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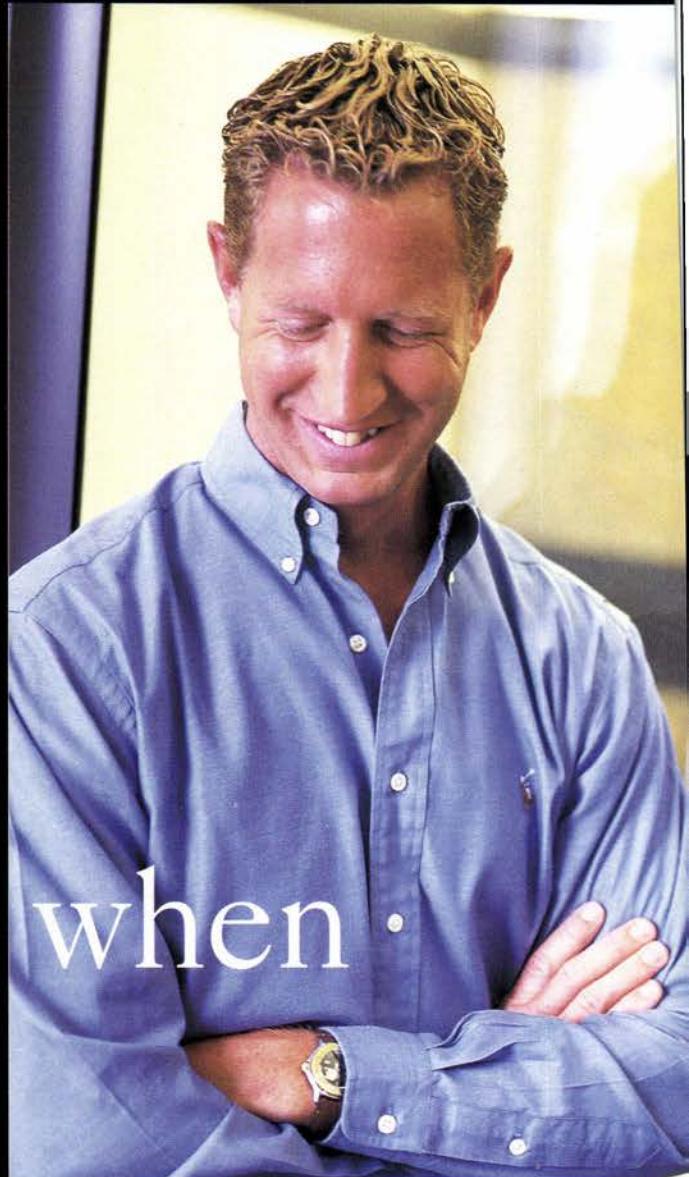


