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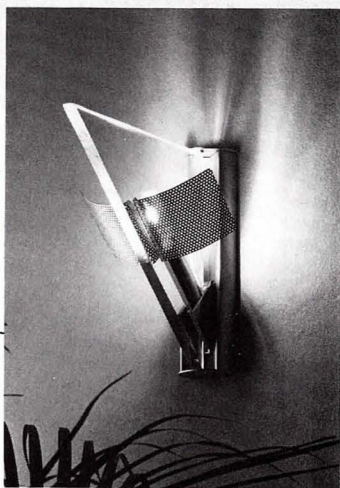
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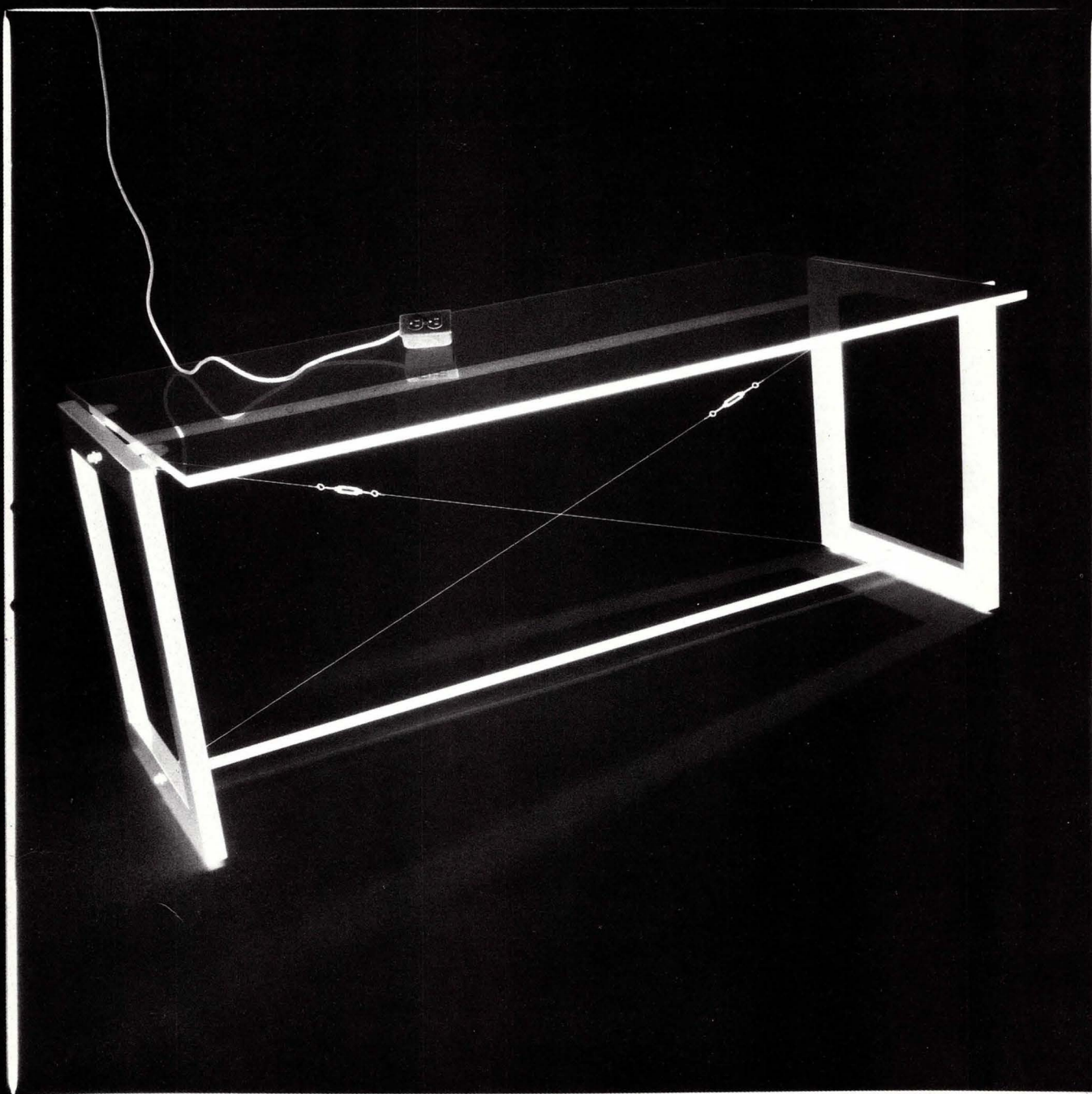
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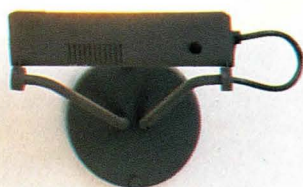
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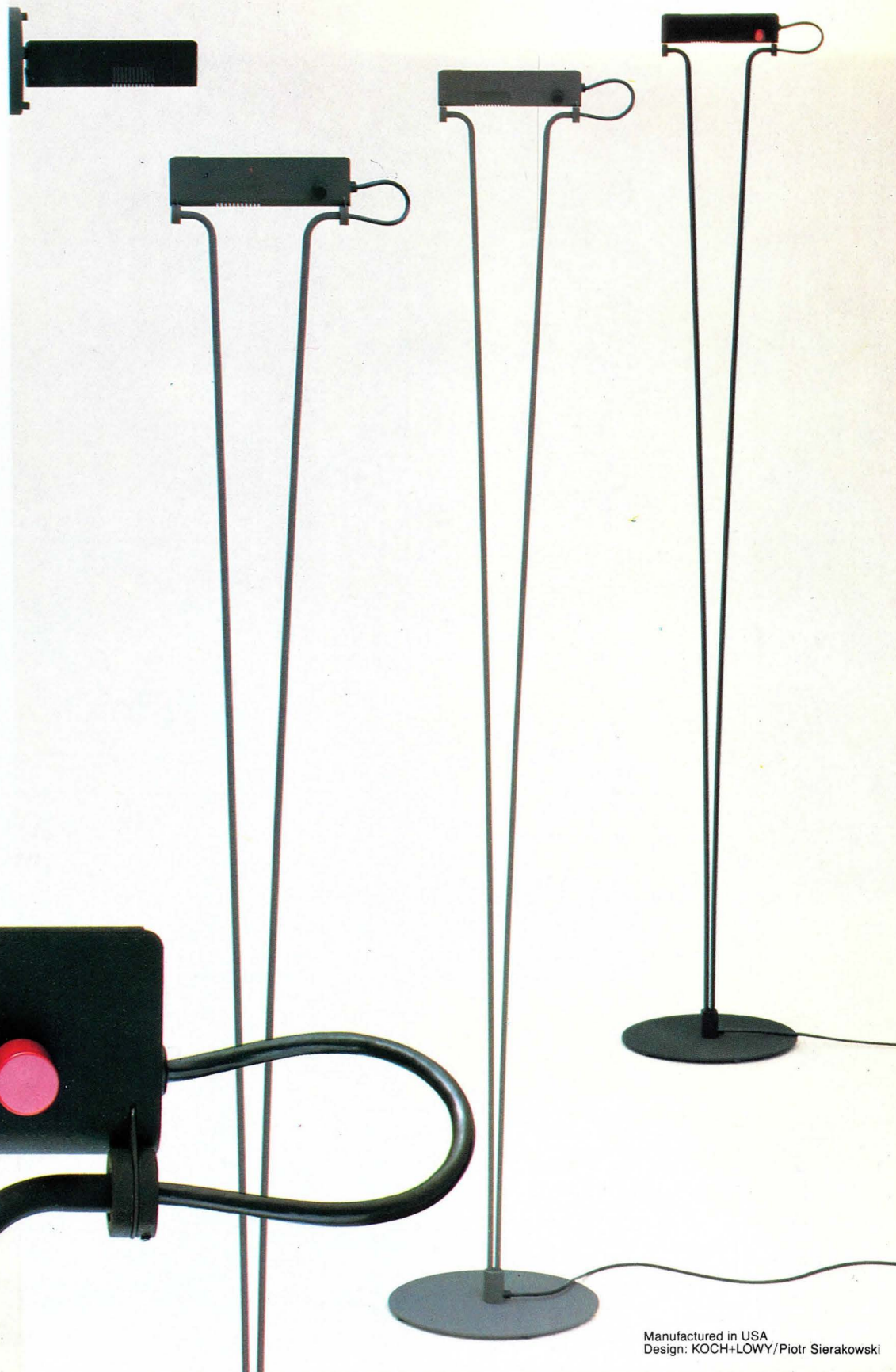




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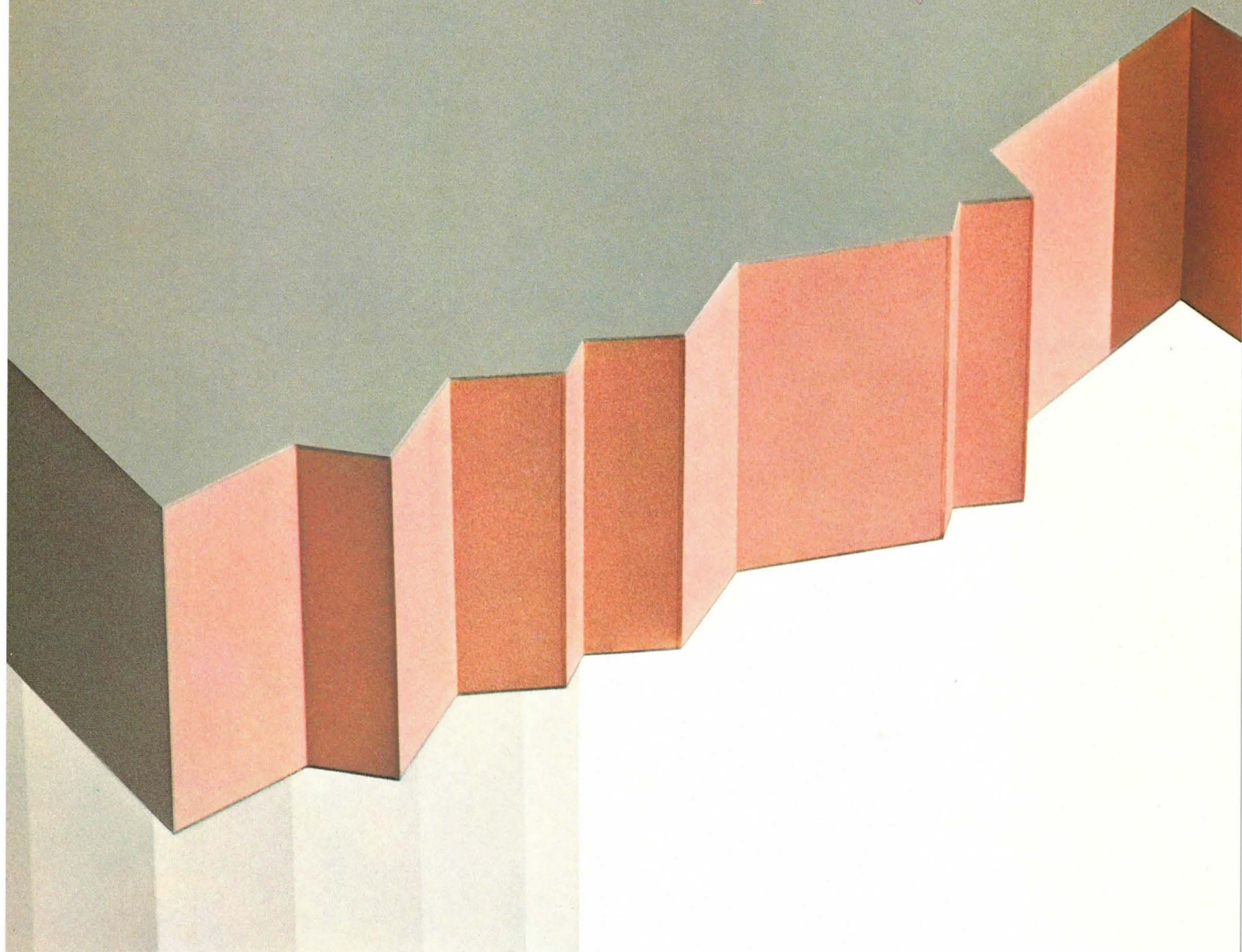
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# arts+architecture

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 4

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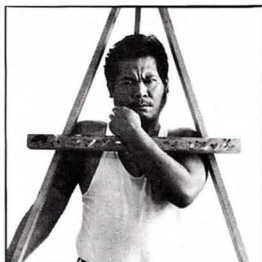
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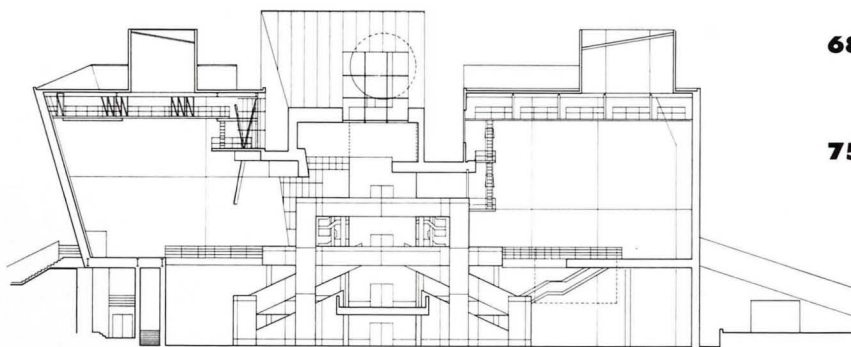
## Cover

A linoleum rug entitled *Chicken Ship* designed and executed by A<sub>2</sub>Z. An interview with the artists begins on page 68.



## Errata

Mitsu Sato did the hairstyling and photography on page 74 of "California Culture." The model was Carol Thompson. In the same issue, the guidemap listing for Peter's Landing should have credited Bissell/August Associates as the architects. Merle Schipper's article on Peter Shelton failed to note the show was organized by LA Louver and Melinda Wyatt galleries. In Schipper's "After Industry" piece on Abhasa, acknowledgment should have been made of LAICA's role in instigating and underwriting the exhibition.



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## Notes In Passing

How do we come to understand a work of art or architecture? Is it through educational initiation or direct experience? For many people, the appreciation of “pure” art is a nearly impossible endeavor because both the architect and the artist, like specialists in many other fields, speak an exclusive language.

Although an accomplished artist may receive critical acclaim and peer recognition, this lack of communication with the audience can be the ultimate cause of both emotional and financial isolation. Partly in response to this dilemma, many artists and designers are experimenting with hybrid art forms.

There is a new enthusiasm among visual artists for breaking away from traditional studio art, for collaborating with other artists in the creation of artworks, or for crossing over from one discipline to another. Applied art—art which serves a practical function—has come back into favor, and both artists and architects are busy exploring the world of consumer products.

Some artists are concerned with using their art to communicate ideas. Richard Jackson uses individual “paintings” as the building blocks for his ironic conceptual sculpture. His structures call into question the very basis of abstract art, and allow his audience to think about it in a new way. Edward and Nancy Reddin Kienholz collaborate in their work, using a variety of architectural parts and commonplace objects to create rich and poignant narratives. The recognizable parts which make up their work give it a humanity and resonance which any observer can easily grasp.

In architecture, too, many are striving to reach beyond an abstract or purely formal vocabulary in order to make users feel at home in their buildings. In Frank Gehry’s aerospace museum, for example, the architecture defers to the objects it displays, bringing the wonder of scientific hardware to the forefront of the museum experience, and incorporating it as architectural ornamentation. Architect/artists A<sub>2</sub>Z speak about humanizing the environment. They seek to create an architecture and design made up of everyday objects and icons.

By reaching their audience in ways such as these, contemporary artists and designers are imbuing their work with greater social relevance. And, as the definitions of these disciplines become broader, so will their realm of understanding.

**Barbara Goldstein**





Detail of *Influential Dreams*, 1984, Painted steel.

Photo by Tim Salazar.

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## More Primitivism

### ■ African Masterpieces

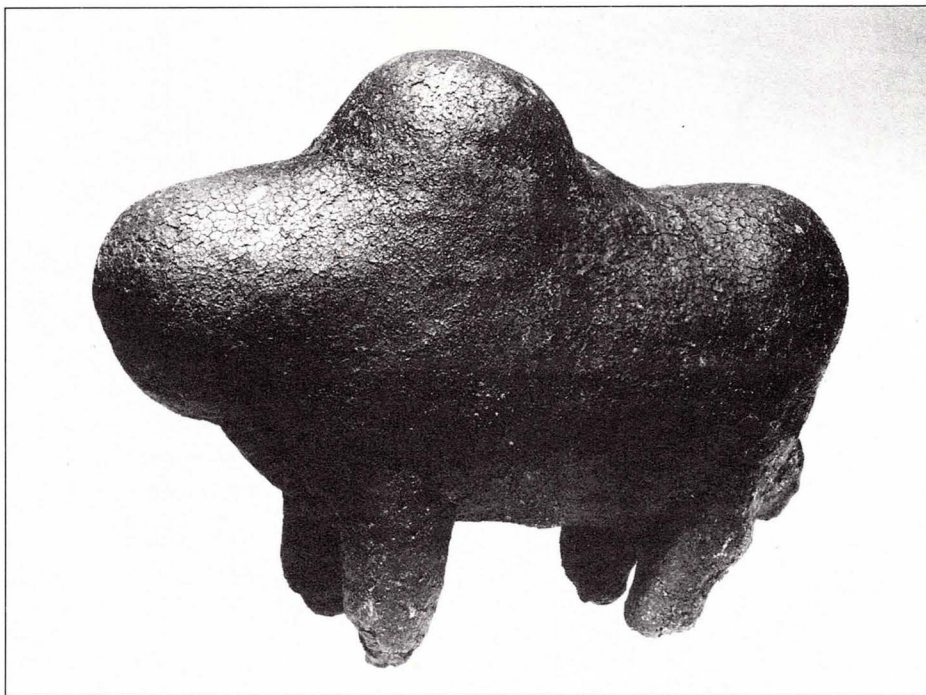
**Washington.** Some of the most rare and renowned works of African art have been collected for the exhibition "African Masterpieces from the Musée de l'Homme," opening April 11 at the National Museum of African Art in Washington. The works, originating in areas from Mali to Madagascar, and among peoples from the Akan to the Zulu, include ceremonial masks and figures, sacred works used in rituals, dolls, utilitarian objects and musical instruments. The 100 objects were selected from thousands stored and undiscovered in the French museum for nearly a century. Many works in the exhibition were on view in 1906 as part of the permanent collection of the Trocadero Museum of Ethnography in Paris, and are known to have had a direct influence on the development of works by Picasso, Gris, Ernst and other artists of the period. Organized by the Center for African Art in New York with the Musée de l'Homme, this exhibition will appear at the National Museum of African Art until June 9.

### ■ Jonathan Borofsky

**New York.** Borofsky's installations envelop the viewer through a variety of media. His finished paintings lean against walls, beside randomly tacked sketches; cut-out figures hammer in perpetual motion or chatter in front of a painting; video screens flash multiple



▲ **Five Hammering Men** by Jonathan Borofsky. Each 14½ ft. high, painted wood and motors, 1983 installation.



▲ **Animal figure from Mali.** 43 cm. high, wood, clay and organic materials. From "African Masterpieces."

images; recorded sounds of music and human speech emanate from various works. The exhibition, "Jonathan Borofsky," at the Whitney Museum of American Art through March 10, indicates that Borofsky is one of the most eclectic and lively artists currently working in this country. Drawing is at the heart of his activity; from initial sketches come new generations of images, reproduced as large drawings or paintings, transferred onto a sheet of plastic, filmed on videotape, projected and traced on a wall or ceiling, and translated into sculpture. Organized by the Philadelphia Museum of Art with the Whitney Museum, the exhibition will travel to the University Art Museum in Berkeley, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington.

### ■ Chicago Furniture

**Washington.** With the advent of new production techniques and an extensive railway system in the 1870s, Chicago became the focal point of America's furniture industry. In response to an upwardly mobile middle class,

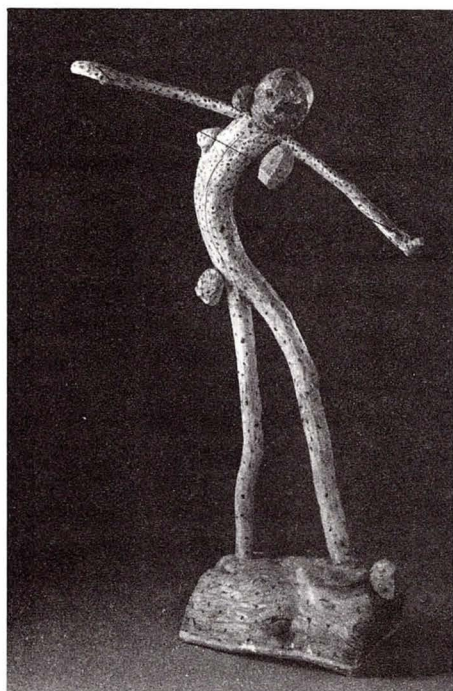
thousands of tables, chairs, desks and upholstered parlor pieces were produced in a wide range of exotic and historical styles. Although cheap labor and plentiful raw materials finally drew a large portion of the trade to the southern states after World War II, the city remained well known as a hub of furniture design. Some 165 pieces of furniture and smaller decorative objects document the contributions made by Chicago designers and manufacturers in the exhibition, "Chicago Furniture: Art, Craft, & Industry, 1833-1983," which includes standard factory production pieces, patent furniture and art furniture created by designers and architects, among them Frank Lloyd Wright, Eero Saarinen and Mies van der Rohe. This exhibition was organized by the Chicago Historical Society and is on view at the Renwick Gallery through April 7.

### ■ Contemporary Wood

**Tucson.** Wood has been used as a sculptural medium since ancient times, and an immense variety of forms and textural effects have been produced. Recent years have witnessed the re-



discovery by contemporary artists of wood's many qualities—its strength, flexibility, and expressive warmth. "Contemporary Wood" is an exhibition featuring the work of 15 prominent American artists who have used wood as a principal medium for the past 20 years, includ-



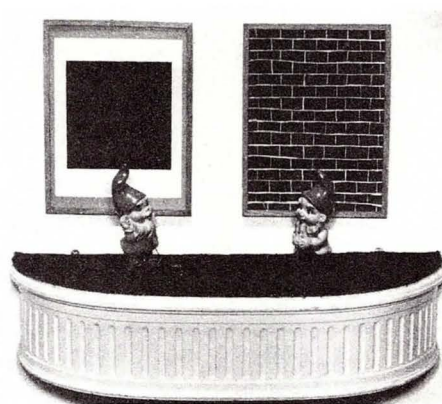
▲ *St. Stephen Being Stoned* by Italo Scanga. 71x47x27 in., oil on wood, 1982. From "Contemporary Wood."

ing Charles Arnoldi, Roy De Forest, Alvin Light, Italo Scanga, James Surls, Jeremy Anderson, Alan Siegal, H.C. Westerman and Fumio Yoshimura. Works will also be shown by artists who are relative newcomers, among them Miles Carpenter, Robert Helm, Sam Hernandez, Ralph Johnson, Louise Lieber, Michael Stevens and Margaret Wharton. After leaving the University of Arizona's Museum of Art on March 31, the exhibit will travel to the Sunrise Museums, Charleston; Florida International University, Miami; Huntsville Museum of Art, Huntsville; and Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum, Anchorage. The exhibition was organized by the Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento.

### ■ Manipulated Reality

**Los Angeles.** The *Nouveaux Realistes*, a group of artists that emerged in France during the 1960s, appropriated reality for their own esthetic purposes, recognizing the expressive potential of the banal object. In many ways, they were reinterpreting ideas about "ready-

made" that had been explored by Duchamp and the dada artists. Many contemporary French sculptors are now responding to *Nouveaux Realistes* concepts with works that not only appropriate reality but also manipulate it in an obvious and humorous way. The exhibi-

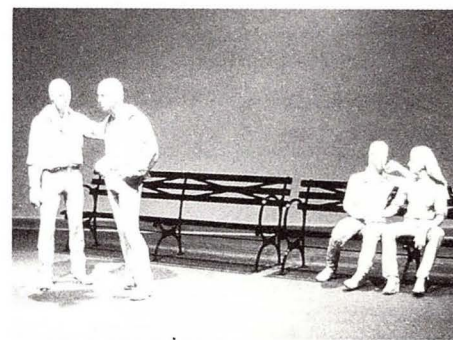


▲ *Jacques Soullou and Clement Greenberg discuss the comparable merits of contemporary painting* by Presence Panchounette. 76x79x30 cm., mixed media, 1978. From "Manipulated Reality."

tion, "Manipulated Reality: Object and Image in Contemporary French Sculpture," includes selected works by Arman, Jean Tinguely, Niki de Saint-Phalle and Yves Klein, as representatives of the original *Nouveaux Realistes*, as well as those by Etienne Bossut, Bertrand Lavier, Jean-Luc Vilmouth, Patrick Raynaud, Presence Panchounette, Daniel Tremblay, Noel Cuin, Nicole Stenger and Miguel Egana, as the new generation. Organized jointly by UCLA's Wight Art Gallery and the Musee d'Art Contemporain in Bordeaux, in cooperation with the Association Francaise d'Action Artistique, this exhibit is on view at the Wight Gallery until March 24.

### ■ Six in Bronze

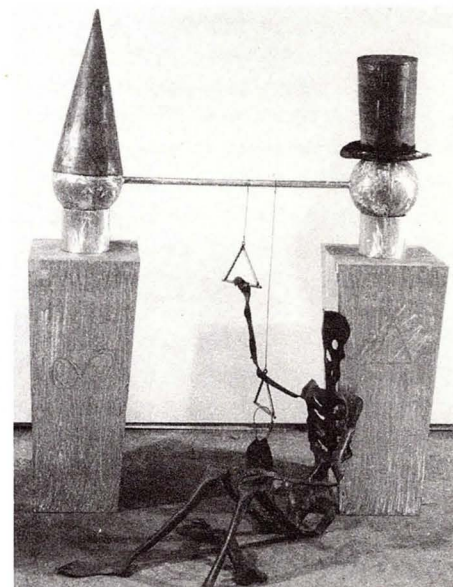
**Newport Beach.** Better technology has allowed artists to cast thinner forms with greater detail; sophisticated welding has led to combining sandcasts, direct casts and multiple casts in one sculpture; surface patinas offer an unequaled range of hues and tones. This variety of concerns and techniques is reflected in bronze sculptures by George Segal, Sandro Chia, Anthony Caro, Nancy Graves, Brian Hunt and Isaac Witkin. Works of abstraction, figuration, and combinations of both admit to a diversity among artists who gained notoriety in other areas. "Six in Bronze" is at the Newport Harbor Art Museum until April 14.



▲ *Gay Liberation* by George Segal. 71x192x80 in., cast bronze and aluminum, 1980. From "Six in Bronze."

### ■ William T. Wiley

**Boise.** A series of large-scale steel and mixed-media sculptures as well as three steel wall plaques were constructed by allowing the materials to "conceive of themselves," according to their creator, artist William Wiley. The result is a juxtaposition of steel, bronze, aluminum, lead, brass and found objects which employs Wiley's own iconography and reflects his personal concerns with themes such as the struggle to survive, man's relationship to the environment, and the mutability of all things. The exhibition containing these pieces, "Steal Witness for the Time Being," represents a major move for Wiley into the arena of large-scale sculpture; it is on view at the Boise Gallery of Art from April 6 to May 5.



▲ *Bones, Dunces and Gentlemen* by William Wiley. 71x57x42 in., aluminum, lead and paint, 1982.



## Letter from Scotland

### ■ The Edinburgh International Festival

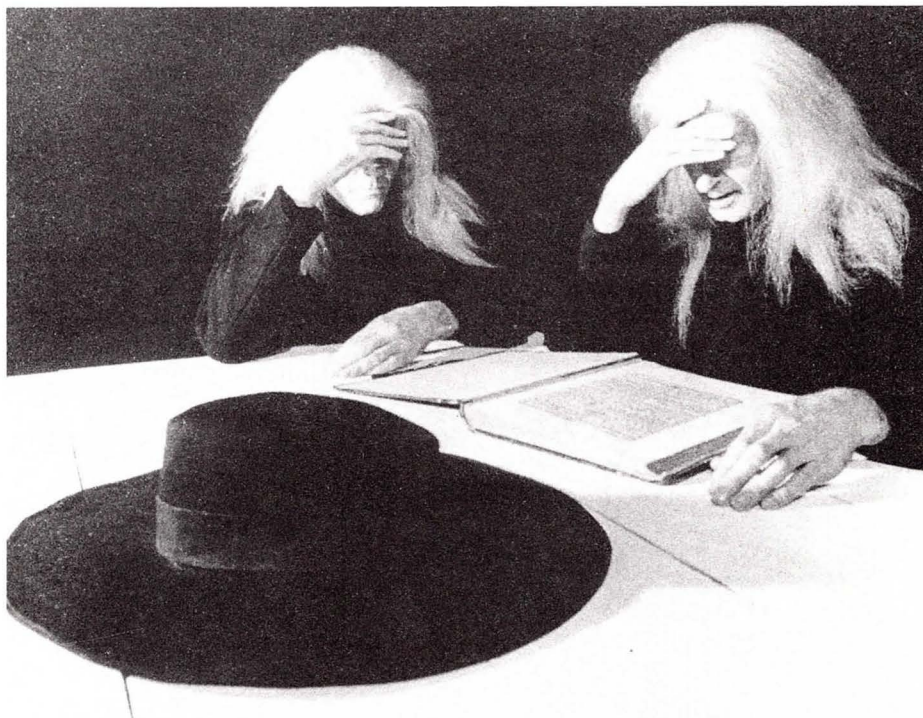
by Michael Kurcfeld

In any August, the best place on the planet for culture vultures is Edinburgh, Scotland. The much esteemed Edinburgh International Festival, first held in 1947, is an annual feast of theatre, music, dance and visual art that transforms this history-drenched college town into a major rendezvous point for art pilgrims. But it doesn't draw these audiences entirely on its own power; if the official festival is a feast, the Festival Fringe is *La Grande Bouffe*. Listed in the *Guinness Book* as the world's largest arts festival, the Fringe sold 400,000 tickets to 840 shows this year, all in its three-week span.

The Fringe was spontaneously born when eight local groups invited themselves to the first festival, creating a theatrical *salon des refuses*. It has been wildly successful ever since, particularly as a launchpad for new talent. The names of Derek Jacobi, Tom Stoppard and the cream of Beyond the Fringe (Dudley Moore, Jonathan Miller and Peter Cook) haunt the Fringe with success stories that began in Edinburgh.

Among the most coveted tickets at the official Festival this year were those for the Berliner Ensemble from East Germany, the Paris Opera Ballet under Rudolph Nureyev, the Washington Opera's staging of Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Medium* and *The Telephone*, the Komische Oper Ballet (also from East Berlin) version of *Swan Lake*, Max Wall's rendering of Samuel Beckett's *Malone Dies* as part of an ongoing tribute to Beckett, the London Symphony Orchestra, and super-soprano Jessye Norman teamed with Pierre Boulez and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. My particular focus was on theatre, so I savored little of the musical largesse that included four opera companies, nine orchestras and a large number of chamber, jazz and folk recitals. Apart from mesmerizing stretches of the Berliner Ensemble's *Scenes From Faust* and a few of the Beckett vignettes, there was nothing revelatory in the way that, say, Le Theatre du Soleil or Pina Bausch were at the LA Olympic Arts Festival.

The Festival contains within itself several mini-festivals for special audiences—film, jazz,



▲ The action of *Ohio Impromptu*, part of a Beckett mini-festival, consists of an old man, played by David Warrilow, reading from a huge book while another, Rand Mitchell, listens in a trance.

television (more of a British TV-industry conference), even a Beckett festival. The idea seemed at odds with the 78-year-old author's own saturnine shades and ascetic nature, but the tribute was overdue in the British Isles. At the heart of some 60 events was a repertory of Beckett's more recent plays, stark one-acts that he calls "dramaticules"; one evening's program comprised a trilogy seen last year in Los Angeles.

In *Catastrophe*, a cigar-chewing director barks orders at his sultry assistant who is absorbed in her task of arranging a pitiable, defeated figure upright on a dais. Dedicated to Czech dissident writer Vaclav Havel, the piece sets up a dire image of the creative artist as a humiliated victim in an oppressive regime. In *Ohio Impromptu*, two black-garbed ancients in long, white manes sit at a table. One reads monotonously from a huge book, the other listens in a trance. As in other works shown here, the mood was sepulchral, the acting style like rigor mortis. In fact, each pithy, impeccable staged piece (produced by New York's Har-

old Clurman Theatre) was a poetic death rattle. The elegiac trilogy worked better in Edinburgh than in Los Angeles simply by occupying a more intimate theatre than the Mark Taper Forum.

The arrival of the Berliner Ensemble was awaited with reverence and excitement. The ensemble, founded by Brecht in 1950 and dedicated largely to perpetuating his work, offered productions of Brecht's masterpiece, *Galileo Galilei*, Goethe's *Scenes From Faust*, and a medley of Brecht songs and poems with music by Kurt Weill and others. Brecht considered Galileo the true father of the Bomb, creating a portrait of the heretical 17th-century astronomer as a petulant, insular scientist who sells out. Ekkehard Schall gave a fine performance as Galileo, but the star of the show was Reason, and the bad guys were the Cardinal Inquisitor and his clerics, costumed all in white.

Certain scenes were visually stunning; upon an abstract set of high white backcloth, a skeletal platform above and wooden disc stage below, a carnival crowd marched about brandish-



ing immense wooden head-caricatures of rulers, clergy and, bigger than the rest, Galileo himself. But the most extraordinary scenes were to be found in *Faust*. The original devil's advocate, a bored Faust dabbles with the black arts and conjures not only a consummately wicked Mephisto, but a fashionable entourage of black and white-plumed angels. During this dark fantasia's ensuing four and a half hours,

corpses and a wisecracking God/stage director. As for Shakespeare, there were several Hamlets; MacBeth turned up as a rock opera and in a production of lifesize puppets.

