "quietly found its groove and move[d] within it."<sup>9</sup> On the other side of the debate stood the working-class men and women whose employment in white-run industries and households exposed them daily to the deprivations and indignities of segregation.

In 1956 the Reverend Fred Lee Shuttlesworth, pastor of the Bethel Baptist Church, convened the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR), an organization that drew its constituency from working-class churchgoers. Birmingham's black middle class—the clergy and members of elite churches such as the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, the officers of the NAACP, educators, and black businessmen such as Gaston—remained committed to a policy of accommodation, of petitioning white authorities for better residences, better schools, and better services within the confines of segregation. During the renowned civil rights campaign of April–May 1963, when the ACMHR invited King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to Birmingham to join in a full-scale assault on public



**James Drake, *Police Dog Attack*, 1993,  
Kelly Ingram Park.**

segregation, the elite ministers continued to resist. The Sixteenth Street Baptist Church did not join the campaign until late April of that year, but it achieved fame as Birmingham's premier "civil rights church" by serving as the launching point for the schoolchildren's actions of early May, and later as the target of the bombing in which the four girls died.

The Children's Crusade marches were an improvised response to weak middle-class black support for the 1963 campaign. Throughout April, the demonstrations floundered, attracting few adult participants. Just as the entire campaign seemed in danger of failing, ACMHR and SCLC leaders seized on the use of children to capture national attention. The Children's Crusade—which was carefully staged for the benefit of out-of-town media—was a wildly successful public-relations event. When police responded to the marches with dogs (used on two occasions against onlookers rather than the marchers themselves) and firehoses, the movement managed to ignite public outrage about the treatment of African Americans in the South in a way that it had not been able to accomplish earlier.

Not only were black Birminghamians divided along class lines over the local civil rights struggle, but there were divisions within the movement itself. Even at the height of its success, the more radical, impatient Shuttlesworth clashed with King and his SCLC aides. King's political inclinations in the early 1960s leaned toward the accommodationism of the black elite, in which he had been raised and with whom he associated during his weeks in Birmingham.<sup>10</sup> His actions in the civil rights campaign undermined the ACMHR's goals by accepting promises by Birmingham's white leaders that were of little value to the local movement but that allowed him to make a strategic retreat from the scene.

Kelly Ingram Park presents more fragmented, more varied, and more concrete, though still problematic, images of this history of black struggle than Lin's monument in Montgomery. It also takes a much broader historical view than the Civil Rights Memorial. The prehistory of the movement is acknowledged in the four tablets at the southwest entrance, which commemorate black middle-class achievers like Pauline Bray Fletcher (1878–1970), the first African-American registered nurse in Alabama, and Carrie Tuggle (1856–1924), who founded the Tuggle Institute, a school for black children. These women worked within the accommodationist model, and their 1979 monuments were funded by Tuggle Institute graduate A. G. Gaston, whose offices they face. Another of these tablets honors sailor Julius Ellsberry, the first black person killed in World War II, and thus responds to the name Kelly Ingram Park, which honors the first U.S. seaman killed in World War I, who was white.

In contrast to the conventional memorials to movement predecessors, Drake's and McDowell's works effectively demand an emotional engagement with events rather than contemplation of the goals of the movement. But they also raise questions about the pairing of the words "Reconciliation and Revolution." Conflict is clearly visible and the antagonists explicitly identified. Revolution is evident—but where is reconciliation? At first glance the seemingly innocuous tablets dedicated to the four predecessors appear to take the opposite tack, but in fact they contribute to the tension. In commemorating African Americans who worked within the system, the tablets serve as reminders of the debates over direct action and accommodation that raged within the black community.

Yet, like Lin's Civil Rights Memorial, Kelly Ingram Park is eloquently evasive. Its apparent inclusiveness disguises some significant omissions. Despite Shuttlesworth's contributions to the civil rights movement, for example, his leadership is acknowledged nowhere in Kelly Ingram Park, for he was disliked by both the white and the black elite for his direct and uncompromising tactics. Instead, credit is divided between other figures of the movement. On the one hand, a male general—King, sanctified and sanitized by martyrdom—is credited with the “dream that liberated Birmingham from itself and began a new day of love, mutual respect, and cooperation.” On the other hand the children, brought into action relatively late in the Birmingham campaign and presented to the nation as the innocent victims of repression, have been recast (as the text on McDowell's statue, credited to Mayor Arrington, reads) as “the foot soldiers in Birmingham's civil rights movement.” They “represent[ed] humanity unshaken in their firm belief in their nation's commitment to liberty and justice for all.” In this most figurative of the monuments, then, we are raised once more to the abstract plane of Lin's memorial. As in Montgomery, as well, nonparticipants are drafted into the struggle, for the young man in McDowell's work was not a marcher but a spectator, and the demonstrations themselves only unintentionally escaped their staged format to become real battles among onlookers and police.

The most jarring absence is the urban landscape of 1960s Birmingham itself. In this light, the designers' care to tie Kelly Ingram Park to its urban context is especially notable, for the cityscape that supplied the background for the famous movement photographs no longer exists.

The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute occupies the site of buildings (owned by Gaston) that were burned in riots that took place at the culmination of the 1963 campaign, after white terrorists had bombed the Gaston Motel in an attempt to kill King. As elsewhere in the South, however, most of Birmingham's black downtown fell victim to the great urban renewal campaigns that devastated nearly all southern cities in the 1960s and 1970s. The Sixteenth Street Baptist Church stands as one of only three survivors of the elite black churches that clustered near Kelly Ingram Park.<sup>11</sup>

In ways the black middle class may not have envisioned, their world was destroyed by the civil rights movement. Direct actions like the Children's Crusade projected black political voices directly into the national ear, undermining the intermediary posture of the black bourgeoisie.<sup>12</sup> As downtown services and accommodations were opened up to African Americans, black merchants could not compete, the black banks and insurance companies that financed urban development declined or collapsed, and the former black business district was transformed into a “blighted” landscape ripe for redevelopment. The devastation of the landscape that was so painstakingly built through the efforts of the black middle class is shocking. The few churches and commercial structures that survive among the open fields and parking lots of Birmingham's so-called “Civil Rights District”—and even more appropriate, the fields and parking lots themselves—constitute another kind of monument to the movement, for it is commemorated at the site of its significant events, but in a setting that bears virtually no resemblance to its historical self.

## Civil Rights and the New New South

In short, the settings of the civil rights memorials in Montgomery and Birmingham are as important to understanding the monuments as are their form and inscriptions. The concept of public space as it has evolved in the United States implies that whatever is found in these spaces expresses in some way common values of the public. Yet monuments, even those that achieve wide popular acceptance, are invariably the work of small groups of people with points of view to advance. Public monuments and

memorials build on the communal premises of public space to imply that the particular points of view they advance through iconography and inscription are generally accepted by the public at large. The settings make claims about the nature of the civil rights movement and its legacy to the contemporary South in addition to those explicitly conveyed by the monuments.

The civil rights memorials of the 1990s serve two related agendas. Disparate as they are in their approaches, the monuments in both Birmingham and Montgomery jettison the more encompassing and radical visions of a Fred Shuttlesworth or of Martin Luther King Jr. in his last years. More important, they evade a long tradition of black struggle for a definition of citizenship that, according to historian Nan Woodruff, "entailed more than voting rights. It meant having the right to eat, to work, and to have a home," thus it "refused to separate economic from political rights."<sup>13</sup> These struggles were conceptually messy, ran counter to the ideology of industrial capitalism, were often led by women, and, most important, often emanated from the urban and rural poor.<sup>14</sup> While Kelly Ingram Park acknowledges some of the gender and class diversity and some of the internal conflicts of the local movement, it joins with the Civil Rights Memorial to endorse the definition of the civil rights movement as a simple campaign for legal rights. Thus it avoids challenging the South's political economy except on the narrowest grounds. By radically erasing differences within the movement and tightly confining it to a brief fourteen-year period, Lin's memorial goes on to claim the movement for the black middle class, as the crowning achievement in a century-long series of accomplishments that began with the establishment of homes, churches, schools, businesses, and civic organizations, and ended with the ascension of African Americans to full (political) citizenship during the years between *Brown v. Board of Education* and the assassination of King.

By commemorating a particular version of this mid-twentieth-century history, the civil rights memorials contribute to a larger project to redefine the trajectory of contemporary Southern history. In uncanny ways, this project recalls events of a century ago, when the defeated Confederacy was resurrected as an industrialized, modernized New South. The New South ideology recast the Civil War as the "Lost Cause," a struggle among honorable, patriotic white men over high principles that was followed by a tragic period of subjugation of the South by the uncontrolled black masses. The disfranchisement and segregation of African Americans that the civil rights movement challenged was central to the emergence of a revitalized South. Hundreds of Confederate monuments erected across the region between 1890 and the Civil War commemorate the pain of the Lost Cause but also celebrate the resurgent New South to which it gave birth.<sup>15</sup>

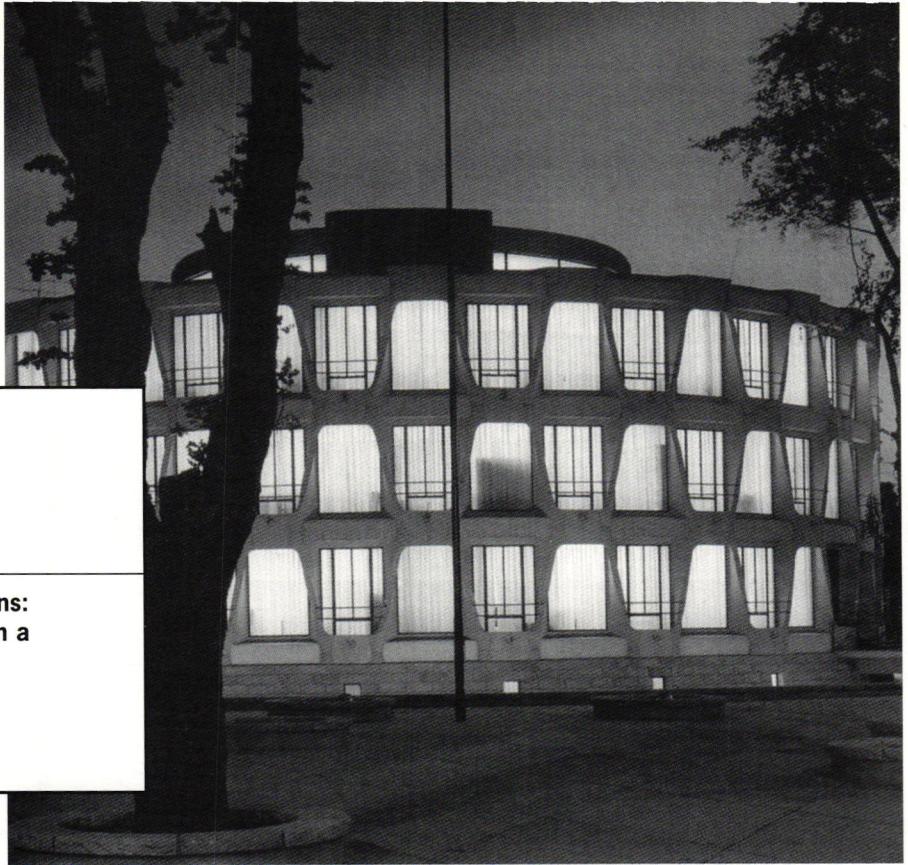
A century later, southern leaders frame the civil rights movement as a second painful rebirth—"the payments our history required," in the words of one touristic publication—that transformed the New South into a New New South.<sup>16</sup> Its memorials are tombstones of racial strife and heralds of a new order. Taking their cues from the spectacular economic success of Atlanta, which billed itself during the years of the civil rights movement as "The City Too Busy to Hate," southern urban leaders herald the birth of a (non)racial order that fulfills the "nation's commitment to liberty and justice for all" and forms the social basis for a reinvigorated, globalized regional economy.

The unifying blandness that urban reconstruction has cast over both the black and white sections of southern downtowns is the material sign of the New New South. Ironically, this race-neutral landscape has been created by eradicating the black business districts—monuments of black achievement in the Jim Crow era—substituting a landscape of parking lots and government buildings ancillary to revitalized white downtowns.<sup>17</sup> In Birmingham, the Civil Rights District, the Civil Rights Institute, and the revamped Kelly Ingram Park are part of one such revitalization scheme, intended to integrate the black business district into the city as a kind of civic entertainment zone.

As efforts by participants and sympathizers of the civil rights movement to commemorate a rapidly receding past, the memorials present disparate, necessarily fragmentary interpretations of the movement's nature and significance. Their urban settings tell a different story altogether. If the monuments speak of struggle and sacrifice, they are set in landscapes meant to embody progress and transcendence of differences. The confrontational nature of the Drake and McDowell works (which led the city to delay installation of Drake's *Police Dog Attack* in the face of municipal criticism) resists the easy integration of Kelly Ingram Park into the homogenized New South order as smoothly as the planners envisioned.<sup>18</sup> Yet neither the memorials nor the revitalized cityscape acknowledges the story of struggle, sacrifice, and ultimate loss attested by the erased landscape of black businesses and churches. This revolution has yet to find its memorial.

Notes

- 1 Thanks to Catherine Bishir, Elizabeth Cromley, Owen Dwyer, and Kirk Savage for their comments on an earlier draft of this essay.
- 2 Tim Weiner, "Congressman and His Colleagues Re-enact March," *New York Times*, 8 March 1999.
- 3 Maya Lin, quoted in *Southern Poverty Law Center, The Civil Rights Memorial: Forty Lives for Freedom* (pamphlet distributed to visitors to the memorial). All quotations describing the memorial are derived from this pamphlet, except where otherwise noted.
- 4 The monument also serves the SPLC's own agenda. The center specializes in civil-rights related legislation and has won important settlements for its clients. Owen Dwyer has pointed out that the monument's emphasis on violent death reflects the SPLC's historic emphasis on violence-related, rather than social-justice, cases and its desire to position itself in the vanguard of the contemporary civil rights movement.
- 5 This account is based primarily on Glenn T. Eskew, *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), and Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988).
- 6 Lucia Giddens, "The Happy-Go-Lucky Harlem of the South," *Travel* 53, no. 4 July 1929: 40-41.
- 7 Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1990). For Birmingham, see Lynne B. Feldman, *A Sense of Place: Birmingham's Black Middle-Class Community, 1890-1930* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999).
- 8 Betsy Butgereit, "A. G. Gaston Dies; 103-Year-Old Businessman Broke Barriers," *Birmingham News*, 19 January 1996, 1A-2A.
- 9 John R. Hornaday, *The Book of Birmingham* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1921), 69.
- 10 For a discussion of the Atlanta black-elite milieu which nurtured King, see Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 27-119.
- 11 For a sense of how much has been lost, see the map and catalog of churches in Marjorie L. White, *A Walk to Freedom: The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, 1956-1964* (Birmingham, Ala.: Birmingham Historical Society, 1998).
- 12 See Michael C. Dawson, "A Black Counterpublic?: Economic Earthquakes, Racial Agenda(s), and Black Politics," in *The Black Public Sphere*, ed. The Black Public Sphere Collective (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 197-227.
- 13 Nan Elizabeth Woodruff, "African-American Struggles for Citizenship in the Arkansas and Mississippi Deltas in the Age of Jim Crow," *Radical History Review* 55 (winter 1993): 34.
- 14 Robin D. G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *Journal of American History* 80 (June 1993): 75-112.
- 15 On the creation of the New South ideology, see Paul Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York: Random House, 1970). The racial dimensions of the New South are treated in Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), chap. 6. The embodiment of the New South racial order in the monumental landscape is discussed in Catherine W. Bishir, "Landmarks of Power: Building a Southern Past, 1885-1915," *Southern Cultures*, inaugural issue, 1993, 5-45 and Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
- 16 Marty Ellis and Wendi L. Lewis, *Montgomery: At the Forefront of a New City* (Community Communications, 1996), excerpted at [www.waka.com/montgomery/montgomery.htm](http://www.waka.com/montgomery/montgomery.htm).
- 17 For a carefully documented catalog of the effects of urban renewal on Birmingham, see Marjorie Longenecker White, *Downtown Birmingham: Architectural and Historical Walking Tour Guide*, 2nd ed. (Birmingham: Birmingham Historical Society and the First National Bank of Birmingham, 1980).
- 18 Catherine Howett, "Kelly Ingram Park: A Place of Revolution and Reconciliation," *Landscape Architecture* 83 (March 1993): 35.



**The Architecture of Diplomacy:  
Building America's Embassies**

by Jane C. Loeffler  
Princeton Architectural Press, 1998  
306 pp., \$27.50

**The Unveiling of the National Icons:  
A Plea for Patriotic Iconoclasm in a  
Nationalist Era**

by Albert Boime  
Cambridge University Press, 1998  
427 pp., \$59.95

**The United States Embassy,  
Dublin, Ireland (1957-64).  
This controversial design  
by architect John Johansen,  
was inspired by Celtic towers  
in Dublin. (from *The Architecture  
of Diplomacy*)**

## Constructing American Values, at Home and Abroad

by Lawrence J. Vale

Following the August 1998 bombings of United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the United States commissioned a study of the safety of all its embassies and consulates throughout the world. Five months later, the experts concluded that fully two-thirds of the 262 U.S. diplomatic outposts were so vulnerable to terrorist attack that they should be relocated or reconstructed—a project estimated to cost \$15 billion over the next decade.<sup>1</sup> Historian Jane C. Loeffler's book, *The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America's Embassies*, which came out shortly before the East African attacks, fortuitously provides the perfect backdrop for understanding the history of construction and the provision of security in these facilities. In addition, it elucidates the broader cultural context that produced American embassies, which were the nation's premier ideological efforts at exporting American values through architecture. In contrast, art historian Albert Boime's book, *The Unveiling of the National Icons: A Plea for Patriotic Iconoclasm in a Nationalist Era*, is aimed squarely at understanding how such values are produced and represented at home, through examination of the production

and interpretation of several iconic monuments, such as the Statue of Liberty and Mount Rushmore. Separately and together, these two volumes add significantly to our understanding of how the built environment is both politically and aesthetically produced.

Loeffler's book has a wide geographic and chronological scope, as befits her subject. Its eleven chapters take readers from the early years of embassy building in the 1920s to the counterterrorism efforts of the last two decades. The bulk of the book, however, is a close examination of the projects and personalities involved in the U.S. embassy-building program in the 1950s, a period of great productivity and ideological assertiveness.

As such, *The Architecture of Diplomacy* is also a book about the struggle of a government coping with the opportunities and limitations of modern architecture. The strength of Loeffler's book is its ability to demonstrate how these buildings are the product of *democratic politics*; it is less successful in resolving the vexing question of whether there exists an *aesthetic of democracy*. She effectively confronts the

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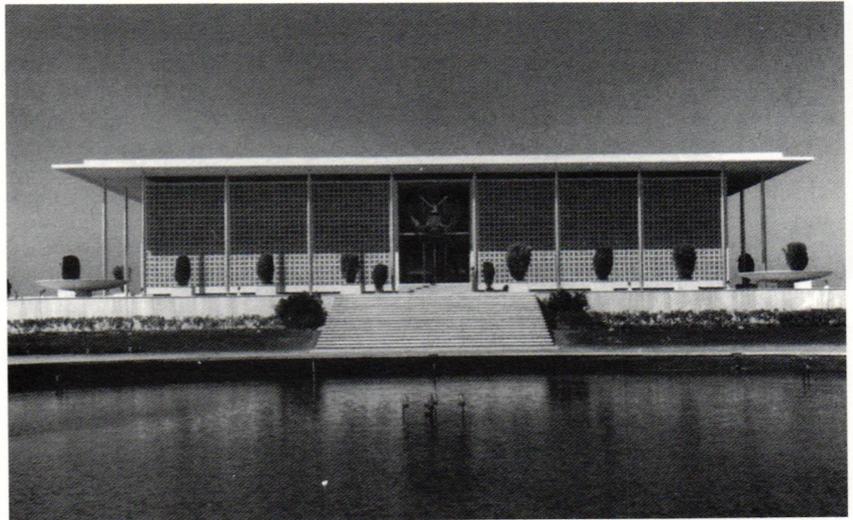
challenges of architectural representation by investigating what American leaders actually intend when they try to “export democracy” in physical terms.

Loeffler, however, could have pushed her investigation concerning the representation of democracy even further toward resolution. For example, she argues that American embassies differed from their Soviet counterparts—which are, unfortunately, not illustrated in this book—by emphasizing the individuality of each U. S architect’s response to particular sites: their simultaneous aim to “fit in” yet remain “distinguished.” Yet Loeffler never explains how the difference between U.S. architects’ individualized approaches and the typical Soviet architect’s adherence to a pattern is the product of American architects practicing in a “democratic nation.” To be fair, Loeffler is constrained by her sources, as architects and politicians involved in embassy construction are conspicuously inarticulate about their aims. Even the manifesto of Pietro Belluschi, who drafted a much-circulated statement to guide the work of the Architectural Advisory Committee to the Office of Foreign Buildings Operations (FBO) in 1954, was vague and predictable on this topic. Belluschi’s set of principles enumerated in his document made no reference to function or economy and, as Loeffler puts it, offered “no clue as to how an architect might reconcile the apparently conflicting directives to reflect both the local and the American scenes.”

Other questions are raised by implication in *The Architecture of Diplomacy* but are not explored in depth: What should democracy look like? How is it related to images of modernity and westernization? What happens when the visual and architectural openness employed as a metonym for democratic access comes into conflict with the harsh realities of non-American climates or, even more pointedly, with the harsh realities of anti-American security risks? Built in the cold war during a period of massive decolonization, U.S. embassies, combined with American propaganda efforts, helped to further a dual agenda to “cultivate friends and promote democracy.”

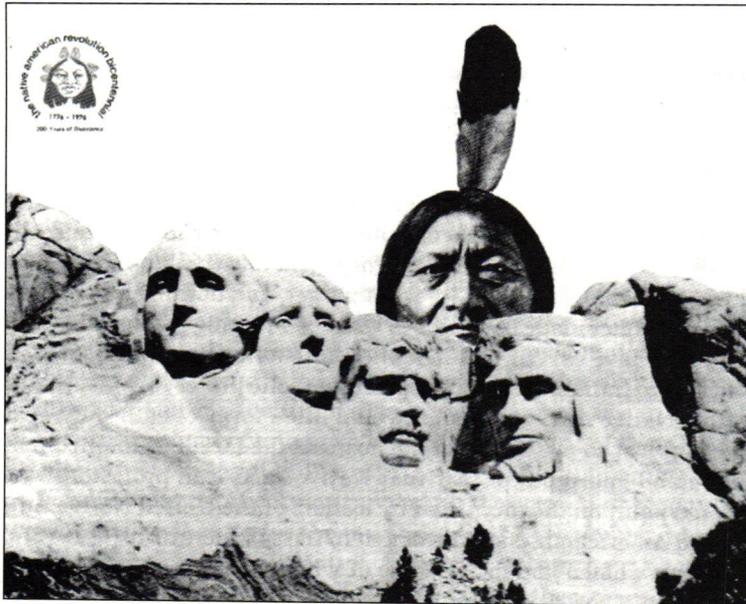
To her credit, Loeffler always seeks to elucidate why each building was produced, and how it contributed to the pursuit of particular American goals abroad. Her work is full of sensible and often illuminating links to key turns of events in international relations and in the domestic politics that shaped U.S. policy—including periodic efforts to employ only American-born architects (or ethnically appropriate ones), to advocate the use of American-produced materials, or to cope with the controversies that arose over

**The United States Embassy in New Delhi, India designed by Edward Durell Stone, 1954–59. In its review of the building in 1959, *Architectural Record* celebrated the embassy “as a symbol of friendship and good will” and noted how its design combined “Eastern and Western skills.”**  
(from *The Architecture of Diplomacy*)



payments in foreign credits rather than in American dollars. It catalogues the efforts of the full coterie of major (and not-so-major) American architects and the internal politics that often colored the awarding of commissions to them.

Loeffler is not afraid to criticize the architects of many of these embassies, especially in terms of their frequently disastrous attempts to cope with tropical heat and rain as well as their often crude efforts to claim inspiration from indigenous cultures. She recounts a number of interesting tales of protracted impasses and unexpected consequences of poor design: Russian spies peering through glass walls in Athens; sunscreens turned into ladders for burglars; the infamous bugged Moscow chancery. At the same time, the book reads as a “who’s who” of postwar American modernism, including references to Walter Gropius, José Luis Sert, Richard Neutra, Edward Durell Stone, Hugh Stubbins, Marcel Breuer, Louis Kahn, and scores of others, yet it showcases many projects that (except for Stone’s in New Delhi) are far from the architects’ best efforts. The book as a whole does little to rehabilitate the overall reputation of embassy design, which still comes across, rather yawningly, as yesterday’s “buildings of tomorrow.” The reader may be thankful that many of the illustrations are quite small.



**A 1976 poster titled *Shrine of Hypocrisy* shows how the image of Mount Rushmore could be used to symbolize dissent.**

**Native Americans have argued that the monument bearing the likeness of white political leaders stands on land rightfully owned by the Sioux. The poster shows the head of Sitting Bull rising above the presidents and reproduces a quote from Chief Joseph: "Always remember, your fathers never sold this land."**

*(from *The Unveiling of the National Icons*)*

That said, this book is clearly the work of a diplomat, one intent on producing a book that would be acceptable to many diverse constituencies. Loeffler cautiously steers a course that enables the book to simultaneously reassure state department officials who permitted access to sensitive materials while saying little that would draw offense from the architects and other sources who took her into their confidence. To be published at all, *The Architecture of Diplomacy* required the author's own expertise in diplomacy. In addition, this is a work of meticulous scholarship enriched by a wide range of interviews. It fills many voids in a literature that, to date, had consisted chiefly of a couple of chapters in Ron Robin's broader and more conspiratorial opus, *Enclaves of America: The Rhetoric of American Political Architecture Abroad, 1900–1965*.<sup>2</sup> Loeffler places her entire emphasis on embassies, whereas Robin also looked at such artifacts as war memorials and cemeteries; while Loeffler certainly focuses on the heyday of the embassy-building program from 1954 to 1960, her book confronts the full sweep of embassy ownership and construction, from the 1820s to the 1990s. As such, *The Architecture of Diplomacy* is not only a comprehensive overview of an important building type; it is also a profound investigation into the material culture of American diplomatic history.

Readers of this book who expect Loeffler to argue for connections between embassy design and foreign-policy objectives will not be disappointed. The more unusual contribution of the volume, however, lies in the author's ability to diagnose and document the ways that domestic political struggles contributed to embassy production. She illustrates the importance of who is president, who runs the FBO, who sits on

the FBO's Architectural Advisory Committee. Because the book is so thoroughly researched, Loeffler is able to dissect the complex nature of the client for each project. Each of the buildings she describes is deftly shown to be not simply the work of an architect and the FBO, but the contested and hybrid product of shifting powers in Congress and changing constraints abroad.

*The Architecture of Diplomacy* is not without its flaws. The most obvious fault is the almost complete absence of urban context for most of the buildings included in the book, especially in terms of how they are represented as visual entities glimpsed from city streets. This is a book about individual pieces of architecture rather than the city outside the embassies or, for that matter, the interior organization and office culture within these buildings. One can assume that this oversight is no fault of the author's, but is instead a direct result of the intense and understandable security concerns associated with publicizing this material at all. Even so, such lack of context undermines the ability of the reader to grasp the full presence of these facilities since he or she is presented with so little information about what role the embassies play in their surroundings.