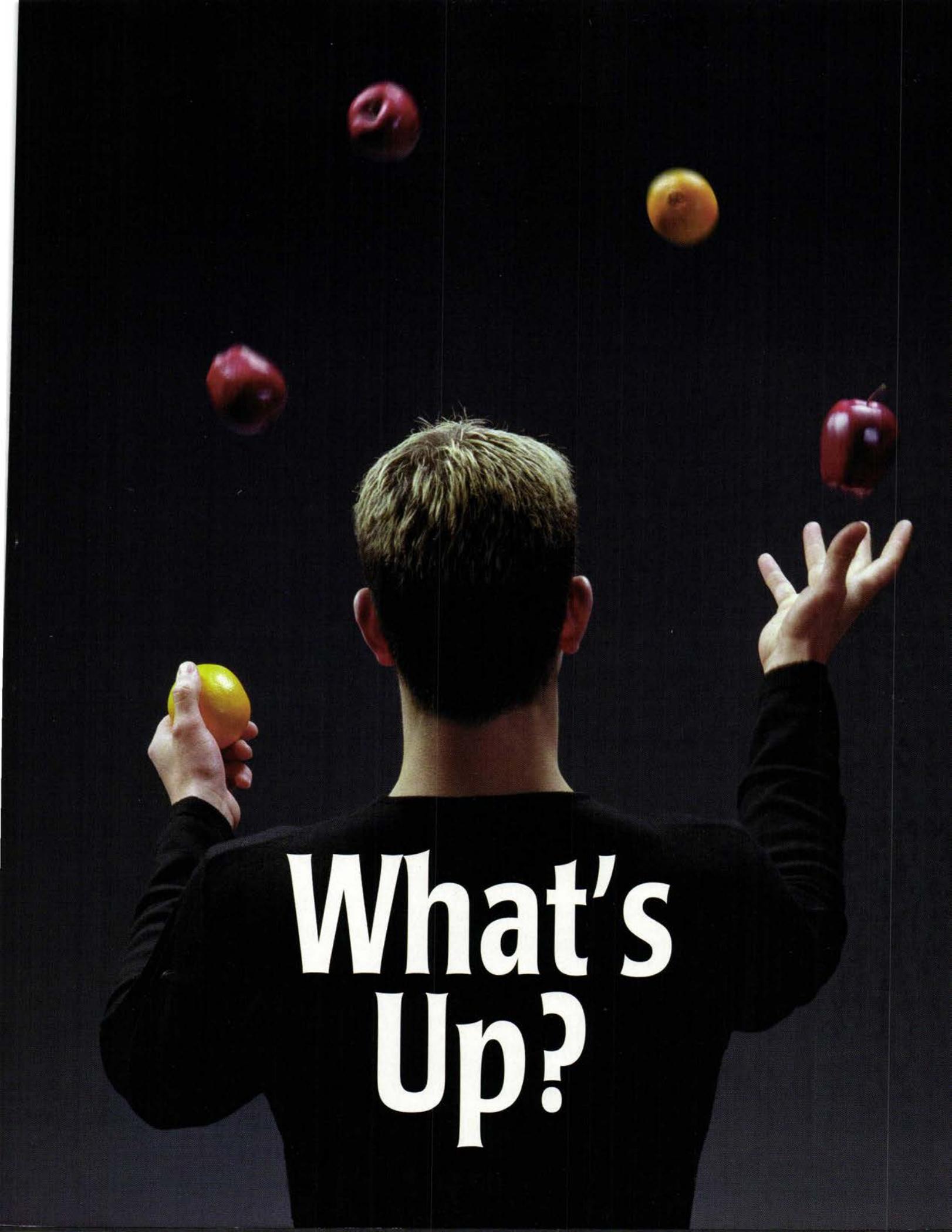
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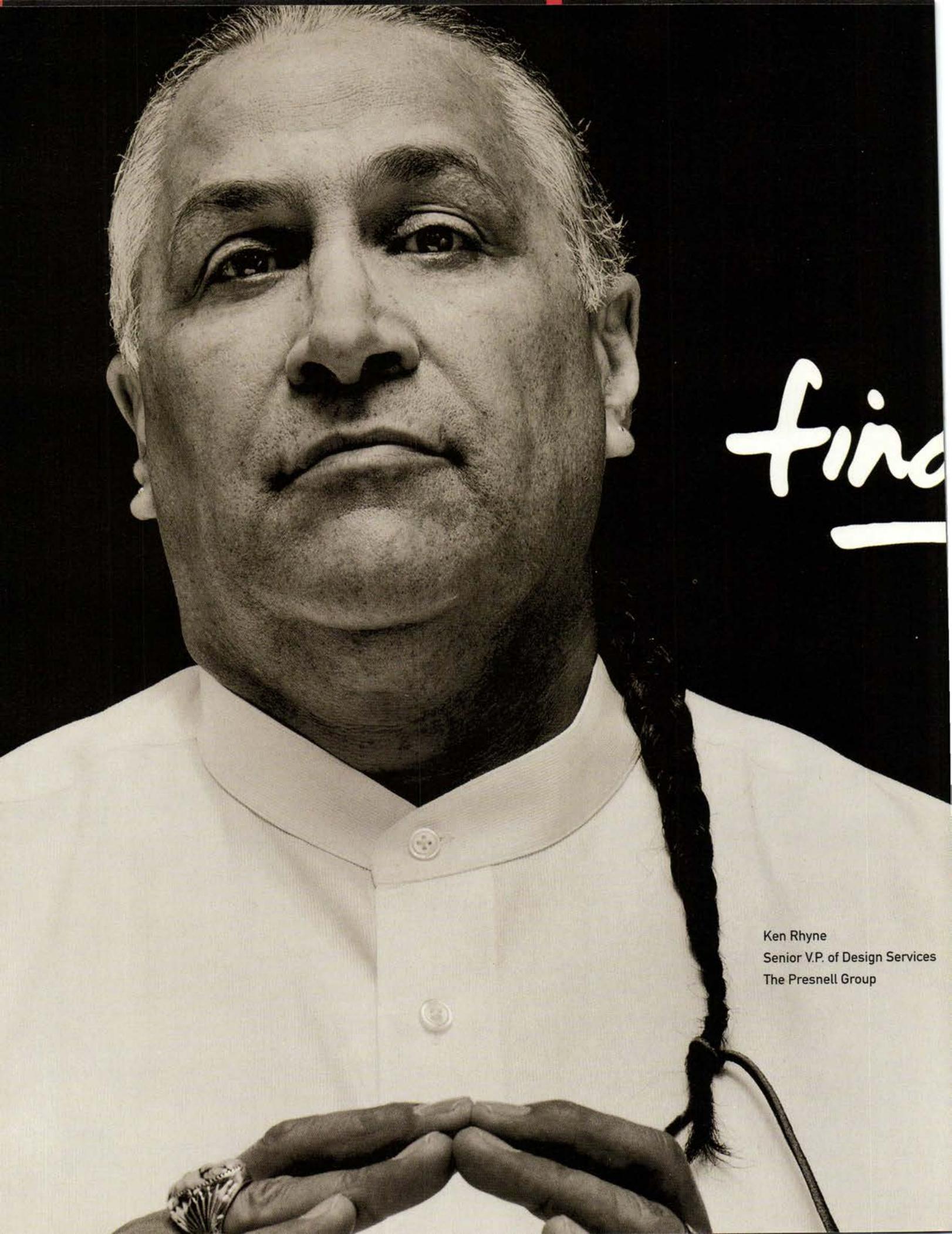
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Up?