There was also a rich vein of *commedia dell'arte*. The official Festival gave us, on the one hand, the Prague Black Light Theatre's *Doors*, in which Pierrot, Harlequin and Columbine cavort and vividly pantomime games

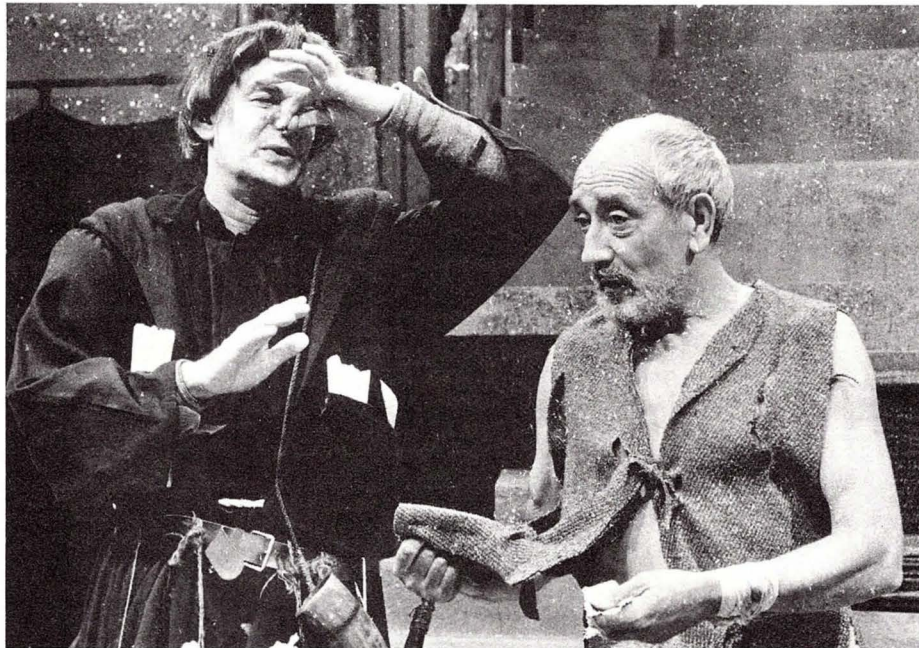
Fo was one of the hottest tickets on the Fringe; his *Mistero Buffo* was a solo sendup of the Italian church, the American technocracy and the French 18th-century ruling class, divided into *grammelots*, 15th-century scat-shtick routines of onomatopoeic patter. Fo's calculated blasphemies were powered by his stage charisma—a cavalier blend of contagious laughter and astonishing versatility of voice, face and body. An interpreter was on stage to translate Fo's Italian, but Fo articulated more through gesture and inflection than through language.

Comedy all but dominates the Fringe, and cabarets and revues sprout in every church basement and public hall. Madame Doubtfire's Cabaret (named for a local baglady with 100 cats) was a late-night potluck of Fringe acts looking for exposure. It specialized in a certain species of British humor that is rabidly lewd and scatological, aimed at a particular social reflex. One anorexic comic named John Dowie unloaded an extended monologue on hemorrhoids.

The British also have a genius for splicing together silliness and subtlety, the grubby detail wrapped inside the lofty conjecture, and they have little problem laughing at themselves. The Hull Truck Company, which after 13 years is among the most polished troupes in the Fringe, performed *Bouncers* to SRO crowds. Five zany he-men expertly mimicked English working class guys and dolls in the urban ritual of Friday night bar and disco hopping. Some observations (primping, pissing, pawing) were universal, others profoundly British—all of it a scream.

Apart from a lavish remake of a 16th-century Scottish satire, the Festival's only stab at comedy came in the vehicle of Murray Schisgal's pair of one-acts, entitled *Twice Around the Park* and star-powered by husband-and-wife team Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson. This writer thought that Schisgal, who co-wrote *Tootsie*, could do better than battle-of-the-sexes schmaltz. The idea was to import Broadway magic to Edinburgh, but what we got was diluted Neil Simon at best, and routine TV sitcom at worst.

Politics is more welcome in the Fringe than in the Festival, even when only as radical chic. There were plays about vivisectionists, Belfast Catholics, miners, Hibakushas (Korean victims of Hiroshima) and South Africa. A particularly potent work was *Black Dog*, put on by the Market Theatre of Johannesburg. Written by Barney Simon, who created *Woza Albert*, it



Alex Wilson

▲ Walter Carr and Phil McCall make scents in the revival of *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaites*, a classic Scottish work lampooning the clergy, nobility and merchants.

we witnessed a gratuitously realistic beheading, grapes of fire, dizzying ascents on wires, the mock crucifixion of a donkey, the appearance of a monstrous spirit of the earth from thin air, and a promenade atop a pair of Trojanoid four-wheel horses. All of this incomparable grandeur was encased, and etherealized, behind a gauzy scrim.

Jump-cutting back to the Fringe, we're standing just outside St. Giles Cathedral and craning to see "The Smallest Theatre in the World," midway through its half-hour rendition of *A Tale of Two Cities*. Box office, main-stage and two-seat auditorium are mounted on a motorcycle sidecar; the stagecoach is a converted grocery cart. Makeshift and joyfully hammy, it's an authentic Fringe invention. The classics turn up everywhere; *The Odyssey* was irreverently mounted in a local high school gym, with Penelope belting out blues tunes and the four winds boiled up in a pressure-cooker. Calderon's *Great Theatre of the World*, a medieval theological allegory, emerged as a musical comedy with juggling

of dice and chess in an iridescent world of flying objects, magic doors and mirrors. The other entrée was the Paris Opera Ballet, under Nureyev's artistic direction since late 1983, which revived a trio of works on a *commedia* theme. Nureyev could be seen behind his mask in the title role of *Harlequin, Magician of Love*; Fokine's *Carnaval*, one of Diaghilev's greatest hits, was a frivolous display of genteel coquetttries and gallantries; in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Nureyev, the motleyed prince of swains, became Moliere's Cleonte, a canny master of disguise animated by Balanchine's fluent moves.

One doesn't think of *commedia dell'arte* as a polemical device, but that's how Marxist actor/writer Dario Fo uses it, and brilliantly. At 58, Fo is a legend, a cunning satirist whose works are translated and performed as often as any living playwright. The "minstrel of the proletariat," as he has called himself, has made an exhaustive study of *commedia* and its origins and fashioned a style that suits his anarchic mind—very funny and deadly serious.



presented a taut weave of six storytellers from the variously colored sectors of South African society. Amplified by the harsh lighting, contrasting speech patterns of the multi-racial cast, and haunting traditional song and dance, the stories revealed the traumas of apartheid that lead inexorably to violence.

1984 had to include Orwell, but the Orwell estate had mercifully sanctioned only one production. Surprisingly, it was his 1920s testimonial to abject poverty, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, staged as separate plays. I saw *Paris* and preferred the book, but the device of having a young and an elder Orwell trade the narration of his slumming odyssey paid off, since it connected his youthful experiment in misery—which we were told left him emotionally scarred—with his later social criticism.

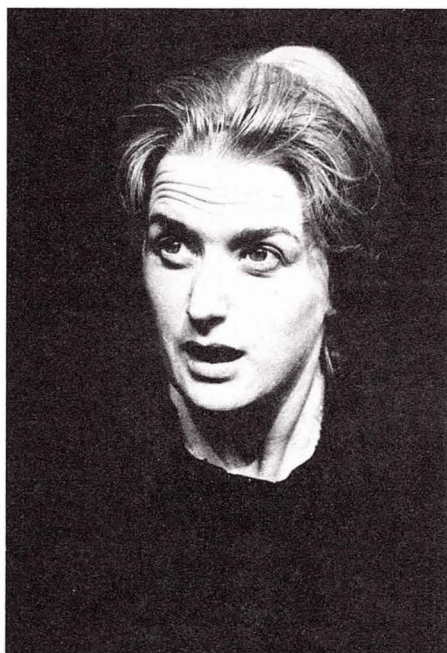
1984 was also the year of Geraldine Ferraro. Every chord of feminism and post-feminism was sounded in the Fringe; but the most eloquent voice for the plight of women happened to be in Italian. Franca Rame—an electrifying actress of about 50—breezed through several solo sketches grounded more or less in the contortions of women living in a male-dominated society. Rame made her points with deadly accuracy, but she was hilarious in *A Woman Alone* as the housewife who is locked in her home by her jealous husband. Her rapid-fire woman's-eye-view of sex, pregnancy, birth, or abortion Italian-style, took the shape of a Rabelaisian parable. In the second half, Rame came back with two tragic portraits of the mother of a terrorist, and a woman who has just been raped. Her virtuosity in both comedy and tragedy soon brought her out of the shadow of her husband, Dario Fo.

Women accounted for a good part of a growing phenomenon, the one-person show; Victorian actress Ellen Terry, Virginia Woolf and George Sand were reincarnated. The fascinating true saga of *Barry* began in 1810, when an Edinburgh girl of 15 undertook to masquerade as a male to become Britain's first female physician. Scottish actress Gerda Stevenson flawlessly embodied Major-General James Miranda Barry, in act one as a pregnant young woman confiding her deception to the audience, and in act two as an iron-willed fiftyish gentleman preparing to fight a duel.

*Barry* was performed at the Traverse Theatre, a tiny two-space complex devoted to new plays by young writers. In its 21 years, the Traverse has carved an international reputation as a vital, year-round energy point in Edinburgh where a lot of successful playwrights got their

start. One of the best Traverse plays of the season was an American import. *Still Life* painfully pinned down the psychological fallout of Vietnam, zeroing in on the true story of three victims—a vet whose not-unusual war crimes plague his conscience, his wife and his mistress. All of them existed on an emotional knife-edge, described in alternating monologues that accumulated anxiety until you couldn't breathe.

As the name implies, the Edinburgh International Festival invites acts from around the globe, but the Festival is Scottish, and the most authentic specimen of Scottish classical theatre was also one of the most beguiling productions. Sir David Lyndsay's *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaites*, first performed for James V in 1540, was a daring, flamboyant allegory that made vehement mockery of the corrupt clergy. The nobility and merchant class were also soundly criticized for their shabby treatment of the poor. Together, they became the three estates of the realm: Spiritualitie, Temporalitie and the Burgesses. The fun began when King Humanitie was persuaded by his courtiers—Wantonness, Placebo and Solace—to allow Dame Sensualitie and her beautiful handmaiden into his virtuous court. As Vices tyrannized Virtues in the knockabout manner of medieval clowns, the humor waxed ribald. Just as the court, or soul, was on the verge of moral bankruptcy, all was saved by Divine Correction. And so on: sermonizing at its most digestible.



▲ Evelyn Langland portrays an Aberdeenshire fishwife in *Precarious Living*.

It worked in 1540, and thanks to Tyrone Guthrie, who retrieved it from mothballs in 1948 with a new adaptation, it worked in 1984.

For darker shades of local color, the grinding poverty of 19th-century Scottish fisherfolk ignited a remarkable play entitled *Precarious Living*. Its brief but wrenching scenes described the true life of local heroine Christian Watt, as based on her own diaries. Although an Aberdeenshire fishwife, she possessed a vibrant intelligence and fine caustic wit, railing with brogue eloquence against the exploitive gentry who made her family's life finally unendurable. When Watt, incandescently played by Evelyn Langland, lost her husband to the sea, she began a 45-year retreat in a local asylum, crusading to the end. The play treated the subject of mental illness as poignantly as it did one of Scotland's grimmer chapters of class struggle.

**Michael Kurcfeld** is a Los Angeles writer.

## ■ Forging a Partnership: The New SAM

by Susan Boyle

The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) has announced the selection of an architect to design a new downtown facility—Venturi Rauch and Scott Brown of Philadelphia. This decision resulted from a two-and-a-half-year process in which the museum's selection committee reviewed the qualifications of nearly 50 architects, examined evidence of their work and checked references. They conducted four days of intensive interviews; traveled to Dallas, Philadelphia, Atlanta, New York and points beyond to evaluate museums and other works by the six and then three architects who made the short list—Henry Cobb for I.M. Pei and Partners; Kohn Pedersen Fox; Venturi Rauch and Scott Brown. The final selection was made in late September.

Of all the issues raised by the museum's move, the selection of the architect had been the most volatile. To preserve their options in continuing site negotiations, as well as their objectivity in evaluating the candidates, the selection committee worked in secrecy. The slow process by which the original list of 47 architects was narrowed to 11, then to six and finally to three, was enough to frustrate the local papers. In one week's time, Roche was in and out; first Meier was chosen, then Barnes and then Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer.

All this was rumor, of course, but rumor was one of the few forums for public comment



on the museum design and the selection of the architect. Last spring's site negotiations precluded NEA funding for a limited competition, but in an attempt to foster discussion, a conceptual competition was sponsored in 1983 by the local chapter of the AIA and another Seattle organization, *Blueprint: for Architecture*. Three potential downtown sites drew provocative responses from 57 entrants.

In choosing the architect, SAM predetermined the character of the final design—either a finely detailed, classical building; one with strong public imagery; or a building that resonates with pluralistic meaning. What many are hoping the museum will become, however, has more to do with its operation and function than with its appearance and design. Local artists had called for a facility that is “comfortable, and active, a laboratory with raw rather than precious spaces.” The desire for a place to display and see artwork is critical. Currently the museum's collections are exhibited (or more accurately stored) at Volunteer Park in a classically planned, art-deco building dating from 1933, and in a so-called temporary building constructed at the Seattle Center for the 1962 world's fair. Neither of these facilities is centrally located and both are on city-owned property. The two combined provide 68,000 square feet, but only 22,000 is display space, allowing exhibition of less than 3% of SAM's collections.

The limited capacity and location of these facilities were only two factors in the push for a new, downtown museum. Incentives for a downtown location included the access to a much wider audience. The sense that a museum should play a much broader role in urban life was also a factor; there has been an ever-

growing desire by SAM's Board to make the museum more of a public institution, beginning with a 1973 policy calling for it to become “an open, inclusive community resource,” and evidenced by the earlier attempt to locate in Westlake Mall. The entire Westlake process lasted over six years, and it may have left some on SAM's Board with the conclusion that property negotiations and design decisions are issues best discussed privately. But, by 1982 when the museum finally quit Westlake, it had made the full commitment to downtown. The place is increasingly one of vitality, and diverse urban experience. Thus, it is no coincidence that the museum's current downtown site is surrounded by Seattle's lively retail core to the east and the new Central Waterfront neighborhood to the southwest. Within one block, the true heart of Seattle, the historic Pike Place Market, still beats with an authentic mercantile rhythm that has drawn a surrounding collection of upscale buildings and users. Today there are proposals for office and residential towers on three of the blocks that will face the museum's new front door.

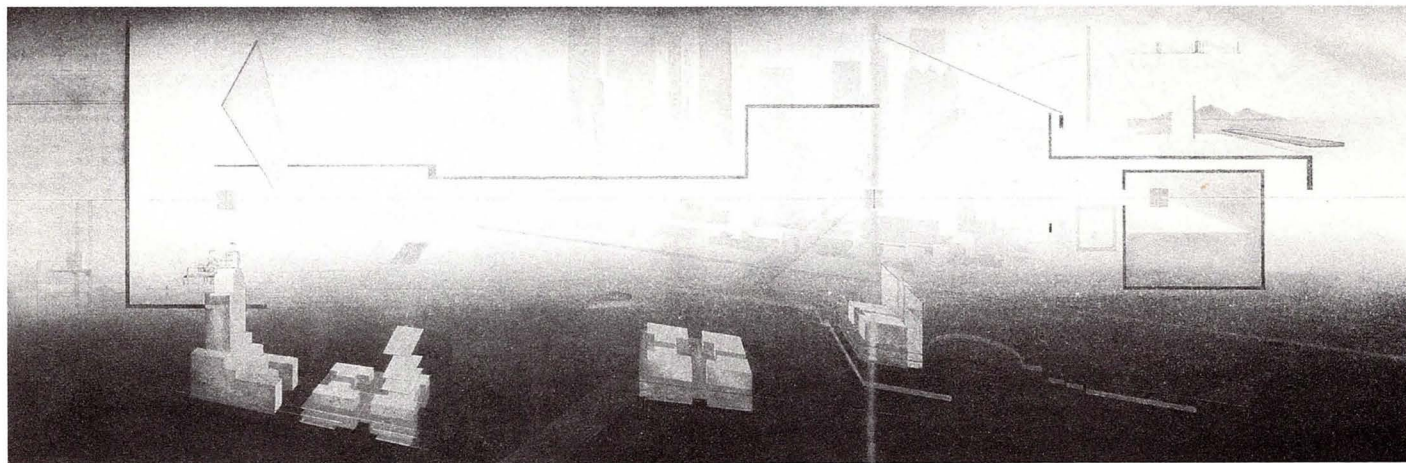
SAM's first downtown site after Westlake was donated by the J.C. Penney company. Their store—a half-block, traditional art-deco structure—had become unprofitable as its lower-middle-class shoppers were displaced to suburban malls and was closed in 1980. The \$10 million building was studied by the museum which sought to purchase the remaining half block for nearly two years. SAM now has a plum of a site, a full block on which they plan to first construct a half-block facility: some 160,000 square feet of exhibit, educational, administrative, performance and theatre space within a five to six-story building. The

new block also contains the Arcade building, a retail structure dating from the 1920s which is used as a revenue-generating office building. The property negotiations for the Arcade site, which included a swap of the Penney's building and its air rights, also provided the museum with a separate parcel containing a 450-stall parking garage. The price was typical for downtown property: an estimated \$31 million including Penney's.

One result of this property deal is a compelling challenge for Venturi et al: a highly contextual location facing three streets, with complex grade changes and traffic patterns, an adjacent building with less than a 20-year life, ongoing surrounding development, and unresolved notions as to SAM's future planning. Another result is one that virtually mandates the museum's desire to become more of a public institution. Because of high property and construction costs, estimated now at \$45 million, funding for the project must come from three sources—the business community, philanthropists and the public.

SAM has ahead an extremely formidable task in forging the necessary public/private partnership in a city with a strong residual mistrust between “the public” and “downtown interests.” However necessary, the lack of full disclosure during the architect and site selections has drawn a “you choose, you pay” response from some, with the conclusion being that, if SAM is run privately, it should be built that way. One member of the museum's committee noted that it is “seeking a partnership with the public, not a plebiscite.” For some, that may be a difficult distinction.

**Susan Boyle** is a Seattle architect with her own practice.



▲ Drawing by Jim Bishop and Bill Hook, in watercolor pencil and gold leaf, used by Olson Walker Architects during their bid for the museum commission.



# Lifestyle Winery Competition

## ■ Domaine Clos Pegase

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art announced last September that the team of architect Michael Graves and artist Edward Schmidt had won the Domaine Clos Pegase design competition. The winners, who have collaborated previously on a project for the Cincinnati Symphony, were to enter into a contract to execute their design for the winery, sculpture garden and residence planned for a hilly site in Napa Valley, California. The owners, Jan and Mitsuko Shrem, are well-known art collectors who established a home in San Francisco several years ago.

The Shrems have a collection which is concentrated in the surrealist movement and includes works by Arp, Calder, Dali, Dubuffet, Ernst, Miró and Tanguy. The two were inspired to name the winery after a treasured work, an oil painting entitled *Pegasus* by Odilon Redon (circa 1900). The paintings will be displayed in public spaces throughout the winery, and the sculpture garden was programmed for the Shrems' growing collection of contemporary sculpture.

The Shrems first met museum director Henry Hopkins when they consulted the institution's conservation laboratory in regard to some of their paintings. They spoke of their plans to build a winery in the Napa Valley, and in the course of conversation it became clear that a design competition sponsored by the museum would be an appropriate vehicle for the selection of an architect. Announced in May 1984, the competition required that entering teams include an architect and an artist

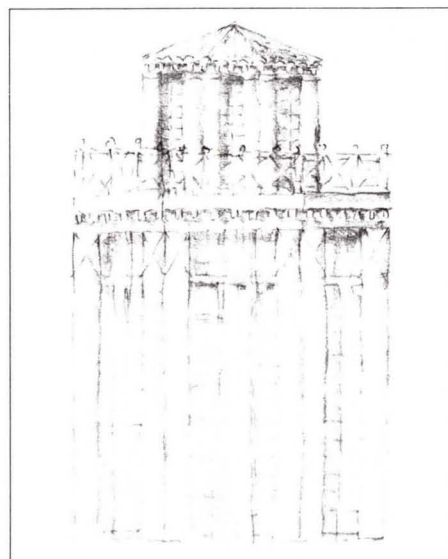
working in collaboration.

Ten semifinalist teams were chosen for interview from 90 entries. The five finalists were selected in July 1984 and each awarded \$5000 to prepare conceptual plans, drawings and a model. In addition to the Graves/Schmidt team, the following were chosen—Andrew Batey and Mark Mack with Peter Saari; Robert Mangurian with James Turrell; Stanley Saitowitz, Toby Levy and Pat O'Brien with Elyn Zimmerman; Dan Solomon, Ricardo Bofill, Patrick Dillon and Barbara Stauffacher Solomon with Ed Carpenter.

The jury felt that the Graves/Schmidt scheme was the most successful at meeting the stated design requirement of integrating the various elements of the program within the context of the site, while clearly expressing and separating public from private functions and areas. "We find their site development plan a brilliant and powerful piece of work," states the jury report.

Visitors enter a central court flanked by wings for tasting and production. On the far side, a trellis structure opens to a symbolic "mountain of Pegasus"—a circular stepped building whose three terraces are planted with poplars. A classical frieze on the inside walls of this building depicts the myth of Pegasus and the wine-making cycle.

Beyond the mountain, a sculpture court is set into the hill and defined by a colonnade; this leads to a pavilion and a field for sculpture. A tree-lined path ascends the hill in a series of switchbacks, ending at the water-filled "grotto of Pegasus." The path then descends along a water-lined stair to a raised covered walkway,

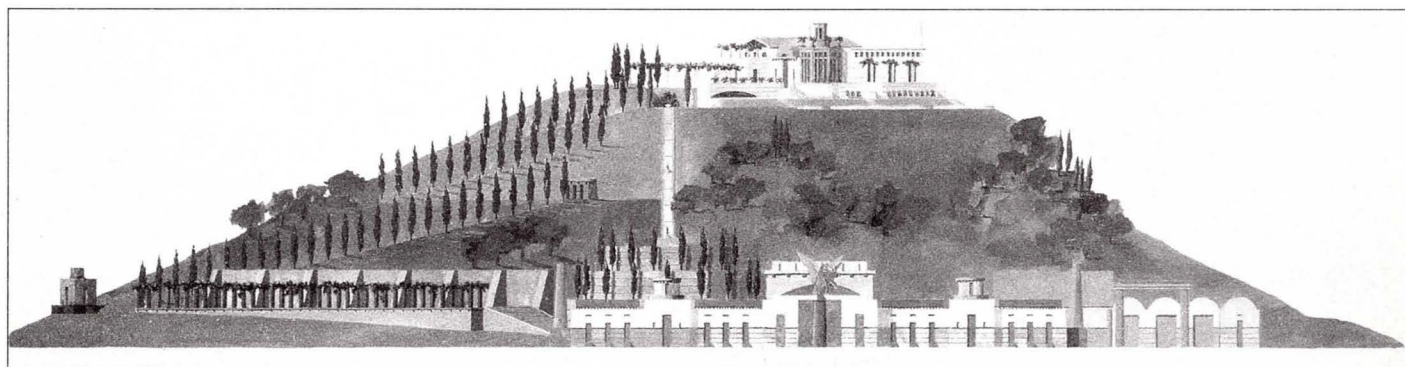


▲ In the winning scheme by Michael Graves and Edward Schmidt, the Domaine Clos Pegase residence is a series of pavilions organized around an atrium, a Japanese bath, and an octagonal winter garden pictured above in a pencil drawing by Graves.

an aquaduct that re-enters the "mountain" at its uppermost terrace.

The plan of the residence echoes on a smaller scale that of the winery. Set among gardens and terraces at the top of the hill, the house is composed of a series of pavilions organized around a central atrium and includes a pottery studio, Japanese bath and winter garden.

The finalists were chosen by a jury including Mary Livingstone Beebe, director of the Stuart collection at UC San Diego; Craig Hodgetts, a designer currently working on theatrical pro-



▲ South elevation, Domaine Clos Pegase, design by Michael Graves with Edward Schmidt, painting by Michael Graves



jects for the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Mark Taper Forum, both in Los Angeles; Robert Mondavi, chairman of the board for Mondavi Vineyards and a patron of the arts through exhibitions and concerts held at the winery; Hideo Sasaki, founder of the landscape architecture firm of Sasaki and Walker and former chairman of Harvard's Department of Landscape Architecture.

The competition was conducted under the professional guidance of Donald Stastny, a practicing architect in Portland and chairman of the Oregon School of Design. Stastny served as professional advisor to both the Beverly Hills Civic Center and Portland Pioneer Courthouse Square competitions. The winery competition was organized by Helene Fried, planning coordinator for the museum's Department of Architecture and Design. Ms. Fried will curate the exhibition, "art + architecture + landscape," showcasing the work of the five finalists and scheduled at the museum for June.

### ■ Art of the Possible: Federal Design Achievement Awards

The recipients of the first federal awards for design excellence were announced in October by the National Endowment for the Arts, administrator for the government-wide Presidential Design Awards Program established by President Reagan in December 1983. Ninety-one winners received the first-phase Federal Design Achievement Awards of the program. From this group, a select number will be chosen to receive the program's highest honor, the Presidential Award for Design Excellence, to be announced early this year.

The jury for architecture, interior design, landscape architecture and urban design and planning noted in its report the large role of the national government.

"First, through innovative and carefully conceived programs, the government has encouraged an extensive amount of superior design." The jury cited the Department of the Interior's Tax Incentive program for the development of rehabilitation standards in conjunction with the Tax Act of 1981; NEA's Main Street Approach for promoting small-town private-sector involvement in preservation.

"Second, the Federal government has initiated processes that have resulted in projects that have been beneficial to the public." Revitalization of entire historic districts has been promoted by HUD's New Partnership for Re-

storing American Cities in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Interior's Klondike Gold Rush National Park in Skagway, Alaska. NEA's Artists' Permanent Studio Building in Boston provides a model for satisfying the space needs of a special interest group.

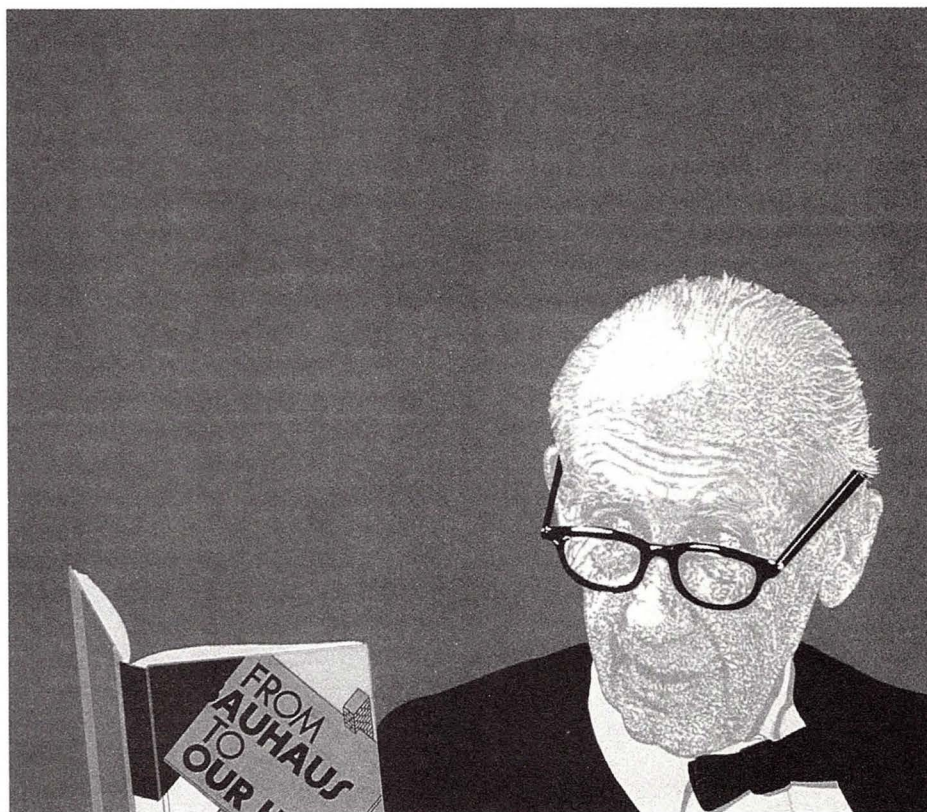
"Third, projects have been created with extremely high quality of design, as expressed in the finished product, often as the result of either innovative programs or processes." The jury cited a major installation such as the Department of Transportation's Orlando International Airport project for meeting complicated functional and environmental requirements; the Department of Justice's Courtroom "A" project in Denver for the economical rehabilitation of a noted historic space; HUD's Japanese Village Plaza project in Los Angeles for providing a lively contrast to formulaic theme markets.

Three juries reviewed the entered projects, processes, programs and policies for eligibility. A jury chaired by architect Thomas Beeby selected 31 entries for awards in architecture and related fields. A second jury, chaired by engineer Edward Cohen, selected 12 projects for awards in engineering design. A third jury, chaired by designer Lou Dorfsman, chose 48 winners in graphic and product design.

### ■ Briefly

**Getty Center.** The selection of architect Richard Meier to design the J. Paul Getty fine arts center in west Los Angeles was announced in October by the Getty Trust. In accepting the commission, Meier said, "This is the single most important thing to happen to me. I don't ever remember feeling so enthusiastic, confident, and positive. We will produce the very best that is possible for the site and the program." The announcement brings to a conclusion the trust's 18-month search for an architect, guided by a committee of seven professionals in the arts and humanities.

**Celebrating Gropius.** A series of four paintings on the theme of Walter Gropius has been completed by Robert Augustine, an architect in Charlestown, Massachusetts. Each painting measures 25¼ inches by 21¼ inches and is executed in acrylic paint on gypsum wallboard. The most intriguing one, *Grope 100*, depicts him reading Tom Wolfe's *From Bauhaus to Our House*. It was incorporated in the design of last year's poster for "Gropifest," a celebration of Gropius' birthday on May 18 held at the Architects Collaborative in Cambridge. Augustine hopes to reproduce the entire series in silkscreen.



▲ *Grope 100* by Robert Augustine



## Creative Pragmatism

### ■ Four California Architects

by Alson Clark

#### The Second Generation

by Esther McCoy

Peregrine Smith Books,  
Salt Lake City, 1984.

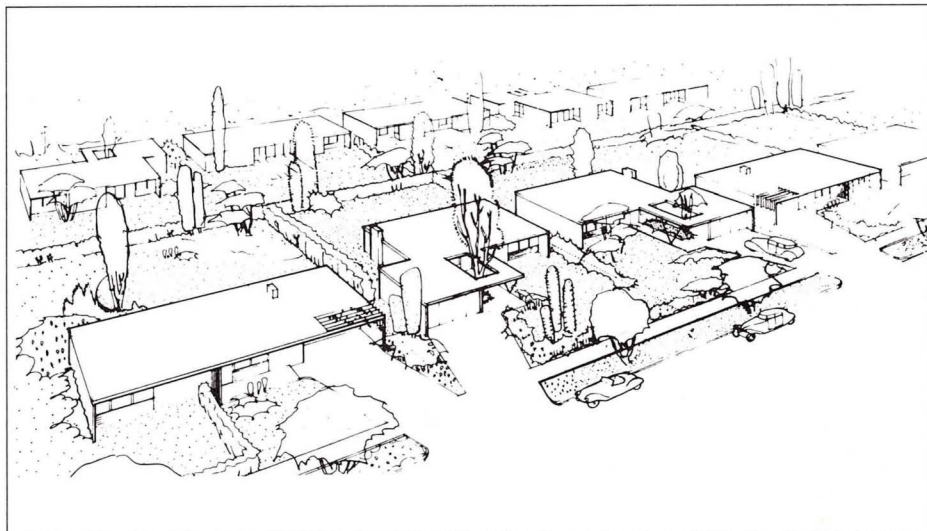
191 pages, illustrated, \$27.50 cloth.

Twenty-four years ago Esther McCoy gave us *Five California Architects* and two years later she wrote *Modern California Houses*. Her latest work, *The Second Generation*, forms the middle leg of a triptych about the progress of the modern movement in Southern California.

No one is as qualified to write this book as McCoy, who possesses an economical, effortless prose style. Everyone recognized the amount of careful research that had gone into *Five California Architects* and that her subjects, especially Maybeck and Schindler, had received recognition at a critical time. Since then, good monographs have appeared on the architects, but McCoy introduced them to an international audience.

Designers are no longer preoccupied with the modern movement, but *The Second Generation* is in some ways more remarkable than *Five California Architects*. The author was better acquainted with her subjects and able to interview them all in the process of writing the book. *The Second Generation* includes biographical information not previously available on the four architects—J.R. Davidson, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Gregory Ain and Raphael Soriano—who enjoyed national recognition from the late 1930s until the middle 50s.

In choosing the title, McCoy did not mean to imply that this was a generation that lived easily on its inheritance. The five California architects had to contend with a conservative academic community who disapproved of all but the Greene brothers, and changing fashion which shortened the careers of both Irving Gill and the Greenes. The second generation had to cope with different problems, especially financing, local building codes and, in one case, the national government acting as Big Brother. (One of Ain's cooperative housing projects of the postwar period was not built because some members were black, and the Fed-



▲ Gregory Ain hit his stride in 1947 with the Mar Vista subdivision.

eral Housing Authority would not at the time lend money to projects which included blacks.)