Although certainly beyond the scope of an already wide-ranging book, it is important to recognize the extent to which "the building of America's embassies" is far more than a product of their initial construction. Especially in cases in which embassies are embedded in a larger urban fabric that is undergoing rapid change, one cannot grasp how local people interpret the American presence without examining the reception of these buildings over an extended period of time. These structures may represent frozen moments in modernist architectural culture, but they are also ongoing testaments to the continuing American presence in each host city. Embassies

are constantly evolving physical forms, and, as such, their meanings continue to change as well. This has been especially true since the late 1960s, as U.S. embassies became more frequent targets of anti-American protests and terrorist attacks, often forcing the U.S. government to retrofit the buildings to make them more secure. The key turning point in embassy design came in 1985 in the form of the Inman report (named after retired U.S. Navy admiral Bobby Inman, who headed the U.S. Advisory Panel on Overseas Security), which recommended, among other things, that future embassies be built of blast-proof materials, situated with 100-foot setbacks and, ideally, constructed as fifteen-acre compounds. The paramount concern for security is already apparent in the evolution of new construction, as Loeffler clearly shows, and seems likely to dominate discussion about the construction of all American embassies in the future.

As Loeffler correctly and provocatively points out, security concerns have suggested (if not necessitated) a move away from the traditional street location of an embassy building toward

multiacre enclaves located in isolated areas. Given the relative absence of site plans in the book (mostly limited to a few cases in which the project was never built or was later abandoned) and the total lack of maps of embassy districts—or of cities—it is difficult for the reader to appreciate the experience of approaching many of these buildings, and it is even harder to understand the ways that particular embassies were (or were not) given especially privileged sites within their cities. In short, the security concerns that set limits on how these buildings could be depicted in Loeffler's book also limit the ability of the reader to understand the embassies in their full contexts.

The chapters in *The Architecture of Diplomacy* are entirely without subheadings, which detracts from the book's otherwise clear organizational structure. At times the text gets bogged down in chronological disjunctures or unnecessary detail (do we really need every last college degree of minor officials?). More disturbing, however, is the decision—presumably at the insistence of Princeton Architectural Press—to group the



**An illustration by Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi of the Statue of Liberty. In *The Unveiling of the National Icons*, Albert Boime explores how the statue's meaning has changed over time, independent of Bartholdi's original conception of the work. (from *The Unveiling of the National Icons*)**

illustrations into a few chunks, rather than integrate them into the text. The latter process is a much more expensive way to produce a book, but would certainly seem to have been warranted for a venture of this kind. The book includes a generous selection of more than 150 images (which, aside from the deliberate downplaying of urban and interior contexts, seem quite well chosen), but their placement in the book requires an extremely awkward amount of back-and-forth cross-referencing for the reader. These quibbles aside, Loeffler has produced an admirable piece of work that sets a high standard for further work in this area.

Albert Boime's fascinating book, *The Unveiling of the National Icons*, is in many ways the perfect complement to Loeffler's effort. Where her focus is international, his is resolutely domestic. Where Loeffler ranges across dozens of examples, Boime limits himself to sustained, chapter-long reflections on five "national icons": the American flag, the Statue of Liberty, Mount Rushmore, the Marine Corps War Memorial, and the Lincoln Memorial; he also includes an epilogue on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Likewise, while Loeffler's investigation takes an evenhanded and diplomatic tack, Boime's subtitle—*A Plea for Patriotic Iconoclasm in a Nationalist Era*—strikes a very different and more critical tone.

At its heart, Boime's book is far more than a set of six compelling stories (some of which would even lend themselves to cinematic treatment); more fundamentally, the book is about the relationship between artistic intent (in collusion with conservative political forces) and the subsequent appropriation of a work's meaning by broader, more progressive constituencies. It is thus an "unveiling" in a double sense: both an account of the first moments when these objects were revealed and an unpeeling of the layers of meaning that have veiled them ever since. To pursue this unveiling, Boime assembles far more than the usual collection of images associated with these icons. He combines thoroughly researched accounts of their politically charged origins with a panoply of political cartoons, advertisements, artworks, and views of protests and demonstrations—all to illustrate how these icons have been subverted, marketed, exported, and cross-fertilized by subsequent interpreters who have harnessed their power for alternative agendas.

Boime's stated interest in writing this book is to highlight efforts at "parody, image reversal, and substitution" so as to clarify "the gulf between the professed associations and the achieved reality." As Boime presents it, "privileged members of the American hierarchy, bent on maintaining their economic and social class advantages, attempted to appropriate the symbols of America almost from their inception and use them to stimulate

an illusion of inclusivity." With this book, Boime's goal is to demonstrate that these national icons need not carry only the privileged meaning of those that created them, and that "patriotic iconoclasm" (which stops short of outright vandalism) is both possible and necessary.

This fine book is only slightly marred by redundancies and typos, which suggest the need for tighter editorial control. Some may question the sometimes heavy-handed Freudian interpretations given to the icons. For example, Boime writes, "Liberty's asexual appearance and elision of anatomy preserve both the sanctity of motherhood and the authority of the patriarchal tradition," and that Mount Rushmore creator Gutzon Borglum "must have known he was gouging into the entrails of his mother's body to deliver his rocky offspring," but each chapter is brimming with careful observation and excellent documentation of sources.

In the chapter on the Lincoln Memorial, for example, Boime convincingly argues that the sculpture was championed by a conservative elite in order to deify Lincoln as the savior of the Union and yet gradually was transformed into a resonant setting for events intended to emphasize Lincoln's role as emancipator. From the concert given for 75,000 onlookers by black contralto Marian Anderson in 1939 on the steps of the memorial (after Anderson was denied permission to perform in Constitution Hall, owned by the Daughters of the American Revolution) to the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, the memorial's meanings were extended and enriched through deliberate reinvention of its iconography.

Boime's account of Mount Rushmore reveals its origins in an even more reactionary political climate, and its entrepreneurial sculptor, Borglum, is unveiled as a Ku Klux Klan potentate and strident anti-Semite with intermittent paternalist sympathy for the Native American groups whose sacred mountain he so memorably chiseled away. Boime tellingly and poignantly juxtaposes the tale of "authoritarian impulses and imperialist politics" with the counterclaims of local groups, writing, "Borglum managed to convert the site of Sioux religious mysticism into a sacred altar for white people's worship, analogous to the Spanish erection of Catholic churches on the foundations of Aztec temples in Mexico." Boime's book does not give a very full account of the ongoing efforts to carve the "even more spectacular mountain-in-the-round tribute to Chief Crazy Horse," but surely such a monumental enterprise ensures that the interpretive future of the Mount Rushmore area will continue to remain contested terrain.

In the chapter on the American flag, Boime elegantly analyzes the anti-immigrant xenophobia that engulfed early support for the "Pledge of

Allegiance” and reveals the ceremony’s links to authoritarian rituals elsewhere. Boime carries this argument further through trenchant interpretation of flag paintings by Jasper Johns and other representations in art and popular culture (such as Abbie Hoffman’s flag shirt). Inevitably, the chapter closes with an extended analysis of the various controversies over flag desecration that gained such high visibility in the late 1980s.

The author’s study of the Statue of Liberty links the production of this icon to the ebb and flow of immigration restrictions. In addition and with more originality, Boime demonstrates how the “gift from France” was thoroughly embroiled in a particular strain of French republican politics that sought to advance a conservative definition of “liberty” based on property rights. This conservative position contrasts with a definition based upon more radical ideals and revolutionary unrest, a viewpoint that carried its own iconographical tradition. Boime extends the discussion of the statue to its various replicas and representations, concluding with a probing discussion of the hypermarketing surrounding the statue’s centennial, its symbolic appropriation during China’s Tiananmen Square uprising, and its iconological function in ongoing debates about immigration restrictions.

Boime’s account of the Marine Corps War Memorial is equally compelling, and forces the reader to revisit key moments in American historiography in order to assess his analysis of the statue’s meaning (for instance, was the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor deliberately provoked by U.S. policy?). Especially arresting is Boime’s detailed analysis of the troubled life of each marine who is represented in the famous Joe Rosenthal photograph of the flag planting on Iwo Jima that inspired the sculpture. In the case of this memorial, as with the other icons described in the book, the complex politics and contested aesthetics of the object are enriched by tales of its subsequent appropriation, showing how “the emotional power of the monument and the event that inspired it have been exploited by everyone from public relations specialists seeking to sell more war bonds to military brass trying to safeguard Marine Corps autonomy down to sundry politicians drumming up support for their particular policies and programs.”

Aside from three appendices that provide further background information about some of the tangential issues raised by the case studies of each icon, *The Unveiling of the National Icons* concludes with a lengthy epilogue on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Boime argues that this particular monument, however venerated, should not be considered one of the “national icons” because it was recently created



**The Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington, Virginia. This bronze monument is based on the famous Joe Rosenthal photograph of the Iwo Jima flag raising during World War II.** (from *The Unveiling of the National Icons*)

and “not easily susceptible to commodification and patriotic sloganeering” and because its “realization was engineered from below rather than from the office towers of the managerial elite.” His logic here is compelling, but it leaves the reader wondering whether there has been a significant shift in recent decades in the way national monuments are produced. After the author has presented three hundred pages of arguments about how icons created by conservative forces are co-opted through left-of-center resistance, the description of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (where conservative forces only later successfully lobbied to have figurative statues added) would seem to contradict both this sequence and the spirit of the other cases. This memorial may well be unique, but its power and publicity have surely affected all subsequent efforts to design American memorials.

Boime’s choice of examples seems a defensible canon, although other potential candidates would include the Washington Monument, the Capitol, the White House, and Monticello. He also could have included the American eagle, which adorns the cover image of Loeffler’s book and seems to have been a touchstone in embassy iconography and iconology. Even so, his book is already plenty long enough, and one can certainly imagine Boime’s style of argument extended to a longer list of national icons.

Separately and together, the books by Loeffler and Boime add new dimensions to the study of political aesthetics. Just as it will be impossible to encounter a “national icon” again without some of Boime’s skepticism and challenges, so too a visit to an American embassy will be significantly enriched by the insights of both these volumes. These books both make clear that the symbolic meaning of monuments—whether embassies or statuary—is never fixed. Monuments are defined instead through a dynamic and contested process that continues long after completion.

#### Notes

- 1 Norman Kempster, “15b Embassy Security Plan Urged,” *Boston Globe*, 9 January 1999.
- 2 Ron Robin, *Enclaves of America: The Rhetoric of American Political Architecture Abroad 1900–1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

# Maya Lin Reconsidered

by Eleanor M. Hight

## Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision

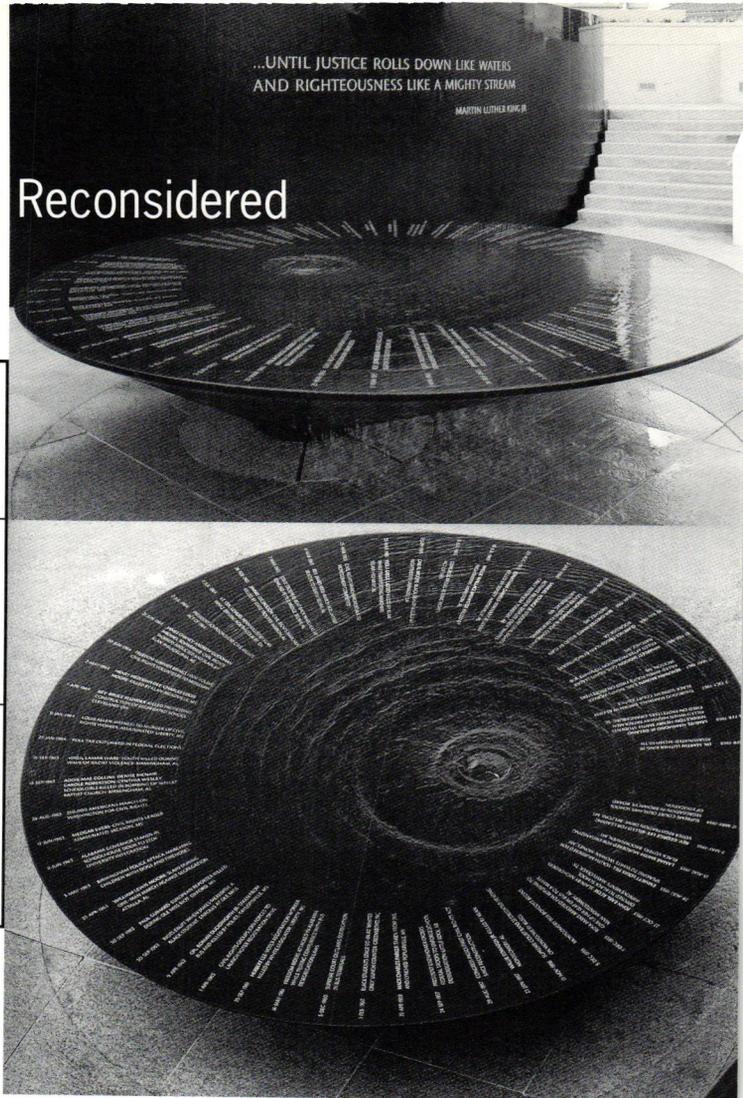
film written and directed by Freida Lee Mock  
produced by Mock and Terry Sanders  
1994, 92 minutes

## Maya Lin: Public/Private

exhibition catalogue with essay and  
artist interview by Sarah J. Rogers  
Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio, 1994  
39 pp., \$16.95

## Maya Lin: Topologies

exhibition catalogue with essays by Michael  
Brenson, Terri Dowell-Dennis, and Jeff Fleming  
Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art,  
Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 1998  
56 pp., currently out of print



At a time when critics and historians still produce scores of essays about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and fiberglass replicas of the wall tour the United States, those interested in art and design welcome any news of recent work by its creator, Maya Lin. The film *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision* and the exhibition catalogues *Maya Lin: Public/Private* and *Maya Lin: Topologies* offer a comprehensive view of her creative output after her design of the celebrated war memorial. While the film and catalogues demonstrate that Lin's post-Vietnam Veterans Memorial work warrants serious critical attention, they also begin to explore the architectural and artistic precedents that have long nourished her creative process. At the same time, they confront and, in most cases, overcome, considerable difficulties in treating Lin's work. How should filmmakers or scholars address a work of art as controversial as that of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which was designed by Lin as an undergraduate at Yale University? Is Lin, who was born in 1959, even worthy of a feature-length documentary film or an art exhibition? The film and catalogues make it clear that Lin's career warrants serious critical attention.

Documentary films rarely combine the vision, insight, and artistry to further our understanding of art and architecture. *A Strong Clear Vision*, written and directed by Freida Lee Mock, however, offers an unusually strong combination of such

qualities and gives the viewer an opportunity to reevaluate the efficacy of the medium for exploring the cultural meanings of architecture. Mock, who in 1995 received an Academy Award for best feature documentary for *A Strong Clear Vision*, is a well-known Los Angeles-based director of documentary films; her work includes portraits of such renowned figures as Rose Kennedy and Lillian Gish, as well as *Return with Honor*, the recent, well-received film on American prisoners of war in Vietnam. Mock said she selected the young architect and sculptor as a film subject in 1989 after reading an article about her in the popular press. Mock's challenge was to convince the naturally reserved and publicity-shy Lin to agree to be subjected to five years of filming. The ability of Mock's film to answer the above questions—often in unexpected ways—was due to a sympathetic understanding between a sensitive, artful filmmaker and her original and unorthodox subject.

*A Strong Clear Vision* begins where it must, with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, designed by Lin in 1980 and completed in 1983. The multifaceted history of the memorial's reception has all but obscured the meaning of the work as landscape architecture and the actual experience of it as a memorial. The film counteracts this phenomenon by offering a fresh overview of the often-virulent battle over the suitability of Lin's

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monument, using archival and recent film footage of the competition to design the memorial, the heated debates over her winning design after she received the commission, and the site itself. These are the important dual roles of documentary filmmaking, to record events as they happen and to bring archival material—photographs and film footage—out of storage and into the public eye.<sup>1</sup> Mock reconstructs the battles among veterans groups, the art establishment, and the youthful Lin by combining film footage of press conferences with more recent interviews. The film focuses on Lin's status as an outsider—a woman who attempted to portray the male-dominated profession of the military, a student too young to remember much of the war, a daughter of Chinese immigrants.

The film, however, fails to address the central issue of the debate: the revolutionary nature of Lin's design. The artist had devised a new language for architectural memorials—one that the public and politicians found difficult to understand. Situated on one of the most splendid sites imaginable, the Constitution Gardens of the Mall in Washington, D.C., the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is located at the intersection of the axes of the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, and thus creates a historical dialogue with them. These older monuments employ the established language of classical architecture: the soaring obelisk representing victory and hope, the Greek temple enshrining the philosophical foundations of our nation. The power and effectiveness of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial lies in Lin's ability to create an innovative, site-specific design that rejected the traditional symbolism of memorial architecture. From the beginning of her career, Lin has demonstrated a profound understanding of what public art should be. Lin draws the spectator into the monument—encouraging him or her to walk down into the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, find names on the wall, and, finally, to pause and reflect on the war. This is a site of pilgrimage, like the Wailing Wall or Lourdes, where human experience—both collective memory and individual remembrance—take priority over one architect's heroic statement.

Mock's portrayal of the early history of the memorial provides the viewer with an understanding of Lin's working methods, and thus offers a rare look at the artist's creative process. Lin comes to a project slowly and patiently develops a "strong clear vision" that guides the work to its completion.<sup>2</sup> Whether she is working on a memorial, a sculpture, or a private house, the resulting form rises out of solitude and silence after a period of intense study of the problem. This contemplative approach toward creating an object leads to a similar contemplative response from a person viewing the work.

The focus on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Mock's film makes Lin's later work appear as a separate chapter in the artist's career. Perhaps this was unavoidable given the memorial's turbulent origins and historical importance. Nevertheless, the film does show Lin's continuing artistic inventiveness when she accepts a commission to create the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama, after finishing graduate work in architecture at Yale University. Although she had hoped to avoid working on another memorial, Lin could hardly reject the project offered to her in 1988 by the venerable Morris Dees, cofounder of the Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization that combats racially motivated crime. Dees wanted a memorial to remember the victims of the American civil rights movement and to teach future generations about the movement's important events. The memorial consists of two black granite sections. The first is a curved nine-by-forty-foot wall engraved with the biblical phrase Martin Luther King Jr. used in several speeches: "...until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." To amplify this language, water pours over the top of the wall and across the text. In front of the wall stands the second granite section, the "water table," shaped like an inverted cone with its top incised with important dates of the civil rights movement, from the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision to the 1968 assassination of King. Thus, with this work and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Lin created highly original memorials for two of the most significant chapters of American history of the last four decades, a time of death as well as moral questioning.

The year after the Civil Rights Memorial was completed in 1989, Lin received a commission from her alma mater to create the *Women's Table*, a sculpture dedicated to women who attended Yale. Mock's examination of this work at first seems redundant, as the work is yet another water table—a section of an inverted cone with water flowing across an inscription. As with the Civil Rights Memorial, Lin again used text—here a series of numbers spiraling out of an off-center water source, to mark at ten-year intervals the number of women who have attended Yale since the university's founding. The passage of time—the chronological listing of names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the chronology of events inscribed on the Civil Rights Memorial, and the dates on the *Women's Table*—has been a constant theme in her work.<sup>3</sup>

In her treatment of the two memorials, Mock demonstrates how film offers advantages over other media. The viewer can make his or her way through the spaces of the architecture and landscape in a manner that approximates the

opposite

**Maya Lin's Civil Rights Memorial, 1988–89, The Southern Poverty Law Center, Montgomery, Alabama.**

(from Maya Lin: *Public/Private*)

actual experience of visiting a site. The film makes it clear in ways that photographs cannot that the memorial in Montgomery does not have a site as dramatic as that of the memorial in Washington, D.C.; it is squeezed into the irregular shape of the cramped plaza in front of the Southern Poverty Law Center. The film also enables us to observe the ways in which people experience the memorials. While we witness the cathartic emotional release of Vietnam veterans in front of the wall, regardless of its initial denigration by many veterans as a mute black gash, we also observe ordinary citizens and noted civil rights leaders alike interacting with the Civil Rights Memorial. No one who watches this film will forget Rosa Parks running her fingers over her name on the water table. This inspirational segment serves as more than a dramatic filmic moment, as it artfully conveys the emotional impact of the memorial. And while the film generally avoids the distraction of overtly arty shots, Mock smoothly incorporates some fine closeups of water flowing over King's words on the Civil Rights Memorial, or over the beautiful pink-flecked green granite of the Yale water table. Lin's minimalist forms prove highly photogenic to the modernist camera's eye.

Over the past decade, Lin has devoted her energies to additional major landscape commissions, other architectural projects, and her own sculpture. In 1993 Lin became the first visual artist-in-residence at Ohio State University's Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio, which was designed by Peter Eisenman and opened in 1989. Lin created a site-specific work, titled *Groundswell* (1992–93), in three of what she referred to as the "residual spaces" of the building. Using forty-six tons of ground automobile glass mixed to create a color like that of the sea, Lin created soothing, Zen-like landscapes amid the disjunctive forms and aggressive slam joints of Eisenman's postmodernist building. How different are these meditative spaces from the Wexner Center's architecture or from the pyrotechnic effect of large-scale projects by Christo and Jeanne-Claude. Mock's film sequences and the nicely designed catalogue's photographs of the installation's creation—quiet, thoughtful, showing individuals at work—also provide a sharp contrast to the bustle, noise, and sense of urgency in the Maysles brothers films about Christo and Jeanne-Claude's projects.

In their presentations of Lin's *Groundswell* as well as several other projects, the Wexner Center's exhibition catalogue *Maya Lin: Public/Private* and Mock's film nicely complement each other. The catalogue explains the *Groundswell* commission, includes an interview with Lin, and documents the contents of the Wexner Center's accompanying exhibition of Lin's other projects and sculptures. Due to the catalogue's modest

size, however, the entries for individual works are brief. Mock's film partially compensates for these limitations by contextualizing *Groundswell* and other projects. Likewise, the photographs of six of her sculptures and the brief discussions of them included in the catalogue are enhanced by the film's segments of Lin creating her sculpture, pouring beeswax into a mold, or crushing glass.

Sarah J. Rogers, the Wexner Center's director of exhibitions, aptly chose the words "public/private" for the title of the exhibition, for they described a duality in Lin's work. In her private sculptures—small-scale works made at the rate of two or three a year—Lin leaves traces of authorship in her working of the materials. Indentations made by her fingers in beeswax or in pieces of lead are traces of a human presence in these unorthodox and organic industrial materials. On the other hand, in her public works she often suppresses the materiality of the object. Lin speaks of both the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Civil Rights Memorial as surfaces rather than volumes. She compares the walls of the former to polished earth, "like a geode." The use of highly polished stone serves two purposes: it dematerializes the work while its reflective quality pulls the viewer toward his or her own reflection into the memorial.

Although Lin's public and private projects differ in their materiality, they reflect a single goal: to create a harmonic coexistence between the artistic work and nature. For example, the graceful curves of the roof and the materials Lin used for a house she designed in 1994 with William Bialosky in Williamstown, Massachusetts, reflect the undulating terrain of the surrounding landscape. Likewise, in her 1992 interior renovation of the Museum of African Art in New York City, Lin used a dual color scheme of yellow and gray in an attempt to evoke the sensation of journeying through a landscape in both the day and the night. Finally, in her *Juniata Peace Chapel* (1988–89) at Juniata College in Huntington, Pennsylvania, she planned for the surrounding grass and moss to grow over the two parts of the structure—a circle of roughly hewn stones and a smaller, flat circle of concrete placed at a distance on a hillside. Thus the *Juniata Peace Chapel* symbolizes a closing of the gap between human-built forms and nature.

But like any creative endeavor, Lin's projects do not rise fully formed from a tabula rasa. The primary omission of both the film and the Wexner Center exhibition is that they tend to isolate the artist's works from their historical contexts. By focusing on the clarity of Lin's own vision, they fail to provide background on those artists and architects that might have inspired her. What about her experiences with the architect Fumihiko

Maki, the Japanese “metabolic” architect for whom she worked one summer while in graduate school? Was she influenced by the Zen gardens of Kyoto and the sculpture gardens of Isamu Noguchi? Is it important to consider the influence of Lin’s own father, Henry H. Lin, a ceramicist who was the dean of the College of Fine Arts at Ohio University from 1972 to 1984? Perhaps the Native-American burial mounds near her childhood home in southern Ohio influenced the form of her projects as well; how could Mock have resisted including an aerial view of the Serpent Mound in her segment on *Groundswell*? And can one ignore the influence of the earth art of the 1960s and 1970s by Robert Smithson and others, or the sculpture of Richard Serra, specifically his *Shift* or *Pulitzer Piece*?<sup>4</sup> Although Lin mentions such influences in Mock’s film and in other interviews, they could have been explored in greater detail in all of the works considered in this review.

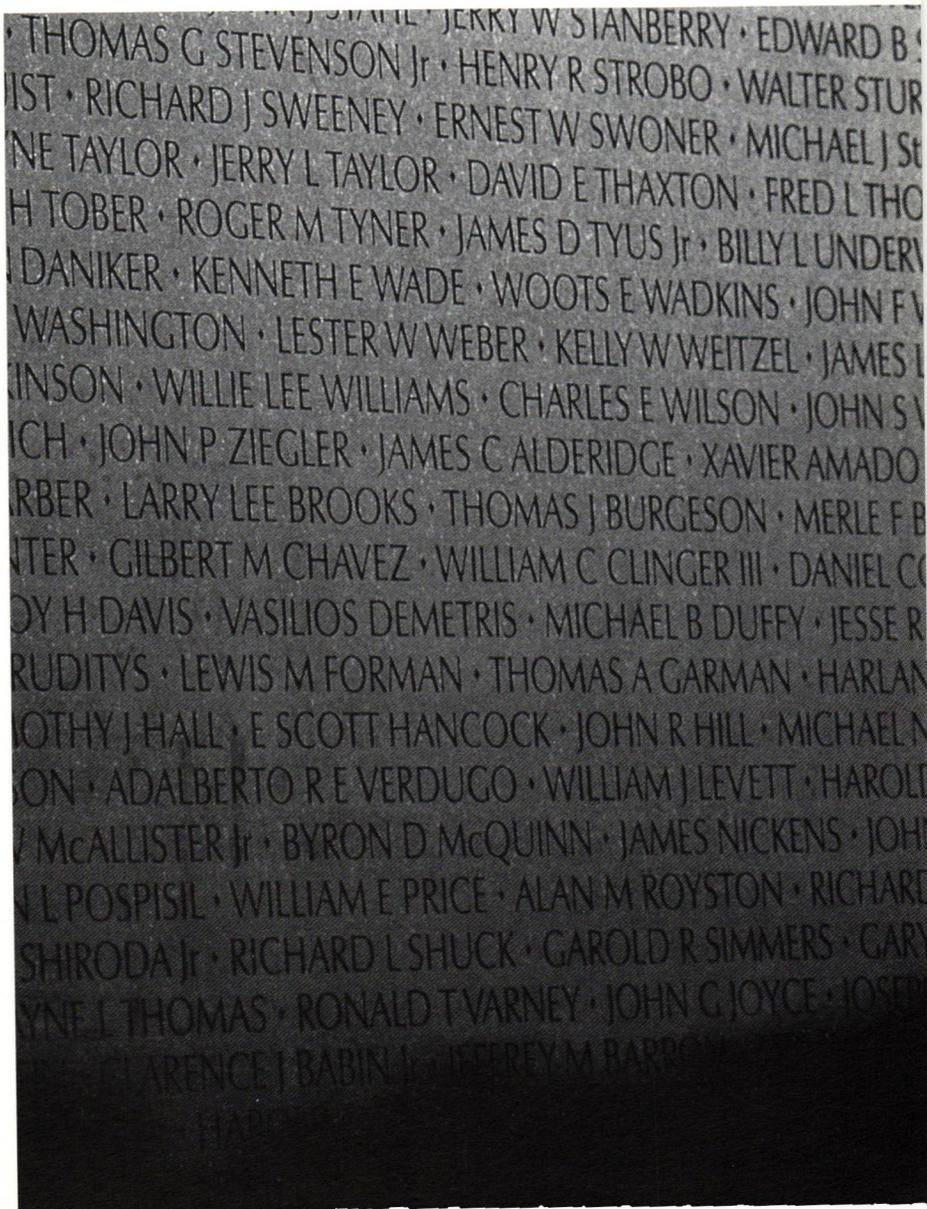
An investigation of the architectural precedents for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial places the work in a broader historical context. The first competition for the Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) Memorial in Washington, D.C., in 1961 was strikingly similar to that for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, with its large field of entrants and the subsequent bickering over the suitability of the winning entry. As Thomas Creighton pointed out in his 1962 book about the FDR Memorial, many of the entrants incorporated landscape solutions into their projects. A noteworthy counterpart to Lin’s memorial is the Joseph Wehrer and Harold Borkin entry. In this project, viewers entered a space contained by wedge-shaped walls of dark granite with mounds of earth and grass behind the structure and with a view of the Washington Monument at the end of one of its axes. The entry of Robert Venturi, who taught at Yale while Lin was enrolled at the university, received an honorable mention and again featured a simple geometric wall against a mound of earth, with a walkway on the other side.<sup>5</sup> Of course, Lawrence Halprin’s 1995 winning entry for the final FDR Memorial competition is very different from Lin’s memorial. The Halprin design’s focus on spectacle and narrative—eight acres with massive stone walls, sculpture, a waterfall, and an eight-hundred-foot-long walkway—not only diverges from Lin’s goal of bridging material form and nature, but is also likely the last thing Roosevelt himself would have wanted.