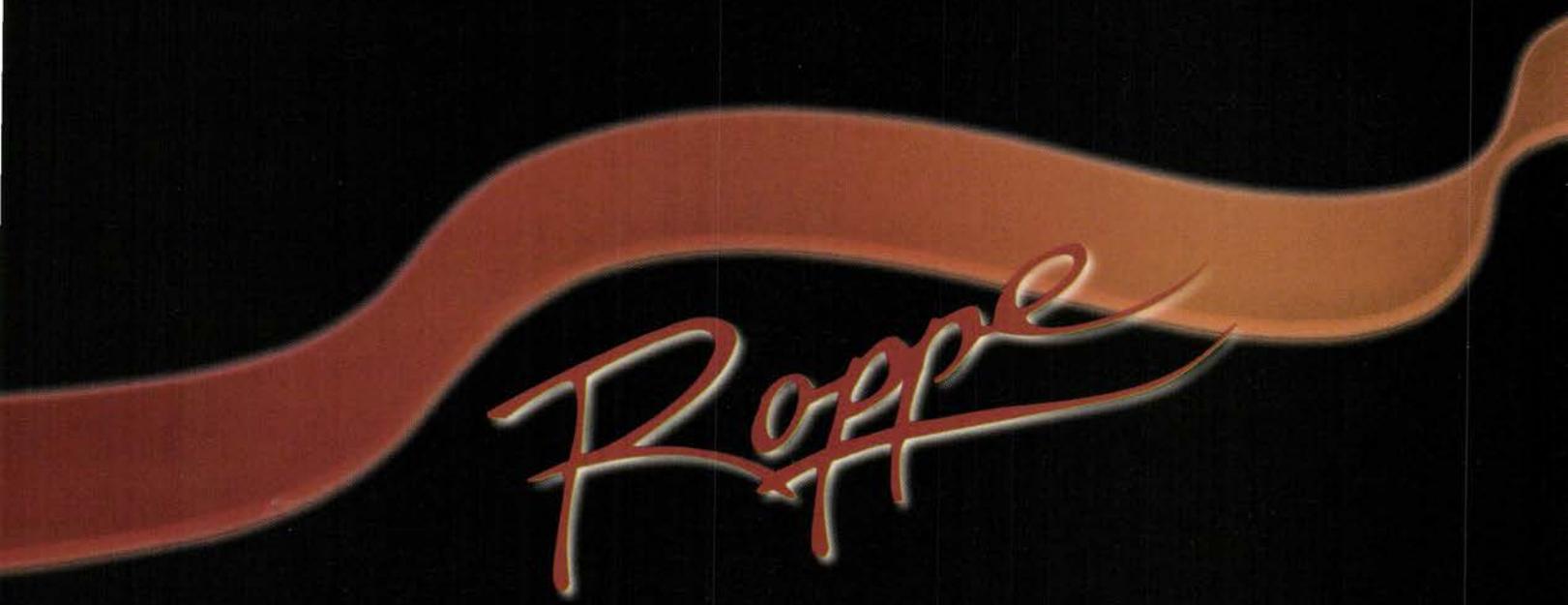


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# Architectural Record

14  
Contributors

17  
Editorial

23  
Letters

120  
Ad Index

128  
Protest

## NEWS

- 25  
**AIA's Web Adventure Flounders**  
Weissenhof, Long Island?; Presidential Award winners announced; Olympic Village way behind; new school construction looks like smart growth?; and more. *Edited by Anthony Mariani*

- 35  
**Calendar**

- 36  
**On the Boards**  
City Hall in Alphen aan den Rijn, the Netherlands, by Erick van Egeraat Associated Architects.  
*By Anne Gulley*

## PRACTICE

- 39  
**Pretty Cool for a School**  
Edison Schools, a for-profit company which runs public schools, is redesigning the classroom. Is this what the future of education looks like?  
*By Lawrence W. Cheek*

- 46  
**The Green Machine**  
Most clients don't know—or care—about sustainable architecture. But the Chesapeake Bay Foundation is no ordinary client. *By Bradford McKee*

## CULTURE

- 53  
**Architecture's Muse**  
Three books and an exhibition raise questions about the role of technology in modern architecture.  
*By Jane Morley*

- 56  
**Revival of the Fittest**

During the 1970s, architectural discourse thrived. What does contemporary architecture owe to those early debates? A dialogue among Michael Hays, Jeffrey Kipnis, Brendan Moran, and Liane Lefaivre

- 60  
**De-Bunkered**

Peter Noever of Vienna's MAK Center for Architecture recycles a Nazi anti-aircraft tower into a contemporary art gallery. *By Liane Lefaivre*

February 2001

## DESIGN

### 65 Parking Structure

### 66 Wolf Architecture

Disney Resort, Guest Parking Structure, Anaheim, California  
*By Joelle Byrer*

### 76 A Brief History of Parking

From Main Street to megastructures, and back again.  
*By Jane Holtz Kay*

### 80 Murphy/Jahn with Heinle, Wischer & Partner

Parkhaus 2 and Parkhaus 3, Cologne/Bonn Airport, Germany  
*By Anne Guiney*

### 88 No Exit

In 1960s and 1970s action movies, the inner city was a dangerous place, and parking garages even more so. *By Deane Simpson*

### 90 Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture

Center Street Park and Ride, Des Moines, Iowa; Melrose Avenue Parking Facility, Newton Road Parking and Chilled Water Facility, North Campus Parking and Chilled Water Facility, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa  
*By Anne Guiney*

### 104 The Biggest Closet in the House

People keep a lot of stuff in their garages—even cars.  
*Photographs by Jason Fulford*

### 108 Brian Healy Architects

Lincoln Street Garage, Boston. *By Elizabeth Padjen*

### 114 Long-Term Parking

An excerpt from the 1959 novel *Mrs. Bridge*, set in a wealthy Midwestern suburb. *By Evan S. Connell*

### COVER AND TABLE OF CONTENTS

Artist Doug Aitken made a series of photographs for this issue. The cover (and flip book beginning on page 65) was photographed at the Worldway Postal Center parking garage at Los Angeles International Airport, with model Kammy Lennox at the wheel; the table of contents picture was taken at the Century Plaza Towers parking garage in Los Angeles's Century City.

### NEXT ISSUE

An Environmental Portrait: Eric Owen Moss in Culver City  
When Cities Secede  
How the Bush Administration May Change Your Life

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Architecture®  
(vol. 90, no. 02), publication number ISSN 0746-0554, is published monthly by BPI Communications, Inc., 770 Broadway, New York, NY 10003. Postmaster, please send changes of address to Architecture, P.O. Box 2063, Marion, OH 43305-2063.

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# A Dramatic Tower in the Heart of Riyadh

The landmark, multi-use Al Faisaliah complex is situated in the heart of Riyadh's most prestigious commercial district. It towers majestically over the city, a monument to the King Faisal Foundation's philanthropic, cultural, and asset-management goals. The complex is multifunctional, comprising a shopping mall, a five-star hotel, business offices, luxury apartments and a conference center. Mitsubishi Elevators and Escalators provide designated services to each of the functional zones in the center. Five high-speed elevators with 25-passenger capacity cars transport people to the top floor for a panoramic view of the horizon, while 52 regular elevators cover the floors in between and 20 escalators move shoppers through the mall floors.

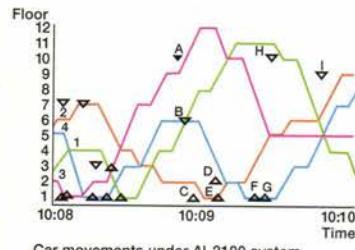


Entrance to the Al Faisaliah Center, Riyadh's new landmark.



Elevator halls and cars are finished in luxurious designs.  
20 Mitsubishi escalators move customers through the shopping mall.