Of the four architects, the modest J.R. Davidson had the least tempestuous career. He was as old as Schindler and had come to California before Neutra, but had worked only as a designer of fine interiors and furniture until in 1936 an MGM art director commissioned him to build a house. This book is the first time that Davidson's work has been assembled, and the illustrations, especially of the interiors, reveal him as an important talent.

A native of California, Harwell Hamilton Harris majored in sculpture at college but went to work for Richard Neutra. Harris' first work of architecture, the Lowe house of 1934, was brilliantly planned and he soon built a following. His wooden houses of the 1930s were so successful at combining imagination, ingenuity and sensitivity to site that they were among the best residential works of the decade. After the war, Harris became one of the first "postmodernists" by re-interpreting the Craftsman works of Maybeck and the Greenes.

The wisdom of McCoy's decision to incorporate biographical material is demonstrated in the chapter on Gregory Ain. This section compliments David Gebhard's *The Architecture of Gregory Ain: The Play Between the Rational and High Art*, a work familiar to those interested in Ain. A comparison between this book and *The Second Generation* reveals how

unfortunate it is that McCoy did not include the Ain drawings illustrating Gebhard's book, since these indicate more clearly than photographs the quality of Ain's single-family houses of the 1930s.

During the war, Ain devoted himself to privately financed, low-cost housing schemes which employed standardized construction methods, and this stint as a technologist had a profound effect on his work. The national press was very interested in Ain's ideas and gave much publicity to his three built projects—in Altadena, 1945; Los Angeles, 1946; Mar Vista, 1947. Ain had hit his stride in the Mar Vista houses, which avoided the monotony of the Altadena project and the mannerism of the Los Angeles Avenel houses. MOMA was so impressed that in 1951 Ain was asked to design a demonstration house for the sculpture garden. The house was supposed to convince reluctant East Coast builders that the modern approach was superior, but the house was costly and its numerous built-in features incited Lewis Mumford to title his critique, "Not for Internal Use."

Although European-born Raphael Soriano was the only member of the second generation to graduate from an architectural school (USC) his real education was in the office of Richard Neutra. In his pre-war practice, Soriano was recognized for his daring use of the new technology; in 1950, he designed a rational steel pa-



vilion for the Case Study House program. His career suffered an unfortunate eclipse after the 1950s, an event which McCoy is too wise a writer to explain.

In his 1950 introduction to *Richard Neutra: Buildings and Projects*, Siegfried Giedion could not discuss anything but Neutra's expensive steel or concrete houses; Arthur Drexler, in his 1982 catalog for the Neutra show at MOMA, concluded that Neutra had wasted his talents by building small, inexpensive houses. Since the architects of the second generation launched their careers during the Depression, their work was of necessity small and low-budget. Cesar Pelli, in his introduction to this book, remarks that the low-budget commission is almost a California tradition and labels the architecture, "Creative Pragmatism." The remarkably minimal houses by Davidson, Harris, Ain and Soriano have struck a responsive chord, and this book, the result of so much first-hand knowledge and careful documentation, will serve as a significant appreciation of an era.

**Alson Clark** is the architecture librarian for the USC School of Architecture and Fine Arts.

## ■ Image and Object

by John Pastier

### Photography and Architecture: 1839-1939

by Richard Pare et al.

Callaway Editions, New York, 1982.

282 pages, illustrated, \$65.00 cloth.

### Images of America: Precisionist Painting and Modern Photography

by Karen Tsujimoto

University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1982.

248 pages, illustrated, \$40.00 cloth.

Of all the arts, architecture has forged the strongest bonds with technology. The relationship is so strong that it approaches dependency. Structural methods, materials, and building techniques have largely molded modern architecture, yet it can be argued that photography has been just as strong a technological force.

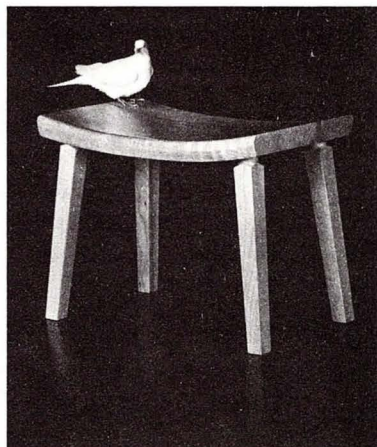
We see few of the world's best or most interesting buildings directly, but rather through photographs; it is books, periodicals and slide lectures that bring those mountains to Mo-

hammed. Not only do photos show us architecture, but they can show us *how* to see it, and even show architects how to design. New styles move through the profession in step with monthly magazine deliveries, and there is surely a link between the increasing use of published color photography and the blossoming of color in buildings themselves.

But beyond their utilitarian, formative or informative value—in other words, beyond their role as technological servants of art—architectural photographs can themselves be art. They can reflect new visions, give us satisfactions beyond those of their subject matter, and make some statement about life and their times. *Photography and Architecture: 1839-1939* is a massive work that seems to miss that point in the course of presenting 148 nostalgically reproduced (sepia ink on rough cream paper) and often puzzlingly selected examples of its subject. The book is the catalog of a traveling museum exhibit that itself is the initial showing of works from the newly formed collection of the Canadian Centre for Architecture. It has, however, been packaged as far more than a catalog—given its size, price, scope and all-inclusive title, it seems intended as some sort of definitive work.

But what emerges is a complacent tome, a decaffeinated coffee-table book that is for the most part dry and joyless, dull and dutiful. Much of its content could be deemed travel or landscape photography, and not enough of it shows imagination or formal mastery. It is preponderantly concerned with the earliest quarter of photography's first century, and it omits a figure as significant as Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, ignores a technique as important as color, and underrepresents a genre as basic as the work of professional architectural photographers. This no doubt reflects the limits of a new collection, and an impulse to show off older and presumably rarer works, but it also causes wonder as to why such an important effort was launched so prematurely. That question is even more mystifying when one considers that the same principles, Richard Pare and Phyllis Lambert, organized and produced the splendid and exemplary "Court House" exhibit and catalog in 1978.

The qualities most lacking in *Photography and Architecture: 1839-1939* are abundantly present in *Images of America*—vitality, compositional strength, a sense of discovery, and evidence of the artists' emotional commitment to their subject matter. It, too, catalogs a traveling exhibit, organized by the San Francisco Muse-



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um of Modern Art, dealing with photographers' and painters' adoption of machine forms and architecture as subject for art, and their celebration of an industrializing and urbanizing society in the period between the two world wars. Along with such expected figures as Berenice Abbott, Margaret Bourke-White, Charles Sheeler, Alfred Stieglitz, Joseph Stella, Niles Spencer, Louis Lozowick, Paul Strand and Charles Demuth, there are some cast against type: Georgia O'Keeffe, Ansel Adams and Walker Evans working with big-city subjects, and Brett Weston and Imogen Cunningham tackling industrial ones. Here we see strong interaction between painting and dynamically composed photography (particularly in the case of the movement's versatile star, Sheeler) and a fine combination of both seeking and resolution. Through subtle abstraction, these realistic painters and photographers advanced a persuasive vision of an America more modern than its architects had actually been able to build; its imagery is part of our basic definition of modernism even to this day. Theirs was an art of innovation and risk, and usually one of polish as well. It retains its force and freshness so completely after a half century that one is tempted to think of it as a silver age.

## ■ But Is It Art?

by Kerry Tomlinson

### Artists Design Furniture

by Denise Domergue

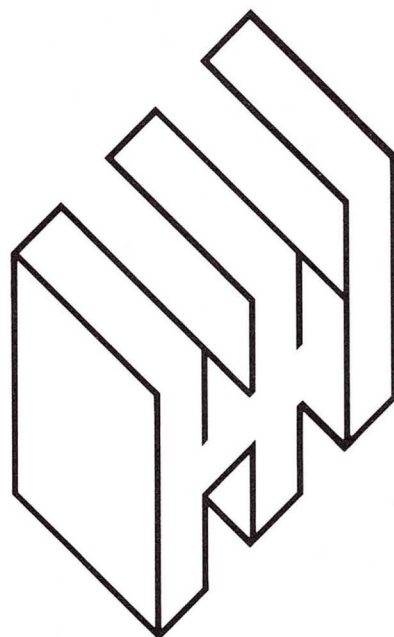
Abrams Art Books, New York, 1984.

176 pp., 230 illustrations, \$35.00 cloth.

"I like the *Cardboard Table* because it looks even more useless in a photograph than it does in real life."  
—Robert Rauschenberg

First, get your hands on this book. Put your feet up for a preliminary perusal and, in half an hour's time, you'll be casting sly glances at every stick of furniture in the room. Your spouse may return to find you've sawed off all the chair's legs, splashed the sofa with fluorescent paint or chucked the coffee table out the window in favor of a cluster of old cardboard boxes. Don't laugh; if Robert Rauschenberg has inspirations like these, so might you.

*Artists Design Furniture* is a delight, a veritable glut of ideas. More than 200 pieces by contemporary American artists—including chairs, tables, beds, lamps, dressers, sofas, bookcases, screens and clocks—are pictured in this hand-



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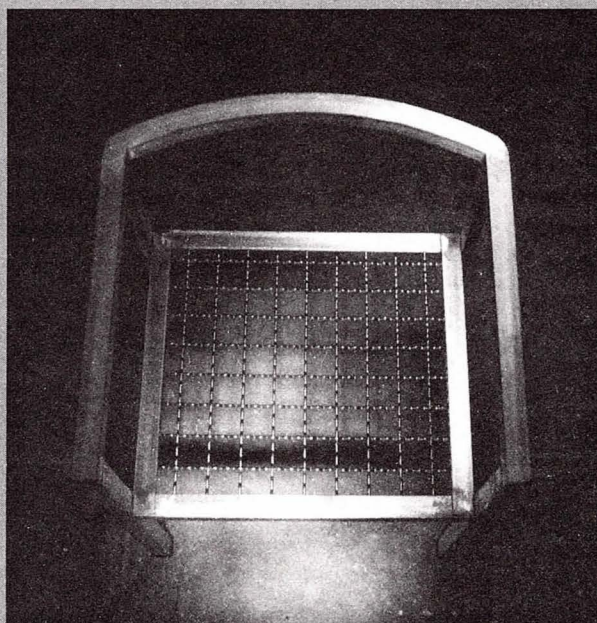
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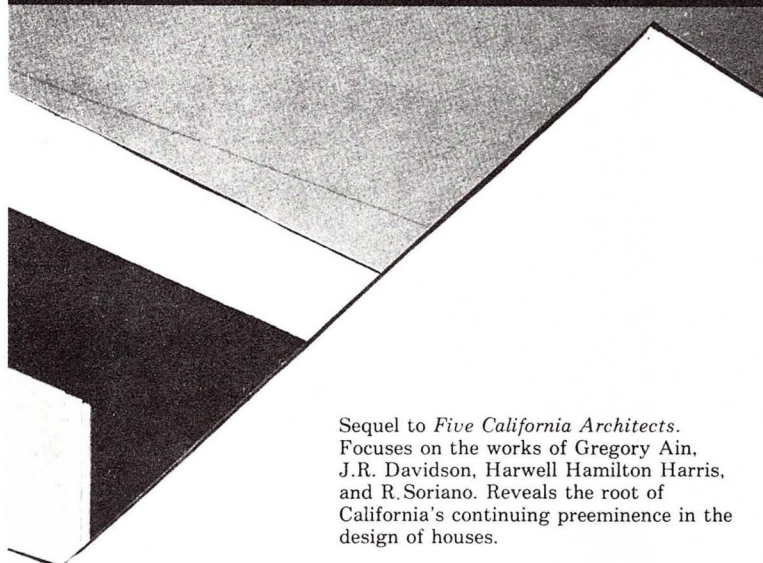
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# THE SECOND GENERATION

ESTHER McCOY

Introduction by Cesar Pelli



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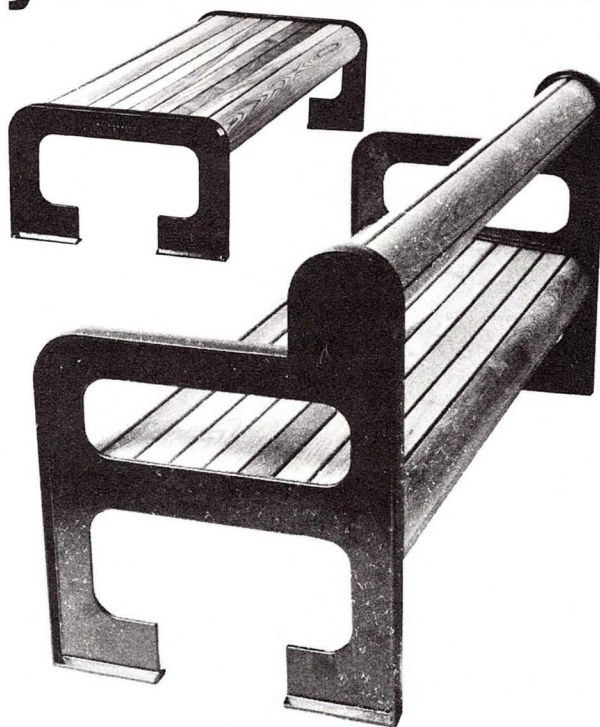
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D I G E S T

some volume, offset by Carol Robson's provocative if initially confusing layout and design. The 69 artists, arranged in alphabetical sequence with the odd exception of Isamu Noguchi, who is first, are further represented by comments about their work, excerpted from interviews conducted by the author, Denise Domergue, over a three-year period.

Not only are the artist's remarks revealing of the individual, but they also express common ground which has nothing to do with a "movement" in this case, since most of the artists were unaware of one another's experiments with furniture. For example, a frequent reason for toying in the first place with the making of furniture turned out to be an actual lack of anything in the studio on which to sit. "I started making couches about 1969 or 1970," says John Chamberlain. "I needed some place to sit down, which is the best reason for making them, I suppose."

Still other artists felt that designing furniture was simply a necessary and stimulating break from their usual media. "I was dissatisfied with drawing and photography because I found them too specific," says Howard Meister. "I wanted to make broader, more general statements about humanity and to find something that was an abstraction for the human body. . . ." Robert Guillot explains, "For an artist, what he already knows is the least interesting thing he can do."

The big issue—one which Domergue illuminates in her lucid introduction with a crash course in art history from the late 19th century to the present—still seems to be, if it's functional, is it art? The nagging insistence that it is not, Domergue tells us, is a decidedly American aberration opposing not only the Eastern mind, wherein there lies no conflict between an object's utility and its artfulness, but also the tenets of Duchamp, dada, surrealism, suprematism, constructivism, de Stijl and the Bauhaus as well. Abstract expressionism, she continues, the first sincerely American art movement, and the "inevitable succession" of trends and variations of the past 30 years have succeeded in rebuilding the cool, cerebral, exclusive ivory tower of art. ". . . American modernism, with its self-proclaimed formalist criteria, has erected its own version of the academy. It has painted itself into a corner, and art is again regrettably out of sync with life. . . . There has never been a more pressing mandate for artists to apply themselves to the task of revitalizing a dispirited society."

The overwhelming majority of the artists



gathered in this volume already seem knee-deep in that very task. They speak enthusiastically of collaboration, experiencing new materials and the challenge of function, and do not regard their tangential interest in designing and creating furniture to be inferior in any way to their central focus in fine art. In fact, all the background yammering about "This is art/ This is not art" seems not only to be dangerously counterproductive, but a waste of an artist's time and, ultimately, boring. Still, there's Billy Al Bengston: "Furniture is furniture; I've never considered it art. I figure if anybody else can do it, it isn't art." Bunk; it's time for this attitude to pick up its football and go home.

The overall impression is that this lot is having a great deal of fun. LA artist Philip Garner describes himself as "an industrial parasite" whose idea of creating furniture out of vintage car parts sprang from seeing sparkling new models on the showroom floor. "I have always felt the automobile belonged indoors." Insisting that there is a practical side to having one's couch in the trunk of a '54 Chevy, Garner says, "... the trunk lid when closed keeps pets off the furniture."

Personal favorites include the devastatingly elegant *Queen Anne*, *Queen Anne* chair by Main and Main, as well as their equally impressive *Ribbon* chaise, which graces the cover. Highest honors to Buster Simpson and Randy Turner for their *Living Bench*, a clear Plexiglas bench shape under which was planted eight tiny willow trees which will hug the form as they grow. In five years, the artists plan to remove the Plexiglas and people will be able to sit directly on the tree.

"The optimum aspiration would be to make all aspects of daily life works of art. Richard Serra said: 'If it's functional, it's not art.' Give me one year and I'll turn any outdoor sculpture into a sundial." —George Herms

**Kerry Tomlinson** is an artist who curated "The Chair Show" for James M. Hansen Gallery, Santa Barbara, in 1983.

## ■ Briefly

**50 Northwest Artists**  
by Bruce Guenther  
Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1983.  
128 pages, illustrated, \$16.95 paper.

The second in a pair of thumbnail-sketch books about regional artists and their work,

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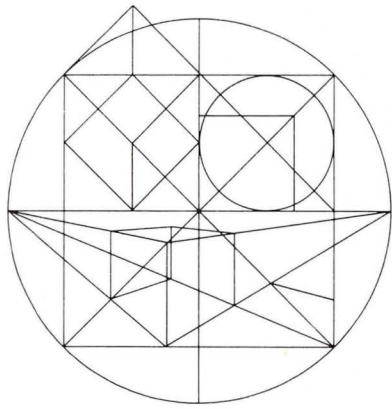
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D I G E S T

this publication rigidly follows the format established by *50 West Coast Artists*. Each artist is represented by a color photograph of one work, a duotone portrait, and a personal statement. Needless to say, while these sketches prove titillating to anyone who is unfamiliar with the work, they are hardly informative. The book is a joy to the eyes, with Marsha Burns' revealing duotone portraits and good reproduction of the artwork. The artists' explanations, however, range from informative to downright silly; more detailed descriptions might have been appropriate. While the book is a rudimentary introduction to the artists, anyone wishing to learn about them in depth is better advised to seek out their work or to subscribe to a regional art publication.

—Goldstein

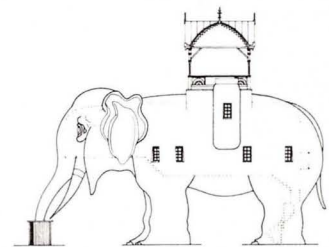
### The Well Built Elephant and Other Roadside Attractions

by J. J. C. Andrews

Congdon and Weed, New York, 1984.

146 pages, illustrated, \$16.95 paper.

Each year, as more and more unique commercial architecture vanishes from the American landscape, we are treated to another book about its wonders. Over the last ten years, there has been a vast array on the subject, ranging from Hirshorn and Izenour's scholarly *White Towers* to John Margolies' beautifully photographed but ultimately uninformative *End of the Road*, a catalogue for a show by the same name at the Hudson River Museum. The latest entry into the vernacular-architecture stakes is *The Well Built Elephant*. Designed to



accompany a traveling exhibition, it differs from the other books in that the author traces the life history of each structure shown and, in some cases, even provides drawings. Like most of the other books, this one maddeningly omits exact street addresses of the examples. Photographed primarily in black and white, the book is another poignant reminder that, as American highways expand, the delightful structures that used to populate them are rapidly disappearing.

—Goldstein



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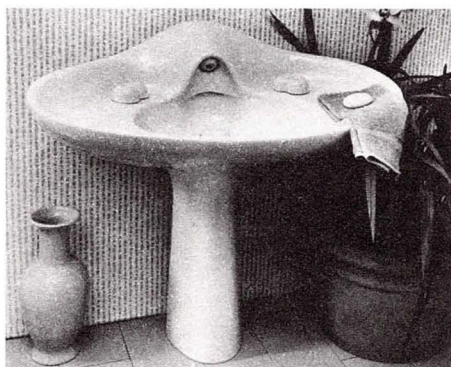
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## Ceramic Sculpture

### ■ Platner Collection

The fixtures were designed to evoke the image of fountains, but in creating the pedestal and drop-in lavatories, toilet and bidet for **American Standard**, architect Warren Platner says he was also inspired by the soft shape of the human body. "Instead of creating just a beautiful bathroom, I wanted to create a bath-



▲ American Standard's pedestal lavatory

room that makes people beautiful." The Platner collection is characterized by a smoothness of line and detail; metal is not visible and the fittings are of ceramic, including the recessed water spouts and the delicate shell-shape handles.

Circle Number 1 on Reader Inquiry Card

### ■ Rated Finish

Esthetic compromise in favor of safety or practicality is a familiar problem, but a new type of plastic laminate lets architects and other designers satisfy fire codes without sacrificing good looks. **Formica** fire-rated laminate has a kraft core specially treated with a fire-retardant



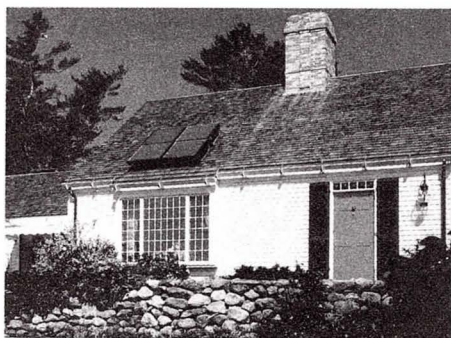
▲ Formica's fire-rated laminate

chemical, but it provides the same appearance, durability and stain-resistance as the company's regular plastic laminate. To introduce the product, Formica has produced a brochure containing technical data for both fire-rated and regular laminates in various fire-rated assemblies.

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### ■ Hot Air

Those looking for a low-cost, supplemental space-heating system will be interested in **Hansolar TA-3**. "We have taken the mystery out of solar and packaged it in a carton," claims Peter Holden, vice-president of **Hanson Energy Products**, who goes on to say, "If you can install a skylight or a dryer vent, you can install our products." The system is based on a module of two panels, but additional panels can be added according to the recommendation of a sizing chart. Installed on a roof, wall or window, **Hansolar TA-3** draws cool air from an



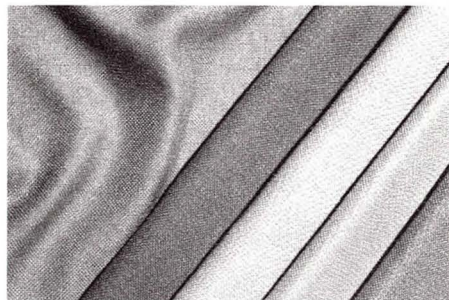
▲ Hanson Energy Products' solar system

adjacent space to be heated by an absorber plate. When the plate temperature falls below 70°F, a thermostat shuts the blower and the system seals against drafts.

Circle Number 3 on Reader Inquiry Card

### ■ Linen Look

A line of polyester fabric by **Haworth** has been named **Pinpoint** to emphasize its distinctive texture, a basketweave with a noticeably lustrous surface. High priority was placed on maintaining unity within the company's open-office system, so the offering is color-compatible with current chair and panel fabrics.



▲ Haworth's Pinpoint compatible fabric

Twelve colors range from **Luna Moth**, a pale green, to **Mayfly**, a warm grey. Available on all panels and components with fabric, **Pinpoint** brings **Haworth's** textile program to a total of 11 fabrics in 131 colors.

Circle Number 4 on Reader Inquiry Card

### ■ Glass Necklace

Larry Lazin describes it as "a lighting fixture designed with an accent glass necklace. When illuminated, one can see the brilliance of color; when not, the beauty of glass." Available in 22-inch and 14-inch diameters, Lazin's **Chelsea** light has a textured aluminum shade crowned by a ring of red or white glass. The ring balances some of the downlight to reduce glare. Available in standard colors of charcoal and white, the baked-enamel shade has a low profile which allows the bottom of a silver-tipped bulb to show. **Chelsea** is the first in a planned series of fixtures from **Lazin Lighting**.

Circle Number 5 on Reader Inquiry Card



▲ Lazin Lighting's Chelsea fixture



## ■ Silhouette Figures

A mural by photographer Arnold Gore is an unusual way to animate a space; **Peoplescape** is a silk-screened montage depicting a variety of walking figures in silhouette. The mural promotes user identification since tenants or employees can be photographed and



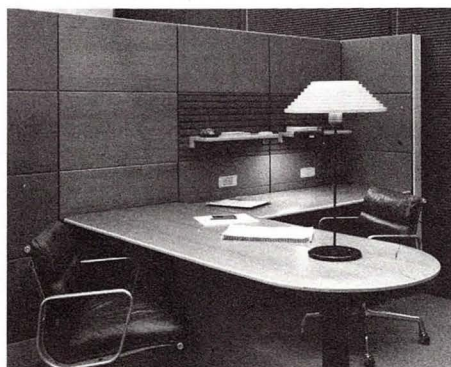
▲ **Peoplescape's** silkscreen photomural

celebrated in a public area like an elevator lobby. This site-specific wallcovering is available in repeatable modules of four feet by eight feet. The finished size is unlimited.

Circle Number 6 on Reader Inquiry Card

## ■ Gracious and Flexible

Motivated by the notion that it's necessary to design for more than ergonomic considerations, Bill Stumpf along with collaborators Jack Kelley and Clino Castelli has designed a new open-office system for **Herman Miller**. Ethospace is the result of a conviction that workers are more productive in situations where they have control over their space; access to natural light and a view; surroundings which are gracious and flexible. To satisfy these subjective needs, the Ethospace system has a structural frame available in 16-inch height increments; this frame supports small rectangular tiles that can be finished in almost



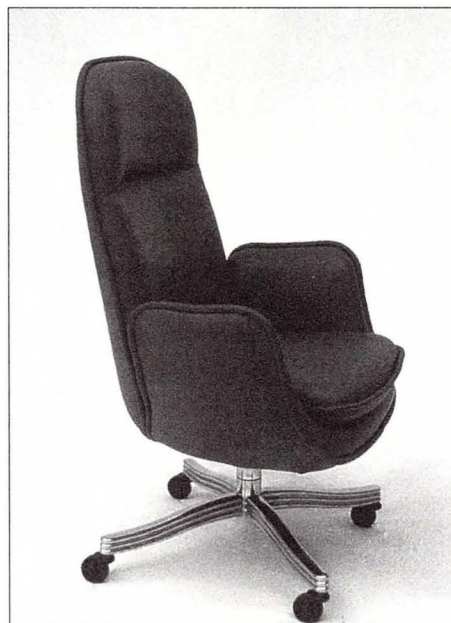
▲ **Herman Miller's** Ethospace system

any manner—fabric, glass, wood and vinyl. The designer can arrange the tiles to create visual patterns, or model the profile of the wall to promote the penetration of natural light into the office.

Circle Number 7 on Reader Inquiry Card

## ■ Layers of Metal

Don Pettitt has designed a contemporary chair for **SunarHauserman** that fits in a traditionally styled office. The chair's most distinctive detail is the base, an exaggerated S-shape built-up of three overlaid forms. Pettitt knew what kind of shape he wanted from the beginning but was unsure of the expression. He was



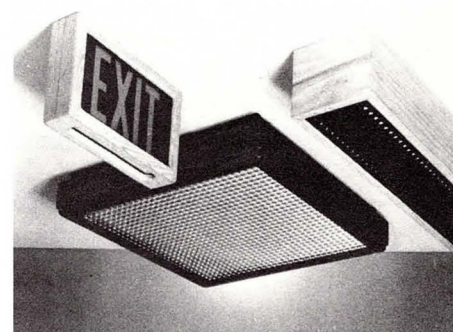
▲ **SunarHauserman's** highback chair

not confident of the solution: "Even though it was just a base, I felt that it had elements in it that were different from what the conscripts of contemporary design are thought to be. It wasn't pure somehow; it wasn't elemental enough." Pettitt's fears were unfounded, for the result is nonetheless handsome and restrained. These qualities are repeated in the other elements of the Pettitt collection—tables, desks, credenzas and cabinets—an integrated statement for the executive office.

Circle Number 8 on Reader Inquiry Card

## ■ Solid Hardwood

Mass-produced lighting fixtures are now available in a variety of hardwoods providing an alternative to the unpredictability of custom woodwork. Designed for specialty applications



▲ **Miller Company's** hardwood fixtures

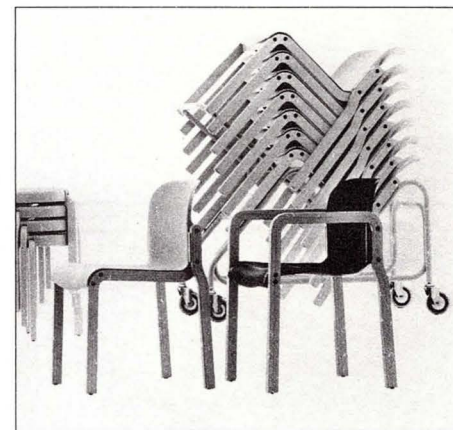
such as executive offices and public lobbies, the **Miller Company** line features one-inch-thick solid hardwood constructed with mitered corners and no visible hardware. The fixtures are available in nine woods including vermillion, redwood, American black walnut, hard maple, Phillipine mahogany, red oak, teak, purple heart and red gum, all hand-rubbed in Danish oil or left sanded for finishing by the contractor.