The similar entries for the FDR Memorial would appear to be much stronger influences on Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial than those indicated in Mock’s film. Lin and Vincent Scully, the artist’s architectural history professor at Yale, acknowledge in the film the influence of Edwin Lutyens’s 1924 memorial to missing and dead British soldiers during the First World War at Thiepval, France. While both Lutyens and Lin

shared the problem of how to create enough wall space to inscribe a large number of names of the dead (over 73,000 for Lutyens, 57,000 for Lin), Lutyens’s solution, a massive neo-Palladian form surrounded by a cemetery and a flat landscape, seems alien to Lin’s aesthetic.

As Lin acknowledges, her work has been nourished by both Chinese philosophy and art, as well as by the return to nature that characterized the earth art movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In 1998 these influences were at last extensively addressed in *Maya Lin: Topologies*, the catalogue that accompanies her first traveling exhibition. In his essay, “Maya Lin’s Time,” Michael Brenson portrays Lin as an artist who defies traditional categories of art and avoids being defined by a particular culture or group. Is she an architect, landscape designer, or earth artist? Are her influences Chinese or American? Is she a historicist or a member of the avant-garde? It is precisely the elimination of such borders and classifications, Brenson argues, that allows Lin’s work to reflect the global culture of the coming century.

**Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, D.C., 1980–83**



Notes

- 1 Freida Lee Mock and Terry Sanders's most recent film, *Return with Honor*, similarly relies on the use of archival footage released by the Vietnamese government to portray the experiences of American prisoners of war in Vietnam.
- 2 The phrase, a "strong clear vision," comes from a speech Lin made in June 1987 upon accepting an honorary degree from Yale University. That speech is heard in the film.
- 3 Another piece, *Eclipsed Time* (1988–93), in New York City's Pennsylvania Station, is a clock comprised of a sliding aluminum disk that "eclipses" a second disk of illuminated glass to mark the passage of time.
- 4 Lin claims that she was not aware of the work of Serra, Smithson, or other earth artists at the time she designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. See Tom Finkelpearl, "The Anti-Monumental Work of Maya Lin," *Public Art Review* 8 (fall/winter 1996): 6. In this interview, Lin discussed her discovery of Smithson at an exhibition of his work in 1982. Finkelpearl's interview with Lin will also appear in his forthcoming book from The MIT Press titled, *Dialogues on Public Art*.
- 5 Thomas H. Creighton, *The Architecture of Monuments: The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial Competition* (New York: Reinhold, 1962), 78–81. In this book, Creighton discussed the Wehrer and Borkin plan at length, including excerpts from their competition essay and six illustrations. Venturi's plan is also illustrated. Lin said in her interview with Finkelpearl that rather than studying the Vietnam War, she studied the history of memorials.
- 6 Previous projects in the program also addressed issues relevant to Winston-Salem, such as Donald Lipski's project about tobacco farming, Fred Wilson's work about slavery, and Willie Birch's project about racial tolerance.

The roots for her blending of Eastern and Western ideas can be found in her family background. Lin grew up in Ohio as the daughter of Chinese immigrants in an academic milieu. Both of her parents built bridges between American and Asian cultures in their work and teaching—her father's work as an artist, and her mother's vocation as a poet who taught both American and Chinese literature. In interviews with Brenson, Lin has stated that her Chinese heritage shaped her contemplative approach to design. Lin added, however, that she has resisted systematically studying Asian cultures because she does not want to become "too self-conscious" about her influences; she instead wants subconsciously to blend her "two sides" into her work and life.

In his essay for *Topologies*, Brenson explores the affinities between Lin's ideas about art and nature in Asian and American cultures. He focuses on specific concepts such as horizontality, gesture, time, and the passage through the natural landscape. Thus Lin's feel for gesture, as seen in the lines of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, or her *Shift in the Stream* (1995–97) in Des Moines, Iowa, can be tied not only to Abstract Expressionism and its extension into the environment (as with Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, for example), but to Chinese calligraphy and brush painting. Her memorials and sculpture are likewise related to minimalist sculpture in that they require the participation of the viewer and they use simple colors and geometric forms. Like Serra, Lin uses form and site to force the viewer to confront each memorial, to move around or through each in specific ways. Unlike Serra, however, Lin maintains a balance of empathy between the viewer and her architecture or sculpture, rather than creating an aggressive provocation through form.

The manner in which Lin differs from Serra is brought to light in her landscape piece *The Wave Field* (1993–97). The work is comprised of eight rows of grass mounds that are spread out over a ten thousand-square-foot area on the campus of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Brenson uses this work to show how Lin's notion of public art is to create a site of both physical and philosophical passage. This approach offers close parallels to the writings of the fourth-century alchemist Ge Hong, to the landscape paintings of the Song Dynasty, or, for that matter, to the Great Wall of China. Lin is by no means stuck in the past, however, for she also finds inspiration in visual sources such as computer imagery, satellite photography, and microscopy. In sum, one is struck by Lin's phenomenal ability to combine seamlessly all of her interests and influences to create a work that is meaningful to the contemporary viewer.

The 1998 exhibition *Maya Lin: Topologies*, organized by Jeff Fleming, chief curator of the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, also presented Lin's recent work: installations in glass, wax, and wood; and prints, drawings, and models for new public art projects. Her corner piece *Avalanche*, a pyramidal pile of ground recycled glass, or *Untitled (Topographic Landscape)*, made of 128 curved sections of particle board, continue her approach of using minimalist forms and manufactured materials to create subtle references to both science and nature. As this show made clear, Lin's art is not elitist, even though its simple refined beauty may appeal to the art elite. The show was the seventh in the Southeastern Center's Artist and the Community program, which integrates the institution's exhibitions with a community-based public arts program.<sup>6</sup> Lin's project for this program involved the revitalization of the blighted Winston Lake Park, which is in a predominantly African-American neighborhood in Winston-Salem. Her design included a walkway through three parts of the park: a stream crossing, a wooded area, and a trail on a ridge around a lake; her plan also contained a new water-purification system for the stream. Lin collaborated on this project with the YMCA, the Delta Fine Arts, which is a local exhibition space that focuses on showing the work of African-American artists, and a group of local teenagers who helped create designs for the signs and the landscaping at the park's entrance. With this approach, Lin follows Smithson by taking a neglected area and turning it into a site for the contemplation of nature. But unlike Smithson, whom she greatly admired, Lin goes beyond collaborating with other artists and works with children and the local community.

As with any humanistic endeavor, this discussion of Lin's sources and influences shows how an artist comes to terms with the past while offering inventive solutions for each specific problem, whether it be healing the wounds of a disastrous war or creating sites of passage through nature. However successful the film is in capturing what it is like to visit her projects, it cannot be a substitute for a personal experience of the works themselves. As larger, wealthier art institutions have not dared to do, the Wexner Center for the Arts and the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art gave Lin the opportunity to create impressive new works of installation and landscape art. All three of these recent presentations of her work clearly indicate that Lin deserves more serious attention within the field of architecture and design, an arena that has rarely, if only fleetingly, paid attention to her work. At the turn of the twenty-first century, one suspects that Maya Lin will be a major player in the field.

# Earthbound: The Land Art of Robert Smithson

by Philip Ursprung



## Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings

edited by Jack Flam  
University of California Press, 1996  
385 pp., \$24.95

## Between Landscape Architecture and Land Art

by Udo Weilacher  
Birkhäuser, 1996  
248 pp., \$68.00

## Land and Environmental Art

edited by Jeffrey Kastner  
Phaidon Press, 1998  
304 pp., \$39.95

## Land Art

by Gilles A. Tiberghien  
Princeton Architectural Press, 1995  
312 pp., \$65.00

## Land Art USA

by Patrick Werkner  
Prestel, 1992  
157 pp., currently out of print

## Earthwards: Robert Smithson and Art after Babel

by Gary Shapiro  
University of California Press, 1995  
271 pp., \$40.00; \$19.95 (paper)

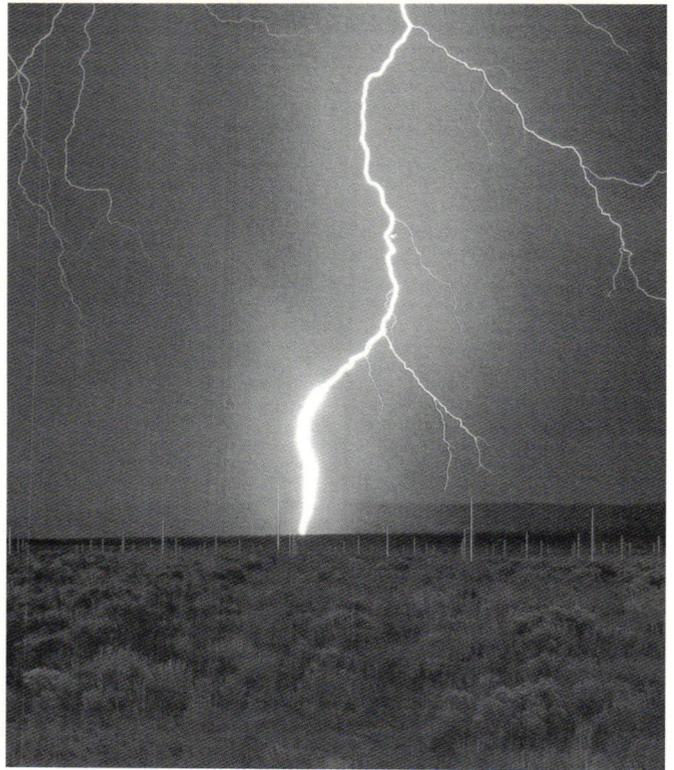
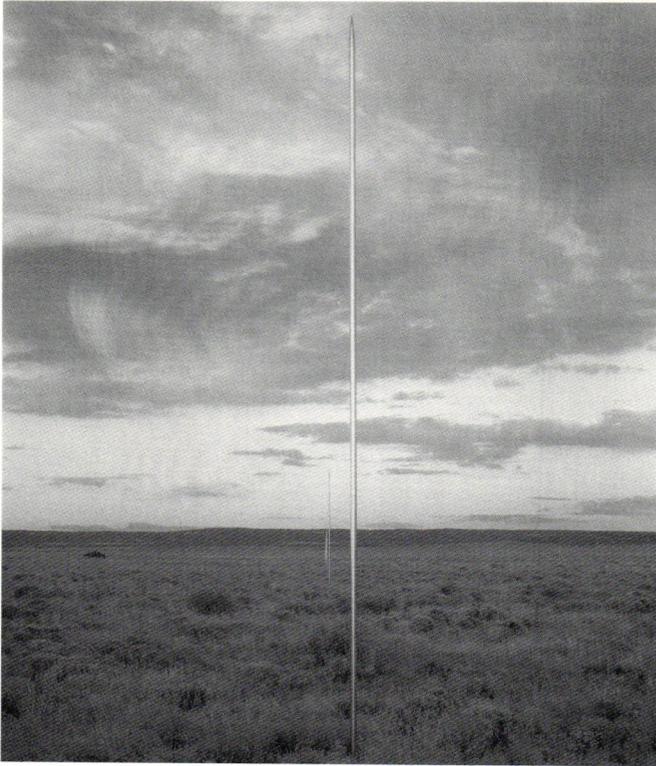
Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* coils more than 1,500 feet into the brackish water of Utah's Great Salt Lake. Smithson created this spectacular example of land art in 1970, using bulldozers and dump trucks to shove tons of dirt, limestone, and black basalt into a massive corkscrew form. Smithson selected the archetypal shape in order to mirror the spiraling molecular form of a salt crystal and to symbolize the collapse of industrial civilization into disorder and ruin.

As if to only help the artist emphasize his point about the disintegration of the man-made world, the rising waters of the lake submerged the jetty only two years after its completion. For nearly two decades, Smithson's project remained out of public view. Only recently have the waters receded enough to again make visible Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*. Each fall, the outlines of the structure appear just below the surface of the lake, giving viewers an idea of the stark magnitude of the project.

When I visited *Spiral Jetty* one day in October 1996, I was one of the first visitors to see the reemerged work of art. I could just make out the top of the jetty through the water; its salt-encrusted surface shimmered in the afternoon light. I decided to venture out from the shore and make my way along Smithson's rock-strewn path.

**Robert Smithson's 1,500-foot-long *Spiral Jetty* in the Great Salt Lake in Utah. A rise in the water level submerged the artwork not long after it was completed in 1970. In the 1990s the water level receded enough for *Spiral Jetty* to become visible during part of the year.** (from *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*)

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**Two photographs of the *Lightning Field*, which was created by Walter De Maria in 1977. De Maria set up 400 twenty-foot-tall stainless-steel poles on arid and uninhabited land in the western part of New Mexico. The poles attract lightning during electrical storms.** (from *Land Art*)

I waded up to my knees in the lukewarm salt water, which had turned pink from the microorganisms that live in the lake. I had looked forward to this moment for many years, for I believed that I might experience those feelings usually associated with viewing massive land art projects, namely, a sense of the sublime, of awe, of being in the moment. Smithson himself hoped that those who walked to the tip of the jetty and then back to the shore would experience a sense of rebirth from their journey.

And yet I felt nothing of the sort.

In fact, this trip was in no way better than watching Smithson's own film of the project, also called *Spiral Jetty*. Wherever I looked, I could see that the artist's own monotonous narration in the film had forecasted just what I would see, namely ordinary "mud, salt, crystals, rocks, water." I became excited about my journey only after I had left the site. The slides I could show and the stories I could tell back home in Europe might help me answer my longstanding questions about earth art. What is it that still attracts artists and architects to this genre? Why is earth art not just one among many forgotten art-historical movements of the past thirty years? Why do many European students take expensive trips to the United States to see important examples of earth art? As I walked along the jetty toward the shore and up a small hill that overlooks the project, I realized that the jetty might be better understood as a giant question mark.

*Spiral Jetty's* reemergence from the Great Salt Lake coincides with a revival of interest in Smithson both in Europe and the United States, including the release of a new edition of *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, edited by Jack Flam. In addition, a generation of young artists and architects is currently building on the artistic foundation that Smithson and other artists created in the 1960s and 1970s. With Smithson's growing influence in the contemporary arts—notably on Christian Philipp Müller, Mark Dion, and Peter Fend; and among architecture firms, including West 8, RVRDV, and Herzog & De Meuron—it is now critical that we use Smithson's writings to help us define what we mean when we use the term *earth art*.

The earth art movement began in the late 1960s as several artists joined together to promote a style that went beyond minimalism's emphasis on simple geometric forms and its artists' detached, emotionless style. Smithson, who died in a plane accident in 1973, was an important leader in their effort to use the American landscape itself as the raw material for artistic production. Many earth artists believed that they could avoid much of the commodification of the art market by creating works that could only be shown outside a gallery setting. Despite this shared iconoclasm for traditional modes of artistic production, the notable proponents of earth art—including

Michael Heizer, Walter De Maria, Richard Long, Dennis Oppenheim, and Peter Hutchinson—occupy different artistic and ideological positions that are far more interesting to explore than their similarities.

*The Collected Writings* is an invaluable sourcebook to begin a reevaluation of the earth art movement. The text is a much revised and enlarged edition of *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, which was edited by Smithson's wife, artist Nancy Holt, and was published in 1979. This easy-to-use and well-illustrated book contains a detailed index as well as unpublished work by Smithson, including interviews, statements, letters, and even early poems. Flam arranged the documents chronologically, and some of the pieces are reproduced in facsimile form.

*The Collected Writings* showcases the artist's unique approach that combined penetrating critical thought with an entertaining, if not humorous, style. Smithson's work frequently transcended the tedious and often self-important genre of "artists' statements." In fact, this collection is a rare example of how an artist's writing can remain fresh and inspiring over decades. Most creative statements from the 1960s and 1970s, notably those of minimalist Donald Judd, seem petrified today and bear the stylistic flair of a religious catechism.

Smithson's essays reveal how earth artists fundamentally differ in the ways in which they understand nature. Smithson's own writings suggest that the idea of a virgin landscape is pure fiction and is, rather, a product of historical conditioning. In his eyes, the distinction between an artificial landscape in a city and the remote and rugged plains of the West—a dialectic so cherished by many earthworkers—is an imaginary abstraction. He wrote, "The desert is less 'nature' than a concept, a place that swallows up boundaries....New York is natural like the Grand Canyon. We have to develop a different sense of nature; we have to develop a dialectic of nature that includes man." Smithson's assertion is the opposite of the views of artists like De Maria or Heizer, who continue to venerate nature and who understand it as a realm of the Absolute, a state of perfection beyond human control.

Smithson placed his faith not in nature, but in the all-powerful force of entropy. Entropy refers to the irreversible decay from order to chaos, be it in geology, in language, in history, or in any other system. Smithson saw entropy in the political system as well. In one interview in 1973 Smithson said, "One might even say that the current Watergate situation is an example of entropy. You have a closed system which eventually deteriorates and starts to break apart and there's no way that you can really piece it back together again."

One of Smithson's aims in creating his artworks was to make visible the forces of entropy. Smithson was less interested in making monumental gestures in an untouched landscape—as is commonplace with many earth artists—than in working with industrial landscapes and other wastelands. "I'm interested in bringing a landscape with a low profile up, rather than bringing one with a high profile down. The macro aggression that goes into certain earthworks doesn't interest me," he said. Even *Spiral Jetty*, which at first can be seen as another example of an artist's incursion

**In Robert Smithson's 1969 project *Asphalt Run-down*, a dump truck released a flow of asphalt in a dirt-and-gravel quarry in Rome. Smithson used such projects as *Asphalt Run-down* to challenge traditional methods of creating works of art.**  
*(from Land Art)*



into an unspoiled territory, is, in fact, a response to an industrial setting. The area around Smithson's jetty still contains bits of industrial wreckage, including a second jetty built earlier in the century in an unsuccessful oil-rigging expedition. Smithson's interest in the vernacular and, some would say, corrupted landscape implicitly criticized the more aristocratic, exclusive examples of earth art like De Maria's *Lightning Field*, which was located in the barren grasslands of New Mexico. *Lightning Field* consists of 400 twenty-foot-tall stainless-steel poles arranged in a grid pattern over nearly three-quarters of a square mile. In this 1977 project, the poles attract lightning, creating spectacular displays of nature's power during electrical storms.



**Michael Heizer dug his (now deteriorated) desert work *Rift*, 1968, directly into a dry lake bed in Nevada. He contrasted the immensity of nature with human endeavors by intending his work to erode away. (from *Land and Environmental Art*)**

Smithson was not interested in the self-referential tradition of *l'art pour l'art*, but rather in what he called “dialectical” art. In other words, he did not use his art to ask *what* art is, but *how* it relates to other fields. This approach doesn't mean that he “transgressed” the boundaries of art and architecture. He never shared the modernist utopian belief that everything could become art. Instead he attempted to find the means to communicate with other fields. Smithson once said, “All legitimate art deals with limits. Fraudulent art feels that it has no limits.” This position set him apart from the minimalist Judd, who denied the boundaries between art, design, architecture, and politics.

One of the continuing myths about earth art is that it offered an “institutional critique” of the art world. Smithson was skeptical of the romantic idea that earth art subverted the structures of the capitalist market merely by leaving the city and going to the desert. “Industry, commercialism, and the bourgeoisie are very much with us,” he said in his last interview. Smithson believed that rather than viewing earth art as a defensive escape to the barren landscape, the viewer should see it as an offensive conquest of new territories. Earthworkers operating in remote areas did not “develop monumental landscape projects which are beyond the reach of the commercial art market,” as Udo Weilacher unfortunately suggests in his book *Between Landscape Architecture and Land Art*; rather, according to Smithson, such artists expanded the geographic control of the

urban-centered art world. Galleries or museums made possible all the important examples of earthworks from the 1960s and 1970s. And noted art gallery owner Virginia Dwan represented the leading practitioners of earth art, including Smithson, Heizer, De Maria, and Long, and paid for such seminal works as *Spiral Jetty*.

Smithson never wanted to escape the contingency of the art world. He knew all too well that in order to make a living he had to produce tangible objects that could be exhibited and sold. In 1968 he exhibited several so-called “nonsites” in gallery settings. These works consisted of containers filled with fragments from various absent sites, including old airfields in New Jersey and the industrial wasteland of the Ruhr area in Germany, combined with maps, photographs, and descriptions of those sites. With these works, it was not necessary for the viewer to actually experience the site itself. In fact, the gallery displays of the detritus from the sites symbolized the impossibility of the accurate representation of any external landscape. The exhibitions suggested the absurdity of attempting to transfer meaning from the external world to gallery spaces without alteration, misunderstanding, and mistakes. Smithson thus embraced and investigated through his art the concept of presenting work in a gallery. He once said, “I don't think you're freer artistically in the desert than you are inside a room.”

Not only has there been a growing interest in Smithson, and in earth art in general, by members of the artistic community, the recent publication of several books on the genre suggests that there is a growing public curiosity in the movement as well. For example, Jeffrey Kastner's *Land and Environmental Art* is a superb introduction to the pioneering artists of the 1960s and 1970s as well as the younger artists who explore land art today. Published in 1998, *Land and Environmental Art* contains a large collection of historic texts important to land artists—including those by Henry David Thoreau, Walter Benjamin, Rachel Carson, and J. B. Jackson—and thus gives readers a chance to examine some of the critical foundations of the movement.

Most of these new books on land art tend toward a formal approach, organizing projects by shape or location, and they each often cite the same examples and repeat the standard themes associated with the movement. Similarly, most contemporary architects and landscape architects use the phenomenon of earth art as only a quarry of forms to be mined for inspiration for their own work. As in the recent surveys of the movement, these architects often fail to address critical questions that artists like Smithson raised in their work. For most architects, Smithson's projects are less influential than those of James Turrell and Heizer, or the sculpture of Richard Serra, for that matter, who focused on more aesthetic or formal problems.

The two major European publications about earth art, Gilles A. Tiberghien's *Land Art* and Patrick Werkner's 1992 book, *Land Art USA*, avoid the questions that Smithson demanded of the art world and of art scholarship in general. Tiberghien and Werkner both emphasize the common denominators of earth art in the 1960s, rather than focusing on the differences that distinguished the movement's protagonists. Both of these books are based on the pioneering study by John Beardsley, *Earthworks and Beyond: Contemporary Art in the Landscape*, that was first published in 1984 and is now in its third edition. Tiberghien and Werkner likely used Beardsley's text to develop their questionable explanations of earth art's "roots." By referring to prehistoric cultures and by juxtaposing illustrations of Neolithic burial mounds, Mount Rushmore, and ground markings made in Peru by the Nazca Indians, Werkner reaffirms the cliché that a linear history of styles lead to the creation of earth art. Werkner's approach is based on formal analogies, and it lacks the sense of irony of the first earth artists, who referred playfully to such past examples as a way to legitimize their own work.

Similar criticisms can be made of Tiberghien's book, the first monograph on the topic to appear in France. The first chapter of his *Land Art* starts with the sentence, "The origins of Land Art can be traced to distant eras of human history, to the spectacular remains left by ancient civilizations that have influenced contemporary artists."

What makes Tiberghien's beautifully designed book indispensable for anyone interested in earth art is the excellent choice of illustrations, many of them published for the first time. The author has included his own recent snapshots of the sites in this book, thus offering a rare look at the effect of erosion upon many examples of earth art. Tiberghien's work is also valuable for it examines these monuments from many different theoretical perspectives, which is a promising approach, yet one that unfortunately results in confusing repetitions.

Werkner's book has the unquestionable merit of being a pioneer in the study of earth art in the German-speaking world. It provides the reader with important archival material and gives succinct and balanced descriptions of the leading protagonists of the movement. The book also sheds light on the artistic context of the 1960s and 1970s and provides interesting speculations on the relationship between earth art and colonialism.

Weilacher's *Between Landscape Architecture and Land Art* differs from the surveys by Tiberghien and Werkner in that it focuses on the influence of earth art on the design professions. Weilacher, a landscape architect, examines the widely varying work of such figures as Isamu Noguchi, Dani Karavan, Ian Hamilton Finlay,

Martha Schwartz, Peter Walker, and Adriaan Geuze. While the book's comprehensive interviews are inspiring, Weilacher's general introduction is largely disappointing. Instead of asking what contemporary landscape architecture could learn from the earth art movement of the 1960s and 1970s, he confronts the reader with a set of vague definitions of earth art. One would have liked to have seen more documentation on the individual projects by landscape architects and less interpretation of their work. The selection of illustrations, and especially the design of the book, are confusing. Illustration captions don't allow the reader to construct a context for the selected projects, and most of the plans fail to indicate where north is located. Insignificant snapshots of sites, such as Walker's atrium for the Kempinski Hotel in Munich, are reproduced to fill an entire page, whereas detailed plans, like those for Hans Dieter Schaal's 1985 Federal Horticultural Exhibition in Berlin, are far too small and largely illegible.

One way to avoid the formal or stylistic approach that mars most earth art surveys is to focus on a single artist, as does Gary Shapiro in his congenial book *Earthwards: Robert Smithson and Art after Babel*. As Shapiro portrays the artist, Smithson is a hero of postmodernism who deconstructs his late-modernist adversaries. One of the highlights of the chapter "Uncanny Materiality" is the analysis of Smithson's attitude toward minimalism: "Smithson's work would probably have been impossible without that of the minimalists. However, he is involved in a more radical activity; rather than simply reversing traditional assignments of values, he is calling those values into question by displaying their variability and volatility."

*Earthwards* starts with a description of Smithson's film *Spiral Jetty*, a film that is traditionally considered secondary in regard to the original artwork in the Great Salt Lake. Shapiro deconstructs the belief in the superiority of the unique example of earth art over the motion picture and brings us back to Smithson's original intention, namely, to consider as equally important the always available film.

The emphasis on the film is characteristic of Shapiro's rhetorical method. The moment we open the excellently designed *Earthwards* and start reading, we feel as if we are comfortably seated in a movie theater. Shapiro, as director, guides us through the different sets of Smithson's oeuvre. He uses the earth artist's work as a starting point to discuss the history of ideas, from antiquity to the present day. By moving forward and backward in time and by using sudden changes in depth, speed, and rhythm, Shapiro provides an intriguing narrative that honors Smithson's influential approach to art and landscape.

**Understanding Ordinary Landscapes**

edited by Paul Groth and Todd W. Bressi  
 Yale University Press, 1997  
 304 pp., \$37.00; \$18.00 (paper)

**Architecture of the Everyday**

edited by Steven Harris and Deborah Berke  
 Princeton Architectural Press, 1997  
 229 pp., \$19.95

**Exploring Everyday Landscapes:  
Perspectives in Vernacular  
Architecture VII**

edited by Annmarie Adams and Sally McMurry  
 University of Tennessee Press, 1997  
 344 pp., \$30.00

**Landscape in Sight:  
Looking at America**

by John Brinckerhoff Jackson  
 edited by Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz  
 Yale University Press, 1997  
 416 pp., \$40.00; \$18.00 (paper)



## The Common Landscape after John Brinckerhoff Jackson

by **Dean MacCannell**

John Brinckerhoff Jackson's unusual gift was his capacity to see through the trappings of capital. When the rest of us drive through the landscape, we do not see what he saw. We can't. All we see are horizons defined by capital. When we gaze down that open road, we worry about whether we are going to make it to our destination on time; whether we will be overdressed or underdressed for the occasion; whether we will be able to find a room or a meal; whether we should run the air conditioner while going uphill; whether there is enough room on the credit cards if the car breaks down; whether we have been spending too much time at work and not enough with our children or spouses; the mortgage; the bills; student loans; whether we will have health insurance in our old age.