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# Architectural Record

12  
Contributors

15  
Editorial

27  
Letters

114  
Ad Index

126  
Protest

## NEWS

29

### A Eulogy for Morris Lapidus

Dome, dome on the range; Aaron Betsky headed to the NAI; Architects, planners blamed for India quake deaths; Damn It, Janet, *Rocky Horror*'s back; and more. *Edited by Anthony Marani*

39

### Calendar

43

### On the Boards

Chinati Foundation House in Marfa, Texas.  
*By Anne Guiney*

## PRACTICE

45

### Cabinetmaker

The Bush administration and its policies will change the business of architecture. But will it be a change for better, or for worse? *By Jacob Ward*

50

### Old-School Rules

As suburban schools become larger and better maintained, historic urban schools are being abandoned. *By Bradford McKee*

52

### Five (or More) Degrees of Separation

NAAAB is reviewing degree nomenclature again—and the B. Arch. may soon be on the endangered list.  
*By Bradford McKee*

## CULTURE

57

### Beyond the Workaday Workplace

Hold on to your cubicles: Two new exhibitions review the history and future of the workplace.  
*By Peter Hall*

60

### The World According to Gursky

Photographer Andreas Gursky builds and unbuilds extraordinary views of the contemporary world. *By Kurt W. Forster*

64

### Breaking Up Is Hard To Do

Los Angeles disintegrates, Seattle threatens to come apart. Why are more and more cities facing the threat of secession? *By Christopher Hawthorne*

March 2001

e

## DESIGN

67

### Totalizing Environments

68

### The Victory of the Commons

David Salmela and Coen + Stumpf + Associates' Jackson Meadow finds freedom in homogeneity. *By Thomas Fisher*

78

### The Code Nouvel

In a new courthouse on the banks of the Loire, a terrible beauty is born. *By Anne Guiney*

84

### The Story King

Disney's new theme park in Anaheim tells a tale of California's history. *By Witold Rybczynski*

94

### Just Add Electricity

LOT/EK converts a cement mixer into a media-immersion tank. *By Peter Hall*

96

### The Concrete Picturesque

Tadao Ando orchestrates a sequence of set pieces on a Japan hillside. *By Tom Heneghan*

104

### Eric in Wonderland

With the completion of the Wedgewood Holly complex, Eric Owen Moss's fantastic urban vision for Culver City finally takes form. *By Joseph Giovannini*

#### COVER

Workers put the finishing touches on a false theater front at Disney's new California Adventure theme park in Anaheim. Photograph by Robert Polidori.

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Seashells line the surface of a pool at Tadao Ando's Yumebutai garden complex in Kobe, Japan. Photograph by Shigeo Ogawa.

#### NEXT ISSUE

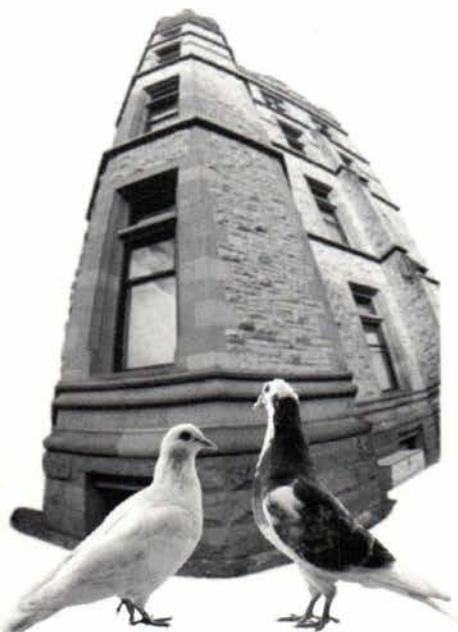
The 48th Annual Progressive Architecture Awards

The AIA's dot-com bomb Michael Sorkin on Joseph Rykwert's *The Seduction of Place*

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Architecture®  
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# October

17  
Editorial

26  
Letters

136  
Ad Index

148  
Protest

## NEWS

35

### Learning from Washington's Quake

Viewers help *Today* show build house; Chicago landmarks its major avenue; Venice combats flooding (really!); The Wall gets a neighbor; and more.

*Edited by Anthony Mariani*

### 53 Calendar

54

### On the Boards

Hamlin Chapel and Library in Hamlin, Pennsylvania, by Karen Bausman + Associates. By Anne Guiney

## PRACTICE

57

### Mixed Parentage

The Lake Superior Center fired its architects, Holt Hinshaw, and replaced them with Hammel, Green and Abrahamson. In the end, whose building is it? By Bradford McKee

60

### The Outsider

Ken Brown came from General Electric to lead SOM into the future. Less than two years later, he was gone. By Jacob Ward

64

### Underworld

New York's City Hall subway station is a beautifully preserved landmark. Trouble is, no one's allowed to see it. By Nathan Ward

## CULTURE

67

### Reynolds Wrap

Reynolds Metal Company's postwar aluminum demonstration housing is still gleaming after all these years. By Bradford McKee

70

### Gimme Shelter

One's home is one's castle—or missile silo, cat haven, tech fantasy, boat, or tree house. The film *Home Movie* profiles five eccentric homeowners. By Glen Helfand

72

### Seduced and Abandoned

In his latest book, *The Seduction of Place*, Joseph Rykwert expounds on what we love—and hate—about cities. By Michael Sorkin

April 2001

**Whether this was done by artists or architects doesn't change our apprehension of the work and how it gets us to think about the seasons. These are always odd kinds of boundaries to define.**

MARK ROBBINS ON PIERRE THIBAULT'S WINTER GARDENS

## DESIGN

83

### 48th Annual P/A Awards

By Raul A. Barreneche

86

### Skidmore, Owings & Merrill

Changi International Airport Terminal 3

92

### Mark Anderson and Andrew Zago

Detroit Community Pavilion

96

### Gil RAMPY Architect

Kentucky Heritage Center

102

### Estudio Teddy Cruz

Casa Familiar: Living Rooms at the Border

108

### Kolatah/MacDonald Studio

Raybould House and Garden

114

### Pierre Thibault, Architect

Winter Gardens

118

### Michael Bell Architecture

Glass HOUSE @ 2°

124

### Eric Sutherland and Kent Kleinman

Crosby Hall Accessible Route

128

### Vincent James Associates with Salmela Architect

Cable Natural History Museum

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

One of several components in Pierre Thibault's Winter Gardens project, in which 50 people spend an hour each evening lighting 2,000 candles on the frozen surface of a lake in Quebec.

