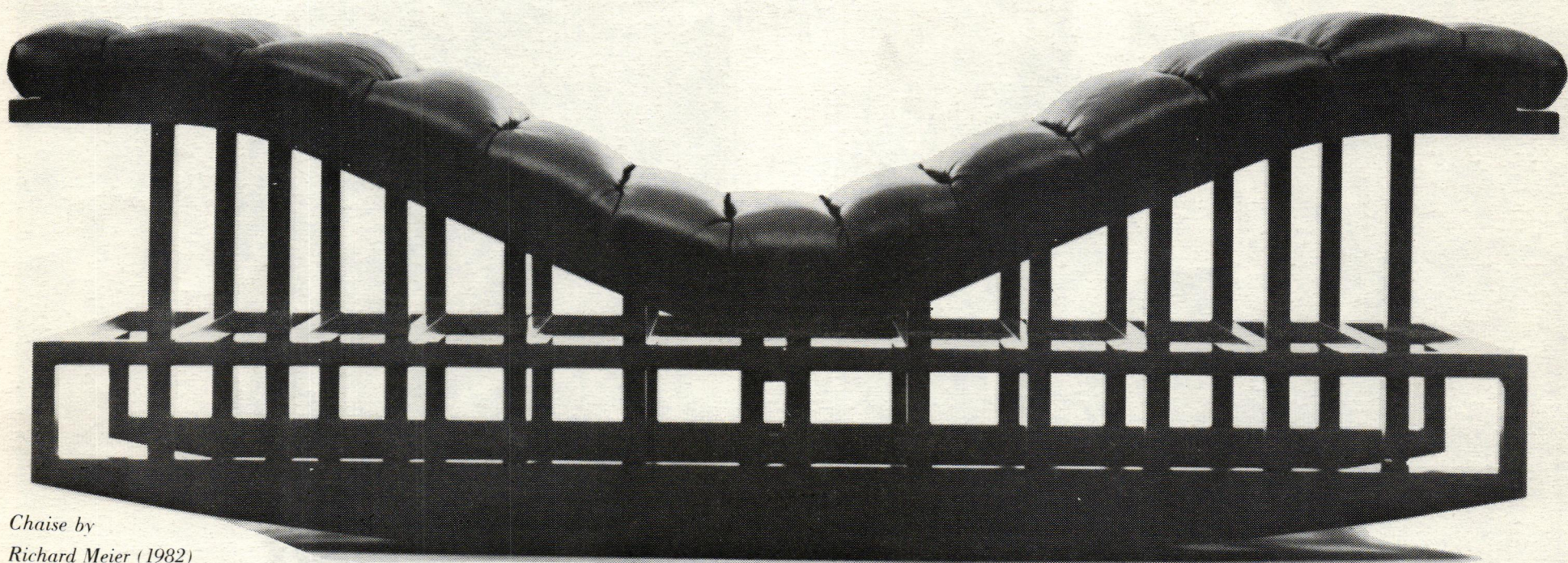


# Skylight

The Architecture and Design Review

April 1983 \$2.50

## Inside Furniture

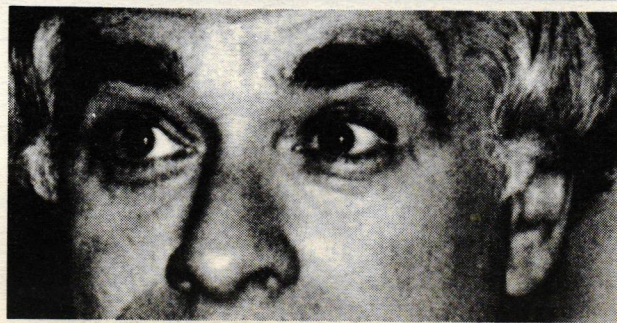


*Chaise by  
Richard Meier (1982)*

**Exclusive Excerpt  
from Steven M.L. Aronson's  
forthcoming HYPE**



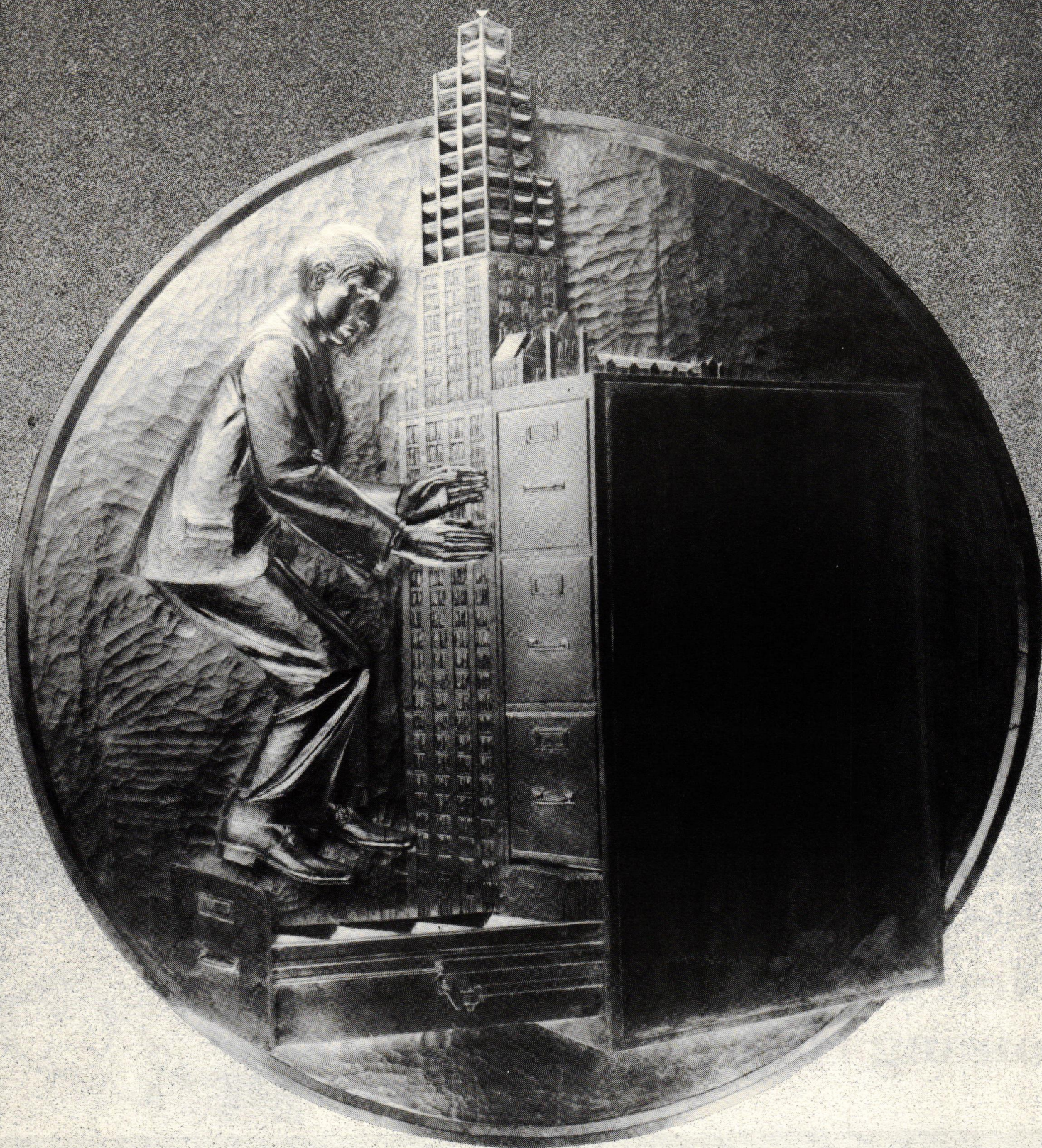
**Plus: Brendan Gill on House X;  
Interview with Richard Serra**





# *We're Jumping*

SHAW-WALKER





# Skyline

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## Views and Reviews

### A Hesitant Welcome to Vanity Fair

Comes now the new *Vanity Fair* to be coped with on top of the floodtide of paper that already swamps daily life in New York. And it is no easy task. This reborn magazine brings cheer: many new pages for our Ralph Lauren album of the perfect WASP family at play by the sea; confirmation of everything we already know about Michael Graves, Meryl Streep, Laurie Anderson, Robert de Niro, and Julian Schnabel and Co.; more of the ramblings of nice John Leonard (you remember that when we left him at the *Times* we had not yet learned whether his son got into Harvard? Well, I'm afraid we still don't know).

I'm glad to discover that Clement Greenberg is alive and well. I intend to begin Gabriel Garcia Marquez' novella right after I finally read *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, although Lord knows when that will be. I love Gore Vidal's account of his Gobi Desert junket and the elegant pages from the original *Vanity Fair*, and I appreciate Philip Burke's excellent likeness of President Reagan (see above).

I wonder, though, if *Vanity Fair* will survive, being so All-Embracing. The last possible all-embracing magazine in America was *Life*, which really died years ago. There seems to be no room anymore for the ambitious magazine that wants to give us Everything, even if, in contrast to *Vanity Fair*, it has legible typography and a point of view. This is, I think, mainly because *The New York Times* has taken over, using up the public mind. From stuffing mushrooms to coddling our emotions, from fashioning brand-new antique Shaker rocking chairs from a kit to viewing secret Sri Lanka and understanding William Blake, almost all that we once learned from magazines we now learn — not only on Sunday, but every day — from *The New York Times*.

Where, then, if anywhere, can the chronic magazine reader turn? Perhaps to those few middle-aged magazines that have been with us since childhood — say, the *National Geographic*, *Consumer Reports*, *Popular Mechanics*, and *Mad*. Or to *The New Yorker*. *The New Yorker* is inevitable. To the great span of magazines — from earnest to fluffy — that can be shuffled through with pleasure at the stationer's or dentist's, but which pouring into the home cause distress. And to the spare, quirky others that, like good restaurants, specialize — pursuing their subject, whatever it is, with passion and a clear eye: the *Amicus Journal*, with the lowdown on environmental issues; the *Nation*, which hasn't forgotten the decency of the Old Left and packs more meat into a 300-word editorial than most newspapers string out over a double-page of opinion; *Landscape*, a mysterious and beautiful magazine I once saw somewhere and never found again. And *Skyline*, which you hold in your hand.

"Reagan Staying the Course"  
 by Philip Burke (from  
*Vanity Fair*, March 1983)



*Skyline* is brave, sassy, provocative, strong-minded and great-looking. It provides more news about architecture in our city and the built environment than can be found in the *Times*, *The Daily News*, *The New York Post*, *The Village Voice* and the general magazines all together; not to mention in radio/television land, which, for architectural coverage and comment, is terra incognita.

So slim down and shape up, *Vanity Fair*. I do hope I'm wrong and that you will make it.

Joan K. Davidson

President, The J.M. Kaplan Fund

### Dear Suzanne Stephens:

I heard from my partner that you liked our model apartment [see p. 12 of this issue], and I said, "Have you read *Skyline*?"

To refer to the project as a "Beach House" [*Skyline*, March 1983, pp. 8-9], and to call us "youthful masters" is condescending and implies non-validity through innuendo and generic language.

To assume that the only legitimate architecture is one that creates a "new architectural language," is absurd [sic], arrogant, and inaccurate historically.

Finally, to invalidate the private residence, architecturally, for its non-accessability [sic] is fraudulent and pretentious. Ideas are not limited to "public buildings" — remember Paladio [sic]?

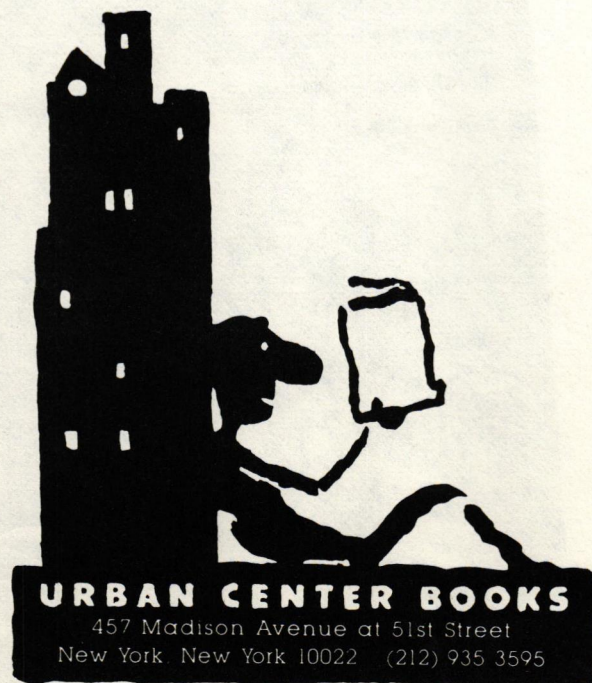
Written with less respect and disappointment in your inability to be more objective and informed.

Sincerely,

Charles Gwathmey

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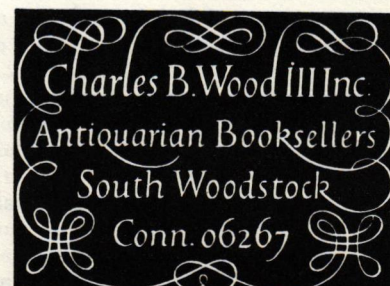
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# New York City Report

Peter Freiberg

## Saving the Theaters (?)

A major brouhaha is likely to develop soon over theater air rights transfers. Under the midtown zoning plan approved last year, a Theater Advisory Council (TAC)—consisting of theater owners, preservationists and others—was established to make recommendations to the City Planning Commission on how to “strengthen the long-term viability of the legitimate theaters.” Within the next few weeks, the TAC is scheduled to come up with proposals—and already the fur is flying.

The three major theater chains—Shubert, Nederlander, and Jujamcyn—have submitted what a spokesperson called a “working document” to the TAC. The proposal opposes landmarking of the theaters, which is now under consideration by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (see *Skyline*, November 1982, p. 28), and instead calls for the temporary no-demolition regulation currently in the midtown zoning to be made permanent. The theater owners would give the City Planning Commission the responsibility of deciding, whenever applications for demolition are submitted, whether the owner deserves a special permit. The owners (whose advisers were Cooper Eckstut Associates and Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates) then go on to make a proposal that would be a major precedent if adopted: The theater chains want the right to transfer air rights over their buildings anywhere within a wide swath of west midtown, from 34th to 58th Streets (including Columbus Circle) between Sixth and Eighth Avenues. Present zoning allows non-landmarked buildings to transfer air rights only to adjacent properties and permits landmarked buildings to sell air rights to adjoining plots, across the street or down the block through a common chain of ownership. The owners’ plan would be a significant liberalization of these restrictions, but the three chains also ask for reduced real estate tax assessments and remissions from real estate taxes when theaters are dark.

The owners’ plan was condemned by members of Save the Theaters, the group started by Actors Equity Association during the Portman Hotel battle. Jack Goldstein of Save the Theaters says the best way to preserve the theaters is through the landmarks agency, not the City Planning Commission. The present zoning regulation, says Goldstein, “is called no-demolition, but that’s not what it is. It’s a permit which I think is so unspecific that the City Planning Commission would have a hard time denying it to any theater owners who came in.” The Planning Commission is usually responsive to developers, and, as Goldstein notes, “the advantage of landmark designation is that it is tied to the merit of structures, which does not change, and it provides standards for economic hardship which must be proven [before demolition is approved].”

The preservationists have proposed their own plan, drawn up by Lee Harris Pomeroy Associates. Unlike the owners, they urge that air rights sales be limited to the theater district—43rd to 50th Streets, from midway between Sixth and Seventh Avenues over to Eighth Avenue—as a way of guiding redevelopment and promoting more cultural uses. Pomeroy urges that the district be downzoned slightly, which would reduce the amount of salable square footage if the theaters were landmarked (from 3.9 million to 3.5 million). The hope is that the downzoning would give developers an incentive to purchase air rights in the theater district; if the current zoning stands, the developers may prefer to build as of right since the present density is profitable. The only way a developer could get the maximum density under Pomeroy’s plan would be from air rights purchase. Pomeroy recommends that a portion of the proceeds from the rights sales go into a special fund for improvements in the theater district. Other zoning changes, design controls and incentives aim to encourage “new theater and entertainment related uses,” as well as reinvestment in existing properties.

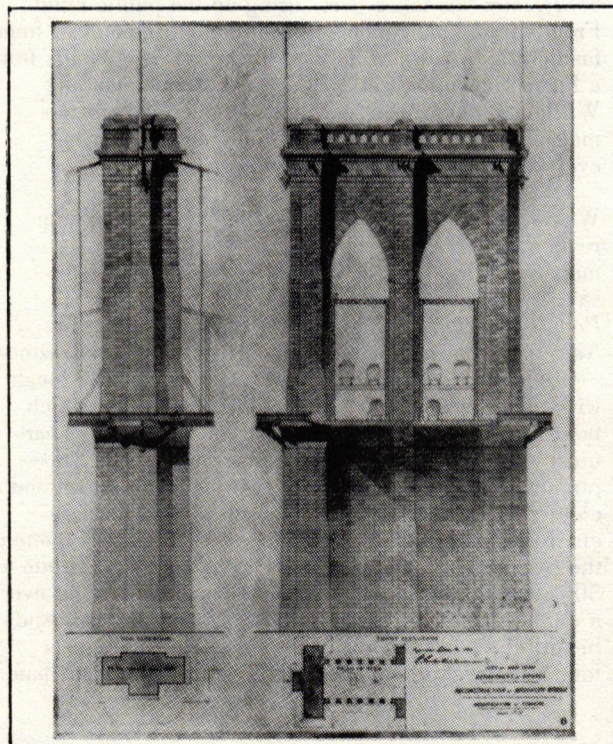
What the TAC will recommend is uncertain. The theater owners have substantial political clout with the Koch Administration, and are certain to fight hard at the TAC—and afterwards. Undoubtedly, they don’t expect to get all of what they’re seeking. But, as one preservationist said, “They’ve asked for so much that if they get one bit it will be more than they deserve.”

## Brooklyn Bridge Celebrated

It opened on May 24, 1883, and the praise has never stopped: David McCullough, author of *The Great Bridge*, says more paintings, etchings, lithographs and photographs have used it as subject or backdrop than have used any other American structure. Next month will be the centennial of what was once called “the eighth wonder of the world,” and six months of festivities in the city have been planned in celebration of the Brooklyn Bridge.

The observance began early, on March 19, with an exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum entitled, “The Great East River Bridge: 1883-1983.” It will run through June 19, and features more than 300 objects, including paintings and prints as well as some of the original engineering drawings of John and Washington Roebling, the designer and chief engineer, respectively. Other cultural institutions participating in the celebration will include the Museum of the City of New York and Pratt Institute.

The highlight of the celebration will be May 24, when a “Rededication Day” will be held reminiscent of the holiday declared a century ago in what were then the cities of New York and Brooklyn: There will be a parade, a salute by ships in the harbor and a fireworks display at dusk. A 25-minute sound-and-light show will run through October 10.



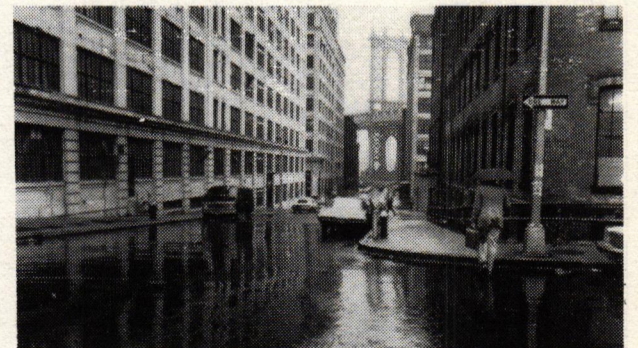
Brooklyn Bridge drawing (1903)(Municipal Archives, NYC)

## Fulton Ferry Pro Industry

A long-awaited City Planning Department report on the future of Brooklyn’s Fulton Ferry section has been released—and the reaction is favorable from residents, manufacturers and unions fighting to preserve the area’s endangered industrial base (see *Skyline*, December 1982, p. 16).

The report recommends that Fulton Ferry be retained as an industrial area. It notes that while other parts of the city were losing significant numbers of jobs during the 1970s, Fulton Ferry was relatively stable. Recently, an estimated 600 jobs have been lost as David Walentas, selected by the city and state as “conditional developer” of a publicly-owned waterfront site, emptied three buildings in the adjoining Gair and Sweeney manufacturing complex that he purchased. Even with this loss, however, there are still 1500 jobs remaining. The report says that Walentas, who hoped to convert the manufacturing complex to offices or residences, should be required to keep the remaining occupied buildings for industrial use. In return, Walentas would get the approvals that would allow him to implement his proposal for a mixture of stores, galleries and restaurants in the Empire Stores (seven landmark brick warehouses, currently unused), as well as a marina, a sports and recreation center and a parking garage.

Under the City Planning Department recommendations, 1.7 million square feet of the 2.5 million in the Gair and Sweeney buildings would be kept for manufacturing for at least 15 years. Monte Davis, a loft tenant on the board of directors of the Fulton Ferry Local Development Corporation, was enthusiastic about the report. Walentas told *Skyline* he thought the report was “fine,” a “step in the right direction.” Nevertheless, neighborhood activists in the Save the Jobs Coalition expect Walentas and his lawyer, former Deputy Mayor and Planning Commission chairman John Zuccotti, to lobby hard at City Hall to weaken the recommendations. What will happen? “It will depend on Koch,” says Davis. “If City Planning, which is not known for its spine, can come out with a report like this, I’ll believe in any kind of miracle. I’ll believe in someone saying no to John Zuccotti.”



Main Street near Fulton Ferry, Brooklyn (Steven Daniel)

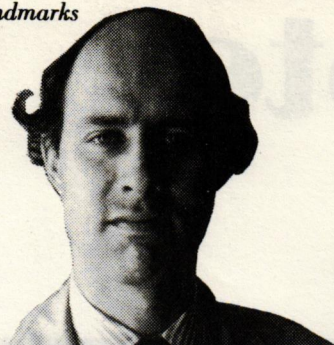


Brooklyn Bridge catwalk (1877) (NY Public Library)

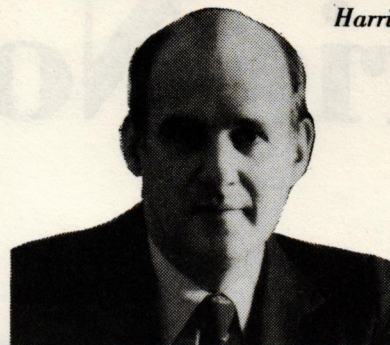


A few controversies have been resolved, while others are still left dangling. New trouble spots emerge, but the good guys persevere.

Kent Barwick (photo: Landmarks Preservation Commission)



Harrison Goldin (photo: NYC Office of Comptroller)



## More East Side Towers

Developer Paul Milstein is at it again. Recently, in a controversial case that has yet to be decided, he asked for a substantial zoning variance to build a highrise residential tower on the Upper East Side (see *Skyline*, December 1982, p. 17). Now, Milstein is seeking another huge variance, this time further down on the East Side in the Murray Hill section — on a square block, stretching from 31st to 32nd Streets between Lexington and Third Avenues, where a post office was once scheduled to be constructed.

Milstein has long been criticized by preservationists and neighborhood activists for such actions as his sudden demolition of the Biltmore Hotel and his unsuccessful attempt to win a massive variance for a building in the Lincoln Center area. His Mastic Development Corporation, formed with his brother Seymour, placed a winning bid for the post office site — although the firm is still reportedly involved in price negotiations with the federal government because the block was not totally cleared of tenants. Milstein, whose architect is The Vilkas Group and whose urban design consultant is Raquel Ramati Associates, came up with a plan for a residential development that would contain more than 900 apartments.

Under the current zoning, an as-of-right building with a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of about 8 is permitted. According to Ramati, this project, plus medical offices, "would basically create one long tower," with heights ranging from 24 to 48 stories depending on the zoning lot. Instead, Milstein has proposed a development with an FAR of 12 — a 50 percent increase in density — that he argues would enable him to build a better planned project, including a 16,000-sq.-ft. park open to the public. In addition, Milstein would renovate an existing six-story apartment building on the site, where he would relocate site tenants wanting to live there.

While a number of tenants are enthusiastic, Community Board 6 expressed strong opposition to Milstein's initial rezoning request in its preliminary talks with him, and is expected to take a similarly tough stance when his variance proposal comes before the Board of Standards and Appeals (BSA). Philip Howard, chairperson of Board 6's zoning committee, says it makes sense to "develop the whole block as a whole," but that an FAR of 12 is out of the question. In return for placing 50 tenants in the renovated building, says Howard, and building a park, Milstein is asking to increase his development space from about 650,000 square feet to almost a million. "We're not buying it," says Howard. "I'm all for a sensible development here, but I'm not for paying a 50 percent bonus price for doing it. I'm for giving the guy a 12 percent or 10 percent bonus." Norman Marcus, counsel to the City Planning Commission, says Milstein's plan received "a very negative reaction" from the agency, which is likely to oppose it at the BSA.

According to Ramati, a major reason Milstein is seeking a variance is that a stream running underneath the middle of the site makes development difficult and more costly. Howard calls this claim "absurd," and there is doubt whether even the BSA, which is generally sympathetic to developers, will buy this argument from Milstein and the legal firm advising him, Tufo and Zuccotti.

## Barwick at MAS

After five years as head of the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), Kent Barwick is resigning this spring. Barwick, 42, will return to the Municipal Art Society (MAS), where he previously served as director and will now become its president — the new title for its chief executive officer.

Preservationists generally give Barwick high marks for his work on the LPC — except for his actions during the Portman Hotel controversy. They point to such designations as Radio City Music Hall, which was threatened with destruction by Rockefeller Center Inc. the day Barwick took office, and the Upper East Side Historic District, where the LPC acted despite initial opposition from developers, the City Planning Commission and some architects. Barwick himself, in an interview with *Skyline*, lists those two designations as among the actions of which he is especially proud. He says he got substantial personal gratification from the designation of the Longwood Historic District in the South Bronx, which helped working-class minority homeowners in their effort to preserve their neighborhood. "The most critical thing we can do," says Barwick, "is let people know we recognize that where they live has some value." Under Barwick's tenure, the LPC also designated a number of skyscrapers, including the Chrysler, Empire State, Daily News, McGraw-Hill and Lever House buildings.

Barwick says Mayor Edward Koch gave him complete independence and "has not interfered in anything." Preservation activists, however, were extremely upset over the LPC's failure to save the two theaters on the site of the proposed Portman Hotel — a project strongly favored by Koch. Barwick argues that he came into the controversy after the Board of Estimate had made the basic policy decisions about the Portman, but Jack Goldstein of Save the Theaters says intervention by Barwick might have forced City Hall to consider an alternative proposal to prevent the theaters' destruction. Barwick says the Census to Save New York, a government- and foundation-funded project to identify all potential landmarks in the five boroughs, could help prevent fiascos like the Portman situation from developing.

Barwick has been asked by Koch to suggest several names as possible replacements, but the mayor is also seeking nominees from other sources. As *Skyline* went to press, Barwick said he had not decided on his list, which might include several members of the LPC. Selection is complicated by the fact that the post, paying \$41,633 a year, is officially part-time, and anyone filling it would not be able to pursue planning, architectural or other jobs that would raise questions of a conflict of interest.

Barwick says the next chairperson will find that while there is still criticism and opposition on specific landmark proposals, "the principle of historic preservation and the basic support for the law is no longer controversial. Those who attack it are forced to attack it obliquely." Barwick may be right, but, as the Lever House battle and the opposition by churches to landmarking shows, opponents do not give up easily — and there may be future pressure to weaken the landmarks law. Barwick says he hopes to strengthen MAS to place it in the forefront of zoning and other city issues as well as preservation. "I think there's a need for a strong, disinterested civic voice," he says.

## Update

• As *Skyline* went to press, a State Supreme Court justice overturned the city's approval of the controversial Lincoln West luxury housing plan (see *Skyline*, April 1982, p. 4; June, p. 7; October, p. 5) on grounds that an adequate environmental impact statement had not been prepared. But City Hall said the judge lacked updated information when he made his decision, and the city will either return to Supreme Court Justice Richard Wallach seeking a new decision or appeal to a higher court. Community groups and West Side elected officials opposed to the \$1 billion project had filed the lawsuit, charging the developer and the city with violating environmental laws by failing to consider alternatives to the massive project. Lincoln West is planned for the Penn Central yards between 59th and 72nd Streets along the Hudson River. Meanwhile, a spokesperson for Lincoln West Associates said the death of Carlos Varsavsky, who headed the firm, will not alter construction plans.

• Westway looks more and more like a dead project. A federal Court of Appeals upheld Judge Thomas Griesa, who a year ago revoked an Army Corps of Engineers permit for construction of the landfill necessary to build the Battery-to-42nd Street superhighway (see *Skyline*, May 1982, p. 4; October, p. 4). Then, last month, lawyers for the federal government revealed that there may have been a conflict of interest on the part of an Army Corps official who ruled against undertaking additional studies on Westway's possible effect on the striped bass in the Hudson River. The official had overruled a panel of experts who recommended that a two-winter, independently supervised fish study be done.

If the Corps now agrees to conduct a study, a decision on the landfill would be put off another two or three years. The delays increase the possibility that Governor Mario Cuomo, a longtime supporter of Westway, will do what opponents have long sought: "trade in" Westway's federal highway dollars for \$1.4 billion that could be used for mass transit as well as a modest alternative road.

• Lever House is now an official landmark. After months of debate and controversy, and after weeks of putting off a vote, the Board of Estimate upheld by 6-5 the Landmarks Preservation Commission's (LPC) designation of the 30-year-old glass skyscraper on Park Avenue between 53rd and 54th Streets.

The Board of Estimate vote saw Mayor Koch, Controller Harrison Goldin and City Council President Carol Bellamy lined up in favor of the designation, with the borough presidents of Brooklyn, Queens, The Bronx and Staten Island backing their Manhattan counterpart, Andrew Stein, in his opposition. (Koch, Goldin and Bellamy have two votes each, the borough presidents one.) But the March 18 vote was an anti-climax to the drawn-out controversy, since Goldin, who was the swing vote (see *Skyline*, March 1982, p. 4) announced his position two days earlier.

The designation was strongly opposed by Fisher Brothers, which had contracted to buy the land underneath the building from the Goelet family estate. Fisher Brothers wanted to demolish Lever House (designed by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill) and replace it with a higher-rise building. The development firm, which has made political contributions in the past to both Goldin and Stein, lobbied hard; just before the vote, one of its lawyers said the company might seek to overturn the designation on grounds of economic hardship, a move that is unlikely to be approved by the LPC. What is more possible is that Lever Brothers, whose lease on the building has 27 more years to run, will restore and renovate the building (although the company's plans could run into trouble at the LPC). It's also possible that George Klein or another developer will seek to buy a site adjoining Lever House for a high-rise building that could utilize the landmark's air rights.

In the meantime, however, preservationists are celebrating. "It was a long fight," said Joyce Matz, a publicist who was active in the Lever House battle, "but it's worth it to . . . save a building of so much architectural significance."



# Paris Notes

Two exhibitions are presently on view at the Institut Français d'Architecture in Paris: **Adolf Loos, 1870-1933, 50th Anniversary Exhibition**, presented in collaboration with the Institut Autrichien de Paris, was curated by Felice Sanuele and Patrice Verhoeven; **Jean Prouvé, L'Idée Constructive** was presented in collaboration with the Boymans-Van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam, and curated by Jean-Paul Robert. The shows will be on view until April 21 and April 16, respectively.

## Loos and Prouvé at IFA

Barry Bergdoll

"Adolf Loos" and "Jean Prouvé," two major retrospective exhibitions that opened the 1983 season at the Institut Français d'Architecture (IFA), exemplify the spirit of critical revisionism this young institution has focused on the heritage of modernism. With neither collections nor students, the scarcely two-year-old IFA has rapidly established itself as a nodal point and forum for architectural debate, chiefly through its energetic exhibition program. Juxtaposing modest and highly-focused exhibitions of current student or "star-status" projects (such as Norman Foster's Renault factory under construction in Swindon, England) with larger documentary and historical exhibitions, IFA has avoided alignment with any group or tendency in its enterprise as an instigator of the late-emerging French critique of modernism (see *Skyline*, November 1981, p. 8). Shadow figures of modernism, both Loos and Prouvé are household names; but names that all too often have hidden behind simplistic rubrics as, respectively, "prophet" and "constructional wizard" of the Modern Movement.

### Adolf Loos: A Fiftieth Anniversary Exhibition

Long hailed as a brash pioneer of the modernist rupture with the past for his polemical essay "Ornament and Crime" (1908) and the abstract garden facade of the Steiner house in Vienna (1910), Adolf Loos was praised by Gropius and Le Corbusier and historically sanctified by Giedion and Pevsner. More recently his work — more liberally appreciated — has known a dramatic flurry of interest and a rash of publications and translations, notably among Italian Marxist historians and as a referent in American post-modern imagery. Yet Loos' fundamental classicism, his cosmopolitan irony and his sustained critique of hubristic architectural attitudes — the principal factors in his historiographical leap from father figure of modernism to iconic forerunner of a post-modern "sensibility" — remain enigmatic. The small but exquisitely installed IFA exhibition presents Loos' entire *oeuvre* for the first time to a French public less absorbed than either its Italian or German neighbors with the revival of Loos. An accompanying two-day symposium (held February 24-25), bringing together the purveyors of that revival and the French research team that organized the show, proffered a reassessment of Loos' career and especially of that remarkable pre-1918 Viennese milieu he at once disdained and exemplified.

Both Loos the architect and Loos the person are elusive. His calculated personality inevitably dominates considerations of his work. His writings can be interpreted only in relation to his often contradictory architectural and personal strategies. Apart from a handful of well-known buildings, Loos' work consists mostly of lost interiors and unexecuted projects, many poorly documented. Nonetheless the chief glory of the IFA show is neither the assembly of the relatively small corpus of Loos drawings (he ordered most of them destroyed when he left for Paris in the 1920s), nor the surprise of the peaceful cohabitation of the Loos and Secessionist furniture in the introductory galleries, but rather a set of superlative demountable models of most of the domestic projects, many constructed for the exhibition. These permit an understanding of Loos as spatial innovator that is difficult to achieve through any of the recent luxurious monographs on the architect. If the recurring atrium centers of his houses are well-known from photographs and plans, their essential role as the germ of spiral compositions that encompass the development of the plan is evident only in reconstructing the models. Loos' adept manipulation of interlocking levels, double-height spaces and a ceremonial approach to circulation occasionally makes one think of Le Corbusier in the late 1920s, especially in Loos' famous Villa Moissi project for the Venice Lido (1923) and the lesser-known project for Croissy-sur-Seine, France (1924). Loos' organization of rooms around a path of processional stairs and corridors is not, however, a free-plan "promenade architecturale," but a hermetic gloss on antiquity and on the dialectic of geometric form and human movement in Schinkel's villas of the 1820s.