None of these concerns seem to have bothered Jackson. What is immediately striking about Jackson's descriptions of the vernacular landscape is the extent to which he was unmoved by the drive of capital to negate everyday human creativity and self-expression. He got out and poked around when and where he pleased.

He was not impressed, as almost everyone else has been, by capital's successful efforts to reduce humanity to being little more than efficient producers and consumers in a landscape defined by corporate economic interests. He could see that there is nothing more human than an irrational—or noneconomic—attachment to places and practices. He could see the love and the energy that people put into shaping the world around them.

One could argue that Jackson could see and feel these things better than those people themselves; better, that is, than many of those actually responsible for shaping and preserving their special worlds. It is almost as though had he not seen the vernacular in the landscape, it would have disappeared entirely. Who else has really seen it, unless they've seen it through his eyes?

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A first step toward remedying this situation—to let us become more aware of our place in the landscape and our part in creating it—is to make explicit Jackson’s methodology. This is a complex and collective task in which all readers of Jackson should partake. I will make a few observations to start.

**Jackson:** refused to accept received design wisdom. He could find something redemptive in a freeway, a paved parking lot, or a suburban garage. He could find a “tastefully designed” urban playground overorganized and that such a design implied that children lacked imagination.

**had a strong understanding** of the way in which climate, season, and time of day are as essential to the experience of place as are its built elements. He found that the people who live in a place are consistently more knowledgeable than the corporate world about wind direction and the importance of overhangs, shade, and temporary resting places.

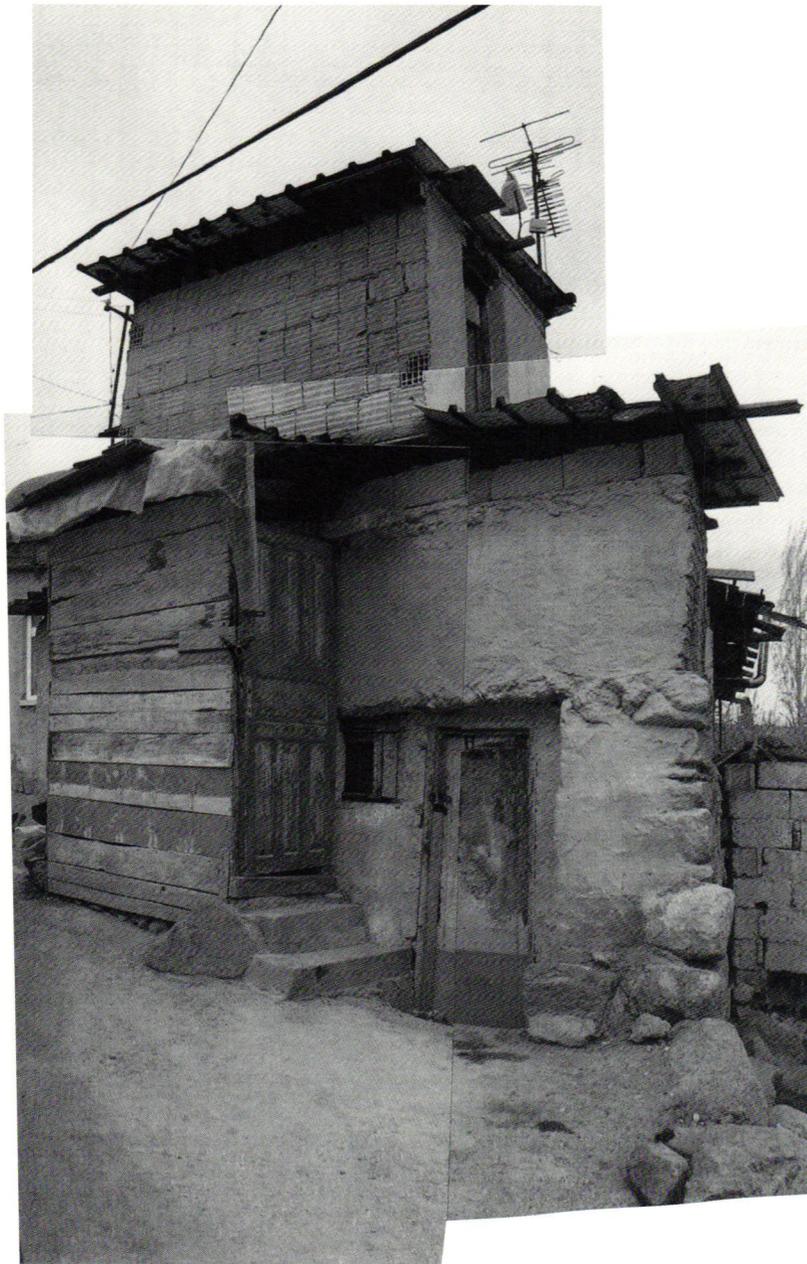
**took much care** in the choice and handling of words. He understood that every word has a political history—a left and a right wing. The word *place*, for example, can imply home, safety, and comfort, but it can also imply division and separation, as in “stay in your place” or “go back to the place from where you came.” Jackson did not use such loaded words without first examining their political significance to his task at hand.

**relied on contrast.** He was the master of the original and illuminating comparison. He could see an entire English countryside in an American suburban front yard. His method of employing contrast is raised to the level of a general principle in *Landscape in Sight: Looking at America*, in which Jackson comments that the present is “an enormous interval in which even the newest of man-made structures are contemporary with the Primaeval.” All scholars of the ordinary landscape should follow his example. In *Exploring Everyday Landscapes: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture VII*, there are good descriptions of former slave quarters and housing for agricultural laborers, as in Rebecca J. Siders and Anna V. Andrzejewski’s essay, “The House and Garden: Housing Agricultural Laborers in Central Delaware, 1780–1930.” And there are good descriptions of contemporary office cubicles, as in Carolyn Torma’s “The Spatial Order of Work.” But, as far as I know, no author has specifically compared slave quarters to the cubicles of corporate functionaries, or, for that matter, to studio apartments in Orange County, California. Some readers might find such a comparison problematic—if they assume that slaves had less choice about shaping their environment than do today’s office workers. But this is precisely the kind of assumption that Jackson would enjoy putting to a test. A test would certainly be instructive: what might we discover about ourselves from comparative measures of square footage, light and air passage, techniques of worker surveillance, and freedom of personal expression in interior décor and adjacent landscaping?

This didactic list can and should be extended, but I will stop here and turn to the matter of the books under review. The sudden spate of edited volumes on the ordinary, everyday, and vernacular begs comment as much as anything that is said in them. There is a strong sense of memorial here, and in physically handling the books one cannot help but remember that John Brinckerhoff Jackson is dead. Scattered across my writing table, these volumes seem to me to resemble toppled headstones. But there is something more than Oedipal jockeying for the position of alpha critic at play here, something unavowed. While the books claim to celebrate the ordinary, they can also be read as marking the passing not just of Jackson, who died in 1996, but also of an understanding of his favorite domain: the everyday, the ordinary, the vernacular as defined by the exemplary language and arts of the people. In due course, I will return to the matter of this second death—the death of the vernacular.

Two of the books under review here almost invite themselves to be compared as the “Yale collection” and the “Berkeley collection.” Most of the contributors to *Architecture of the Everyday* are Yale University faculty, as are the book’s editors, Steven Harris and Deborah Berke. In contrast, an editor and many of the writers in Paul Groth and Todd W. Bressi’s *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes* are University of California, Berkeley, faculty. Although it should be noted that the Berkeley collection was, in fact, published by the Yale University Press, there are no crossover contributors between the two volumes. The Yale collection (published by the Princeton Architectural Press) is the most handsome of the four books under review. It has a quality feel to it, with a full-color cover and illustrations, and is printed on heavy satin-finish paper, with its footnotes fashionably located in the margins. Its essays vary in style and length and include several nontextual contributions by artists. The

opposite  
**John Brinckerhoff Jackson argued in his article “Truck City” that commercial vehicles played a critical role in shaping the American landscape. The vehicle gave rise to what Jackson called the “burgeoning truck culture,” including the truck stop.**  
(from *Landscape in Sight*)



**A mosaic of photographs capture a Turkish *gecekondu*. The word *gecekondu* means a house built in one night and usually refers to individual buildings in squatter settlements. This structure in the city of Ankara is typical and is built of scavenged metal and wood. (from *Architecture of the Everyday*)**

Berkeley volume has a straight-from-the-shoulder look and feel: it is comprised of seventeen articles of conventional length, with good black-and-white illustrations as needed and an excellent conceptually grouped and annotated bibliography of “Basic Works in Cultural Landscape Studies,” compiled by Groth.

As their titles suggest, the Yale collection focuses on everyday *architecture*, while the Berkeley volume is about ordinary *landscapes*. Both, however, explore the boundaries around critical discourse in these two fields. For example, one of the strongest pieces in the Yale collection is Margie Ruddick’s “Tom’s Garden,” a reflection on why she came to like her neighbor’s garden, which had first annoyed her because of its seeming lack of design. And in the Groth and Bressi Berkeley collection, at least three essays treat architectural issues almost exclusively: James Borchert’s essay, “Visual Landscapes of a Streetcar Suburb,” about a turn-of-the-century town in Ohio; Rina Swentzell’s analysis of the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ architectural impact on the Santa Clara Pueblo in “Conflicting Landscape Values: The Santa Clara Pueblo and Day School”; and David Chuenyan Lai’s piece, “The Visual Character of Chinatowns.”

This blending of the studies of architecture and landscape architecture is appropriate to the Jackson tradition, which addresses the experience and meaning of the built environment. A kind of joyful promiscuity of disciplines reaches a peak in *Exploring Everyday Landscapes*, the latest volume from the Vernacular Architecture Forum series. The editors of this volume, Annmarie Adams and Sally McMurry, have avoided making any kind of distinction between the two discourses, and the book deals easily with subjects that would be difficult to pigeonhole; e.g., Timothy Davis’s well-written piece, “The Miracle Mile Revisited: Recycling, Renovation, and Simulation along the Commercial Strip,” about ethnic succession in 1950s-style strip malls; Richard Harris’s tracking of owner-built homes in suburbs in “Reading Sanborns for the Spoor of the Owner-Builder, 1890s–1950s”; William D. Moore’s “To Hold Communion with Nature and the Spirit-World: New England’s Spiritualist Camp Meetings, 1865–1910,” a study of New England spiritualist campgrounds; and James Michael Buckley’s study of company towns in “A Factory without a Roof: The Company Town in the Redwood Lumber Industry.”

**This photograph by Paul Groth, from *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*, shows two workers' houses in Poughkeepsie, New York.**



Beyond such matters of classification, however, and returning to the Yale and Berkeley volumes, the most intriguing difference between the two books is their relationship to the Jackson legacy. In Groth's generous introductory chapter and throughout, the Berkeley volume openly celebrates its intellectual indebtedness to Jackson. Except for its aggressive move into the domain pioneered by Jackson, there are no footnotes to Jackson's writings in Harris and Berke's book, and only two passing nominal references to Jackson himself. I will attempt to explain this meaningful silence.

There are other differences between these books that go beyond form and emphasis. As one might expect from a Berkeley connected publication, political questions are raised more directly in the Groth and Bressi book. See, for example, Dolores Hayden's helpful essay on spatial politics, "Urban Landscape History: The Sense of Place and the Politics of Space," or Anthony King's essay "The Politics of Vision." Richard Walker intentionally stirs up debate with his caustic comments on the language of critical theory in "Unseen and Disbelieved: A Political Economist among Cultural Geographers." On the other hand, the Harris and Berke Yale collection has a more adventurous, self-consciously experimental feel, with pieces about architecture as it is represented on television and about the exteriors and décor of homes and apartments occupied by gays, lesbians, and bisexuals.

Do these books' relentless focus on the ordinary and the everyday yield anything new? Are we any closer now to understanding the ordinary, the everyday, or the vernacular than we were before these books were published? Is there any way in which these authors and editors might congratulate themselves for having covered ground beyond Jackson? On localized and empirical matters, the answer is yes. The site-specific studies in these books are brimming with carefully obtained, illuminating detail. This is especially true of *Exploring Everyday Landscapes*.

But conceptually? No. The books do not shake up our understanding of the everyday, the ordinary, or the vernacular. What concepts are provided mainly restate Jackson. Taken together, the books do not address the political or historical status of the everyday in any way that might lead to an examination of its fate after Jackson's passing.

Perusing the posthumously published collection of Jackson essays, *Landscape in Sight*, with its fine biographical introduction by Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, one discovers anew that it was the *fate of the everyday* and the ordinary that fascinated Jackson throughout his life. What a strange idea: "the fate of the everyday." Isn't the everyday just there, "taken for granted," as the phenomenologists used to say? According to Jackson, no. The everyday constantly has to be constructed anew, often from physically and spiritually recalcitrant materials. "What is the vernacular?" Jackson asks in his study of the conversion of suburban garages into workspaces.

His reply: “[I]t is the visible result of a confrontation between the aspirations of the occupying family and the realities of the environment.” Jackson concludes that the “all-purpose garage” is “as authentic in its complex and restless way as the dwelling of the Pueblo Indian or the Greek peasant.” The everyday isn’t just there. It must constantly be made up as we go along. Jackson’s intense identification with the makers of the vernacular (and therefore also with its destroyers) is what sets him apart from other critics. In defining his conception of a city as “a place of general exchange,” Jackson writes, “I cannot conceive of any large community surviving without this ceaseless influx of new wants, new ideas, new manners, new strength.” In the first essay of the Groth and Bressi, “Frameworks for Cultural Landscape Study,” Groth quotes Jackson’s assertion that “[t]he beauty that we see in the vernacular landscape is the image of our common humanity: hard work, stubborn hope, and mutual forbearance *striving to be love*” [emphasis added].

Compare Jackson’s definition or sense of the everyday with that of the editors of the Yale collection. In his introductory chapter, titled “Everyday Architecture,” Harris writes, “What unites the articles and projects collected here is...the focus on the quotidian, the repetitive, and the relentlessly ordinary. The everyday is that which remains after one has eliminated all specialized activities. It is anonymous, its anonymity derived from its undated and apparently insignificant quality.” And Berke’s definition of the everyday is clear in the final chapter, “Thoughts on the Everyday,” in which she makes aesthetic arguments for looking at the “generic,” “banal,” and “crude.” For example, beneath the assertion that “[a]n architecture of the everyday may be generic and anonymous,” Berke states, “Much like the package in the supermarket with the black letters on the white ground that does not carry a brand name—but is still a perfectly good container for its contents—the generic does not flaunt its maker. It is straightforward. Unostentatious, it can lurk, loiter, slip beneath the surface, and bypass the controls of institutionally regulated life.”

I feel the need to say a couple things at this point. Despite claiming to hold everyday materials in a redemptive embrace, these passages have a sneaky and arrogant tone that unaccountably undermines the good work of the authors and artists these editors have assembled. For example, in Peter Tolkin and Mabel O. Wilson’s fine essay, “Catfish and Coltrane: A Conversation about Making a Homesite,” about the home that the artist John Outerbridge built for himself in Los Angeles, nothing in Outerbridge’s home is depicted as generic, unostentatious, or repetitious.

In fact, the home has a very strong signature quality, as, indeed, does much vernacular architecture, something Jackson never failed to notice. The attitude that is expressed in the editorial framing of *Architecture of the Everyday*, however, is about as far as one can get from Jackson’s sense of the same materials. It is unimaginable that Jackson could have examined any component of the landscape, even the most generic component, and simply have pronounced it “generic.” It is unimaginable that Jackson would gaze upon any landscape and say, “It bores me.”

What explains the authors of the Yale collection’s divergence with Jackson’s approach to the ordinary? My guess is that the writers included in the Yale collection believed that Jackson was overidentified with Berkeley and Harvard University scholarship. As a result, they sought out a different totemic ancestor and found a paternal figure in Henri Lefebvre. In *Architecture of the Everyday*, the editors of the Yale collection feature a 1972 encyclopedia article by Lefebvre titled “The Everyday and Everydayness.” Lefebvre’s piece is conceptually interesting for anyone who is concerned with everyday life and the vernacular.

The Lefebvre text became widely known to American scholars after it was published in a special 1987 issue of *Yale French Studies* (YFS) that was titled *Everyday Life*, edited by Alice Kaplan and Kristin Ross. This same issue of YFS contains an article by Maurice Blanchot that is likely a primary source of Harris and Berke’s radical-chic attitude toward the everyday. Blanchot wrote, “The everyday is platitude (what lags and falls back, the residual life with which our trash cans and cemeteries are filled: scrap and refuse)... the daily with its tedious side, painful and sordid (the amorphous, the stagnant), and the inexhaustible, irrecusable, always unfinished daily that always escapes forms or structures [particularly those of political society].” Further on in his article, Blanchot commented, “Boredom is the everyday become manifest,” and the everyday is “without responsibility and without authority, without direction and without decision, a storehouse of anarchy....casting aside all beginning and dismissing all end.”

The first chapter in Harris and Berke’s publication is a twenty-page essay by Mary McLeod, “Henri Lefebvre’s Critique on Everyday Life: An Introduction,” in which she reads Lefebvre as having set forth an opposition between an “optimistic” and a “pessimistic” view of everyday life. The pessimistic position—that everyday life is fallen, contingent, generic, and boring—leads to the conclusion that people are not capable of creating innovative cultural solutions to day-to-day problems on their own. This view posits that individuals are especially incapable of entertaining themselves; i.e., of



**Jackson took this photograph of a house in Kansas. This image is published in *Landscape in Sight* and accompanies Jackson's article, "The Westward-Moving House." His article, originally published in 1953, describes the historic development of the American house.**

coming up with a solution to the ubiquitous problem of boredom. Corporate provisions for entertainment, television, new architectures of pleasure, theme parks, show trials, celebrity weddings, government-sponsored spectacles, and the like are all seen as quasi-necessary cultural service stops for a populace perpetually on the brink of sinking into ennui.

This negative view of the everyday is most famously developed and theorized in the early writings of Martin Heidegger and in the later writings of literary critic Paul de Man: everyday life is accidental, and, by definition, essentially uninteresting, except by virtue of its universality.

In the United States the pessimistic position draws on the deeply rooted Puritan tradition of fear of enjoyment and pleasure. The design praxis that emerges from this perspective would result in a vast aesthetic wasteland, punctuated here and there by euphoric, stage-managed releases from Puritan constraint, which often border on the ridiculous; e.g., Las Vegas, Disneyland, sets for rock-music spectacles, and theme restaurants.

Design practice within the pessimistic frame can also be viewed as a new class ideology—what Marxists used to call the "superstructure," which is only now fully embedded in the details of work, domestic, commercial, and other "basic" relations. Living in a tract house, driving a generic car,

using a "Wintel" PC, eating at fast-food restaurants, and purchasing everything in chain stores distinguishes one from the upper and lower classes, which, for better or worse, do not have these types of ordinary, everyday lives.

The optimistic or positive pole of the dialectic can be seen in humanity's discovery of imaginative solutions to enliven the rhythm of everyday acts such as eating, drinking, sleeping, working, and ordinary traveling. These solutions emerge into historical and/or regional "styles." *Style*, in the way Lefebvre uses it, represents a linkage of everything—from the smallest tools and procedures to the largest monuments and even to human ingenuity—into complex "wholes." Within these styles, the ordinary details of daily living have symbolic as well as practical, functional value. According to Lefebvre, such symbolism potentially connects even the smallest details of daily life to "meaning at its most vast: to divinity and humanity, power and wisdom, good and evil, happiness and misery, the perennial and the ephemeral."

According to the Yale authors, this positive position in Lefebvre's account is countered by his pessimistic position. But, if one reads Lefebvre closely, one discovers that Lefebvre's paradigm is not simply a matter of individual choice between two opposing positions based on taste. According

to Lefebvre, what humanity is dealing with is a dialectical movement of history in which capital swallows whole the entire notion of “style,” “the symbolic,” and, in fact, the entire “positive” position as the Yale group has laid it out. This movement involves overstatement of signs of meaningfulness. Nowhere is this overstatement more evident than in the new trend of marketing entire regions of the world as tourist destinations, each with a distinctive “style” or “ambiance”; such a trend may have originated as a series of authentic local solutions to quotidian life, but it now functions as commodified entertainment. In other words, the opposite pole of Lefebvre’s dialectic of the everyday is the invasion of functionality and rationality into human imagination, into everyday life, and into the very notion of habitability. This invasion does not outright destroy the meaningfulness of these human solutions to everyday problems. Rather, it feeds off of their originality and meaningfulness. It insists on forced functional integration, forced “style,” as a positive principle, and it demands that human happiness and creativity must move to inhabit the new totalization created by capital.

To represent this type of coerced integration, Lefebvre cites the example of “industrially produced food,” which he defines as a system that groups food products around “functionally specific household appliances such as the refrigerator, freezer, electric oven, etc.” He also states that the demand made by capital that humankind must be “happy” inhabiting its system is excessive, and will lead to the system’s downfall. According to Lefebvre, the system will break down when humankind recognizes the “artificial mechanism” of the ways of life being sold to it and the “fatuousness” of the kind of “diversity” promoted by capital.

In other words, the ordinary, the everyday, the vernacular is not just boring, taken for granted, repetitious, or routine. It is a battleground for the human soul. And the extent to which it is successfully theorized as boring, repetitious, and routine is the best indicator we have of the demise of the everyday, and of the vernacular; or, at least, of a large-scale invasion and redefinition of the everyday and the vernacular by capital and other rational, bureaucratic products and processes. The editorial positioning of the Yale collection, therefore, seems to be a very good example of the type of phenomenon I mentioned earlier—an editorial framing that in its very celebration seems to mark the passing of the everyday.

Can we look to the Berkeley collection, then, for a theoretical corrective; i.e., for a rigorous conception of what is positive and alive in the vernacular? No. The Berkeley authors write little about theory. They read Jackson as if he, too, were atheoretical. This dismissal is regrettable because—as the heirs of Jackson’s position on

everyday practices—they might have potentially assumed a leadership role in the development of future design theory based on Jackson’s insights. But they appear to prefer to leave theoretical weightlifting to their pessimistic East Coast colleagues, with their truncated version of Lefebvre.

Let me suggest the beginnings of an outline for a Jackson-based practice of theory, criticism, and design. First it would have to be democratic and anti-authoritarian. Whoever designed the Fiats and Citroën 2CVs of the 1950s did not think that their buyers should be given a generic transportation product simply because these consumers were near the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. The theory would oppose any sense of contradiction among such concepts as “inexpensive,” “distinctive,” and “fun.” It would oppose all design that is conceived in order to reinforce class distinctions rather than to disrupt them. It would certainly not theorize everyday life as relentlessly boring. Everyday life would be viewed the way Marx, Freud, Erving Goffman, Michel de Certeau, Lefebvre, Jackson, and many novelists view it: as occasionally boring, but also as the setting for meaning and drama and for performances that determine competency, character, dignity, cleverness, and other elements of emotion and meaning. According to this view, architecture and other forms of expression—drama, for example—would draw upon inexhaustible resources embedded in the details of daily living.

The greatest threat to the everyday, ordinary, and vernacular is not their replacement by sterile, modernist, functional objects and procedures. Rather, it is their replacement by corporate copies of the everyday, ordinary, and vernacular that poses the most danger; it is the manufacture and sale of “tradition” at places like the New Urbanist experiment, Celebration, Florida. In the fields of design criticism and theory, the comparison that is screaming to be made is the one between a place Jackson described and the recently built-from-scratch Disney version of that same place. Is it possible to discover anything in the corporate version of the everyday that is other than a monument to nostalgia? None of the writers included in the books reviewed here undertook such a comparison and analysis. If they had, they would have discovered very quickly that an arbitrary allegiance to one totemic ancestor over another would not have been helpful to their work. This type of analysis requires one to take both Jackson and Lefebvre seriously, and to take even more seriously one’s own critical and design responsibilities.

# Fear and Downloading in the City

by E. Perry Winston

Take a walk around Times Square  
With a pistol in my pocket  
And my eyes on the TV  
In a car, taking a back seat  
Staring out the window  
Thinking about danger

"Times Square," by Barry Reynolds, 1990;  
Island Records; sung by Marianne Faithfull

## Architecture of Fear

edited by Nan Ellin  
Princeton Architectural Press, 1997  
320 pp., \$19.95

## Mortal City

edited by Peter Lang  
Princeton Architectural Press, 1995  
111 pp., \$12.95



Today's visitor to Times Square may arrive anticipating the atmosphere described in the lyrics above, or at least the frisson of edgy, low life associated with Bright Lights and Big City, but will most likely run smack into the new Disney Store with its ear-to-ear grins and soothing air-brushed images. Instead of pausing uncertainly at the anonymous and handbill-covered entrances to the threatening reaches of the New York City subway, the visitor will find artistic transit signage confidently announcing access to an ecologically correct mass-transit system. Fortunately, the visitor's anticipated "walk on the wild side" will not be a total aesthetic disappointment; so far, the managers of this newest "business improvement district" have not seen fit to limit access to this urban theme park, allowing the daily contingent of religious apocalyptic, cultural nationalist, or paranoid visionary speakers haranguing passersby to provide no-cost entertainment, not to mention grounds for lots of overt (and covert) police presence, embellishing the menace factor all the more.

At least New York offers the real thing. As a stage for skateboard acrobatics by daredevil teenagers, the Sea World amusement park in San Diego once built a stage set of an inner-city neighborhood called "City Streets," which came complete with brownstone rowhouses, stoops, trash cans, and subway entrances. Entrance cost \$40 a pop, effectively screening out any undesirable elements that might make the scene too real. Danger sells.

How does this relate to the two books reviewed here? Only that Times Square seems on its way to becoming another of the hyper-real entertainment areas contributing to the post-cold war urban paranoia discussed in Nan Ellin's *Architecture of Fear* and Peter Lang's *Mortal City*. There is no lack of interest in this topic; in fact, cities have always defined themselves spatially by their strategies, both defensive and offensive, against fear. From the walls of Jericho to the stone towers of medieval towns, from the strategic expanses of Georges Haussmann's boulevards to the gated subdivisions of the 1990s, human settlements have always

This image of a bank vault in Los Angeles is by noted architectural photographer Julius Shulman. A collection of photographs by Shulman is published in *Architecture of Fear*.

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reflected the shape of their fears. Modern American suburban sprawl is, in part, a map of the white flight that accompanied the push of minority groups for economic and social advancement. Although recent statistics declare a decline in violent crime in many cities, the essays in the two books reveal the continuing spatial implications of fear and violence in America, which concern not only architects and city planners, but also those citizens concerned for the future of open societies.

The two volumes are collections of essays and mixed media (thirty-one contributors in all) on the state of fear in human settlements after the fall of the Berlin Wall. As Herbert Muschamp states in *Mortal City*, "the collapse of that border has not eliminated the tension. It has only removed the focus, allowing the pressure to be dispersed elsewhere." Whereas *Architecture of Fear* stems from its editor's academic investigation into the possibilities of diminishing fear through design, *Mortal City* evolved from two shows at New York City's StoreFront for Art and Architecture gallery involving urban violence: one documenting the effects of the Bosnian civil war on Sarajevo's buildings; the other featuring the results of an urban design studio's investigation of a South Bronx neighborhood. Both publications broaden the groundswell of interest in urban fear and violence generated by the writings of Mike Davis, elaborated upon in his seminal 1990 book about Los Angeles, *City of Quartz*, and the 1992 pamphlet *Beyond Blade Runner: Urban Control, the Ecology of Fear*. Although they do not expand significantly on the intellectual territory Davis mapped out, Ellin's and Lang's compilations do extend the urban geography explored and make provocative observations about the approaches of the design professions in dealing with that geography.