#### COVER

A sample of the deliberations of the 48th annual P/A Awards jury, which met on January 11th and 12th, 2001.

#### NEXT ISSUE

How do you solve a problem like postmodernism?

Charles Jencks's new opus

The Charles Moore successor firms

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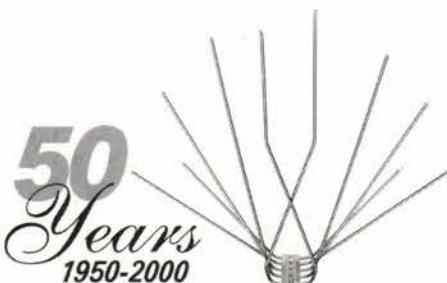
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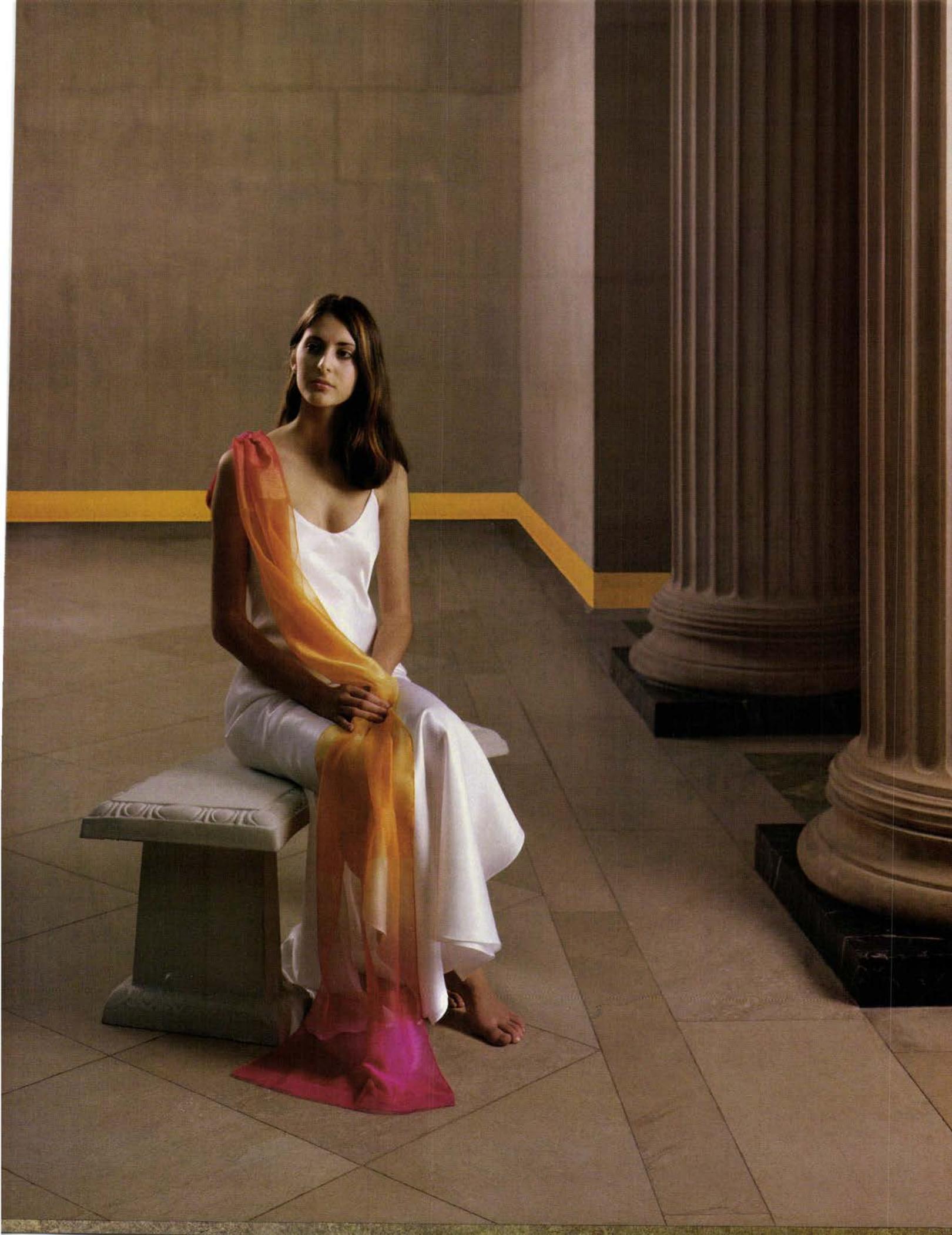
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# Architectural Record

23  
Editorial

26  
Letters

121  
Ad Index

129  
Specifications

136  
Protest

## NEWS

### 33 **SOM Hires New Chief**

Beijing to build new business district; Chicago rewrites its zoning laws—after 44 years; insurance rates rising for home builders; and more. Edited by Anthony Mariani

### 44 **Calendar**

### 46 **On the Boards**

Walker Art Center Expansion, Minneapolis, Minnesota, by Herzog & de Meuron (with Hammel, Green and Abrahamson). By Anne Guiney

## PRACTICE

### 49 **Quick, Build Us a School**

Money is tight, time is short, and schools are needed everywhere. Los Angeles and Las Vegas are each taking a very different approach to surviving the crisis. By Bradford McKee

### 54 **Rooftop Oasis**

Green roofs can breathe new life into American cities by lowering pollution, heating and air-conditioning costs, and even air temperature. By Alan G. Brake

### 57 **Steel This House**

A Los Angeles home is being converted into a gleaming, steel-clad antimicrobial testing facility. By Purcell Carson