The exhibition "catalogue" edited by Pierre Mardaga documents neither the models nor IFA's reconstruction of Loos' Tumowsky Apartment (c. 1900). Absurdly enough, it consists exclusively of the papers presented at the Loos symposium which are to be re-edited

subsequently for a forthcoming publication of the *Actes du Colloque Loos*. A melange of synthetic documentary pieces, impressionistic reminiscences and more scholarly essays, the majority of the material is familiar from recent Italian and Austrian publications, such as the essays by Aldo Rossi and by Burkhardt Rukschcio on Loos as urbanist. More interesting are essays on Loos' less familiar Paris years (1922-28) — the only souvenir being the now sadly altered house for Tristan Tzara on Montmartre — and an essay, by far the most enlightening, by historian Bernard Michel. Michel picks up the torch of Carl Schorske's work in his cogent and insightful analysis of Loos' position in pre-war Viennese society. Adamantly aristocratic and cosmopolitan in ethos, Loos was profoundly bourgeois and provincial in background. Nor did he occupy the personal or professional position in Viennese society he might have wished. His clients were precisely the commercial bourgeois he ironically disdained in his writings. Loos was an outsider who was an insider, an insider who chose to be an outsider; his architecture and life, Michel suggests, are based on the dialectical tension between acceptance and rejection, between ethics and dandyism.

### Jean Prouvé: L'Idée Constructive

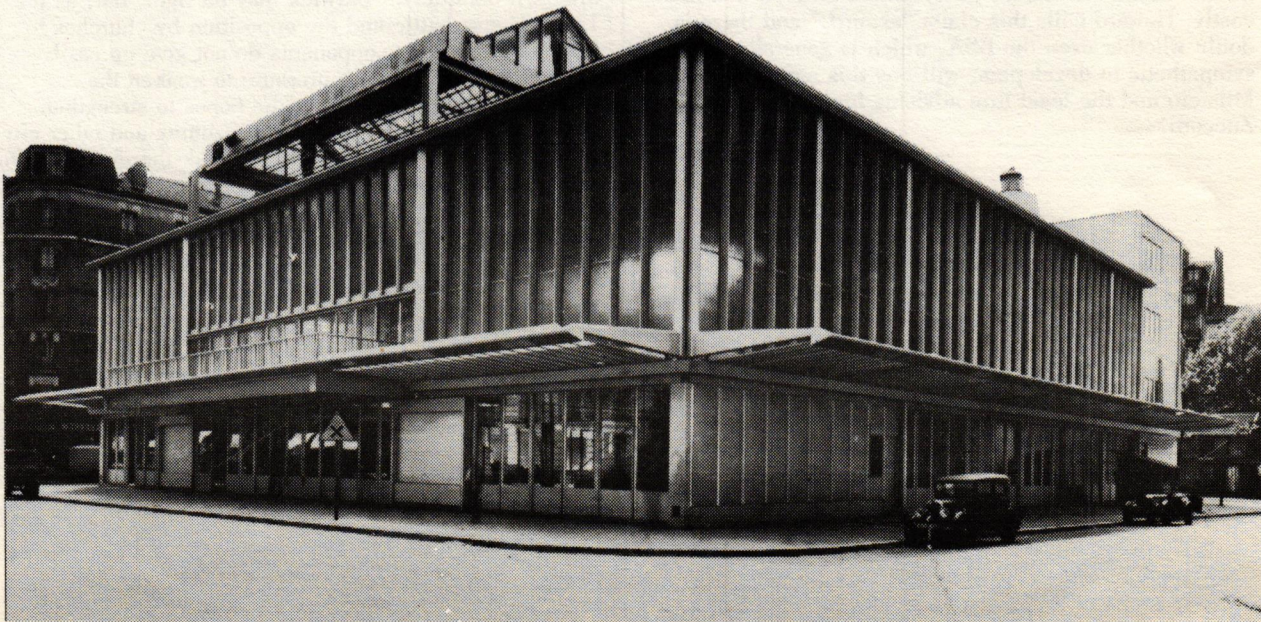
In contrast to the determined outsider of Viennese and Parisian society, Jean Prouvé is associated with nearly every major figure in the history of twentieth-century French architecture from Mallet-Stevens to Rogers and Piano. He has played an essential role in major monuments of the functionalist traditions from the Maison du Peuple at Clichy (1936) — the pioneering curtain-wall structure in France — to the immense shell structure of the Centre National des Industries et Techniques congress hall at La Défense (1956). A critic of the principles of industrialization embodied in the "Grands Ensembles," which have defaced the outskirts of nearly every major French city since the War, and president of the highly-criticized jury for the Centre Beaubourg, Prouvé has remained at once publicly controversial and the trusted collaborator and ally of countless architects.

Yet even in France, where his Nancy ateliers represented the forefront of industrial experimentation in construction for some thirty years, an individual "artistic" personality is hard to discern: Jean Prouvé remains famous but little known. This "anonymity" is as much a product of Prouvé's commitment to team design as of the denial of the title "architect," which would

offer the conceptual apparatus for a recognizable "oeuvre." Prouvé's fluidity of professional status renders him both historiographically elusive and historically essential in a post-war society that has incessantly challenged the traditional architectural definitions. If Le Corbusier admired Prouvé as a rare *homme type*, he is nonetheless a prototype with little issue: *Jean Prouvé represents in a singularly eloquent way the "type" of "constructeur" — socially ranked — which isn't yet accepted in law but which is demanded by the era in which we live. I mean that Jean Prouvé is indissolubly an architect and constructor, as everything he touches and conceives immediately assumes an elegant plastic form at the same time as brilliantly solving the problems of resistance and means of production.* (Modulor II)

The IFA exhibition and an accompanying new monograph by Dominique Clayssen (*Jean Prouvé: L'Idée Constructive*, Dunod Editions) set out zealously, and at times overtly reverently, to extract an individual personality from the war of complex architectural associations and to trace the thread of a consistent architectural theory — or at least ethic — through Prouvé's long career. As both his sparse writings and 13-year-long course at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers (1957-70) demonstrate, theory for Prouvé emerges only from action. His body of work contains none of the drawings of fantastic but feasible projects one associates with great technical innovators. Rather, his inventions are all immediate responses to pressing problems, whether in the challenge of industrializing the housing industry after World War II or in the need for standardized schools and school furnishing in France of the 1950s and '60s. The designs exhibited are all working drawings, for as Prouvé repeatedly insists, "J'ai horreur de dessiner sans construire" (I abhor drawing without building). Nonetheless they are of a didactic clarity that immediately instructs the workman or fabricator in an untried technique, or the student in the thought process where material and technique are inherent in the mental conception of the drawing.

But while tracing Prouvé from his origins in the Nancy Art Nouveau to the *grands chantiers* of the 1970s, the catalogue oversimplifies the complex issues of architecture and engineering it sets out to expose. At times it reads more like a martyrology than an analytical essay. In analyzing the open-plan, flexible and industrialized Maison du Peuple at Clichy as the industrial prototype for the Centre Beaubourg, Clayssen ignores the essential issues of the cultural and political differences between 1930s syndicalism and the official programs of cultural and national representation of the Pompidou years. The IFA exhibition has adeptly isolated and analyzed a misunderstood thread of modernism, but a just assessment awaits its reweaving into the history of the Modern Movement.



Maison du Peuple, Clichy (1936-39); Jean Prouvé (Alain Salaun)



A participant at the Paris Cultural Congress provides an inside report; two shows at IFA focus on lesser-known modernist works of two leaders.

## The Cultural Congress

Richard Meier



Participants at the recent Cultural Congress of Paris

Much has been written about the conference staged in February by France's President François Mitterrand and Cultural Minister Jack Lang, but most of the reporting has focused on what seem to be minor issues. I found that the symposium, entitled "Creation and Development," was one of the most stimulating I have ever attended. The meeting, held February 12 and 13 in Paris, involved in its discussions 100 or so invited foreign artists, economists, filmmakers, actors, writers, philosophers and a handful of architects — myself, Kenzo Tange, Renzo Piano, Ricardo Bofill, Vittorio Gregotti.

The organization of the conference was remarkably well thought out: The participants were divided into three round-table seminar-discussion groups; each group met to hear papers and to make comments on three separate topics, "Creation and Economic Development," "Creation and International Relations" and "Creation and Change in Society." At the end of the first day and on the second day the entire group convened for larger sessions open to the press. I was assigned to the group that was concerned with the topic of "Creation and Economic Development", chaired by John Kenneth Galbraith. The participants began the debate by addressing such questions as, "Which periods in history give rise to artistic development and economic power simultaneously?" "Is development *per se* an economic and creative act?" And, of course, the theme of creation as an economic commodity constantly reappeared. The question was raised as to whether "creation" could be an object or commodity with a short life span, easily disposed of or quickly consumed. Galbraith raised the point that the role of the artist was important to the economic development of Paris, London and New York, for art is a major "industry" in all three cities. Leopold Sedar Senghor, a poet and writer, contended that culture is a basic commodity throughout the world, not just in Europe. The development of industrialization, he further maintained, brings into question the fate of culture, for "the Western world holds something that is wanted throughout the world: a cultural environment."

The issue of creation and economic development inevitably raised questions as to the relationship and obligations of developed countries to the Third World. Participants discussed problems of unemployment in underdeveloped countries, as well as in countries where technology is freeing men and women from physical labor. On this point Wassily Leontief, the Nobel-Prize-winning economist, noted that we have developed a morality of "if you don't work, you don't eat." He further explained that, as this morality changes due to technological factors, culture will take on a more important role.

While many of the questions posed were never answered nor most of the issues resolved, the discussion

maintained its momentum the entire two days and did produce some interesting opinions: Galbraith, for example, pointed to the resistance to an association of art and economics on the part of both artists and economists. But, he went on, money does not necessarily destroy art. Other participants warned that one should not confuse creation with artistic production.

Several participants' pronouncements in the discussion took industrialized nations to task. Kate Millett claimed that "culture" is for rich people, but that rich people don't create art. Norman Mailer put it even more pithily: "The economy of the First World is an excremental economy," he maintained, explaining further that "the worst aspects of the American economy have proliferated throughout the world. Plastic is an excrement of oil and abounds everywhere. Quantity extinguishes quality." Instead of heaping all the blame on the Americans, William Styron, "a Francophile down to my fingertips," countered that France and America "produce garbage in equal measure." Styron also made an observation that others were to bring up frequently — that Mitterrand had increased the cultural budget in France at the same time that Reagan was slashing funding for the arts in the United States. Susan Sontag, too, expressed amazement that this type of discussion was being sponsored by the French government — a debate that certainly would not occur in the U.S., she added. (It should be noted that France's Ministry of Culture received \$1.05 billion or .78% of the national budget in 1981, while the U.S. government apportions only \$500 million or .06% of its Federal budget to artistic endeavor.) In the closing session François Mitterrand gave an address in which he concluded that, "Any creation of the mind is first and foremost political."

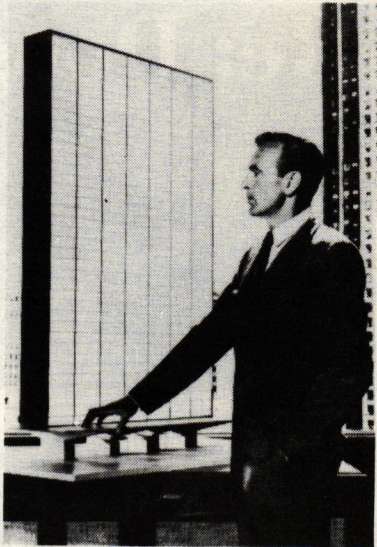
### [Footnote]

Architecture and urban problems were not addressed at this preliminary meeting. The format and atmosphere were much more conducive to the participation of those versed in the articulation of sophisticated ideas, those who are fast on their feet. The artists and architects were clearly out of this literary league. Norman Mailer was the only one to point out the sad inadequacy of French urban values and urged protection of the Paris skyline. I must agree. The French government is at a strange crossroads right now with its regard to its intentions, concerns and interest in urbanism. French architects must begin to identify the meaningful relationship between architecture and society, and further analyze the significance of the buildings they are currently putting up. France's program of urban decentralization and the proliferation of new towns is making the environment increasingly worse than the French seem to think. The French, like the rest of us, need to rediscover certain kinds of "conventions" in architecture.

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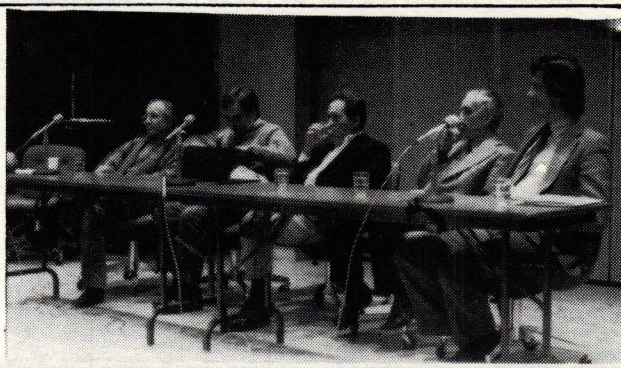
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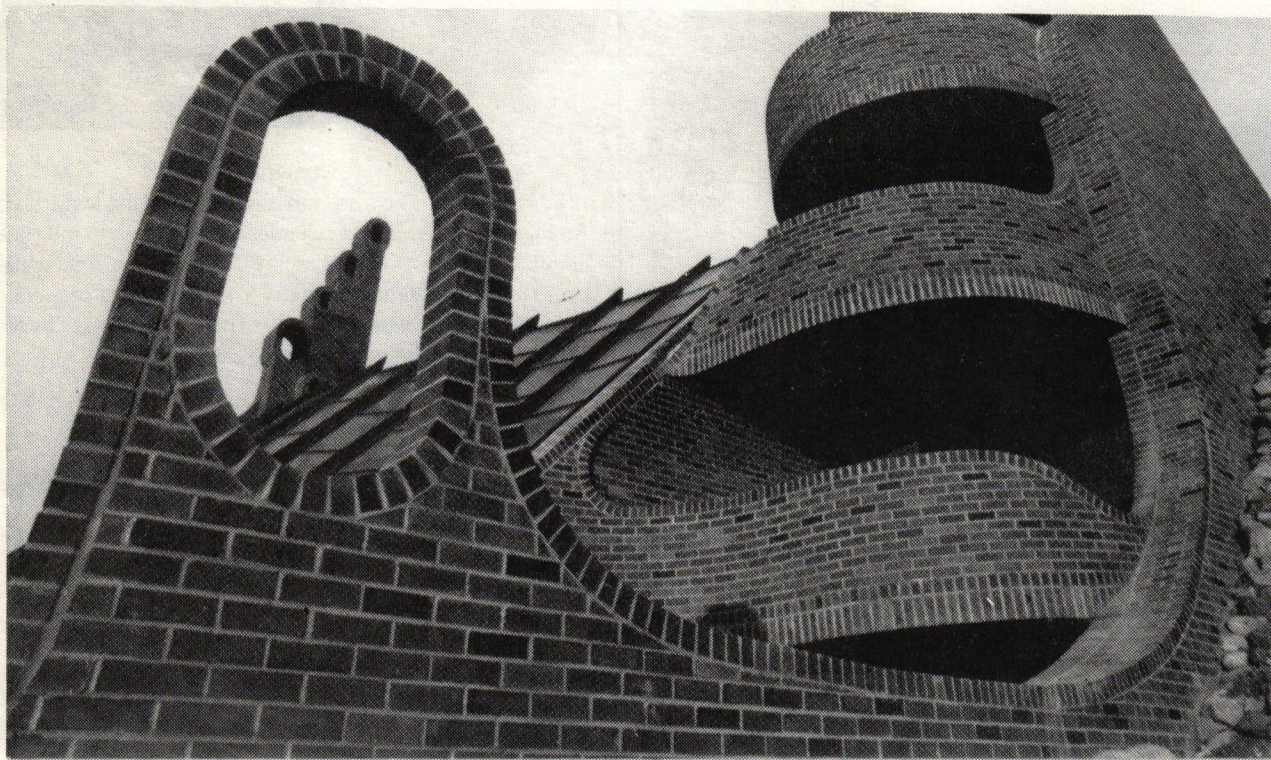
# Alberta Letters

Left to right: Michael Graves, George Baird, Rodolfo Machado, Steven Peterson, John Lawson



## Re: Douglas Cardinal

Trevor Boddy



Douglas Cardinal's residence and studio, Stony Plain, Alberta (1983)

Canadian architectural circles were surprised with the news that relatively unknown Edmonton architect Douglas Cardinal had been selected to design the National Museum of Man for a site in the shadow of the Canadian Parliament Buildings in Hull, Quebec. Cardinal was selected over the heads of the doyens of Canadian architecture by Canada Museum's Construction Corporation Chairman Jean Sutherland Boggs and a review panel. The building, budgeted at \$93 million, will have a companion new National Gallery designed by Moshe Safdie across the Ottawa River on the Ontario side of the National Capital Region.

Douglas Cardinal is a Metis — one-eighth Stony Indian. Much was made of Cardinal's native background in the government press release — "He's a Shaman of his adopted tribe" — announcing his commission for this showplace for the cultures of Canada's aboriginal peoples. The sobriquet "Metis Architect" diminishes the accomplishments of this truly radical architect. In a series of subtly undulating buildings constructed in Alberta over the past fifteen years, he has developed a visionary curvilinear architecture in a country that time and again aspires to the blandest of corporate architecture, in both public and private commissions. First in a church, St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Red Deer (1968), then more implausibly in a huge government office complex — Ponoka Government Services Center (1977) — and a large community college in Grande Prairie (1976), Douglas Cardinal has rejected the rigid rectilinear form language of the Modern Movement and replaced it with an equally emphatic idiom of ceaselessly curving brick.

Cardinal has yet to make it into the august pages of any of the glossies of the architectural press. His work, relying as it does on the subtle modulation of unornamented curving surfaces set against the wide prairie landscape, photographs very poorly. Many visitors who had labelled his prairie regionalism "Gopher Baroque" from a photographic familiarity with his buildings have come away stunned by the architectonic power of his sensuous and brooding work when seen in person. Another difficulty in dealing with Cardinal and his architecture is that he does not fit neatly into any of the competing design ideologies current in Canada, or anywhere else. Cardinal is anti-modernist, a sentiment more deeply felt by him because it arises in part out of a dismay with what modernization has done to native people in Canada. His feeling is not a mere shift of aesthetic and urbanistic sensibilities; in all of his projects, Cardinal invests far more than token efforts in working with user groups. The result is that his buildings are both popular and populist — encoding in their curving brick forms a sense of anti-modernism missing from the more esoteric, and more truly

conservative, post-modern neoclassicism. While most of the architectural avant-garde has opted for the surface effects of an elaborated historicist mannerism, Cardinal has gone past the baroque to a position as one of the few remaining architectural expressionists. It is a lonely aesthetic position, but Cardinal evidently thrives on his loner's status.

Cardinal the expressionist has some well-placed mannerist friends. Philip Johnson is a fan of his work, calling him "the only man on the whole continent able to make brick work for him." Johnson's comment is brought home by Cardinal's recently completed studio, which, in spite of any other aesthetic caveats one may have about his personal style, is a tour-de-force of brick. Ever the king-maker and polemicist, Johnson told me that Cardinal is "one of the few true post-moderns; one who actually builds, and doesn't just talk about it." Without a doubt, Cardinal's period of obscurity is now over: His \$50 million St. Albert Civic Centre opens this year, and in 1986 his National Museum will open in Hull, Quebec.

## Banff Conference 1983

Stephanie White

"Well, for one thing, this would not have happened in my home state — we would have been talking about fees, or insurance" (Michael Graves). Thus ended the quite spectacular Fifth Banff Session, the annual conference of the Alberta Association of Architects held March 4-6. Speakers were George Baird of Toronto, currently teaching at Princeton, Michael Graves, John Lawson of Mitchell/Giurgola in Philadelphia, Steven Peterson of New York and Rodolfo Machado of Boston. The participants addressed the theme "Directions for the City" from the perspective of their own work and thought.

An obsession with Rome dominated the presentations from people as diverse as John Lawson and George Baird — a baffling concern in the case of Lawson, whose justifications for some appalling intrusions into Pennsylvania's urban fabric had to do with misguided interpretations of Borrominian archetypes. The spirit of Colin Rowe also hovered over the session, again in people as diverse as Steven Peterson and Rodolfo Machado. Machado pointed out that arcades and palazzi were rather less apt than atriums and parking garages. His acceptance of new building types as raw material for urban design and their transformation into object buildings gave a clear direction to Machado's city as a series of rich and heroic monuments, using the vocabulary of place and culture. George Baird felt that the primary obligation of urban building is not to the building itself but more to the void around it. This argument had a slightly different orientation than those of Graves and Machado, whose "object-buildings" would affect the spaces between them by their presence, more than by active intervention. Baird's gentle insertions into the urban fabric in two Canadian projects he showed — for Regina and Vancouver — were at the level of fine-tuning existing possibilities.

Steven Peterson relates the loss of the traditional formal garden (the interface between the wilderness and the city) to the loss of urbanism. To regain urban coherence, he stated, one must clearly define the qualities of outside space, since the infinite space of modernism has depleted the urban vocabulary.

Michael Graves' rich and humorous case for a figurative architecture, a poetic architecture, was utterly convincing, propagating the conviction that a beautiful object has an ultimate beauty that goes beyond personal meaning. Mitchell/Giurgola's work, which perhaps hitherto has been a strong role model for many architects in the area, only emphasized how potent is the present concentration on typology, as seen in the work of Baird, Graves, Machado and Peterson. Of the speakers, it was Rodolfo Machado who grappled most directly with the present reality of the city, possibly because he was outside North America's dilemma of both deifying the past and feeling obliged to rework it.

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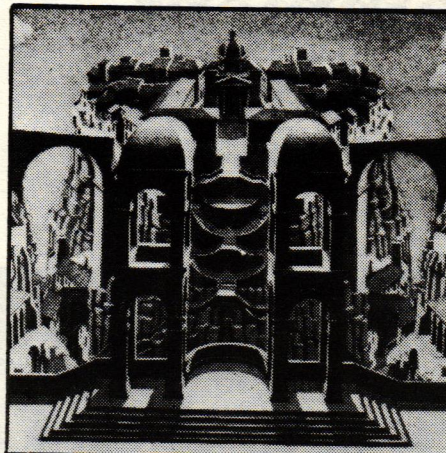
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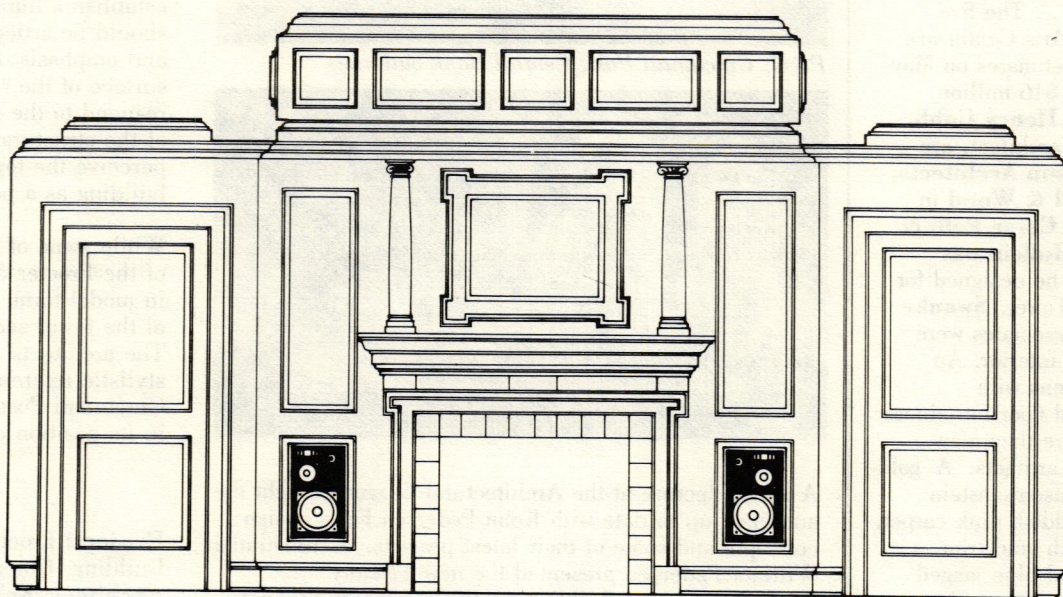
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# People and Projects

## Notes & Comment



Installation by Hans Hollein (photo: Dorothy Alexander)

Results of Hong Kong's Peak competition for a luxury residential development with related club facilities have just been announced. First prize went to **Zaha Hadid** of England; second prize to **Barrington Charles Marshall** of Australia; third prize (two awards) to **Edmund Baylon Burke** of Ireland, and to **John Hagmann** and **David Mitchell** of New York. . . . **Robert A.M. Stern** in association with **Martinez/Wong & Associates** of San Diego has just won a limited competition for the design of an office building to house 40,000 square feet of commercial and retail mixed-use space for Southwest State Group Inc., a subsidiary of SEG-Austria. The building is to be located at the eastern end of La Jolla's commercial district, on a hill overlooking the ocean. Construction is due to begin in September 1983. . . .

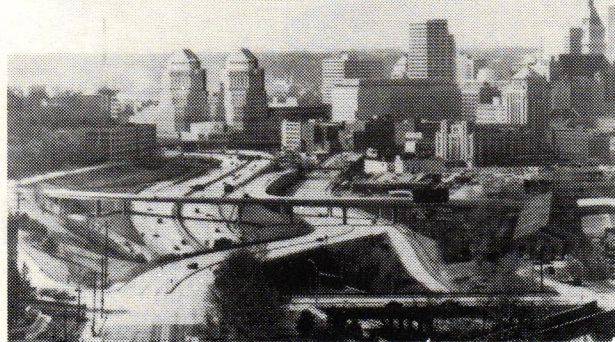
News from Battery Park City Authority: \$100 million worth of construction is currently under way at the World Financial Center, the 6 million-sq.-ft., four-block complex designed by **Cesar Pelli & Associates** and financed by Olympia & York. The foundations for all these buildings, the winter garden and the mechanical plant for the entire scheme are now going in. Meanwhile architects with drawings approved for the next phase of residential development (1800 units total) include **Bond Ryder Associates**, **Conklin Rossant**, **Davis Brody, Ulrich Franzen, Gruzen & Partners, Keith Kroeger & Associates**, and **Charles Moore**. . . . The five finalists for the new Ohio State Visual Arts Center are due to submit final drawings and cost estimates on May 25. The panel for this 100,000-sq.-ft., \$16 million budget competition is being chaired by **Henry Cobb**. The finalists, each teamed with a local architect, are **Eisenman/Robertson, Arthur Erickson Architects, Michael Graves, Kallman McKinnell & Wood** in association with **Donlyn Lyndon**, and **Cesar Pelli & Associates**. . . . On March 24 **Hans Hollein** was present at the opening of the new shop he designed for Ludwig Beck of Munich in the Trump Tower. **Swanke Hayden Connell** and **Shank Design Associates** were local coordinators for this 3,500-sq.-ft. interior. An entrance rotunda on painted steel columns with plastered, airbrushed "sky" and painted floor introduces shoppers into a brightly lit interior where they may browse through designer clothes and artifacts. A gold-painted model of Ludwig II's castle Neuschwanstein (1872) is reflected in a large mirror; reddish pink carpet, marbled finishes, gray/blue walls with gold trim, a frieze of fake stag's skulls and white and blue jagged patterned ceiling all create an opulent setting with Bavarian references for the "Rive Gauche" customers. . . .

The City of Barcelona is moving ahead with its plans to reconstruct one of the leading icons of Modern Movement architecture, **Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's** German Pavilion, designed in 1929 for the Barcelona International Exposition. **Cristian Cirici, Fernando Ramos** and **Ignasi de Sola-Morales** will be the architects in charge of the reconstruction of the pavilion on its original site in Barcelona. . . . A ten-acre piece of property in Long Island City, Queens, is being transformed into the International Design Center New York by Lazard Development Corporation, a subsidiary of Lazard Realty. Lazard has hired **I.M. Pei & Partners** to prepare the master plan, which calls for retaining the American Chiclé Building and the adjacent Bucilla Building for the Design Center plus renovating the nearby Executone Building and building a fourth structure. **Joseph D'Urso** has been hired to design the interior spaces (110,000 sq. ft. on five floors) of the Chiclé building, **Charles Gwathmey** and **Robert Siegel** are designing the spaces (50,000 sq. ft.) of the eight-floor Bucilla Building. The entire complex will have graphics and signage by **Vignelli Associates**.

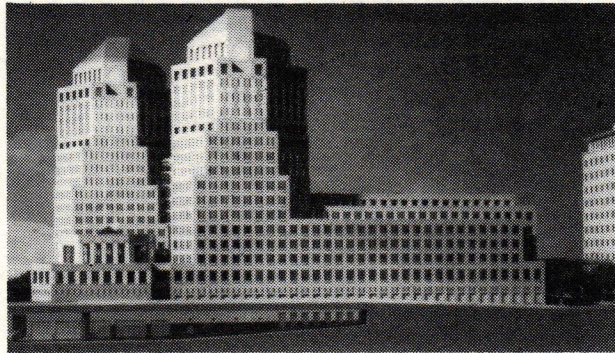
## Kohn Pedersen Fox's Procter & Gamble



Model of P&G East Building; KPF (photo: Jack Homer)

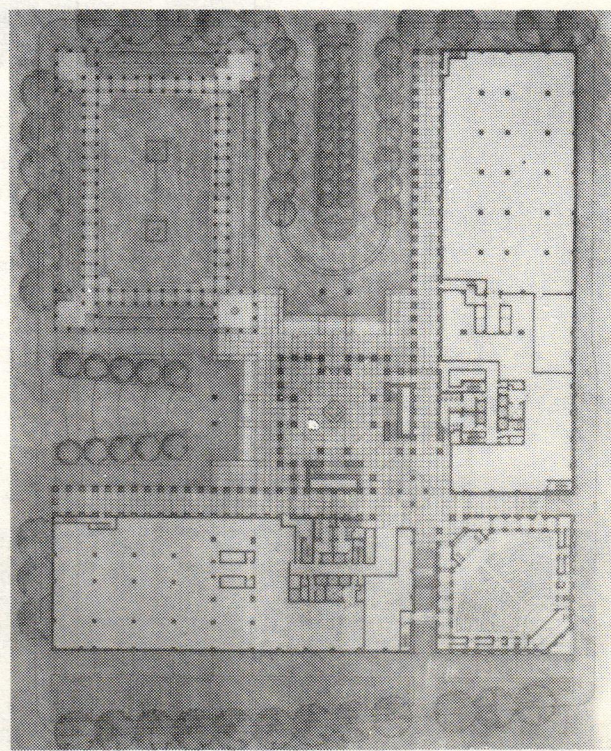


P&G, Cincinnati Post, Central Bank buildings



A recent lecture at the Architectural League brought the audience up to date with Kohn Pedersen Fox's design concepts and some of their latest projects. As illustration William Pedersen presented the new 17-story twin-towered East Building for Procter & Gamble, now under construction in Cincinnati. The massing of the structure is intended to respond to both the configuration of the site and the overall building pattern generated by the city's grid. Because of its relationship with a main highway of the city, the tower will act as a marker, or type of gateway. The lower levels of the East Building are designed to form a complex series of square-arched spaces and rhythmical modulations on both the interior and the exterior. As the building rises, the facade changes from first-floor white limestone decorated with black granite, through white marble to the second level; above that white concrete and stainless steel cladding leads to white marble on the bright octagonal towers.

In his presentation Pedersen proposed that architects should try to organize today's high-rise office buildings with their "primitive" character — free-standing, autonomous, insular and uncommunicative — into collective spaces that support and enhance the public realm. Pedersen sees this as a central task of architecture today, and a major concern of his firm. The lower part of a building (drawn to the property line), he maintained, should visually link with adjacent faces to



First floor plan

define public space. "Visual linkage between buildings is made possible when buildings are composed of elements derived from common concerns," he contended.

Because the top, middle and base sections of tall buildings are seen in varying degrees of detail by the viewer, Pedersen urged a tall building be designed with this thought in mind. Like other architects currently designing towers — Diana Agrest, Mario Gandelsonas and Michael Graves, among others — he argued that to establish a human scale in a skyscraper its expanse should be articulated into small volumes with rich detail and emphasis on "entry" and "procession" space. The surface of the repetitive vertical middle section should respond to the sun's orientation and "the aesthetic nature of the structural system." The distant viewer should perceive the top as a "signature" establishing the building as a personality in a community of structures.

While some of the detailing and ground floor articulation of the Procter & Gamble building seem crude — at least in model form — the overall configuration and treatment of the tower seems to fit well with the Cincinnati context. The architects' sensibility is shown in their building's stylistic references to nearby older buildings, such as the Cincinnati Post Building and Central Bank Tower, and in its position on the edge of the city grid. — SH

**Project:** Procter & Gamble General Offices East Building, Cincinnati

**Architect:** Kohn Pedersen Fox. William Pedersen (partner in charge), Alex Ward (senior designer), Robert Cioppa (project architect), Timothy K. Hartley (project manager), Benedict Curatola (job captain)

**Client:** Procter & Gamble

**Site:** 200,000 sq. ft. city block adjacent to existing Procter & Gamble headquarters

**Location:** On the eastern edge of the downtown city grid, close to a major highway which passes underground

**Program:** The new 800,000 sq. ft. of offices, restaurant, 500-seat auditorium and sales training center accommodates 1,800 people, and was to be visually integrated with the existing office building and garden.

**Structure and materials:** Poured-in-place concrete. A limestone facing to the exterior, dark granite medallions, with white marble to the second floor, entrance and towers. Public interiors have travertine and terrazzo floors with plaster walls and wooden picture rail. Darker granite to base of exterior columns at ground level

**Office interiors:** Kohn Pedersen Fox Conway

**Consultants:** Structural Engineers: Weiskopf & Pickworth. Mechanical/Electrical: Syska & Hennessy. Construction Manager: Huber, Hunt and Nichols.

Landscape Consultants: Bentley Meisner Associates

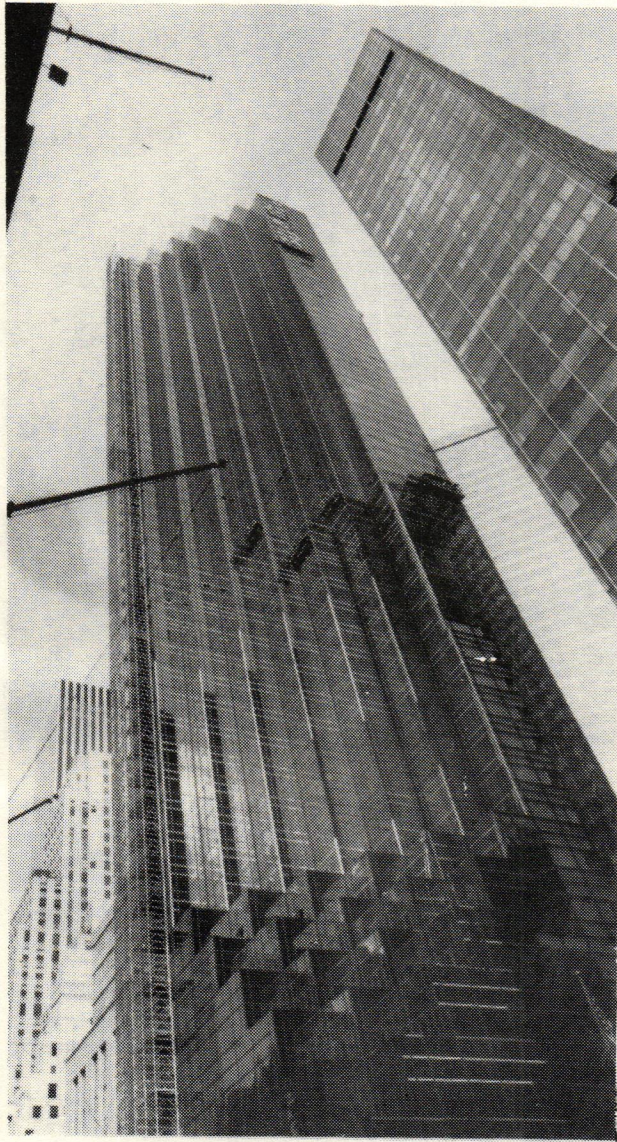


# Building Crit

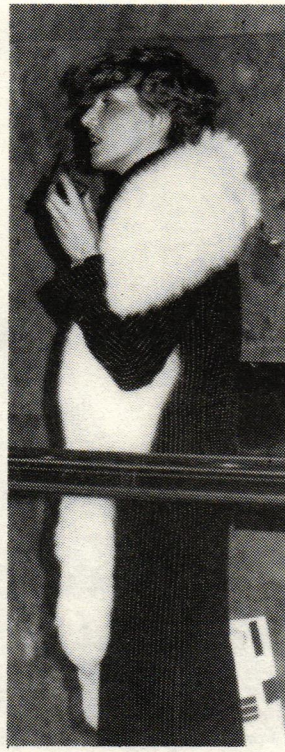
The Trump Tower, 500 Park Tower and the MoMA Tower are all nearing completion; an English architecture critic compares and contrasts them.