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## ■ Knockout Knockdown

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▲ **Kembo's** Dolmas line of modular chairs





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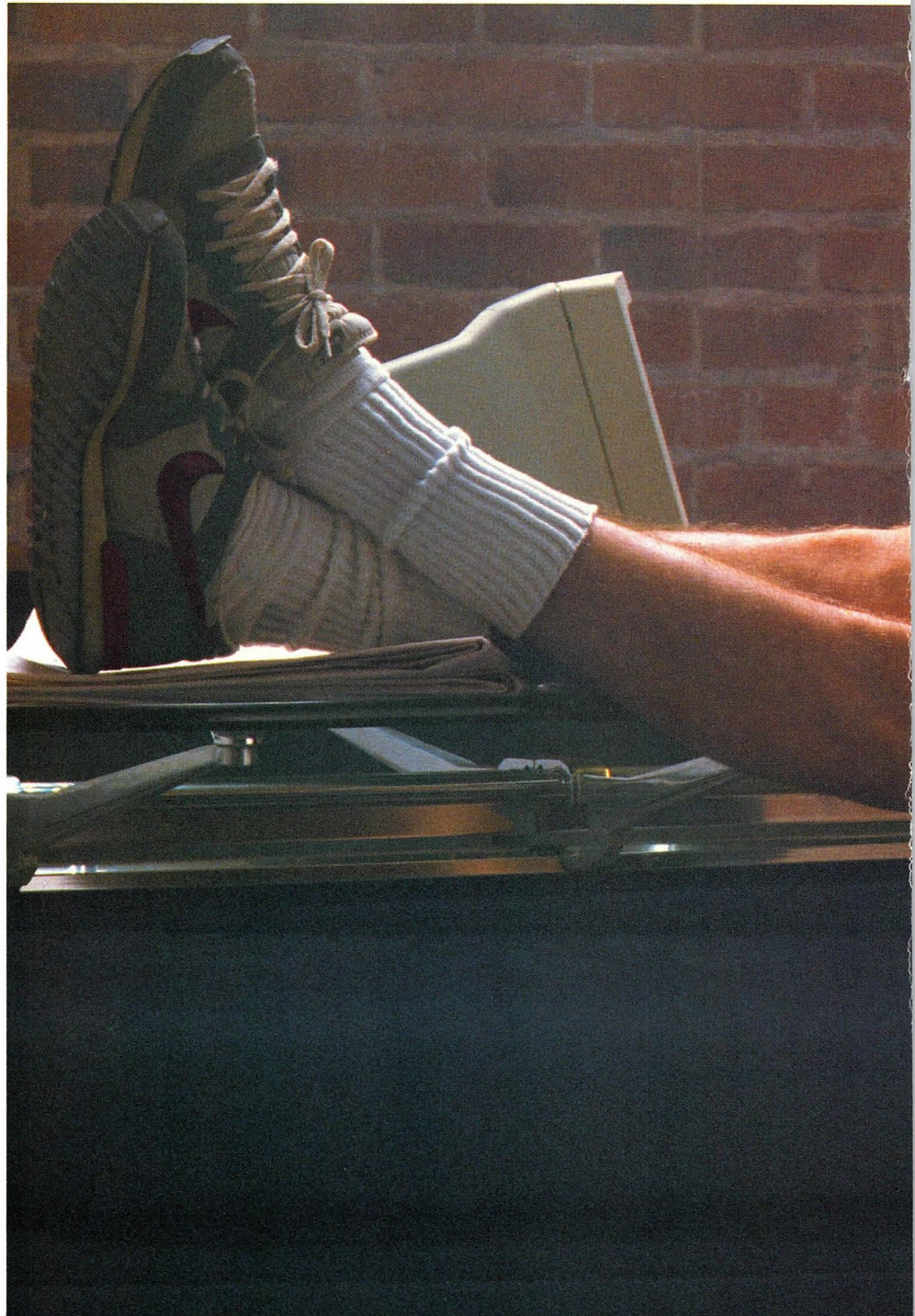


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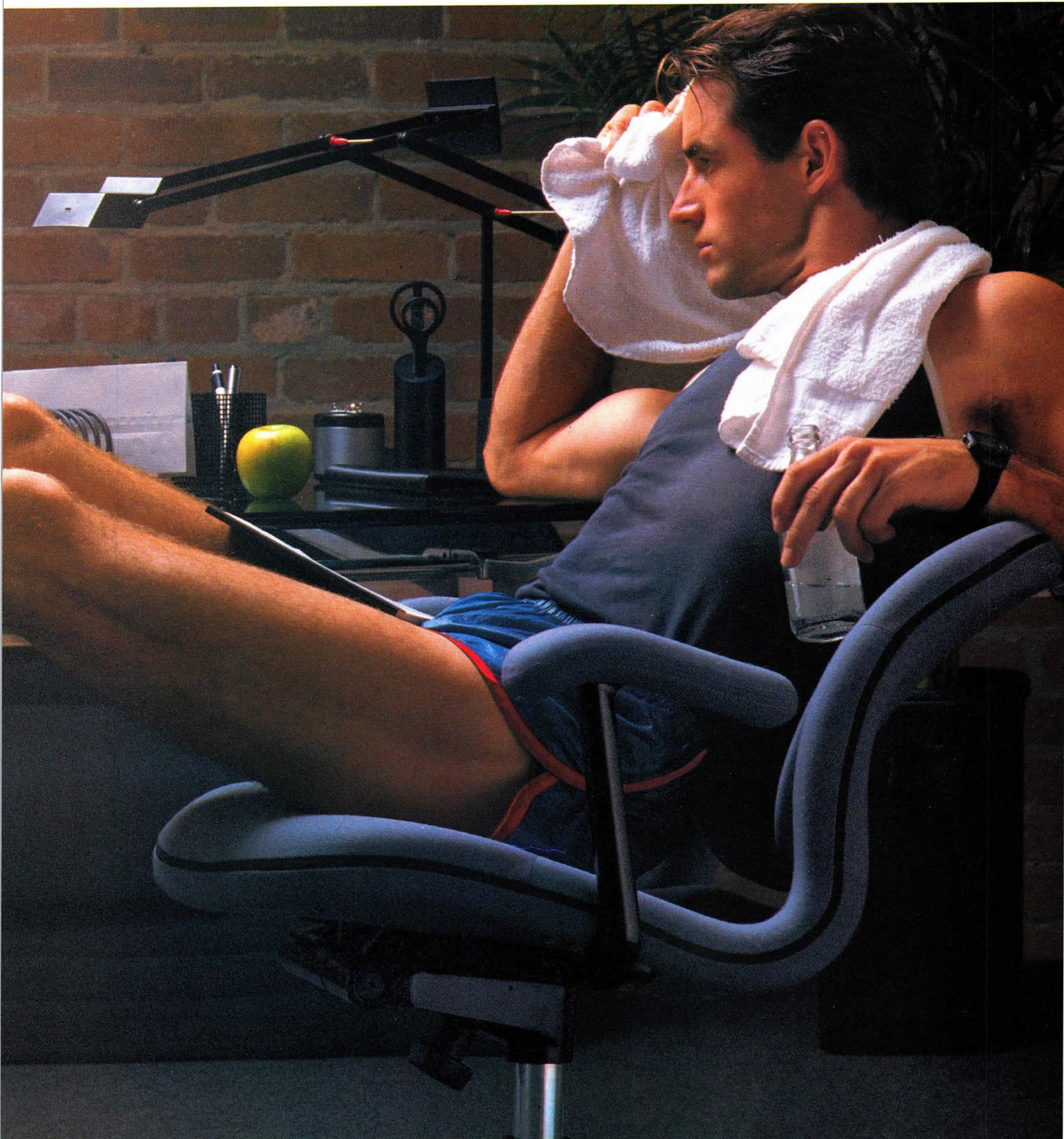
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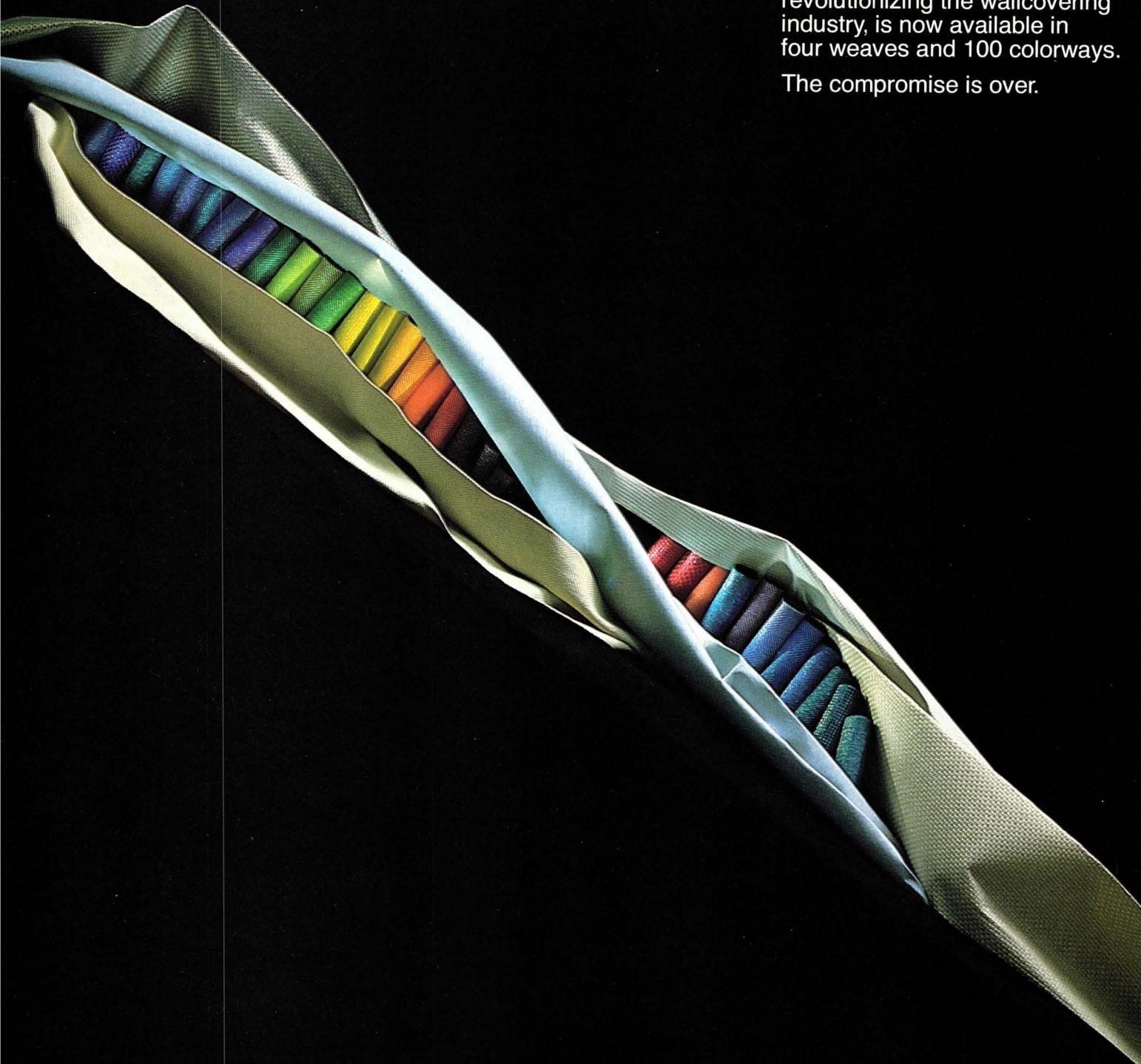


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# FURNITURE BY ARCHITECTS



**Elba Cabin**  
by Aldo Rossi  
A spare design in-  
vokes the architect's  
primary forms, the  
name an elegaic atti-  
tude. All the same,  
one could hardly  
imagine a former  
emperor changing in  
this jauntily colored  
cabaña. Available as  
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ished in pink or sky-  
blue matte lacquer  
or yellow stain with  
a brass-covered  
base. From Furniture  
of the 20th Century.

BY BRUNO GIBERTI



▼ Sideboard

by Rennie Mackintosh

The spare architectural form accented by lyrical decorative touches illustrates the Scottish architect's typical strategy. The 63-inch-high sideboard is in solid ash with mortise and tenon construction and is finished in ebony or walnut stain. The alcove is lit by a leaded-glass interpretation of the architect's favorite motif, the rose. From Atelier International.

► Cabinet

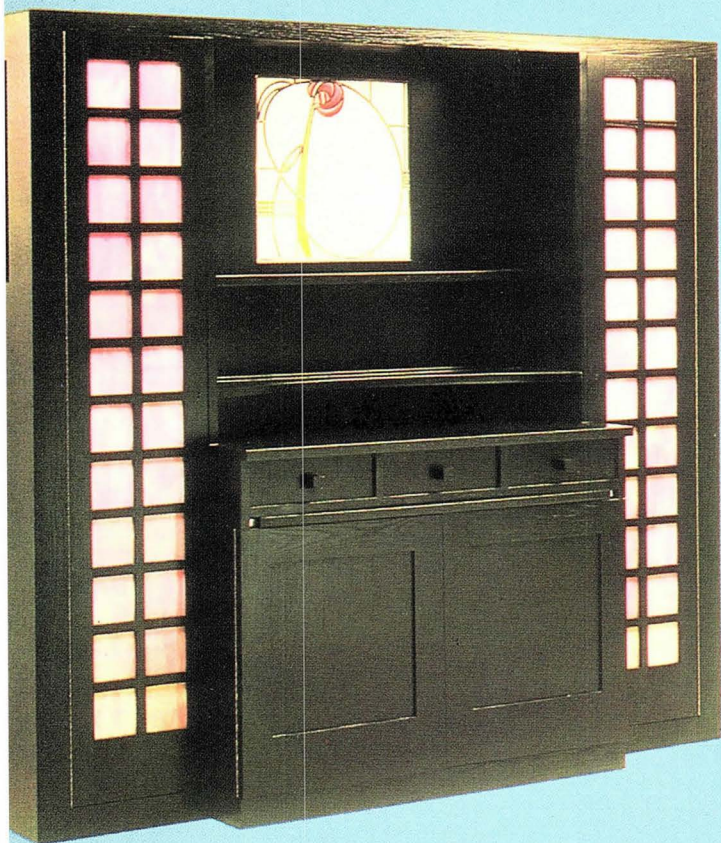
by Aldo Rossi

Related to the Elba Cabin, this interpretation of the ordinary actually bears a stronger resemblance to the other members of Rossi's family—a chair and chest of drawers. The 81-inch-high cabinet is in beech, finished in yellow stain or pink, black or sky-blue matte lacquer. It has brass-covered details, green glass doors and a grey-green Beola marble counter. From Furniture of the 20th Century.

The furniture designed by architects is naturally ambivalent. Like the furniture created by artists, it must satisfy the goals of two not necessarily coincidental programs—the functional requirements of the useful object and the intellectual or aesthetic demands of culture. This ambivalence is reflected in the attitude of the user who can admire a beautiful chair, for instance, while admitting that it

is not altogether comfortable.

Artists are now expressing a great deal of interest in furniture, due in no small part to its iconic quality. A series of object types is the beginning of formal discipline, and in this confusing age, when no consensus exists in regards to appropriate form, it is attractive to know that, no matter what translation is imposed on a chair, we all agree that it has certain basic ele-





ments—usually four legs, a seat and a back. This agreement accounts for the popularity of art furniture with its audience. Not since the heyday of pop art have collectors seen anything so recognizable, so close to home, both literally and figuratively. In response to this popularity, galleries are opening exclusively devoted to "functional art."

The point of all this interest should be to erase the line between fine and applied art, between art and design. It is marginally curious to note that functional art, a quintessentially postmodern movement, should share such an ambitious goal with the disavowed Bauhaus. It is more important to ask whether this line is eradicable, for at the bottom of a historical

dichotomy lies a fundamental difference in attitudes.

The architect's training, and by extension that of any designer, prepares him to feel the greatest responsibility to his client. This sense of "professional guilt" is nurtured by the realization that the architect is in a practical way not essential to the construction process. At a more idealistic level, the designer feels a responsibility to the user, who may not be the client and for whom he substitutes during the process of design; it is in this sense that design can be called social art.

The role of an artist, however, teaches him to be faithful to himself. Although there may be a good number of individuals who tailor their work to please the tastes of the dealer or collector, they would hardly admit it. This is because a heroic model of the artist endures from the 19th century to teach the primacy of self-expression and the romance of isolated work. It

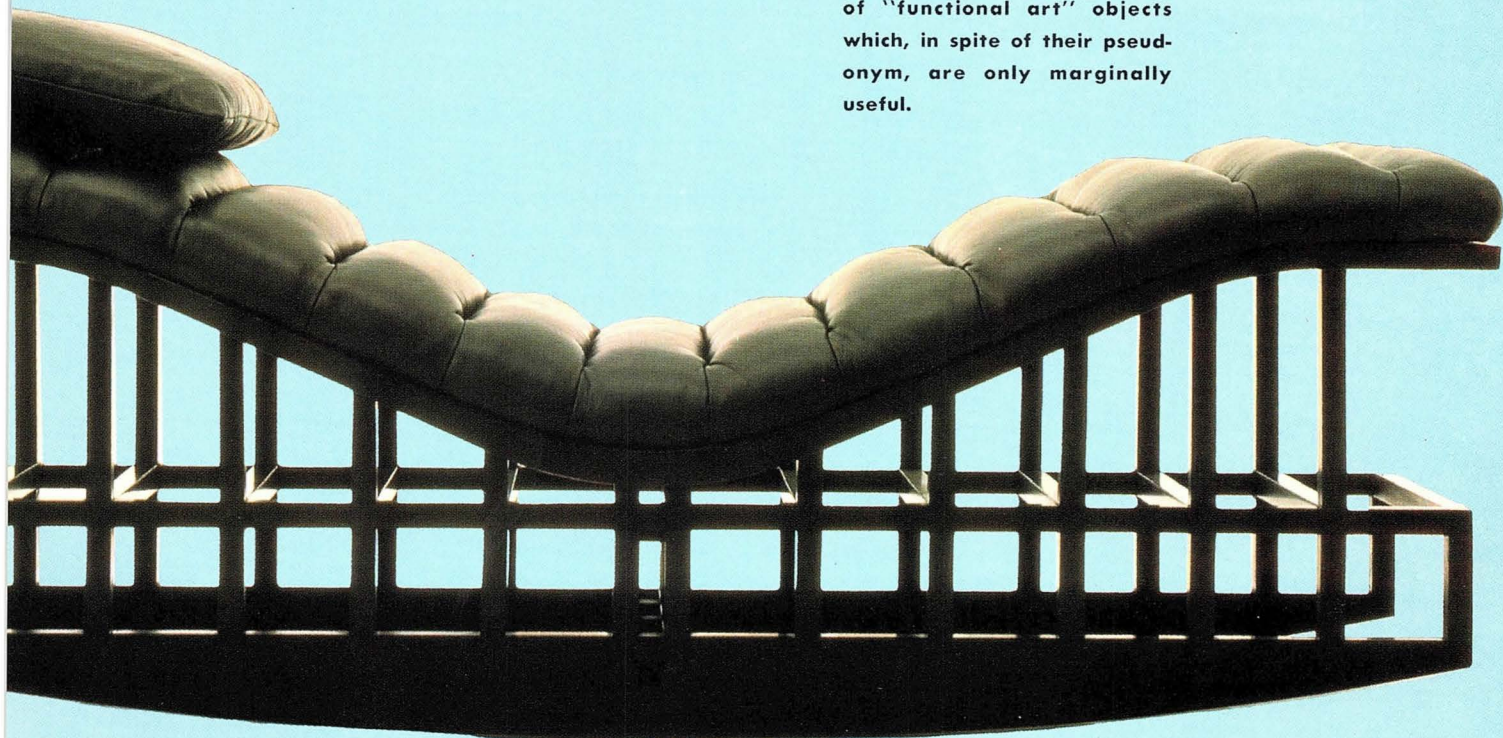
## FURNITURE BY ARCHITECTS

supplies a sense of autonomy which suffuses not only the artist's conception of self but of work.

If a tree falls in the woods and nobody hears it, is there any noise? The old saw poses a relevant perceptual problem; since our conception of it does not require the validation of an audience, art exists in a state which is similarly suspended as the noise from that tree. One can therefore paraphrase the question and ask, when the lights go off and the crowd goes home, is there still art? Of course there is, for with the exception of a few interactive pieces, contemporary artifactual art is complete of and by itself, remote from any particular context and independent of the spectator.

In contrast, the designed thing requires an audience or, in its own terms, a user; no matter how beautiful or intellectually correct, it needs to be used. The designed thing has no purpose otherwise and, in fact, the thrill of appreciation is in use. This orientation contrasts sharply with the large number of "functional art" objects which, in spite of their pseudonym, are only marginally useful.

▼  
**Chaise**  
by Richard Meier  
This monumental piece (25x72x28 in.) has the kind of weight and sobriety which in sufficient quantity becomes handsome. Each 72-inch-long chaise bears the architect's personal mark. The frame is in laminated and solid hard maple with mortise and tenon construction, finishes are hand-rubbed in clear vinyl or black or white lacquer, pillow and cushion are down-filled and covered in leather or fabric.  
From Knoll.







### Chair

by Robert Mallet-Stevens

The work of this lesser-known French architect is receiving a boost from the popularity of this design.

Among his best-known architectural achievements are a villa in Hyeres (1923) for Surrealist patrons Vicomte and Vicomtesse de Noailles, and a series of houses in Paris (1926-27) for a street which bears his name. The stacking chair has a steel frame with epoxy finish. From Palazzetti.



### Bisante

by Afra and Tobia Scarpa

With top poised above frame, this sleek table recalls an earlier one designed by Le Corbusier, Perriand and Jeanneret for the 1929 Salon d'Automne. Available in various sizes and shapes, the modern design has a frame in solid sand-blasted steel with brass details and a clear satin finish. The top is in 3/4-inch-thick clear glass. From Stendig.



Architects' furniture is not autonomous and, specifically, it cannot be separated from architecture. By tradition, it is designed to complete the stylistic effect of a room but, more profoundly, it can be manipulated to further develop the architectural organization of space. The Miesian design of an interior is

not only an application of minimalist material and detail, but it is also a plan essay in the floating and overlapping planes which are the first subject of his architecture. While this illustrates how space planning implements composition, furniture can also be used to explore concept.

Sometimes the choice of medium is a matter of convenience; the idea may be one that is more easily pursued at the relatively small and easily managed level of furniture than at the complicated and expensive scale of architecture. The card-

board chairs designed by Frank Gehry in the early 1970s embodied an intention to create "the ultimate inexpensive furniture," in the words of the architect. They were extremely popular, selling well at Bloomingdale's, but their interest remains as an exercise for Gehry's taste in cheapskate construction—rough finishes and industrial materials. He says that his furniture "recycled all my feelings about trying to build cheaply in architecture."

The Bauhaus emphasized the relationship between art and



◀

Arca

by Paolo Piva

The understated sofa is operable with individually adjustable headrests and round side tables which swivel from underneath identically shaped arm cushions. The two or three-seat sofa has an optional wool blanket which slips over the back and under the seat to contrast the leather upholstery. Table top is in ¾-inch-thick glass. From Stendig.

▼

Haus Koller Chair  
by Josef Hoffman

The 1911 original interprets the traditional club chair in muscular solid-color panels drawn tight by striped cord. The reproduction is also available as a two or three-seat sofa, in velour upholstery and matching piping. From International Contract Furnishings.



design, but it also taught the destruction of barriers between design disciplines. This invigorating attitude becomes weaker by the day as "special interest groups" attempt to market a corner of design to themselves. Where we once had architects, we now have architectural designers, interior design-

ers, furniture designers, urban designers. While the distinction between art and design may be worth maintaining, the divisions between various design disciplines are not.

The difference between a piece of furniture and a piece of a city may be easy to maintain, but when the intermediate

steps are inserted—from furniture to space, to building, to neighborhood—the continuity is apparent. Architects' furniture stands as a demonstration of the essential unity of design. It reminds us that one process invigorates all the areas of design, and that one talent can grapple with all of its aspects.



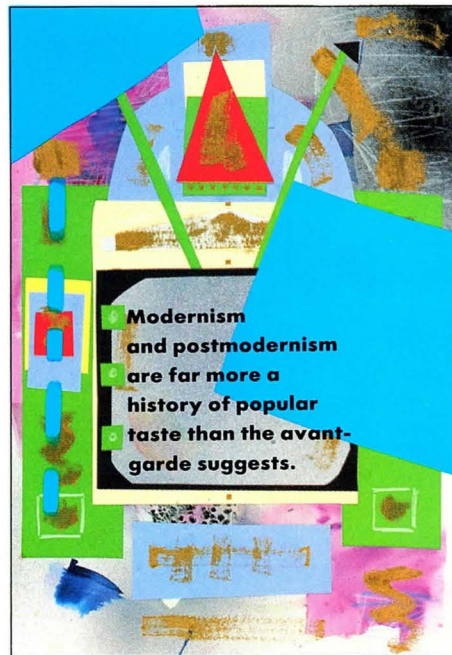


**by Norman Klein**

**The  
Aesthetics  
of  
Comfort**

Illustrations by Nan Beber





How do we define the meaning of art that “crosses over” from the fine art to popular culture? Clearly, this crossing has been made before. When artisans shifted in 1720 to designing interiors for aristos living in Paris, rather than for the king at Versailles, this could be regarded as crossover. When poets shifted toward writing historical novels and melodramas in the Paris of 1830, they were making a bridge into mass publishing. The novel itself was seen, quintessentially, as a popular medium, Grub Street throughout the 18th century. As late as 1835, neither Balzac nor Stendhal felt at ease when their books were described as “novels,” a shabby word from street commerce; they preferred more gentlemanly labels, like “histories of mores,” or “chronicles.”

In 1816, when Géricault experimented with lithography, and nearly bankrupted himself in a dismal partnership with a London printer, this also was crossover. Nearly 50 years later, when the painter Burne-Jones joined the design firm that came to be called simply William Morris and Company, he was surely entering the vagaries of the applied arts. In the German Art Nouveau (*Jugendstil*),



both Behrens and Van Velde trained originally as painters, then went into what could be called interior design.

And artists do not enter this compact unwillingly. The Russian Productivists in 1921 announce the superiority of the industrial artisan, by then an old Futurist argument; Lissitzky calls it the continual "Americanization" of Europe. After World War I, the death of the fine artist was heralded in many quarters. "Long Live the Machine Art of Tatlin," the placard held by Berlin Dadaist Raoul Hausmann declared. In Russia, Stepanova designed fabrics for a factory; Rodchenko made posters as advertisements for cigarettes, baby bottles, light bulbs, and shoe rubbers.

In America, painters often developed first as illustrators, and even after they were established, continued to work for newspapers and magazines, without shame. In Dreiser's novel, *The Genius*, a painter of "high ambition" dreams of himself as a popular illustrator, like Gustave Doré.

In fact, often the populist impulse is so strong among fine artists that it is difficult to find the boundary that is being crossed. In Brecht surely, the sources for epic theater are as much cabaret and vaudeville as Expressionist theater or the avant-garde. For Brecht, the dream of engaging the working class audience overwhelmed any desire to remain inscrutably devoted to the lucky few.

We have one myth that should be dispelled immediately—that the avant-garde has fought desperately to keep its audience narrow. There are too many exceptions at moments when new, broad markets open up. Even the international dealer system must be defined as a broad market.

It seems just as accurate to assert that Modernist artists struggled to find new artisan markets. Put another way, modernism (and postmodernism) are far more a history of popular taste than the mystique of the avant-garde suggests.

Let us start from the beginning, with early Romanticism: both Goethe and Schiller struggled to reach a sophisticated audience among the pietistic burghers who lived in tiny walled cities in Germany. What these common readers lacked in cosmopolitan taste, they made up for in their passion for sentimental narrative. Compare these burghers with aristocratic readers, "sensualists" who played whist in one room, while musicians served as background a room or two away (an early example of furniture music).

In the 19th century, the rooms and decors changed, but the bourgeois proved as irksome as aristocrats had been earlier. The need to in-

vade the bourgeois sitting room became treacherous: how to fill a congested parlor with yet another etching, or another claw foot settee, a Morris tapestry. . . . Or to turn walls into diversion: Daumier's publisher sold rolls of Daumier images as wallpaper (a special bonus for subscribers to *Charivari*).

In the 20th century, the dominion of popular taste is even more unavoidable. The modernists of the 20s pursued the new mass media, particularly cinema and magazine photolithography, vigorously. Let us remember



that by 1920, movies had just come of age from the crudeness of kino and flickers houses, entertainments for day workers, housewives and immigrants, or as opening acts in reconverted burlesque houses.

And what of Adolph Loos and the factory aesthetic? Like Wright's arguments with the Arts and Crafts ethic, Loos was not attacking the role of the artisan, but rather giving him a new machine to work on. What Loos, Wright and Gropius favored was the industrial artisan instead of the handicraftsman. To call for the death of ornament was merely a way of signifying the end of the nostalgia for the medieval craftsman. It was too late by 1910. Of course, the fancy for medieval craftsmen does not die altogether. We examine Feininger's woodcut emblem for the Bauhaus in 1919: the industrial building as *Bauhaus*, as medieval cathedral, like nameless stonemasons filling the niches of God's house.

There are enormous contradictions here. It was difficult to avoid the medieval image of an organic society, even when promoting the industrial artisan. Gropius writes: "The art of building is contingent on the coordinated teamwork of a kind of active collaborators

whose orchestral cooperation symbolizes the cooperative organism we call society." And then at the same time, he also attacked the "dogged resistance of the old civilization of handicrafts to the new world order of the machine."

This sort of oversimplification completely neglects the problems of pre-marketing, as well as the ideology of design, and simply worships the architectural truth to materials. It is just as naive as the mystique of the artist's unconscious—as a pagan frontier against advertising and shoddy commercialization. What, after all, is advertising about, if not to make us "unconsciously" load our shopping carts with familiar packages? Our impulses are precisely what the advertisement assaults.

By the end of the 20th century, we look back warily at the factory aesthetic, and its utopian theories about art production. We grow nostalgic for the Arts and Crafts movements. Perhaps we will be rereading Ruskin next. But the problem is simpler than any of the rationales that tried to bring together what cannot be reconciled. The contradictions of the artisan in the commercial market have never been solvable. In effect, when all the rhetoric is cleared away, we are left with a statement like the following: the artist pursues the function of the artisan, and therefore the tastes for comfort and order that govern the world. Even today he remains much as he was in the 17th century—both guildsman and servant to the aesthetics of comfort.

What then are the aesthetics of comfort today, that have caused enough of a shift to justify all this interest in crossover once again? We cannot simply throw barbs at the process; quite the contrary. There must be an apt discourse that can capture the edge of a John Sanborn video piece suddenly appearing on MTV, or an Orange County newspaper headlining Robert Venturi's furniture.

As always, fine artists announce the polyphony of markets and tastes that define the new standards of comfort (not unlike Roland Barthes' description of Flemish paintings of moist lobster on a delft plate as "the world as object in itself"). What are a few clear standards we can rattle off about crossovers today—in terms of new standards of comfort? What is the leisured bourgeois doing in his/her apartment these days that signify for us? Here are a few obvious examples: the meaning of video, the meaning of advertising signage, both neon and billboard, as architectural form, the aesthetics of the shopping mall; the consumer rituals from five o'clock news, to late night TV movies, to autopian patterns of freeway life.



What do these incidents signify? A post-modernist diffusion has begun, owing nothing at all to the well-wrought sketches of Michael Graves. The ribs of the 60s parking lot have been painted in soft roses and Craftsman greens. Through a gradual drip process, fragments of architectural memory are entering the urban landscape. There are new pseudo-mission-style taco franchises, and not far away, we notice the exposed Romex wires in Frank Gehry's "rehabbing" of the factory into the Temporary Contemporary. Or the term postmodern appears as a sell word for new condominiums in Portland. The naked process of simulation and rehabilitation have become essential to the new aesthetics of comfort.

I believe the crossovers are simply a response to markets created by what can be called audience culture. Briefly, audience culture is based primarily on the memory of being an audience, or recreating the ritual of audience. The crowds at noon at a shopping mall are an audience. The lines waiting to get into a special showing of a cult film are already a quaint audience, like collectors of leather-bound books. Disengaged pieces of narrative: the memories of Ernie Kovacs gags are part of audience culture; so also are old Alka Seltzer commercials, and the thousands of faces we've seen in flaccid stomach distress. And also Michael Jackson making believe he is part of the remake of *West Side Story*.

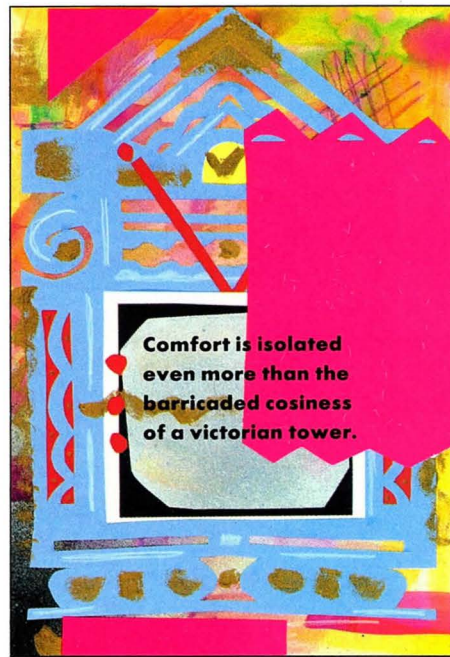
Audience culture is an explosion of narrative scraps, each as profoundly overcoded as an old hieroglyph. Thus, we do not want the story; we want the familiar cliché—the conventional meaning as naked as possible. It is parody as state of mind, parody as floating signifier. Thus, the chop-cut editing of music video is similar to the surface "quotations" in postmodernist facades, or in photomontages of all sorts from fine arts appropriation to Mozart wearing designer jeans, the endless chimaera possible in advertising.

Narrative has become a sophisticated visual syntax, on a level that even the 19th century reader of novels could not follow. We have abstracted narrative down to computer blips. In video, a dot on third base steals home; to me, being an old addict of penny arcades, this dot can never compete with the tin baseball player on the old baseball games I played for a nickel as a child. But I live in a Newtonian universe of narrative (steel bat hits tiny steel ball). I am still of the 20s essentially, not the late 20th century.

I am not entirely conditioned by the video literacy that is turning audiences into refined cinematophiles. But these are the new mar-

kets, just as the novel was new in the 1820s, or cinema in the 1920s. We live on the surface, beyond 19th-century theories of psychological character identification. Instead, *Flashdance* and Piazza d'Italia coexist for us. What is a decorated shed? It is a phosphorescence of surface narrative, all of it isolated from story, like paint chips blown off a wall by years of traffic.

Here are a few of the markets that have brought on audience culture, where all narrative begins to refer to old movies, old post-



cards, old travel posters, old golf courses, weekends in Vegas, weekend drives to the Indiana Dunes, or to the quaint New England inn.

—The rituals created by tens of thousands of hours of television watching. This homogenized audience, including all classes, is a mark of crossover, when the initiates and the ill-informed are both audiences for the same styles of leisure.

—The effects of pre-marketed leisure narratives that prepare us for events, from Mickey Mouse merchandising before we go to Disneyland, to Ronald Reagan before election day, from shopping malls to Sunday supplements in newspapers, to billboards about wildlife on the drive out to Yosemite.

—The computer "revolution." More simply, this is the overwhelming expansion of information media; what was formerly a system for storing information has evolved into forms of narrative, as in video games.

—The loss finally of any personal memory of living in a rural culture; even in the 40s, this memory was still strong. To us, the 20,000 years of rural community become narrative strips from Westerns, memories of the

three months spent at an Oregon commune, or weeks out in the boondocks somewhere, listening to the gnats and field mice. Perhaps we think of Auntie Em waiting for Judy Garland to zip back to Kansas. We now define nature utterly as man-made, not with any qualms really, certainly nothing like the panic of early romantics, or German expressionist painters forming communes in the late 19th century. Like the new collectors of 50s kitchen sets, we are at peace with early Formica.

—A fascination with rehabilitating turn-of-the-century housing. I am afraid that my generation of dinosaurs are partly responsible for this. They are also helping to define the aesthetics of comfort right now. There is a nostalgia for, of all things, the take-off stage of industrial development. We seem to have forgotten the Panic of 1893, even of 1919, and find our origins back at the take-off point for leisure industries. That period from 1880 to 1920 compresses for us into consumer landmarks like the first Sears catalogue, early pedal sewing machines, hoosiers, Windsor McCoy comic strips (1905), cathedral radios, the first countrywide vaudeville circuit, and wax cylinder recordings.

Artists of all stripes are settling upon the exoticism of false narrative these days. The new design and film/video markets are offering financial alternatives such as the computer graphics artisan. Above all—and here is the most optimistic note I can muster—there is a new audience literacy that is virtually untapped. It is an audience for parody, surface references to old films, and false exoticism. To use *Time* magazine hyperbole, it is an audience for Warner's cartoons and Wittgenstein. We have finally arrived at a Cubo-Futurist world, or at least the markets have. Comfort today is highly privatized, and essentially electronic. It is isolated even more than the barricaded "cosiness" of a Victorian Queen Anne tower, even beyond the "streamlined" penthouse of the early 40s. It is a privacy built not of wood shingles, nor picture windows, nor distance from the street. It is composed of electronic bits (or bytes) of fantasy, and now artists have the anxious experience of engaging it (first in their own experience, but above all, in the way it is enjoyed by the consumer in his/her media center). One does not crossover, really. The ground beneath conveys us. It moves, and we cope.

**Norman Klein** is a resident faculty member at California Institute of the Arts. His article, "The Audience Culture," has been anthologized in *Theories of Contemporary Art* (ed. Richard Hertz).