## CULTURE

### 59 **Community Builders**

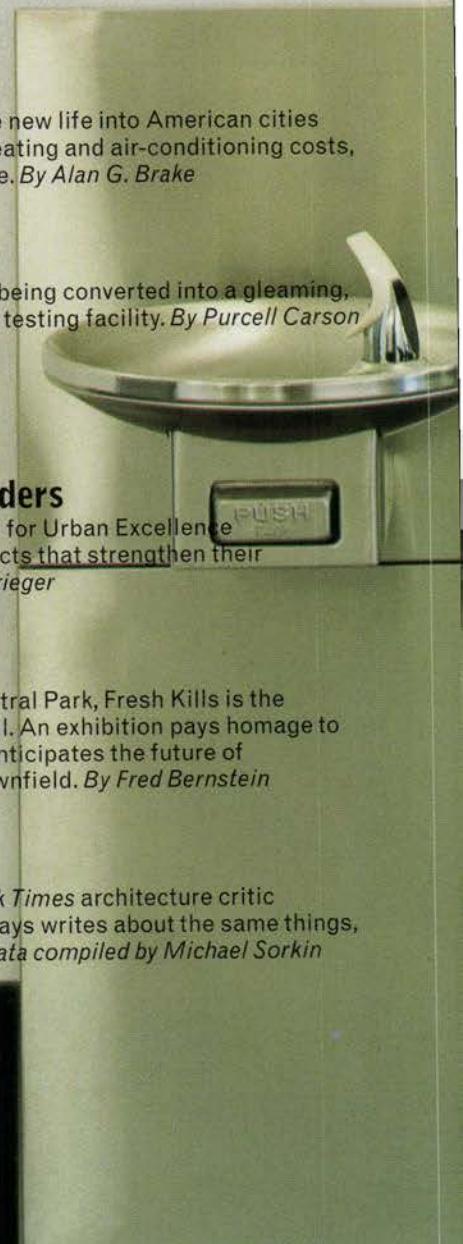
The Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence celebrates design projects that strengthen their communities. By Alex Krieger

### 62 **Talking Trash**

At twice the size of Central Park, Fresh Kills is the country's largest landfill. An exhibition pays homage to its recent closing and anticipates the future of New York's newest brownfield. By Fred Bernstein

### 64 **Herb's Content**

If it seems like *New York Times* architecture critic Herbert Muschamp always writes about the same things, it's because he does. Data compiled by Michael Sorkin



June 2001

## DESIGN

- 67  
**Is This Architecture?**

- 68  
**No More Pencils, No More Books**

No one's seen a school building quite like Erick van Egeraat's Ichthus College in Rotterdam.  
By Liane Lefaivre

- 74  
**Air Traffic Control**

The making of San Francisco Airport's International Terminal.  
By Jacob Ward

- 84  
**The Outer Light**

Artist James Turrell collaborates with Houston architect Leslie Elkins on a new Quaker meeting house.  
By Ned Cramer

- 90  
**Exceptionally Ordinary**

The "everyday architecture" of Deborah Berke's Yale University School of Art and New Theater.  
Reviewed by critics K. Michael Hays, Julie V. Iovine, and Gwendolyn Wright

102

### Mies Revisited

The Museum of Modern Art takes on the canonical modernist image of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.  
An interview with photographer Thomas Ruff and curators Terence Riley and Barry Bergdoll

#### COVER AND TABLE OF CONTENTS

Photographs by Victoria Sambunaris of Deborah Berke's Yale University School of Art and New Theater in New Haven.

#### NEXT ISSUE

In search of creativity:  
William McDonough + Partners

Studio Asymptote's office rebellion

Joseph Giovannini on R.M. Schindler

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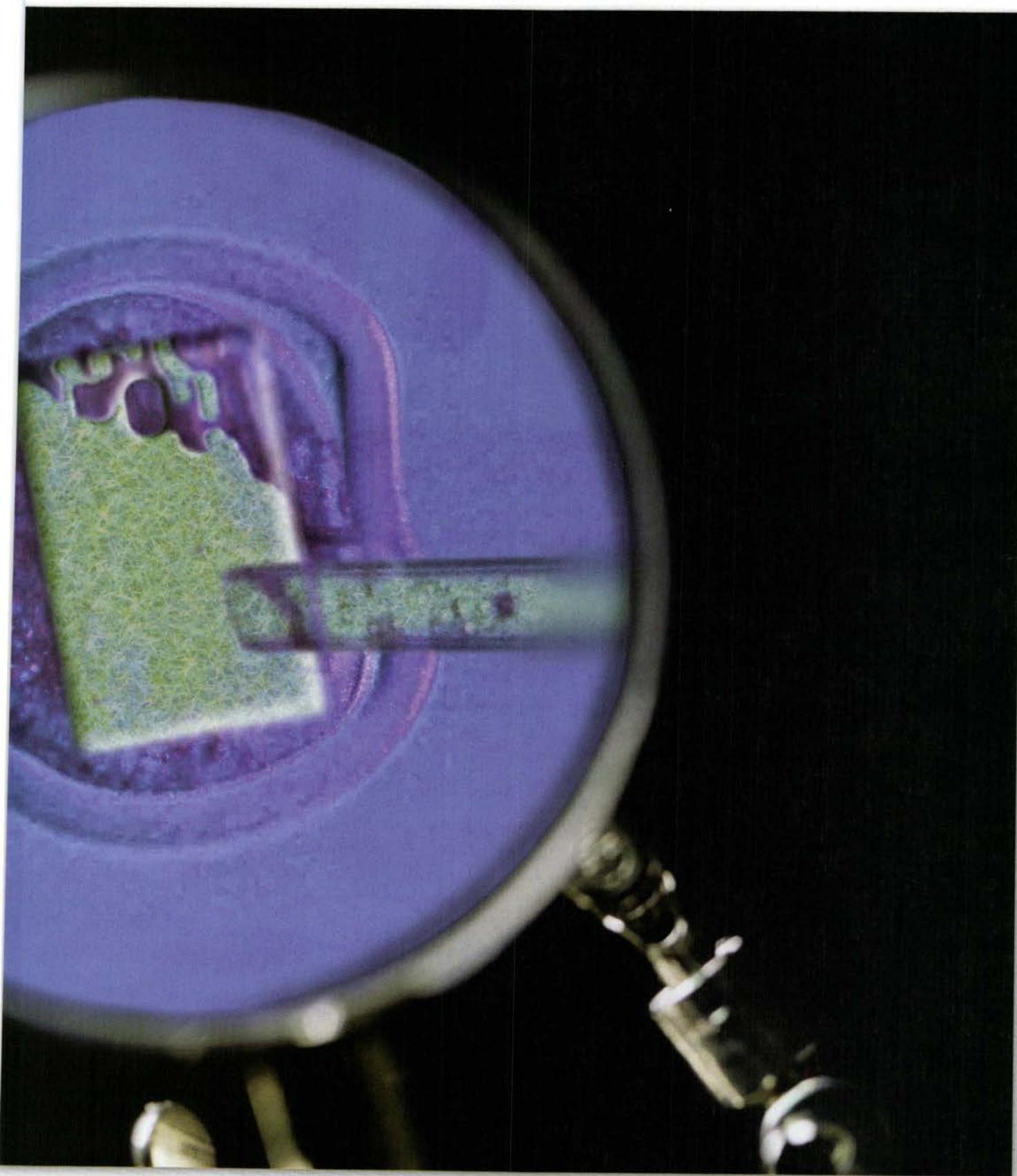
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# Architectural Record