## A London Observer Views New York

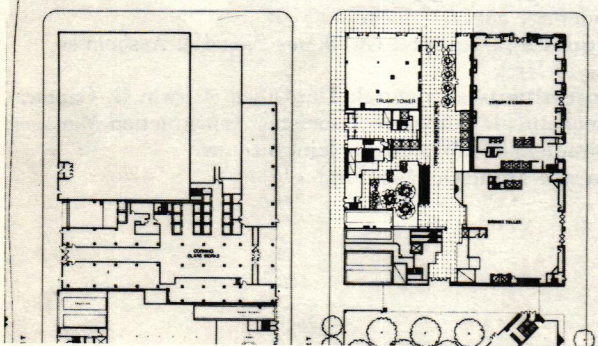
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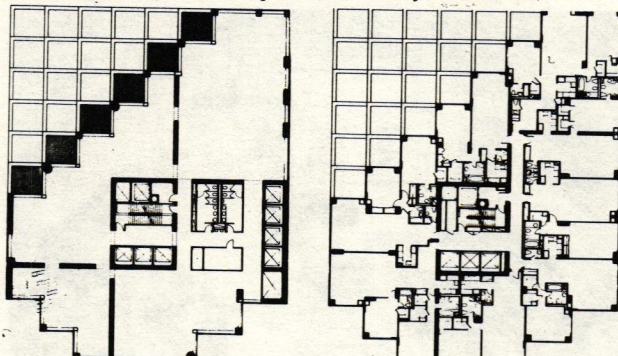
Trump Tower, southwest facade (photo: Dorothy Alexander)



Ground floor of atrium (photos: Dorothy Alexander)



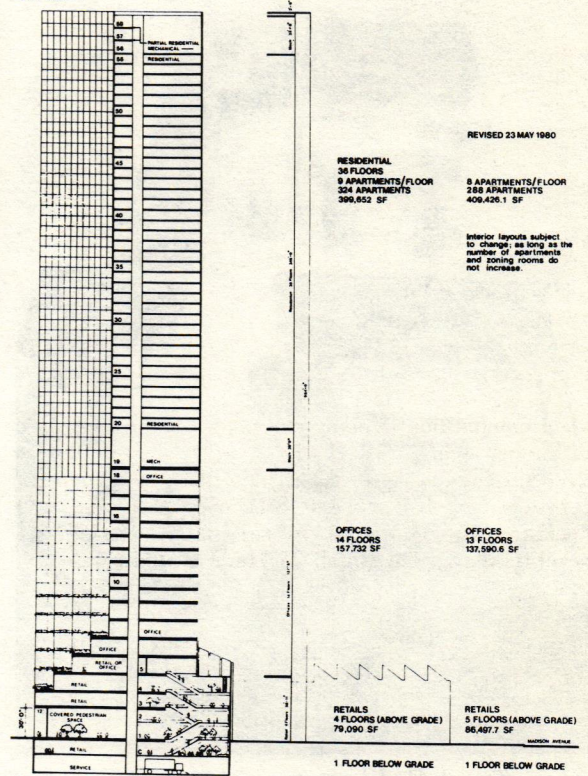
Site plan



Plans of typical office (left) and apartment (right)



Atrium



Section

This tale of three towers has no happy ending. When this aptly-named journal asked me to look at some of the latest manifestations of the skyscraper syndrome in Manhattan, I felt rather like the doctor called in to analyze the symptoms of a patient already overcome by boils. That towers continue to sprout, grow and bloom in Manhattan is obvious to any visitor. The infinite number of newer seedling projects will create a jungle-like effect, with a lack of light and air where it matters — for the people on the ground. Manhattan's urge to shoot skyward has little to do with architecture. As expressions of economics, these new buildings cannot be seen as architecture, but only as reflections of the Dow Jones index.

Three towers sharing certain common features — the Trump Tower on Fifth Avenue, 500 Park Avenue, and the Museum Tower on West 53rd Street are recent examples of the trend of building tall, expensive residential buildings on highly valuable sites in the "best" parts of the city. Zoning and development pressures provide the parameters for their form and architects try to make the process palatable. Since all three buildings occupy sites that are of immense civic importance, the potential for large-scale and lasting damage to the environment is enormous.

### The Trump Tower

The Trump Tower cuts like a jagged saw into Fifth Avenue. It is too tall. It is too coarse in conception and too slickly unsophisticated for such an important site in the city. Architects Swanke Hayden Connell have abused the architectural intelligence of the average New Yorker: No one will be lured for long by the flashy glamour of the atrium, which cannot conceal the poverty of the parti.

Being the part of the building most New Yorkers will see, how does the atrium add to the indoor urban fabric of this section of Fifth Avenue? The first thing that struck this observer was the uniforms of the doormen. Red tunics and tall bearskins have a loose affiliation to the Brigade of Guards, but are not characteristic of any regiment likely to be seen trooping the color before Her Majesty. The next thing that impressed this visitor was the harsh sound of a piano and a violin ricocheting off the brass and marble. The Trump trio plays for your pleasure daily, although by the time this article is printed the sound of the musicians will be drowned by the rush of what is already being described as the "most magnificent waterfall in the world." Poor Niagara . . .

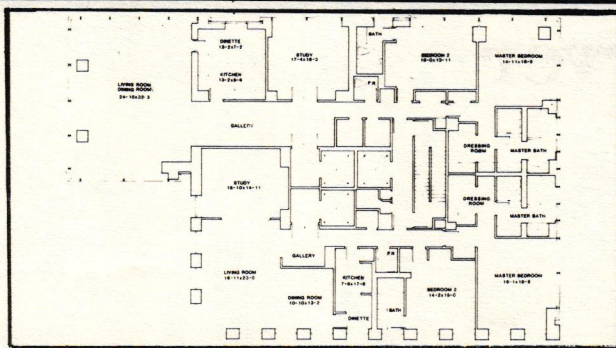
It is a dizzying trip up the escalators through the six floors of the atrium space in a glittering world of rose tinted mirrors and hot-pink Italian marble. It is difficult

**Project:** Trump Tower, New York  
**Architect:** Der Scutt with Swanke Hayden Connell Architects. Richard S. Hayden (partner in charge), Der Scutt (partner in charge of design), John Peter Barie (project architect), Fanny Gong (senior designer), Domenic Scale (job captain)  
**Client:** The Trump Organization and The Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States  
**Site:** 35,000-sq.-ft. site on the corner of 57th Street and Fifth Avenue, in the heart of midtown Manhattan  
**Program :** 758,000 sq. ft. of gross building area includes six retail floors, 13 commercial office floors and 38 apartment floors  
**Structure and materials:** Poured-in-place reinforced concrete, with a 4-story post-tension concrete truss above the 6th floor. Breche Pernice dark marble, pink mirror glass and polished bronze to atrium, bronze mirror glazed exterior  
**Consultants:** Structural Engineers: The Office of Irwin G. Cantor; Mechanical/Electrical: W. A. DiGiacomo Associates, Inc. Landscape Architect: Balsley-Kuhl  
**Completion:** 1983

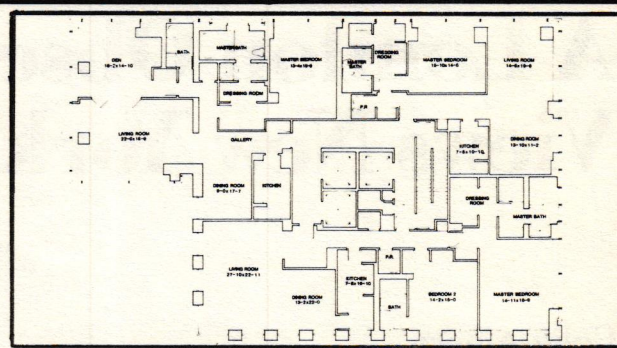


## NYC Towers

**“Polshek’s expanses of glass are not as large or as impressive as Bunshaft’s, but the glass curtain wall retains a general deference to the overall proportional system of the older building.”**



Plan of typical two-apartment floor



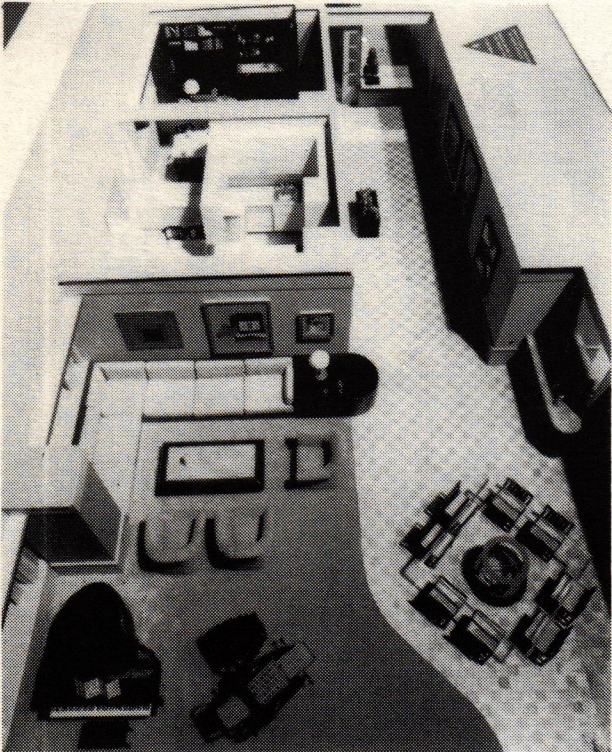
Plan of typical three-apartment floor



500 Park Tower montage (photo: Wolfgang Hoyt, Esto)



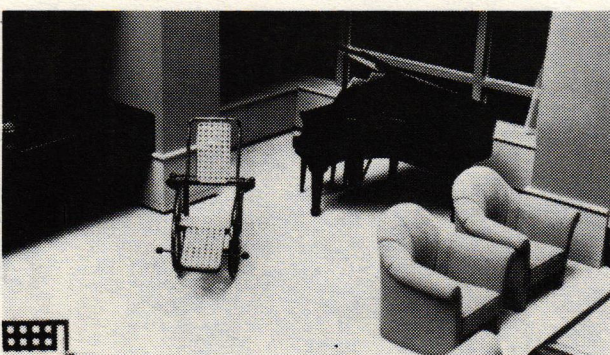
500 Park Tower: James Stewart Polshek and Partners



Gwathmey/Siegel; Model apartments in 3/4-inch scale

not to be overwhelmed by the sense of aggressive luxury and consummate consumerism presented by the retail shops on four levels. Here the most expensive shops in the world cling to the walls of the marble hive. The atrium's impact is obvious. Insofar as it is designed to dazzle and lure, it is a success, but a far cry from the great indoor spaces of New York that have real civic value, such as Grand Central Terminal or the New York Public Library. I can understand the reluctance of the architects to accept *too* much responsibility for the final appearance of the interior space. There has been a lot of muttering about the influence of the developer's wife in the selection of finishes that will enhance the appearance of the rich shopper.

Shoppers perhaps will not notice the impact of the height and shape of the building on the Fifth Avenue Special Zoning District. Granted that the architects have designed a building that holds the street line for three floors, only receding into its saw-toothed, vaguely crystalline forms above the fourth floor; on the street they have designed a facade of unrelenting glazed dreariness. The advantage of the saw-tooth is only seen from within the building. From the outside, it does little to diminish the height of the building, but inside the apartments it does create interesting floor plans and two angles of view.



(photos: Dorothy Alexander)



built by Architectural Dimensions

No one can pretend that Tiffany — now the shining example of how to treat a street — is not dwarfed by this building. No one can feel pleased by the presence of this 58-story brown giant, for it does nothing to advance the beauty of the city. Its interior spaces have brought an unwelcome note of vulgarity to Fifth Avenue, instead of heightening the civic experience.

**Five Hundred Park Tower**

The other two residential towers under consideration both rise above existing buildings. James Stewart Polshek has designed a 40-story tower behind and above the elegant PepsiCo headquarters building designed in 1960 by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill at 500 Park Avenue. Polshek's structure is a very serious and successful attempt to build high without crushing the neighboring buildings. The tower uses two wall treatments — a glass curtain wall on the portion cantilevered over the PepsiCo landmark and a granite wall with recessed windows on the street side that echoes the stone-walled qualities of Park Avenue. The mix-and-match of granite, glass and aluminum is both clever and effective. Polshek quietly integrates the new with the old. Polshek's expanses of glass are not as large or as impressive as Bunshaft's, but the glass curtain wall retains a general deference to the overall proportional system of the older building. His granite is not articulated or carved or blessed by classical details, but

**Project:** 500 Park Tower, 500 Park Avenue, New York  
**Architect:** James Stewart Polshek and Partners

**Client:** The Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States with Tishman/Speyer Properties, Inc.

**Site:** Southeast corner of 59th Street and Park Avenue, located between commercial area to the south and residential area to the north

**Program:** The mixed-use tower adds 57,000 usable sq. ft. of new commercial space and 152,000 usable sq. ft. of luxury condominium space to the existing landmarked PepsiCo Building. Residential areas consist of 56 condominium apartments and 4 maid's units on floors 12 through 40; the basement and floors 1 through 11 are commercial space

**Structure and materials:** Reinforced, poured-in-place concrete, concrete facade

**Model apartments:** Gwathmey Siegel & Associates, David Hicks

**Consultants:** Structural: The Office of Irwin G. Cantor. Mechanical: Cosentini Associates. Construction Manager: Turner-Lehrer/McGovern Joint Venture

**Completion:** October 1983

the solidity and depth of the 12-inch recess suggest discreetly that this architect is aware of the past. The corners of this building, where the two traditions meet, are the evidence of Polshek's concentration. Polshek prudently retains the past as a pedestal for the future with discretion and respect; 500 Park Tower avoids all excess.

The interior of this residential tower presently can be seen only in the form of two models — one by Gwathmey/Siegel and the other by David Hicks — both totally designed and furnished at dollhouse scale. The apartments are on a grand scale: There are only 56 of them on the 29 floors. Most floors include only two large apartments, each extending the length of the building, with the living rooms in the cantilever section having two or three exposures to the views.

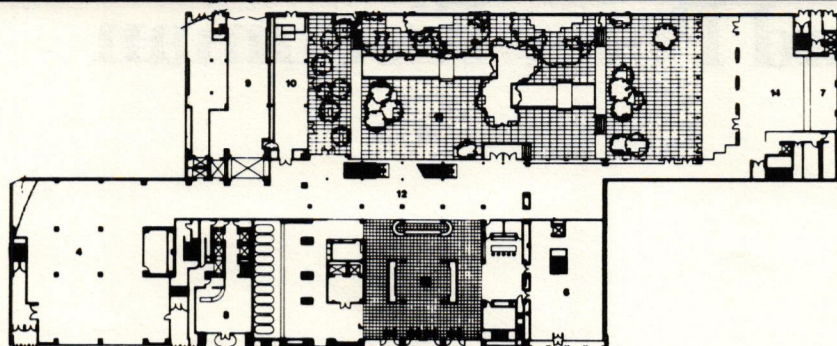
David Hicks has produced his inevitable mixture of antique and modern sentiments for the apartment interiors. It is by any standards uninspired stuff. The Gwathmey/Siegel approach to these good spaces is, by contrast, original and expressive of the architecture. The palette of their design successfully defines the elements of form in the limited architectural vocabulary of the interior spaces. Their use of Mackintosh and Hoffmann furniture indicates their spatial awareness. Mackintosh, above all other European designers, knew how to use furniture to create space.



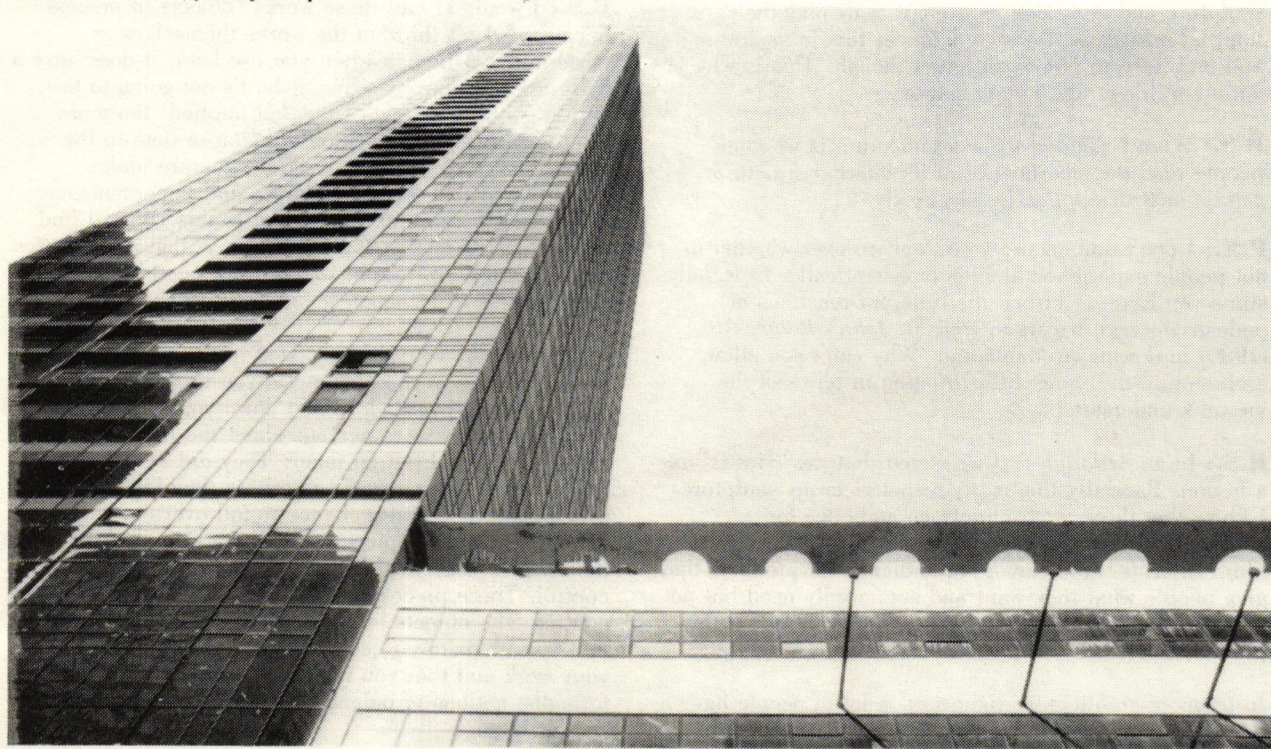
**“The three approaches seem to indicate that discretion produces a better result than daring—Trump’s attempt to cut a figure on Fifth Avenue does little to advance the design of the high-rise.”**



Museum Tower typical floor plan



MoMA ground floor plan



Museum Tower: Cesar Pelli &amp; Associates, Edward Durell Stone (photo: Dorothy Alexander)



Apartment interior by Parish-Hadley, Inc.

#### MoMA Tower

When the Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art decided to take advantage of the museum's midtown location and build an apartment tower in its air space to fund the museum expansion, they were faced with an architectural problem *par excellence*. They opted for a design for Museum Tower that, compared to the Trump Tower, is the soul of discretion. While the project has had a complex history of developers and architects, it was finally Cesar Pelli who designed the tower's facade and museum spaces and Edward Durell Stone the actual apartment layouts. Pelli's glass aesthetic provides a subtle elegance. He has sheathed the 52-story tower in a skin of glass, carefully organized to include 12 shades of gray and blue in an arrangement of small-scale elements. The effect is rather like a discreetly clad fish—scales of graduated color that change in the light and give the solid structure a fluidity. The top of the building, stepped for terraced penthouses, brings back a sense of excitement that neither Trump Tower nor 500 Park Avenue have.

Inside the MoMA Tower the apartments aim at spacious luxury, and achieve some success. The 9-foot ceiling height and the glazed corners of all but 20 of the 167 apartments make many decorative possibilities available, although the decorators Parish-Hadley Inc., McMillen

Inc., and Bray-Schaible Design Inc. have stayed within the range of tiger-skin traditional to nylon-parachute modern for model apartments. None of the designers attempts to realize the potential of this building or see these residences as some kind of reflection of the contents of the museum below. The Museum Tower could have experimented with new aesthetics of interior architecture instead of continuing the faux-malachite approach.

The smaller studio apartments, with their sloped glazing walls, are an agreeable and amusing attempt to top the museum with a pile of high-rise “Montmartre” artist studios. Even more effective should be the apartment of Philip Johnson. Not only has he chosen an apartment with a view of the AT&T building, but he has decided to design the interiors in a reinterpreted Sir John Soane style. A restrained revival of serious neo-classicism—fine moldings and shallow domes—will surround this founding father of the International Style as he looks from the window across his Museum garden to the broken pediment of the granite monument he has left on Madison Avenue.

What are the lessons to be learned from the three latest residential towers? Like the rivalry in thirteenth-century San Gimignano in Tuscany, the urge to erect towers is more of social/historical interest than of architectural

**Project:** Museum of Modern Art Residential Tower, New York

**Design Architect:** Cesar Pelli & Associates

**Architect:** Edward Durell Stone Associates, P.C.

**Client and Developer:** The Charles H. Shaw Company/Leon D. DeMatteis Construction Corporation

**Site:** Apartments are built overlooking the 74,400-sq. ft. MoMA site on 53rd Street

**Program:** 53-story building includes 500,000 gross sq. ft. of residential tower above the 384,000 gross sq. ft. of museum space

**Structure and materials:** Flat slab reinforced concrete structural system, clad with a multi-colored glass curtain wall

**Interiors of model apartments:** Bray-Schaible Design Inc., McMillen Inc., Parish-Hadley Inc.

**Consultants:** Structural Engineers: Robert Rosenwasser Associates. Mechanical/Electrical: Cosentini Associates. Contractor: Leon D. DeMatteis Construction Corporation

**Completion:** 1984



Apartment interior by McMillen, Inc.

concern. The three approaches seem to indicate that discretion produces a better result than daring—Trump's attempt to cut a figure on Fifth Avenue does little to advance the design of the high-rise. Pelli and Polshek demonstrate the result of care and control. The chromatic skin and the reverent use of granite and glass in each case produces buildings that respect their surroundings rather than excite the spectator. Both the Museum Tower and the Park Avenue apartments point to the revival of the well-scaled interior.

Gwathmey/Siegel's model apartments for 500 Park and Philip Johnson's apartment at MoMA should well demonstrate that the architect's concern with the interior has to be based on an architectural as well as decorative approach to the organization of living space. While these buildings avoid current architectural polemic, they all touch on issues that vitally concern the future of the city. Aesthetic commitment finally becomes the major question raised by these towers, for none of them has created more than a shadow of true aesthetic adventure.



# Interview

A well-known sculptor whose work is conceived at an architectural scale discusses his concerns with a well-known architect whose work embodies sculptural concepts.

## Richard Serra and Peter Eisenman

*I am not interested in the idealization of the perennial monuments of art history, emptied of their historical function and meaning, being served up by architects and artists who need to legitimize their aesthetic production by glorifying past achievements. Their "appropriate historical solution" is nothing other than kitsch eclecticism: so much for the cast bronze figure on the pedestal and the Ionic column. The return to historical images, icons, and symbols is based on an illusionary notion, the nostalgic longing for the good old days when times were better and art more meaningful. —Richard Serra, *Perspecta 19* (1982)*

**P.E.:** In the past, figural sculpture — the figure on the pedestal — was concerned basically with the meaning inherent in the representation of the figure in the object. Modernist sculpture intended to break away from figuration or, let us say, representation in terms of figuration; any representation in modernist sculpture supposedly represented sculpture itself. You say that what you attempt to do is to bring forth sculptural intentions. Is this the representation of sculptural intentions?

**R.S.:** The biggest break in the history of sculpture in the twentieth century occurred when the pedestal was removed. The historical concept of placing sculpture on a pedestal established a separation of the object from the behavioral space of the viewer. "Pedestalized" sculpture invariably transfers the effect of power by subjugating the viewer to the idealized, memorialized or eulogized theme. The need architects feel today to repress the history of sculpture since Rodin is based upon their desire to represent questionable symbolic values under the guise of a questionable humanism. The fact of the matter is that symbolic values have become synonymous with advertisements; witness Michael Graves' Portlandia logo for the Portland Building or Johnson/Burgee's "Golden Boy" for the AT&T Building. It is interesting to watch certain self-named and self-proclaimed post-modern architects trying to convince people that placing a contraposto figure atop a column serves humanistic needs. Old themes are firmly embedded; antiquated identification patterns support the expression of mediocre decor, both in public centers and private interiors. Social relevance, humanistic values, are the reinstated buzzwords, the new international shtick . . .

The credo is that architecture shall stabilize the status quo by appealing to pluralism: Let's decide that Chinatown needs a new pagoda and Central Park another equestrian rider. Exploitation and marketing strategy are protected under a populist umbrella. Decide what the people need and make them believe in your definition of their needs. Isn't Charles Moore's Piazza d'Italia in New Orleans, for instance, a little condescending?

One reason architects consume and use traditional sculpture is to control and domesticize art. Architects are openly reactionary in their adaptation of watered-down artistic conventions. Their continual misuse of art as ornamentation, decoration and garnish denies the inventions of the past. Much of what purports to be new is in fact a derivative appropriation: The new zipatone has replaced art as appliqué. When sculpture and painting rely on their internal necessities and motivations, they have the potential to alter the construction, function and meaning of architecture. At least Le Corbusier understood this (see his letter to Victor Nekrasov, December 20, 1932, in *Oppositions* 23, 1981, p. 133). As soon as art is forced or persuaded to serve alien values it ceases to serve its own. To deprive art of its uselessness is to make other than art.

**P.E.:** But to say that architecture cannot put forward its own internal necessity outside of either use or the misuse of artistic convention is, I think, a narrow view of the potential of architecture. It is difficult to conceive of architecture that presents the possibility of the realization of its own internal necessity precisely because in architecture the agglutination of parts such as rooms and corridors and the adjacencies of use and shelter are necessary elements. These necessities, which do not exist in sculpture, are what set my "site." To me the challenge of a site is to overcome the limitations inherent in piling parts together according to use, and to produce an internal necessity that is outside of use. Both

sculpture and architecture attempt to display their internal necessity; how one achieves this in sculpture and architecture is very different though. This is why I am an architect and not a sculptor.

**R.S.:** What I wonder about architecture is whether people read the significance of its internal structure perceptually or haptically, physically.

**P.E.:** I don't understand your concern over whether or not people experience architecture haptically, especially since you have described the different reactions of pedestrians and drivers to your *St. John's Rotary Arc* (1980) in downtown Manhattan. Why can't you allow architecture the same differentiation in terms of the viewer's understanding?

**R.S.:** In an *Artforum* text we stated that the "viewer" is a fiction. Basically this is my response to my sculpture. I know that there is absolutely no audience for sculpture, as there is none for poetry and experimental film. There is, however, a big audience for products that give people what they want and supposedly need but not more than they understand. Marketing is based on this premise.

In terms of architecture right now, a lot of people have a need to build and a lot of clients are concerned with what's considered "relevant." This creates a situation in which both client and architect receive criticism and advice on how to serve. Since there is no audience for sculpture or poetry, no one demands that they resist manipulation from the outside. On the contrary, the more one betrays one's language to commercial interests, the greater the possibility that those in authority will reward one's efforts. Architects have justifying phrases for this behavior. They call it "being appropriate" or "compromising." When Robert Venturi's pylons for Federal Triangle in Washington, D.C., were criticized for not being symbolic enough, he returned the next day with the American flag atop each pylon. This is the kind of self-justifying pragmatic compromise I am talking about.

**P.E.:** You have said that your *House of Cards* project (1969) is an example of internalized necessity in sculpture, and yet it does make a metaphorical allusion — to something very fragile, almost self-critical. The phrase "house of cards" is traditionally used to imply a negative idea. My first projects were called "houses of cards" precisely because they were autocritical. Was the self-critical idea intentional on your part?

**R.S.:** No. The title of the piece is *One-Ton Prop*. I wrote "House of Cards" in parentheses. In my work at the time, I had been propping lead elements against the wall. Even in those wall-props, it was easy to understand that the "how" was defining the "what." But these pieces were still related to the pictorial plane of the wall. When I decided to build a freestanding work using the same principle of point load and compression, I wanted to define a space, to hold a space.

**P.E.:** Then the *space* and not the wall becomes an implied armature — a negative substance. Armature is usually thought of as solid, but it could be a void.

**R.S.:** I wouldn't say the space is the armature. There never has been an armature. Armature and pedestal are old solutions to old problems.

**P.E.:** In the *House of Cards* was it your intention to present the object *in process*, as opposed to having the object *represent* a process, as is done in what is commonly known as "process" art?

**R.S.:** As I said, I was interested in the "how" defining the "what." I do not believe in the mystification of the creative process. I would just as soon have the work involved available to anyone's inspection as part of the content. Not that it *is* the content, but that it would be discernible to anyone wanting to deal with that aspect of my work.

**P.E.:** The idea of the object in process was not part of the intention?

**R.S.:** I wouldn't call these works "objects in process" because I don't think of the works themselves as performing. Although when you use lead, it does have a high order of entropy. Obviously it's not going to last, and is going to deflect. That's all implied. I'm more interested in the implication of collapse than in the actual fact of it. You can build a structure under compression that implies collapse and impermanence and yet in its mere existence denies this. What I find interesting about the *House of Cards* is that as its forces tend toward equilibrium, weight is negated. When something is truly balanced, it becomes weightless.

**P.E.:** You say you are interested in the notion of the impermanence of the object. Do you think that when the men in the shipyards knocked down your pieces they did so because they were nervous about the limit — whether the pieces would fall on them? They did not want the objects to be out of their control, so they knocked them over before they had a chance to fall over on them. Whether or not the pieces actually fall down, they create the anxiety of the maker and the viewer not being in control. These pieces are interesting to me because they control. The objects have their own power. But it seems that you ultimately reject this idea of disequilibrium in your work and that you reject it because it implies formalist notions of balance, symmetry and, finally, composition.

**R.S.:** I use gravity as a building principle. I am not particularly interested in disequilibrium.

**P.E.:** But for you gravity also has formal overtones of convention.

**R.S.:** No. Gravity has always been a problem in sculpture. How that problem is resolved is part of any definition of making sculpture.

**P.E.:** Again going back to the *House of Cards*, you argue that pictorial illusion is being expunged, and yet the notion of implosion and collapse is itself an allusion.

**R.S.:** Allusion is different from illusion. If something has the potential to decay, that can be allusion. Smithson's *Buried Woodshed* (1970) and its potential to collapse is an example of an allusion. SITE alters Smithson's concept from one of allusion to one of illusion.

**P.E.:** I would think SITE alters Smithson's concept from illusion to something very literal.

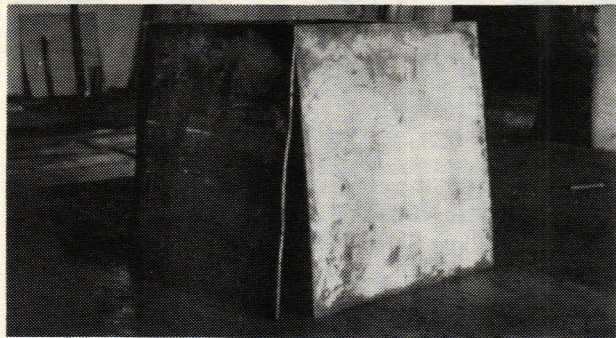
In talking about large-scale sculptures other than those of Smithson — those of Noguchi or Calder, for example — you say that they remain little more than model enlargements. Thus the large scale in their work is arbitrary. Are you suggesting that inherent in sculptural concepts there is a notion of scale specificity that is not anthropomorphic, not related to man, but related to the intrinsic being of the sculpture?

**R.S.:** I don't think it's related to the intrinsic being of sculpture. I think it's related to site and context. Whether something is large or small has nothing to do with scale. Large or small has to do with size. Scale deals not only with the interrelationship of the parts of a sculpture but also, more importantly, with the sculpture's relationship to its context. The context always has its boundary, and it is in relation to that boundary that scale becomes the issue.

When I talk about Calders and Noguchis what I am saying is that those are studio-made pieces. In the studio they might have scale. To take those sculptures out of



**“Architects are openly reactionary in their adaptation of watered-down artistic conventions. Their continual misuse of art as ornamentation, decoration and garnish denies the inventions of the past.”**



One-Ton Prop (House of Cards), Richard Serra (1969)

the studio and site-adjust them is conceptually different from building on a site, where scale relationships are determined by the nature and definition of the context. You can't build a work in one context, indiscriminately place it in another, and expect the scale relation to remain. Scale is dependent on context. Portable objects moved from one place to another most often fail for this reason. Henry Moore's work is the most glaring example of this site-adjusted folly. An iron deer on the proverbial front lawn has more contextual significance. Architects suffer from the same studio syndrome. They work out of their offices, terrace the landscape and place their buildings into the carved site. As a result the



Belts, Richard Serra (1966-7) (Peter Moore, Castelli)

studio-designed then site-adjusted buildings look like blown-up cardboard models. There are exceptions: the work of Le Corbusier, Wright, Kahn, Gehry . . .

**P.E.:** Rosalind Krauss has written that in recent sculpture, such as that of Robert Morris and David Smith, there is a changed relationship of viewer to object. Because a change in the viewer's position provides a change in the sculptural object, the space of the viewer becomes part of the space of the object. The viewer and the object are seen as occupying the same space.

**R.S.:** Changing the content of perception by having viewer and sculpture coexist in the same behavioral space implies movement, time, anticipation, etc. This wasn't started with David Smith or Robert Morris. This concept was developed by Brancusi in Tirgu Jiu and has continued throughout the twentieth century.

When sculpture enters the realm of the non-institution, when it leaves the gallery or museum to occupy the same space and place as architecture, when it redefines space and place in terms of sculptural necessities, architects become annoyed. Not only is their concept of space being changed, but for the most part it is being criticized. The criticism can come into effect only when architectural scale, methods, materials and procedures are being used. Comparisons are provoked. Every language has a structure about which nothing critical in that language can be said. To criticize a language, there must be a second language dealing with the structure of the first but possessing a new structure.