# PLEASE STAND BY

## THE ARTISTIC POTENTIAL FOR MUSIC VIDEO

BY DAVID GOLDBLATT



It happens quickly. A single turn of the head means something has gone on without you. It is intense and cunning, saturated and demanding. It has the look of chic, clean, unwholesome decadence. It is pulsating and intentional, high-tech and low-brow. It is polished to a glitter and discharges images if not icons as a matter of course. It is financially respectable and popularly entrenched. It is exactly the opposite of the unread poet ■ Sooner or later the artworld will have to confront music video. It might as well be sooner, for whatever else music video is, it is new. Thinking of videos simply as the visual track for records is like thinking of television as the picture for radio. People did, as was natural, but not for long. Music video is an entity to be reckoned with, and it might be worth the artworld's time to take a long hard look. ■ The reality of music video is firmly tied to profit and amusement, to the interests and consumerism of the 14-34 year-old. It is no accident that in its present historical form music video is motivated by the search for the new and haunting image, the next vision, tomorrow's sign of the times. For music video, whose audience boasts miniscule attention spans, is nothing if not perpetual motion: a fear and loathing of staying in one place. It is married to rock 'n' roll. Paradoxically, the more that visuals transfix us, cementing our gaze to the set, the more they conflict with a music that sets our bodies into dancing motion. The trouble with TV, it has been said, is that you have to watch it. ■ Whatever it is now, the glowing illuminated screen of music video has shown us a vocabulary that might make surrealism look tame, expressionism half-hearted or futurism static. It has made gestures toward depth and maturity, self-consciousness and visual radicalism. It is no wonder that the Italian directors Michaelangelo Antonioni and Federico Fellini have gotten into the act, Fellini doing Boy George's "The War Song." Or that the American director Sam Peckinpah has done "Valotte" for Julian Lennon, John's son. Andy Warhol gave it a shot with the Cars' "Hello Again." Bob Dylan has made at least two; and one, "Jokerman" puts him back into the realm of political critique. Even Allen Ginsberg, perhaps America's most enduring and formidable poet, has created an eerie, effective video of his 1976 "Don't Grow Old" for the Manhattan Poetry Video Project, an organization hoping to popularize modern American poetry by using music video as its model. ■ Young and in transit, music video holds out for us a format, an artistic opportunity filled with creative possibilities, abundant with state-of-the-art techniques. Think of it this way: you are the video *auteur*, in this case the director. You've got a formidable budget, say \$100,000, and three or four minutes to do something visual from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* or maybe one of Kafka's short parables or a chunk out of Homer or Joyce. Suppose you had the idea to do what happens next in Van Gogh's *The Potato Eaters* or Cézanne's *The Card Players* or even Dali's *Premonition of Civil War*. No need to worry about the drawn-out necessities of character and plot development or any of the usual mechanisms of 90-minute fill-in feature film construction. Use the music anyway you like; in fact it's not perfectly clear that music is absolutely essential. Dispense with the dialogue and get to the heart of the major visual impact, the bits and pieces the audience takes from the screen even in the longest thrillers. Let them walk away whistling your favorite visual *gestalt*. It certainly has possibilities. ■ This hottest of video forms is new but it did not arise *de novo*. The ancestors on the family tree are many—the avant-garde film from Cocteau and Buñuel to Anger and Brakhage, the kids' TV shows, Busby Berkeley extravaganzas, the Monkees, Richard Lester's Beatle films, the TV commercial, coming attractions at the movies, and instant replays of television sports. The list goes on and on. We would have to mention, too, that since the video tape was invented in 1956, artists like Vito Acconci, Richard Serra, John Baldessari and Robert Morris have made video part of their expression. Their camera ran on resulting in a "real" time that tended to be boring.

▲ The Cars' "You Might Think" was voted best video of 1984 at the MTV awards.

Electra/Asylum Records

◀ Unusual lighting and make-up create a painterly effect in David Bowie's "Jazzin' for Blue Jean."

EMI America Records



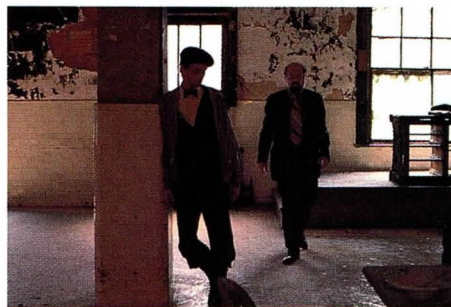
▶ **As filmed in the Ellis Island immigration center, "Dead Father's Blues" adds visual impact to Allen Ginsberg's poem.**

Virginia Romero



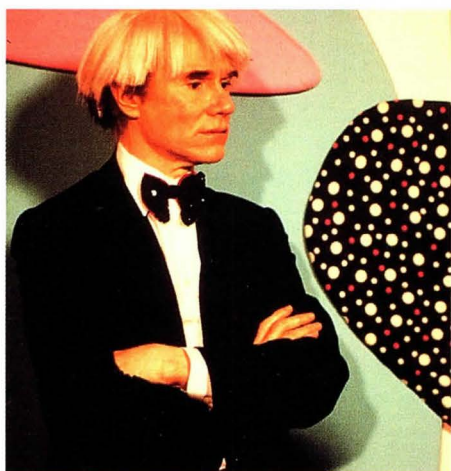
▶ **Allen Ginsberg has created a poetry video for his 1976 work, "Don't Grow Old."**

Virginia Romero



▶ **Andy Warhol directed "You Might Think" for the Cars.**

Electra/Asylum Records



▶ **Elton John's set for "Who Wears These Shoes" is reminiscent of those of Busby Berkeley.**

Clic Spencer



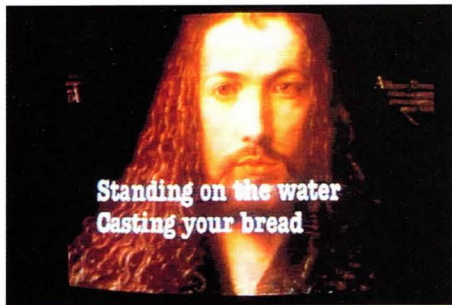
In any case, too many music videos are not videos at all but 35mm film transferred to tape later on. An exceptional case, Andy Warhol's Studios' "Hello Again" for the Cars accented the usual montage effect by including the use of Super-8 and 8mm film as well as 3/4-inch and 1-inch tape. The similarities between art videos and their musical progeny had really been pretty minimal. ■ Just what the origins of music video really are is just one more issue that seems to be raised about what is now a prevalent cultural entity. What is not controversial is that no discussion of music video is possible without some account of MTV, the New York-based, three year old plus, rock-around-the-clock Music Television Network. For it is MTV that has come to define, if not dictate, what music video is—its form and content, standard of quality, message and look. What is shown by MTV are the paradigms for music video in general and nothing is a video, it might be said, unless it is shown. Music Television is to music video what the Museum of Modern Art and the galleries of Manhattan have been to art in this century and country. ■ Since the first, full-of-irony video to show on MTV, The Buggles' "Video Killed the Radio Star," on August 1, 1981, the network has borne the burden of proof for its claim that music video pays. From the point of view of the record companies, videos have grown from a minor annoyance (just another thing to worry about, one more substantial overhead item) to a virtual necessity in recording promotions. Not halfway through its fourth year in business, MTV is showing profits and so are the bands who can make the transfigurations from musicians to performers, who can fill a spot in the MTV rotation. ■ As casual as its extemporaneous, just-like-you-and-me video jockies may appear, MTV is quite the opposite: a meticulously market-researched, market-directed organization leaving nothing on the screen to chance or whim. It is the fastest growing cable network ever, shrewdly enticing locals to share in the pot. MTV Networks Inc. (which includes the cable station Nickelodeon as well as MTV) had third quarter revenues up 116% over the same quarter for the previous year, while nine-month revenues were up 126%. In the third quarter, MTV Networks reported a pre-tax profit of \$6,169,000 compared to a pre-tax loss of \$2,551,000 in that quarter of 1983. ■ What MTV has done for rock 'n' roll music is not immune from criticism, not by a long shot. *Rolling Stone* magazine's Steven Levy takes the negative: "It's tough to avoid the conclusion that rock 'n' roll is being replaced by commercials." Some of the new breed of video auteurs seem to agree. At a recent symposium of video directors sponsored by *Variety*, Ken Walz, who has done over 50 videos for the likes of Billy Joel, Chicago, Bette Midler and Cyndi Lauper, said: "I'm convinced that not only are they commercial, but they're becoming increasingly commercial. The last couple of videos that I produced have been very calculatedly designed to sell the artist and to sell the record. In fact, one record company that I'm working with now is doing focus research as to young people who watch MTV, what they like or don't like, when do they get bored, and do they like black and white. . . ." ■ Others at that *Variety* get-together stress the creative possibilities. Martin Kahan, who has directed *Scandal*, *Kiss*, *Loverboy* and *Air Supply*, says, "It is still now an artistic medium, although granted, it has far-reaching commercial applications. It is still a medium where we all can go home with a song and come up with an idea and you can get original visions made. You can get paid to execute those original visions." Adam Friedman (the Stones, Yes, Shalimar) who is tired of the same old breakers recalls, "When we did Jean-Luc Ponty, we got some dancers from the Joffrey, and I said to the choreographer, 'Look, I want to get a much more romantic kind of dance form. I want to get a Dionysian form as opposed to this Mondrian straight-edge. I want to get a smoother look.' "



Creators of videos usually divide the concept from concert; the latter they call "performances." Performance videos picture the bands doing their thing in front of an audience or anything else. With only certain exceptions—Brian De Palma's "Dancin' in the Dark," a staged concert simulation for Bruce Springsteen, the Talking Heads from their movie *Stop Making Sense*, or David Bowie's "Modern Times,"—they are imitative and repetitive. The rule is something like this: the less the band is shown performing, the more

gum undermines metaphysics but that it is metaphysics—this is what must be made clear." Rem Koolhaas, a Dutchman now doing architectural work in New York, has written about the origins of that city's skyscrapers in the tower facades of Coney Island's Dreamland: "The strategies and mechanisms that later shape Manhattan are tested in the laboratory of Coney Island before they finally leap toward the larger island. Coney Island is a foetal of Manhattan." Amusements in general are often prototypes for a more considered

land, the gateway for Ginsberg's immigrant father and countless other humbled masses yearning to be fed, is adorned with actors in motionless tableau and period dress. The video is cut by touching black and white snapshots of the poet and his father while Ginsberg blankly sings with sober moderation: "Hey Father Death, I'm flying home/Hey poor man, you're all alone/Hey old daddy, I know where I'm going." The contrast with MTV is the difference between actuality and potential.



▲ Pointed images underline the political statements in Bob Dylan's "Jokerman."

Columbia Records

creative freedom the director is allowed, i.e., the more the concept can approach originality. Usually, as much as the director might wish it, the band is never entirely eliminated as they lip-sync their way through a shaky story line.

No one questions the relationship between music videos and financial matters; just as there is no such thing as paper architecture, there is no such thing as cheap video. The average cost of one has been estimated at between \$35,000 and \$50,000 and going up. John Landis' "Thriller" for Michael Jackson cash-registered at \$500,000, and the Jackson-Paul McCartney "Say, Say, Say," by star video director Bob Giraldi of Miller Lite fame, was \$300,000. Indeed, it is only by superstars like McCartney with "No More Lonely Nights," a virtual promotion for his feature film *Give My Regards to Broad Street*, and David Bowie with his 20-minute dazzler "Jazzin' for Blue Jean" that the three-to-four minute video model can be broken.

But it isn't as if the debate about the relevance of art to commercialism, kitsch, amusement or popular culture is new. The likes of critic Clement Greenberg and philosophers Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno took the relationship between money and art seriously in dealing with everything on the popular frontline from jazz to astrology to circuses. Adorno, for example, insisted on the distinction between music that was and was not market-oriented while Horkheimer expressed his concern by saying: "It is not that chewing

manifestation in art: retaining the format, changing the depth.

That is what the Manhattan Poetry Video Project (MPVP) hoped to launch in what may someday be seen as one of those memorable nodes in art history. On September 14, 1984, with Lou Reed as host, the project presented to a sell-out audience at Joseph Papp's Public Theatre a combined live/video show featuring Allen Ginsberg and performance poets Anne Waldman and Bob Holman. The event can be understood as an attempt to investigate the potential of music video for the arts. With student crews and a limited budget, the event has to be seen more as a launching than an arrival, but the Ginsberg piece especially exemplified what can be done by taking a critical stance toward the music video status quo. "I love TV," says MPVP producer Rose Lesniak, "but I can never find anything to watch. Music video is a good idea that unfortunately did not change its concept intellectually. For the most part, it's the same oppressive sexist trash: boy meets girl, girl tantalizes boy, boy rapes girl." It is a criticism echoed by many, that MTV is up to its neck in violence and racism—a large part of the violence directed against women.

On the other hand, "Dead Father's Blues," the Ginsberg video, for all its faults succeeds as an example of what music video can do at its best. There we find the 58-year-old poet, dressed in suit and tie, a man dazed yet at peace, walking through a paint-peeled Ellis Island immigration center like a man floating through a colossal empty refrigerator. Ellis Is-

For whatever reason, perhaps partly because of its nearly instant injection into our lives, MTV, now with 22.6 million subscribers, seems to be shrouded in criticism. Even criticism attributed to television in general seems targeted at MTV in its own particular form. One debate goes something like this: doesn't MTV intercept the imagination? Doesn't it plug in visual scenarios, seal associations, where once roamed the free play of imagination to the beat of picture-less tunes? But then there is the reply: what was so good about the content of the vision of the average adolescent (or adult) mind in the first place, where the same lost sweetheart is the content if the lyrics are even tended to at all? And anyway, hasn't that always been the case? With painting, for example, getting to Venus or Christ or God before we do? Don't artists do what the rest of us cannot, for want of time or money, vision or genius?

At the end of the 20-minute version of the Julian Temple/David Bowie music video "Jazzin' for Blue Jean," an intriguing tale where Bowie plays the double role of hapless wimp and drug-buttressed superstar, there is a moment of reflexive criticism when the story breaks and Bowie argues with his director for a happy ending while the camera pans vertically through a cage over the urban landscape. It leaves us with the ending unresolved, as is the future of music video and its tangle of uncertain links with art. But we shall see.

**David Goldblatt** is a writer and professor of philosophy at Denison University.



# AN ARCHITECTURE OF P A I N T

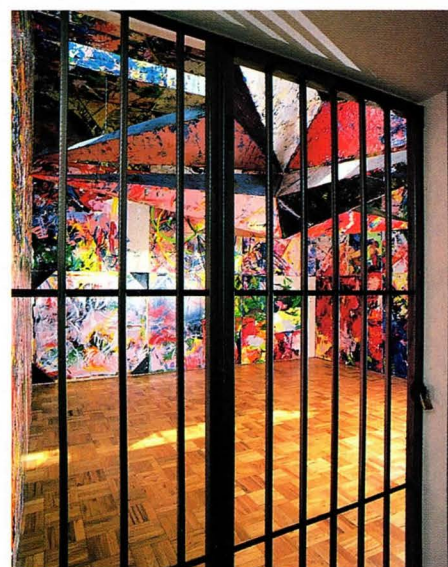
The medium of modern art is thought. That so few artists realize this is evident from the fact that the great majority are one-idea artists. Each new work is yet another variation on the same "idea" which is more often than not either a gimmick or an arbitrary craft "innovation." Vapid newness and egocentric virtuosity are confused with importance. If an artist's one idea is sufficiently impressive and does not require anyone to think beyond the initial low hurdle of "getting it" in the first place, a product identity is established and the buyers and sellers of commodities are smugly self-satisfied. It is paramount that the product be easily recognizable and that it be cool and innocuous in a typical materialistic and unevolved middle-class interior. It absolutely must not challenge the viewer or rock the art-as-status-interior-decoration boat. Hence, one-idea art is the enforced rule and good luck getting a show or making a living if you don't toe the line.

► **Big Ideas installation at Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles, 1984.**

Douglas M. Parker

That is why Richard Jackson hasn't sold so much as a drawing in Los Angeles in the last six years. He is incorrigible and shows no signs of developing his own product identity. Like his work he is difficult and has too many ideas for his aesthetic investigations to ever conform to a predictable result. Nor can he be coerced into producing one-idea art because he maintains a deliberate independence from the entire commercial art structure by supporting himself with small contracting jobs. He's thin, but not hungry. He could use the money but won't prostitute himself. He's got the talent but you might as well save your breath because he'd only laugh in your face. The guy, obviously, is a thug.

## RICHARD JACKSON'S INSTALLATIONS



BY JEFFREY BROWNING

► **Detail, Big Ideas, acrylic on canvas, 1984.**

Grant Mudford

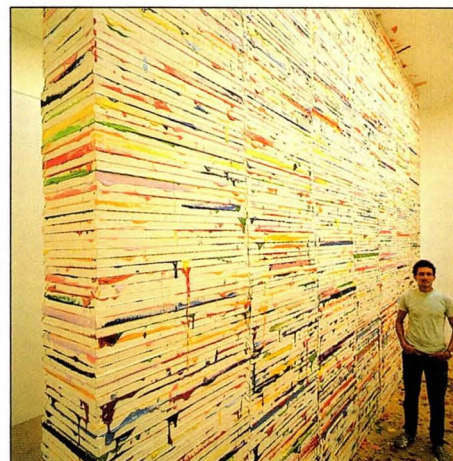






▶ **Richard Jackson  
and *1000 Pictures*,  
a work that simul-  
taneously denies  
and reinforces  
conventional notions  
of modern art.**

Grant Mudford



A probable first reaction to a Richard Jackson installation is shock, amazement, and, very likely, incomprehension. Painting, sculpture, and the environmental scale of architecture are all fused into a very powerful and enveloping totality. You thought you'd hit a few galleries but in this case the gallery has hit you. As you try to piece together what you may or may not know about painting, sculpture, architecture, conceptual art, process art, and environmental installations, Richard thought he would help you along by subverting virtually every accepted belief associated with those disciplines. In lieu of training wheels for the mind, two oblique clues will have to suffice: "painting is a mental thing" (Leonardo), and "architecture is a pure creation of the mind" (Le Corbusier).

Conventional media such as paint on canvas are for those who do not think and can only endlessly repeat with inconsequential variations what has already been done. Such an artist suffers from tunnel vision. Painting has not been the premier medium of contemporary art since at least the 1960s, nor will it ever be again. In the late 20th century there are so many media with which to express ideas that any individual medium is secondary. It is the concept that is primary. The dominance of painting over all other art media has passed into history. This is true even if you love painting, and Richard Jackson does love painting. A bury-the-head, wishful thinking, crawl-into-the-past nostalgia is not going to restore painting to its former glory. Painting (on canvas) isn't dead, it's merely secondary.

An idiomatic expression such as "a picture

is worth a 1000 words" applied to an idiomatic medium such as paint on canvas exposes the little horns on Richard Jackson's head. Why not *1000 Pictures*? And don't let 'em see the pictures either! Of course, Richard's "pictures" aren't pictures at all—they're not even paintings. If, as Warhol said, in the era of mass production "thirty are better than one," a thousand is that much better. The value of a painting, however, has always been predicated upon the virtue of its uniqueness. A wall constructed of 1000 identical 19" x 35" x 1¼" canvases stacked floor to ceiling with only their edges visible energetically returns that archaic idea whence it came—the distant past. Like all of Richard Jackson's installations, *1000 Pictures* is site-specific. The dimensions of the individual canvases echo the shape of the room (20' wide x 30' long x 16' high), which is an integral part of the work.

The stacking of modular units is not only a primitive activity which preceded the dawn of civilization, but it is also intrinsic to modern art and architecture, and especially to systemic and conceptual art. In *1000 Pictures* Jackson uses the modular stretched and gessoed canvases ironically as bricks or blocks to construct a wall 16' high x 20' 8" long x 19" wide. The use of paint as mortar trowelled on as thickly as cake icing and spilling over the edges of the canvases like a gloriously sloppy peanut butter and jelly sandwich is no less ironic. Given the cost of 6000 feet of lumber, 550 yards of canvas, more than 100 gallons of acrylic paint custom-made to Jackson's specifications, and the month it took him to stretch and gesso each canvas and to construct his installation in the gallery, as well as

▶ ***Big Ideas* will be  
recreated for the  
Menil Collection,  
Houston.**

Grant Mudford



the remoteness of the possibility of ever selling such a work, it helps to have a sense of humor.

Adding to the taut density and nonchalance of *1000 Pictures* is the frank evidence of process indicated by the paint-splattered floor and ceiling and the wooden wedges along the top row of canvases which stabilize the wall. Most remarkable of all is the fact that every consideration of material, process, and conceptual rigor is emphatically subordinated by the miraculous resolution and overwhelming presence of the completed work. The power of *1000 Pictures* is such that, like the monolith which initiated consciousness in the apes of Stanley Kubrick's *2001*, perhaps even a few retrogressive, one-idea, single-medium, tunnel-vision paint-daubers might be shocked into the realization that the medium of modern art is thought.

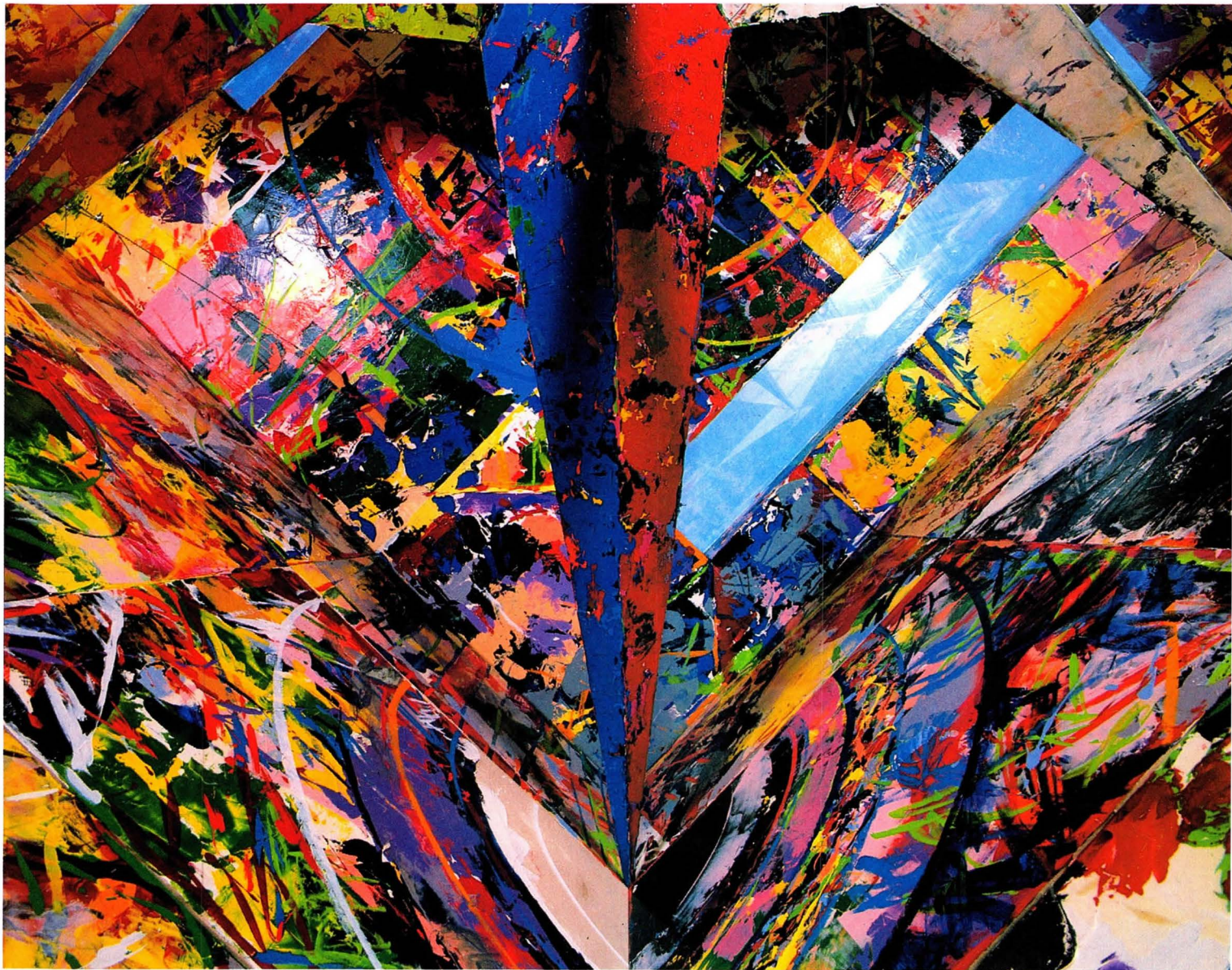
Richard Jackson's most recent installation,

*Big Ideals*, incorporates many of the same materials and aesthetic qualities as *1000 Pictures* but yields an entirely different result. The tendency with *1000 Pictures* was to perceive the wall of canvases as a monumental object constructed in the center of the otherwise unchanged space of the gallery. The wall, however, was designed specifically for and requires a room with exactly the same dimensions as the Rosamund Felsen gallery space. *1000 Pictures* is therefore an environment and not an object. Although the necessity of the total space may not have been consciously realized by some viewers, the environmental force of the work was unmistakable.

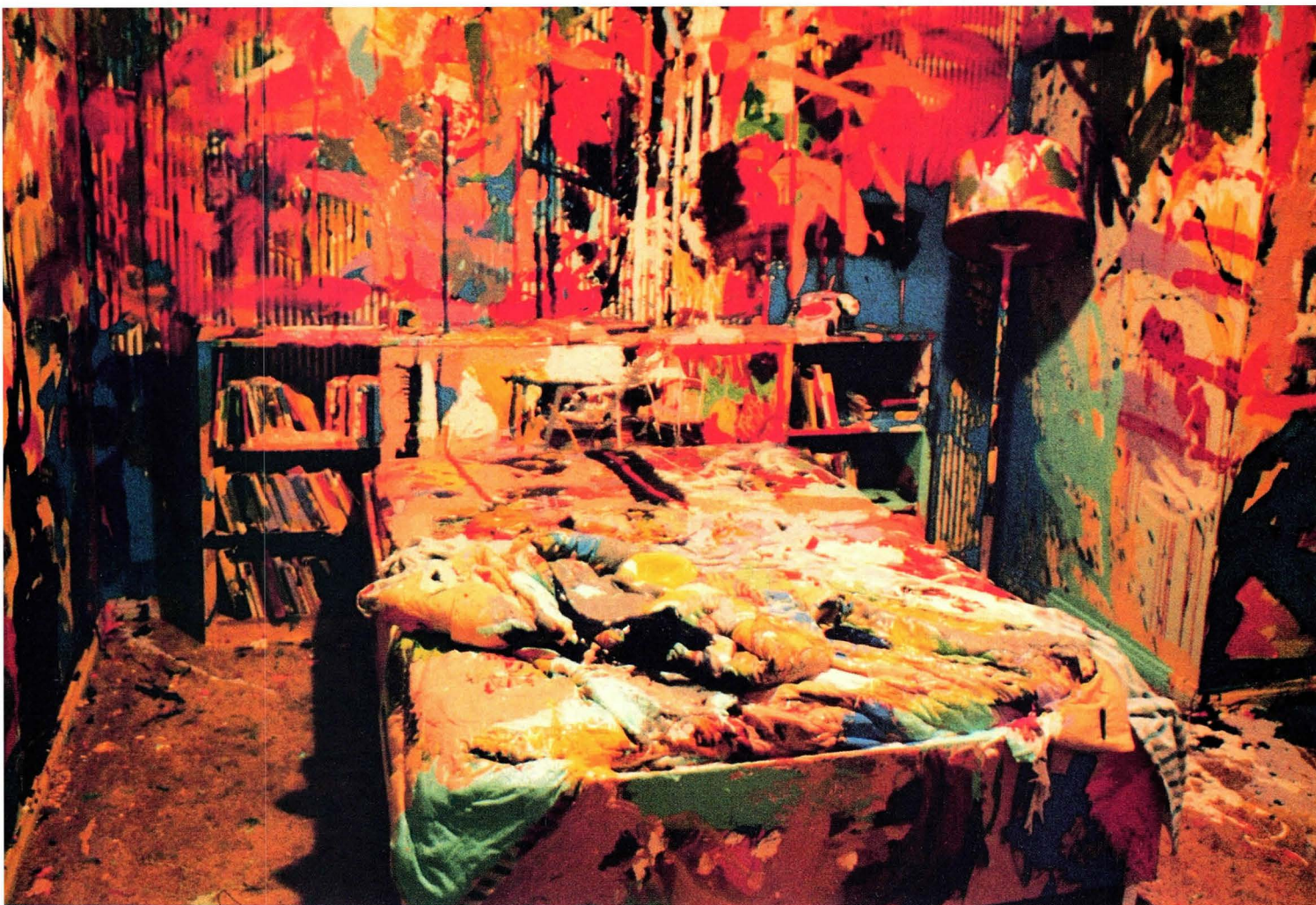
*Big Ideals* resolves such ambiguities because it can only be perceived as an environment. Whereas in *1000 Pictures* one's attention was directed inward and upward as one moved around the central wall, in *Big Ideals* the viewer is now free to move in the central space

with one's attention directed upward and outward to the painted walls, ceiling, and two four-pointed stars suspended overhead. Jackson has constructed a 19' square room, 16' high with 36 modular canvases which completely cover the four walls of the gallery. The ceiling is also entirely painted except for two long narrow skylights which, with the open doorway, are the only sources of light.

Lending credence to Richard Jackson's criticism of conventional painting is the undeniable fact that many of the individual painted canvases look very strong—and Jackson had not painted a painting for 15 years and spent less than a day on each of the 36 canvases. In order to deliberately provoke painters, the modular canvases were nailed to the wall through the front of the painting. Whereas even abstract painters tend to think in terms of an image, Jackson's work is not reducible to an image. Jackson thinks of his installations







▲  
**The energy found in *Bedroom* transcends its conceptual genesis and strongly ties the work to abstract expressionism.**

Richard Jackson

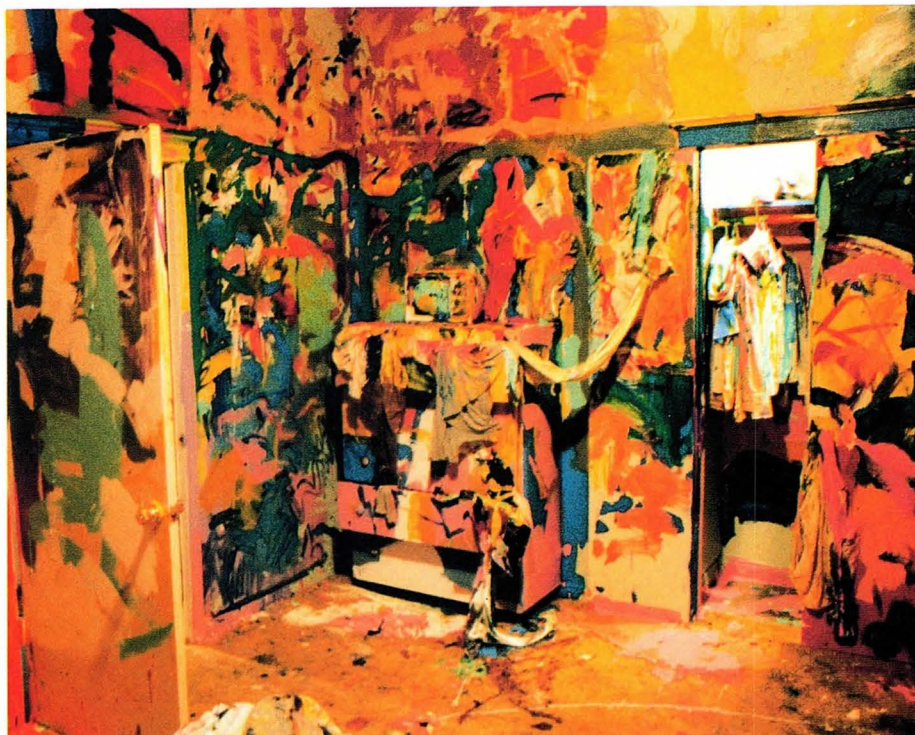
as events which are, above all, experiences.

In spite of Jackson's less-than-reverent attitude toward the principal deities of abstract expressionism, there are very definite parallels in his work to the more environmental painters of that school: specifically DeKooning, Pollock, Rothko, and Newman. None of the four artists painted images per se; color, space, and process were the means to a much higher goal. Richard Jackson's palette is very hot, like DeKooning's, and he shares with both Pollock and DeKooning their tremendous energy. The spatial, environmental, and spiritual concerns of Pollock, Rothko, and Newman are also analogous to similar qualities in Jackson's installations. Both Rothko and Newman were led to view individual paintings as modular elements in a total spiritual environment. Viewing the vanguard trends of the 60s and 70s as research and extension, it is easy to observe Richard Jackson's continuity with these major abstract expressionists. Virtually all of the minimalists and conceptualists were cool and cerebral, relatively uninterested in process but highly systemic. Jackson, however, is hot and expressionistic in spite of the minimal forms of his systemic installations, and with an emphasis upon process. The dramatic

mood and energy of the final work transcends its conceptual genesis and is actually closer in feeling to abstract expressionism than to minimalism or conceptualism. Jackson has watched minimalism pass into history and has seen a lot of conceptual art become overly intellectual, academic and, ultimately, boring. But, given the example of *Big Ideas*, that's not his problem.

*Bedroom* is a no longer extant work which Jackson worked on sporadically over a period of six years from 1976—1982. (He worked on a variety of other projects in the United States and Europe during this time.) Jackson actually constructed the walls and made all the furniture. Any activity which is not mental Jackson deprecates as busywork. He is not prolific because he rigorously requires even his drawings to be about ideas. Hence, much of his activity he calls busywork, which amounts to self-deprecation because he is very interested in process. Jackson now feels that he may have been overly precious in making all of the furniture by hand and does not like even the suggestion of too strong an emphasis upon craft. In Jackson's view many artists are craftsmen because they cannot think.





Another view of *Bedroom*. The pockets of the clothes in the closet are filled with paint.