13  
Editorial

25  
Letters

104  
Ad Index

109  
Specifications

116  
Protest

## NEWS

27

### Eleven Endangered Places

Follow the bouncing deans;  
AIA is in the red; Mies house saved;  
and more. *Edited by Anthony Mariani*

34

### Calendar

36

### On the Boards

Cornell University College of Architecture,  
Ithaca, New York, by Steven Holl Architects.  
*By Anne Guiney*

## PRACTICE

39

### The Business of Creativity

A new series on creative practice.  
Part 1: William McDonough + Partners  
*By Peter Hall*

44

### The Anywhere Company

Amazon's facilities strategy may signal the  
end of corporate architecture, and the beginning  
of leased anonymity. *By Daniel Cohen*

46

### Mission of Mercy

The National Park Service is looking to  
replace hundreds of modernist visitor centers.  
Are they worth saving? *By Fred Bernstein*

## CULTURE

49

### Modern Master

*The Architecture of R. M. Schindler* at  
the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary  
Art should have placed the architect in  
the modernist pantheon. Instead, it seems  
to have missed the point.  
*By Joseph Giovannini*

52

### The West-East Web Site

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture is about to  
launch Archnet, a Web site devoted to architecture  
in the Islamic world with strong links to the  
international academy. *By Richard Becherer*

54

### Out of Context

Artists James Casebere and Glen Seator  
dance around the barrier between visual art and  
architecture. Their work has a lot to say to  
practitioners of both arts. *By Brenden Hookway*

July 2001

## DESIGN

57

### Employees of the Revolution

58

### Unsentimental Education

A new school by Chilean architect Mathias Klotz doesn't talk down to its students. *By Anne Guiney*

66

### New Cube on the Block

Allied Works demonstrates that modernism, meticulously detailed, makes a good neighbor. *By Lawrence W. Cheek*

74

### Lines of Desire

Bernard Tschumi imparts his dynamic sense of order on a multimodal transit interchange in Lausanne, Switzerland. *By Joseph Giovannini*

80

### Plays Well With Others

How Stanley Tigerman became an ethicist, and other stories. *By Eric Frederickson*

88

### Commodity, Fitness, and Delight

Dominique Perrault exhibits perfect form in a Berlin sports complex.

94

### Office Revolution

Knoll's latest furniture system, designed by architects Lise Anne Couture and Hani Rashid of Asymptote Architecture, puts a new spin on the cubicle. *By Raul A. Barreneche*

#### COVER AND TABLE OF CONTENTS

Not your father's cubicle: The forthcoming A3 furniture system, designed for Knoll by New York City's Asymptote Architecture, seemingly breaks every convention of office layout thanks to its curvaceous footprint. Units can be specified with a variety of different components, such as paper trays (these pages). See story, page 94.

#### NEXT ISSUE

Mies mania

Frank Gehry at the Brandenburg Gate

L.A.'s mass-transit crusader

Volume 90 Number 7

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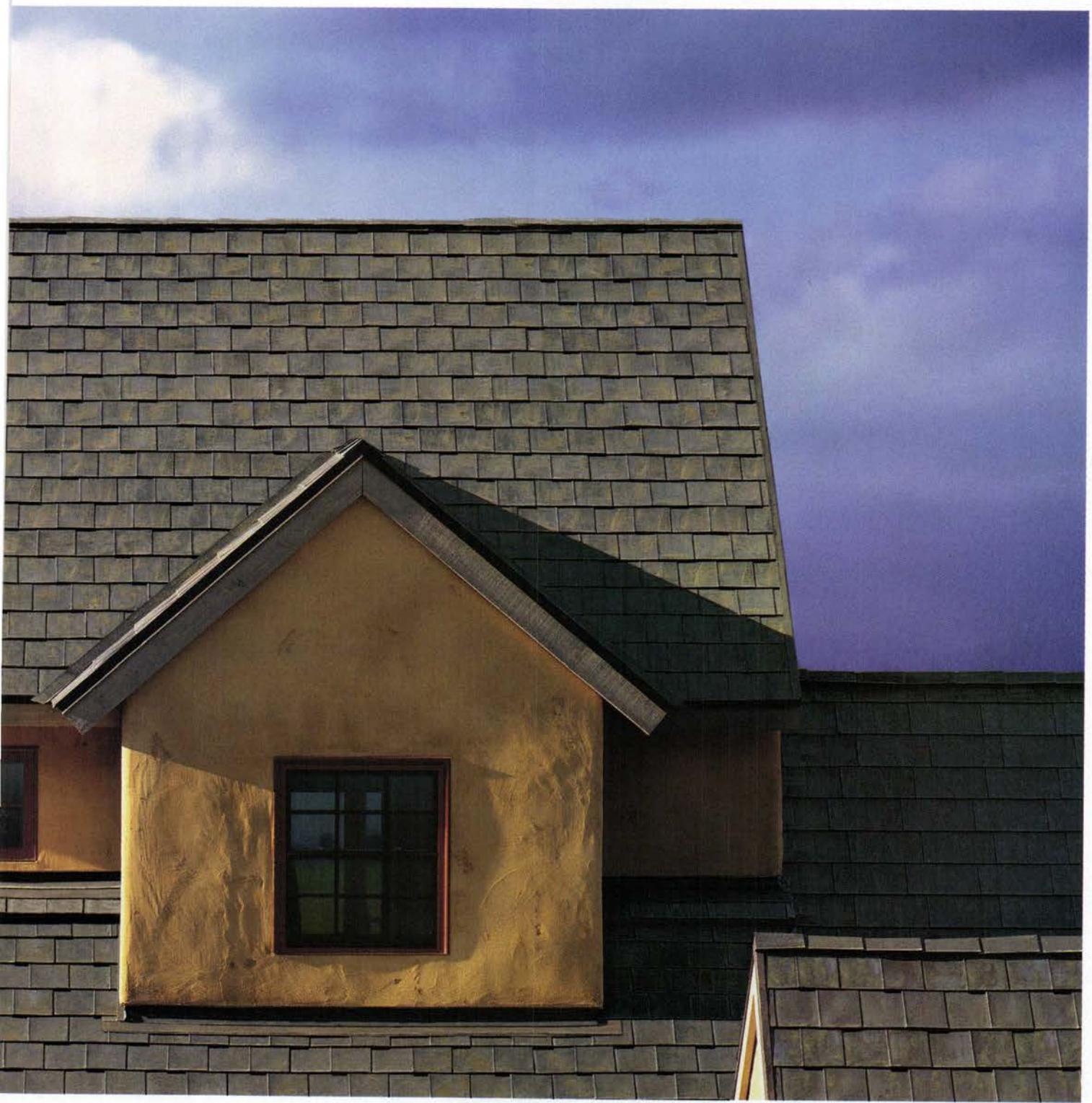