**P.E.:** You want architecture to be a neutral background. When architecture comes off the wall and off the pedestal, you seem to want it to remain as a discrete object, to maintain its neutrality. When architecture becomes both figural and contextual, it worries you because it leaves the sculptor with little room to operate.

You say that architects — and specifically Robert Venturi — claim to be dealing with context, yet are never critical of it. In other words, their “site-specific” architecture is simply objects that fit into the site or attempt to fit into the site. This is what in architecture is called “contextualism.” I see a difference between what you mean by “site-specific” in your work and what Venturi or the contextualists mean by “site-specific” in their architecture.

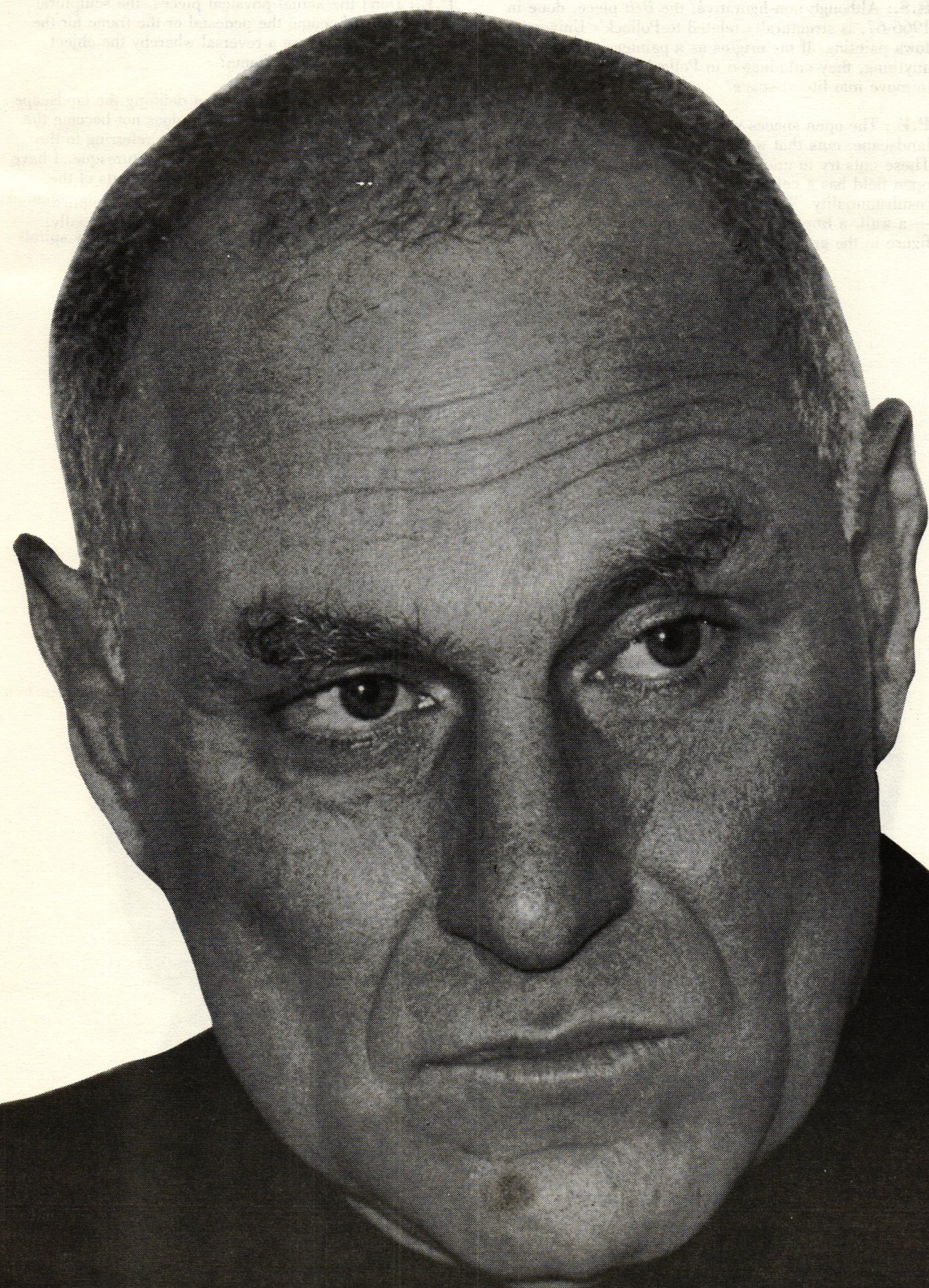
**R.S.:** What they call contextualism I call affirmation in the guise of social justification. For “contextualists,” to build site-specific means to analyze the context and the content of the indigenous cultural situation, then to conclude that what's needed is to maintain the status quo. That's how they seek meaning. They give a great deal of priority to the person who laid down the first rock as well as the last person who put up a signboard.

**P.E.:** And the nostalgia for that!

**R.S.:** Nostalgia, and the willingness to augment the existing language. In my work I analyze the site and determine to redefine it in terms of sculpture, *not* in terms of the existing physiognomy. I have no need to augment existing contextual languages. I'm not interested in affirmation.

**P.E.:** But you are also not interested in negation.

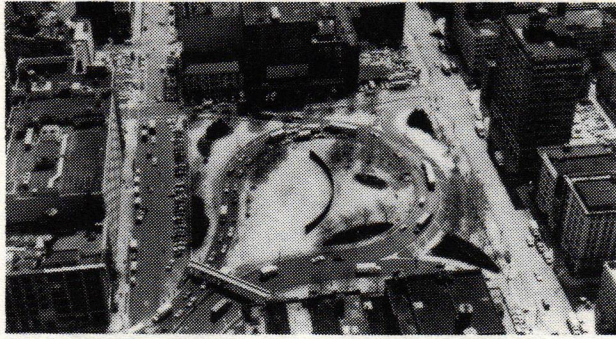
**R.S.:** No. I'm interested in sculpture; site-specific sculpture.



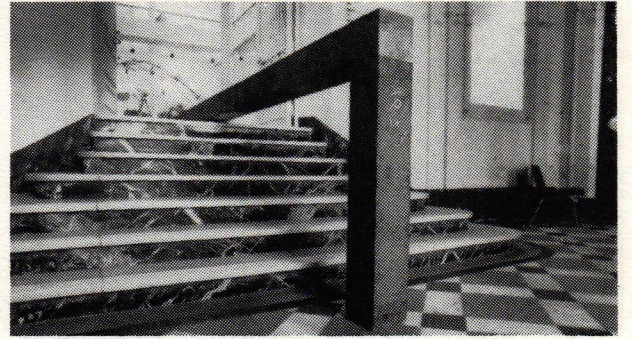


## Interview

**“On the contrary, the more one betrays one’s language to commercial interests, the greater the possibility that those in authority will reward one’s efforts. Architects have justifying phrases for this behavior.”**



St. John's Rotary Arc, NYC, Richard Serra (1980)



Step, Richard Serra (1982)

**P.E.:** There could be site-specific architecture that is critical, that attempts something other than an affirmation of the fact that everything preexisting on the site is good. Piranesi's recreations and Palladio's redrawings were inventions and not so much concerned with what had actually been on a site.

What interests me in your work is that it is neither affirmation nor negation. Most architects do in fact say that whoever laid the first stone made the context. You do not say that. You try to analyze the context in a way that might necessitate the removal of the first stone.

**R.S.:** Absolutely.

**P.E.:** To allow for meaning in architecture, the material itself may be covered up; this is departing from materialism. In this way, to do in architecture what Richard Serra does in sculpture could mean to do the reverse. That is, the actual fact of covering up materiality may bring the object closer to architectural as opposed to material necessity. You do this when you cover up foundations of certain pieces because the foundations literally hold up the pieces, but the work is not conceptually intended to be seen that way.

**R.S.:** All my pieces will stand if they are placed into the ground and the earth is then backfilled. The reason for the fixtures and foundations is to satisfy engineering codes laid down by cities, the federal bureaucracy, and so on. For example, *Rotary Arc* was required to have a foundation in order to meet city codes, although it is apparent that a 100-ton quarter-circle will “freestand” anywhere.

**P.E.:** Let's go on to another subject. You say you reject chance, which is totally random, and you reject judgment, which is totally closed. You say experimentation is somewhere in between, but that your experiments with chance, influenced by William Burroughs and John Cage, led you to a dead end. What is the difference between a judgmental viewpoint and a viewpoint of chance? Would you say there is chance in Jackson Pollock's action paintings, for example?

**R.S.:** Absolutely not. I saw Pollock's retrospective in Paris recently. In these paintings the skeins don't touch the edge, they never leave the border or boundary; the passage of paint is absolutely controlled. People misunderstand the “how” of the process and think that because someone is standing over a canvas working on the floor in a spontaneous manner, he must be out of control. But the decisions as to how much paint to use, where to put it, in fact, all the formal conditions that go into making paintings — line, massing, overlaying — are tightly organized. In hindsight it's obvious how much structure is contained within the overall field and how much the overall field is a structure. It's not an amorphous field.

**P.E.:** When Pollock says that his paintings are not representations of his feelings but expressions of his feelings, you know that they must be controlled by an unconscious reality. The imagery that comes up — the black holes that appear larger, the white and black, the pulsations — finally overtakes him.

**R.S.:** I have great difficulty with spurious psychological interpretations. One's psychological make-up at a given moment is developed from the womb on; and one's activity at a given moment is an intersection of congruences that will vent certain emotions. But to say that works are the result of an emotional state is to use a knee-jerk causality that simply does not follow. Critics have tried to explain one of my works — splashing molten lead — as a temper tantrum. It's hard to keep up a temper tantrum for seven days, the time it took me to complete the sculpture. The same confusion surrounds Pollock. Pollock was never out of control. Look at his paintings.

**P.E.:** You used the term “noncompositional” in reference to Pollock's work.

**R.S.:** There is no hierarchy of parts in Pollock. There is no relation of part to whole in terms of composition, as there is, for example, in Malevich, in whose work forms

float on the ground in compositional relation to each other and the framing edge. There are other examples of European compositional tradition that are more pertinent: the work of Matisse, the Cubists, Mondrian.

**P.E.:** Your *Belt* pieces seem to be based on a non-compositional idea; only when you get far enough away from them is there a whole image. For me it is not the elements of composition in architecture — the bay, the column, the window — that are interesting, but what is between them. Similarly, in the *Belt* there seems to be a serial structure, without beginning or end, and the important consideration is not the elements but the spaces in between — the negatives, the voids.

**R.S.:** Although non-figurative, the *Belt* piece, done in 1966-67, is structurally related to Pollock's University of Iowa painting. If my origins as a painter culminated in anything, they culminated in Pollock. Then I felt a need to move into literal space.

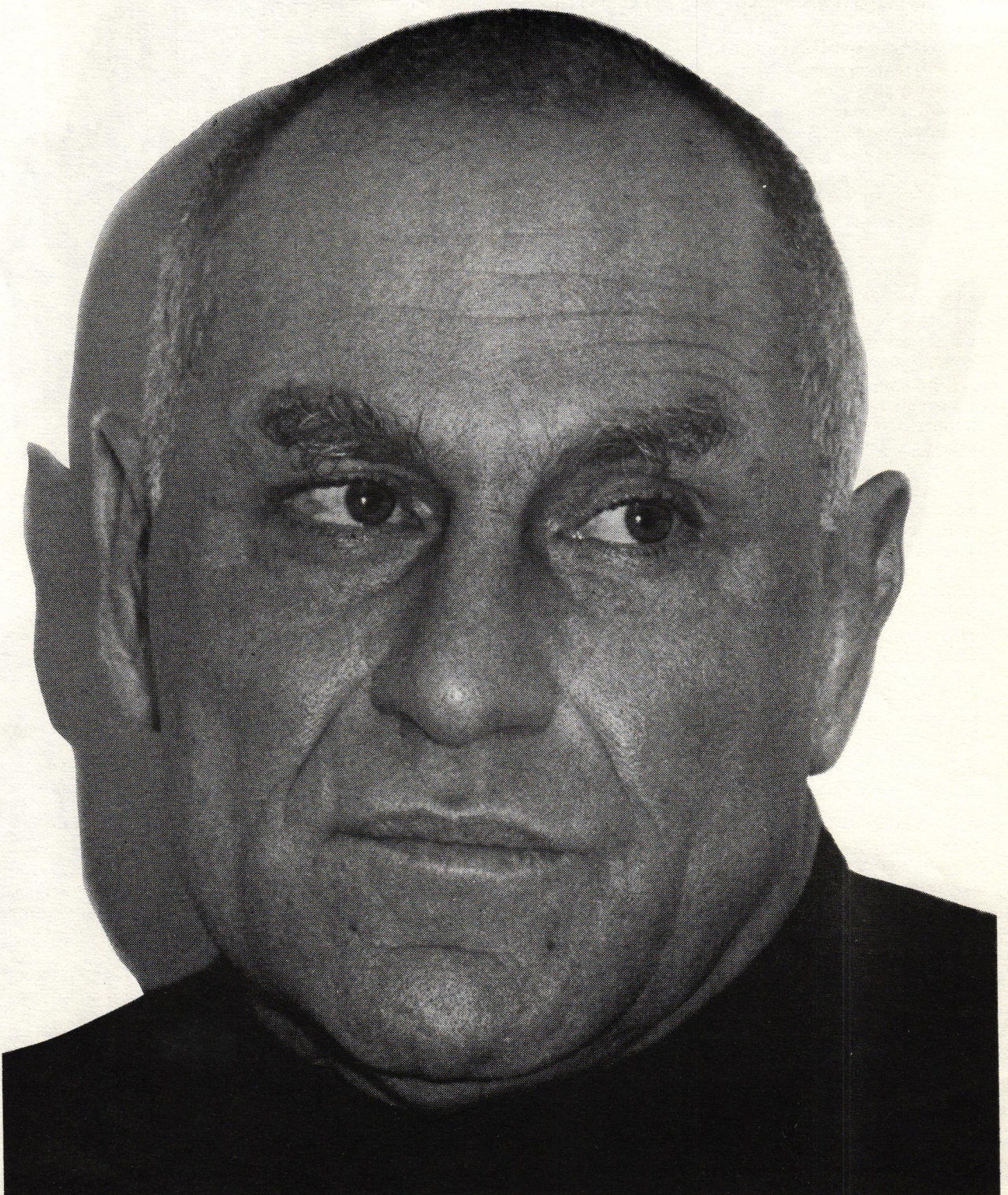
**P.E.:** The open spaces you moved into were cuts in the landscape, cuts that were seen as substance, not void. These cuts try to create substance out of nothing. An open field has a certain neutrality about it because of its insubstantiality. When a cut of some kind is introduced — a wall, a line, whatever — you are not creating a figure in the ground, but you are creating out of that

ground. It is not the figure/ground nature that is important, but giving substance to the void.

**R.S.:** My elevational pieces point to the indeterminacy of the landscape. The sculptural elements act as barometers for reading the landscape. They are not viewed as discrete sculptural units nor as parts in a larger composition. It's impossible to have an overview of the work in its entirety. In different proximities the work functions and is perceived differently. At a close distance the elevational fall of the landscape is experienced step by step. From a further distance the elevational fall seems measured by the sculptural elements.

**P.E.:** Don't the actual physical pieces, the sculptural objects, then become the pedestal or the frame for the landscape? Isn't there a reversal whereby the object itself now becomes the frame?

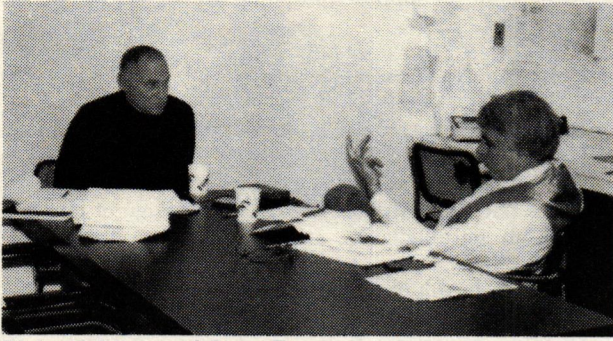
**R.S.:** It does become an element defining the landscape within its given boundaries, but it does not become the frame. If you use the word “frame” in referring to the landscape, you imply a notion of the picturesque. I have never really found the notion of framing parts of the landscape particularly interesting in terms of its potential for sculpture. Smithsonian was interested in the picturesque. His *Spiral Jetty* (1969-70) not only spirals



Richard Serra (photos: Dorothy Alexander)



**“Critics have tried to explain one of my works — splashing molten lead — as a temper tantrum. It’s hard to keep up a temper tantrum for seven days, the time it took me to complete the sculpture.”**



Richard Serra and Peter Eisenman

you out into the landscape, framing vistas of the landscape, but as it dovetails back on itself, it also leads you to concentrate on its internal structure. The nautilus, being a centripetal structure, leads you into its vortex bit by bit. That’s an interesting notion in terms of its relation to the narrative of seeing but it’s not of particular concern to me.

**P.E.:** Bringing an object to reality is certainly the opposite of abstraction, which is not an aspect of your work. Your work has an immanence — that is, a latent other structure in the real material. Abstraction deals with transcendence, the opposite of immanence. While a Brancusi may be an abstraction of a column, your work is not an abstraction of anything. You are in fact making abstract ideas real.

**R.S.:** Van Doesburg articulated a difference between abstraction, which derives its impetus from nature, and concretion, which is based on an inventive order. I am not interested in this kind of distinction. However, I don’t begin with a correlative and abstract from it. I don’t work from a given in that way. But since it has become a convention to call non-figurative work abstract, I don’t object to that definition of my work.

**P.E.:** But it could be argued that you are a “realist” artist, although not in the way the term is conventionally used. It could also be argued that you are a post-modernist (little p, little m) in that your concerns are not derived from modernist conventions. You are interested in self-referentiality, but not in a modernist sense. Your objects produce an inherent, internal necessity structuring the landscape; this necessity has to do with self-referentiality. In fact you have said that the context invariably returns the work to its sculptural necessities. The work may be critical of the context but it always returns to sculpture as sculpture. These ideas could be seen as leading to a self-referential, autonomous or closed system.

**R.S.:** My works do not signify an esoteric self-referentiality. Their construction leads you into their structure and does not refer to the artist’s persona. But we might be discussing a bogus problem. As soon as you put a work into a museum, its label points first to the author. The visitor is asked to recognize “the hand.” Whose work is it? The institution of the museum invariably creates self-referentiality, even when it’s not implied. The question of how the work functions is not asked.

The problem of self-referentiality does not exist once the work enters the public domain. Even negative controversy is evoked by the site-specificity of the sculpture; how the work alters the site is the issue, not the persona of the author. It’s a curious fact that all the petitions against my piece in the Federal Plaza dealt with aspects of the work, whereas the art press didn’t criticize the work but attacked the person. Here we have another form of promulgating self-referentiality.

Once the works are erected in a public space, they become other people’s concerns. By their implicit and explicit values they become judgmental by what they exclude. They simultaneously criticize what they neglect and pass judgment on other works.

**P.E.:** The self-referentiality that I am speaking about in your work is not narrative. It is not telling Richard Serra’s story. It is telling its own story. Modernist self-referentiality created a split between author and object. James Joyce was thought to be non-narrative in the sense that he removed the imposition of the author between the reader and the object. I believe the same thing exists in your work, although it is not modernist. The object tells me how to see it — that is its self-referentiality.

If you don’t want to use the term self-referential, you could say your work is “structural” in that the dialogue it opens up is an archaeology of its own structure. This kind of structure is not an abstraction. If anything, this archaeology reveals what has previously been hidden in the classical closed or contained object.

**R.S.:** For the same reasons that I am not interested in the distinction between concrete art and abstract art, I am not interested in whether my art is called structural or abstract. I don’t subscribe to labels and “isms,” although many have certainly been applied to my work.

**P.E.:** I would call your work “structuralist” in the sense of looking for the structure inherent in a text. It is a matter of searching in the structure not so much for the text or the meaning of the text as for the inherent structural capacity of the text. What is the internal necessity, the inward feeling that you have talked about? What is it other than the work’s own structure? What is the sculptural identity that these things are revealing?

**R.S.:** I can’t answer that question. It depends on one’s knowledge of the condition and history of architecture, painting and sculpture; it depends on what one brings to a specific work. I don’t think there is any ideal interpretation; I don’t think I need to articulate a dogma of how to see my sculptures.

**P.E.:** I am trying to get at the notion of structure as part of the ineffable condition of an object. The presence of the structure itself is no guarantee of art. What is it that makes art out of structure? It seems that is what you concern yourself with.

**R.S.:** It’s not something I program into my work, although I may recognize it. I am most interested in selecting structures that define the context in question.

**P.E.:** But aren’t you interested in their self-selection rather than your selection of them? You do not make an arbitrary selection; they select themselves from a range of possible archaeologies.

**R.S.:** I am confused. They don’t select themselves. They are the responsibility of the person who is formulating the problem and making a decision as to the solution. You imply that I’m just there to somehow receive structures?

**P.E.:** No. You are not passive. I am arguing that you engage in another activity. You do not invent or select but rather uncover a range of possibilities.

**R.S.:** By implication the selected solution is an attempt to resolve all of the possible solutions to a problem. The decision (selection) process differs according to the context, although there is never any certitude.

**P.E.:** You did not invent the *Rotary Arc*. You found it. It was preexistent.

**R.S.:** Preexistent in the world? That sounds strangely Calvinistic.

**P.E.:** No, preexistent in the context and in the universe of sculpture.

**R.S.:** No. A tilted arc didn’t exist in the history or repertoire of sculpture.

**P.E.:** It preexisted. It was there and you found it.

**R.S.:** Where?

**P.E.:** It preexisted conceptually. It is possible to conceptualize it before you make it “become.” The inherence that you constantly refer to — the inherence of sculpture, the inherence of a landscape, the inherence of an object — don’t you think they preexist and that your work gives them substance?

**R.S.:** I don’t believe that my sculptural concepts are found objects. They are inventions. Of course they are related to the tradition and history of sculpture, but they are still inventions.

**P.E.:** In the universe of sculpture the concept suggests itself. Let us say you and I were playing a game of chess. All potential lines exist, but all lines are not necessarily winning lines nor are they necessarily elegant. Some are more elegant or beautiful than others. But the context for the invention of the poetic — the art of the winning game — lies within the rules of chess

itself, lies on the board in those pieces. We have to find it, but it does suggest itself to us. What you call invention I call scanning, choosing a limited range of possibilities from an infinite number.

**R.S.:** I don’t subscribe to the chess board theory. There aren’t any rules. I make them up as I go along, and I never consider “beauty” in my solutions. Beautiful solutions are about taste. I have my own methods of working that allow me to make decisions once the problem is posed. One method I employ is a large sandbox I have built in which I work out solutions for constructions. The sand allows me to shift, tilt and lean elements on their plane and axis. The practice of working in the sandbox does not rely on theory.

**P.E.:** You say your sandbox — my “chess board” — is a methodology and not merely a series of images. The methodology seems to be finding differences in things rather than similarities. You seem to be looking for those seemingly useless differences that fall in between the similarities. But your intervention is limited by the sandbox. Your sandbox, for instance, is defined very differently from Robert Morris’.

**R.S.:** I would hope. The problem is that Morris plays in my sandbox and everybody else’s. I call that plagiarism, other people call it mannerism or post-modernism. Those who play in others’ sandboxes, or who play with the icons, forms or thematics or history, labor under the assumption that history can be dispensed. The source and center of work no longer derives from the necessity of invention but from strategical game plans.

**P.E.:** I wanted to ask you about ideology in relation to structure. It seems to me that the notion behind the landscape pieces you do is anti-ideological in the literal sense of ideology. I believe that your urban pieces are anti-ideological, but that in their anti-ideology they become ideological.

**R.S.:** Art is always ideological, whether it carries an overt political message or is art for art’s sake and based on an attitude of indifference. Art always, either explicitly or implicitly, manifests a value judgment about the larger sociological context of which it is part. Art supports or neglects, embraces or rejects class interests. Tatlin’s Monument to the Third International is no more ideological than a black painting by Ad Reinhardt. Ideological expression does not limit itself to an affirmation of power or political bias. To answer your question about the ideological content of my work, there is no difference in the degree of ideological content in my urban and landscape pieces.

**P.E.:** I would argue that your work is non-ideological in the sense that it does not speak to the meaning of man’s condition today vis-a-vis the natural and physical world. Man has unleashed physical forces that can destroy him at a greater rate now than ever before. This idea has changed the former relationship of man to God and to the natural world. Modernism always spoke of the future, but now we are in what I call a futureless present, a condition of immanence, in that we face the biological extinction of the entire civilization.

Man’s relationship to God and nature has traditionally been mirrored in architecture. But I don’t believe you address this issue in your work, nor do most architects. It seems to me that underlying post-modernist architects’ return to history is their intuitive realization that the post-nuclear condition of man is greatly changed. It seems that the anxiety of man’s present condition has caused architects to abrogate their responsibility and to go back to history as if they were ostriches sticking their heads in the sand.

**R.S.:** You can’t construct a causality between the fear of biological extinction and post-modern architects thumbing through history books. That’s doomsday philosophy. True, modernist architects believed in a better future; they developed utopian ideas for city planning as well as pragmatic solutions for workers’ housing. But post-modernists also believe in the future: the future of AT&T and corporate America.



# "HYPE": An Excerpt

Steven M. L. Aronson

**Steven M.L. Aronson:** Today nobody can imagine any architect creating the kind of synoptic vision of world order — man conquering the elements, et cetera, et cetera — that Frank Lloyd Wright not only created but embodied. He had an impassioned conviction about architecture, and he was attempting to make an impression on society that would alter the nature of society. He was *the* great mythological American architect . . . Does Wright's brave-new-world myth of architecture still hold in certain architectural circles?

**Philip Johnson:** No, of course not. It's like Shakespeare or any other great man — each generation has its own "take" on that kind of a character . . .

**S.M.L.A.:** But what *about* the myth of the architect as someone who can change the world through architecture?

**P.J.:** That's . . . Ayn Rand's joke.

**S.M.L.A.:** Wright didn't see Rand's joke, did he? He believed the myth.

**P.J.:** Sure. So did I. So did the whole Modern Movement. Today we have our hands full just trying to save architecture, save what's left of Park Avenue, but back then we were out to save the world, rout all the philistines. . . . The Modern Movement disintegrated because architects' morale changed from salvation through architecture to survivalism-is-all-we've-got-left, damn-lucky-to-have-a-job.

**S.M.L.A.:** No architect has pure, idealistic goals anymore?

**P.J.:** Oh, all the old people still do. But I think that that belief system is long since finished, the descendant of that you-can-do-good-by-having-social-housing-done-by-teamwork Gropius ideal, the architecture-as-a-weapon-of-social-reform thing — that's the one I hate. I don't mind Wright. Move the capital to the middle of the country, he said. Let's design a real capital. Not only said it, he designed one practically. A great park and building complex at the Golden Triangle — you know, where the Monongahela and Susquehanna become the Ohio. Oh, he was a great man. Magnificent. He was our greatest architect next to Richardson. . . . Jefferson was our most famous, but he was a politician, not a professional architect.

**S.M.L.A.:** In terms of how architectural reputations are made, is there a difference between the time of Richardson, the time of McKim, Mead and White, and our time? Back then, the *very* old boys' network really counted, didn't it? McKim and White got started working in the drafting room of Richardson. And often one got one's first job through a family connection . . .

**P.J.:** It was *fashionable* to work in Richardson's office in the early eighties. It's a business world now. You work for developers. . . . You work for serious businessmen who look you over: Can you produce . . . let's see your shop . . . what engineers do you use . . . who's the man who's gonna be on my job, 'cause if you've got six projects going, you're not gonna be spending all your time on mine and I wanna know who is. They have every right to know. You have to become kind of a businessman yourself.

The amusing way I got most of *my* jobs is all from Gerry Hines, a big real-estate developer in Houston. We've gotten, I think, six tall skyscrapers from him. It was an accident, because he had a partner called Brochstein who had a furniture shop — he did all the cabinet work in my early houses — and he thought I was just great. So he said to Gerry Hines, "Why don't you get Philip Johnson to do you a building?" and Gerry said, "Who the hell is Philip Johnson?" "Oh, he's an architect," Brochstein said. So Hines said, "All right, send him down." And the chemistry was right. But it wasn't just *me*, it was my partner John Burgee and me, you see, because I never was in the big time before John Burgee joined me. Oh no, I was nothing. Just a simple farm boy. You see, he's capable, clear-headed, and a very good designer. And *that's* the combination: Johnson and Burgee. We're Hines's biggest architects now, and other people say, "Well, if Gerry Hines likes them, they must be good." Hines introduced us to Liedtke, the chairman of Pennzoil, and we designed *their* corporate headquarters, the pure-modern, all-glass, monolithic as in quote unquote Pennzoil Place Building in Houston.

So one of the important ways you get jobs is by accident. I did a house once, my own house, the Glass House, and people visited it, and one of them was Dayton and Hudson, the great department-store chain. He came in and said, "Well, will you do *me* a house? I love this house." I said sorry. Sometimes you turn down the damndest things. So he went back to Minneapolis and became a partner in I.D.S., Investors Diversified Services, which is a horrible company that built our

biggest building — ours, theirs, it's the biggest building in the northwest. A nondescript building. I was the architect. What's famous is the courtyard in glass. "The Crystal Court," they call it — "the living room of the city." It was the first of the great interior atriums. The whole room's covered with clusters of glass cubes piling asymmetrically to a hundred-foot-high apex, a *crazy* high point. Damned if it isn't the most important downtown urban complex of its period.

But how they picked us is the interesting thing. I.D.S. had a list of five *genius* architects. By accident they came to us first. They were scared, they didn't know *what* to do. They talked to us for ten minutes and we turned them down, because they wanted us just to do the façade and we don't *do* façades. So they said could they come back and I said sure, come back at three o'clock. They came back and so I says, "Have you seen any of the other genius architects as in quote unquote on your list?" They said, "We don't want to see any other architects." So you see, it *wasn't* a competition, it wasn't even social, it was absolutely accident. The man Dayton that liked my Glass House had talked to somebody at I.D.S. lower down that'd talked to somebody way lower down and then the guy that picked us was way, *way* down the line. Same with AT&T.

**S.M.L.A.:** It can't be accident, it has to be Philip Johnson. How *do* you take a conventional project like an office building and stamp it so that it's a Philip Johnson? In other words, how do you introduce architecture into it, Philip Johnson architecture?

**P.J.:** I don't know. Didn't know I did. Didn't know I ever did design a "Philip Johnson Building." You know, consistency is one thing I've never been accused of. Well, I don't like the buildings I see around me, so naturally I try to do something else, something individual, not-to-be-copied. Everyone said the AT&T Building was going to be a real clinker, and you know something, it looks pretty good. All my women friends keep telling me to hurry up and finish it so they can get around the corner more easily to Kenneth's to get their hair done.

**S.M.L.A.:** Architects are famous for doing drawings that don't become buildings. You're famous for going into presentations with clients without any drawings and getting to do the buildings.

**P.J.:** That's right, I have *never* used drawings. At AT&T we had no drawings. I'm not interested in presentation. Apparently, Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo . . . have two projectors — fade in and fade out — and nine screens. *We* don't even use slides.

**S.M.L.A.:** What *do* you do? Just talk?

**P.J.:** That's all. So I lose jobs that way.

**S.M.L.A.:** Aren't you being too self-deprecating? You're the only architect who can get away with not putting on a show, with just talking. You can sell your work on the sheer force of your personality, as well as on the assumption that the prospective client knows what you've done in the past.

**P.J.:** It does seem to me that my work is well known. Frank Lloyd Wright once said to a client, "You know my phone number. Call me when you've put fifty thousand in my account in the National Trust Company and I'll be yours." A job that Mies got from him, by the way. So *not* bothering to make the fancy presentation doesn't always work.

It doesn't always work for *me*. In the fifties I went into the competition for the air traffic controllers' towers that are all over the country now — federal towers — and I said, "Well, I think you all know my work. Now what I'd do if I got the job, I'd take the slip form thing, this wonderful dimension, and put through these cylinders like this if it's all right." Pei got the job.

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**S.M.L.A.:** There are many styles of selling. You're clearly attentive to all sorts of details relating to the presentation of self. God's in the details, Philip — remember. You dress beautifully. Robert Stern described you in print as a clotheshorse.

**P.J.:** Bob Stern, of course, is describing himself. He was a slob, you see. Oh ya, and then he got married to a Gimbel and got into the chips, and he said to himself, "Philip Johnson is a clotheshorse, it must have something to do with success, *I'll* be a clotheshorse, too." This is my interpretation. People always describe themselves when they're talking about somebody else.

**S.M.L.A.:** So does an architect's personal appearance advertise his work, the way a movie star's does, or not?

Are architects supposed to be stylish, idiosyncratic, and dramatic?

**P.J.:** No. No. Absolutely not.

**S.M.L.A.:** What about Richard Meier? *He* has an aura. He just seems to float miles above the grit of everyday life — his silver hair, his silver Mercedes, the blue-white shirts. He's an artifact. His detailed design of himself must attract clients.

**P.J.:** He hasn't attracted many. Oh no, he hasn't had much work to speak of. Yet he's the most deliberate of all the younger architects. And his work *is* awfully good. And he's very tall and very, very handsome, and I enjoy him enormously. I'd rather have lunch, let's say, with him than any living architect.

To me the ideal architects are Mies, Corbusier, and Wright — *they're* the three. Wright, of course, had his own way of self-projection. The purple cape. The purple hair. The hair was not really purple but blue, and the cape wasn't exactly purple, either — these things get exaggerated. But the other two were working on their work. That's *all* they did. Mies and Corbusier didn't give one damn about anything else. They might have thought they did, but they didn't. Even Wright didn't really care as much as he thought he cared, and his flamboyance wasn't really to the jugular of success as Stern's is.

I resent people thinking *I'm* that way, but I suppose they're right, that I'm a success because I work at that as the aim, whereas any artist worth his salt should work at art, and not the way Warhol does and Stern does, for success as a thing in itself. It's like money — plenty of people work for money. Like the Skidmore firm. It's such a big firm, what else would you work there for? You gotta keep the firm running, increase profits over last year. Now that I *don't* do, I never had to — money doesn't occur to me. Success I *thought* didn't occur to me as such, but when I analyze Stern's singleminded devotion to success, I wonder. I don't know. It's a question.

**S.M.L.A.:** What precisely are the ingredients in Robert Stern's success?

**P.J.:** *Chutzpah*. He's a shit. You can call it arrogance if you want to be nice about it. And of-course he got that style from Frank Lloyd Wright. But it's better to be honest arrogance than false humility. I'm very fond of Stern, because he's so intelligent. He wants to be the Philip Johnson of his generation.

**S.M.L.A.:** Does Philip Johnson think that Robert Stern has succeeded in his arrogant ambition to be the Philip Johnson of his generation?

**P.J.:** Well, I would be another person if I said yes. You see, you can't expect Papa to say that the son is going to be as good. If he did, he wouldn't have enough *amour propre* to be his own success, would he? It's all very well to be interested in the kids, but do you *really* want them to be good? Does the father *really* want his son to rival his abilities? Wright didn't want *anyone* to come after him. It would be the end of architecture. He didn't want anyone to come before him, either. He wanted to be the only architect that every lived. He actually said that Michelangelo created the greatest mistake of any architect in history by building St. Peter's dome. And Mies was the same way. And so was Corbusier.