Richard Jackson

The source of *Bedroom* was the idea that artists who have to teach to make a living are often too tired from teaching to do their own work. Jackson's solution is to just stay in bed and paint everything within reach! A 1978 exhibition catalogue of Jackson's drawings published by Ed and Nancy Kienholz extends this idea throughout the *Bedroom*. The first drawing sets the tone for the catalogue and depicts a paint can tenuously balanced on the top edge of a partially opened door. The first person through the door, if it's not Jackson himself, will soon be cursing vehemently as the open can falls to the floor. Other elements in the room include a parodistic tableau which involves an easel with canvas and paint brushes set up in front of an actual still life of a small table with bottle, fruit, skull, etc. Here, again, subtlety is not the issue and everything gets drenched with paint. A small couch is painted in the same manner as the bed. A floor lamp with a conical shade is used as a paintbrush. Window curtains are painted and swept upward along the wall in an arc from the curtain rod. A chest of drawers gets it, too, including the insides of the drawers and their contents. The television situated at the foot of the bed is lovingly attended to, and an electric fan, turned on, becomes an abstract expressionist sprinkler. One of my favorite aspects of *Bedroom* is the clothes closet. A complete wardrobe with storage shelf for

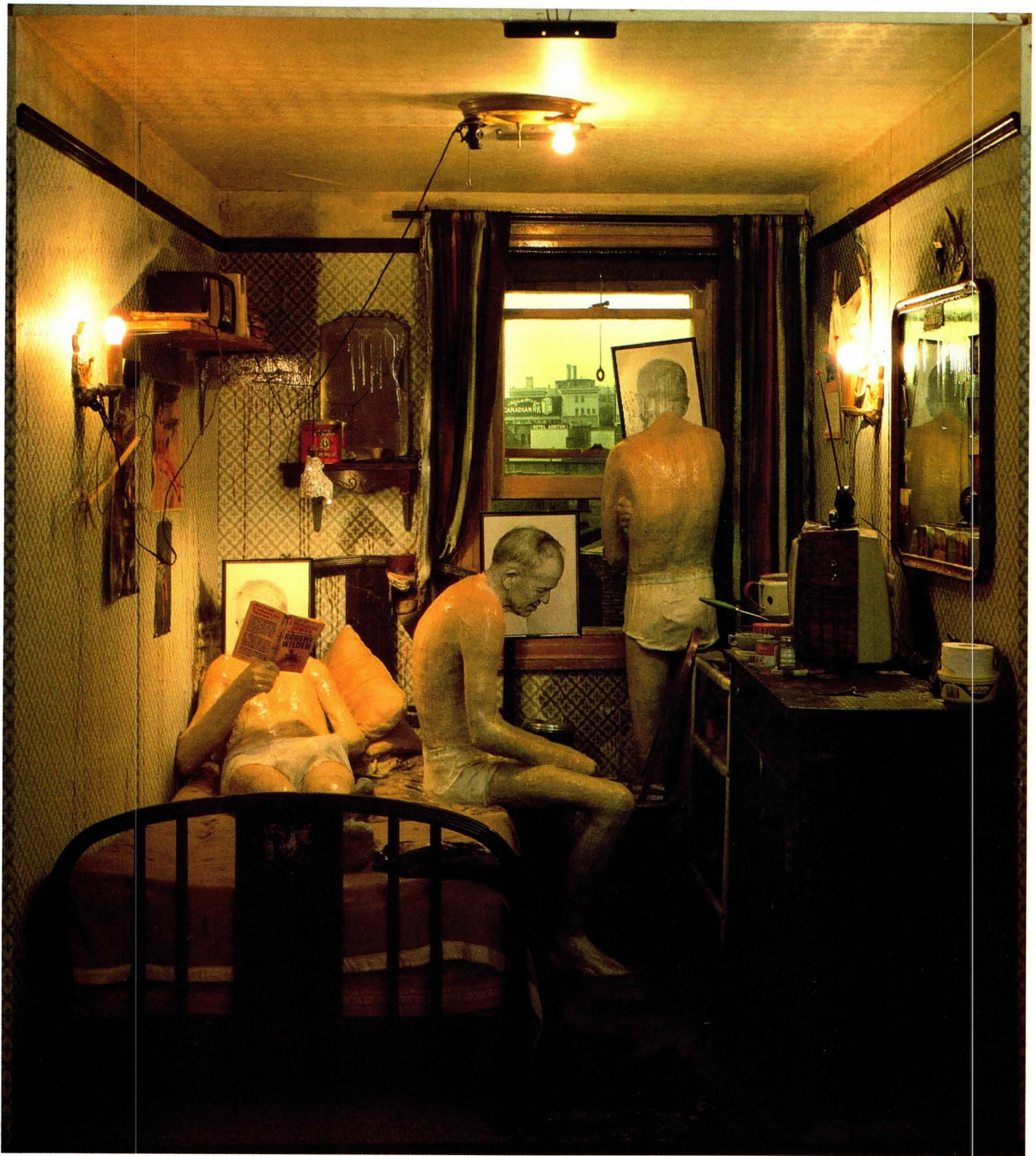
shoes and things is painted inside and out, with each of the pockets carefully filled with paint. Richard Jackson is certainly a colorful guy.

*Bedroom* had to be carted off to the dump and no more than a dozen people ever saw it. More than a month of work and \$10,000 in materials went into *Big Ideas* and, with no place to store it, Jackson thought it, too, would have to go to the dump. Walter Hopps had a better idea. Now the director of the Menil Collection in Houston which will house the most important private collection of modern art in the United States, he has asked Richard to recreate *Bedroom* for permanent installation, along with *1000 Pictures* and *Big Ideas*.

From Duchamp to the present much of the best of contemporary art has been ironic. Art was an intellectual game for Duchamp (who preferred chess). Conceptual art is his legacy. Richard Jackson transcends the cool intellectuality of the ironic posture regardless of his motivation. Minimal form, a conceptual approach, humor and irony become mere means to the final work. At their best his installations are profoundly moving and spiritually cathartic. The truth is out—Richard Jackson is a passion artist.

**Jeffrey Browning** is a writer living in San Francisco.





L.A. Louver Gallery: Venice, CA

▲ *Sollie 17*, mixed media environment, 1979-80.



## WITHIN A RECENT MEMORY

The five fullscale architectural tableaux and several smaller assemblages by Edward and Nancy Reddin Kienholz, currently on tour in the U.S., is the first major museum survey of the Kienholzes in this country since the mid-1960s. This seems shocking at first, considering Ed Kienholz's seminal presence in the Los Angeles art scene of the 50s and 60s and his—now their—considerable international reputation as American artists based in West Berlin. (In a 1981 catalog declaration, Ed Kienholz acknowledged his wife Nancy as subsequent co-author of the works.) But the

## EDWARD AND NANCY KIENHOLZ

oversight is partly a matter of logistics, and partly a matter of gestation; the end result is a long-awaited review of the Kienholzes' latest body of work that is obsessive, powerful and disturbingly hypnotic.

"Edward and Nancy Reddin Kienholz: Human Scale" was organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art as part of the museum's 1984 Biennial, "The Human Condition," and will travel as a separate entity to the Contemporary Art Museum in Houston and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis during 1985. In slightly different form—substitution made of two smaller assemblages—the exhibition premiered prior to the SFMMA Biennial as "Kienholz in Context," sponsored jointly by the Cheney Cowles Memorial Museum and the Touchstone Center for the Visual Arts in Spokane, Washington. The prestige of SFMMA lends its cachet to the traveling exhibition, but the reasons for the Spokane exhibition are uniquely compelling and merit attention.

BY RON GLOWEN







Some brief background information is essential to understand both the context and the particulars of construction of the new work. Since 1973 the Kienholzes have divided their time between studios in West Berlin and the small resort town of Hope, Idaho, not far from Spokane. During the 1970s their production was primarily European-based (*The Art Show*, the *Volksempfänger*, *Berlin Women*) while the Idaho studio was under construction. All of the work in the current exhibition has been produced in Idaho since 1979, and the materials which Kienholz uses in these assemblages were salvaged from demolition sites in downtown Spokane. Four of the large environments—*Sollie 17* (1979–80), *Pedycord Apts.* (1982–83), *Night Clerk at the Young Hotel* (1982–83) and *The Jesus Corner* (1983)—are referred to as the “Spokane Series” or “Hotel Series” because of their contextual nature. Each is an architecturally-intact former private living space or social environment faithfully extracted from derelict tenement structures.

The explicit socio-critical nature of Kienholz’ *oeuvre* tends to obscure another important aspect of the major installations; that is, the context of architectural environment. Many, if not most, of Kienholz’ major installations dating from *Roxy’s* (1961) are predicated on environments of human intercourse—a room, or a portion thereof, including furnishings (*Roxy’s*, *The Wait*, 1964); a crowded cafe (*The Beanery*, 1965) or a claustrophobic cell (*The State Hospital*, 1966). For the most part, these works have not been critiques of that



▲  
***Portrait of a  
Mother With Past  
Affixed Also,  
mixed media envi-  
ronment, 1980-81.***

Ron Glowen

◀  
***Night Clerk at the  
Young Hotel,  
mixed media envi-  
ronment, 1982-83.***

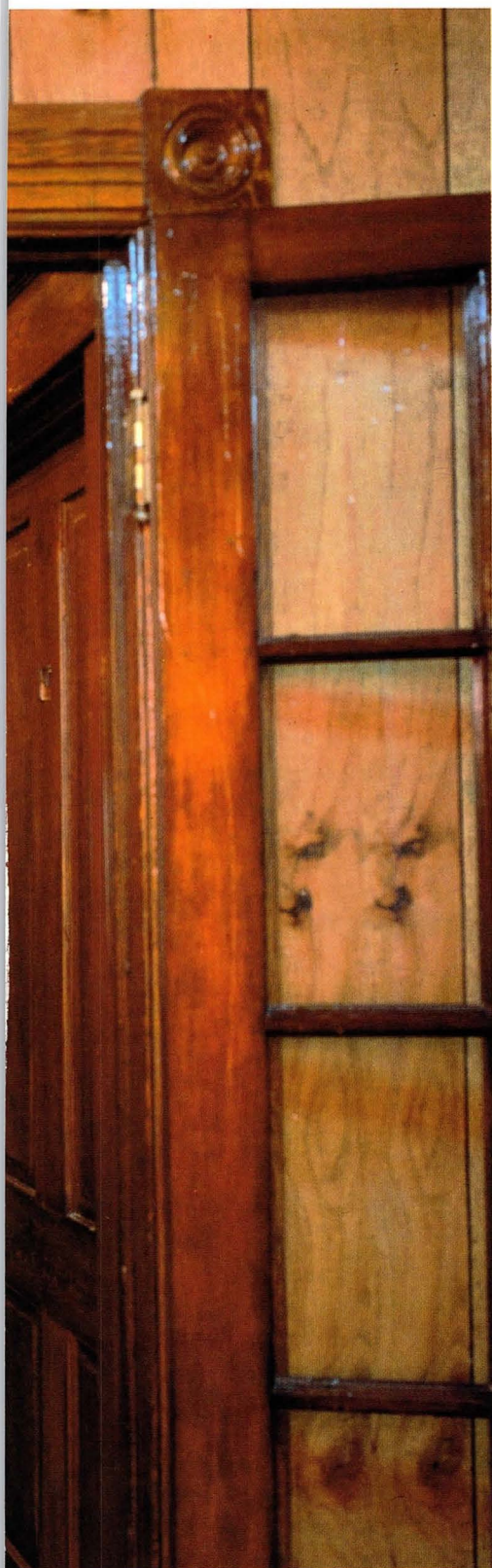
L.A. Louver Gallery; Venice, CA



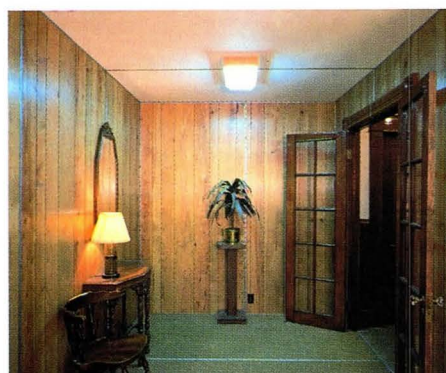


▲ *The Pedicord Apts.* (hallway), mixed media environment, 1982-83.





James Ball



***The Pedicord Apts.***  
(interior view),  
mixed media envi-  
ronment, 1982-83.

James Ball

environment *per se* (though the impact of *The State Hospital* derives equally from the referential stigma and squalor of the cell and the condition of its inhabitants; the same can be said for *Sollie 17*). Nor do they chronicle the “downscale” social evolution of that environment from, say, a pleasant communal dwelling to a sleazy boardinghouse; Kienholz arrives upon these environments at the state of their diminished remains. With this in mind, Kienholz delivered a wicked blow to “upscale” social convention in *The Art Show* (1973-77), shown last summer at the Braunstein Gallery in San Francisco. The installation consists of various figures attending an art exhibition reception; the social phenomena of “art openings” is skewered as a lower form of relevant social intercourse.

The works in the “Spokane Series” are fragmentarily extended to suggest or incorporate, by partial physical reference, the surrounding architectural context, as an introductory addition to the central environment. A corridor wall functions as the front to, and partition behind which, the complete dwelling room of *Sollie 17* is located. Similarly, the converted storefront that is *The Jesus Corner*

continued on page 81



# T H E

There exists today an almost symbiotic relationship between art, architecture, and landscape. The changing vocabularies of these fields continue to alter the boundaries by which we are able to formulate comfortable definitions. As the vocabularies change, so do the meanings; what we are witnessing is the increasing synthesis of definition. The formal elements of line, form, space, and scale still exist as definitive esthetics, yet these elements are in constant flux, being manipulated to reflect today's concerns. Artists are seeking humanistic solutions, questioning more evidently the subjective experience. Without the element of human perception and interaction, the formal qualities remain objective, oftentimes meaningless.

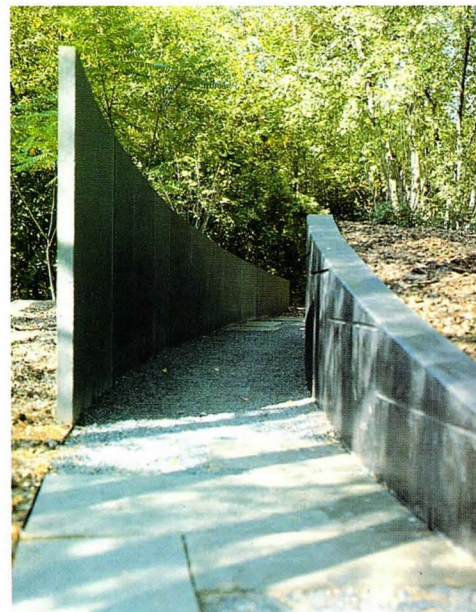
The pioneering efforts of large-scale site works and earth sculpture forced us to look at ourselves in relation to the vastness around us. Lucy Lippard wrote, "Art must have begun as nature itself—not as an imitation of na-

# C H A N G I N G

ture, not as a formalized representation of it, but as the relationship between humans and the natural world. . . ." If this is where art began, then it has come full circle in the search for subjective meaning. Art, architecture, and landscape have integrated in response to the evolution of human participation. No longer are we as individuals ineffectual fixtures on the landscape. We are active respondents. And it is the importance of this joint relationship between humankind and the surrounding elements that is the basis for much of the work that is at the forefront of these trends.

The three artists featured here reflect the integration of these relationships. The work of Elyn Zimmerman, Martha Schwartz, and Patricia Johanson exemplifies the patterns created as a result of the crossover process, being at once art, architecture, and landscape. It is clear that their work boldly addresses the issue of human involvement and perception, each in its own unique manner.

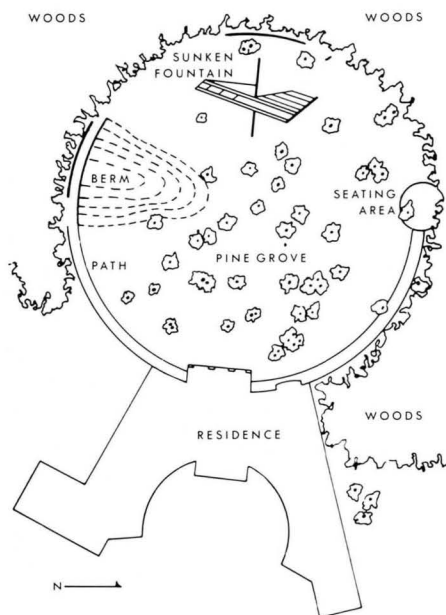
BY LAURIE GARRIS



▲  
Pathway leading  
through berm re-  
taining wall and  
stone outer wall.



# LANDSCAPE



▲ **Shunyata, overall plan.**



▲ **Three stone walls introduce the architectural elements of the sunken fountain at the rear of the garden.**

In Elyn Zimmerman's garden, *Shunyata*, we find art conversing with the landscape in an ongoing dialogue. Designed for the wooded grounds behind a private residence in Illinois, *Shunyata* consists of a 200' diameter circular area that provides a cloistered arena for spiritual reflection. From the curved rear facade of the residence, a pathway was created leading in one direction towards an intimate seating area. In the opposite direction, another pathway leads to a berm that Zimmerman imposed on the otherwise flat landscape. At this point, the passageway is literally defined by the six-foot-high retaining wall supporting the berm, and a free-standing stone outer wall that dips gracefully from a six-foot to a two-foot height along a 30-foot length. In this way, Zimmerman controls the sightlines and perspective changes so that at one point the view is completely obscured, and returns gradually, with a sense of mystery, as one travels further down the path. At the end of the pathway and directly at the back of the garden, three stone walls are visible. These thin walls demarcate a sunken fountain, becoming the garden's focal point. It is with this pool that Zimmerman stresses the importance of human involvement in an architectural setting.

Descending stairs at each end of the pool draw visitors directly into a substratum level where the sound of moving water and altered perceptions afford an integrated repose, one in which the formal elements of architectural structure maintain a complimentary merger with the surrounding wilderness and one's inner reflections.

One of the most tangible qualities of Zimmerman's work is that it relies heavily on hu-

## Elyn Zimmerman

man perceptual systems. In this piece, one is aware of the importance of the spectator's position in defining the forms and their relationship within the surrounding environment. "*Shunyata*," we are informed, is Sanskrit meaning "awareness of emptiness without which there could be no awareness of form."



▲ **Descending steps and moving water lead into the fountain.**

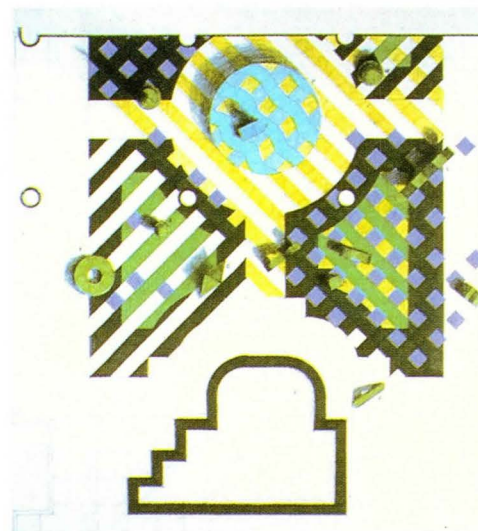


## Martha Schwartz

### King County Correctional Facility, Seattle, plan view.

Martha Schwartz's winning proposal for the entrance plaza of the new King County Correctional Facility in Seattle, Washington, has all the metaphorical elements of a formal parterre: paths around a central and cross axis, a water feature, geometric flower beds with green borders, and topiary forms. Overlooking the garden is an edifice that resembles a contemporary office building. Yet this building is not what it seems, and neither is Schwartz's garden. The building is in fact the county jail, and Martha Schwartz's garden is a surrealistic response to the site itself.

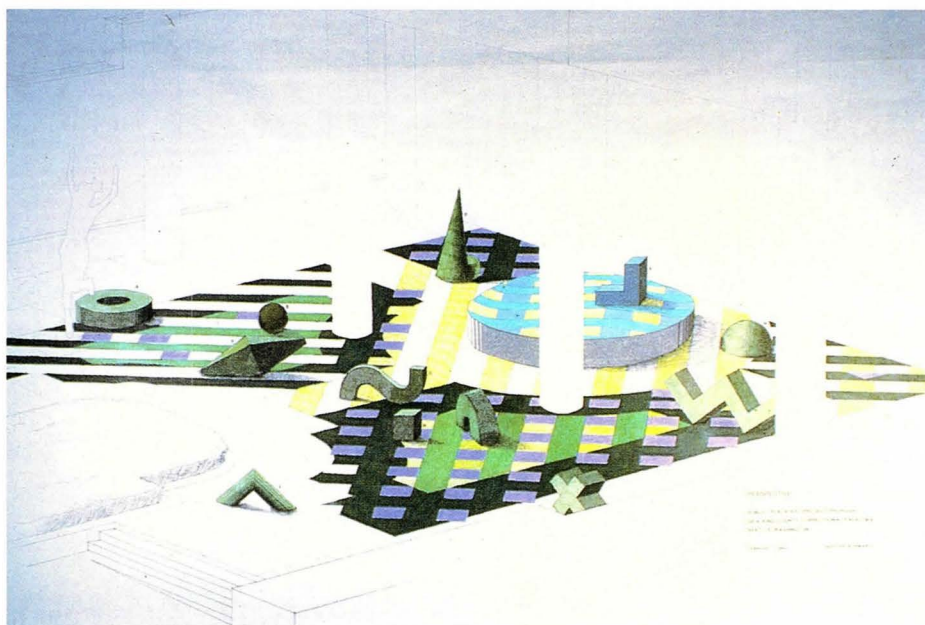
Schwartz has taken the elements and twisted them to reflect her sociological and psychological concerns. The designated flower



beds have been flattened and replaced with broken tile mosaic. Pieces of the pattern seem to float outside of their restricted areas. The axial paths are interrupted by diagonal stripes. The circular water fountain is rather a seating platform where a pattern of wavy blue bands exist as a vague reminder of what might be. The topiary are concrete rather than evergreen forms, covered also with broken ceramic tile mosaic. These skewed forms become benches and seating areas that would otherwise act as unifying and ordered elements in a true parterre. The entire "garden," in fact, is truncated, cut off at one end, abruptly terminating two of the flattened beds and the central axis.

Not only does Schwartz question the implications and applications of a formal garden, but also the very existence and quality of life of the prisoners who inhabit the site. Their lives are certainly truncated, cut off from the outside world and the rest of society. And the order of their existence is an imposed, enforced one, much in the same way as the topiary has been anchored out of sync in the garden. The broken pieces of ceramic tile and the interrupted patterning all reflect the shattered totality of their lives.

Martha Schwartz is certainly speaking here in a vocabulary that is sensitive and intelligent. From 16th century origins, she has drawn the parterre forward through time to respond to the attitudes relevant to this particular site in this specific age. The site, while dictating this solution, has certainly taken into account the force of the human element. In following this lead, Schwartz has elevated architecture and landscape to a higher ground.



Elevation, showing  
topiary and  
seating forms.



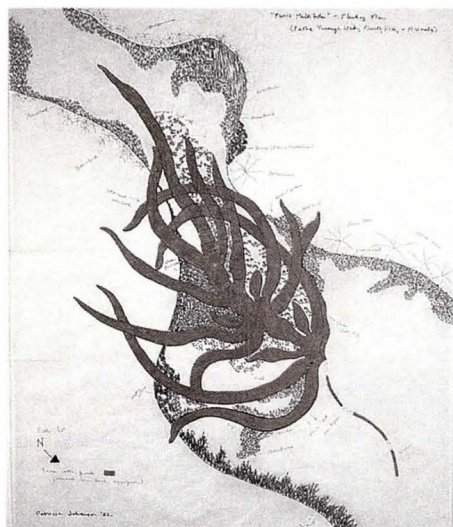
► **Site plan, Fair Park Lagoon, Dallas, indicating placement of sculptures.**



For more than a decade, Patricia Johanson has been designing large utopian structures. Born of natural sources—flower forms, human organs, moths and butterflies, even reptilian monsters—these biological forms are translated directly into architectural edifices. In Johanson's work, scale is the overriding force, her ambitious concern being "to mediate between human scale and the undifferentiated vastness of nature." Often in Johanson's work, the minutest details, even microscopic organisms, are converted into immense translations in landscape and architectural forms.

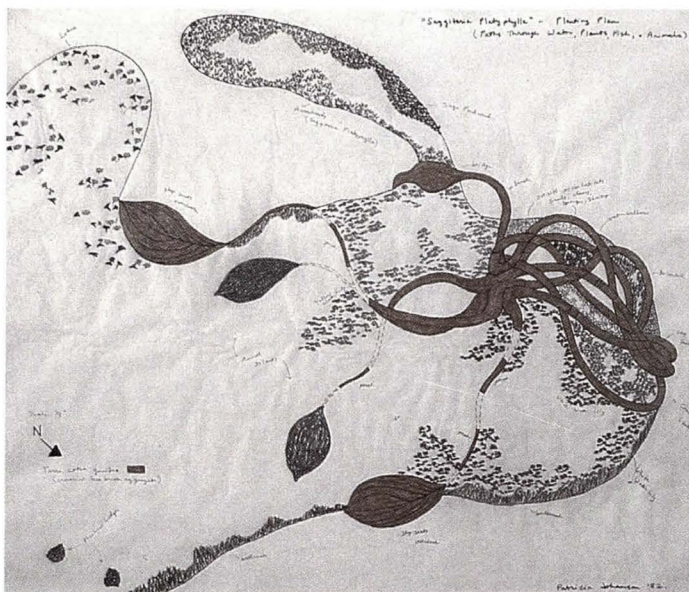
In the Fair Park Lagoon project in Dallas, Texas, Johanson has taken a neglected waterway and transformed it into an ecologically balanced site where sculptural and architectural elements combine with landscape in an extremely successful collaboration, offering its participants an important sense of human scale.

The lagoon's biological restoration consisted of two major building blocks—the introduction of native landscape and wildlife, and two sculptures at each end of the lagoon that would form paths, bridges, vistas, and islands directly on the water, allowing visitors to become literally immersed in the daily ecosystem of the site. At the southern end of the lagoon, a sprawling piece fashioned after a Texas fern called *Pteris multifida* spans a distance of 225' x 112' x 12' maximum height. Reaching beyond sculpture, this piece be-



▲ ***Pteris multifida*, at the lagoon's southern end, provides bridges, seating and wildlife pockets.**

► ***Sagittaria platyphylla*, at the northern end of the lagoon, affords leaf islands, pathways and natural vegetation.**



## Patricia Johanson

comes an architectural element that merges into landscape. The individual leaf structures arch over or float on the water, supplying a network of connecting bridges, causeways extending into sources of changing colors and vegetation, and a series of step-seats leading to an observation area towards the center of the piece. Some of these arches travel a distance of 80 feet, providing access through the carefully planned islands and open pockets where fish and flowers proliferate.

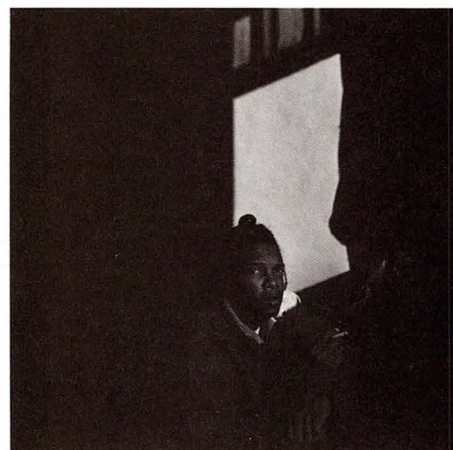
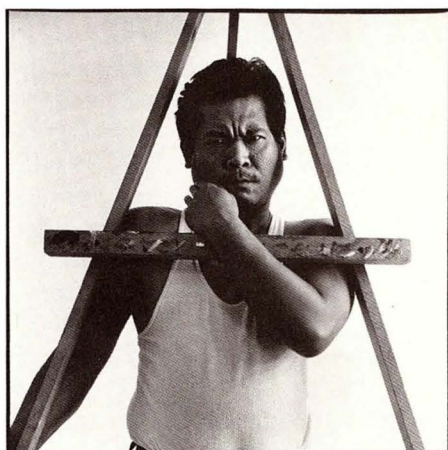
The northern end of the lagoon posed a significant problem in that it was eroding at a rate of eight inches a year, so Johanson's solution became a protective one in which portions of the sculpture at this end extended into the water, breaking up the eroding wave action. One of the large leaf forms acts as a bulwark at the head of the island, with its stem following the natural shoreline.

This sculpture is called *Sagittaria platyphylla*, and has an overall dimension of 235' x 175' x 4' in height. Here again, the esthetic is one of human involvement. The sculpture's "roots" provide an intricate, entangled mass of pathways that lead one through the natural aquatic community. A central circular walkway is created by the twisting stems, offering a place where one can oversee the lagoon's inhabitants. Some of the leaf structures are composed of natural materials, forming islands where waterfowl and turtles find refuge. The connecting leaf stems descend under water and rise up again to form perches for the regional birds. Other leaves along the shoreline become step-seating and observation areas amidst tall vegetation.

Johanson's esthetic is one in which all of the separate and distinct elements "come together in a mutually-defining process." Her work indicates a fusion of entities: architecture merges with landscape, and landscape becomes the synthesis of nature and the human response. It is clear that, for what is seen in Johanson's work, a larger context exists.



**G A L L E R Y   O F**  
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**P H O T O G R A P H Y   O F   B A S I A   K E N T O N**

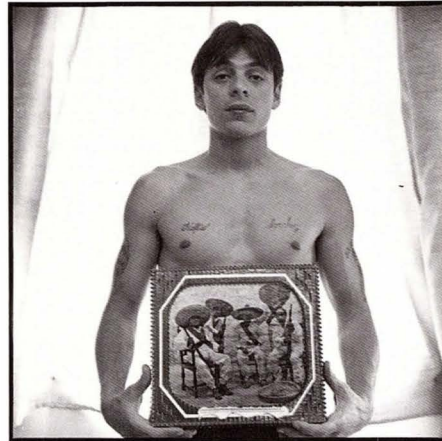
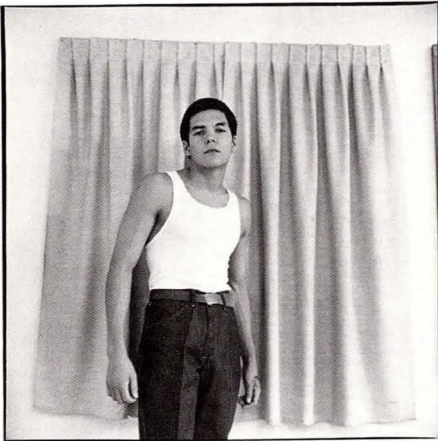
**B Y   I R E N E   B O R G E R**



**rogue** . . . An unprincipled person; a scoundrel or rascal. . . . A vicious or solitary animal, especially an elephant that has separated itself from its herd . . . An organism, especially a plant, that shows an undesirable variation from a standard

**rogues' gallery** A collection of photographs of criminals maintained in police files and used for making identifications.

—The American Heritage Dictionary  
of the English Language, 1981

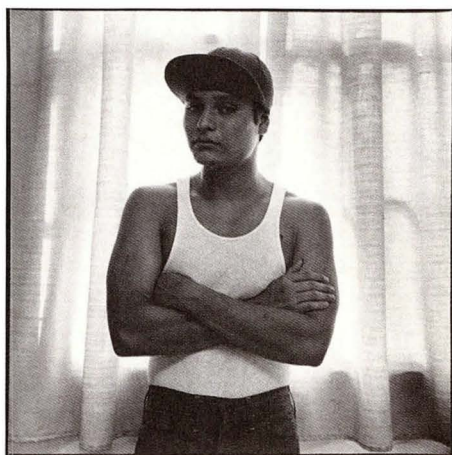


■ “No,” the murderer’s neighbor says to the newspaperman. “I didn’t really know him. No one around here did.” We learn about ourselves—our power, our beauty and our boundaries—in relationship to others. The mother must reflect the infant, the adolescent must find mirroring among peers, the adult needs to be seen, to find congruence in the world. Like the 13th fairy in *Sleeping Beauty*, the ones not invited to the party, those not written about or photographed, not found on billboards and TV, come back to trample or to haunt us. You *will* see me, they are forced to say.



## GALLERY OF ROGUES

■ Basia Kenton chose to see some of these invisible men. Nearly every Friday for two years she drove out to the California Rehabilitation Center, a "light-medium" security prison in Norco, California. Although authorized to teach a photography workshop at the prison, as a matter of course she was regularly detained by guards who searched through her bags and haggled over her papers before allowing her to cross the border into their circumscribed world. Her workshop, "Photographic Portrait/Self-Portrait," held under the auspices of UCLA Extension's Artsreach Program and funded by the California Arts Council and the Arts in Correction program

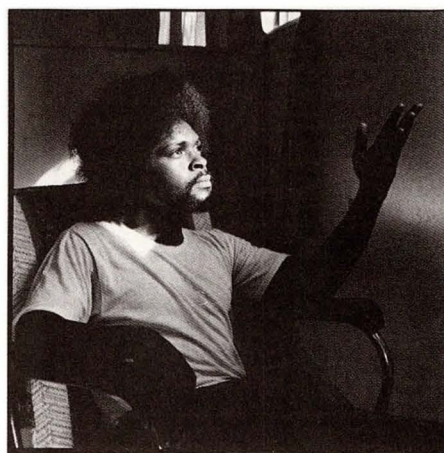


of the California Department of Corrections was designed to teach basic skills in photography while simultaneously giving the inmates an opportunity to literally see what it means to be seen.

■ Kenton says that her students had little sense of themselves or of what they looked like from the outside, yet came dressed and polished for their sittings within the aesthetic guidelines of their milieu. A dark prince arrived at class without his usual head full of pink rollers. Another ironed his tee shirt with French laundry finesse. Some showed their fierceness; others, their poetry, their tattooed love mementos, "Nellie," "Isabel," and one, his tattooed tears. One guy sat in a beatific lotus position, another took a Marlboro-man glamour pose. Since Kenton explicitly asked her subjects to consider what they hoped to

express, she sees the portraits as collaborations. She says each person consciously decided how they wanted to be seen and often signaled the decisive moment of the "click." It is highly debatable whether portraits can ever truly be collective works. Although models clearly have more say-so than either peppers or handsome sites, it is the photographer who understands the translation into two dimensions and prints the final image to be viewed.