Although both books are published by Princeton Architectural Press, they are aimed at distinct audiences. *Mortal City* is a slim collage of visual, poetic, and written materials created by and for the design community, while *Architecture of Fear* is a significant attempt to broaden the circle of concern about urban affairs, bringing to bear a wide range of professions (architects, planners, urban theorists, educators, geographers, writers, artists, a television news correspondent, a photographer, a choreographer, a psychologist, and a physicist) in order to "critically assess our landscape in a holistic fashion with an eye toward detecting less than optimal design trends and suggesting viable alternatives." While the two volumes are different vehicles, some common threads of thought can be traced between them.

The two collections track the sources of current urban violence and malaise. Donald Albrecht, in *Mortal City*, makes the case that American society and cities have been on a war footing ever since World War II. Citing Lewis Mumford's 1934 quotation "War is the health of the machine," Albrecht outlines how massive building programs, internal migration, the incorporation of minorities and women into the labor force, the formation of the military-corporate-academic cooperative, and the birth of planned obsolescence of consumer goods radically transformed American cities, even though they escaped the physical destruction of European and Asian cities, and, most recently, of Sarajevo.

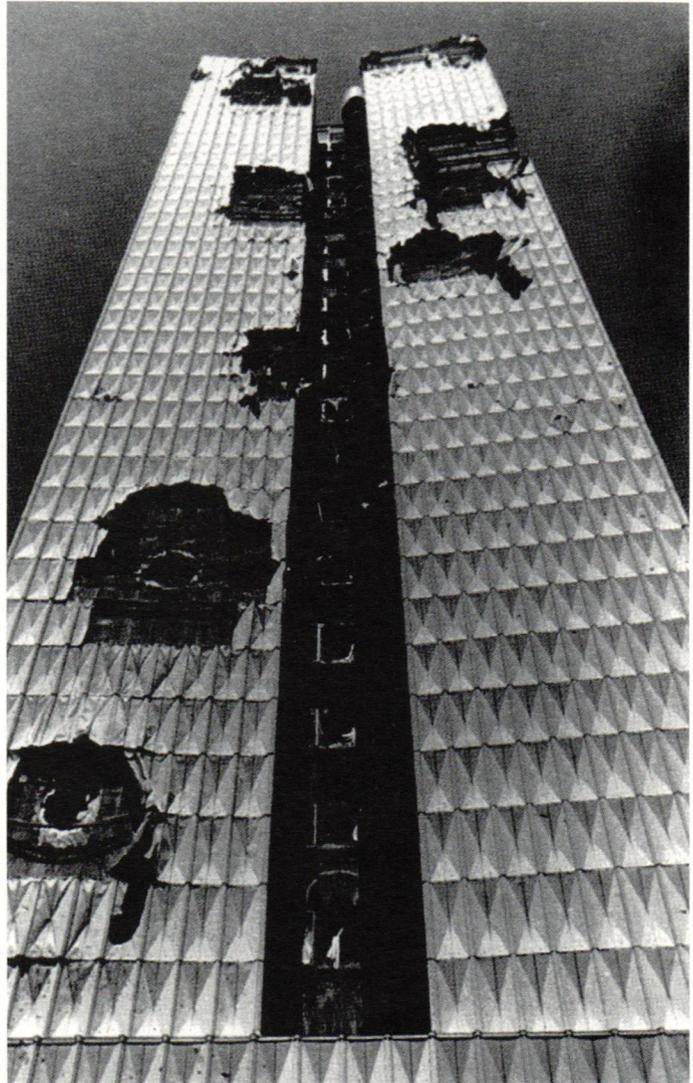
The real culprit, however, is what Steven Flusty, in his biting essay in *Architecture of Fear* titled "Building Paranoia," calls the "new-world bipolar disorder": the fragmentation of social, physical, and moral urban environments, with the accompanying distrust of the increasingly proximate "other," even as the world economy becomes more interconnected and uniform. He traces this phenomenon: "with the decay of previously established cultural standards, and the absence of widely accepted new ones, a wealth of differing ways of life have surfaced, each with its own rules governing spatial use and interpersonal contact. The result is a fluid urban matrix in which likely outcomes of encounters are unpredictable and territorial clues are misread or ignored, causing social friction as individuals and groups continuously encroach upon one another." D. G. Shane's interesting essay, "Balkanization and the Postmodern City," in *Mortal City*, connects urban violence, whose extreme is Sarajevo, with the Balkanization/atomization of urban society, whose extreme is Los Angeles or Singapore. He points to the breakdown of relationships between a city's neighborhoods "due to increasing segregation of its residents by class and race, the armed perimeters formed around its residential communities, its gang turfs, and the privatized public realm of its shopping malls and central business district." As Muschamp puts it, "When we peer out from whatever bubble of security we occupy—a job, a walled condominium compound, the Psychic Friends Network—it is hard to discern any connective tissue between the bubbles."

Another breeding ground of fear and violence is the marginalization of large segments of poorer urban populations who often live adjacent to defended enclaves of wealth. In her essay, "Shelter from the Storm," *Architecture of Fear* editor Ellin refers to the master-planned communities, shopping malls, theme parks, and entertainment palaces of postmodern cities, and asserts that

“the existence of such hyperreal environments side by side with places of desperation and people who are unable to share in the hyperreal benefits certainly engenders shame, resentment, and fear in the haves and have-nots alike.” Flusty follows in the same vein: “The shrinkage of the labor market [in post-cold war Los Angeles] has increased already substantial differences in quality of life between the city’s highly visible elite and expanding poor neighborhoods.... Thus, portions of L. A., like most world cities, have joined the global economy’s exploited and neglected periphery.”

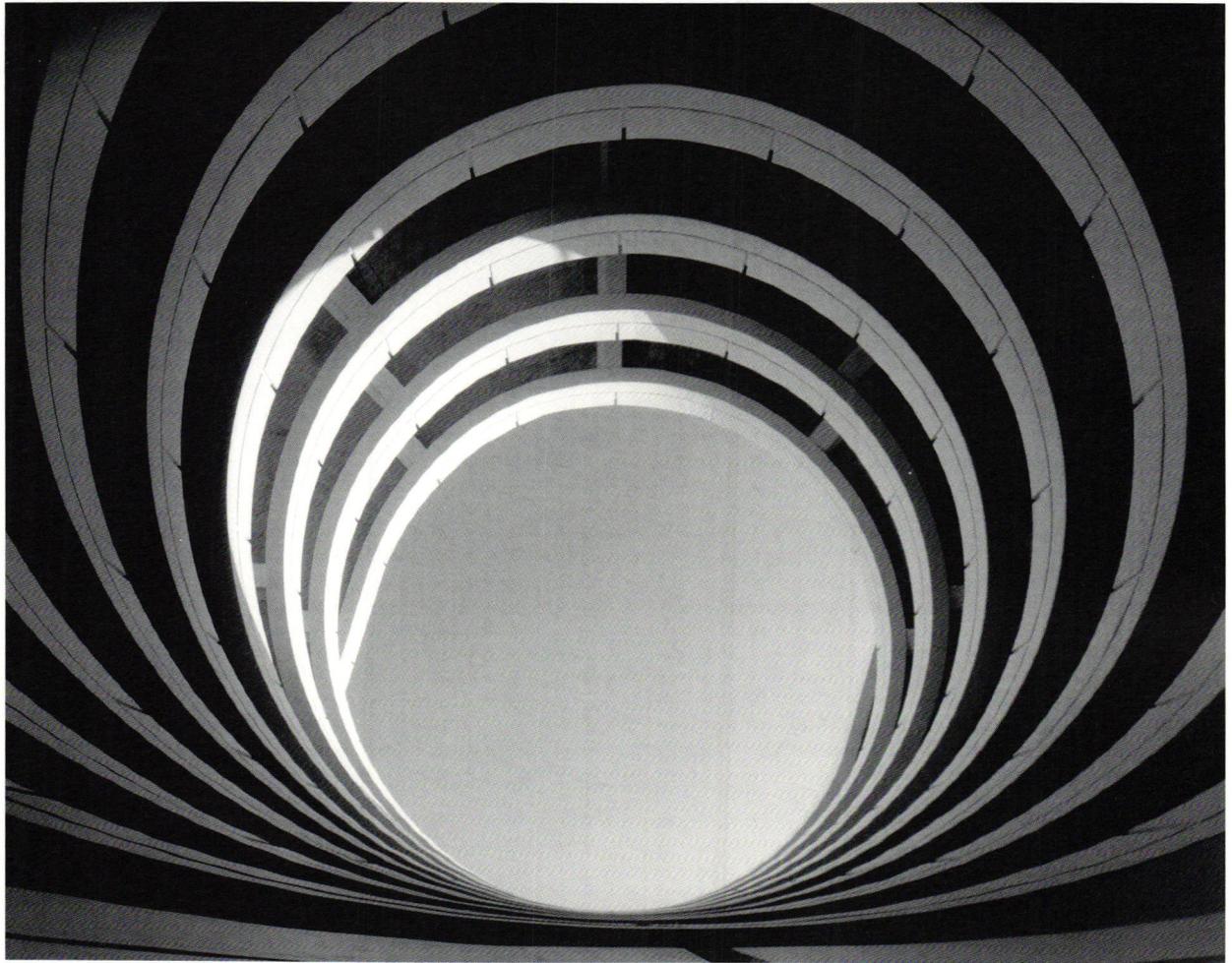
Both books mention another important source of fear: the privatization of public space and public services, and the constriction of civil liberties. Edward Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder in *Architecture of Fear* describe “an entirely parallel, private system...to provide schools, playgrounds, parks, and police protection for those who can pay, leaving the poor and less well-to-do dependent on the ever-reduced services of city and county governments.” Flusty cites the replacement of traditional public spaces with privately produced and managed, closely monitored “post-public spaces”: malls, office building plazas, or residential sidewalks, “where ideas narrowly perceived as inimical to the owner’s sensibilities (and profit margin) are unaccommodated or ejected by private security.” He terms them “a threat to the free exchange of ideas engendering a progressive society.” Even older public spaces are increasingly controlled and guarded places, usually with curfews and/or gates and not accessible to all. (This reviewer has been stopped numerous times on sidewalks in Los Angeles and Houston by police who asked, “Why are you walking?” Once a police helicopter spotlighted me as I walked the 200 feet from my car to my apartment.) Mark Wigley questions the lament for atrophied public space in an interview by *Mortal City* editor Lang. Wigley maintains that “it is not so clear there ever was such a space and if there was, it was not so wonderful.” He adds that the “television, fax machine, and computer represent...other spaces that are, in their own way, just as clearly defined.” Counter to this argument, however, Fred Dewey, in *Architecture of Fear*, points out that “as our world becomes less and less locally grounded in community in a system of billions of switches, a single phone can be turned on or off or monitored undetected, while a person’s entire history can be tracked by credit hits.”

A final theme touched on by both volumes is the feeling of powerlessness in the face of what Ellin calls the “increasingly transnational nature of power.” Dewey in his excellent contribution, “Cyburbanism as a Way of Life,” points out that



“the problem is not merely power within the LAPD [the Los Angeles Police Department], but power wherever it exists in brutal fashion. People are reduced to fearing what they cannot hope to counteract.” Referring to his own involvement in a grassroots effort to revive interest in local decision making after the 1992 Los Angeles riots, he reports that “it was my misfortune to discover that Los Angeles residents seemed not only unable to imagine such a civil politics but assembly of any kind. Where in Singapore it is illegal to gather politically in groups of more than three or four, in new-age Los Angeles, laws forbidding assembly and speech are entirely unnecessary.” In *Mortal City*, Lebbeus Woods laments that modern architects “must become aware that...they are soldiers in an army engaged in the conquest of space, and at the command of very particular individuals and institutions, whose ends, if they are to be realized, must be pursued ruthlessly.” Against this array of global socioeconomic forces, Richard Sennett’s repeated use in *Architecture of Fear* of the term “personal failure” to describe the feelings of downsized workers seems particularly off-target.

**This photograph of the Assembly and Government Building of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina is from *Warchitecture—Sarajevo: A Wounded City*, an exhibition organized in 1992. The exhibition documented the destruction of buildings in Sarajevo during the civil war.**  
(from *Mortal City*)



**Parking Garage**  
**San Diego, 1965.**  
**Photograph by Julius Shulman.**  
**The low walls and tight turning**  
**radius of this spiraled structure**  
**frightened many drivers.**  
*(from *Architecture of Fear*)*

*Architecture of Fear* and *Mortal City* employ an entertaining variety of written and visual formats with which to present their theses. Classifications of defensive or offensive spatial strategies occur in several essays. Blakely and Snyder list various types of gated communities (lifestyle community, elite community, and security zone) and the corresponding rationales for gating. Flusty provides a vivid classification of the new “interdictory spaces” in Los Angeles (Stealthy, Slippery, Crusty, and Jittery). Peter Marcuse, also in *Architecture of Fear*, lists five types of architectural elements (ramparts, stockades, barricades, and stucco and prison walls) that divide cities into distinctive enclaves. Several selections utilize innovative methods of photography, computer graphics, cartoons, and mixed media to communicate urban fears. Peter Anders, in *Mortal City*, utilizes an innovative literary device by placing his essay’s content in a series of footnotes to a fictitious document. Similarly, *Mortal City* editor Lang attempts a more interactive approach by presenting his interview with Wigley in a transcription format.

Some of the interpretations of modern urban phenomena are quite original. Richard Ingersoll’s insightful essay, “Landscapegoat,” in *Architecture of Fear*, depicts contemporary gardens, lawns, and

parks as compensatory offerings, “the privileged victims of a society committed to exponential development, set aside to absolve humanity for its detrimental exploitation of the natural environment.” Thus gardens serve “as desperate offerings that try to extract one’s complicity with accelerated entropy [or] cushion the fear of the end of nature.” In the same volume, Udo Greinacher, Margaret Wertheim, and Dewey all examine an important new topic, the contours of the new “cyburban” geography. Dewey is pessimistic, pointing to the corrosive effects of the Internet, the superseding of face-to-face contact, on the physical and political life of the city. Despite his frustrating experience after the Los Angeles riots, he continues to call for efforts to make the political decision-making process more responsive to citizens, represented by town meetings on local issues, and to expand the range of governmental matters subject to the vote. Greinacher sees both the attractions and weaknesses of this new technology. Citing the “absence of meaningful space” in modern home and work environs, he sees American teenagers’ enthusiasm for the Internet as a migration to a new kind of space offering opportunities for personal involvement, entertainment, and novelty, but complete with some of the same dangers of the real-time world (credit-card theft,

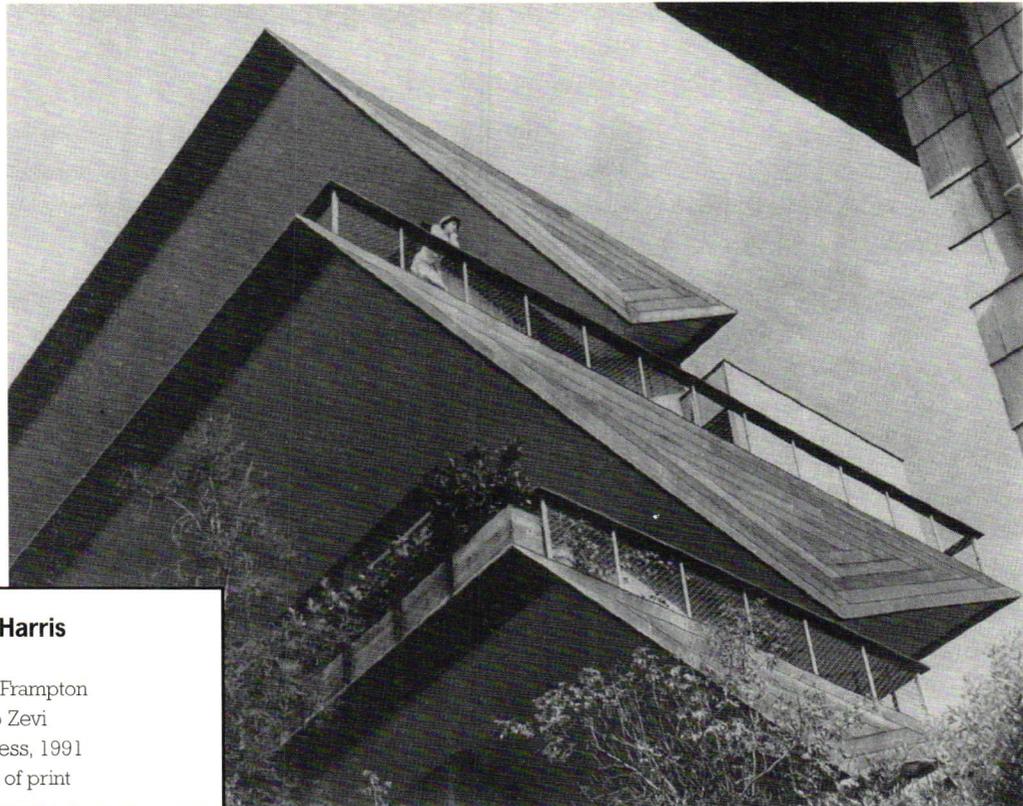
software piracy, pornography) and governmental controls that will soon create "digitally gated communities." Wertheim swallows the bait altogether, suggesting that the "role played by cyberspace in popular imagination today...is not dissimilar to the role played by heaven in early Christian imagination." Pointing to the same fragmentation of late-twentieth-century Western society and the resulting fears and insecurities mentioned by other contributors, she maintains that cyberspace provides a renewed spiritual grounding, a "belief in salvation through science and its technological by-products," as championed by an array of politicians from Newt Gingrich to Al Gore. Evidencing a pronounced distaste for the dangers (especially sexual crimes) of the virtual urban world, Wertheim extolls the tendency of cyberspace to focus people on metaphysical, communal matters instead of on physical and individual affairs, though she provides no examples of such a tendency.

In sum, the two books together are a good introduction to the angst that is becoming a central theme of post-cold war architecture and urbanism. As individual works, however, they operate on two different levels. *Mortal City* shares many themes with *Architecture of Fear*, but, with a few exceptions, its contributions are short presentations of more overt rather than unseen manifestations of urban violence. Although *Mortal City* makes tangible the fragility of the urban fabric, it does not go deep enough into the sources of the danger. Editor Lang might have undertaken some of this task himself, but chose instead to allow the cumulative effect of the varied text and media to create its own impact. Some of the selections do communicate the atmosphere of urban dystopia, like the photos of fortified inner-city buildings and war-damaged Sarajevo, Anders's loopy but informative footnotes, and the essays by Diane Ghirardo and Woods. Other attempts at employing mixed media are less successful, such as the contribution by Richard Plunz, "Beyond Dystopia. Beyond Theory Formation," which combines high-tech computer graphics with captions describing crime in the South Bronx, or an overly cryptic comic strip titled "El Niño and the Rhino." Lang's interview with Wigley may provide additional variety to the book's format but primarily seems to save both men the time required to compose their own essays. In addition, their pronouncements on what architecture "is" or "isn't" sound more pompous in the interview format than they might have had they been part of a developed essay; such self-important statements weaken some good arguments for social responsibility among designers.

At first, *Architecture of Fear* appears to be yet another edited assemblage without an overall shape. Indeed, Ellin's introduction avoids the challenge of identifying an overarching theme

for the book and moves immediately to individual discussions of the collected texts. Nevertheless, buried almost too deep in her own well-fortified (102 footnotes in thirty-three pages) leadoff essay is the book's synthesis: a serious critique of current trends in urban-design theory and an advocacy of a nondefensive, "reconstructive" urbanism. The book represents an important shift in urban scholarship as it moves away from an overemphasis on the physical object toward inclusion of the social, economic, environmental, psychological, and cyberspatial aspects of built environments. Ellin traces the split between city planners and sociologists to the survival strategies of the professions during the early part of the twentieth century. Urban planning and the social sciences, "both of which were sparked by the mounting problems engendered by industrial capitalism, diverged as planners focused on the physical city (the container) and social scientists focused on modern life (the contents)." This division of thought "facilitated the growth of the modern industrial city in a fashion that has suited the patrons of building more than the majority." Ellin's broad-based selection of essays is itself part of the message: that the fragmentation, tensions, and loss of power among urban inhabitants require collaborative, proactive responses from citizens and professionals of all disciplines, not just from architects, planners, and urban designers.

These two books can serve as handholds for those trying to rise above the current morass of urban theory. *Mortal City* offers ways of perceiving the fragmentation and violence; *Architecture of Fear* offers a glimpse beyond neotraditionalist and regionalist "New Urbanism" and themed environments toward ways of dealing with the sources of fear. Some of Lang's and Ellin's selections describe situations in which residents may be defined less by a common sense of place and more by a common interest; less absorbed in narrow, neighborhood-based issues and more interested in root causes of unequal distribution of power and resources. In the context of the physical and social phenomena of urban areas, it is possible to look at the subordination of human rights to corporate rights. With the end of the cold war, the practice of evaluating capitalism always in comparison with its ideological opponent can be halted. As George Soros wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly* in February 1997, "The main enemy of the open society is no longer the communist but the capitalist threat." Muschamp, citing the failure to rebuild South Central Los Angeles, asks, "Do inner-city neighborhoods want to be remade in the image of corporate culture?...Or are we prepared to acknowledge that, for integration to occur, the corporate culture must also be remade?"



### Harwell Hamilton Harris

by Lisa Germany  
 foreword by Kenneth Frampton  
 introduction by Bruno Zevi  
 University of Texas Press, 1991  
 296 pp., currently out of print

### The Texas Rangers: Notes from an Architectural Underground

by Alexander Caragonne  
 introduction by Charles Moore  
 MIT Press, 1995  
 442 pp., \$52.50

**Harwell Hamilton Harris's Weston Havens house, Berkeley, California, 1941. The photograph is by the surrealist artist Man Ray.**  
 (from *Harwell Hamilton Harris*)

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## Power Rangers

by John A. Loomis

My first encounter with the work of Harwell Hamilton Harris came as a young man during a visit with my parents to their friends, Calvin and Ines Antrim, in our hometown, Fresno, California. The house had been built in 1956 by Harris. I knew nothing about Harris, and little about architecture, for that matter. But I did know that the house impressed me as something far removed from the typical postwar tract-home environment that made up my suburban Fresno—and this encounter became a formative experience for me as an architect.

The Antrim house, nestled into the densely landscaped site of a former fig orchard, was an integral part of the site's equally well-designed garden. An L-plan wrapped around a courtyard, closed on its other side by a garage, made for an intensely private, intimate environment. This tight, efficient plan gave the illusion of more space than there really was, and clearly yet quietly separated public and private functions. An extruded roof frame reached out into the vegetation. There was a vague Japanese quality to it all, a feeling of tranquility and harmony. Harris's use of indirect sources of light, natural and artificial, gave the interior a peaceful glow.

While it was the last house Harris built in California, it drew directly, almost literally, from his first, a house for Pauline Lowe in Altadena, which was completed in 1934. The Antrim house thus provided a poetic closure for a chapter in his career. Although at one time he was considered by his professional peers as one of the major emerging architects of his generation, his career faltered when he left California and moved to Texas and, later, to North Carolina.

Harris's work gained renewed recognition first in 1984 in Esther McCoy's book, *The Second Generation*, which also documented the work of Southern California architects J. R. Davidson, Gregory Ain, and Rafael Soriano. In *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, Kenneth Frampton noted Harris's important, but little-known contribution to regionalist theory. But it is the monograph *Harwell Hamilton Harris* by Lisa Germany that definitively documents the life and architecture of this important architect. Although this book is out of print, it is nevertheless worth searching out in bookstores or libraries.

*Harwell Hamilton Harris* is highly biographical and is written in a personal tone that indicates the author's genuine respect and affection for her subject. At times, such a familiar approach may cause some minor lapses in the author's objectivity, but otherwise this is a well-documented work. In setting the context of Harris's career, Germany also provides useful profiles of the architects Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra, as well as a cogent description of California's role in the development of modern architecture. Most of all, however, the book is a tribute to its subject, Harris, chronicling his California career, his stint at the University of Texas, his subsequent work teaching, and, finally, retirement to North Carolina.

Harris, the grandson of early pioneers, was born in Redlands, California, on July 2, 1903. His life overlapped both the Victorian and modern eras and his personality reflected the values of both periods. Growing up in a Southern California that appeared to be an Arcadia ascendant, Harris lived to see the area evolve into something quite different with the ever-sprawling dystopia of postwar development.

Harris discovered architecture through his father, Fred Harris. The senior Harris was a rancher and a self-taught architect/builder. Harwell Hamilton Harris's practice, too, would be grounded in the pragmatics of construction, unencumbered by formal theory, but perhaps also impeded by a lack thereof. In place of an academic education in architecture, he studied art, then, in the 1920s, served as an apprentice under Schindler and Neutra. Although this period in California was a crucible of cultural optimism and emerging regional modernity, it is still undervalued by American architectural historians.

In spite of his apprenticeship with Neutra, the major influence upon Harris was Frank Lloyd Wright. Harris especially venerated Wright's Hollyhock House, which became a reference point for many of Harris's works, from the Harold English house (1949–50) in Beverly Hills, California, to the Ruth Carter Stevenson house (1955–56) in Fort Worth, Texas. Wright's rather sparse practice in the 1920s was predominately in Los Angeles, and the body of work Wright produced there had a profound influence upon Harris. Harris, however, was fortunate to not have chosen to work at Wright's studio, Taliesin, in Scottsdale, Arizona, and become a disciple of the master.

The influence of Wright on Harris was tempered by Harris's own sense of restraint, his practical knowledge of construction, and his affinity for the native Californian variant of the Arts and Crafts movement. At first it was more of an unconscious influence, but after Harris and his wife, Jean Murray Bangs Harris, conducted

seminal research on Bernard Maybeck and Charles and Henry Greene, he came to quote more conspicuously from the Arts and Crafts idiom, as evident in the Ralph Johnson house (1947–48) in Los Angeles. Harris adopted a preference for wood and the pitched roof from the craftsman tradition and yet his spatial preferences were shaped by the continuity and transparency of modernism. Harris's fondness for wood possibly influenced Neutra's own explorations in that medium as the latter architect evolved toward a more regional derivative of the machine-age modernism of his early work.

Harris's work is marked by a quiet, competent conservatism that all too often was easily copied by contractors and builders. While Harris may not have had the ability to reinvent himself periodically, like Wright, or the natural tendency toward a steady, linear evolution in his work, like Neutra, his architecture stands as an important contribution to the regional culture of its time and is most worthy of Germany's monograph.

Harris's repertoire was predominately defined by the single-family house. His few ventures into commercial projects (mostly unbuilt) are unremarkable, and his design of an embassy in Helsinki is downright banal. Like Wright, he believed in the myth of the single-family home as a symbol of American democracy. While he tended to elaborate on a set of recurrent formal themes, which he rendered in a consistently reserved manner, Harris could also be given to moments of irony and invention, such as his use of chain link in the Weston Havens house (1941) or off-the-rack plastic lanterns in the Carter Stevenson house. But above all Harris believed that all architects, even those working in the modernist tradition, should reflect the region in which they practiced.

Harris's work is most powerful when he reduces the single-family house to its most elementary form. The previously mentioned Lowe house, and the Fellowship Park house (1935), a minimal Japanese-influenced tree-house pavilion with no furnishings (and originally without running water) that he built for himself and his wife, are testaments to his keen reductive aesthetic sensibilities. Of Harris's reserved and referential work, one project stands out as truly original—the Weston Havens house, sited on a dramatic slope in Berkeley, California, looking out over the San Francisco Bay toward the Golden Gate. Harris was no stranger to sloped sites. The one-story Entenza house (1937) projects dramatically into Rustic Canyon at the edge of Santa Monica. The Blair house (1939) steps down its hillside as three shifting, interlocking trays. But unlike the majority of Harris's work, which is driven by the plan, the Havens house is inspired by a sectional idea. The house is comprised of three stacked, inverted gable trusses. The section not only directs one toward the view of the bay,

it shapes the spatial experience of the entire house. The architectural promenade is deftly choreographed, taking the visitor from the barely visible off-street entrance, through a connecting bridge, into a series of layered spaces that expand as one approaches the view. This is the most authentic of Harris's designs, free of the residual influences of Wright or Neutra. The Havens house is a truly inspired modern masterpiece that is strangely neglected by the canon.