**S.M.L.A.:** What precisely are the ingredients in Philip Johnson's great success?

**P.J.:** Very much the same as Stern's — *chutzpah*. *I'm* a shit, too, you know. I'm not very good at human relations. I don't have a whole lot of friends. Mostly enemies. And quite naturally when you get to my status you have to have them — what would you do without them? But as for Stern, I'm not as bright as he is, anywhere *near*. That man can absolutely think rings around *me*, and his historical acumen and knowledge are second to none. I think he's the best architectural historian living, who can write . . . Stern is a *marvelous* writer.

**S.M.L.A.:** Was it you who introduced him to Gerald Hines?

**P.J.:** Ya, sure. Oh, ya. I also introduced Gwathmey to Hines. And Charles Moore to Hines. And they've all done houses for Hines, who's a genuine patron of architects — he picks the very best. Only Gwathmey flunked out. He submitted plans for Hines's house in Martha's Vineyard that didn't get by the local design controls, and Stern took over. I just think that Stern is the *brightest* son-of-a-bitch. My lunch list would be Stern, *then* Meier. But for different reasons. Stern hates Meier, by the way.

**S.M.L.A.:** But he sings Meier's praises.



The following excerpt from Steven M.L. Aronson's live-wire book *HYPE* (William Morrow & Company, May 1983) is from the interview portion of the architecture chapter, "The Daisy Chain of American Architecture: Philip Johnson Loves Them, Philip Johnson Loves Them Not."

**P.J.:** Guilt. Guilt. Stern used to say bad things about Meier, till I said, "Look, you damn fool, you're an architect, you don't talk that way about your fellow architects." The only way you can talk down architects if you *are* one yourself is the way Frank Lloyd Wright did with Saarinen. Wright was five times Saarinen's age, he was the grand old man, and to him Saarinen was a stupid, unable architect — well, *that* didn't bother anybody. Anyway, Stern took my advice. Oh, he does. And now he's *generous* about his competitors, because he understands that to talk down a competitor hurts yourself, not the competitor. I also taught him that architects must not publicly criticize other architects in print.

**S.M.L.A.:** You knocked Wallace Harrison in the *New Yorker* Profile of you . . .

**P.J.:** Did I? Did I really? Oh, *shit*. Well, you see, it shows through. And I *liked* Wally. Of course, I tend to like people when they're no longer competitors. I'm much better friends with Bunshaft now that he isn't practicing. He doesn't admire *me*, because I was a *shit*. But I admire *him*. I really do. Oh, I was nasty about him. I'd say, "Well, if you want to do a lousy building, why don't you go to Bunshaft?" *Unnecessary*. Sheer jealousy. That's why I don't want Stern to make that mistake. Bunshaft was building every building in New York.

•••••

**S.M.L.A.:** Yet it's you who sets the tone for much that is happening in architecture today — you are the father and mother of many architectural sons. Now that Peter Eisenman has gone into private practice, do you see him as being out to kill the elder of the tribe — namely *you*?

**P.J.:** Well, I fell in love with another architect. Mies van der Rohe, and later I revolted against him.

**S.M.L.A.:** Do you think that Eisenman's identification with the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies is going to work for or against him, now that he wants to be commercially successful and practice architecture in a big way?

**P.J.:** He's the brightest man in the country. My lunch list would be Eisenman, *then* Stern, *then* Meier.

**S.M.L.A.:** Another preferred lunch guest? *Another* brightest man in the country?

**P.J.:** Eisenman's is an entirely different intelligence from Stern's. They're the *two* brightest people on the horizon. It is all very surprising that Eisenman and Robertson have gone into partnership together.

**S.M.L.A.:** From your experience with corporate clients, would you say that Eisenman will have to overcome his image as an intellectual in order to make it big in big business?

**P.J.:** That's easy enough — send Robertson. Eisenman wouldn't appeal to an executive of Pan Am; Robertson would — he speaks easily and authoritatively, and he has a wonderful voice, *la voix d'or*, oh ya. But actually, Eisenman wouldn't hurt. He thinks he's an intellectual like the Italians, Tafuri . . . and Rossi and those boys, and what he *is* is a terrific manager. I mean, you can't start a school like the Institute without a penny and work it for fifteen years and still be *around*, and still be *inventive*, without . . .

**S.M.L.A.:** Eisenman seems to function as a kind of impresario of the avant-garde.

**P.J.:** Ahhh. Exactly. He's perhaps like that man in the dance, who do I mean, Diaghilev. He plays with all of us crazy people. He's wonderful with the crazies. He said, "leave the crazies to me." He doesn't know how revealing that statement is about his own genius.

**S.M.L.A.:** Why? Is he also crazy?

**P.J.:** Like a fox. He's got a terrific sense of how to use crazies and how to get them to work together — Koolhaas, Krier . . ., Rossi, most of the Europeans of today, Frank Gehry. Eisenman can showcase *them* and still have a show of Wally Harrison and have a show of me — the oldies, you see. Eisenman's so broadminded, and so clever at getting the whole ball of wax together, that there's only one place in New York where architecture happens — at the Institute. He certainly did surprise us all by wanting to become a commercial architect. One more thing on his belt. He's so good at everything else that why shouldn't he be successful at that, too? Well, it's the Philip Johnson problem, you know — want to do everything well. Heavens, I've got seven over-a-hundred-million-dollar buildings. That's a lot of buildings, and the fees aren't bad.

**S.M.L.A.:** But doesn't it strike you as ironic that this man who loves crazies should choose for his architectural partner the solid and sane Jaquelin Robertson?

**P.J.:** That's not so hard. Robertson's the essence of WASP political respectability. He's a Virginia gentleman's son — he will send you a Virginia smoked ham, which I can't eat. He's the real thing, political in the sense of WASP-getting-ahead-in-the-State-Department, correct-tie point of view. It sounds bad, but it needn't *be* bad. He has a genuine interest in political accomplishment. He'd like to be mayor of New York or president of the United States and reform the way the world *looks*. I was the one who persuaded him to become an architect. He was at Yale, starting architecture, and he asked me should he do that or should he go on to Oxford and study political science, and I said, "Look, we need people like you in architecture." Later he went into the city under Lindsay and did extremely well, but then Lindsay sort of drifted off into do-goodism. Then Robertson got into the big world through the job in Iran, and of course we know what happened to that, so he's had back luck. But I don't think the thing's in yet — the judgment — on Robertson. He's very able. Very acute. What is going to happen to his actual design capabilities is a question mark.

Somebody like Gwathmey, who was at Yale the same time as Robertson and Stern, really got down and went to work. He put his nose to the grindstone *at once* — he's the success-boy type of the kind who'll get work and get it done. He's very sound; he does even, good-quality work, and I've always given more jobs to Gwathmey than I've given the others.

**S.M.L.A.:** Have you also patronized, in the oldest sense of the word, Frank Gehry?

**P.J.:** I'm a great friend of Frank, but Frank is a great friend of everybody. He's one of the most attractive personalities on the *scene*. I've seen some work of his, mostly on paper, that I think is very interesting. When he gets into full scale, sometimes it isn't.

**S.M.L.A.:** And Michael Graves? He was virtually unknown ten years ago, and now all of a sudden he's the architect of the moment, his name is on the lips of architecture students and cultural types — he's a media darling. Is his current status well founded? And will his reputation just keep growing?

**P.J.:** No one's reputation keeps going.

**S.M.L.A.:** *Your* reputation's kept going.

**P.J.:** Mmmmmmm. But I never had one of those. See, I was never taken up by the young gurus as in quote unquote. Not at any time in my life. I never became a Kahn Pied Piper. . . . I never became a Michael Graves. Today three-quarters of the students' work at the architecture schools is straight Michael Graves. I think that's because he has a take that is so very, very clear and so attractive. Plus he draws beautifully. But that's all quite different from building buildings, so we shall see. Now he's just *built* a building, the Portland Building in Oregon. I was on the building jury that chose him, so I guess *that* helped. But the judgment isn't in yet on whether he's a clear *consistent* producer of buildings.

Then there's Stanley Tigerman. He is the most delicious of all the revolters, and very, very *funny*. Now again he's done *some* interesting buildings — an all-black house that looks like a silhouette: pure form, no shadows or edges. But we don't know yet about Tigerman, we just don't know. He organized that competition, a second *Chicago Tribune* Competition. . . . He called it "Late Entries for the *Chicago Tribune* Tower Competition." I guess he wanted to counteract the influence of Mies who had kind of a hammerlock hold on Chicago architecture. He wanted to see what the Competition would bring out *now* in designs, from *his* friends, all the kids. And, of course, I welcomed this exhibition very much. I went out to lecture on it, but I couldn't — the results were not good, I didn't like *any* of them. Stern's may be the best. So what I did was talk on the 1922 Competition. They were not overwhelmed with delight.

**S.M.L.A.:** Tigerman, Eisenman, Robertson, Stern, Gwathmey, Gehry, Graves, Meier — does this list cover the up-and-coming architects?

**P.J.:** You've got them all. No secrets.

**S.M.L.A.:** All of them seem to have presented themselves as well as their work to the world, tailored their personas to fit their ambition and, one would strongly suspect, their desire for fame, and then organized their opportunities accordingly. How did an

architect like Robert Venturi manage to become so famous without having consciously tried to?

**P.J.:** As a theoretician. He's not famous as an architect. In fact, I think he does rather bad buildings. The Stage in Hartford, the addition to the Allen Art Museum at Oberlin College — they're bad buildings, ya, *oh ya*. Oh yes. Of course, it depends on who you talk to. Bob Stern, who's his inventor, thinks he's marvelous. I resent a little bit that arrogance of Stern's. He didn't discover Venturi. Venturi was perfectly able to discover himself.<sup>2</sup> He came by that book, the Venturi book on complexity and contradictions. And *really* the discoverer of Venturi is Arthur Drexler, my successor as head of the department of architecture at the Museum of Modern Art. He sweated editorial blood for years, because Venturi can't write. That book was a pile of junk, and to put it into any format at all took a Drexler. Drexler's a beautiful writer. He's just crazy — like everybody else.

**S.M.L.A.:** Clearly, architecture books are not just for writing and reading, they're hype tools. It's understood that Louis Kahn wouldn't have become "establishment" at the late age he did if Vincent Scully hadn't written that book about him in 1962. After it was published, Kahn was given a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art and became a luminary, attracting large commissions.

**P.J.:** Large commissions? You mean the capital at Bangladesh? Well, Lou Kahn and I were friends, and he *was* very influential. But he was not modern, you see. He was mystical. "We are born out of light." "Material is spent light." "In the beginning lies eternity." "I ask the brick what it wants to be, and it said it wanted to be an arch." His Beaux-Arts training, and the symmetry, and the circles, and the layering around them, and the window behind, were all fascinating, and La Jolla is great, the Salk Institute at La Jolla, but Kahn's was a minor talent — it didn't influence the world. And it won't stand the test of time.

**S.M.L.A.:** A minor talent? Isn't that just Philip Johnson killing off his competition retroactively? It's a fact that Kahn was the only threat you had in your generation — he commanded greater respect from both students and other architects. So today you state that Scully overrated him.

**P.J.:** Scully overrates everybody. I think it's one of his charms. When he built his own house, he copied my Glass House, but he never gave me the full PR treatment. He gave Corbusier the full treatment. Then he did Kahn. *Then* he did Venturi and now *Rossi*. Well, they can't *all* be gods. But Scully is by nature an Irish elfin enthusiast — a type that I happen to love, so it's all right with me. But whether it's good for the subject or not in the long run, I don't know.

**S.M.L.A.:** You see Scully as a kind of publicist, then?

**P.J.:** Nothing wrong with that. Less a historian and more a publicist, yes. Naturally, I can't be *too* enthusiastic about him because he's not *too* enthusiastic about *me*. In his foreword to the collection of my writings that Stern and Eisenman put together, Scully says, after all, Johnson's going to be known for his books, not his works. I can hardly complain. Only, I'm an artist. And artists are verry sensitive. Scully's greatest fault is that he isn't overenthusiastic about *me*. Isn't that terrible? I mean, it's so personal and ridiculous. I don't mind admitting that actually I'm very partial to critics that like me. I don't find anybody that's any different. We're all human, we're *all* human. . . . Paul Goldberger feels that since he's a critic he can't write an article without saying something bad about even something that's good.

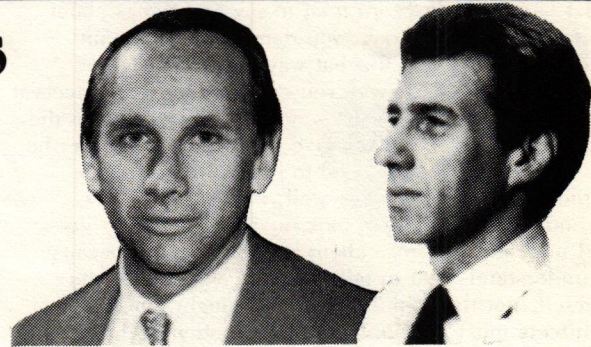
1. One architect who was present has a different "take," as Johnson might say, on the occasion: "It was typical Johnson. He won everyone's good humor — told everyone they were terrible, but didn't hurt anyone's feelings, and then lectured on something they were all academically interested in."

2. The fifty-seven-year-old Venturi, feeling perhaps that he's controversial and needs to smooth a few feathers among those who give out work, now has a PR super: Letitia Baldrige, Jacqueline Kennedy's social secretary when she was in the White House. When Philip Johnson recently came upon a press kit from "Tish" Baldrige hyping the Venturi firm on her PR stationery, he phoned an architect friend: "Did you know that Bob Venturi has a press agent?" The friend said, "I don't believe it." Johnson promptly sent him — and several other architects as well — a copy of the press release. In truth, Johnson was shocked. Tish Baldrige says: "I think they were very smart to hire a public relations firm to make people aware of them. After all, they're in Philadelphia."



# Tour d'Objets

## Knoll Five Years After



Marshall Cogan and Stephen Swid

*Italian architects have been in the vanguard of furniture design since the 1960s; only in the last few years have U.S. architects been getting involved in a similar way. With Knoll International and Sunar setting an example, other firms, along with many eager architects, are making their own plans. Architects are naturally intrigued by the prospect, since the design of a piece of furniture presents a possibility to explore in a microcosm ideas that they may be developing at an architectural scale. In many cases, too, architects simply seek furnishings suitable to the scale and style of their architectural environments. Given the current obsession with historically referential architecture, the design of furniture that is not too mired in a modernist aesthetic is in demand. Early modern pieces, too, are increasingly favored over the familiar Bauhaus staples.*

*As witnessed by two famous chairs of Breuer and Mies van der Rohe — the Wassily chair and the Barcelona chair — furniture by architects may catch on with the public in a way that buildings may not. Although the piece of furniture must solve quite different problems than a building, the design object quickly imparts to the observer much about the architect's own attitude toward architecture. The concern with comfort and use is the most obvious clue. The approach to form, materials, and structure also indicate where the architect's interests and concerns lie. The crafted elegance of Richard Meier's designs, shown opposite, or the technical inventiveness of Emilio Ambasz' chairs, or the structural clarity of Mario Botta's chair all represent certain orientations one finds in their larger-scale work.*

*But designing a piece of furniture is in some ways much more treacherous than designing a building. Because furniture can be tested, seen and evaluated more quickly and easily, public opinion about an architect's work can be formed by this isolated evidence. Thus each piece of furniture both advertises — and betrays — its architect-designer.*

*This month Skyline surveys the furniture scene and spotlights objects designed by architects and designers from a select group of showrooms. We also explore how one firm, Knoll International, has managed to combine a commitment to architect-designed products with the everyday realities of producing, manufacturing and selling furniture — SS*

A little over five years have passed since Knoll International was purchased by General Felt Industries. Since that time Knoll, GFI, and Marshall Cogan and Stephen Swid, two young investment brokers who bought GFI in 1974 have increasingly gained public recognition. Knoll's accomplishments have been extraordinary, in both sales volume and perceived image. According to Marshall Cogan sales for the past year were \$170 million world-wide — as compared with the 1977 figure of \$61 million. (According to *Moody's Index* General Felt's overall net sales were \$300 million in 1981, and \$226,460,000 the first nine months of 1982). While Knoll's growth rate has been about 25 percent a year for the last few years, Swid and Cogan's current predictions are 15 to 20 percent sales growth per year — a figure they see as only "natural" after the explosive start.

Meanwhile, the image of Knoll-designed furniture has been considerably refurbished in the same time period. Specifically, Knoll's program of involving architects in the design of furniture and showrooms has brought them great attention.

Knoll's hegemony as a prestigious and innovative furniture designer and manufacturer was undisputed from the time that the German-born Hans Knoll founded the company in 1939 and with his wife Florence began systematically introducing the "modern" furniture of Mies van der Rohe, Eero Saarinen, Charles Eames and, later, Marcel Breuer to the U.S. market. (The firm also offered interior design and space-planning services to their clients.) With the changes of ownership, however, during the 1960s and '70s, Knoll had come to rely increasingly on its "warhorses." By the mid-1970s designers had stopped talking about Knoll. Then, after 1977, with Nan Swid working at Knoll as Design Manager and Jeffrey Osborne as Vice President of Design, a group of architects and designers new to the furniture business were enlisted to develop various lines of furniture.

First Joseph D'Urso — a talented young designer known for his highly polished minimal interiors — came out with a line of furniture. His designs were followed by desks and cabinets by architects Charles Gwathmey and Robert Siegel, and nine pieces of seating, tables and chairs by Richard Meier (see p. 21). Next fall, a number of different items — tables, sofas and chairs — designed by Robert Venturi of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown are slated to appear. Meanwhile two rocking chairs designed by architects Stanley Tigerman and Margaret McCurry are in the development stages, and more architects and designers are waiting in the wings.

At the same time as these American architects are being "showcased," Knoll International, headquartered in Paris, has been developing furniture by well-known European architects and designers: Ettore Sottsass has just designed new sofas and tables for Knoll that are being currently shown in Europe, although they are not available yet in the U.S. Altogether Knoll claims to have 800 different pieces of furniture, fabrics and products in its lines world-wide, with forty new products in development.

The opening of new showroom spaces, some designed by architects, has occurred almost simultaneously with the appearance of new products. D'Urso's furniture was introduced in the new New York showrooms designed by Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown in 1980; Richard Meier's furniture was presented last fall in the newly renovated showroom and offices that Knoll had just opened in SoHo, designed by in-house staffer Paul Haigh. The Boston showroom, designed in 1980 by Gwathmey/Siegel, also occupies its own building on Newbury Street, and Stanley Tigerman is currently renovating a showroom in a Knoll-owned building on the fringe area of Houston. (He is also executing the master plan for the site, which includes two other buildings owned by Knoll.) Two years ago Knoll had Lee Stout, Creative Director of Interior Design, do the showrooms and facade of its building in Atlanta.

Knoll's choice of showroom designers has been criticized nevertheless. Some think that the showrooms would present a stronger, more dramatic image if Knoll had done what Sunar did with Michael Graves — have one architect

design all the new showroom spaces. Others suggest having a more complete spectrum of architects design the showrooms. Knoll emphasizes, however, that showrooms should display merchandise, and one senses that it is afraid too many architect-designed showrooms would highlight the architecture more than the furniture. Instead Knoll seems to seek its distinctiveness by occupying single buildings.

Many argue that Knoll's choice of architects doesn't represent a consistent point of view about architecture or design, that Knoll is simply trotting out a sampling of wares from the "established" avant garde. The work of Richard Meier, for example, is a far cry from that of Stanley Tigerman; the designs of Charles Gwathmey and Robert Siegel are ideologically distinct from those of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown. Nor does the "established avant garde" produce iconoclastic designs on the order of those being designed by architects Ettore Sottsass, Michael Graves and Hans Hollein for the Italian-based Memphis group. While Swid and Cogan have avowed to "provide a platform" for young and talented architects and designers that would be in keeping with Knoll's long-standing position at the "leading edge" of design, the pieces these architects are producing appear to many to be a few steps back from that edge. This criticism applies even more to the rest — the majority — of Knoll designers whose products are refined and elegant, but not earth-shattering.

Knoll's choices may be "safe," but the quality of the designed object is nonetheless very much present. The pieces introduced so far seem to be doing fairly well in the marketplace, and a good part of their success probably has to do with the timeless quality achieved by designs that are not going too close to the "edge." According to Swid, the Joseph D'Urso collection has consistently sold above the estimates or the sales quotes. Although he did not release specific figures, the D'Urso couch, listed at \$6,625-\$10,000, brings in the largest revenue. Swid and Cogan both point out that the Gwathmey/Siegel desks have been a remarkable success — they generated \$5 million in orders in the first year of production alone — the single most successful product Knoll has come out with since Swid and Cogan took over. (While the Zapf line of office dividers and storage units is Knoll's largest seller in terms of dollar volume and quantity of sales, this system, by industrial designer Otto Zapf of West Germany, was developed and designed before Swid and Cogan came on the scene.) Three months is too little time to tell how the Richard Meier line of furniture is doing, Cogan states, although reports indicate the side chairs and dining/conference tables are moving the fastest.

Obviously the furniture from Meier, D'Urso, Venturi et al. represents a tiny portion of the overall product line at Knoll. As Jeffrey Osborne explains, the office systems designs, of which Knoll carries four, are the strongest sources of income. They usually are designed by industrial designers familiar with the complex tooling, functional requirements and price factors involved in the development of office systems. The architect-designed pieces act as "pull-through" items, as Stephen Swid puts it. In other words, people come to Knoll to see the special lines of furniture — or the showrooms — and presumably end up buying the staples. A careful balance is struck between seduction and sell.

This careful balance is backed up by a well-thought-out managerial policy. In-house designers receive a percentage of the royalties for their designs, profit-sharing is available to all employees, salaries are high, and so is morale. In addition, Knoll has expanded its design and development staff in the last five years, and increased the designers it has under contract. When Swid and Cogan bought the company, Cogan recalls, there were about four architects and designers under contract and seven working in the development of products. "Today we have 50 in design and development and 40 architects, designers and industrial designers under contract world-wide." These developments make Swid and Cogan's recent record with Knoll International all the more interesting and potentially instructive. Along with having a well-known interest in art and design, Swid and Cogan also know how to run a business. — SS



*Skyline* visits a select group of showrooms and comments on the objects on display.

# Meier and Gwathmey/Siegel at Knoll

Sarah Halliday

Included here are examples of recently designed furniture by Richard Meier and Gwathmey/Siegel.

## Richard Meier collection (1982)

*Dimensions and list price:*

- Chair: 21"W × 20"D × 27½"H, 17½" seat; \$2,520
- Low stool: 17½" diam. × 15¼"H; \$1,590
- High stool: 15½" diam. × 27½"H; \$2,120
- Chaise: 72"W × 27"D × 25½"H; \$13,500
- Telephone stand: 18¼" diam. × 27½"H; \$3,120
- Table: 40" × 40" × 15¼"; \$5,750
- Table: 60" × 60" × 27½"; \$7,620
- Table: 40" × 80" × 27½"; \$7,270
- Table: 60" × 96" × 27½"; \$7,940

*Description:* All items come in black and white laminated hard maple veneers or in natural solid hard maple, with mortise and tenon construction. Black and white finishes are hand-rubbed urethane lacquer; natural finish is hand-rubbed low-sheen vinyl. The high stool has a stainless steel footing, and the chaise is channel-tufted fabric or leather with down pillow.

*Comments:* In an ensemble, the pieces form a geometrically abstract and beautifully proportioned collection. Each item becomes a sculptural element, ordering and containing the space around it. The dining table top's rounded — rather than angular — corners, however, detract somewhat from the purity of line and form of the rest of the pieces. Similarly, the chaise departs from the astringent simplicity of other pieces because of its overall bulk and the density of its vertical supports. Unofficial word is that the conference table and side chair are selling well, but we find the low stool the most formally elegant item. It is both a pure object and a functional one. Heavy enough to denote sturdiness, it has neither the uncomfortably sharp seat edge of the high stool, nor the too-low and unaccommodating backrest of the armchair.

## Office desks and table by Gwathmey/Siegel (1982)

*Dimensions and list price:* Desks are 62", 74" and 81½" long by 30" or 39" deep and 28" high. Matching credenzas are 20" deep; the table is 101" long by 39" deep by 28" high. Some examples are listed below.

- Two-pedestal mahogany desk 62" × 39" × 28"; \$2,758
- Two-pedestal mahogany desk: 74" × 39" × 28"; \$3,090
- Two-pedestal mahogany desk: 81½" × 39" × 28"; \$2,861
- Two-pedestal mahogany credenza: 62" × 20" × 28"; \$3,308

Mahogany "race-track" table: 101" × 39" × 28"; \$2,200  
*Description:* This range of furniture comes in varying combinations of rectangular tops. The desks are available with one rounded side; the table has semi-circular ends. Materials vary from solid mahogany to laminate, or techgrain (resembling wood) veneers, and any combination of pedestals, legs and tops can be ordered.

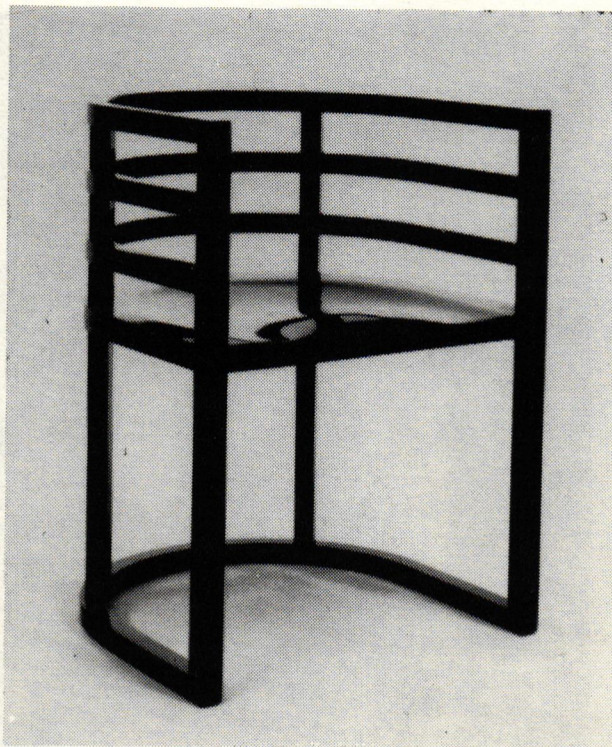
*Comments:* Subdued and traditional in tone. All the pieces have classic simplicity, unobtrusive shapes and a quality of finish that should make them appropriate for varied surroundings.



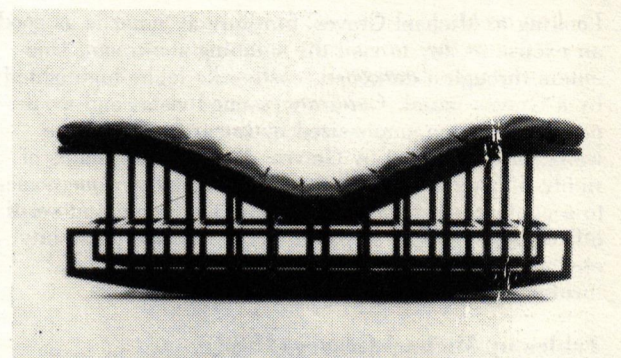
Richard Meier



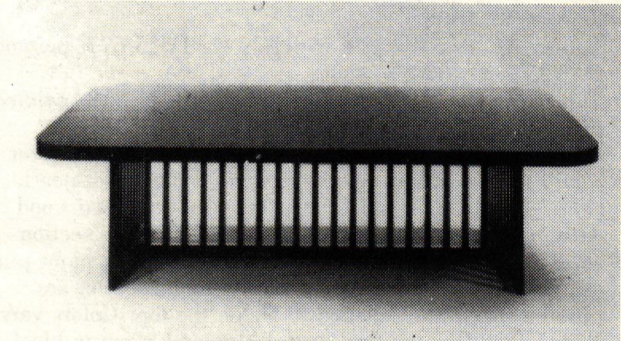
Charles Gwathmey and Robert Siegel (photo: D.Alexander)



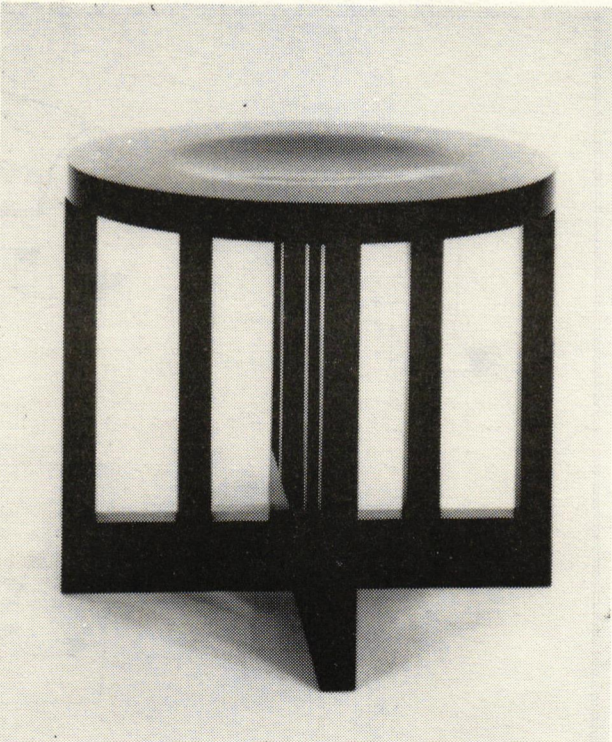
Furniture by Richard Meier (1982). Armchair



Chaise



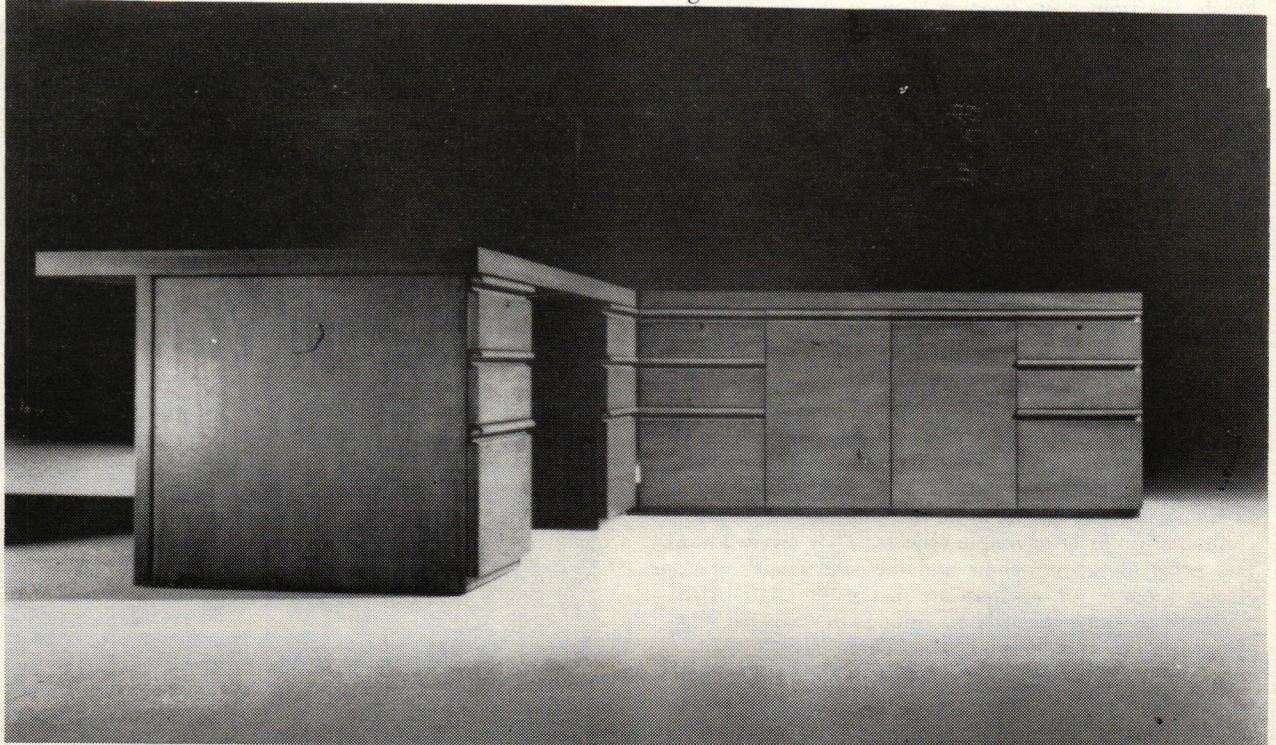
Conference/dining table



Low stool



High stool



Desk (1982); Gwathmey/Siegel



## Special Report: Furniture

**“The table’s sumptuousness comes from the finely inlaid and decorated top, the neat feet and the fine craftsmanship. . . . A formal table for an ordered household.”**

## Graves at Sunar



Michael Graves (photo: Dorothy Alexander)

Looking at Michael Graves' furniture at Sunar is as good an excuse as any to visit the stunning showroom. One enters through a darkened, castle-like lobby highlighted by a Graves mural. Carefully planned vistas and axial passageways are emphasized by linear friezes on the walls, also executed by Graves. Moving past swaths of richly-finished Graves-designed wallhangings, one comes to a conference room, large central showroom and small offices. The complete spatial and decorative continuity obviously provides a sympathetic setting for Graves' furnishings.

### Tables by Michael Graves (1982)

#### Dimensions and list price:

Table: 40½" × 105" × 29" (8 legs); wood \$20,837, painted \$12,502

Table: 40" × 70" × 29" (6 legs); wood \$15,677, painted \$9,525

Table: 40" × 40" × 29" (4 legs); wood \$11,212, painted \$6,251

**Description:** The table top is of Birds-Eye Maple veneer inlaid with ebonized wood and natural mother-of-pearl, semi-gloss lacquer finish or polyurethane painted wood with colored lacquer finish. Legs are 6" square-section solid wood, with vertical ebony inlay or black paint pin-stripes in the recesses to match the top. The feet are painted black and finished to match the top. Colors vary from cream through terra cotta, blue and green to black.

**Comments:** The Mannerist table has an aura of opulence, but the massing seems out of proportion — the long top of the eight-legged table is wafer-thin compared to the sturdy pillars supporting it. The effect is exaggerated by the bevelled table-top edges, which again reduce the sense of mass. The vertical strips on the legs reduce the bulk, but only to a degree. The table's sumptuousness comes from the finely inlaid and decorated top, the neat feet and the fine craftsmanship. Two bolts from top to base of each leg are needed to prevent them fracturing off if the table is shifted. Also, with four, six or eight legs, seating at the table is limited to just so many people — one per "portico." This is a formal table for an ordered household.

### Lounge chair and sofa by Michael Graves (1981)

#### Dimensions and list price:

Lounge chair: 32"W × 29"D × 28¾"H, 15¾" seat height; maple \$3,438, mahogany \$3,459

Sofa: 54"W × 30"D × 32"H, 15¾" seat height; maple \$4,609, mahogany \$4,714

**Description:** The frame is hardwood with a choice of Birds-Eye Maple or Pomele Burl Mahogany veneer, finished with a partly sheened lacquer and ebonized wood front corner detail. Foam upholstery is finished in either fabric or leather.