■ While turn-of-the-century immigrants wore hats and clear-glass spectacles in photographs to make them look refined, and wealthy men have long posed with their collections and their broods, these captive men carefully display the vehicle available to them: the body. Biceps are proudly revealed, pecs are visible, manly signs, yet inadvertently, cer-



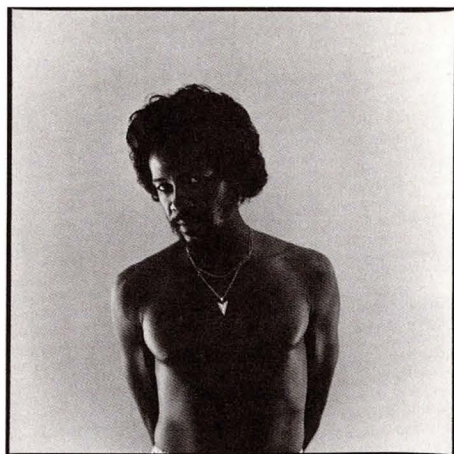
tain postures and gestures give the guys away. One man holds his fist tight while the rest of him looks cool, another man's shoulders seem braced for perpetual attack. One young fellow faces the camera frontally while his crossed arms function as his shield. The photographer is, after all, another sort. She is white, European and female, while most of them are either Latin or black. Yet this is no hit-and-run shoot and they know it. She's no street photographer coming in once to steal their souls. Kenton is their teacher and some even send her mash notes. ("You are beauty herself, extracted whole from the quarry of creation.")

■ Elias Canetti once wrote that when someone bared their teeth (in a smile, at a communal meal), they were showing, in a primal sense, that they did not intend to eat the



other. Much as many students professed admiration for Kenton, none of them opened their mouths to smile. Although many of these inmates could barely write in a cursive hand, they carried one of the tenets of visual culture with them. They instinctively understood the code for presentation. The unsmiling male is a vestige of a classic warrior's pose. Look at the "dangerous" men in men's fashion magazines today. One does not grin at immortality.

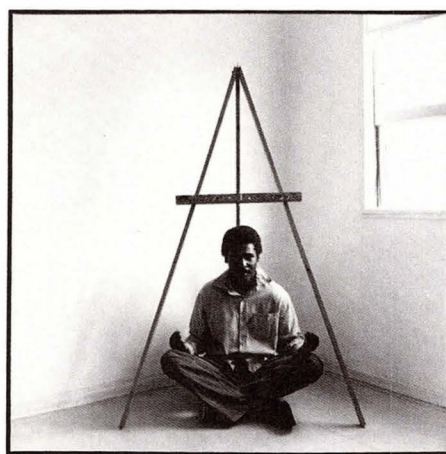
■ As in the stripped-down "poor theatre" of Polish director Jerzy Grotowski, each and every detail in the portrait becomes a magnified symbol for careful scrutiny. In these photographs, windows are suddenly poignant signs. An artist's easel functions as both a sanctuary and a cage. Light streaming in a window is the



sole connection with nature. A hat signals a way of life, a photograph hails ethnic pride. But the eyes, those purported "windows to the soul," are opaque, impenetrable.

■ The poor have been scrutinized, photographed for years. Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine, the photographers of the Farm Security Administration, Bruce Davidson, Mary Ellen Mark, are just a few of the documentarians who have attempted to reveal this world. The man in the ghetto has been far more accessible than his counterpart sheltered on top of the hill. When German photographer August Sander made pictures of a great cross-section of society, it was the faces, as well as the dress, which clearly signified particular class. One learns early which social mask to wear. Central Casting has merely magnified this. Physiognomy may or may not be destiny.

■ The people living at CRC have transgressed. They're "in" for drug and drug-related crimes, petty thievery, fraud, mugging and murder. Some readily told their photography instructor what it was that they had done. She made it a practice never to ask. Notice that she doesn't use captions, even simple ones like Diane Arbus, ("Transvestite at her birthday party"), or Irving Penn ("Glazier, Paris," "Plumber, New York"). Just imagine the meaning these photographs would take on if accompanied by a description of the subject's crime. When Basia showed this body of work to me, she pointed to one portrait and declared, "His dream is to become a cosmetologist." I cannot look at the photograph now without hearing this remark. Words, captions, context, distort what it is that we initially see. Even grouping these images together



under the heading "pictures of people from CRC," or titling this article, "Gallery of Rogues," announces a particular frame.

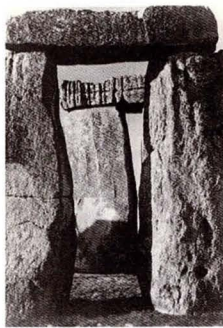
■ Imagine, for a moment, that all this information you've been reading is actually a hoax. Substitute this: Basia Kenton regularly photographs performers. Perhaps these guys are actors used to putting on all kinds of masks and posing for the lens. Maybe they're simply members of a high school class. Most of them seem to look you directly in the eye. These pictures are *not* evidence. They register a moment of interaction with a camera on a series of Friday afternoons. What is it that you see in their faces now?

**Irene Borger's** writing has appeared in *Architectural Digest*, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *LA Weekly*.









◀ **Stonehenge extends its ley lines over both physical and temporal planes.**

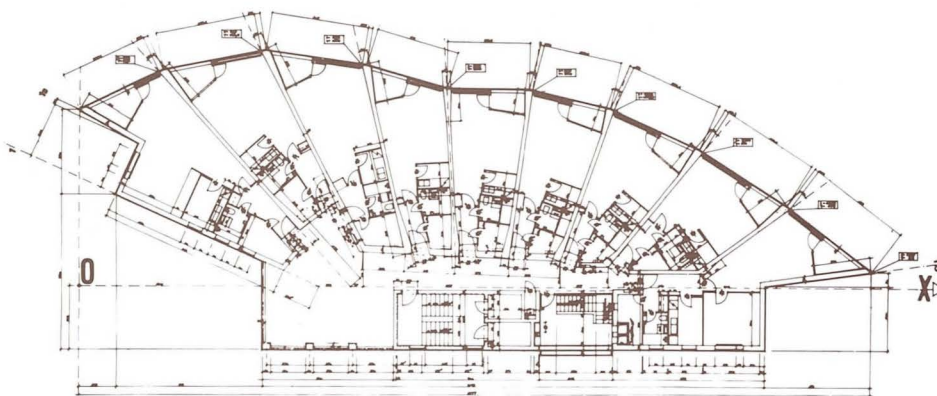
Edward Piper

As a working architect, I have tried to relate what we are doing to the current wisdom of other fields to substantiate some truth in professional experience. The place to begin seemed to be metaphysics, because architecture is the metaphysics of form; that is to say, the form of being and dwelling. I explored psychology, history, even theology, in search of a scheme of principles, then I happened upon the broad movement known as process philosophy, which deals with an evolutionary world view and the temporal flow of experience. The earliest proponent was Henri Bergson, but Alfred North Whitehead became the center of the movement with the publication of his *Process and Reality* in 1929. ¶ As process philosophy had influenced so many fields, I began to wonder how the mainstream of the modern movement in architecture had become detached from contemporaneous thought. A fantasy emerged of the future archeologist

## **TOWARDS AN ARCHITECTURE OF PROCESS**

misdating the ruins of the 20th century as the 19th because his knowledge of history led him to conclude that 20th century buildings were erected before the discovery of quantum physics. ¶ Whitehead's cosmos was dynamic, marked by light and movement; the systems were open-ended and the world appeared to be getting somewhere. He agreed with the Taoists of China and the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers that the world is distinguished by ceaseless change which includes continuity. The entire universe is made up of events, entities, happenings. Every event matters and has consequences. A thing is what it does. Novelty appears within the process as a creative event. Every event has both possibility and actuality. Each event is becoming, unless it has reached satisfaction. Each event is unique. Time is important; it is perpetually perishing. ¶ Let me apply four of Whitehead's philosophical themes to architecture: the process of becoming, the interconnectedness of all things, the resolution of opposites, and limitations as opportunities. **BY EVANS WOOLLEN**

▼ **Alvar Alto's fan plan echoes the motion implied in Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*.**



◀ **A mirror of 300 years of collective experience: Chartres.**

Garanger



**The Process of Becoming.** If the design, construction and subsequent life of a building is conceived as an ongoing event, always in the process of becoming, the architect's role is different. Before the architect makes an appearance there is already an accumulation of economic factors, long-felt needs of the users (their collective unconscious), the total ethos. Torrents of diverse information pour in—existing patterns and functions, cost alternatives, technological advances, unexpected requirements. Client relationships grow and change. I believe that the architect never stops processing these changes and deeper insights.

A building is what it does. Buildings may change during construction and more often should change. The contractor departs, but the building is not complete when the users take occupancy. It lacks history, associations. No one is likely to have deep feelings for or against it; dwelling therein takes time. Then slowly it is seen in different lights, walls are rearranged and painted different colors, weather stains appear, nature grows up around it and changes the shadows. The relationship of the building to its neighbors exerts an influence on the environment. Functions are later reappraised, and a wing is added in a surprising position; still later, the original occupants have moved on. It may be abandoned for a time before it is selected for adaptive reuse; it may in time be in the process of becoming a beautiful ruin, until it achieves ultimate "satisfaction" as ashes. But it was never complete.

Where then is the golden, timeless instant when the perfect design falls into place, either in the eye of the creator or on the site? Some would believe that the only thing approaching it is the flick of the camera shutter. Is our work to be digested in 1/60 of a second? One photograph is hardly the definitive statement on the unfolding happening of architecture. The complete building is a myth!

If such changes are typical, then architectural plans need not be closed systems, closed to growth and change. Architects would then not defend some point in the process, as if time had stopped. Recent architecture professes a fixed completeness, a straight-faced perfection. American Indians believed that only God was perfect, so they carefully left some small imperfection in each blanket or pot to remind themselves that they were human. The great model for builders, the human body, is never perfect, always changing. Intimation of an unachieved wholeness may be poignant or beautiful, as the polished bronze spheres of the sculptor Arnaldo Pomodoro, which reveal through deep vents a complex and dark interior. Or my own plan of the great cloister at St. Meinrad Monastery suggests the circular refectory "moving" toward the center of the enclosing triangle.

As we come from the past, live in the present and look to the future, our buildings might well reflect this passage of time by reminding us of places and things dear to us which we as a people have left behind. A rich building needs a memory, a prior history. Instead, it is rooted in the present and in the available technology. Let poetry intimate the aims of the future. Poets look for original meanings, and novelty appears in the freshness of untried combinations. But a building which wanted to be a poetic union of change and continuity is only a static high-tech product or a humorless revival of a revival.

Some 20th century painters have achieved this union. Change is motion in the vibrations of Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending*

the Staircase, and de Chirico paints classical buildings with a railroad train in the background. But painting is a reflection of life while architecture is a vessel of life, constantly battered by the environment and people. Much of modern architecture is oblivious to change, although exceptions are Alvar Aalto's plans of asymmetrical fans, Le Corbusier at Ronchamps, or the musical windows at La Tourette. Gothic and Baroque were often spectacular in imparting movement and change, and medieval builders, by accepting the idea of a building under design and construction for over a period of 300 years, mirrored the collective experience. Chartres Cathedral is the favorite example.



▲ The great cloister at St. Meinrad suggests inward motion.

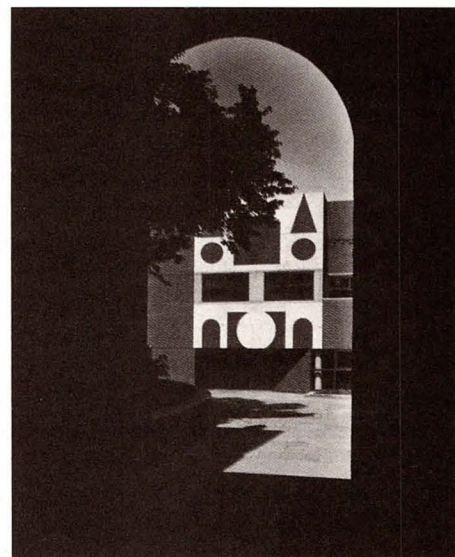
Balthazar Korab

Vernacular building today points the way

to an architecture of process, whether in isolated societies such as South Yemen or in turn-of-the-century American farm buildings. A complex of barn, house, sheds and fences reveal the changing face of life with plants and animals. From its inception, the layout accommodated new crops, different machinery, porches, cold frames, even windmills. It is this spontaneous accommodation that largely escapes high-style architecture of any day.

### The Interconnectedness of All Things.

There is a famous line from Lao Tzu: "Thirty spokes are assembled by one hub; by their non being a wheel is formed." Individual buildings may be non beings unless they work together with others to make a wheel. In its tangible life on earth, architecture gains meaning when it relates to the surrounding people, their past, their environment, both natural and physical, the genius loci. The relationships are there; it is up to the architect to

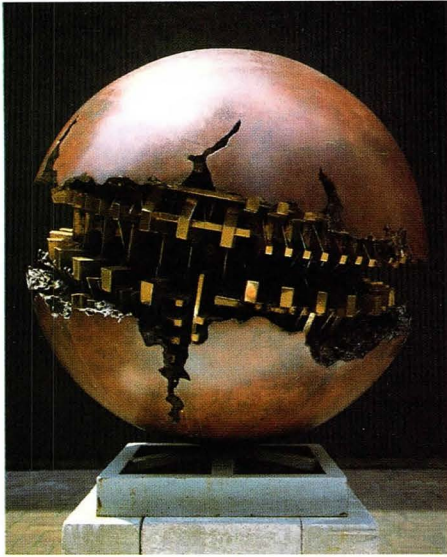


▲ Venturi's Wu Hall is in the spirit of its age; an architecture modeled on life.

recognize and include them, as architects did intuitively in previous centuries. Great places cannot be encompassed in a single set of drawings. Even Stonehenge connects with neolithic Britain, with its ley lines over Salisbury Plain and beyond, with its different layers of meaning. It took some 1000 years and 100 architects to make the city of Siena what it is today.

The idea that architects live with their clients before a serious work is begun may have started in the 13th century when Villard d'Honnecourt moved from one cathedral town to another. When Bill Caudill of CRS in Houston did it years ago he called the live-in architects "squatters." David Lewis of UDA in Pittsburgh was a pioneer in this pro-





▲ **Intimation of an unachieved wholeness may be beautiful, as the bronze spheres of Arnaldo Pomodoro.** Courtesy of Marlborough Gallery

cess, especially on planning projects. We learned from him to settle in and know the inhabitants before putting a pencil to paper. We wonder now how we could have proceeded without this sympathetic identification.

**The Resolution of Opposites.** In the sixth century B.C. Heraclitus coined the word “enantiodromia,” which means the resolution and incorporation of opposites to achieve a paradoxical wholeness. Whitehead thought that the truth lies in the union of opposites, and it had been clearly implied in the *I Ching* some 3000 years earlier, which viewed all change as the byproduct of the interaction of opposites. Architecture critics might draw up a checklist of polarities to include: freedom vs. necessity, clarity vs. ambiguity, simplicity vs. complexity, solid vs. void (space), symmetry vs. asymmetry, order vs. chaos. But most often forgotten is Yin vs. Yang, the opposite sides of the same mountain: Yang the sunny south side, Yin the dark, mysterious north side, now associated with masculine and feminine characteristics.

An era of machismo in building is yielding to the more androgynous, as a muscle-bound Breuer gives way to the softer touch and quicker wit of a Charles Moore. Clarity yields to ambiguity. We begin to distrust clear, exact statements. Reality is not that simple and concise. “The truth is in the nuances,” said Whitehead.

Much of modern architecture is instantly legible on only one level of meaning, as in the new east wing of the National Gallery, with few discernable nuances. Single poles are dangerous in psychology: I may end up being

what I most avoided. Jung wrote that Freud was blind to the paradox and ambiguity of the contents of the unconscious. He “did not know that everything which arises out of the unconscious has a top and a bottom, an inside and an outside.”

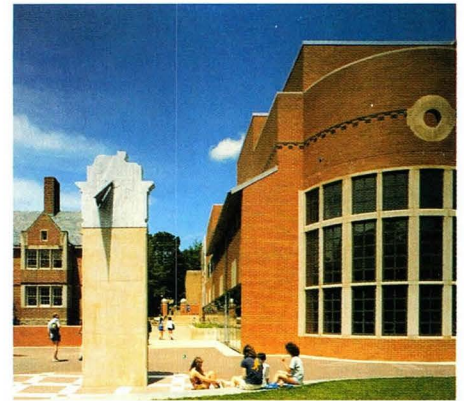
In my college days I dwelt in the Yale of James Gamble Rogers. I was shocked and fascinated by Davenport College with its Gothic facade on the street and its Georgian facade in the courtyard. The shock was heightened by a passageway between. Only the cupola could be seen from both sides, so it became transitional and somewhat ambiguous. Even in nature the inside is often quite different from the outside, but there is a resolution in the total container. When I was working on the Benedictine monastery at St. Meinrad there appeared a donor who would give enough money to sheath only the outside in limestone. This proved a happy limitation. The inside of the large cloister court could then be a smooth creamy white plaster, the soft underbelly of the building as it were.

**Limitations as Opportunities.** “The whole world contrives to produce a new creation. It presents to the creative process its opportunities and its limitations. The limitations are the opportunities,” wrote Whitehead. Michelangelo carved his David out of a damaged block of marble which Donatello had worked on and abandoned. The architect’s limitations may be more easily identified than other artists’ since they are not so abstracted from the lives of the inhabitants. The very ground itself is never a blank piece of paper; the pocketbook is rarely overflowing; the client may deeply resist a changing view of an old problem. Critics and juries do not show much interest in limitation or for that matter in process. It is messy. It does not make a neatly packaged presentation.

I used to expend much energy in fighting limitations. But in the Pilot Center in the basin of Cincinnati I first saw the strong possibilities of the existing limitations. The project involved both planning of a neighborhood and the design of a social service center on a particular city block with interesting 19th century buildings. Our initial instructions from the city as client were, “Clear the land and put up a brave new center that is a reflection of the generosity of the municipal and federal governments.” We opened our job office next door to the site in Findlay Market, and in assimilating the attitudes and patterns of the neighborhood found that there was no appetite for wholesale destruction. The final design wove together new and old structures

to form a whole that was larger and richer than we could have achieved otherwise. An 1840 church tower was saved as a beacon of the new center. Beyond our original program, Victorian housing was rehabilitated as useful apartments. A most serviceable A & P stood at the strategic market corner where all architects would have liked to do a new building. It still stands there today.

It is clear that these four process themes are interconnected. The second and third approximate the concerns of Robert Venturi in his book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, a watershed between the Cartesian past and a Whiteheadian future. Indeed, the recent Gordon Wu Hall at Princeton University by Venturi’s office embodies all four themes. The building is a dining hall and social center for small, residential Butler College. It is the final segment of the college to be built into a tight unpromising site. It speaks simultaneously in three tenses: past, present and future. Its order is not stiff and complete,



▲ **At Wu Hall, the limitations of site and program have been seized to produce a poetic, spontaneous whole.** Tom Bernard

but is a flexible order which arises from a site in which there was no apparent order. Entities of the facade seem to be moving toward some ultimate satisfaction, and the building itself acknowledges each of its neighbors. Opposites are resolved: site vs. program, simple shed vs. a complex of spaces, Butler Walk vs. a discrete room. The stringent limitations of both site and program have been seized to produce a poetic and spontaneous whole.

Wu Hall is in the spirit of its age, with a view growing out of our latest understanding of the universe—less an architecture of Le Corbusier’s machines, more an architecture modeled on organisms, or for that matter, modeled on life.

**Evans Woollen** is a practicing architect in Indianapolis.







# A<sub>2</sub>Z



**A<sub>2</sub>Z: Sheila Klein,  
Ries Niemi, Norman  
Miller**

Tom Collicot

A<sub>2</sub>Z is the collaborative name adopted by architect Norman Miller and artists Sheila Klein and Ries Niemi. The team, founded in 1983, prides itself on solving design problems at any scale, and interjecting a human element into their solutions. ■ The members of A<sub>2</sub>Z are young and restless, and their creative curiosity extends from their immediate projects to all aspects of the built environment. Their lively interaction often spills over into their conversation, where they complete each other's sentences or wind up speaking in unison. ■ Originally based in Seattle, A<sub>2</sub>Z has just moved to Los Angeles where they hope to broaden their scope. They are interviewed here by editor Barbara Goldstein.

**Would you say that A<sub>2</sub>Z is an expression that summarizes the goal of your business?**

**Norman Miller** Right. The goal and the operating process.

**Ries Niemi** You need something?

**Sheila Klein** You want anything? We'll do it. We consider A<sub>2</sub>Z to be a new element, like H<sub>2</sub>O.

**RN** We were really inspired by Balinese artists. They sit by the side of the road with their paintings and say, "You want something? You want to see my paintings?" I always wanted to sit by the side of the street in Seattle and say, "Look at my work. Do you want to buy my work?" But, culturally, that just wouldn't work.

**So you see this as sort of an alternative to being a fine artist?**

**RN** For me, it's actually better than being a fine artist, because I use all the same skills and the same interests that I used in my artwork. It's just that now people want the things that I make.

**SK** It's a way of going in the back door. My definition of the difference between art and design is this: art has guts and design has manners. You can do something very artistically and very artfully, and if you manner it a little bit, it turns into design. It becomes a little more palatable. You can serve art up "a la mode" and you can reach a wider range of people. I tend to think that people have become very uncomfortable with the format in which art is shown. You walk into the white void, the cloister, and you're a little uncomfortable. Should you speak? How far away should you stand from the object? That sort of thing. People feel more comfortable with things they use or environments that they're in. They don't feel that they have to question why or how it's the way it is.

◀ **Working with  
Olson/Walker  
Architects of  
Seattle, A<sub>2</sub>Z de-  
signed the Zipper  
floor of Le Salon,  
1984.**

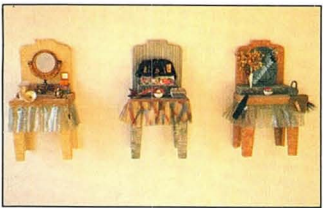
Tom Collicot





A<sub>2</sub>Z

▲ **The Gun Collection, Ries Niemi, 1979**



A<sub>2</sub>Z

▲ **Cultural Relativity, Sheila Klein, 1982**



A<sub>2</sub>Z

▲ **Some Hut/Chance, Sheila Klein, 1981**



A<sub>2</sub>Z

▲ **Interior, Some Hut/Chance**

**RN** The art audience also seemed too small. The number of people subscribing to the biggest art magazine in the United States or maybe even in the world is probably under 100,000 people who care enough to spend \$25.00 a year; but everybody cares about cars, everybody cares about buildings, everybody cares about forks.

**SK** It's a wider access point.

**Is mass production, then, one of your goals?**

**NM** Yes, I think if we recognize that, we recognize that we are in the middle ground between art and mass production. A lot of the things that we do still have the amount of time and money invested in them to make them very expensive; and they are for a small, select audience. A painting can sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars although it costs very little to fabricate; but a real mass-produced object has to cost almost nothing to make. The design cost has to be amortized over a huge quantity of objects. We'd like to do some mass production; but we would also like to keep working on things where we do



▲ **Dice Table, left; and Stacking Table Building, both 1982.**

Tom Collicot

▲ **Round table and Mother linoleum rug, 1984.**

Tom Collicot

have the luxury of spending a long time on design, like custom architecture and furniture.

**SK** We really want to affect visuals and environment. Whether that's in an art sense, an architectural sense, an environmental sense, or a conceptual sense, we feel that it's a good way to be influential. By mixing the two and muddying the boundaries you can reach a wide audience.

**You seem to be playing with a number of so-called ordinary materials, which is a very popular thing to do.**

**NM** There's definitely some of that in what we're doing, and there is also a love of certain materials for themselves regardless of how

they're produced. We really like marble, too, but at this point we can't afford to work with it. At the same time, we also like galvanized steel, and whether it was expensive or cheap we'd still like it. What we're doing is showing that linoleum can be just as valuable as marble depending on the way it's detailed and used. It's a surface; it's a color; it's a way of making something lovable rather than saying, "This is marble and therefore it's valuable no matter what you do." You can see marble used in ugly, ostentatious, "bad taste" ways as well as in beautiful ways.

**You seem to have done a lot of linoleum rugs. How did you get started in that?**

**SK** Yes, that's one of our big projects. I was



▲ **Formerly the dispatcher's office in a Seattle bus terminal, A<sub>2</sub>Z transformed the space for their office.**

Tom Collicot





using linoleum as a surface material in my artwork. And I loved the material itself just for what it could do and what it offered in color and surface range. After a while I started thinking that it was really an undervalued material for interior design. My background is in textiles, and so I always liked the idea of making soft things in hard materials. I made a quilt out of linoleum for a wall, a tallis (Jewish prayer shawl), and I started thinking that linoleum should be reutilized and reexamined. And I talked to Ries and Norman for awhile about linoleum rugs and they really encouraged me. We figured out how they would work, what they would look like, and how they could be put together. The first thing that we did was a series of portable rugs made of linoleum. We called them "thoroughly modern, mop to clean, no dust, no muss, just mop and glo." They were nomadic rugs, the wave of the future because everybody needs a floor surface, and usually when you have a floor surface it isn't what you like.

**NM** Especially for renters, a growing class of people.

**SK** We made portable hard rugs, with very

tactile, textile-like surfaces. The first group took their patterns from quilts or from rugs. We have a whole series we call Navajoleum, from Navajo rugs. Later, we started making in-place floors and those too have a relationship to textile rugs, terrazzo and mosaic floors.

**You've been collaborating with each other for about a year, and you've also been collaborating with architects. How well has that worked?**

**NM** That really started when we did; that's how we met. I was working at Olson/Walker and Sheila came onto the South Arcade project. Jim Olson, the partner in charge, met with Sheila and they decided to arrange a group of artists to work on the project. During the same time, Ries and I started working together.

**SK** It worked out very well for the architectural firm because they felt they could get services from us that they didn't have within their own staff and that really weren't available to them in the architectural community. It opened up a whole range of possibilities. One reason we've continued to work with ar-

chitects is that we want to maintain a lot of control over the kinds of things that we do and it may be a long time before we can do very large scale projects on our own. A way of being involved in large scale projects is to offer those projects the ideas we've developed on a smaller scale.

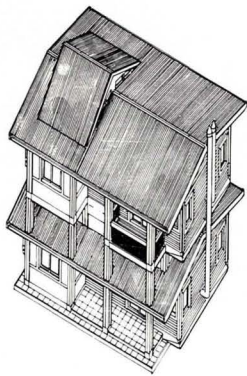
**What kind of hands-on work are you doing?**

**RN** I have a big metal, wood and plastic fabricating shop and mostly we do metal fabricating. There are a lot of people who can fabricate wood better than we can and cheaper than we can, so we farm that out. But, every once in awhile we come across something that we've designed that is special enough that it's easier for us to just whip it out than to try to explain it and get somebody else to make it cheaply.

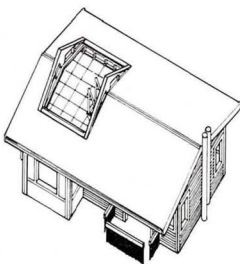
**NM** We're building a lot of our office furnishings slowly but surely.

**RN** We do a lot of steel and sheet metal fabrication. We also do all our tile and linoleum work ourselves. We have a lot of specialized

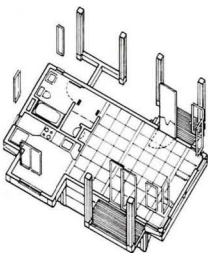




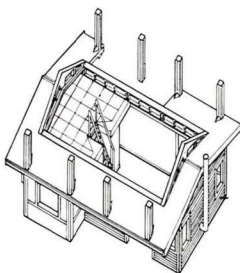
▲ **Doublehouse, axonometric**



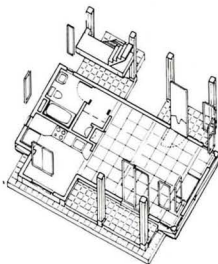
▲ **Doublehouse, upper mezzanine**



▲ **Doublehouse, upper unit**



▲ **Doublehouse, lower mezzanine**



▲ **Doublehouse, lower unit**

tools for tile and linoleum. Sheila has an enormous collection of unused vintage linoleum.

**SK** The hands-on nature of the business is important to all of us because there is something that you learn by putting your hands on it and there is also something that you discover by becoming close with the nature of the material. You discover its strengths and limitations.

**RN** Both Sheila and I were much more intuitive in our work before we started this firm. I would often go down to the shop and just start cutting up pieces of steel and welding things together without really knowing how it was going to end up. When we started working with Norman, Norman always said, "Well, what's it going to look like? Let's do a drawing of it." So we've gotten much more disciplined.

We're kind of coming together in the middle. Actually Norman always encourages us to draw everything out in advance and even when we do, lots of times when we get to the shop the piece will change but it's just a matter of checking yourself. Sometimes they call me Eagle Eye because if something's slightly off it just bothers me . . .

**SK** . . . In a much more intuitive sort of way. More like a witch-doctor than a scientist.

**RN** We have both the ability to draw it over and over again until we get it to look right on paper and the ability to keep up with the necessary modifications as it's being made. If something needs to be changed we can decide to change it. Lots of times when you're working with contractors and fabricators they'll tell you they did it the easiest way. When there are two choices it seems like they almost always pick the wrong one.

**SK** One thing I learned when I was working with architects was that although they could do really beautiful drawings of just about anything, they didn't necessarily understand how things went together or the limitations of the materials. We're interested in the middle ground, where the object is appropriate to the way it's going to be built and it also looks good on paper. The intu-rational.

**Could you describe what kind of art you were making before you created A<sub>2</sub>Z?**

**SK** I was doing installations, component parts that were companions to each other which would create an environment. The first



show that I did in 1979 was called "Domestic Set Up" and it was a spoof on furniture and on taste and on arranging those things. It was a landmark for me. From that point on I was doing what I called Albatrosses, large environmental pieces that were typically about places that triggered memories or sensory experience. They were like fairy tales. After I did a group of shows like that I was a little discouraged because I could only show them in art galleries and museums and they weren't things that you could pick up and buy and put on your table. So I thought, well, why don't I try and do this and put it into an interior so that it could be used.

**What about your work, Rie?**

**RN** My work was a lot about technology and mass production and consumer goods. I did a lot of work with colored xerox for a time and I did a lot of mixed media sculpture. I was working with cardboard and sheet metal and things like that. I did a show that was called "The Pawnshop Show" where I took all the objects that would normally be in a pawnshop, color xeroxed them, took the paper and laminated it onto cardboard so that they were the thickness of the real objects—saxophones, guitars, drafting pens and hammers. I



▲ **Domehome, southwest elevation**



did a lot of work with power symbols—guitars and guns and human forms.

**Do you think that being in Seattle somehow influenced your tendency toward applied art? There seems to be a trend in this direction among Seattle artists.**

**SK** I think it's safe to say that we've probably influenced that movement in Seattle to a certain extent. On the other hand, the public art program has driven people towards applied art in many ways because of the design team projects such as manhole covers, mechanical boxes and substations. That started to open up the possibility for other people to say, "Well, how would I approach that?"

**NM** It just happens to be the style right now for artists to design furniture and I think that style will pass. I think that our interest in it would have been there whether or not that was the style.

**RN** Actually, I was on a design team with architects in 1978. It was an electric substation.

**SK** Ries and I were also in a group called Friends of the Rag that was interested in art clothing and dressing the body in different ways, using it as a machine. Both of us are very drawn toward objects and transforming them.

**RN** A lot of the things we work on tend to relate to the human body or to human expression, like T-shirts or robots. Even our buildings have that sort of presence and that grows out of our work with Friends of the Rag. There always tends to be a friendly quality about our work.

**NM** As the three of us worked together, all our work started to assume a sort of a character and that character seems to be very friendly. It's not a very hard-edged style.

**What are some of the projects you've been working on lately?**

**SK** On the architectural scale we have three current projects. One is Doublehouse, two urban cabins on top of each other. We look at it as a module that could be stacked 3 times, 9 times, 81 times. We call it economy with grace. It's a very simple way of living elegantly in a very contained module.

**RN** It's very special, like being inside a ship because you see the framing coming down

**An espresso bar designed by Sheila Klein in 1981, before the founding of A<sub>2</sub>Z.**

Victor Gardaya

**From left, Dousing Rod chest, Light Bulb chest, Tea Chest, with Ching Rug, 1982.**

Tom Collicot



and the lines in the floor. Everything is very self-contained and detailed, very basic.

**NM** Doublehouse is studio apartments. The overall area is very small, but the main room is very large. It's as big as the living room of a two or three bedroom house. Doublehouse is very much like one of Ries' pieces of furniture because we're edging the whole thing in galvanized metal, like a steamer trunk.

**SK** Sort of like our offices.

**RN** On the outside the whole thing will be made with wood and metal . . .

**SK** like a cabinet . . .

**RN** . . . and we're going to be building much of it ourselves because we're so particular.

**NM** The budget on this project is really small. The project can't be built for that amount of money, but it will be . . .

**RN** . . . because we're building it, and we have a friend who is a contractor who will take the risk of building it at that cost in order to get it done. So, it's a project for everyone involved, including the owner. Everyone is making a lot of concessions in order to see it built. As our first free-standing building we just felt that's sort of what we had to do.

**SK** We're hoping that we can use what we've learned from this to go on and do something with a highrise tract development. It's a module that we're interested in developing further.

The other two architectural projects are residential remodels and additions. They're very typical suburban, what Norman often calls builder-burger.

**NM** I don't think either one of them had an architect to begin with.

**SK** No, they're very ordinary.

**RN** They weren't site specific.

**NM** They're both in very affluent suburbs in Seattle.

**SK** The clients are relatively conservative, straight-laced characters yet they are very encouraged by what we offered them.