Harris, who throughout his career published numerous articles on many subjects, had a pragmatic nature and was cautious about theory. Nevertheless, he did develop one theoretical text titled "Regionalism and Nationalism," which he first gave as a speech to the Northwest Regional Council of the American Institute of Architects in Eugene, Oregon, in 1954. Frampton summed up the importance of this address in his *Modern Architecture*, in which he states, "No-one has perhaps expressed the idea of a Critical Regionalism more forcefully than Harris." In his speech, Harris wrote, "It is the genius of this region to be more than ordinarily aware and more than ordinarily free. Its virtue is that its manifestation has significance for the world outside itself." He later added, "In my opinion...a regional expression at its highest is an expression of liberation. It is a picture of adventure into new territory, new ways of living, new forms of construction, new harmonies of form. It is the picture of individual men discovering the Universe in architectural terms and realizing themselves more fully than before. It is a picture of liberation, of expansion, of diversity."<sup>1</sup> Even though the address is undoubtedly Harris's most important and most radical written work, reference to it is absent from Germany's book.

In "Regionalism and Nationalism," Harris went on to argue that modern architecture in California was an indigenous, non-Eurocentric phenomenon, part of a continuum rooted in the practices of Maybeck and Greene and Greene. He drew a distinction between the modernism of the East Coast, which was, he felt, dependent on European models and, therefore, a "Regionalism of Restriction," and that of the West Coast, which nurtured indigenous creativity—a "Regionalism of Liberation."

But a regional culture is a fragile entity, not only in the face of today's globalized culture, but in Harris's time, too. Frampton, in his foreword to Germany's monograph, defines the criteria for the creation of a regional culture as a "combination of economic vitality, political independence, and cultural continuity." These characteristics coexisted in Southern California often

precariously during Harris's career. The Depression halted the economic vitality of the twenties. The war effort and the postwar boom erased much of the "otherness" that had given Southern California an Arcadian character. Harris's Arcadian vision was challenged by the more aggressive and cosmopolitan visions of Neutra, Ain, Soriano, and Charles Eames. More European in orientation, it was their architecture, not Harris's, that was vigorously promoted by John Entenza in *California Arts & Architecture*. Harris's work was destined to recede into a supporting role, where machine-age modernism eclipsed his wood-framed structures. His career as a California architect effectively came to an end in 1951 when, at age forty-eight, he assumed the deanship of the School of Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin.

Harris's tenure as dean in Austin was to prove a professionally frustrating as well as a personally devastating experience. Nevertheless, he was, quite by chance, to preside over a set of events that, over time, would profoundly influence architectural education in both the United States and Europe.

Harris's administration began amidst great optimism. Respected as an accomplished designer and builder, he offered great promise as a potential leader for the School of Architecture, which had only just gained its independence from the School of Engineering. But he unknowingly had entered an untenable situation, with a faculty highly resistant to change or innovation of any sort. He had inherited a tenured senior faculty that he would come to describe as "a group of 'coasting incompetents' entrenched in the highest ranks of the school."<sup>2</sup> The faculty, coupled with a parsimonious budget, would thwart the efforts of any dean, regardless of his or her leadership capabilities. Harris's short-lived administration, nevertheless, was to be marked by a series of curricular reforms by young, untenured junior faculty members, now often referred to as the "Texas Rangers."

Bernhard Hoesli and Colin Rowe led the restructuring of the design studios. They were soon joined by other young faculty later hired by Harris: John Hejduk, Robert Slutzky, Lee Hirsche, followed by Irwin Rubin, John Shaw, Lee Hodgden, and Werner Seligmann. Harris had perhaps more fortuitously than knowingly assembled a highly creative and collaborative group of motivated individuals who would greatly raise the level of student performance through their critical retooling of the process of design instruction. Moreover, Harris is to be credited for having greatly contributed to the creation of a nurturing environment for this group.

John Hejduk



Colin Rowe



Lee Hirsche



Harwell Hamilton Harris



Robert Slutzky

Bernhard Hoesli



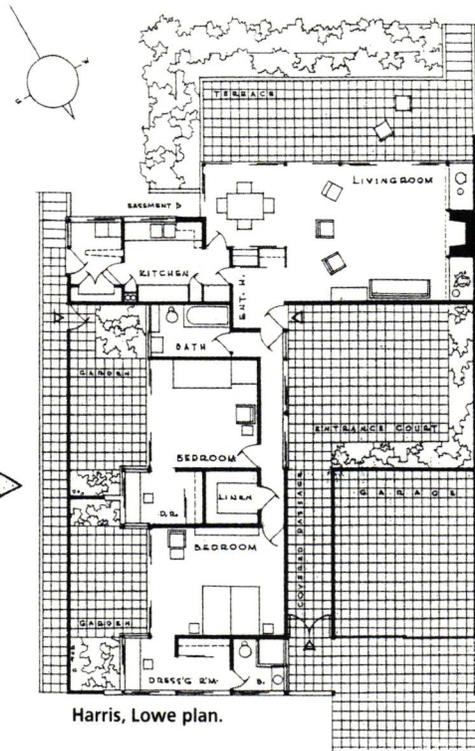
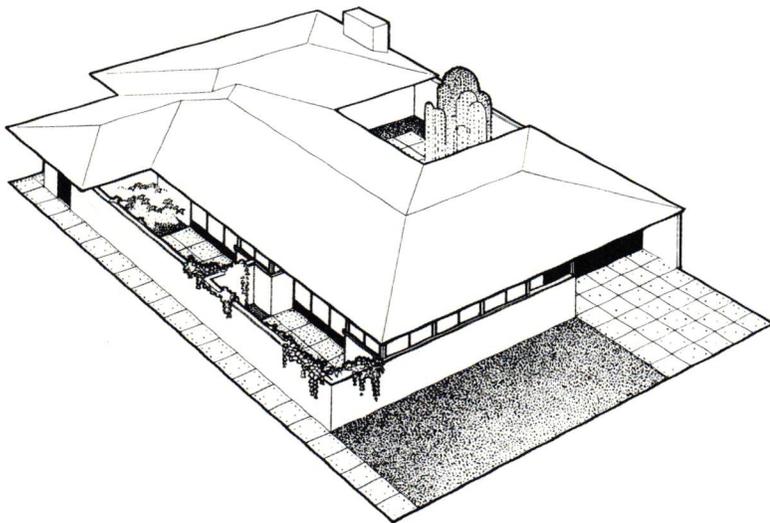
Conscious of the limited pedagogical resources of the senior faculty, Harris made effective use of his young faculty by assigning them to instruct those students who were in the early years of the design curriculum. Harris hoped that the momentum gained in these classes would sustain students when they contended with less effective teachers in the later years. Still, the intellectual, cultural, and generational gap between the junior and senior faculty would prove to be unbreachable. The situation was not helped any by the well-intentioned, but often reckless, interventions by Harris's wife.<sup>3</sup> The senior faculty, more accustomed to bickering among themselves than to advancing pedagogy, felt threatened by the growing competence of their junior colleagues and closed ranks to undermine both their reforms and Harris's administration.

Crushed by the irreconcilable situation, Harris abruptly resigned in the spring of 1955, leaving his junior faculty to fend for themselves.

Hejduk, Hirsche, Slutzky, and Rubin were effectively purged as their contracts were allowed to run out a year later in 1956, the same time at which Rowe resigned. Hoesli resigned the following year, while holdouts Shaw, Seligmann, and Hodgden left in 1958—and so did all traces of the new pedagogy at the School of Architecture at Austin. As discouraged as all the young Texas Rangers must have been at that time, as their careers progressed they all ascended to high levels of prominence in architectural education. Harris's career, however, was destined to plateau, and he slowly declined into relative obscurity. His spirit defeated, in 1962 Harris moved to North Carolina, where he taught and practiced. From this time to his death in 1990, Harris had little of the drive that had marked his youth.

With the passage of time, the School of Architecture at Austin, under the leadership of another dean, Hal Box, played an important part in rehabilitating Harris's contributions both as architect and as dean.<sup>4</sup> The University of Texas

**The faculty of the School of Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin, ca. 1955.**  
(from *The Texas Rangers*)



Harris, Lowe plan.

**Harris's house for Pauline Lowe in Altadena, California, 1933-34. The formal and stylistic origins of the Lowe house can be traced through the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Rudolph Schindler, and was influenced by Japanese gestures.**  
(from *Harwell Hamilton Harris*)

Center for the Study of American Architecture at Austin became the repository for his archives in 1984, and in 1985 the school endowed a professorship in his name. Also in 1985 the school and the center cosponsored a retrospective exhibition of his work, curated by Germany. This project was the genesis for the publication of her monograph reviewed here. Harris's sojourn at the University of Texas is dealt with gently in Germany's book. For a story that pulls fewer punches and one that follows protagonists other than Harris, we must turn to Alexander Caragonne's *The Texas Rangers: Notes from an Architectural Underground*.<sup>5</sup>

*The Texas Rangers* is a book without any real typological or literary precedent. While Germany's book, in a classic monograph format, speaks to a broad audience with architectural interests, Caragonne's inventively organized text addresses a narrower group, design educators—for whom it should be required reading.<sup>6</sup> *The Texas Rangers* offers a pedagogical odyssey that meticulously records the development of the curricular reforms of Hoesli, Rowe, and their companions at Austin. The book also reflects upon the subsequent influence of their work as it traveled from "underground" to mainstream. The author dispenses the narrative tale with relish, in all its drama and Machiavellian intrigue, in the first chapter. The next three chapters detail the genesis and development of the two stages of the curriculum reform, and give us further insight into the process. The final chapter follows the post-Texas diaspora of the Texas Rangers and charts the reverberations of their curriculum and their progeny across other institutions.

Caragonne himself was a student at the University of Texas during this mythic period. As with Germany, his respect for his mentors may at times limit his objectivity. After ten years of research and writing, Caragonne carefully constructs the many-layered context within which the story plays out. His research is scrupulous; much of his information was gained from interviews and from widely dispersed primary sources. No detail or anecdote is too small or insignificant for his observation. In the book, we learn what was the beer of choice at the Texas Rangers' brainstorming sessions (Lone Star), and we know that one of their acquaintances (John Silber) could crush the empty steel cans in the crook of his arm (this was, we are reminded, before the days of aluminum beer cans). The way that Caragonne combines such anecdotes with a meticulous account of the conceptual development of the new curriculum makes for engaging reading. Footnote aficionados will delight in Caragonne's asides, such as his description of Rowe's penchant for writing long sentences, and his annotated references to additional sources. His detailed account of the behind-the-scenes machinations by the senior faculty that eventually caused the demise of both Harris and the Texas Rangers is amusing. It might also be painfully familiar for anyone acquainted with the world of faculty politics. Aside from being an important document of pedagogical history, *The Texas Rangers* provides the design instructor with a context against which to consider and evaluate one's own teaching.

Design education in the 1950s faced an imminent crisis. The Bauhaus model of Walter Gropius's Graduate School of Design at Harvard had been adopted to some extent by most institutions in the United States. Based as this curriculum was on functional considerations, technical solutions, and a denial of history, the pedagogical limitations of this model were becoming apparent. Meanwhile, aspects of the Beaux-Arts model had managed to survive, even though they tended to be submerged in a Bauhaus-based curriculum. In addition, there coexisted a tradition of American pragmatism that eschewed theory of any sort, particularly if such theory had foreign origins. With design education in such a disjointed condition, in which the design process was conceived as something independent from spatial or formal considerations, the time was ripe for reform.

Harris, impressed with the young Hoesli's intellect and energy, charged him with reforming the first- and second-year design curriculum and named him design coordinator for those initial years. This act did not sit well with the senior faculty, which was protective of its own perceived authority. Nevertheless, Hoesli and his colleagues, supported by Harris, labored with great diligence and a strong sense of purpose. Caragonne maps out with precision the development of the design curriculum as it evolved from its conceptual beginnings in 1953 through its implementation from the fall of 1954 to the spring of 1958. Although innovative, the new curriculum drew from both Bauhaus and the Beaux-Arts models, as the designers of this new course of study sought to reconcile technological process with historical precedent. At the same time, Hoesli and Rowe opposed the "Know Nothing" tradition of American pragmatism by proposing a solid intellectual theoretical foundation for design pedagogy. The new curriculum essentially worked to demystify the process of design, to put it on nonsubjective, nonintuitive grounds that could be objectively analyzed, discussed, and articulated. Hoesli attempted to develop a process that transcended intuition and talent in order to make the act of designing accessible to the average student.

Cubism, because of its implicit architectonic implications, became a convenient vehicle for addressing form from a coherent but abstract base. As such, the study of cubism allowed the student to systematically confront the problem of learning to think in spatial terms. Fundamental to the curriculum was the assertion that modern architecture could be taught. The Texas Rangers believed that students could learn basic design principles through the study of cubist painters such as Pablo Picasso and exposure to the work

of architects such as Le Corbusier, Wright, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Under the tutelage of Slutzky, Hirsche, and Rubin, drawing became not a matter of technical mastery but a process of investigation that would enable the student to develop visual literacy and manual proficiency. The Texas Rangers also developed the highly original analysis problem during their stint at the University of Texas. The analysis problem integrated history into the design study, combining both deductive and inductive types of learning. This innovation has since become standard fare in design studios throughout the United States.

Hoesli and Rowe, the first recruits and the elders of the group (they were in their thirties; the others were in their twenties), formed the pivotal center around which the other Texas Rangers interacted. The curriculum, as it evolved, embodied the dialectical relationship of Hoesli and Rowe's pedagogical inclinations. Hoesli searched for a rational, ordered design process fundamentally linked to a formal common denominator—and found it in cubism. Through excerpts from the daily entries in Hoesli's studio diaries, Caragonne reveals Hoesli as a compassionate teacher who cared far more for a class's progress as a group than for the achievements of talented individuals. He emerges as a rare teacher, passionately committed to understanding the learning process with a seemingly infinite capacity for self-reflection and self-criticism. Hoesli's engaging, enthusiastic personality was contrasted by Rowe's more enigmatic and inscrutable demeanor. Hoesli's nature as a linear thinker complemented Rowe's more circular approach to problem solving. Rowe had already challenged academic convention with the publication of his article "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" in 1947. As a protégé of Rudolf Wittkower, imbued with the intellectual discipline and connoisseurship of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, Rowe brought to Austin a rigorous knowledge of architectural history coupled with the insightful ability to make historical connections to design projects. Students working with Rowe inevitably found themselves spending long hours in the library. With his ability to sum up the work of the class as a whole, Rowe was particularly instructive at reviews, drawing general and specific lessons, comparing and contrasting projects, all the while making connections to history with lucid discourse that was devoid of jargon.

Yet it was not just the leadership of Hoesli and Rowe, but the collaborative efforts of all the Texas Rangers that made the new curriculum so successful. Moreover, the group's working method that explored the dialectic between teaching practice and teaching theory contributed to the Texas Rangers' success. They would meet nearly every evening after studio over numerous six-packs of Lone Star beer for discussions that continued late into the night. They were relatively unencumbered with friends, families, or architectural practices. That freedom, coupled with a lack of diversions in Austin, allowed the young men to focus on their mission in a single-minded fashion.

Many of the examples of student work presented in this book curiously fail to convey the radical and experimental nature of the Texas Rangers' curriculum. It all seems so tame today compared with what we are accustomed to seeing in the design studio, even in the beginning years of student activity. What could the senior faculty have found so objectionable in what now seem to be conservative projects? We must bear in mind, however, that the 1950s were a low point for design pedagogy. With hindsight, we can probably safely deduce that standards and expectations for student work have risen substantially since that time and that the continual evolving efforts of the Texas Rangers and their disciples in institutions throughout the United States have contributed in no small part to this higher set of expectations.

Out of the efforts, investigations, and endeavors of this period were also to come two seminal publications of great theoretical importance. The article "Transparency, Literal and Phenomenal" by Rowe and Slutzky, which made its first appearance in 1955, is a well-known discussion of the relationship between architectural space, cubism, and Gestalt psychology. But the lesser-known 1957 *Architectural Record* article by Rowe and Hejduk, titled "Lockhart, Texas," raised issues far ahead of their time and is worth noting. Preceding both Jane Jacobs's interest in everyday urbanity and Robert Venturi's rediscovery of Main Street, this article recognized the inherent dignity of the small, rural Texas town of Lockhart, with its classically inspired plan and solid stock of eclectic buildings. Moreover, in this article Rowe and Hejduk raised issues that would later come into prominence—from context to historic preservation to assumptions that would prefigure the work of the New Urbanists.

But the Texas Rangers' newly discovered concern for history and context did not lead them down the path of nostalgia (though this would not necessarily be true for some of their progeny). They fundamentally believed in modern architecture, and they saw their mission as one

of providing a legitimate formal base for modern architecture and a firm foundation for its continued development that would overcome the theoretical flaws and antiurban bias inherited from the Bauhaus. The Texas Rangers believed they could redeem modernism. Little did they know that their work would eventually provide a theoretical basis for undermining the very modernism they sought to redeem, and would lend legitimacy to the later development of postmodernism and its revival of historicism.

Revolutions rarely evolve as their early visionaries desire. If Hoesli and Rowe were the Voltaire and Rousseau of the formal revolution, then the postmodern excesses of the 1980s were the Reign of Terror. The Bauhaus-influenced suppression of issues of form in favor of those issues relating to technology and function, was followed in the 1960s by a suppression of form once again, this time in favor of issues relating to social responsibility and ecology. The so-called postmodern movement responded to this shift by emphasizing form above all other design criteria. Critics on the left who failed to incorporate issues of form into their discourse during the 1960s bear their own share of the responsibility for later postmodern excesses.

In following a political line of thought, it becomes curious that there is a lack of a political dimension to the work that came out of Texas during this period. The new concern for physical context was not matched by a concern for social context. The progressive nature of the formal doctrine was not matched by a progressive stand on social issues. While the Texas Rangers embraced their mission to redeem modernism, they apparently did not seek to revive the social, not to mention the socialist, underpinnings of modernism. Was this oversight due to an inherent Tory predisposition in Rowe or an inbred Swiss conservatism in Hoesli? Did working in Jim Crow Texas during the McCarthy years produce an understandable reluctance to overstep certain boundaries?

The 1950s, however, were not devoid of progressive political-reformist rumblings, even within the field of architecture. It was in the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* of 1953 that Alison and Peter Smithson, Aldo Van Eyck, Shadrach Woods, and others began to seek to redeem modern architecture through a critical engagement with social issues. Were no reverberations of their critiques felt in Texas in those years? And what about the issues of context and historical precedent? Rowe, as advanced as he was in his thinking, was not operating in a vacuum. Ernesto Rogers, too, in the early 1950s was developing his ideas of *continuità* and *preesistenza ambientale* in the pages of *Casabella*. Other architects from Cuba to Morocco, who were pursuing regionalist agendas,

were looking to their own histories and their own vernacular buildings. Were the Texas Rangers unaware of these and other fraternal critical developments? Probably not, but Caragonne unfortunately provides no information to help us answer these questions, and we are left to speculate.

These unanswered questions do not diminish the fundamental value of Caragonne's book, however. And it can easily be said that no other curriculum has had the pedagogical impact as that of the Texas school. Caragonne does provide an abundance of pedagogical history and points for reflection to satisfy any design instructor who cares about teaching. Also implicit in this publication is a lesson that all architectural schools should note—that any institution that fails to nurture and sustain its junior faculty is destined to fail to grow and evolve. But while the departure of the Texas Rangers in the late 1950s dealt a blow to the School of Architecture at Austin, the efforts of individual members at the school and, later, at other schools expanded standards in architectural education throughout the United States and Europe. Their efforts, in time, would come back to enrich the University of Texas itself.

The influence of the pedagogy the Texas Rangers developed at Austin reached its zenith in the 1980s and appears to be on the wane today. Their reforms, once viewed as radical, are often viewed as representative of establishment thinking and overly formalist by another generation. Current students appear to be more interested in the phenomenological, the ephemeral, the intangible, and the subjective rather than history, typology, context, formal principles, and the objective. Poststructuralist discourses have replaced historical analyses, and ideologies rather than ideas often drive the production of form. The growth of computer use and the attraction of virtual environments have probably also had an effect on this trend. Only time will tell whether we are witnessing the proverbial swing of the pendulum or a dialectical process.

Hoesli died in 1984 after a long and distinguished tenure at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) in Zürich. Sadly, his death predated the publication of Caragonne's book. Hoesli suggested the idea for the book to Caragonne and he provided the author with valuable source material. Harris, who similarly assisted Germany, died in Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1990 before the completion of the book that bears his name. Rowe has retired, although he still writes.<sup>8</sup> Hejduk, Slutzky, Hirsche, Rubin, Shaw, Hodgden, and Seligmann continue to teach and provide leadership in education.

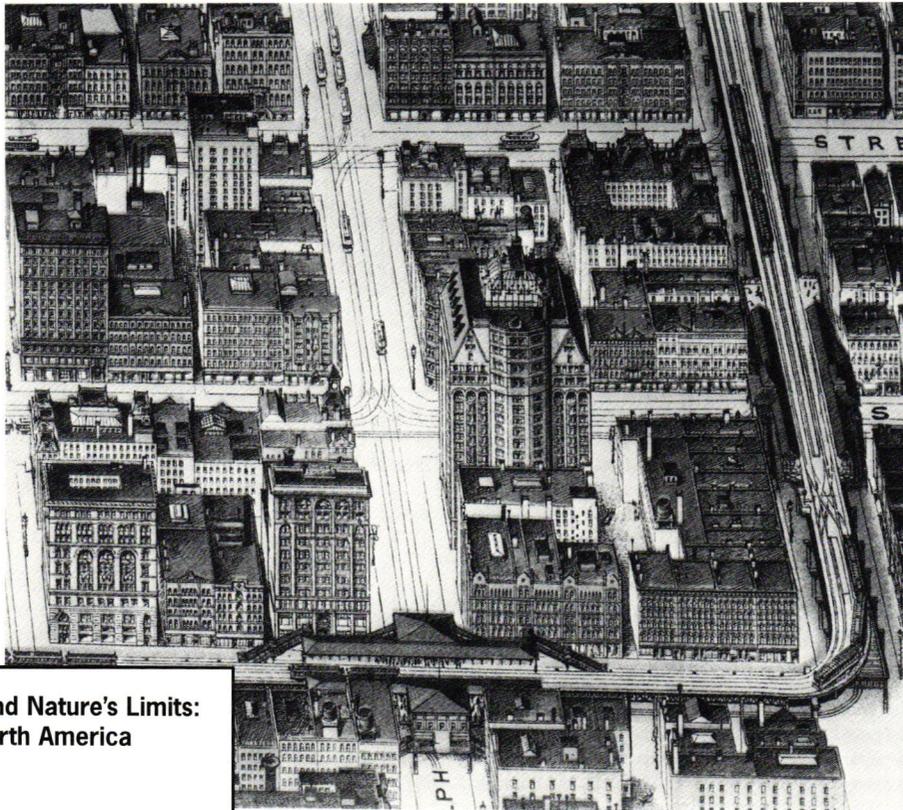
The French have a term, *le second couteau*, the second knife, which they use to refer to those modern architects whose work, no matter how competent, will always be overshadowed by that of the masters. In order to comprehend the totality of an architectural culture, an understanding of the role of *le second couteau* is important. Harwell Hamilton Harris and the Texas Rangers were American *second couteaux*. Harris played a noteworthy part in the development of a regional as well as an American modernism. The Texas Rangers, who themselves have built very little, nevertheless have left an indelible mark upon architecture and urban design through endeavors in education and thereby, the built work of others. Together *Harwell Hamilton Harris and The Texas Rangers: Notes from an Architectural Underground* make an important contribution toward a broader and more inclusive understanding of the ongoing evolution of our architectural culture.

#### Notes

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| <p>1 The speech "Regionalism and Nationalism" can be found in <i>Harwell Hamilton Harris; A Collection of His Writings and Buildings</i> (Raleigh, N.C.: North Carolina State, 1965).</p> <p>2 Harris's criticism came in a letter to University of Texas President Logan Wilson, March 9, 1954, and is quoted in Caragonne's publication.</p> <p>3 Jean Murray Bangs Harris emerges as an unavoidable and complex character in both of these texts. Germany is given to a more sympathetic appraisal of Mrs. Harris, while Caragonne presents a more damaging view of her influence at the University of Texas at Austin.</p> <p>4 Dean Box, to his credit, also played an important role in recognizing Harris's contributions to the field by supporting the documentation of the curricular reforms of the "lost" Texas years of Harris's administration, as noted in the master's thesis of University of Texas graduate student David Thurman. See David Thurman, "Towards a Unified Vision of Modern Architecture: The Texas Experiment 1951–56" (master's thesis, University of Texas, 1988). This document is cited frequently by both Germany and Caragonne.</p> | <p>5 The "Texas Rangers" moniker was created in 1962 by either Alan Chimacoff or Thomas Schumacher, who were students at Cornell University at the time. Needless to say, it has stuck despite the best efforts by all the Texas Rangers to avoid it. Caragonne describes the naming process in his book, on pages 68–69.</p> <p>6 Other useful historical investigations of design education are Kenneth Frampton "Notes on American Architectural Education," <i>Lotus International</i> 27 (1980); and Colin Rowe, "Architectural Education in the USA: Issues, Ideas and People," <i>Lotus International</i> 27 (1980).</p> <p>7 Caragonne informs us that Hoesli was unable to communicate effectively with students at the ETH in 1968. He was sadly out of step with the politics of the time and the issues that concerned the students of that era.</p> <p>8 A recent article by Rowe is "A Modest Proposal for a New Sub-Urbanism," <i>Harvard Design Magazine</i>, winter/spring 1997, 64–67, 69.</p> |
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# The End of the City as We Know It

by Eric Sandweiss



A detail of an 1898 panorama of downtown Chicago. In *Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits*, author James Lemon calls Chicago the "shock city of the age" because the population of the city increased from virtually zero in 1830 to two million in 1910. (from Daniel Bluestone, *Constructing Chicago*, Yale University Press, 1991)

## Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits: Great Cities of North America since 1600

by James T. Lemon  
Oxford University Press, 1996  
341 pp., \$42.00

Notwithstanding Thomas Jefferson's well-known aversion to things urban, the American city and the American dream have grown up hand in hand. The quest for liberty, the search for wealth, and the pursuit of happiness have, as it turns out, led Americans not toward the open vistas of a pastoral republic but down crowded streets leading to a nation of cities.

It is in those cities, argues James T. Lemon, that the "liberal dream" of abundance and individual reward has been most fully realized over the last three centuries. Only recently, Lemon writes, have the tables turned. For it is in today's city that the dream finds itself most clearly doomed by the realities of ever-dwindling resources—the realities, in other words, of "nature's limits."

Like Lewis Mumford's *The City in History* and Sam Bass Warner's *The Urban Wilderness*, Lemon's *Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits: Great Cities of Northern America since 1600* is urban history in service to political manifesto. In this case, Lemon, best known for his historical-geographical study of

Pennsylvania, *The Best Poor Man's Country*, has hung his critique of progress on the broad framework of the changing North American city. Through close analysis of five such cities (Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Toronto), each at a critical point in its development, he builds his case that urbanization is built upon shaky foundations; that we will never transcend our mortal dependence on space, time, and natural resources; and that the continuous growth on which our society historically depends has come to an end. "Nature," Lemon writes, "has triumphed. Can we settle down to a steady state?"

*Liberal Dreams* is devoted primarily to demonstrating the truth of that assertion, and with it, the urgency of the attendant question. This is at once a textbook—one finds here a good synthesis of much of the important recent literature on American cities—and a fervently argued polemic, a warning that "the future cannot lie in liberal democracy as we have known it."