**Comments:** These pieces are very comfortable to sit in and coordinate well together. Their shape, slanted back and channelled fabric recall Viennese and Art Deco designs. Seen in a pale fabric and with darker wood finish, the front posts become abstract shapes supporting an aardvark-like mass. The disconnected details are unsettling: The partial scrolling of the posts, the small repeated triangles patterning the frieze below the front part of the seat, and certainly the ebonized strips attached to part of the outside edge of the legs point up the problem areas. When the ensemble is executed with mahogany in dark fabric, however, these details coalesce to make a homogeneous whole.

### Armchair and side chair by Michael Graves (1982)

#### Dimensions:

Side chair: 17"W × 19"D × 33"H, 18" seat height

Armchair: 23½"W × 21"D × 33"H, 18" seat height

No prices as yet for this prototype.

**Description:** Both chairs are of Birds-Eye Maple over a hardwood core. Arms and quarter-circles are of ebonized hardwood, with a mother-of-pearl inlay to the armchair arm. Fabric or leather seat.

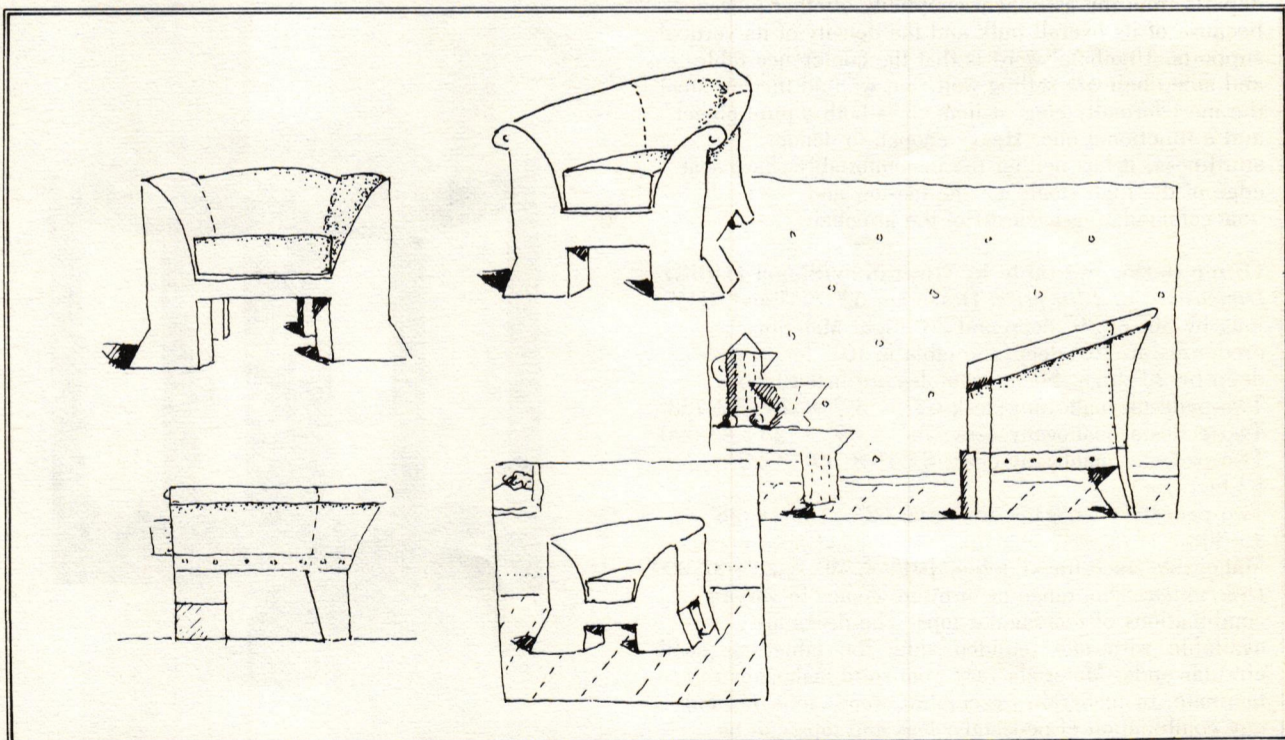
**Comments:** There seems to be little rationale behind the chairs as a pair or as single objects. They are awkward. The arms of the armchair and the side chair's quarter-circles seem to jut out from the rest of the chair. Also designed to catch the unwary sitter is the beveled edge of the seat and notched leg tops. There is little connection between the back supports and legs, which seem to follow opposing design ideas. While the chairs are designed to match the table, it is hard to see how the chair's complicated lines complement the absolute simplicity of the table shape.



Furniture by Michael Graves (1982). Table



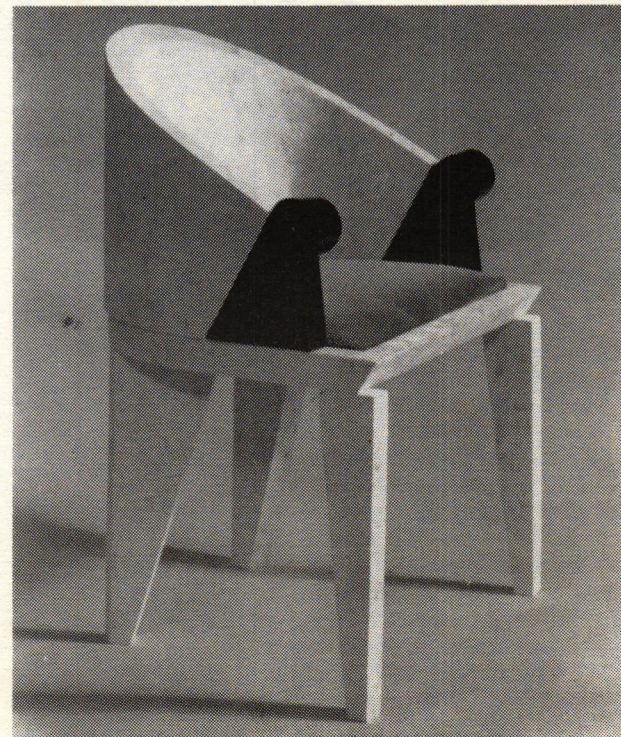
Lounge chair and sofa



Lounge chair studies



Side chair



Armchair (photos: ProtoAcme)



**“Botta has attained the essence of high-tech simplicity in these chairs. . . . The backrest hitting mid-back does, however, encourage the sitter to twitch and move.”**

## Botta at ICF

On the following pages are a number of designs specially selected for review by the editors. Best-selling items are designated by a star (\*).

### Side and armchair by Mario Botta (1982)

Dimensions and net price:

Side chair (Prima): 19"W × 22¾"D × 28¼"H, 18½" seat height; \$540

Armchair (Seconda): 20½"W × 22¾"D × 28¼"H, 18½" seat height, 26" arm height; \$625

**Description:** Both chairs are framed with steel tubing in silver or black epoxy finish, with a structural support curved to allow the seat to bend. Chair seats are made of perforated steel, silver or black epoxy contrasting to the frame. The backrest is expanded charcoal polyurethane rolled in two sections.

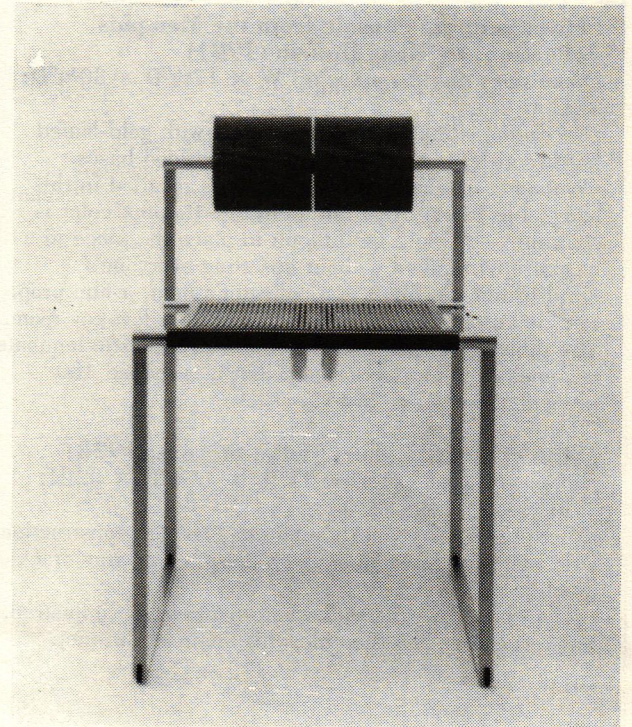
**Comments:** Botta has attained the essence of high-tech simplicity in these chairs: Either version would be perfect in Norman Foster's Hongkong and Shanghai Bank (see *Skyline* March 1983, p. 21). Since they have no color (only gray and black) and no decoration, the objects can be seen as pure form, integrating and expressing elements of structure and function. The black-seated chair appears in reality to be more transparent than the silver-seated version, for the black perforated seat reflects less light and makes more visible the chair's structure below. Both chairs are fairly comfortable (for all-steel construction), and the diagonal support of the backrest allows some springy movement. The rubber backrest hitting mid-back does, however, encourage the sitter to twitch and move.

Armchair (1982) (photo: Alias)



Mario Botta

Side chair (1982)



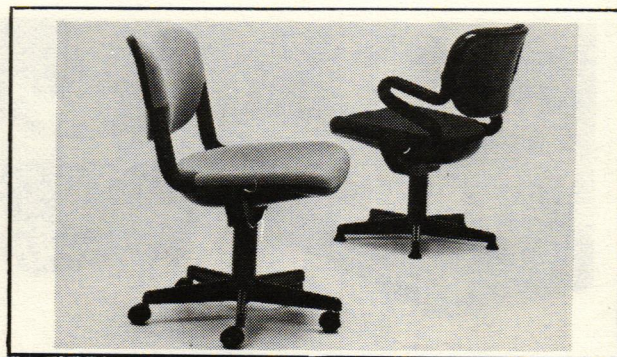
## Ambasz at Krueger

### The Managerial Chair from the Vertebra series by Emilio Ambasz and Giancarlo Piretti (1976)

Dimensions and list price: 22¾"W × 19⅞"D × 33¾"H, 19¼" seat height; \$572

**Description:** A seam-welded tubular steel seat and backrest is padded with injection molded plastic and polyurethane. A five-blade aluminum alloy pedestal column base is finished with black epoxy and has an automatic height-adjustment mechanism. The back rest and seat tilt forward and back together or independently, and the chair has a 360° swivel. Rubber/vinyl bellows conceal all mechanical and automatic movement mechanisms, and the chair is finished in fabric.

**Comments:** The chair has a jolly sophistication. The rounded padding softens any sci-fi effect of the bellows, and the whole is comfortable and fun to live with. This version has no arms or headrest, presenting the cleanest version of the more luxurious Vertebra chairs.



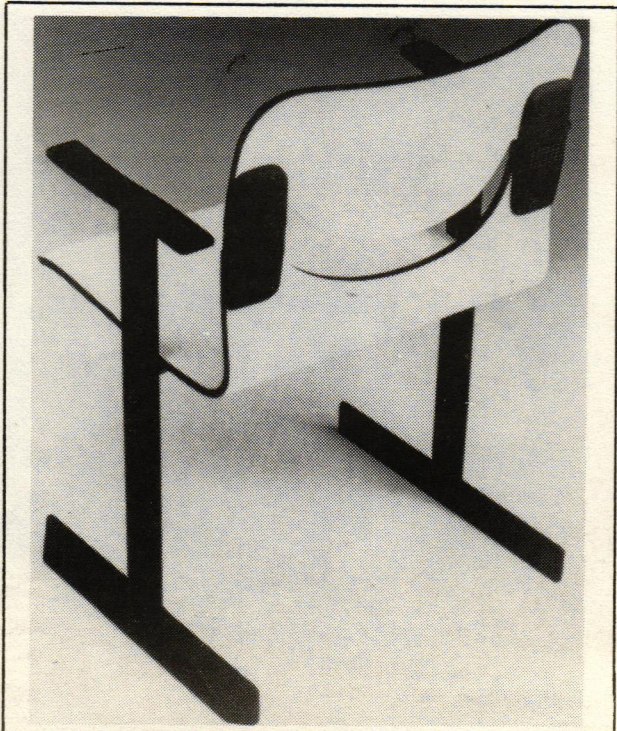
Managerial Vertebra chair (1976)

### \*The Institutional Chair from the Vertebra series by Emilio Ambasz and Giancarlo Piretti (1976)

Dimensions and list price: 19"W × 22"D × 30¾"H, 17¾" seat height; \$156 (no arms)

**Description:** A stacking chair that has optional arms and padding to seat and back. Seam-welded tubular steel finished with black epoxy in various colors. Automatic relax, upright and tilt forward positions.

**Comments:** A well-finished workmanlike design with enough optional variations to make it interesting.



Lumb-r chair (1982)

### The Lumb-r Chair by Emilio Ambasz and Giancarlo Piretti (1983)

Dimensions and list price: The chair's dimensions are not available yet; the list price will be in the \$250 range.

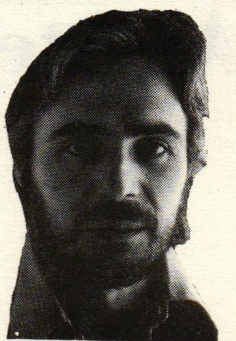
Currently the chair is sold only in Europe. Certain modifications are being made with the chair legs before the U.S. version is introduced at NEOCON in June.

**Description:** Armchair or armless, the chair is of molded hardwood ply with upholstery and steel legs. The backrest can be moved to upright or relaxed positions.

**Comment:** *Skyline* has seen only photos of this chair, but it seems it will maintain the standards of comfort and design established in the other pieces.



Emilio Ambasz



Giancarlo Piretti



Institutional Vertebra chair (1976)

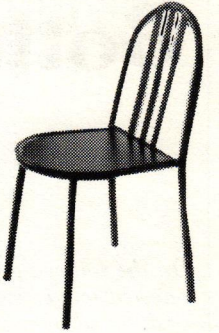


Special Report: Furniture

*“Hollywood in the fifties is recalled in this side table by the Austrian architect. . . . It would be difficult to place the piece in a casual environment without upsetting everyone’s equilibrium.”*

# At Furniture of the 20th Century

Chair (1928); Robert Mallet-Stevens



**Schwarzenberg console from the Memphis collection, by Hans Hollein (1981)**  
 Dimensions and list price: 63"W × 17½"D × 30¾"H; \$3,950

*Description:* Pink-stained briar wood with gold-leafed hardwood legs on two “eyebrow” hardwood bases.  
*Comments:* Hollywood in the fifties is recalled in this side table by the Austrian architect. Its pink color is striking — it would be difficult to place the piece in a casual environment without upsetting everyone’s equilibrium. Surely it is a collector’s item, a film prop, and definitely the center of attention in a low-key room. The table feels as if it is covered with a plastic laminate; it comes as a suprise to learn that it is indeed 100 percent the genuine article.

**\*Side chair by Robert Mallet-Stevens (1928)**

Dimensions and list price: 17"W × 16⅝"D × 32"H, 17¾" seat height; \$210

*Description:* Sheet and tubular steel welded construction, with matte black lacquer, high gloss red or gray crackle finish.

*Comments:* Hovering somewhere between the industrial, the vernacular and the chic, this chair is a winner.

Schwarzenberg side table (1981) by Hans Hollein (back); Transat Chair (1927) by Eileen Gray (front)



# At Atelier International

**\*Armchair by Le Corbusier (1928)**

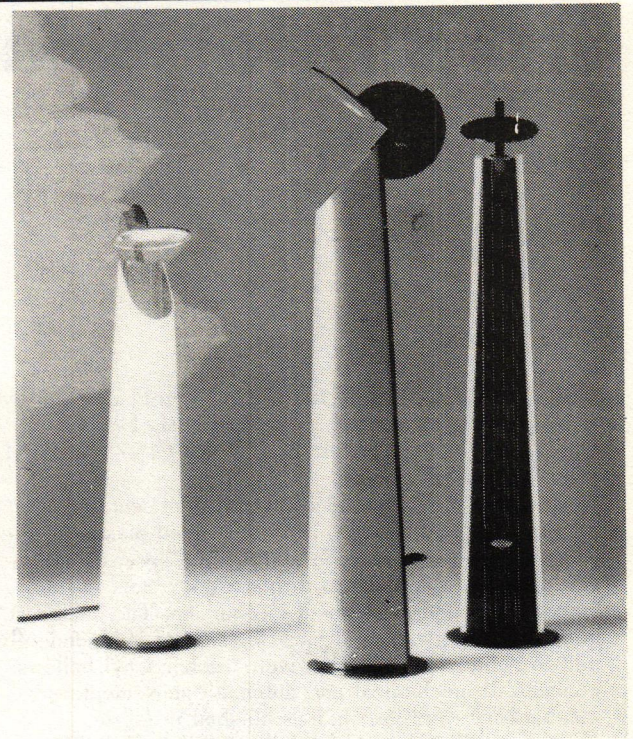
Dimensions and list price: 29¾"W × 27½"D × 26⅓"H, 16¾" seat height; leather \$4,190, Fabric \$2,540

*Description:* Tubular steel finished in polished chrome, matte or glossy enamel or glossy urethane in many colors, including pastel. Seat supports use coiled springs, and cushions are stuffed to approximate the original Le Corbusier samples. Upholstery can be fabric, leather or vinyl.

*Comments:* The whole line sells well (no surprise), although the armchair sells the best of Le Corbusier’s designs. With the new pastel colors for the frame, and tan and canvas leather sling, the manufacturer (Cassina) is meeting new market demands with a sense of style.



Armchair (1928); Le Corbusier (right)



Gibigiana light (1981); Achille Castiglioni

**Gibigiana light by Achille Castiglioni (1981)**

Dimensions and list price: 16"H, \$410; 20½"H, \$430

*Description:* This steel reading lamp has a concealed halogen light projected up through a cylinder and reflected off a circular mirror. The lamp is finished in red, black or bronze housing.

*Comments:* This latest implement for reading fulfills its noble task in a streamlined avian style.

**Sindbad two-seat sofa by Vico Magistretti (1981)**

Dimensions and list price: 68¾"W × 35⅓"D × 75"H, 16¾" seat height; \$3,740

*Description:* A body of molded polyurethane foam padded with Dacron is covered with black fabric on a base of black-lacquered beechwood. Removable blanket covers with cotton, wool or leather borders are attached by hooks, clips and Velcro in many colors.

*Comments:* The sofa by this furniture designer has a back low enough to be comfortable yet high enough for support, with the look of casually modish furniture. Very Italian and very SoHo.



Sindbad low back sofa (1981); Vico Magistretti (background)



**"This chair could go anywhere and we would like to take several ourselves."**

## At Stendig



Gina chair (1981); Bernd Makulik

### Kita side chair by Toshiyuki Kita (1983)

Dimensions and net price: 15¾"W × 19"D × 36¼"H, 17½" seat height; \$199

Description: Available in beech with ash top, in natural, black, red, blue, pale blue, pale green or pale pink matte opaque finish, with removable upholstered seat.

Comments: This supremely elegant design by the Japanese designer owes its clean-cut lines to the classic wood kitchen chair. The pastel shades best show off the combination of slight curves, thin vertical struts and traditional splayed shapes of back and seat. This chair could go anywhere and we would like to take several ourselves.

### \*Gina armchair by Bernd Makulik (1981)

Dimensions and net price: 21¾"W × 22¾"D × 32¾"H, 18" seat height, 22¾" arm height; \$230

Description: Beech frame with natural satins, red glossy, black matte or glossy lacquer. Seat is polyurethane on rubber webbing; back is polyurethane on molded plywood.

Comments: Its simple fluid lines account for this chair's popularity.

Kita chair (1983); Toshiyuki Kita



## Bennett at Brickel



Bankers series armchair (1967); Ward Bennett

### Bankers sofa by Ward Bennett (1982)

Dimensions and net price: 72"W × 33"D × 31¼"H, 17" seat height, 23½" arm height; \$1,480

Description: Natural-oiled cherry or ash, with fabric, leather or vinyl upholstery and tight seat.

Comments: In looking at a version upholstered in gray-green "Aquapile" (velveteen) fabric with very pale cherry frame, the contrast between the sofa's simple lines, uniformly subdued fabric, and the florid grain on the natural wood frame seemed jarring. However, with the taut seat and elegant Regency-like curves, it does achieve a mixture of casual and formal qualities that is unique.

### \*Bankers chair by Ward Bennett (1967)

Dimensions and net price: 23"W × 25"D × 32½"H, 19" seat height, 24½" arm height; \$485

Description: Natural-oiled cherry or ash, with cane, leather or fabric.

Comments: The chair by this furniture designer is a remarkable combination of a simple, basic modernist line and a fluid, traditional and comfortable form.



Bankers series sofa (1982); Ward Bennett

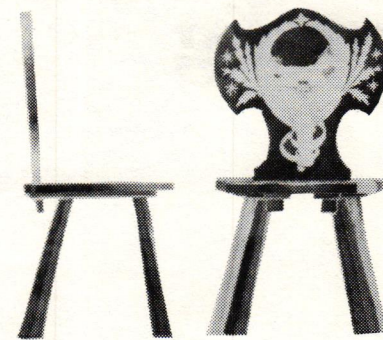
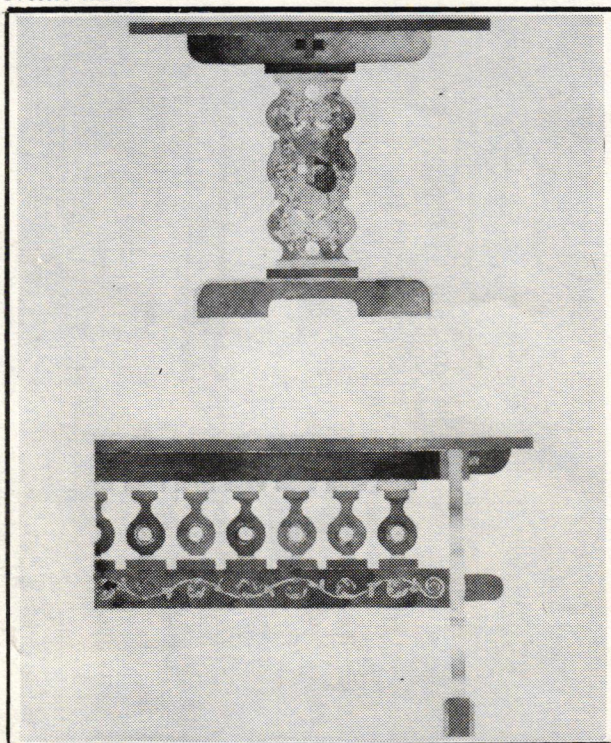


# Custom & Conceptual

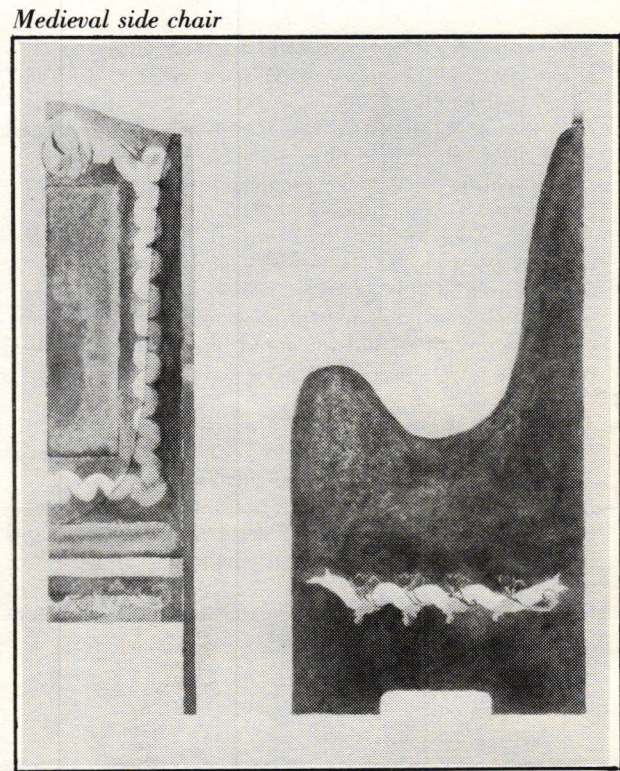
## Hammond Beeby & Babka for Hild Library

The design for the new classical-style Hild Library in Chicago inspired architects Hammond, Beeby & Babka to produce a limited assortment of furniture for the reading rooms. Thomas Beeby, working with Tannys Langdon, designed furniture that recalls vernacular styles of Northern Europe and the United States. In one design a plank chair, ornamented with stencilling and hand-painting, is paired with a similarly executed trestle table. The two architects also designed an armchair based on the American colonial wing chair, with ornamented wood enclosing walls. Another piece of furniture, a table that turns into a chair with a screen-like back, will be used in the children's story-telling room. This item is currently on view in the exhibition of decorative screens at the Rizzoli Bookstore in Chicago. (see p. 28 for review of show).

Furniture by Thomas Beeby and Tannys Langdon (1983).  
Trestle table



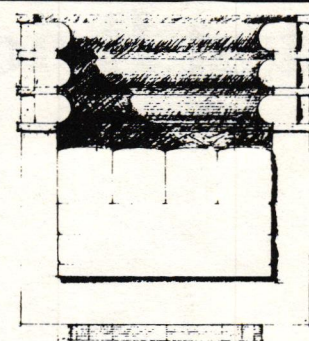
Plank chair (photos: Hedrich Blessing)



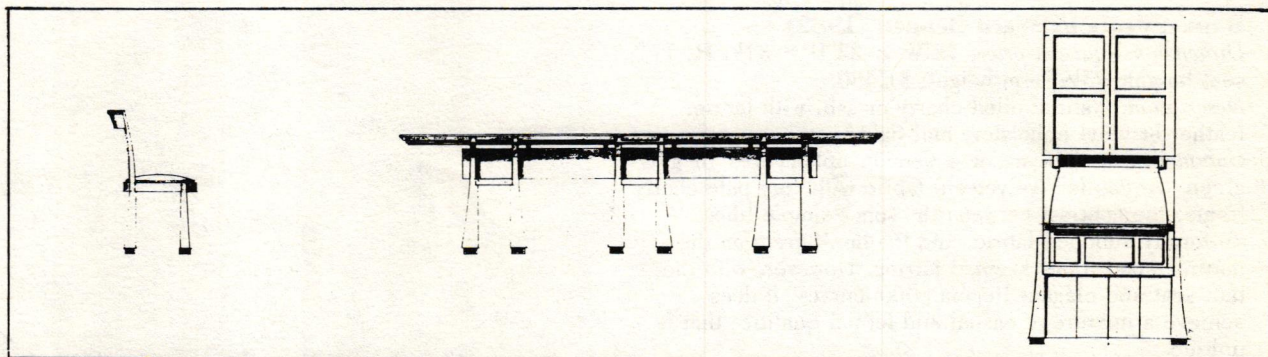
Medieval side chair

## Voorsanger & Mills for an L.A. House

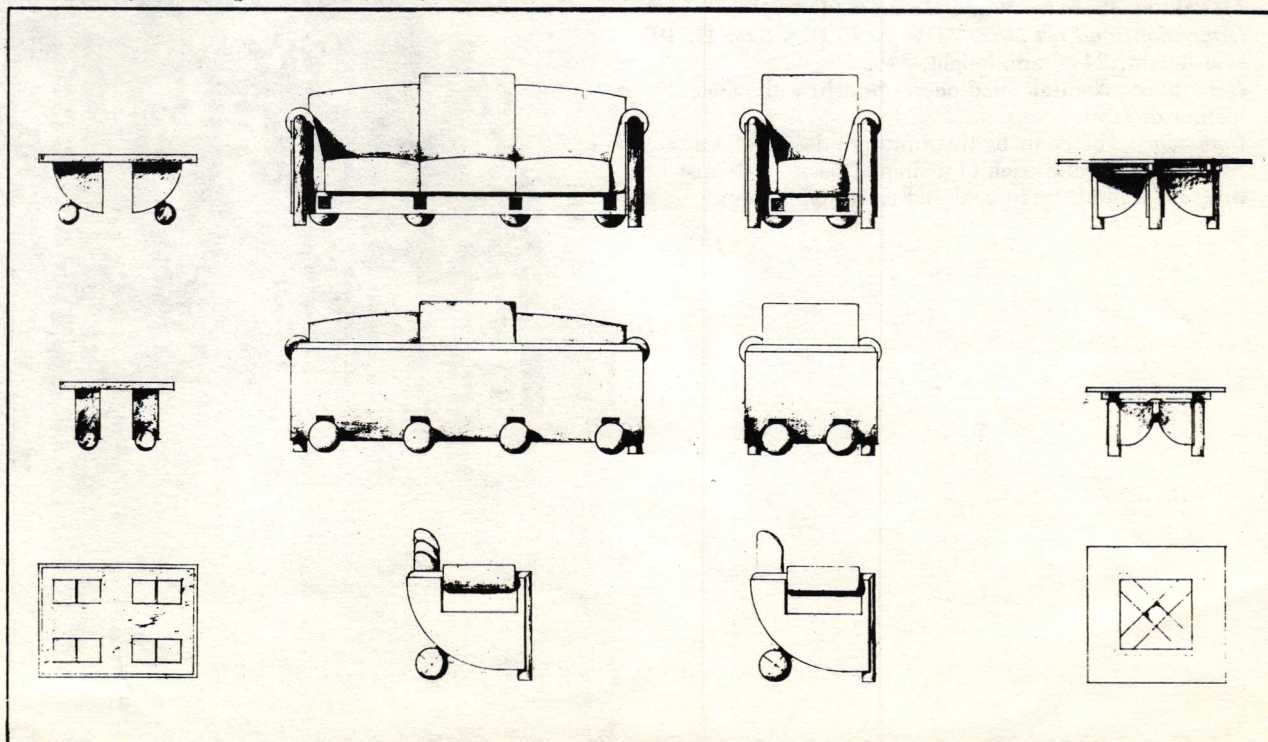
In remodeling a house in the lush and luxurious Bel-Air section of Los Angeles, architects Voorsanger & Mills proposed to the client a group of custom furniture in a style suitable to the axially organized wood-paneled interior they planned. Their proposal met with approval, and currently Voorsanger & Mills are designing 45 separate types of furniture (126 pieces). The traditionally conceived items vary from solid and comfortable easy chairs to light and elegant side chairs, and they rely on an assortment of different woods, such as teak, mahogany and walnut. As an added touch of exotica, Purple and Green Heart woods are used for decorative inlay. The choice of fabrics — silk, mohair, and wool in shades of browns, subtle greens and blues — will maintain the desired aura.



Swivel chair



Furniture by Voorsanger & Mills (1983). Side chair, table, cabinet wall unit



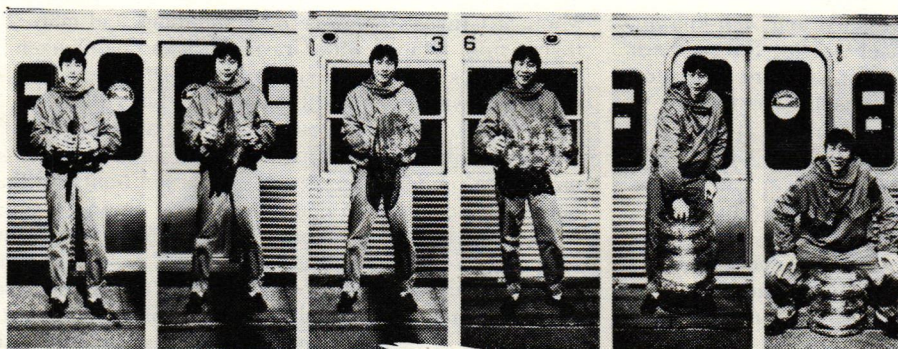
Lounge pieces



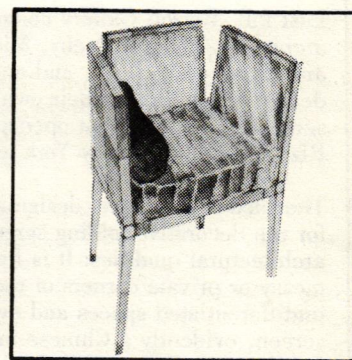
While some architects have recently designed extensive lines of custom furniture, others have won awards in the third annual Progressive Architecture furniture competition, as seen here.

# P/A Furniture Competition

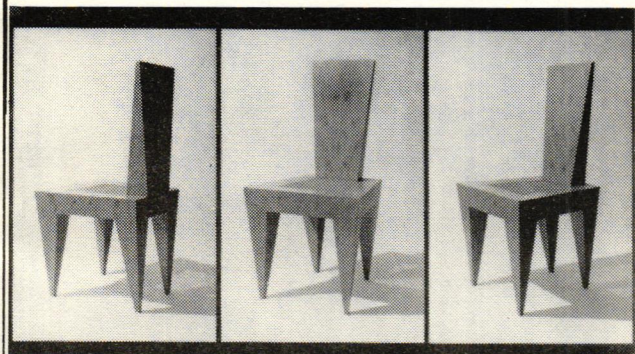
Last month *Progressive Architecture* released the results of its Third Annual International Furniture Competition held in February. In looking over 800 submissions from more than 20 countries, the jurors — Kenneth Frampton, Frank Gehry, Arata Isozaki, Rodolfo Machado and Michael McCoy — gave two first awards, six awards and eight citations. A first award went to Roger Crowley for the design of a side chair of fruitwood and cane (photo, below), which the jury admired for its proportions and careful balance between historical and modernist forms. A design with quite a different orientation also won a first award — an ingenious portable self-inflating plastic seat, designed by Dean Maltz of Tokyo (photos, right).



Accordion chair; Dean Maltz

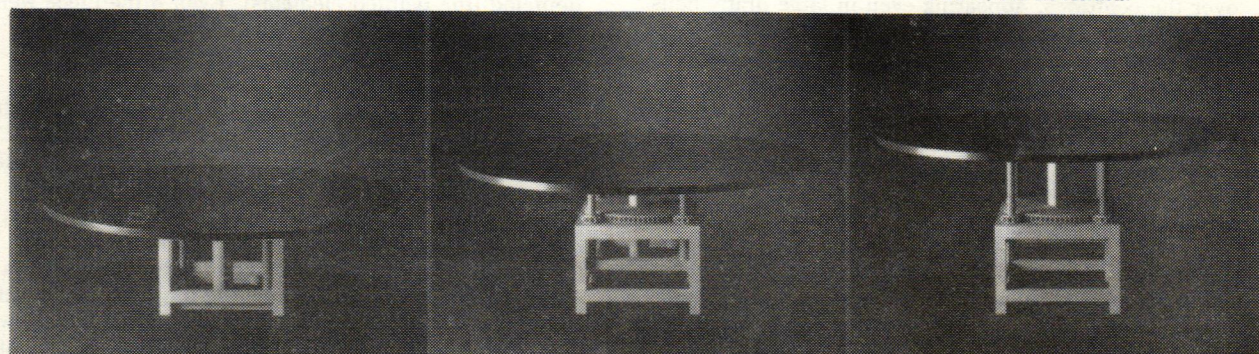


Chair; Tarek Ashkar



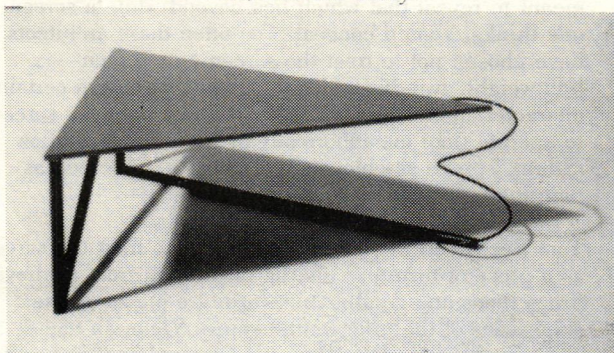
Side chair; Roger Crowley

Other designs that received awards included a chair for a music room made of sycamore and ebony over a pine frame by Tarek Ashkar (photo, right, top); a mechanical wood table designed by Edward Colby that can be adjusted in height like a piano stool by turning the top (right, middle); and a side chair by Michael Graves (bottom, left). Made of exotic wood veneer, bird's eye maple or lacquered wood, this chair is currently being displayed as a prototype design at Sunar (see p. 22).