In both cases we're transforming the typical skeleton house to be something the client would like to be more like home. In one case it's to capitalize on a view and create better interior spaces and in the other case it's to create what they call an audio-visual dome. It's sort of a cross between Star Trek and a chateau, new age suburbia. We call it Dome Home. I think one thing that we're very good at is showing people what options there are.

**RN** Part of that is because we three work together and every day we have to compromise with each other. We usually come up with three versions of everything we do.

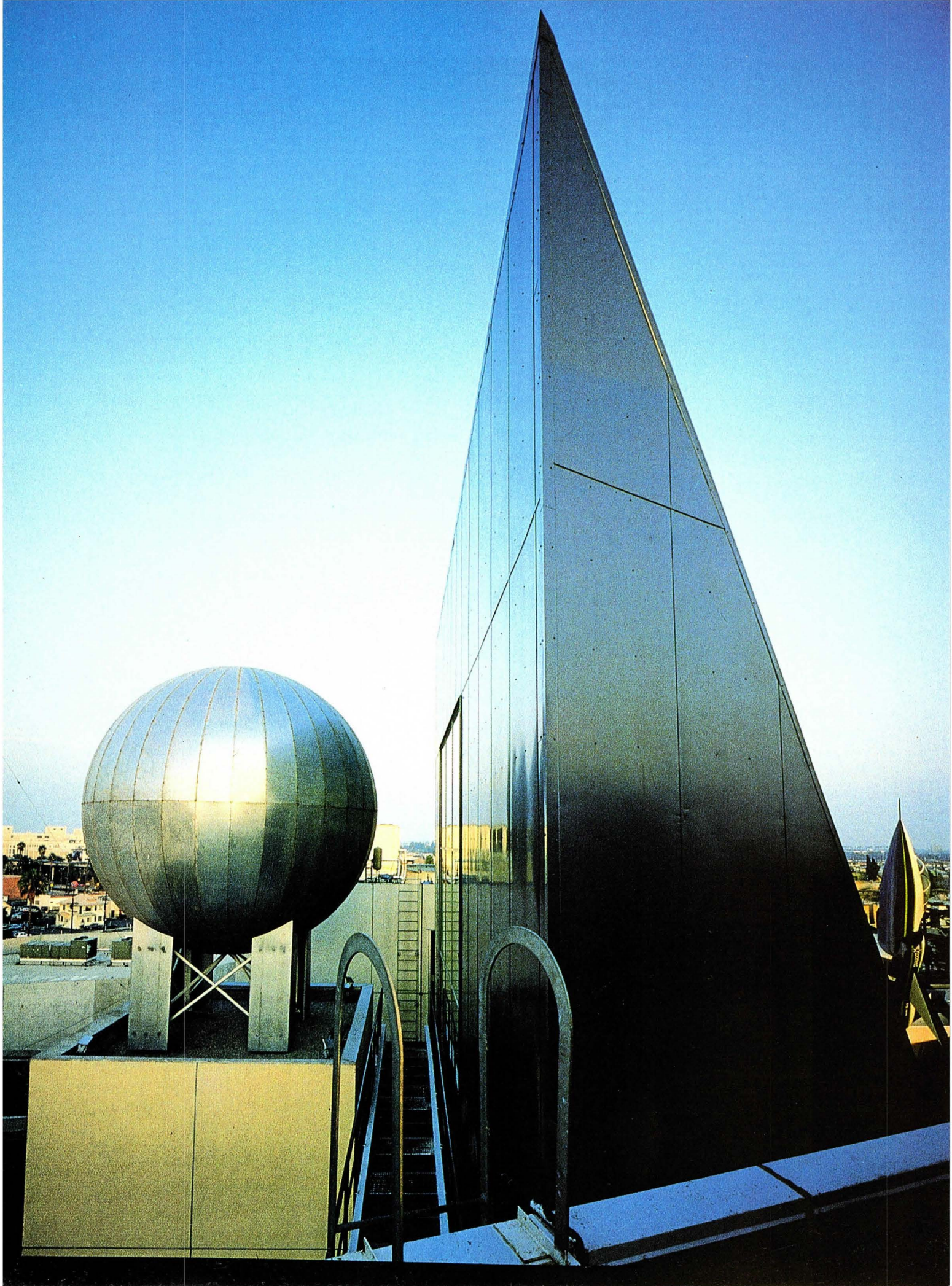
**NM** This one's Ries's favorite, this one's Sheila's and this one's mine. We usually try to present the clients with at least two or three options so that they can choose which they like.

**SK** Or they can say, "I like this part of this one and that part of that one."

**NM** They stay involved.

**SK** We consider ourselves to be an encyclopedia of options.







# P O S I T I V E   S P A C E

## THE CALIFORNIA AEROSPACE MUSEUM



◀ **The aggressive exterior of the building is dynamic but ordered.**

Courtesy Frank O. Gehry & Assoc.

**BY   A N D R E W   R A B E N E C K**

◀ **The strong geometry of the design continues to the top of the structure.**

Timothy Hursley

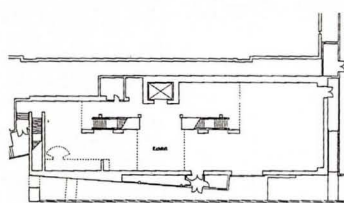
Exposition Park in Los Angeles has always been rich in incongruity, perhaps even before camel races were held there in the 1880s. Home to the Coliseum and Sports Arena adrift in a sea of asphalt studded with olympic jetsom, the park also houses the California Museum of Science and Industry, a 16,000-bush rose garden and a new museum of Afro-American History and Culture. It's the place you go to see Charles Eames's Mathematica exhibit, not to mention Clearissa the Transparent Woman in the Kinsey Hall of Health.

This potpourri of uplifting technical culture, with its inconclusive beaux-arts setting and wishy-washy buildings, has been given a heroic jolt by Frank Gehry's modestly-sized but vastly exciting Aerospace Museum Extension. "Extension" because the 16,000-square-foot building on a narrow lot serves as a gateway to the massive 1913 Armory Building, a simple brick volume which has until now housed a motley collection of missiles and NASA paraphernalia, and which will in a future phase of the project become the major exhibit space.

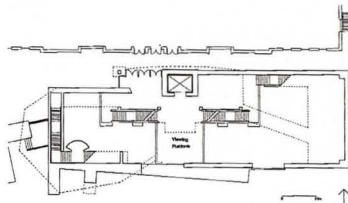
Gehry's building achieves much. Within its setting the exterior is aggressive, its jutting scaleless volumes challenging the placid rose garden, the earlier temple-like museum buildings by Charles Luckman and the ponderous new Afro-American Museum directly opposite. The aerospace museum declares itself at first as "something interesting" rather than as a museum; a welcome curiosity punctuating the emptiness of the park's museum precinct. The apparent entrance is a tall and narrow black hangar door surmounted by a heraldic tripod that grasps a Lockheed F-104 (the planes can be changed)—a startling effect. The real entrance must be discovered, up stairs or a sweeping ramp, lost in the crevice separating the old and new buildings. But for once one does not reproach a new building's lack of invitation to enter because the initial experience of the outside is itself the introduction to the museum's purpose.

The building alludes to flight in many ways, from the literal—a real plane hung on the outside—to the metaphorical—a large, shiny metal sphere hovering above the elevator

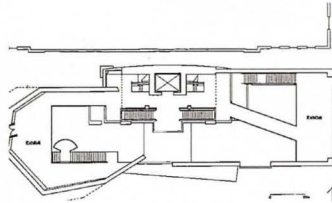




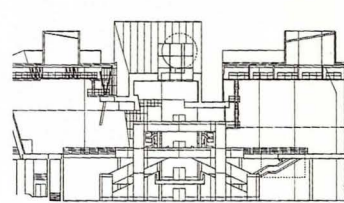
First floor plan



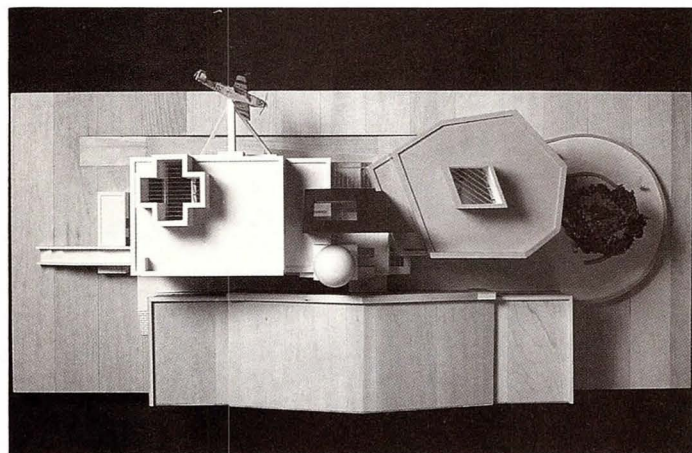
First floor mezzanine plan



Second floor plan



Section



An overhead view of a model visually reinforces the flow of the building.

The present confronts the past: an entry into the new museum faces the 1913 Armory building.

Courtesy Frank O. Gehry & Assoc.

shaft. These are just cues, though, in a minimalist dialectic provoked by the major forms. The east end of the building is largely a windowless plain stucco box punctuated by the great black door that isn't the entrance, while the west end consists of a crazy polygonal volume larger at the top than the base and clad in thin sheet metal. The two ends are reconciled by a vertical strip of mirror glass that wraps onto the roof.

These are forms without familiar antecedents and yet they possess authority. If they evoke anything, it is, appropriately, previously-glimpsed structures of the aerospace industry—strange and unexplained forms of inhuman scale—ordered by an ineffable logic we will never share but which we feel must be at work in such an endeavor as conquering space. Gehry's building summons echoes of the emotions felt by any lay visitor to the installations of a large aerospace contractor. Strange forms and materials, unintentional tricks of scale, and above all no obvious explanations of what one is seeing, seem keys to the sensibility Gehry both seeks and finds. It is a brilliantly appropriate sensibility, too, one that mocks the idioms of better known aerospace museums, particularly the National Air and Space Museum, with its acres of pink marble evoking the moralizing transcendent

**Soaring footbridges involve viewers in the space, as opposed to more conventional circulation systems.**

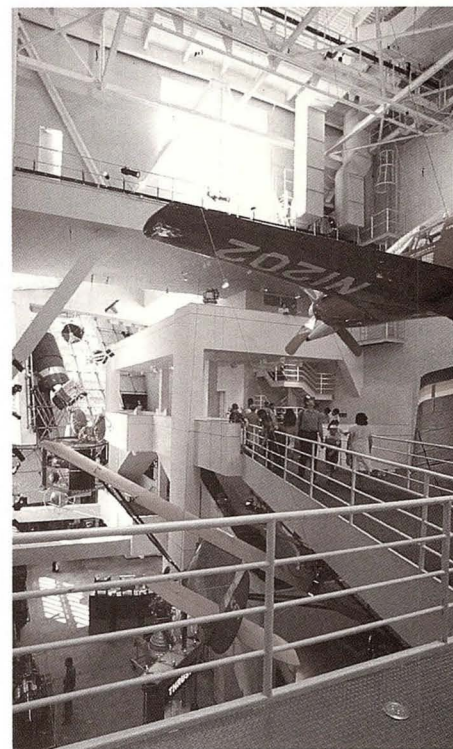
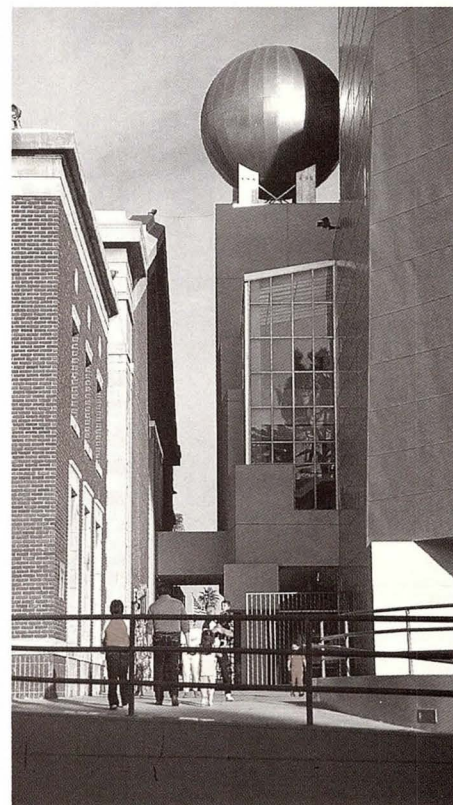
Courtesy Frank O. Gehry & Assoc.

talism of the fin-de-siecle museum era more than the conquest of the air, let alone space.

Gehry's building, in contrast, is constructivist in feeling, appropriating at least metaphorical interpretations of the enigmatic rational structures of the industry it celebrates. But it is a baroque constructivism, the original touched up by the mystical decorator, and that is what makes it architecture. It is much more than a simple evocation of a TRW test facility.

The interior denies the double volume expressed externally. It is a large single volume that successfully sustains the feeling of a "real" aerospace building. Spotlights, soaring footbridges and brilliant white gantry ceilings fill the view as one enters the 80-foot-high volume at second-floor level. All around are planes, space probes and satellites casually slung throughout on fine cables shackled in a rudimentary way to the trusses and gables. The volume is complicated by extension into the lurching polygon of the west end of the building. That end is closed by a giant inclined space frame in blue and gold behind which one may see a nine screen slide show, "Windows on the Universe," written by Ray Bradbury.

Most of the jolly didacticism endemic to the Museum of Science and Industry campus is reserved for exhibits on the ground floor ("design your own plane," "check today's weather satellite picture of your home town," "navigation explained," and the like), some enhanced by bright pop art cases, others



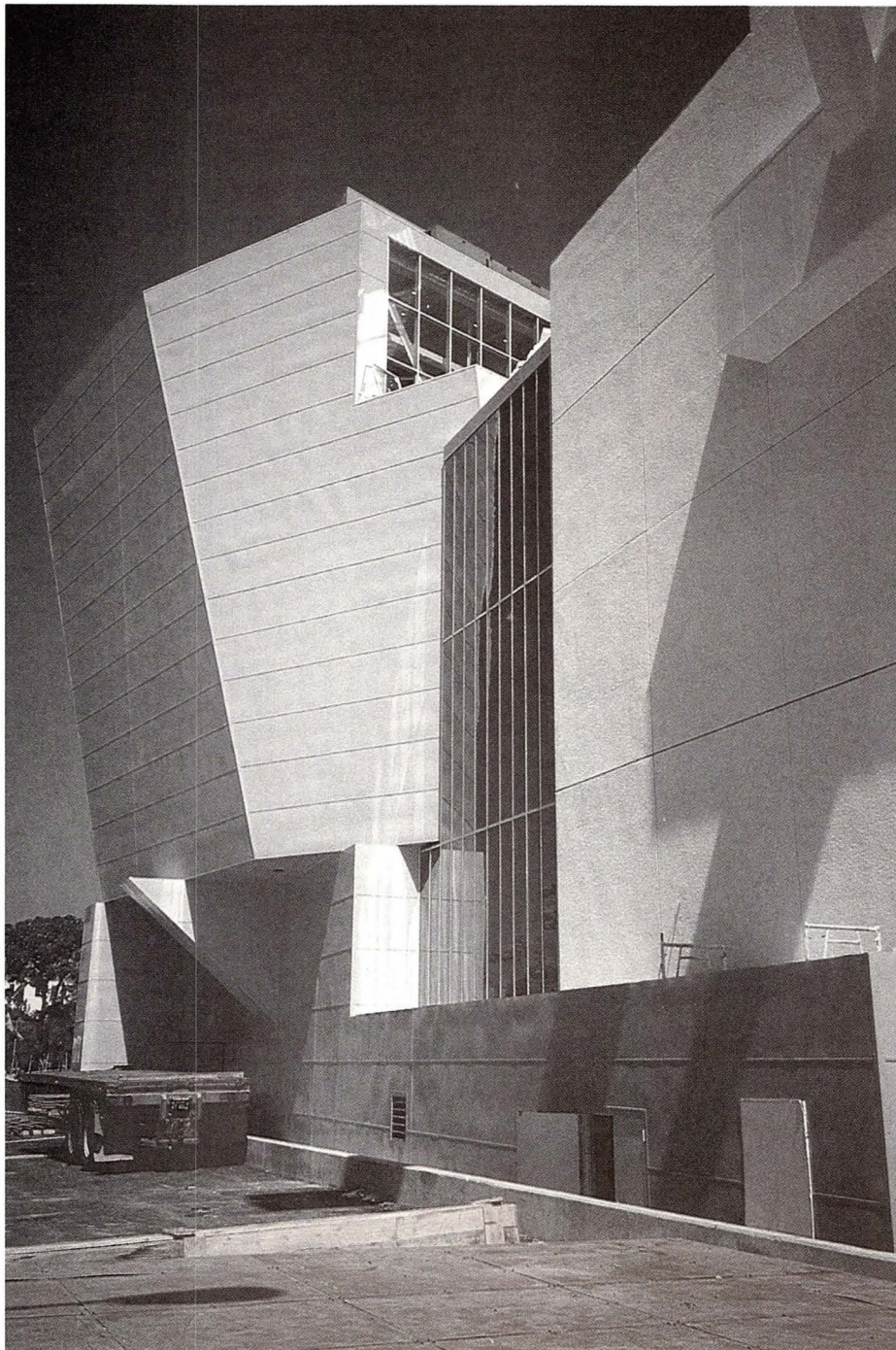
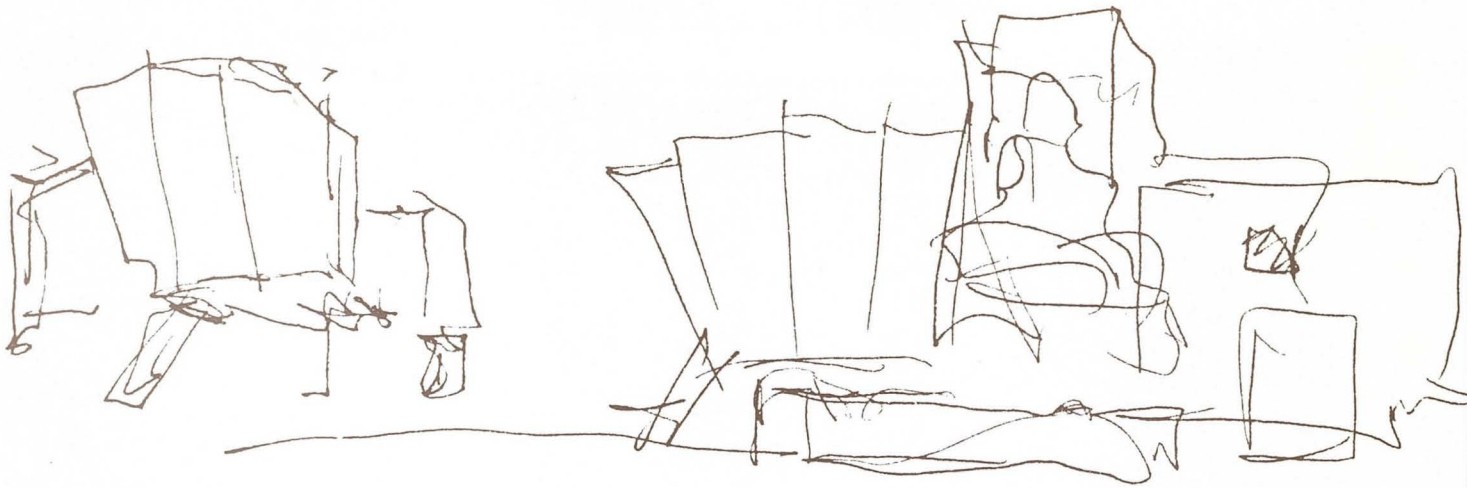




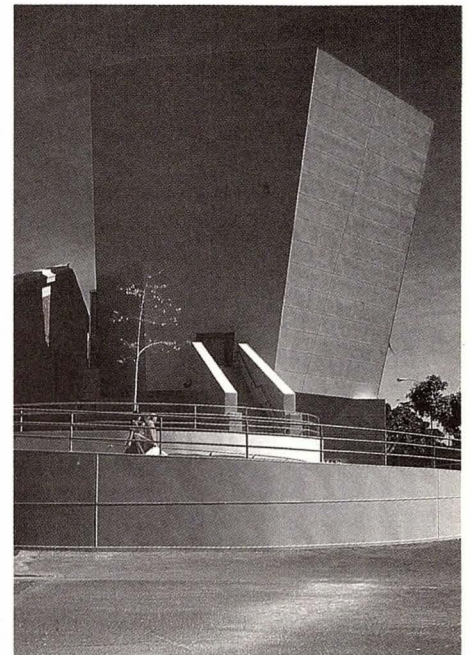
▲  
**Diagonal elements contribute energy to the design.**

Courtesy Frank O. Gehry & Assoc.





▲  
**Design study by Frank Gehry**



▲  
**A view of the cantilevered metal polygon at the west end of the structure; the entry ramp encircles its base.**

Michael Moran

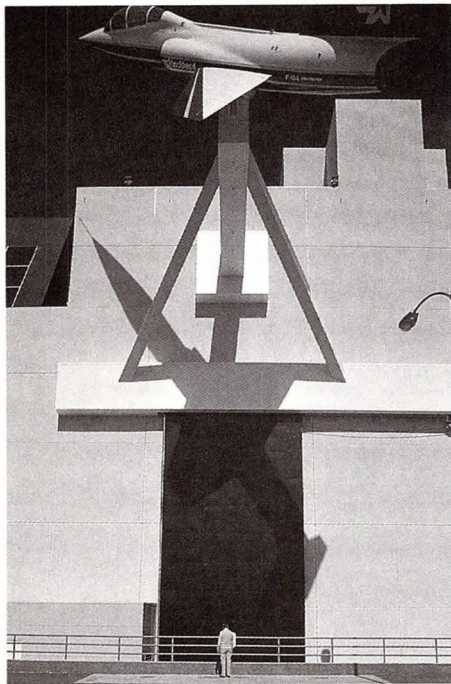
◀  
**Horizontal detailing of vertical masses adds to the tension and counterpoint of the building as a whole.**

Courtesy Frank O. Gehry & Assoc.

mounted on casually distributed bright yellow dollies of the sort found in aircraft factories.

Graphics are minimal, largely confined to backlit image-text collages explaining what is suspended beyond, in the void of the building. Many interactive exhibits have been provided by aerospace industry suppliers, yet the exhibit as a whole has far less of a moralizing



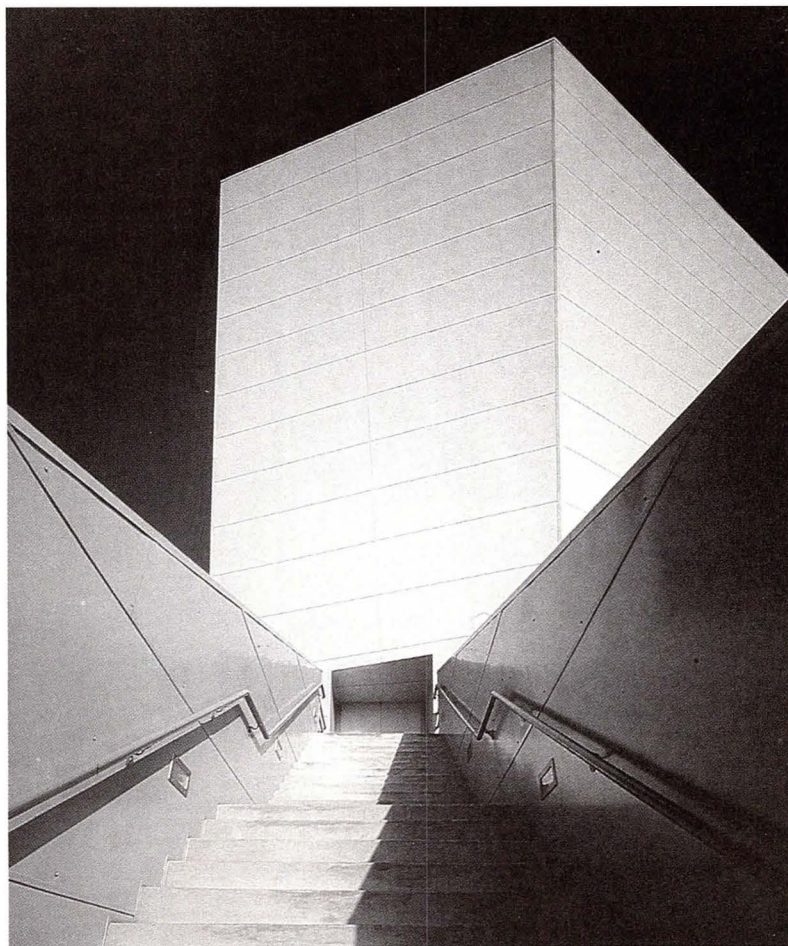


► **When given a human reference point, the scale of the building comes immediately into focus.**

Michael Moran

► **At the head of the stairs, the painted galvanized steel polygon cuts a dramatic silhouette.**

Timothy Hursley



world's fair/miracle-of-science feeling than those in the complex's other museums. The device of suspending the actual planes and satellites pell-mell in the industrial void of the building actually undermines the narrative thread beloved of exhibit designers. Instead, the jostling biplanes and space probes, the lanky space shuttle arm, and the iridescent photovoltaic arrays fill the whole field of vision from every level of the viewing platforms that wrap the elevator tower. Although suspending planes is nothing new, Gehry has appropriated the exhibits as architectural ornament, a necessary and correct counterpoint to his industrial volume. The effect is of a heady entanglement between the raw constructivism of the building and the unintentional decorative perfection of the exhibits. The crude practicality of the building's details, for example, the roughly welded stairs linking levels is contrasted with the shimmering, complex curves of a supersonic airframe or the abstract enigma of a space satellite seen at close range. The aesthetic experience is powerful. A sense of wonder about flight and space exploration is achieved without recourse to literal explanation. Gehry fulfilled a constructivist ideal of absorbing and transforming the decorative qualities of the exhibits by placing them in a setting that strongly evokes their origins, the unadorned workshops and hangars of the industries that gave birth to them.

Ironically, the aesthetic success of this juxtaposition eclipses the traditional purposes of technology museums: the uplifting chronology of technical achievement. Instead of marvelling at facts and figures, one marvels at the

artless beauty of the hardware, products of a special culture with strong roots in Southern California. Art defeats education.

In summary, it is tempting to suggest that Gehry's achievement is to have orchestrated a subversion of the traditional concept of a museum. This is a fine instance of what Reyner Banham calls Gehry's "socially provocative use of disorder." The origins of the museum lie, after all, in archaeology and natural history, with their inherent obsession with order and taxonomy. The haphazard effect of the exhibits suspended in the soaring volume of the unconventional building effectively defeats the museum's traditional task of homogenizing and ordering. Furthermore, it thwarts the sense Theodor Adorno called "museal"; objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying, owing their preservation more to historical respect than to the needs of the present. In Gehry's museum the objects are immediate and relevant components of the general aesthetic, supported by the counterpoint of the building's pragmatic detailing, the equipment dollies, the industrial bric-a-brac. In this setting, it is the slick, educational exhibits that feel out of place. Somehow they belong to the world of publicity, they cannot stand up to the actuality of the planes themselves. But it is a perfect setting in which to

show the aircraft and satellites because it is a natural setting that can be forgotten. The whole hall is like a diorama, using distortion to create an illusion which heightens our experience of the exhibits.

The great strength of Gehry's museum is that with modest resources (\$4 million) but with great intelligence and sensitivity it has much to say about the idea of "museum," and it does so by capturing and putting to work the very practicality and the everyday concerns of the technical enterprise it celebrates. Contrast it with Piano + Rogers' Centre Pompidou, in which the architecture triumphantly neutralized the culture it housed, or Stuttgart's Staatsgalerie, where James Stirling's unabashedly nostalgic evocation of a 19th century art museum becomes an armature onto which he winds his dazzling architectural whimsy. For all their rhetoric these examples have more to say about architecture, less about the cultural idea of museum. Gehry's achievement is a work of architecture that manages to do both, executed in the familiar repertory of ordinary construction technology, which in this case makes an essential comment on California's living aerospace industry.

**Andrew Rabeneck** is a studio director at Kaplan/McLaughlin/Diaz.



A black and white close-up portrait of a man with dark, curly hair and a thick mustache. He is wearing dark sunglasses with a thin, light-colored frame. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on his face and hair against a dark background.

A face is like a work of art.  
It deserves a great frame.

Designers and collectors of limited edition frames for sunglasses and prescription eyewear.

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Face: Eugene Jardin. Hair: Teddy Antolin. Makeup: Alphonso Noe for Cloutier/L.A. Photographer: Greg Gorman. © 1984, l.a. Eyeworks, Los Angeles, CA 90046.

Circle Number 16 On Reader Inquiry Card.





◀ *The Jesus Corner,*  
mixed media envi-  
ronment, 1982.

**Kienholz** continued from page 55

is placed on a metal approximation of a sidewalk, which serves also as a kind of low pedestal for this piece, making it seem a more detached environment. This extension of physical space is analagous to Kienholz' incorporation of significant items into each tableau which relate certain particulars of place and time. It heightens the authenticity of the environment, and integrates the disparate elements into a more unified whole while retaining the sense of detached objectivity. In regard to the exhibition in Spokane, these articles are invested with considerable poignancy, humor and pathos which is peculiar to both the derivation of the objects contained in the work and the site in which the works were first shown. The Touchstone Center, an artist-run exhibition space housed in a warehouse, is surrounded by tenement hotels not unlike the original Pedicord Hotel—which was only a few blocks away. It was as if one had wandered by mistake into a hostelry instead of a gallery. One item in *Night Clerk* caught my eye—it was a cabcompany promotional calendar, with the printed address of the firm located literally around the corner from the gallery. On another calendar the notation "Fire Inspection" is scribbled on the date of December 3, which happens to be the day the original Young Hotel was destroyed by fire. (The note was added by Kienholz.)

An element of confusion and misinterpretation tends to surround some of Kienholz' work, as to whether the critical message of the work is invested in those human figures incorporated in the installation, for example, as conveyed by the human predicaments in *Sollie 17*; or directed at them, as seems apparent in *The Art Show*. This has led to Kienholz having to articulate his intentions in descriptive captions or essays in exhibition catalogs—the brochure catalog for "Human Scale" features a lengthy and detailed accounting, written by Ed Kienholz, of the reasons and the processes

underlying the formulation of the "Spokane Series." In accepting these statements as authentic social concerns, the issue of ridicule, scorn or moral disapproval that seems directed at the members of a circumspect social order—the down-and-outers that populate the "Spokane Series"—is deflected. Despite that, Kienholz' works remain emphatically moralistic.

In the aggregate, the "Spokane Series" addresses voyeurism and intrusion—the prying into lives or lifestyles by others unassociated with the social strata represented in these works. It is a kind of social intercourse that seems improper—what end is served by the poking around in other people's lives? Curiosity? Sociology or cultural anthropology? "Sollie," the elderly gent seen in triplicate caged in his tiny flophouse room, or the bored desk monitor in *Night Clerk at the Young Hotel*, might be regarded as specimens of a particular social register. But while it is easier to condemn the artist for his initial intrusion, it is harder perhaps to accept that Kienholz has turned the viewer into the voyeur. That makes a work like *Pedicord Apts.*, the largest yet most austere work in the show, the most insidious, for the viewer enters into the hallway of apartment doors and leans against each, surreptitiously overhearing the (tape-recorded) sounds of domestic life and strife within. Though the approach of the viewer is invited, access is denied—physical or psychic barriers prevent entry, so one is ultimately forced to stand apart from the work and gaze or listen uncomfortably back towards it.

This same disturbing sense of peering into lives is extended to Ed Kienholz' own mother, as she is presented in the compact, poignant *Portrait of a Mother with Past Affixed Also* (1980-81) the one large piece that is not aligned with the "Spokane Series;" and to *The Jesus Corner*, a curious fragment of a former storefront decorated in the window with a sincerely quaint, delapidated religious shrine, and behind the door stuffed with all

kinds of detritus. *Portrait of a Mother* is Kienholz' least declamatory piece—it does not exclaim the stridency for which Kienholz is known nor does it relentlessly recapture a given social situation. It is an homage, pure and not so simple. Enconced in a compact scale house that approximates her present rural living quarters, and surrounded by mementos of a lifetime, the figure that is Ed Kienholz' mother holds in her hands a framed photo of herself as a child, with doll's arms reaching back towards her own framed, photographed face. In this exchange of gazes, decades pass as the viewer confronts his or her own reflection in the mirrored back wall of the tiny room—one's own visage as the image of mortality. (The use of the photograph in the Kienholzes' work is another relatively unexplored issue—Nancy Kienholz is the primary contributor of this element which includes not only the portrait heads and faces but also the exterior views seen through the windows of *Sollie 17* and *Portrait of a Mother*. However, Ed Kienholz has continually used photographs as objects within his environments, often as cues to the meaning or import of the piece.)

The social and moralistic themes that course through these new works have their basis in previous productions by Kienholz, now enveloped in a newer or specific context but touching upon the same set of fundamental concerns. The new work reveals that these themes are capable of re-generation and the re-investment of meaning. In addition, the power to convey a complex social message in economical form is not subsumed by the mass of detailed and obsessive minutiae that is a hallmark of Kienholz' craft. The large installations, especially, are remarkable feats of craftsmanship, ingenuity and engineering. But it is all meant to heighten, rather than disguise, the central premise of the artists' work—that of humanism, integrity and no small degree of righteousness.

**Ron Glower**



PARTING SHOT

PHIL GARNER

### On the Horns of a Dilemma

Artist/inventor Phil Garner poses the eternal question with his *Schnabelisk*. Is the darling of the New York art world a prophet? Or is his work just a bunch of crockery? Photograph by Tim Street-Porter, courtesy of Functional Art Gallery, Los Angeles.