Eric Sandweiss is the director of research at the Missouri Historical Society.

To bolster that claim, Lemon begins with a compelling survey of the “stagnating metropolises” of late-twentieth-century North America. In the emptying landscapes of the central city, and in the growing disparities between America’s richest and poorest citizens, he finds evidence of the passing of our cities’ historically “generative” character. While Lemon’s critique of the deleterious effects of late capitalism will come as little surprise to readers accustomed to the political presumptions of most academic urban historians, its implications are, at times, surprising: Jane Jacobs, for instance, whose prescriptions Lemon finds “fundamentally detrimental to city life,” comes under more fire than even Ronald Reagan. With the more usual suspects of laissez-faire excess, Lemon’s Jacobs shares an abiding faith in the redemptive powers of free enterprise—a faith unwarranted, the author believes, in light of the reality of diminishing resources and corporate greed.

Clearly, then, *Liberal Dreams* is written with the intent of stretching our consideration of urban options beyond the familiar political outlines of existing debates. It is disappointing, in this sense, that the main substance of the book—its case-study survey of North American urbanization—leans so heavily on extant research and on familiar forms of presentation that only blunt the sharpness of the author’s opening and closing arguments.

Beginning with Ben Franklin’s Philadelphia and proceeding through antebellum Manhattan, post-fire Chicago, interwar Los Angeles, and finally the booming Toronto of the 1970s, Lemon chooses cities whose key moments of growth highlight the changing interrelationships of technology, economic and social organization, and urban space in Canada and the United States. While this ambitious program requires a master synthesist and, in all likelihood, a geographer to succeed (Lemon fits the bill on both counts), it also draws away energy from his central question of whether the “steady state” forced on us by nature’s limits can ever be made more humane or even survivable. That is a question that must be felt in the heart as much as it is understood in the head.

At issue here is not whether Lemon’s thesis is adequately supported by historical evidence—his skill in mining key facts from a huge body of literature convinces me of that—but whether his aim of provoking profound questions about our cities and ourselves can survive the methodical cadences of textbook history. While probably informed by deeper research than was, say, Mark Girouard in his survey, *Cities and People*, Lemon lacks that writer’s skill in vividly evoking the

contrasting realities of time and place across a range of distinct cities. While his concern for reaching wide audiences wisely steers him clear of the jargon-laden prose of a David Harvey, he rarely indulges his fellow geographer’s knack for provoking and even outraging through his critical pronouncements. Yet either of these rhetorical tactics, as much as any assemblage of facts, are what could have pushed the book from historical summary to rallying cry. As Americans, most of us live in fast-changing metropolitan regions. We rarely take the time to look back. For history to touch us at all, it needs to do so forcefully: shadowing our footsteps, blocking the paths along which we otherwise walk blithely into the future.

*Liberal Dreams* suffers, in a way, from being too good: too thorough, too comprehensive in its scope and documentation. Readers will find in these pages a style less like Mumford—with his propensity for sweeping, almost Weberian overgeneralization—and more like the dozens of closely focused historians on whose studies Lemon’s urban profiles depend. It’s all in here: the census tract analysis, the close reading of city ordinances, the patient explanation of infrastructural development. Bolstered by this supporting detail, the five cities serve well their intended function as paradigms for the changing nature of North American urban growth. As a text, the book stands up beside any other urban history survey in print. But reading the argument that frames this historical narrative, the reader expects something more as well. The trick that Lemon sets out for himself is, of course, for argument and narrative to abet—rather than distract from—one another.

Whether he succeeds in pulling off that trick is a question that readers can decide for themselves. The fact that I closed the book with a vague sense of letdown is in part testimony to the respect it gave me for Lemon’s skills both as a historian and as a social critic. Each alone provides reason enough to read this important work; together, they suggest that a return to the grand ambitions of Mumford and his ilk—however successfully realized—will do Americans more good than harm from now on. At its most fundamental level, *Liberal Dreams* reminds us that there is much at stake in the crisis of our cities. We need to do no less than to question seriously the familiar conjunction—coined by Jacobs but shared by most of us—of “cities and the wealth of nations.”

# Addition for Architects

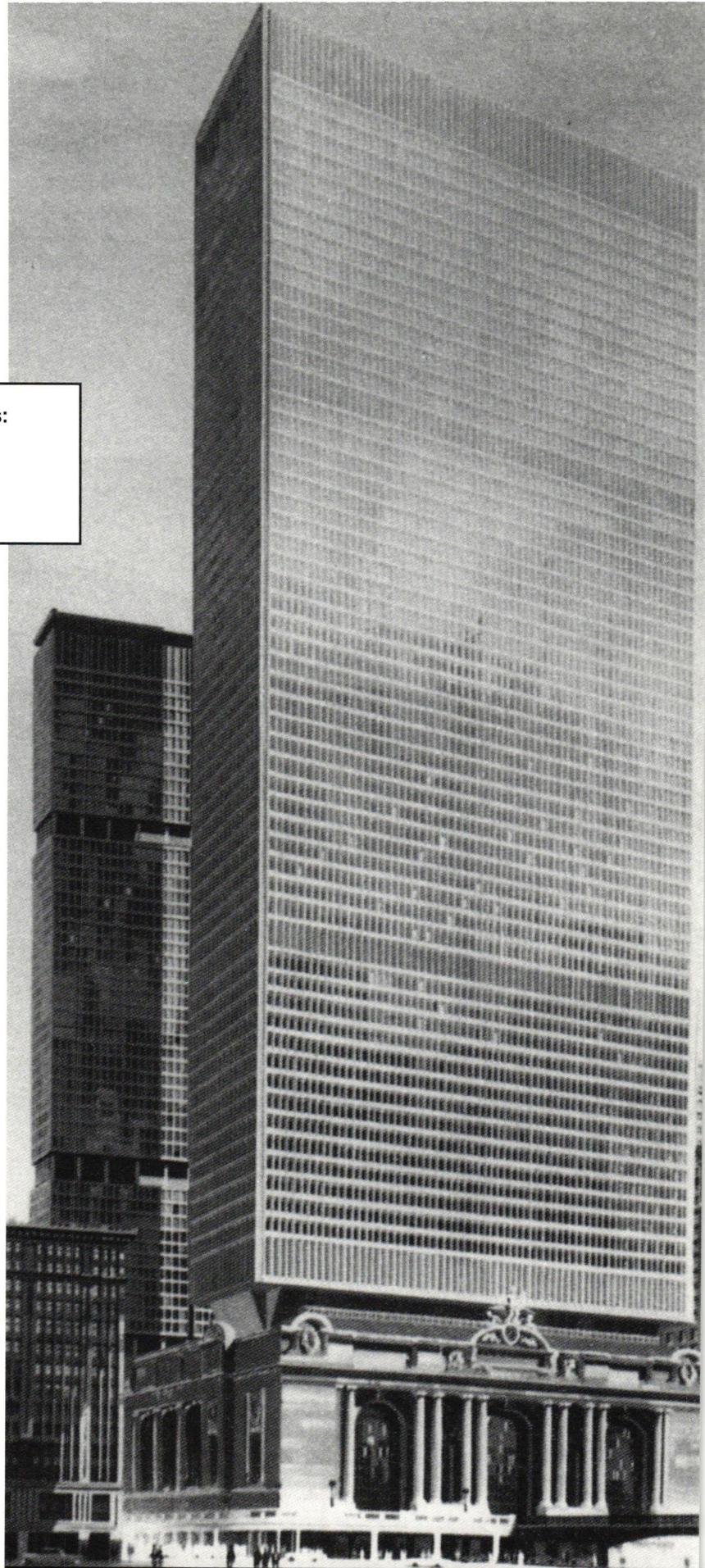
by Sharon Irish

## **The Architecture of Additions: Design and Regulation**

by Paul Spencer Byard  
W. W. Norton & Company, 1998  
191 pp., \$40.00

Few events create as much controversy in the design community as the construction of an architectural addition to a historic building. From the notorious 1968 Marcel Breuer plan for an office tower over New York City's Grand Central Terminal to I. M. Pei's pyramid for the Louvre, such additions often spark years of legal battles and acrimonious public debates. In contrast to the often-rancorous language of such disputes, Paul Spencer Byard's *The Architecture of Additions: Design and Regulation* offers readers a calm and reasoned method for evaluating the success of architectural additions. In no way a traditionalist, Byard offers hope to the architectural profession that successful architectural additions do not need to mimic the past. Through dozens of vignettes, he shows how a wide range of designs can be employed to create an addition that respects and even enhances the function and symbolic meaning of the preexisting building.

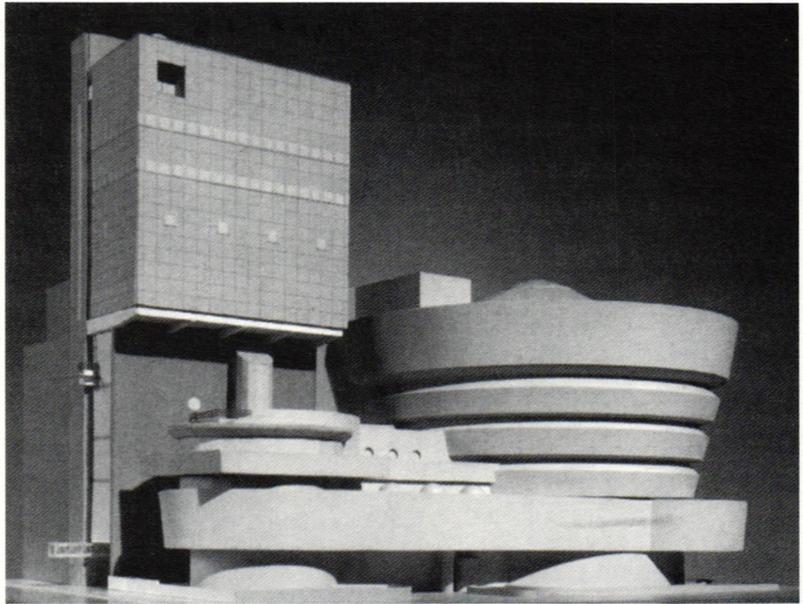
Byard's text is unique among architectural publications. Although Stewart Brand's excellent 1994 book, *How Buildings Learn: What Happens after They're Built*, asked some of the same questions that Byard asks, the text was not primarily about design. Instead Brand focused on the serendipitous changes in buildings across time caused by such forces as weather and changing patterns of use. Almost as an afterthought, Brand offered commentary on what those changes might teach architects. Yet in many ways, Byard's book is a timely response to Brand's call to architects that they rethink the meaning of their profession. Brand wrote in *How Buildings Learn*: "Architecture has trapped itself by insisting it is 'the art of building.' It might be reborn if it redefined its job as 'the design-science of the life of buildings.'" In other words, designers should be more informed about how buildings function over time. Byard's analysis of the architecture of additions succeeds in doing just this and more.



While Brand's *How Buildings Learn* focused on a wide array of different building types—including modest single-family homes and grain silos—Byard's *The Architecture of Additions* largely concentrates on monumental and public structures such as campus buildings, museums, and libraries. Byard offers far more international examples than did Brand. Thirty of Byard's case studies are from Western Europe (Austria, the Czech Republic, England, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Italy, and Sweden) and are designed by well-known contemporary architects (Giancarlo de Carlo; Norman Foster; Frank Gehry; Daniel Libeskind; Renzo Piano; Bernard Tschumi; and Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, among others). The other thirty profiles in Byard's book are located in the United States, half of those in New York City.

Byard shows that a broad range of building types and forms can successfully withstand additive construction, even when those additions change the function of the preexisting building. For example, architect Josef Kleihues's 1989 Frankfurt Museum for Pre- and Early History consists of a series of buildings that wrap around a thirteenth-century Carmelite church. Similarly, Richard Meier's Museum of Decorative Arts (1985), also in Frankfurt, literally embraces the structure of the Villa Metzler, designed in 1803. Byard reminds us that in the successful approach to creating additions the architect does not try to overwhelm the older building, but to preserve and give priority to the meaning of the original architectural fabric. Byard illustrates this enhancement in his intriguing analyses of Carlo Scarpa's 1964 modernist renovation of the fourteenth-century Castelvecchio in Verona, as well as in Ibos and Vitart's 1997 additions to the 1892 Palais des Beaux-Arts in Lille, France.

Byard finds a great many lessons in what he considers failed attempts at architectural additions. For example, he states that Ammi Young's 1837 United States Custom House in Boston was considerably diminished by Peabody & Stearns's massive tower addition of 1915. The original structure's "head [was] lost in the tall Venetian tower, the old building had been delivered up bound and blind to the support of the new," writes Byard. "In its literal and figurative subordination in a combination celebrating the new, it was hard to say that the Custom House itself had been preserved." The author also describes the public's reactions to controversial new additions, including Breuer's plans for a fifty-five-story tower over the Grand Central Terminal. The *New York Times*, for example, called the project "a skyscraper on a base of French pastry" with the "quality of a nightmare," while the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, which eventually halted the project, called it "nothing more than an aesthetic joke."



opposite

**The 1968 proposal by Marcel Breuer for an addition to the Grand Central Terminal in New York City.**

(from *The Architecture of Additions*)

above

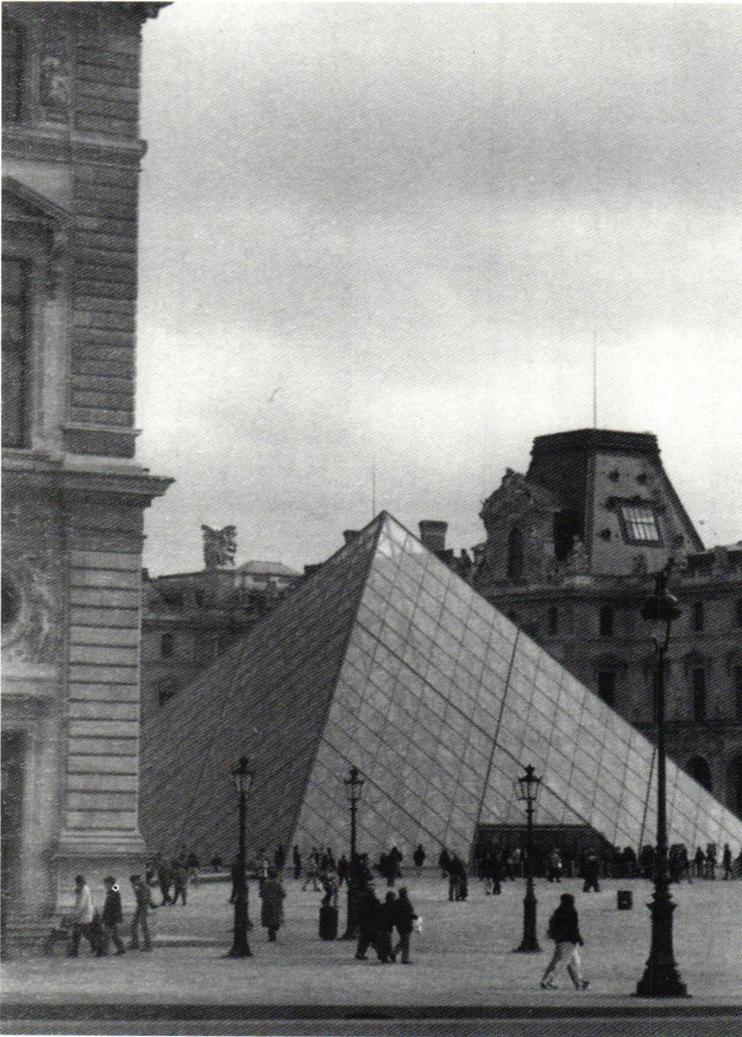
**Gwathmey Siegel's first design for an addition to the Guggenheim Museum in New York City. Paul Spencer Byard, author of *The Architecture of Additions*, notes that the "fatal weakness" in the design "was that it resembled an old fashioned pull-chain water closet." In 1992, the firm offered a less obtrusive design, which was accepted.**

(from *The Architecture of Additions*)

Byard devotes an entire section in his book to a consideration of how best to protect the identities of older buildings. His examples range from McKim, Mead & White's 1898 reorientation of Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia scheme to Romaldo Giurgola's proposed and controversial 1989 extension of Louis Kahn's Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas. Although Byard doesn't dwell extensively on preservation law, his summary of some of the associated legal issues is useful. He discusses how the United States Supreme Court's 1978 decision (*Penn Central v. New York City*), which allowed public constraints on private property for the general good, did not offer guidance on how to judge the aesthetic merit of architectural additions.

A final section of *The Architecture of Additions* focuses on how architects have creatively responded to the existing designs of historic buildings. Byard argues that no one style or approach guarantees success or failure, and thus architects are free to attempt more creative and idiosyncratic approaches. While there are gaps in this ambitious book, Byard's assertion about additions is a challenge well worth pursuing: "Its value in the end is the presentation the old and the new make together about continuity and difference. The value of the combined work increases, the richer and brighter the light of its novelty."

**Sharon Irish** is an architectural historian affiliated with the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. Her book, *Cass Gilbert, Architect: Modern Traditionalist* (Monacelli Press), appeared this year. She has lectured around the country on Gilbert's architecture as well as on the topic of contemporary performance art by American women.



**I. M. Pei's 1993 pyramid for  
the Musée du Louvre in Paris.**  
(from *The Architecture of Additions*)

The wealth of examples that Byard offers, however, is not balanced by a thorough elucidation of overarching ideas and concepts associated with additions and preservation. While readers are likely to be intrigued by Byard's case studies, they will find few links to the theoretical implications that these cases represent. Furthermore, some additions receive extensive coverage in this book, while others, like the ING Bank designed in 1994 by Erick van Egeraat in Budapest, are given short shrift. In Byard's succinct treatment of Pei's Louvre Pyramid, to name one instance, the historical symbolism and formal analysis are compressed into a few clauses that refer to French garden design, Masonic emblems, and Etienne-Louis Boullée's design for a tomb for Isaac Newton. Since meaning in architecture is a complex matter, *The Architecture of Additions* would be stronger with more in-depth analyses of fewer examples. In addition, this volume begs for a bibliography, as architects and the interested public would benefit from references to architectural histories, legal documents, and contemporary commentaries about the buildings under consideration.

The illustrative material in this publication is frustrating. The photographs and plans are far too small, while the diagrams drawn to indicate building phases are confusing. It is difficult to understand the chronology of additions or to distinguish a new building from its preexisting structure. It is not always clear whether an addition remained in the proposal stage or was actually built. Byard assumes a familiarity with modern and contemporary architectural activity that is unrealistic for the average reader.

Ultimately, this book represents the field of architectural preservation at its best. Byard affirms the reclamation of buildings that have public value by arguing for respectful dialogue between the architecture of the past and the present. *The Architecture of Additions* not only helps readers appreciate the rich layers of history that reside within each building, it also offers a challenge to architects to create appropriate and imaginative additions to older buildings.



**Competing Visions: Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture, 1867–1918**

by Ákos Moravánszky  
MIT Press, 1998  
464 pp., \$55.00

**East European Modernism: Architecture in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland between the Wars, 1919–1939**

edited by Wojciech Leśnikowski  
Rizzoli, 1996  
302 pp., \$45.00

**Modernism Rediscovered in Eastern Europe**

by **Kathleen James**

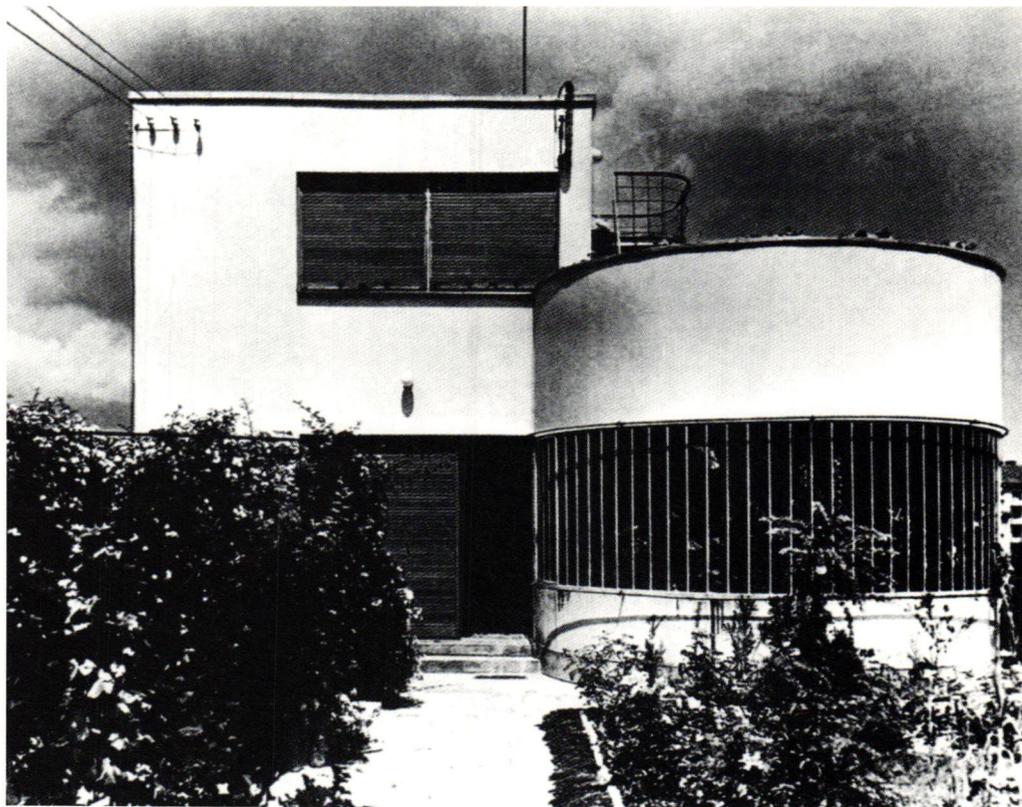
When the Berlin Wall gave way in November 1989, architectural historians in Western Europe and North America anticipated that they might need to begin writing a new history of modern architecture in Eastern Europe. Those historians had only limited access to Eastern Europe before the collapse of the Soviet Union and, as a result, had only a partial understanding of its buildings and landscape. The recent publication of two books on the region's architecture signal that such a rewriting project is underway. *Competing Visions: Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture, 1867–1918* and *East European Modernism: Architecture in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland between the Wars, 1919–1939* finally offer English-speaking readers an introduction to nearly three-quarters of a century of Eastern European architecture.

Ákos Moravánszky, the author of *Competing Visions*, and the collection of writers in the Wojciech Leśnikowski–edited volume, *East European Modernism*, attempt to integrate the architecture of the region into the larger political

**The Museum of Applied Art in Budapest, Ödön Lechner, 1892. The design of the museum reveals an array of influences from around the world, including from Asia and Moorish Spain.**  
(from *Competing Visions*)

**Kathleen James** is an associate professor of architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. She is the author of *Erich Mendelsohn and the Architecture of German Modernism*, which was published by the Cambridge University Press in 1997. Her current research examines the postwar transformation of the American synagogue. She is also working on a book about German theaters, halls, and other buildings designed to hold mass audiences.

**Farkas Molnár's 1932 house in Budapest. Molnár studied at the Bauhaus in Germany in the early 1920s at the same time as fellow Hungarian Marcel Breuer. Unlike Breuer, Molnár returned to Hungary after leaving the Bauhaus. (from *East European Modernism*)**



and cultural trends of greater Europe. The ways in which the two books seek to accomplish this goal are remarkably distinct, as each reflects different assumptions about the purpose of architectural history. Moravánszky, the youngest of the authors, is profoundly influenced by the methods and themes of intellectual history. On the other hand, Leśnikowski and his fellow contributors—all of whom were born before World War II—adhere to a more formalist understanding of architecture that focuses on the styles of individual buildings. In addition, Moravánszky and Leśnikowski differ in their visions of what defined the golden age of the region before its domination by the Soviet Union. The authors in the Leśnikowski collection are fiercely loyal to the individual nation states of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, while Moravánszky is clearly nostalgic for the vast multicultural empire that once united parts of Central and Eastern Europe, including the nations of Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, as well as parts of contemporary Romania, Poland, Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia.

Although both are highly useful books, richly illustrated with images of buildings seldom before published in the west, only Moravánszky's book, *Competing Visions*, will be remembered for its innovative approach and mastery of a period of complex architectural thought and practice. The focus of *Competing Visions* is not on architectural styles, but on the intellectual approaches that

generate styles. The author's magisterial work accounts for the often eclectic architecture and urbanism of the region by examining structures in light of the architectural debates of the time. Moravánszky is sensitive to the political and cultural forces that shaped the designs of Central European architects, notably their efforts to express nationalist identity and represent modern society in their architectural projects. The result of his efforts is a highly sophisticated study, which, to its credit, uses as examples little known buildings in secondary cities to discuss larger architectural trends. For example, Moravánszky shows the influence of the planning paradigms of Camillo Sitte and Otto Wagner on the architectural fabric of such distinct cities as Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Zlín. Moravánszky brilliantly explores the manners in which architects combined motifs from distant nations and their own folk cultures with modern materials and building methods. For example, he argues that Ödön Lechner's 1892 design for the Museum of Applied Art in Budapest incorporates architectural elements from buildings in Renaissance Venice and Moorish Andalusia. The author goes on to argue that the museum's window openings even resemble the shape of the "reinforced cutouts" of the traditional coat worn by Hungarian shepherds.

Although *East European Modernism* lacks the intellectual sophistication of Moravánszky's *Competing Visions*, the volume is nonetheless a valuable mine of information about buildings that are not well known to the general public. The book presents three pairs of essays; each pair examines modernism in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland. The first essay of each pair describes the larger architectural trends in each country during the interwar years; the second focuses only on the concept of functionalism and its influence on each nation's architects. The authors included in *East European Modernism* use the term *functionalism* to refer to a scientific or rational approach to design that largely eschews ornament or other romantic architectural elements—a definition that roughly corresponds to that advanced in Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's classic 1932 text, *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922*. The authors in the Leśnikowski collection similarly employ the term *modernism* in the way that it was defined in the early twentieth century. One of the contributors, Janos Bonta, writes, "The adjective *modern* as used here refers to the pure Bauhaus variety and not to the more elaborate, commercial version that came later with the wider acceptance of modernism."

As a whole, the writers published in *East European Modernism* reveal that in many Eastern European countries during 1919 to 1939, "functional" buildings were not always the most interesting structures of the period. Architects frequently responded to civic commissions with an understated neoclassicism appropriate to the dignity of the new nation states. Such commissions often revealed that architects could work within the classical mode with great imagination, as best exemplified by Josef Plecnik's innovative buildings in Prague. In other instances, the work of Eastern European architects was well within the international mainstream of modernism, as in Gyula Wálder's apartment building in Budapest. Though not functionalist as defined by Hitchcock and Johnson, these designs often resembled the modern form of the brick-faced high-rise buildings that could be seen in Western Europe and the Americas.

The examples of functionalist architecture that did exist in Eastern Europe during this period, particularly in Budapest, are enormously intriguing. For example, the buildings designed in the 1930s by Hungarian architect Farkas Molnár are modest in scale, but not in intention. Unlike his countryman Marcel Breuer, Molnár returned permanently to Budapest after his years at the Bauhaus. The bold, crisp geometry of his houses and apartment buildings is quite different from the designs of the more imposing modernist apartments, office buildings, hospitals, and factories erected in the city in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The authors contributing to *East European Modernism* take the very presence of such buildings as an emblem of the enlightened intentions of the architects. In his preface, Leśnikowski writes:

Functionalism was perceived by the cultural and architectural elite of all three countries as the voice of democracy, inspired by Holland, Weimar Germany, France, and Great Britain. Functionalism was also seen as an art of opposition to the growing threat of totalitarian cultures represented by Fascist Italy, National Socialist Germany, and the Stalinist Soviet Union. Despite political shifts, often conservative, in all three countries, cultural forces associated with the left maintained their intellectual identification with progressive European peers.... As a result, functionalism continued to thrive [in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland] while it experienced grave difficulties in other European countries.