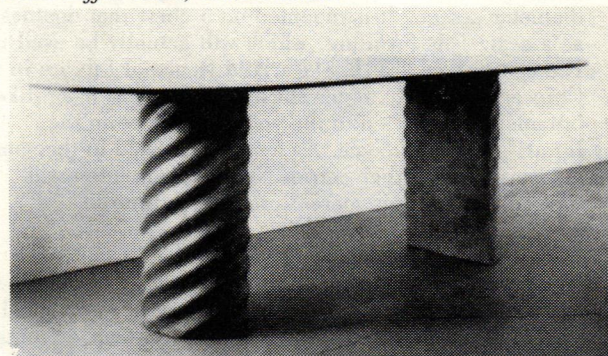


Mechanical wood table; Edward Colby

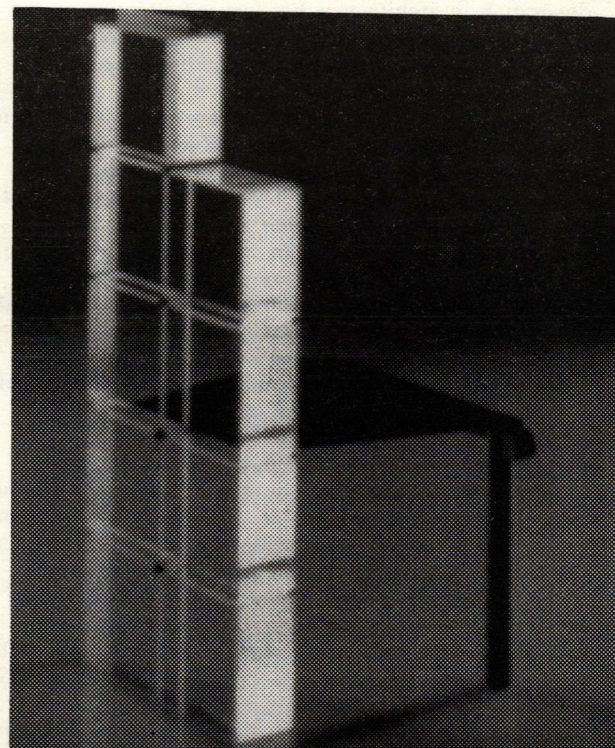
Citations included a design for a coffee table by Martin Linder, with a red plywood and Masonite top with black tubing and steel rod helix spring support (middle, left); a design for a desk/conference table with a glass top and poured concrete base (middle, left); and a chair made of cast-glass block, with a cantilevered stamped-metal seat and lacquered wood leg and frame by Nancy Skolos (middle, right). Also among the entries cited were a chair of steel tubing designed by Makoto Hashimoto of Tokyo (right, bottom) and a chair made of solid ash designed by Jack Millard (below).



Helix coffee table; Martin Linder

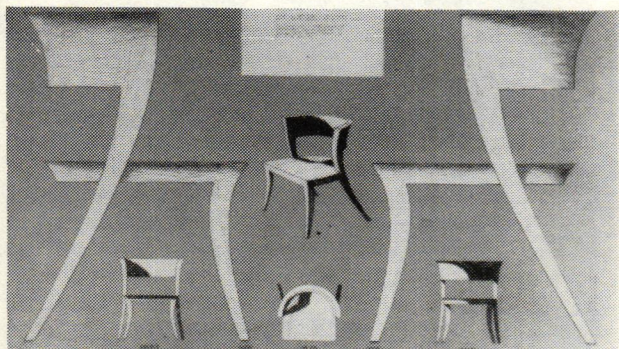


Executive desk/table; Elyse Grinstein and Jeff Daniels

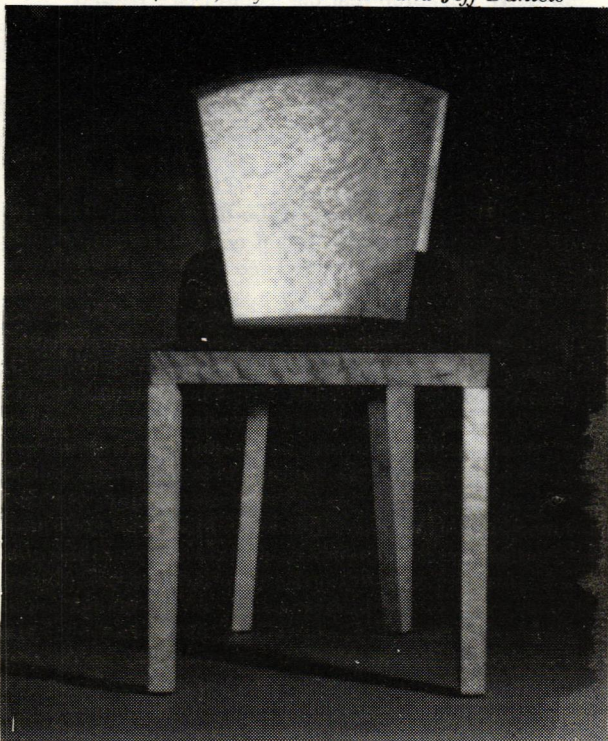


Crystal chair; Nancy Skolos

These and other winning submissions to the competition were on view during L.A.'s West Week in March, and will be displayed during NEOCON at the Chicago Merchandise Mart, June 14-17.



Chair; Jack Millard



Side chair; Michael Graves



Steel tube folding chair; Makoto Hashimoto



# Interior Landscapes

## Rizzoli Screens: Not Hiding Enough

**Suzanne Stephens:**

Last fall, Rizzoli Gallery commissioned four well-known architects, Thomas Beeby, Michael Graves, Robert Stern and Stanley Tigerman, and one artist, Richard Haas, to design and build (at their own expense) decorative screens for a show that opened in December at the Rizzoli Gallery in New York and travelled to Chicago.

The idea of architects designing screens was promising, for the decorative folding screen is an object with architectural qualities: It is free-standing, conceals messy or private corners of rooms, divides large undifferentiated spaces and even obstructs drafts. The screen, evidently a Chinese invention dating from the fourth to third century B.C., has proved quite useful over the centuries, appearing even in large drafty halls of medieval castles during the time of Edward II. According to Janet Woodbury Adams in the recently published *Decorative Folding Screens: 400 Years in the Western World*, in the seventeenth century the French generally adopted the screen as an integral item in their ensembles of furniture, whereas the English viewed the screen as a free-standing art object to be admired for its decorative scenes and motifs.

Given that the open plan inherited from modernist architecture is still characteristic of current construction, the screen-as-space-divider could occupy an important role in today's architecture. At the same time, the recent reevaluation of historical references, ornament and decoration in architecture has focused attention on the wall and its surface — an investigation with obvious design parallels to the decorative folding screen.

The architects chosen by Rizzoli have previously shown a strong interest in the decorative object, in ornament and particularly in the articulation of the wall, which most architects feel was given short shrift by modernist architecture. Strangely enough, however, this group failed to create folding screens of any great aesthetic, architectural or decorative interest. The fiasco of this well-intentioned experiment at least serves as some sort of object lesson, but unfortunately for this group, the object lesson may be harshest on them: These screens are a very accessible representation of their talents and abilities to the general gallery-going public.

Tigerman, Stern and Graves in particular attempt to make the screen a microcosm of their own architectural investigations. The pitfall here is that their efforts ignore certain expectations and assumptions about the nature of the object. Tigerman must be credited with a certain inventiveness: His four-paneled screen is composed of cut-out columns that include sconce-type lighting fixtures. The columns — sheathed in fluted chiffon, with wedge-shaped capitals and sconces made of copper bowls — are executed in a playful manner with whimsical pastel colors. But it is all too playful. Even though using more substantial materials might have diminished the cartoon-like quality, the "screen" as a colonnade introduces other problems. The cut-out columns increase visibility between areas, instead of curtailing it. The column silhouettes and sconces seem to affirm the traditional "background" role of the screen in their references to walls and edges of buildings. But the reduced-scale (six-foot-high) flimsy columns and the bold simplified contours won't allow the screen to recede: It dominates, attracting attention to its art, of which there is not enough.

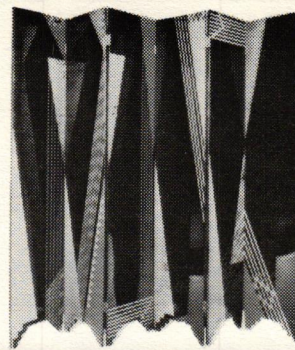
Michael Graves' screen is more ambitious and more distressing. Draped with Graves-designed pale peach fabric, the screen's four six-foot high panels are decorated with a painted trompe l'oeil blue-green drapery, mottled pink stone, and other architectural elements, including rectangular apertures. All these motifs are rendered in perspective on the front and the back of the screen, so that as you move around it you seem to be looking at interior and exterior walls of some strange building. The experiment would have been more successful if the trompe l'oeil materials and drapery had been more realistic — and deceptive. Instead they are executed in a vaguely impressionistic manner with little differentiation between the actual (the drapery) and the depicted (the painted elements). Even if the piece were executed with more polish, it would dominate the perceptual field. It does take over the space.

The same could be said of Robert Stern's screen. In this case, the screen doesn't just take over the space, it looks as if it will come after you too. Bundled up in its framework is a nervous combination of mirrored fragments, glazing bars, gilded broken cornices, three kinds of silk and wood pilasters and dado painted as *faux marbre*. The tension between the formal elements and proportions effectively kills the aesthetic of the soft colors and luxurious materials. Stern and his team saw the 7-ft. 10-in. screen as a "thematic representation of a partially open French balcony window." Yet a window is meant to reveal that which lies beyond while a screen, one thinks, should conceal. Too often these architects have chosen not to treat the screen as a screen — a lightweight, two-dimensional barrier that shares certain characteristics with a wall. Rather they want the screen to operate (too) metaphorically as a screen-as-window (Stern), screen-as-colonnade (Tigerman) or screen-as-painting-as-sculpture (Graves).

Tom Beeby, on the other hand, wants to treat the screen as a piece of furniture, taking inspiration from medieval fire screens and combination furniture pieces in the snuggeries of the nineteenth-century Victorian home. The piece Beeby designed with Tannys Langdon has a tabletop that tilts up to become a circular 48-in. diameter screen. It is mounted on a chest that doubles as a seat. This furniture, which will actually be used in Hammond Beeby & Babka's Hild Regional Library in Chicago, currently under construction, has a moon-like ornament best suited to the young audience in the library's reading rooms. As a screen viewed in the same category as the other entries, however, its interest is limited; it clearly is more a piece of furniture.

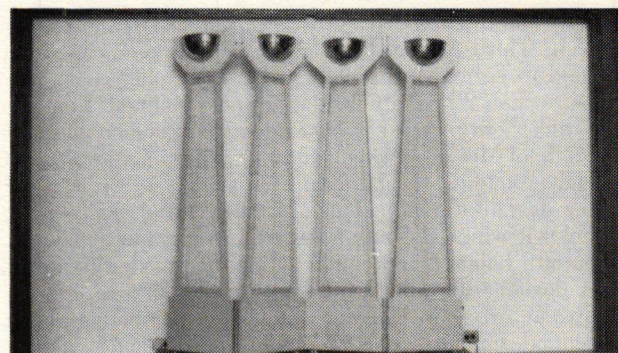
Richard Haas' entry pays close attention to all the features of the traditional folding screen. With its six-ft.-high black lacquered panels ornamented with diagonal gold, silver, red and blue patterns, the screen, executed by Hong Kong craftsmen, provides a rich but not obtrusive backdrop that one could place behind furniture, in corners or where one wanted to partition areas. Its problem, of course, is the similarity it has to previous efforts, particularly an Art Deco screen designed by Jean Dunand in 1925. Haas' replication of Dunand gives one pause, for the most successful entry in the show is clearly this safely derivative one.

Had the architects accepted the basic definition of a screen, their own efforts might not have been so over-reaching. To effectively advance the state of the art of this object-type (presumably a goal), they would have had to maintain a certain balance between what the object is and what it could be. The folding screen is flat, two-dimensional, opaque, usually decorated and recedes to the background or helps define the edge of an interior. If it is to be something else — that is, if the architectonic possibilities of the screen are to be developed — this would have to be done with discipline and restraint, as well as craft and imagination.

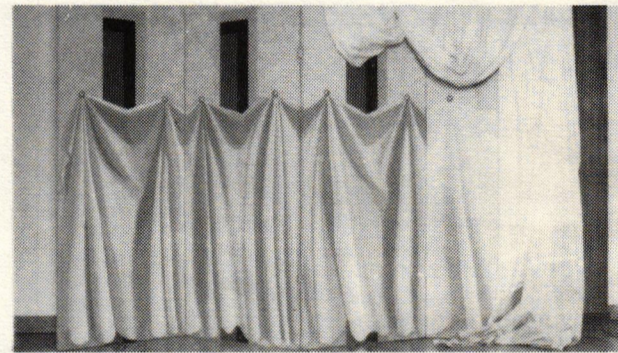


Untitled screen (c. 1925);  
Jean Dunand (photo:  
Philippe Garner)

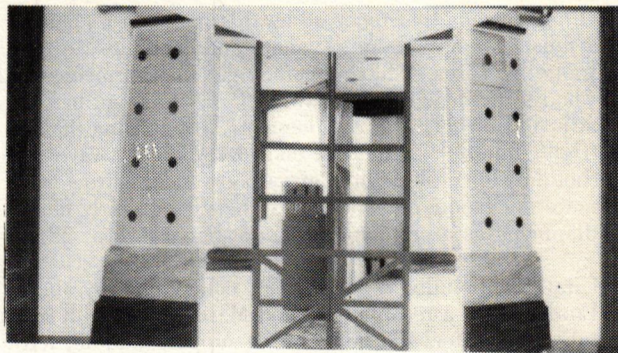
The exhibition *Decorative Screens* opened at the Rizzoli Gallery in New York in December and ran through January. It is now on view at the Chicago Rizzoli Gallery through April 11. The book *Decorative Folding Screens: 400 Years in the Western World* by Janet Woodbury Adams was published by Viking Press, New York, in 1982 (208 pages, black-and-white and color photographs, \$30.00).



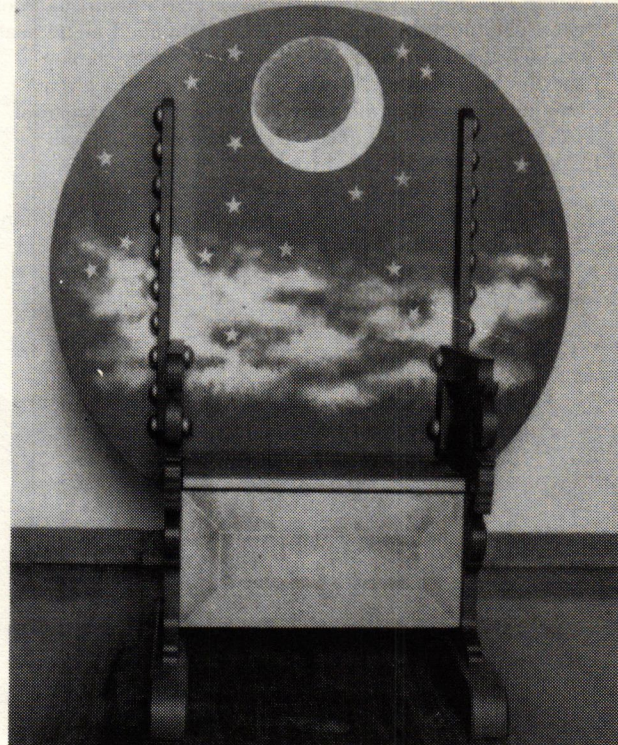
Screen by Stanley Tigerman



Screen by Michael Graves



Screen by Robert A.M. Stern



Screen by Thomas Beeby



Screen by Richard Haas (photos: courtesy Rizzoli Gallery)



An exhibition of architect-designed screens, books on interiors and recent showroom design inspire commentary.

## Design Books: A Selection

Kate Norment

**American Decorative Arts.** Robert Bishop and Patricia Coblenz. Abrams, New York. 394 pages, 443 illustrations, 160 in color. \$65.00.

A massive and comprehensive chronological study of American decorative arts — furniture, objects, textiles, sculpture, painting, printed material — that also provides the historical, cultural and social background for the developments in this field. The text is clear and informative; the layout of the book attractive and the photographs well reproduced.

**Contemporary Furniture.** Klaus-Jurgen Sembach. Architectural Book Publishing Co., distributed by Hastings House, New York. 320 pages, 950 photographs. \$37.95.

A review of international furniture since World War II. Each section of the book highlights one type of furniture and is introduced by a brief summarizing note. There is no attempt at criticism or analysis; the book is intended as a catalogue.

**French Style.** Suzanne Slesin and Stafford Cliff; photographs by Jacques Dirand; foreword by Robert Rosenblum. Clarkson N. Potter, New York. 288 pages, 450 color photographs. \$35.00

A slick, glossy picture-book. Sumptuous design-magazine-type photographs present impeccable rooms decorated in "French" style, ranging from the placement of furniture to an arrangement of seashells. Inconsequential fluff.

**An Illustrated History of Interior Decoration.** Mario Praz. Thames & Hudson, New York. 401 illustrations, 65 in color. \$75.00

Back in print after ten years, this book concerns itself with the details of domestic interiors from the ancient world to the late nineteenth century through a collection of paintings and prints from all over the world. The author's commentary presents a cultivated and literate view of man's relation to his home through the years.

**Mies van der Rohe: Furniture and Interiors.**

Werner Blaser. Barron's, Woodbury, New York. 144 pages, 220 black-and-white photographs and line drawings. \$19.95.

The main point of this book is the visual material documenting Mies' work — plans of his interiors and photographs of his furniture. The written material — very short texts by Blaser and a few reprinted Mies pieces — seem superfluous, providing little background.

**Ornamentalism: The New Decorativeness in Architecture and Design.** Robert Jensen and Patricia Conway. Clarkson N. Potter, distributed by Crown Publishers, New York. 312 pages, 550 photographs, 330 in color. \$40.00.

In an attempt to fit many different trends under one rubric, this book includes material of widely varying quality, ranging from Michael Graves' much-published architectural work to relatively obscure crafts by local artists. The introductory essay is not enough to hold the series of photographs together.

**The Wood Chair in America.** Produced, designed and edited by Donovan and Green; written with C. Ray Smith and Marian Page. Published by Estelle D. Brickel and Stephen D. Brickel, New York. 120 pages, 200 black-and-white photographs and line drawings. \$19.95, soft cover.

This book explores the development of the wood chair in America through a historical survey and glossary of styles, both of which include clean line drawings of representative pieces, and a final section on the chair-making process, which includes photographs. Aside from the useful reference material it provides, the book is notable for its high design, both in the general layout and in the details — such as the glossy-black-on-matte black pages.

**William Morris Textiles.** Linda Parry. Viking Press, New York. 192 pages, 280 illustrations, 180 in color. \$46.95 hard cover; \$24.95 soft cover.

A comprehensive study graced by detailed and intelligent writing about the textiles and their manufacture as well as a complete illustrated catalogue of Morris & Co.'s repeating designs.

## West Week and Showrooms

Barbara Flanagan



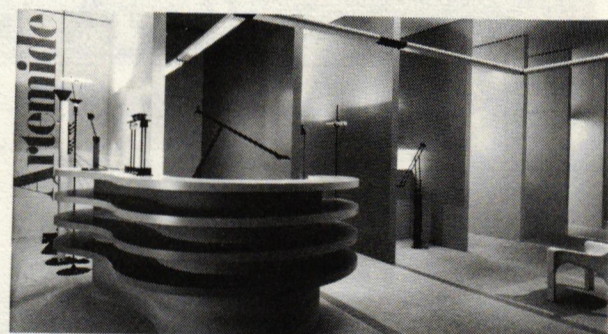
Artemide Showroom (1983); Vignelli Associates

If NEOCON is the big one and Designers' Saturday is the urbane one, then what is West Week? It's the warm one (with palm trees) at Cesar Pelli's Pacific Design Center — the annual western convention of the contract furniture industry. The focus of the three-day gathering (March 17-19) was a series of panels on design philosophy (13 hours) and professional practice (5 hours) and assorted audio-visual presentations (4 hours). The ponderous theme, "Gateway to the Americas," was accounted for in three hours of low-profile events that left visitors asking what "Americas" were. Admittedly, hyperbolic themes are standard fare for conventions and proms, but this one was just plain tenuous. If a theme is invented to rally enthusiasm and provoke conversation (especially if business in the field is bad, as it has been), then at least some of the exhibitions, speeches and programs should refer to it.

The unnamed theme of the week turned out to be "America: Gateway to Italian Design?" Nothing was more controversial than Memphis — their PDC exhibit, their panel of designers, their concurrent exhibit at the Janus Gallery. No one was more serenely articulate than Lella and Massimo Vignelli — except maybe Michael Graves who is a Memphisite anyway. And no place was newer than the Vignelli-designed Artemide showroom. Its design is an ingenious solution to the given: the need to display many illuminated lamps in a small corner tenant space. However, this showroom is a mere snack bar compared to the formal lighting emporium of Artemide, Flox and Arteluce in Milan. The differences seem to reflect the respective approaches to lighting in the two countries.

Italian architects use these lamps as both the sculptural focus and the atmospheric variable of small rooms. Consequently they design showrooms as spare, abstract backdrops to demonstrate the form of the lamp or the shape and color of its light. American architects are not as convinced that lighting and furniture will salvage environments; they are also more optimistic than Italians about the continued possibility of building better buildings. So when enlightened American architects specify expensive Artemide fixtures, it is often to pay homage to Italian design rather than to follow its principles.

Seen as Italian design souvenirs, the new showroom's lamps are well-installed. But to be understood as design tools, the lamps need more space to demonstrate their special relationships to various surfaces. Unfortunately, the narrow spaces of the showroom tend to bake the browsers with tungsten and halogen irradiation. And the room's bright ambient lighting diminishes the individual drama of the fixtures and minimizes the special effects of some of the Sottsass and Gismondi designs.



The rectangular showroom contains a long wall lined with a series of perpendicular walls forming display corridors. Lengths of tatami-like mats subdivide the floor across its width and continue into the corridors as straight, undulating and angled exhibit spaces. Sometimes the corridors invite entry, sometimes they prevent it. Thus, as in the Vignellis' Hauserman showroom down the hall, the visitor orders his own set of vistas and spatial juxtapositions by moving through the rooms attentively. The quality of attention determines the quality of architectural reward. But whereas the fluorescent Dan Flavin/Vignelli lighting glamorized the Hauserman wall systems, the Vignelli walls here do not glorify the Artemide lighting.

The showroom is a better vehicle for Colorcore, Formica Corporation's evolutionarily superior laminate. While the showroom was being designed, Artemide accepted the gift of Colorcore wall, counter, and floor accents and in return labeled the walls with the brand name. This showcasing demonstrates once and for all that Colorcore is what it is — it can be bevelled, routed, easily maintained; it is softly reflective and certainly solid-state in its integral color — but what happened to the distinctive black line? Outside the well-visited Artemide showroom, designers admired the *real* Formica furniture by Memphis and surreptitiously toyed with PA's Furniture Award models.

After days of theme-searching and panel-mismatching the week ended with one unifying thought: Charles Moore proposed that he and his western colleagues have been exploring architectural fantasies of place, beholden to Mediterranean breezes. There is such a thing as wonderful tropical architecture, he claimed. And so, in the battle between emotional warm-clime design and cerebral cold-clime design, Los Angeles scored points for providing another sunny, warm — ergo, architecturally meaningful — day.





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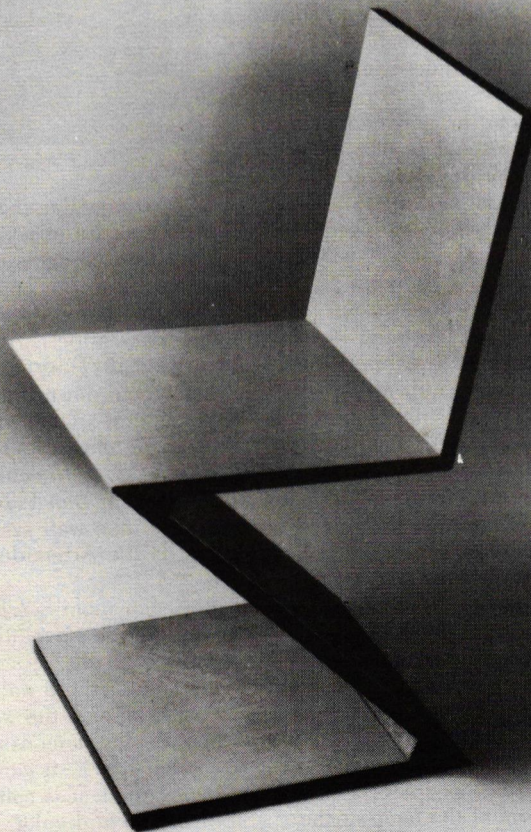
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## In Brief

### Sylvia Lavin

**Architect's Designs for Furniture.** Jill Lever. Rizzoli Publications, New York, and Royal Institute of British Architects Drawing Collection, London. 144 pages, 170 illustrations, 20 in color. \$25.00 hardcover; \$15.00 soft cover.

A selection of works from the RIBA Drawing Collection has recently been catalogued in *Architect's Designs for Furniture* by Jill Lever. The drawings are arranged to represent the development of furniture designed by architects from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. Each entry is well-documented and accompanied by an extensive caption exploring the relationship of a particular design to its intended architectural context and to the overall progression of the architect's career.

Lever's introductory text attempts more than a basic compilation, however, and is in essence a critical essay. Her criticism, though, is based on the premise that furniture most like architecture is superior to furniture that is simply furniture. Her thesis is that architects — a role she leaves undefined — design the "best" furniture, and are at their "happiest" designing furniture. She argues that professional architectural training, as opposed perhaps to apprenticeships in the arts-and-crafts tradition, instills a developed sense of design, which greatly helps the process of creating furniture. In claiming that experimentation in this field has been a response to the architect's desire for "total design," Lever assumes that only an architect has the ability to produce furniture that can be integrated into an architectural context. Lever further asserts that the architect's need for new forms to suit new spaces leads to the "wittiest" and most "innovative" designs for furniture.

Lever never confronts drawing for furniture as an artistic genre independent from architectural drawing; furniture design and architectural design remain undifferentiated. It remains unclear whether Lever believes furniture to be the extension of a building, a miniature version of a building or simply a cheap and easily-produced building "manque." Furthermore, after claiming that architects' designs for furniture are the most "architectural," she weakly concludes that the possibility of attributing "distinct qualities to architect-designed furniture in general is doubtful." Despite some of Lever's misguided conclusions, her initial idea of calling attention to this fascinating realm of architectural practice is to be applauded.

**Modern Architecture Since 1900.** William J.R. Curtis. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. 416 pages, many black-and-white photographs and plans, 12 color pages. \$37.00.

Although the number of survey books covering architecture of the twentieth century has grown exponentially in recent years, until now choosing an appropriate text book has been difficult for teachers and students. One obstacle has been that the major works by Giedion, Pevsner and Hitchcock have come to be associated more with the dissemination of particular ideologies than with the simple transmittal of information. The current changes in attitude toward modern architecture have magnified the problem. Even more recent texts of the highest quality, such as Leonardo Benevolo's *The History of Modern Architecture* or Kenneth Frampton's *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, are characterized by their methods of analysis, relating architecture either to its political context or to a Marxist interpretation of history. These histories provide significant new insights into the study of modern architecture, but nonetheless seem almost more interesting today as "historic" works reflecting the thought of a certain period. It is neither realistic nor desirable to hope for complete objectivity in university course books, yet certain works in related fields, such as H.W. Janson's *History of Art*, have succeeded in remaining useful throughout many decades.

William Curtis' new book *Modern Architecture Since 1900* should prove a superb text for any course on modern architecture. His text contains nothing radical,



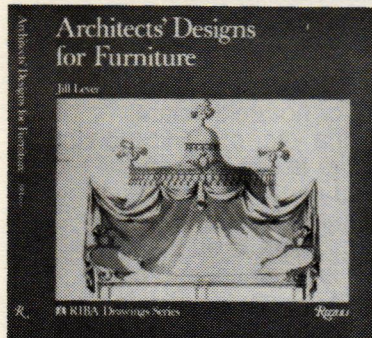
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no aggressively innovative organization of material, no commentary on obscure buildings, no revolutionary new research. It is exactly this quietness that enables the book's greatest quality to emerge: discussion consistently founded on what may be considered the "old school" of visual analysis. This return to traditional architectural history is — paradoxically — revolutionary. Curtis adheres to the belief that what one sees is of prime importance; a vast number of buildings, illustrated or described, are analyzed according to their formal characteristics. This approach does not negate the significance of non-architectural factors, nor does it necessitate conservative or limited conclusions. It is unfortunate that in the final chapter, devoted to buildings of the last decade, Curtis abandons his own principle and takes on the role of critic. It is perhaps more difficult to suppress personal feelings when confronting contemporary buildings, but there is no reason to assume that a new building deserves a less objective analysis than a modernist "masterpiece." Even given this final transgression, *Modern Architecture Since 1900* can provide the student of architecture with the means to accomplish his most arduous task: to "see."

**Architecture of the Twentieth Century in Drawings: Utopia and Reality.** Vittorio Lampugnani. Rizzoli Publications, New York. 192 pages, 166 illustrations, 16 in color. \$35.00.

*Architecture of the Twentieth Century in Drawings* is a pictorial essay on architects' drawings of their own architectural schemes since 1910. It does not presume to be a complete history of modern architecture, nor of the development of techniques or styles of architectural rendering. On the contrary, the book offers a brief glimpse into a particular facet of the architect's creative process by allowing the drawings reproduced to convey their own arguments. The major task involved in producing such a book is not primarily research and writing, but the process of selection and the means of organization.

Lampugnani has elected not to follow the strict courses offered by chronology, geographic distribution or drawing methods. Instead, he has attempted to group the drawings by the visions they represent or the attitudes they embody. For the sake of clarity, the drawings within each ideologically-defined category are presented in roughly chronological order. By avoiding the snares of a traditional historical layout, Lampugnani allows the reader to discern similarities between architectural figures usually considered worlds apart. For example, in the book's first section, a series of Frank Lloyd Wright drawings is followed by works of Alvar Aalto, inviting a comparison that illustrates the architects' common dream for "personal freedom," despite the vastly different forms of their work. Lampugnani's scheme also provides a clarified understanding of shifts within a single architect's career. The placement of Michael Graves' work does not pigeonhole him into a narrow post-modernist category, nor does it present him as a traitor to his earlier modernist designs. His work is generously afforded the opportunity to change; an early project is associated with the "Aesthetics of Reason" and later works with the "Ambivalence of Tradition."

Lampugnani's introductory text would have benefited from the inclusion of a closer analysis of types of architectural rendering. He addresses the symbolic contents of the illustrations but avoids exploring the various implications inherent to perspective renderings, presentation drawings and working sketches. Equally important to the finished drawing are *how* and *why* an architect chooses to visualize his intention. The selection of paper, implements and audience forms as much a part of the creative process as does a conscious reference to other buildings or architectural styles, and is perhaps more pertinent to a discussion of the art of architectural drawing.

## "HUMANISTS IN MUSEUMS"

**The New York Institute for the Humanities has awarded grants to six institutions in New York State to pay for a one-year part-time consultantship at each institution.**

The Institute is now seeking applications from humanist scholars to fill the following consultantship positions:

1) an historian with a background in interdisciplinary and demographic studies to work with the Museums at Stony Brook to conduct research on the patterns of ownership and use of private and commercial horsedrawn vehicles in the U.S. between 1700 and 1900.

2) a social historian with a background in New England colonial history and a familiarity with the content and methodology of New England town studies such as those of Zuckerman, Lockridge and Clark, to work with the Mulford Farm Planning Task Force of the East Hampton Historical Society.

3) a humanist scholar who combines experience in urban planning and architectural history to participate in the development of an exhibition about architecture and the built environment for children at the Staten Island Children's Museum.

4) a social historian or student of material culture, preferably with exhibition experience, to help with research for exhibitions dealing with aspects of 17th, 18th, and 19th century life in Brooklyn for the Long Island Historical Society.

5) a humanist scholar from the field of Jungian psychology and archetypal symbolism to provide expertise in the field of visual symbols for the mounting of two exhibitions at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum.

6) a 19th century American social historian to assist in researching, interpreting and installing a permanent exhibition on the lives and times of the Suggett family, the original occupants of the Cortland County Historical Society's premises.

Re-imbusement for participation in the project will be \$5,000. Details of schedule, duties and work load to be worked out between the humanist scholar and the participating institution.

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*"Humanists in Museums" has been funded by a grant from the New York Council for the Humanities, a state program of the National endowment for the Humanities.*



## Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies

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## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

**The Undergraduate Program**

The Undergraduate Program offers students from a consortium of Liberal Arts colleges the opportunity to spend a "junior year in New York" studying architecture. Architecture has generally been excluded from the Liberal Arts curriculum and treated primarily as a technical discipline. In contrast, at the IAUS architecture is approached as one of the liberal arts, and the curriculum has been developed within a strong humanistic context. Students majoring in fields other than architecture are urged to apply. It is also possible to have the year at the Institute serve as the core curriculum in an architecture major. The design tutorial is highly professional, and is considered to be excellent preparation for graduate school.

The Undergraduate Program runs a full academic year. It is not possible to attend for a single semester. All students take five full year courses for a total of 30 credit hours. There are no electives. The courses are the Design Tutorial, History of Architecture, Theory of Architecture, History of Urbanism, and Structures.

**The Advanced Design Workshop**

The Advanced Design Workshop in Urban Form is oriented to two types of students; graduates of four year programs in architecture, and advanced students enrolled in professional degree programs. The program is directed at the problem of relating professional education to the actual work experience, and to finding new ways to make architectural education more effective and relevant to the Urban situation:

The ADW is a combination of a design studio and academic courses. The studio explores urban problems within a critical and analytic framework. The structure of the academic courses allows students to tailor the program to the individual requirements of their schools.

The Advanced Design Studio is headed by Diana Agrest, noted architect, critic, and Urban theorist. The design projects all involve New York City sites, and the programs are relevant to the contemporary urban situation. Problems in recent years include The West Side Docks, Columbus Circle, and Times Square. Students work individually and in teams, under the direct guidance of a design tutor. Guest tutors have included Aldo Rossi, Robert Stern, Charles Gwathmey and Cesar Pelli.

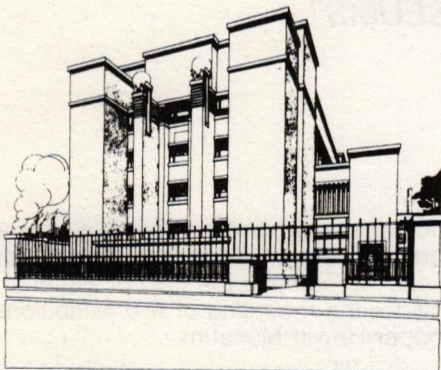
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The Internship is intended for college graduates with little or no architectural background. It offers a year of work and study to allow the student to assess his or her interests, talents and capacities in architecture. The Internship is a three part work/study program. There is an intensive design studio which is the focal part of the program. The goal of the studio work is the development of the knowledge and skills necessary to express architectural ideas in a visual form. In addition, each student works two full days a week for one of the Institute Programs (Publications or Exhibitions) or at an outside architectural office that is connected with the Institute. The work is diverse and is intended to introduce students to the many elements of architecture that exist outside the classroom. The third component of the program is the academic courses. Interns select two or three of the academic courses offered each semester and are expected to attend on a regular basis.

For further information please contact Linda Dukess Bernstein at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, 8 West 40th Street, New York, NY 10018. (212)719-9796.

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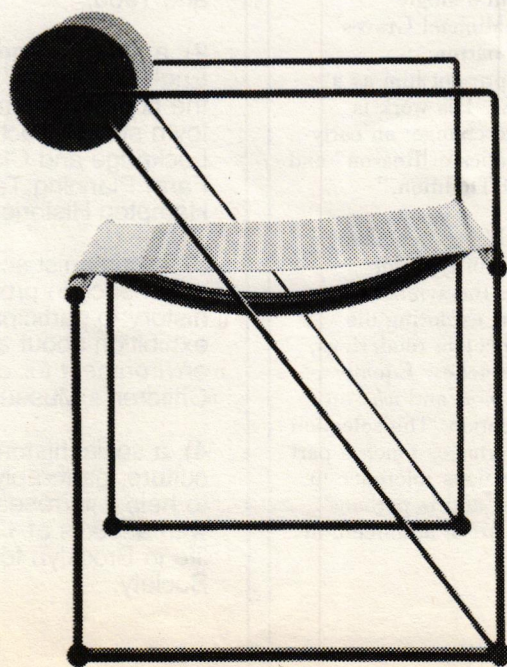
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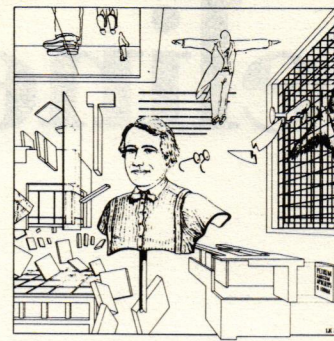
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# On Reading



House X exhibition poster  
of Peter Eisenman by  
Leon Krier

## Peter Eisenman's House X

Brendan Gill

As a feat of bookmaking, *House X* is a suavely handsome product of Massimo Vignelli's sympathetic talent for advocacy through design; nobody could present Eisenman's case for Eisenman with a greater graphic felicity and, at the same time, with a more friendly guardedness on behalf of the use to which the graphic content will be put. Innumerable drawings and diagrams (mostly axonometric and characteristically exquisite), as well as plans, elevations and photographs of assorted models of House X, fill the pages and dominate the text, which is printed almost entirely in a pretty shade of lipstick red. We are encouraged to perceive all this powerful non-verbal material as a worthy aesthetic achievement on its own terms — which it is — and not as merely illustrative of the text. To the extent that we consent to this perception, what I call Vignelli's friendly guardedness pays off; we tend to resist asking the questions that we would ordinarily ask of illustrations: questions about the nature of the depicted house as a place that somebody might be expected to live happily in — about the house, in short, as a dwelling. To ask such questions in the austere elegant ambience of such a book is to risk seeming not only irrelevant but an impertinent clod.

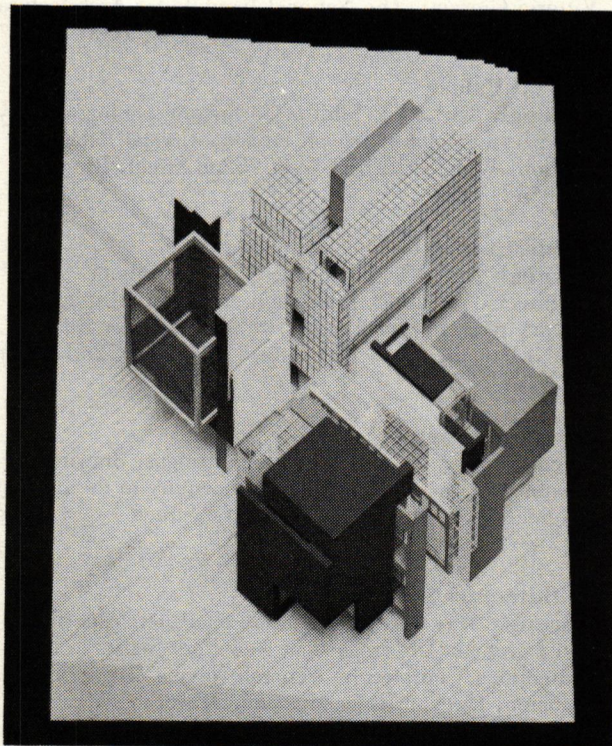
On our best behavior, then, we turn to the text and find, to our dismay, that the very title of the book invites an inquiry. Why *House X* and not *House Ten* or, better still, *Tenth House*? How has Eisenman happened to couple one of the most highly charged words in the English language with a Roman numeral that, for most of us, has little emotional value beyond its utility for illiterates and detective-story fans ("X marks the spot")? The coupling is made all the more odd by the fact that "ten" is almost as rich a word in English as "house"; we have ten fingers and toes, Ten Commandments, Ten Lost Tribes of Israel and so on. Yet Eisenman has chosen to number all his houses with Roman numerals, and I see in this choice a clue to his weakness for a dead language that he flagrantly abuses. It is a weakness worth examining.

In his career as an architect, teacher, journalist, and debonair man-about-town, Eisenman employs the racy, colloquial English bequeathed to us by Twain, Whitman, Lardner and a score of other authentic American voices; it is when he composes a book that he plunges headlong into a quaking sphagnum of Latinic jargon. A mild example, plucked at random: "In assuming no historical or narrative logic, and in doubting or denying that an object consists of a set of hierarchical relationships that can be known, the new object becomes fragmented, relativistic, and non-autonomous." We make sense of this easily enough, though the grammar is insecure — surely Eisenman doesn't mean that the *object* is engaged in assuming, doubting and denying but that an observer of the object is doing so? — but who would willingly enter the following quasi-Latinic labyrinth? "Through such a dual process of selection, after successive stages of approximation, an object began to evolve whose configuration suggested the potential nature of such a process. [Hasn't that sentence just stung itself in the tail?] The process, then, became one of discovery, in which the goal was the revelation of formal consistencies or regularities often through inconsistencies or incongruities, perhaps suggesting preexistent concepts or new ways of grouping elements, but in which the beginning and end point remain undefined and the chief principle was uncertainty: a working forward in time and backward in space."

I wonder whether it is possible that the Eisenman argot is a method of keeping the reader at a distance through a harmless act of verbal sedation? If this polysyllabic orotundity were employed not to explain how the design of a certain house came into existence but to sell us snake-oil, would we not all have bought half a dozen bottles of the stuff by now and be nodding away in a contented half-slumber? Strangely, the pitchman himself

appears to believe that he is practicing a lofty intellectual rigor by his use of all those great big bow-wow words, but this is only rarely the case. There are sentences in *House X* that are logical but not rigorous — "Not only does the function not determine the form, the form does not determine the form" — and other sentences that lack both logic and rigor: "First it is one reality and, simultaneously, another." Neither in physics nor in English does that which is simultaneous with something else know what it is to be first.

Eisenman says, "Each stage of the design process could be analyzed to reveal not so much a transformation but [sic] a decomposition of the heuristic approximation." Now "heuristic" is one of the words that he is most given to falling back upon for reassurance, and with good reason. Webster's defines "heuristic" as coming from the Greek and as being applied to arguments and methods of demonstration that are persuasive rather than logically compelling, or that lead a person to find out for himself. Eisenman uses the word in its persuasive sense; his readers are often obliged to use it in the sense of finding out for themselves. That difficulty acknowledged and, in most cases, overcome, we are free to address ourselves to the grand topic of the book — the creation of the design of a house that, as it happens, has yet to be built. As one would expect of Eisenman, it is a wondrously intricate structure, unimpeachable as a work



Axonometric model, scheme H, view from the northeast

of art and — at least for my purposes as a home-owner — probably uninhabitable. Intended to rise on the slope of a hill in a large tract of wooded country, it is divided into four quadrants. We assume that these quadrants will serve certain conventional functions, but not a bit of it! Eisenman boasts that he has subverted this assumption by setting the functional order against the formal order. "This was achieved," he writes, "by a deliberate separation of proximate functions. Thus, spaces with the same or related functions are not placed within the same quadrant but instead are divided between quadrants — it is thus necessary to move from unit to unit rather than within a single unit to accomplish a single purpose."

Tardily but irresistibly, the imaginary owner leaps to mind. For perhaps the first time in his life, he is faced with being unable to accomplish a single task in a single place, and for no better reason than that the architect has laid it down as a principle that "The form must not seem to be primarily a solution to the functional problem." "But why shouldn't it be?" the owner might ask, tears welling up in his troubled eyes. Why,

**House X.** Peter Eisenman. Introduction by Mario Gandelsonas. Rizzoli Publications, New York. 168 pages, 276 black-and-white illustrations. \$35.00 hard cover; \$19.95 soft cover

Eisenman replies, because the practical fact of connection must be negated through encompassment. Next question?

The structure is plainly the sum of much intense and even anguished cerebration, and to argue its technical and artistic merits and demerits would require a book longer than *House X*. I am quick to admit that I "read" the designs far less patiently than their maker does and that what I read often displeases me for personal reasons rather than for reasons having to do with the nature of Eisenman's architecture. (For example, a house that would be as costly to build as X ought, by my standards, to have large and luxurious bathrooms; most of the bathrooms in the plan strike me as having a penitentiary-like meagerness of scale.) My chief objections to X are, however, based on the impression it gives of an invincible arbitrariness, cunningly transformed into what Eisenman himself might well describe as a coherent ambiguity.

Eisenman's notions about the site are germane here, as being at once outrageous and carefully thought out: "The site for the house, forty heavily wooded acres, was essentially rural. However, since the client worked in the city, the house became the endpoint of a transition from the urban to the rural setting. The car, as the instrument of this transition, was conceived of as conceptually [should "conceived" and "conceptually" be playing tag with one another in this redundant fashion?] spiraling from city to country. When the pedestrian left the car he would become part of another spiral, moving from the point of his departure from the car (supposedly rural) into the house which now, with its four-corner intersection, became a model of the city. In this scheme, there is no suburb: the car moves from one form of urbanism in the city to another form of urbanism in the country. Urban and rural become dialectical components. This gesture immerses in the land, conceived of as rural, an architecture which is strongly monumental and urban. It eliminates the middle ground of the suburban house."

To my mind, this is high-falutin nonsense. It is also a description of the very activity that I would expect the owner of X *not* to wish to engage in — a constant spiraling oscillation between two seemingly indistinguishable urbanisms. If that were his idea of happiness, why on earth would he bother to buy those heavily-wooded forty acres? More nonsense lies in store, for we read that American cities began from a *tabula rasa*; the fact is that thousands of American cities were founded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in exact imitation of predecessor cities in England, France and Spain. I cannot think of a single town on either coast that began as a *tabula rasa*; even Los Angeles, cited in the text, was laid out in the eighteenth century in a conventional Spanish fashion. Still another morsel of nonsensical non-history: "House X seems to introduce into a rural setting an element — the cruciform — which comes from where the car comes from, the four-corner intersection of the city. It is as if a public realm — an outside element — is introduced into the very inside of the private house. The cruciform becomes a metaphor of a street system." Leaving aside for the last time that sorely bedeviled person, the imaginary owner of X, and the question of whether he would wish his country house to "read" as a city intersection, it is simply not the case that the car comes from such a background. How little American history most American architects appear to know! Let Eisenman read the lives of the developers of the automobile industry in this country (especially the life of Henry Ford) and learn, not a moment too soon, that the car had a far closer relationship with rural America in its early years than with urban America — indeed, it was the car, more than any other single invention, that helped turn the largely rural America of the turn of the century into the urban America of today.



# Dateline: April '83

## Exhibits

### Albuquerque, New Mexico

#### Alvar Aalto

**Apr 11-May 13** "Alvar Aalto: The Mystery of Form." School of Architecture and Planning, University of New Mexico; (505)277-7903

### Austin

#### Paul Cret

**Through May 22** "Paul Cret at Texas: Architectural Drawing and the Image of the University in the 1930s." Archer M. Huntington Gallery, University of Texas, 23rd Street and San Jacinto Street; (512)471-7324

### Boston/Cambridge

#### Harvard Exhibitions

**Apr 5-22** "Kazuo Shinohara: Houses and Theory 1954-81." Single-family private residences built in Japan. **Apr 26-May 13** "Space Framed II: Work by Contemporary Sculptors." Spatial definition explored by seven sculptors. Gund Hall Gallery, Harvard Graduate School of Design, 48 Quincy Street, Cambridge; (617)495-9340

### Chicago

#### Decorative Screens

**Through Apr 11** Exhibition of screens by Thomas Beeby, Michael Graves, Richard Haas, Robert A.M. Stern, and Stanley Tigerman. Rizzoli Gallery, Water Tower Place, 835 North Michigan Avenue; (312)642-3500

#### Christian K. Laine

**Through Apr 15** "Temporary Monuments: Ancient Cities Under Construction, Athens/Rome." Photographic exhibition by this Finnish-American architectural journalist. Galerija Art Gallery, 744 Northwells Street; (312)280-1149

#### The Architect's Vision

**Through June 15** "The Architect's Vision: From Sketch to Final Drawing." This exhibition focuses on three Chicago buildings representing a cross-section of current construction trends. Chicago Historical Society, Clark Street at North Avenue; (312)642-4600

#### New Chicago Architecture

**May 19-Aug 7** "New Chicago Architecture: Beyond the International Style" highlights the recent work of 37 Chicago firms. Recurated and expanded version of the 1981 exhibit in Verona, organized by John Zukowsky and Robert Bruegmann. Includes slide/tape presentation by Bruegmann. Gallery 200, Art Institute of Chicago, Michigan Avenue at Adams Street; (312)443-3600

### Houston

#### Cervin Robinson

**Through Apr 15** "Cervin Robinson: Architectural Photographs." Farish Gallery, School of Architecture, Rice University; (713)527-4870

### New Haven

#### Italian Futurism

**Apr 13-June 26** "The Futurist Imagination: Italian Futurist Painting, Drawing, Collage, and Free-Word Poetry." Includes 90 objects exploring the shared goals and themes of the Futurists. Yale University Art Gallery, Chapel Street at York; (203)436-8062

#### Georgian Landscape Gardens

**Apr 20-June 26** "The Early Georgian Landscape Garden." Explores developments in English gardening during the first half of the eighteenth century. 3rd Floor, Yale Center for British Art, 1080 Chapel Street; (203)436-1162

### New York

#### Blank Walls

**Through Apr 6** "Blank Walls: The New Face of Downtown." Curated by William H. Whyte. Doris Freedman Gallery, Municipal Art Society, 457 Madison Avenue; (212)935-3960

#### Lower Manhattan Buildings

**Through Apr 6** "Buildings in Progress IV: Lower Manhattan." Eight buildings under construction in lower Manhattan. Gallery II, Municipal Art Society, 457 Madison Avenue; (212)935-3960

#### Habitats

**Through Apr 9** "Habitats," work by Frank Gehry, Siah Armajani, John Hejduk, Mary Miss, Marc Balet, Sol LeWitt, and other artists and architects exploring the concepts of volume, enclosures, interiors and fantasy. The Clocktower, The Institute for Art and Urban Resources, 108 Leonard Street; (212)784-2084

#### Koloman Moser

**Through Apr 15** Furniture, artifacts, drawings and paintings by the Austrian designer. The Austrian Institute, 11 East 52nd Street; (212)759-5165

#### Vittorio Giorgini

**Through Apr 15** "Urbology," six urban projects by Vittorio Giorgini. The National Institute for Architectural Education, 30 West 22nd Street; (212)924-7000

#### Crystal Palace

**Through Apr 24** Exhibit of 33 historic photographs by Philip DeLamotte of Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace, London. Wave Hill, 675 West 252nd Street, Bronx; (212)542-2055

#### Inside Insights

**Through Apr 31** "Inside Insights: Interiors of Architects." Includes prints and architectural drawings of work ranging from Piranesi to Mies van der Rohe. SPACED Gallery of Architecture, 165 West 72nd Street; (212)787-6350

#### Theater Design

**Through May 1** Costumes, stage designs, drawings of theater architecture from the 16th century to the present. Cooper-Hewitt Museum, 2 East 91st Street; (212)860-6868

#### Architecture on Paper

**Through May 15** "Architecture on Paper: American and European Drawings from New York State Collections," curated by Deborah Nevins. Trevor Mansion, Hudson River Museum, Trevor Park-on-Hudson, 511 Warburton Avenue, Yonkers; (914)963-4550

#### Ornamentalism

**Through May 15** "Ornamentalism: The New Decorativeness in Architecture and Design." Curated by Robert Jensen, co-author of the recent book of the same title. Main Galleries, Hudson River Museum, Trevor Park-on-Hudson, 511 Warburton Avenue, Yonkers; (914)963-4550

#### Brooklyn Bridge Exhibits

**Through June 19** Paintings, drawings, prints and photographs of the Brooklyn Bridge. This exhibition coincides with a city-wide program of events marking the 100th birthday of the Bridge. Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn; (212)638-5000

**Apr 18-May 21** "Images of the Brooklyn Bridge." Work by seven contemporary photographers; curated by Mary Black. Gallery II, The Municipal Art Society, 457 Madison Avenue; (212)935-3960

#### Alvin Langdon Coburn Photographs

**Apr 8-May 8** "London/New York: 1909-1910." 40 illustrations from Coburn's limited-edition portfolios *London* (1909) and *New York* (1910). International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Avenue at 94th Street; (212)860-1783

### Rem Koolhaas

**Apr 9-May 7** Show of The Dance Theater project for The Hague by Rem Koolhaas of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture. Max Protetch, 37 West 57th Street; (212)838-7436

### Great Drawings from the Royal Institute

**Apr 21-July 30** Eighty-two international masterpieces of architectural drawing dating from the 15th century to the present, borrowed from the Royal Institute of British Architects' collection in London. Drawing Center, 137 Greene Street; (212)982-5266

### San Francisco

#### French Beaux Arts Drawings

**Through May 14** "French Beaux Arts Drawings by Victor Postolle," a student at the Ecole des Beaux Arts (1860-1865) and protégé of A.M.F. Jay. Philippe Bonnafont Gallery, 2200 Mason Street; (415)781-8896

### London, England

#### Contemporary British Architecture

**Apr 12-May 22** "Model Futures: Contemporary British Architecture." Includes work by Jeremy Dixon, John Outram, Ralph Lerner & Richard Reid, Alan Stanton, Peter Wadley. Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Mall; 930-3647

#### Mary Miss

**Apr 20-May 29** Current installation by this architectural sculptor. Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Mall; 930-3647

### Milan, Italy

#### Gabriele Basilico

**Through Apr 11** "Milan: Portraits of Industrial Buildings," an exhibition of photographs. Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea di Milano, via Palestro 14; 2784688

### Montreal, Quebec

#### Frank Lloyd Wright from the Met

**Apr 8-June 12** An exhibition of approximately 100 objects from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's large collection of Wright material. Le Château Du Fresne, Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Montréal, 2929 Jeanne d'Arc; (514)259-2575

### Otterlo, Holland

#### Nieuwe Bouwen

**Apr 3-May 29** Exhibition devoted to functionalism or Nieuwe Bouwen, in which the international context is stressed. Rijksmuseum Kroller-Muller; 382-1241. Local work of the Nieuwe Bouwen architects will be stressed in two shows: **Through May 1** "Nieuwe Bouwen and Amsterdam," Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and **Through July 17** "Nieuwe Bouwen and De Stijl," Gemeete Museum, The Hague

### Paris, France

#### Roger Expert

**Apr 26-May 31** "Roger Expert, l'Oeuvre d'un grand patron des Beaux-Arts." Institut Français d'Architecture, 6 rue de Tournon; 633-9036

### Rome, Italy

#### Franz Prati

**Apr 5-25** "Franz Prati: Secret Harmonies of a City, Projects and Designs 1980-1983." Architectural monograph. A.A.M./Coop. Architettura Arte Moderna, 12 via del Vantaggio; 361-9151

#### Quadrio Pirani

**Apr 26-May 15** "Quadrio Pirani: Turn-of-the-Century Culture, Projects and Built Work 1904-1925." A.A.M./Coop. Architettura Arte Moderna, 12 via del Vantaggio; 361-9151



**American Architecture: Innovation and Tradition**

A symposium inaugurating the Center for the Study of American Architecture, Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture and Planning.

**Apr 21** Keynote speech by Vincent Scully; 6:00pm.

**Apr 22** "The Object: Decorative and Industrial Arts," with chairman Mildred Friedman and speakers Edgar Kaufmann, David P. Handlin, Arthur Pulos; 9:45am.

"The Building: Vernacular and Monumental," with chairman William Jordy and speakers James O'Gorman, Donald Hoffmann, and Thomas S. Hines; 1:45pm.

Keynote Speech by J.B. Jackson; 5:00pm.

**Apr 23** "The Place: Urbanism and Suburbanism," with

chairman J.B. Jackson and speakers Denise Scott Brown, John Coolidge, Dolores Hayden; 9:30am. Keynote speech by Tom van Leeuwen; 1:30pm. "The Profession: Contemporary Practice," with chairman Arthur Drexler and speakers Allan Greenberg, Charles Gwathmey, and Kevin Roche; 2:30pm. \$75.00 registration fee. Columbia University GSAP, Avery Hall, New York, NY 10027; (212)280-3473. The symposium will be accompanied by a travelling exhibition of the same title, guest-curated by Gerald Allen, Ann Kaufman, Richard Longstreth, Deborah Nevins, Lawrence Speck, Sally Woodbridge, and John Zukowsky. The show, which opens April 20 and runs for

three weeks in the Low Rotunda at Avery, will examine the impact of local conditions on the production of architecture in six regions in America, and developments common to the entire country in "America as a Region."

**Corrections**

In "Competitions and Communications" (February 1983, pp. 6-7), *Skyline* wrongly stated that Skdimore, Owings & Merrill is suing England's Secretary of State for the Environment over the National Gallery extension competition. Also, in the same article, Webb Zerafa Menkes Housden Architects should have been listed as one of the Canadian participants in the BBC Competition.

# Events

**Baltimore****Architecture Week**

**Apr 6-16** Sponsored by the Baltimore Chapter of the AIA. Activities include a lecture by Charles Jencks, walking tours, movies and exhibits. Information: Shari Coale, Executive Director, Baltimore Chapter, American Institute of Architects, 720 East Pratt Street; (301)727-6156

**Boston/Cambridge****Harvard Lectures**

**Apr 13** Kenneth Frampton, "Contemporary Japanese Architecture" **Apr 27** Ricardo Bofill, "Modernism, Classicism, and History." 6:00pm. Piper Auditorium, Gund Hall, Harvard Graduate School of Design, 48 Quincy Street, Cambridge; (617)495-9340

**Los Angeles****SCI-ARC Design Forum**

Three panel discussions centering on "Downtown Los Angeles: The Urban Revival," sponsored by SCI-ARC and the L.A./AIA **Apr 6** "The Making of a Community through Housing," moderated by James Bonar **Apr 13** "The Cultural Center of the Region," moderated by Esther Wachtell **Apr 21** "Implementation of Dreams, Schemes and Realities," moderated by Raymond Kappe. 5th floor auditorium, 611 West Sixth Street, Southern California Institute of Architecture; (213)829-3483

**New Haven****Yale Lectures**

**Apr 5** Rem Koolhaas **Apr 12** Kenneth Frampton **Apr 14** Milka Blizakov, "The City of the Futurists" **Apr 19** J.B. Jackson. 8:00pm. Hastings Hall, A&A Building, Yale School of Architecture, 180 York Street; (203)436-0853

**Gardens and Landscape at Yale**

**Apr 9, 16, 30** Lectures on the landscape garden presented by graduate students in Yale's Art History Department. 1:00pm. **Apr 23** Symposium, "Land and Landscape in the Eighteenth Century." Held in conjunction with an exhibition of early Georgian landscape gardens. Speakers include John Stilgoe, Dora Wiebenson, John Pinto, Judith Colton. 10:30am-4:30pm. Lectures and symposium at Lecture Hall, Yale Center for British Art, 1080 Chapel Street; (203)436-1162

**New York****John Burgee Lecture**

**Apr 4** John Burgee, "Is This Post-Modern?" 6:30pm. Members free, non-members \$5. The Urban Center, 457 Madison Avenue; (212)753-1722

**Emerging Voices '83**

Lecture series sponsored by Krueger. **Apr 5** Michael Rotondi and Thom Mayne of Morphosis, Peter Waldman **Apr 12** Guy Martin and David Jones, Anthony Ames **Apr 19** Richard Oliver, Peter Wilson **Apr 26** Ron Krueck, Andreas Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberg. 6:30pm. Members free, non-members \$5. The Urban Center, 457 Madison Avenue; (212) 753-1722

**Vincent Scully Lectures**

Milstein Lectures by Scully. **Apr 4** "The Colonial Experience: Craftsman Culture" **Apr 11** "Revolution and the Classical Ideal" **Apr 18** "The Realist Tradition." 6:00pm. Wood Auditorium, Avery Hall, Columbia University; (212)280-3414

**Design Strategies**

**Apr 5** Edward J. Wormley interviewed by Olga Gueft on "Design Strategies for Survival: In the Depression and Now." The second of a series of DAC Press Conferences. 6:00pm. Dunbar Showroom, 6th floor, Decorative Arts Center, 305 East 63rd Street; (212)689-9718

**New-York Historical Society Lectures**

**Apr 5** Elizabeth Blackmar, "A New Style of Living: The Formation of Manhattan's Neighborhoods" **Apr 21** Frederick D. Nichols, "Thomas Jefferson, the Architect" **Apr 26** Elizabeth Cromley, "Living in the New York Apartment, 1860-1905." 6:00pm. Members free, non-members \$2. New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West; (212)873-3400

**AIA Lectures**

**Apr 7** Diana Balmori, "Jekyll and Farrand and the Arts and Crafts Movement in Landscape Design" **Apr 21** Chien Chung Pei on the Peking Hotel, Fragrant Hill, Peking **Apr 23** Tician Papachristou, "A Commentary on the Demise of the Modern Movement." Sponsored by the AIA and *Metropolis* magazine. 6:00pm. AIA members free, non-members \$5. The Urban Center, 457 Madison Avenue; (212)838-9670

**Forums on Form**

Urban Center Books sponsors this series of informal talks by authors of recently published books on architecture and design. **Apr 6** Ralph Caplan, *By Design* **Apr 13** Norman Diekman, *Drawing Interior Architecture* **Apr 20** Henry Hope Reed, *The Library of Congress* **Apr 27** Nory Miller and Michael Sorkin, *California Counterpoint* **May 4** Jacques Guiton, *The Ideas of Le Corbusier*. 12:30pm. Doris Freedman Gallery, Urban Center, 457 Madison Avenue; (212)935-3595

**Interior Design**

**Apr 7** Lecture by Susan Szenasy, "Interior Design: A Fresh Look." 1:00pm. Museum members free, non-members \$3. Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn; (212)789-2493

**Pratt Lectures**

**Apr 7** Charles Jencks, "The New Abstraction, The New Representation" **Apr 14** Carlo Aymonino, Paolo Portoghesi, Aldo Rossi, "The Architect and the City" **Apr 21** Arthur Drexler, "Modern Architecture After History" **Apr 28** Dolores Hayden, "The Grand Domestic Revolution" **May 2** Kevin Roche, "Work Completed/Work in Progress." 6:00pm. Higgins Hall, Pratt School of Architecture, St. James Place & Lafayette Avenue, Brooklyn; (212)636-3407

**Brooklyn Bridge Events**

A series of slide/lecture presentations by Barry Lewis: **Apr 8** "Brooklyn and the Bridge" **May 4** "Building the Bridge" **May 18** "The Bridge and Greater New York City." 6:00 and 8:00pm. Members free, non-members \$5. Doris Freedman Gallery, Urban Center, 457 Madison Avenue; (212)935-3960

Lectures sponsored by the Brooklyn Museum:

**Apr 9** Blair Birdsall, "Brooklyn Bridge as Structure" **Apr 24** Gerald Silk, "Brooklyn Bridge: Image and Icon" **May 7** Alfred Kazin, "A Life Spent with the Brooklyn Bridge." 2:00pm. Third floor lecture hall, Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn; (212)638-5000

**Columbia Alumni Preservation Forum**

**Apr 8-9** "Convocation '83: A Preservation Forum." Panel discussions on the state of preservation practices and techniques. Fayerweather Hall, Columbia University; (212)530-5060

**The Renaissance of New York**

A series of lectures presented by the Real Estate Board of New York and Pratt Institute. **Apr 12** George Klein, "Office Development" **Apr 19** David Teitelbaum, "Housing Development" **Apr 26** Donald H. Elliott, "Public Approval Process" **May 3** Veronica Hackett, "Development Finance." 6:00pm. Pratt Manhattan Center, 180 Lexington Avenue; (212)685-3754

**Architectural Walking Tours**

**Apr 17** "Upper Fifth Avenue: The Townhouse and the Private Palace" **Apr 24** "Astor Place: Peter Cooper's New York" **May 1** "Brooklyn Bridge: A Centennial Celebration." 1:30pm. For meeting places call The Museum of the City of New York; (212)534-1672

**Arata Isozaki**

**Apr 19** Arata Isozaki speaks to the Institute of Business Designers. 7:00pm. \$20 at the door. United Engineering Center, 345 East 47th Street; for information contact Judi Mondello at IBD, (212)421-1950

**Alvar Aalto**

**Apr 23** Paul Goldberger interviews Elissa Aalto on "Working with Alvar Aalto." Third in a series of DAC Press Conferences. ICF Showroom, 7th floor, Decorative Arts Center, 305 East 63rd Street; (212)689-9718

**Philadelphia****University of Pennsylvania Lectures**

Architects speak on their recent work. **Apr 4** Jack Diamond **Apr 6** Morphosis **Apr 11** Lew Davis **Apr 13** Garrett Eckbo **Apr 18** Ricardo Bofill. 6:30pm. Alumni Hall, Towne Building, University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Fine Arts; (215)898-5728

**Princeton****Princeton Lectures**

**Apr 6** Neil Levine, "Post-Modern History Vol. 0 (Louis Kahn's Trenton Bath House and Day Camp)" **Apr 13** Charles Gwathmey, "New Work and Comments" **Apr 20** Kenneth Frampton, "Louis Kahn and the French Connection" **Apr 27** Jorge Silvetti, "New Work." 7:30pm. Betts Lecture Room, Architecture Building, Princeton University; (609)452-3741

**Seattle****AIA Symposium**

A series of events on the theme of "Living Downtown," sponsored by the Seattle Chapter of the AIA. **Apr 6** "The Journalist's Perspective" with Robert Campbell and David Brewster **Apr 19** "The View of the Urban Designer" with Jaquelin Robertson and Don Miles **May 4** "The Architect's Contribution" with Joe Esherick and Chuck Davis. 7:30pm. \$18 for series through June, \$4 at door. Broadway Performance Hall, Broadway and Pine; for information, Seattle AIA, (206)622-4938

**St. Louis****Washington University Lectures**

**Apr 4** Thom Mayne and Michael Rotondi, "Morphosis: Changing Life with the Wave of a Hand" **Apr 11** Bernard Fort-Brescia, "Arquitectonica: Current Projects" **Apr 18** Richard Haas, "Illusionism as Art, as Architecture" **Apr 25** Thomas Beeby, "On Ornament." 8:30pm. Steinberg Auditorium, Washington University School of Architecture; (314)889-6200

**Washington, D.C.****Habitat Conference**

**Apr 6-8** "Typology and Density." Sponsored by the International Union of Architects' Working Group Habitat and hosted by the American Institute of Architects. AIA Building, 1735 New York Avenue; for information contact Peter McCall, (202)626-7465

**Catholic University Lectures**

**Apr 13** Andreas Duany, "The Flight to Realism" **Apr 20** Ehrman Mitchell, Jr., "An Architecture of Consequence." 7:30pm. Gowan Nursing Auditorium, Catholic University Campus; (202)635-5188

**Architecture: The State of the Art**

First three lectures in a series of eight on major movements, controversies and themes in architecture. **Apr 19** Robert Campbell, "The Auteur Theory of Architecture" **Apr 26** Gunnar Birkerts, "The Search for Appropriateness: Projects 1959-1983" **May 3** Richard Stein, "Architecture and the Energy Crisis." Sponsored by The Smithsonian Institution Resident Associate Program and the Washington Chapter, AIA. 8:00pm. Resident Associate and AIA members \$9, non-members \$12. Carmichael Auditorium, Museum of American History, 14th Street and Constitution Avenue; (202)357-3030



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APR. 6

RALPH CAPLAN, *By Design: Why There are No Locks on the Bathroom Doors in the Hotel Louis XIV and Other Object Lessons*. St. Martin's Press. Lecture introduction by Niels Diffrient.

APR. 13

NORMAN DIEKMAN, *Drawing Interior Architecture: A Guide to Rendering and Presentation*. (co-authored by John Pile) Whitney Library of Design/Watson-Guptill. Lecture introduction by Stephen Kliment.

APR. 20

HENRY HOPE REED, *The Library of Congress, Its Architecture and Decorations*. W. W. Norton and Co. Lecture introduction by Arthur Ross.

APR. 27

NORY MILLER and MICHAEL SORKIN, *California Counterpoint*. Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies/Rizzoli International Publications. Lecture introduction by Joseph Giovannini.

MAY 4

JACQUES GUITON, *The Ideas of Le Corbusier on Architecture and Urban Planning*. George Braziller Inc. Lecture introduction by G. E. Kidder Smith.

MAY 11

JEAN-LOUIS BOURGEOIS and CAROLLEE PELOS, *Spectacular Vernacular: A New Appreciation of Traditional Desert Architecture*. Peregrine Smith Books. Lecture introduction by George Collins.

MAY 18

NEAL R. PEIRCE and JERRY HAGSTROM, *The Book of America* (Cities, Planning and Architecture across 50 States). W. W. Norton and Co. Lecture introduction by Virginia Dajani.

MAY 25

PIERRE DE LA RUFFINIÈRE DU PREY, *John Soane, The Making of an Architect*. University of Chicago Press. Lecture introduction by Adolf K. Placzek.

JUNE 1

GUNNAR BIRKERTS, *Gunnar Birkerts and Associates*. A. D. A. Edita/Global Architecture. Lecture introduction by James Stewart Polshek.

JUNE 8

DORA WIEBENSON, *Architectural Theory and Practice from Alberti to Ledoux*. University of Chicago Press. Lecture introduction by Adolf K. Placzek.

ALL LECTURES BEGIN AT 12:30 PM.

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