Unfortunately, this lofty assertion by Leśnikowski is seldom supported in his introduction or by his fellow authors. In fact, his claim regarding the progressive role of Eastern European modern architects likely led his contributors to adopt the position of celebrating these buildings as innovative designs, while elsewhere in the book the authors are forced to admit that they are largely derivative of models elsewhere on the continent.

If the multiple authors in this collection fail to meet Moravánszky's high standards for putting the buildings of Eastern Europe into a larger intellectual context, they still must be thanked for having taken the important first step toward this goal—that of introducing fascinating and unfamiliar work to an English-speaking audience. Only after this critical and initial step is complete can the complex story of modernism's dissemination both as a style and as a body of ideas be explored in detail by later scholars.

# Mansions into Dust: Mississippi Architecture and William Faulkner

by Kendra Taylor



## William Faulkner and the Tangible Past: The Architecture of Yoknapatawpha

by Thomas S. Hines

University of California Press, 1996

164 pp., \$37.50

**The decaying Estes House in Panola County, Mississippi, dates from the 1850s. The deterioration of antebellum houses represented for William Faulkner the decline of a character's fortune or status. (from *William Faulkner and the Tangible Past*)**

In his study of the influence of the built environment on the writings of William Faulkner, Thomas S. Hines takes the reader on a guided tour of the architecture of the rural South. Hines's elegiac book, *William Faulkner and the Tangible Past: The Architecture of Yoknapatawpha*, addresses how Faulkner's childhood experience in Oxford, Mississippi, and its outlying communities greatly contributed to the author's first and most fundamental understanding of the physical world around him.

There is real potential for a scholarly study of the impact of the built world on an artist's consciousness and work. The relationship between the physical world and consciousness in general was early on poetically described by Gaston Bachelard in his 1957 classic *The Poetics of Space* (which Hines draws upon) and in such phenomenological essays as Martin Heidegger's seminal article, "Building Dwelling Thinking." In light of these writings, the more particular work of tying physical landscape to artistic creation would seem a natural step in studies of Faulkner's work.

*William Faulkner and the Tangible Past* is not, in itself, a broad philosophical investigation of the connection between literature and the built world, however, and the connections Hines makes are more literal than one might have hoped.

Hines first sets the philosophical and scholarly stage for his subject by reviewing earlier studies of Faulkner. For example, he quotes historian Joel Williamson to help introduce Faulkner's relative system of using symbols to express the differences between the natural and the built world: "Faulkner early evolved a symbology in which buildings stood for artificial, man-made institutions and the 'outdoors' stood for the natural order....Very often to go into a house or building was to attempt to enter the modern world and deal with it on its own terms, to go out was to abandon that effort and seek salvation in nature." Hines also touches on Henri Bergson's novel concept of time, and Bachelard's linkage of time with space, in order to shed light on Faulkner's reading of the continued presence of the past in the spaces in which we live.

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After this philosophical turn, Hines becomes much more grounded and, one might say, more prosaic. Hines seems to craft his book consciously after the novelist's own dictum; i.e., Faulkner's declaration that "my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about and that I would never live long enough to exhaust it." Hines takes us through the basic categories of architecture addressed by Faulkner and then presents his thesis, that "Faulkner used architecture to help him center and focus his narrative, to evoke mood and ambience, to demarcate caste and class, and to delineate character."

Hines begins this part of the book with brief descriptions of public sculpture and Native American burial mounds. Following these observations, Hines presents one of the most interesting chapters in the book, an exploration of vernacular architecture and its meaning for Faulkner. Here Hines posits that "dogtrot" houses (consisting of two single rooms with an open passage between them and a roof over the whole structure) served as dual signifiers for Faulkner: they were emblematic of a hardscrabble life, but also of the patience and endurance often found therein. Hines offers several examples that show how the author used subtle differences in dogtrot houses to indicate equally subtle distinctions of race and class. He makes the point convincingly, but this is not a groundbreaking idea. Hines also describes private homes and public spaces, such as stores and offices, and the typical gender distinctions of public and private spaces used by Faulkner to signify transgressions of one's rightful domain.

The chapters that follow treat Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, and modernist architecture. The symbolic weight of each of these styles is discussed and illustrated both with examples from Faulkner's fiction and with historical evidence. The Greek Revival, in being associated with the finest residences and institutions, connotes the ruling class of the Old South in Faulkner's work. The seats of the two familial dynasties of Yoknapatawpha, the Sartoris and Sutpen houses, are the most prominent examples of this representation of class. The building and decay of these houses symbolize in a fairly clear way the fortunes of their inhabitants.

The Gothic Revival, by contrast, is redolent of the decay of the Old South in the post-Civil War era. Because it speaks clearly to the past that is always present in the South, this is probably the style most closely paralleled by Faulkner's fiction itself, and Gothic Revival architecture is omnipresent in Faulkner's novels. Modern architecture seems to have bemused rather than engaged him, literary modernist though



**The Greek Revival columns are nearly all that remains of the Windsor House in Claiborne County, Mississippi. The house, built in 1860, burned thirty years later. Faulkner used the Greek Revival style as a symbol for the ruling class of the Old South.**  
(from *William Faulkner and the Tangible Past*)

Faulkner was. He seemed to regret, says Hines, not just the advent of the modernist style, but the destruction of the old world that it represented. Faulkner sounds this despair in books such as *Requiem for a Nun*, in which he expresses derision and even contempt toward the new tract homes being built in the late 1940s on the outskirts of old southern towns. Hines quotes *Requiem* to demonstrate in Faulkner what he calls a "preservationist sensibility":

There were new people in the town now, strangers, outlanders, living in new minute glass-walled houses set as neat and orderly and antiseptic as cribs in a nursery ward, in new subdivisions named Fairfield or Longwood or Halcyon Acres which had once been the lawn or backyard or kitchen garden of the old residencies (the old obsolete columned houses still standing among them like old horses surged suddenly out of slumber in the middle of a flock of sheep).

Hines shows that Faulkner's writing evinced a fear that the intrusion of these outsiders and their new buildings threatened the very soul of the South. These new buildings could never hold the same deep wells of history and consciousness that the older buildings did. In a direct statement of his belief in the power of architecture, Faulkner described a jail building in *Intruder in the Dust*:

It was of brick, square, proportioned, *with columns* [Faulkner's italics] across the front and even a brick cornice under the eaves because it was old, built in a time when people took time to build even jails with grace and care and he remembered how his uncle had said once that not courthouses nor even churches but jails were the true records of a county's, a community's history, since not only the cryptic forgotten initials and words and even phrases cries of defiance and indictment scratched into the walls but the very bricks and stones themselves held, not in solution but in suspension, intact and biding and potent and indestructible, the agonies and shames and griefs with which hearts long since unmarked and unremembered dust had strained and perhaps burst.

The lavish photographs in Hines's book are both beautiful and haunting. They evoke a world that has largely faded from existence—and no faded world carries a greater romantic weight than that of the American South. Hines is skillful in his drawing of parallels between the actual architecture of Oxford, Mississippi, and the Yoknapatawpha architecture that creates important settings for Faulkner's action. The contextual significance of the images should appeal to literature buffs as well as architects and designers.

It is not the appearance of easily recognizable buildings or building types in Faulkner's novels that is most intriguing, however, but the details of the transformations Faulkner made to the actual models when he transmuted them into fiction. Hines provides much less analysis on this topic than one could have hoped. Hines also makes little comparison between Faulkner and other writers or artists, nor does he give any indication of how Faulkner's descriptions of the physical, built environment are different from those of any other author. In fact, Hines quotes Eudora Welty's statement that "fiction depends for its life on place. Location is the cross-roads of circumstance." If this statement is true for

all writers, why should we study Faulkner in particular? Could this same book have been written about any author? There's a good case to be made that Faulkner is not unique—that many, if not all, writers reveal some of the influence of their human-created surroundings in their work. Hines himself says that Faulkner's sense of place was rivaled by that of such writers as Thomas Hardy, James Joyce, and Henry James.

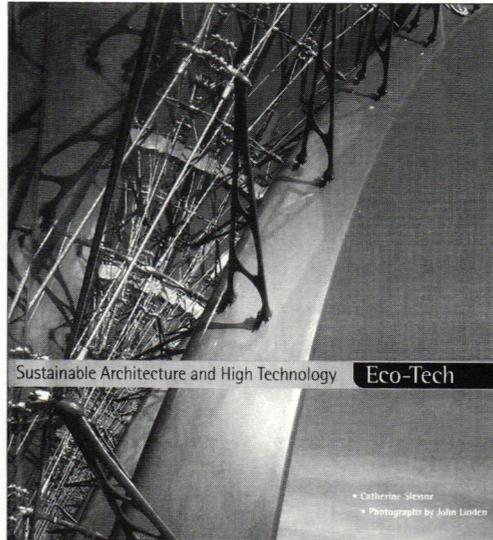
Hines states that his purpose in writing this book was to provide "a study of how the built environment served Faulkner as background and foreground, as symbol and subject, in the long, grand, diachronic sweep of the Yoknapatawpha narrative." He achieves his goal to a great degree. Hines deftly handles the descriptions of architecture in Faulkner's work, the actual architecture (including photographs) of the Mississippi region where his work was set, and some of the clear symbolism these structures embody. Hines concludes—also convincingly—that Faulkner demonstrated throughout his work "that architecture was not only a *part of life* but an art that shaped and reflected its contours.... Among all the vagaries of art and of life, it came closest to representing a sense of continuity between the past and the present." Hines's temperament, as it reveals itself in these pages, is pragmatic rather than speculative, however, and thus his arguments feel more cumulative than inspired on the subject of the effect of material culture on Faulkner's literary oeuvre. As it turns out, Hines's allegiance to the study of Faulkner is also a personal one; his family is from Mississippi and had a peripheral connection to the Faulkner family. In a coda to the main text of the book, Hines uses the literary device of a letter to his son to present the intertwined history of the two families.

Hines never exceeds his goals by drawing broad conclusions. But it would be ultimately unfair to criticize this book for not being something it did not set out to be. Hines's study is, as his publishers claim, a "jewel of a book"—i.e., it takes up a narrow subject in a thorough and particular manner. Although it does not achieve the overarching interest of a book like *The Poetics of Space*, Hines's *William Faulkner and the Tangible Past* does have the qualities of being direct, specific, and well documented. It is not a book of philosophical insight, but it is a well-made, scholarly contribution to the fields of architecture and literature.

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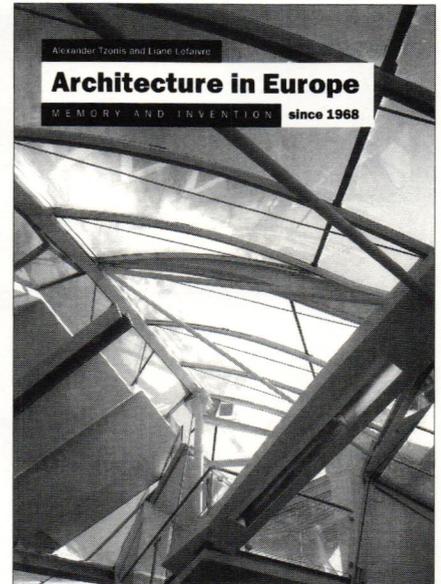
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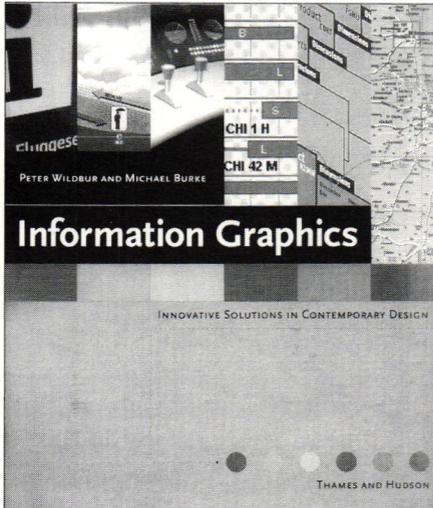
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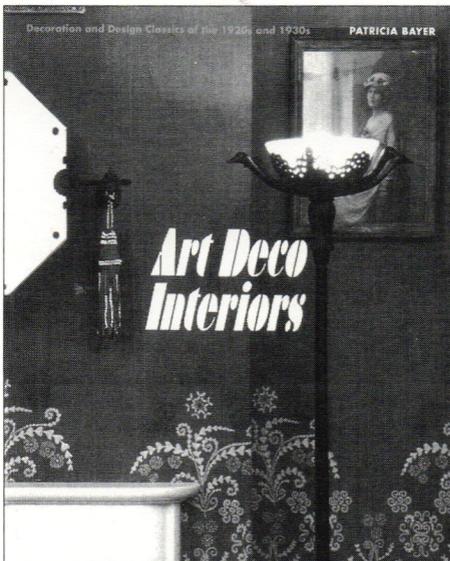
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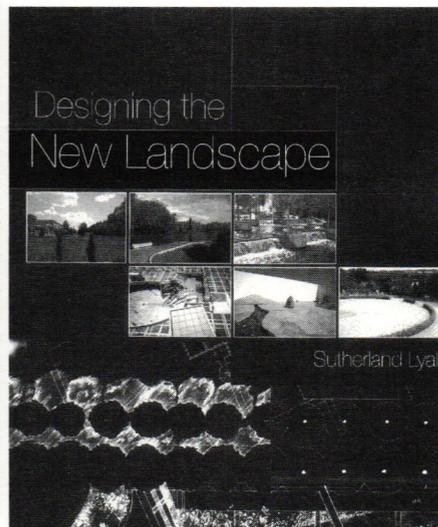
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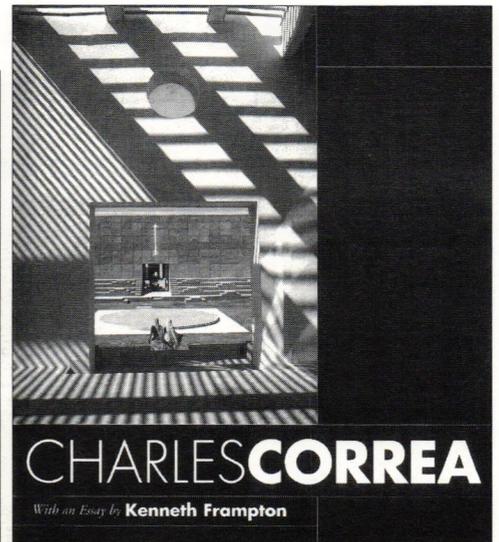
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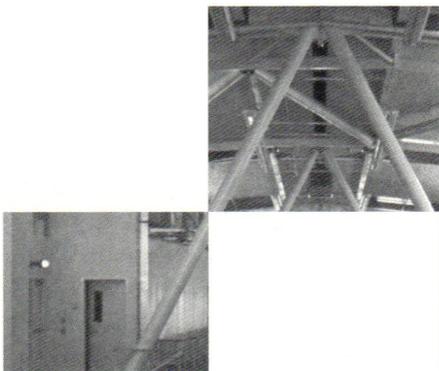
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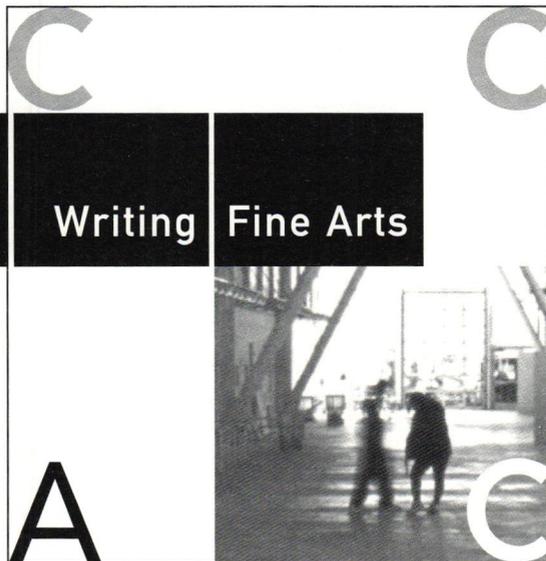
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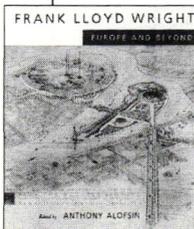


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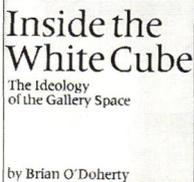
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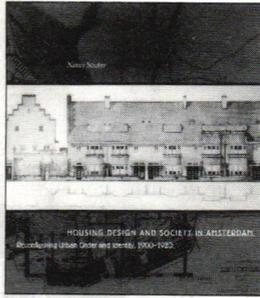
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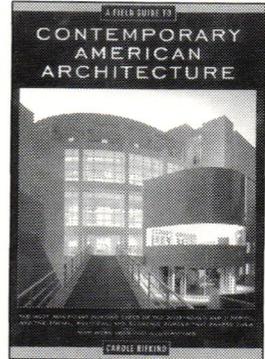
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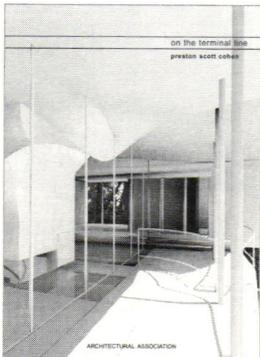
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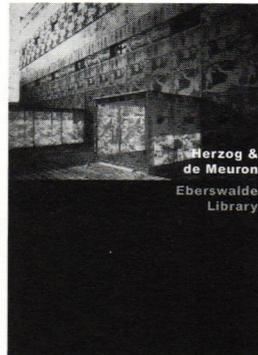
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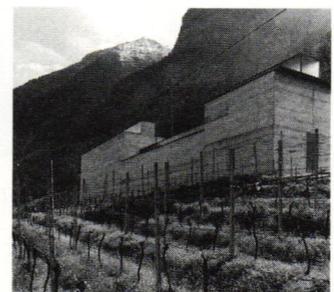
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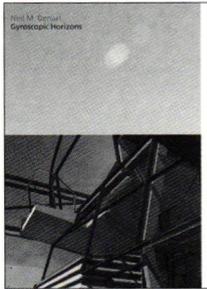
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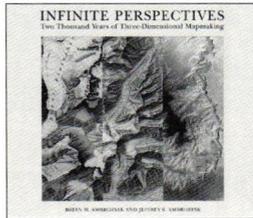


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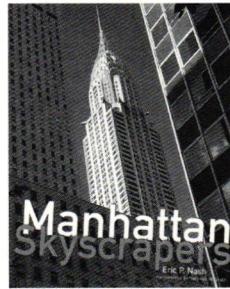
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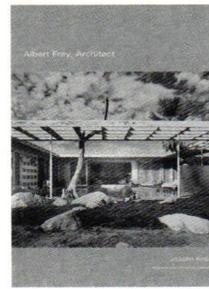


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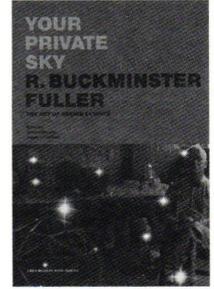


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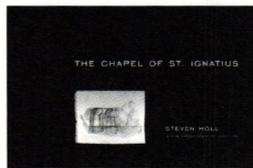


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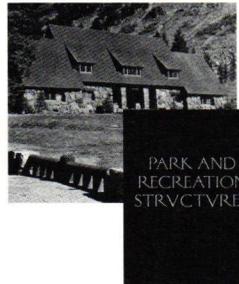


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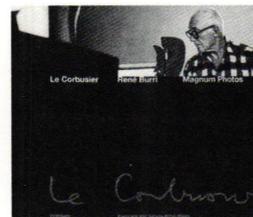


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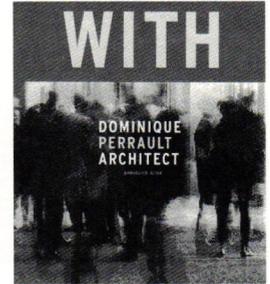


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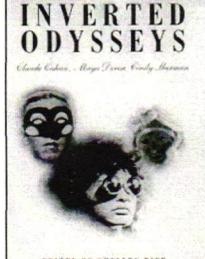
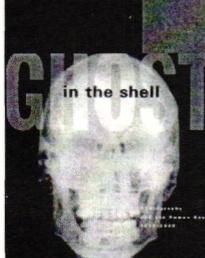
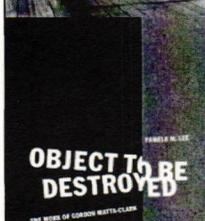
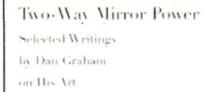
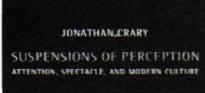
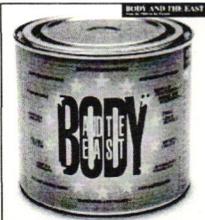
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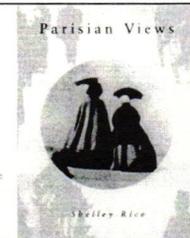
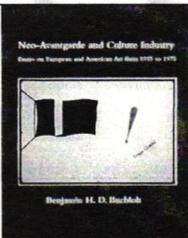
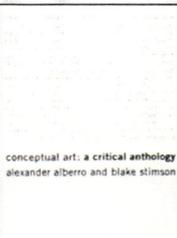
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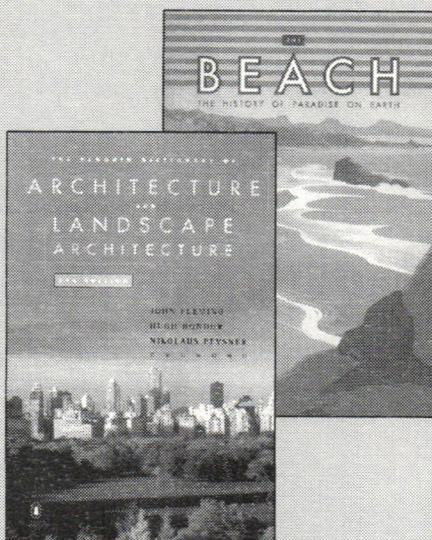
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## A Personal Note in Parting

When was the last time you read a good book about architecture or the design fields? I mean a book that you could claim had the "pleasure of text," one that you could ask a layperson to enjoy? Was it last week, two years ago, or twenty years ago? Would I be too peevish to assume that the late-twentieth-century reader of design books has for the most part been strung along from the tedious to the tendentious?

Lewis Mumford wrote for those with the cultural latitude of the *New Yorker* during its heyday. His incandescent prose style and zealous crusades against the excesses of technocracy fed the groundswell of liberal consciousness in the 1960s, reaching far beyond the small subculture of the design world. His writing, which in retrospect doesn't seem quite so indispensable, reached a perfect union with the cultural aspirations of the reader. Today such well-intended jeremiads, which have survived in the writings of authors like Mike Davis and Diane Ghirardo, are inevitably diluted amid the hundreds of choices and distractions on the bookshelves rather than becoming the literary lightning rods. The mode of consumption has obviously changed and so has the audience.

Perhaps the best reason for *Design Book Review* to continue is to ask who do the authors of design books write for? Aside from the fact that it would be politically suspect, and even demographically unfounded, to consider Mumford's well-fed white people the ideal audience for today's literature, my guess is that the sights have both narrowed and multiplied to include those attracted to post-literate visual smorgasbords, those who are professionally engaged in scholarly and technical nits to pick, and those delusional adherents to latter-day avant-gardism.

Design books today are more beautifully packaged, more useful in their contents, and more intellectually outrageous than ever before (need I mention the one true best-seller of the decade, *S,M,L,XL*, by Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau as a brilliant composite of all three trends), but it is as if they have been scattered to the wind by the maelstrom of incremental telematics and rampant consumerism. And this is where a magazine like *DBR* becomes indispensable. While it was once possible that special books, such as Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture*, or Siegfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture*, provided the synthetic capability of catalyzing the culture of architecture, today one can only achieve such a purview in the pages of a magazine like this where the reader and the writer can find a virtual forum.

I write this as a retroactive benediction for the new *DBR*. The institutional support of the California College of Arts and Crafts and the fresh editorial team of Mitchell Schwarzer, William Littmann, Barry Katz, and John Loomis will endow the magazine with greater credibility and hopefully insure a more regular publication schedule. I look forward, with a certain envy since I will no longer be involved, to the expanded opportunities for criticism in the design fields that *DBR* offers, not as a weary text-jockey but as a critical reader.

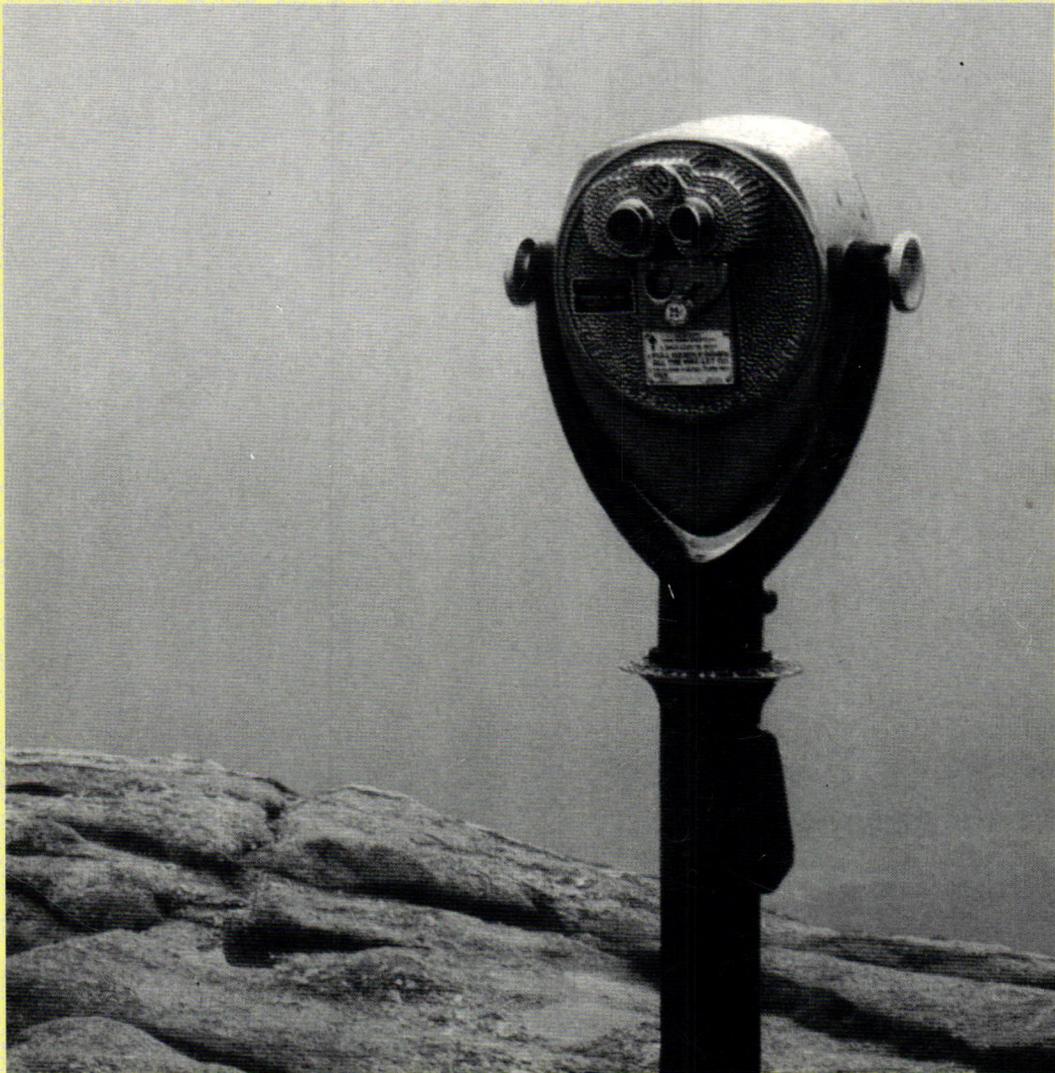
— Richard Ingersoll

Editor

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