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# October

21  
Editorial

24  
Letters

112  
Ad Index

119  
Specifications

124  
Protest

## NEWS

29

### Leaning Tower Reopens

Savannah zoning laws in question; commercial real estate lending named as risk; Steven Holl, America's best architect?; and more.

*Edited by Sara Moss*

40

### Calendar

42

### On the Boards

Ojai Libbey Bowl, Ojai, California, by Thomas Hanrahan Victoria Meyers Architects; Nature's Theater, Saluda Shoals, South Carolina, by Resolution: 4 Architecture. By Anne Guiney

## PRACTICE

45

### Metro Crusader

One architect is winning her fight to bring high-speed buses to gridlocked Los Angeles. By Bradford McKee

50

### The Remote Printer

Reprography has transformed itself into a high-tech industry, and software companies are fighting to dominate it. By Jacob Ward

52

### Rooms by the Hour

Disney Imagineering is using specialized metal formwork to put up a "value resort" in record time. By Purcell Carson

## CULTURE

55

### The Mies Behind the Myth

Two blockbuster exhibitions reexamine the career of the modernist master. By Joan Ockman

58

### Back to Berlin

Remembering the opening of Mies's final, and finest, building, the New National Gallery. By Peter Blake

60

### And Rust to Rust

Photographer Ruth Dusseault documents the demolition of a steel mill closed in Atlanta to make way for new urban development. By Cathy Lang Ho

62

### Hog Heaven

MVRDV's Winy Maas has designed a skyscraper for pigs. By Liane Lefaivre

August 2001

## DESIGN

65

### Gehry in Berlin

66

### Inner Beauty

Straightjacketed by Berlin's strict design standards, Frank Gehry's DG Bank Building saves the spectacle for the inside.  
By Joseph Giovannini

78

### The Light Box

P/A Award-winner Andrew Zago builds a luminous pavilion in a Detroit park. By Anne Guiney

82

### How to Speak Australian

Ashton Raggatt McDougall's National Museum of Australia demonstrates the diversity of Aussie culture in built form.  
By Charles Jencks

92

### Face Value

Pugh + Scarpa invigorate industrial tradition amid the warehouses of Santa Monica's Bergamot Station.  
By Joseph Giovannini

96

### Weird Readers

A look inside the curious minds of Los Angeles architects Robert Mangurian and Mary-Ann Ray. By Ned Cramer

102

### Built on Faith

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir has a new home: a 21,000-seat, 1.1-million-square-foot conference center for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. By Aaron Betsky

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

The roof garden of Zimmer Gunsul Frasca's Salt Lake City conference center for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Photograph by Timothy Hursley. See story, page 102.

#### COVER

The roof of Andrew Zago's Greening of Detroit Pavilion, which comprises 576 PVC tubes supported on a steel frame. Photograph by Raimund Koch. See story, page 78.

#### NEXT ISSUE

How to design a digital-art museum

The battle over H. H. Richardson's Ames Library Zaha Hadid takes a ride

Volume 90 Number 8  
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# Architectural Record

19  
Editorial

20  
Letters

144  
Ad Index

155  
Specifications

164  
Protest

## NEWS

23  
**Vidler to Head Post-Hejduk Cooper**  
Freeport, Maine, says "no" to new downtown;  
Gehry is focus of environmental protest; James  
Stirling's archive moves to Canada; and more.  
*Edited by Sara Moss*

44  
**Calendar**

46  
**On the Boards**  
Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg, Sweden,  
by Brisac Gonzalez Architecture. *By Anne Guiney*

## PRACTICE

49  
**Livingstone's London**  
The first elected mayor of Britain's capital has a  
complicated—and controversial—vision of his city's  
future. *By Chris Nuttall*

54  
**Contingency Plan**  
A team of 23 architects and engineers came  
together to create business models for the year  
2020. The results are sobering. *By Jacob Ward*

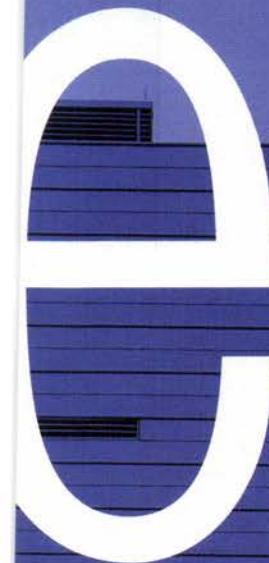
## CULTURE

71  
**The Next Generation**  
Eyebeam Atelier's proposed museum for digital art  
has architects vying to create the first new type of  
exhibition space since the middle of the last century.  
*By Peter Hall*

74  
**Strange Terrain**  
Five landscape architects take on the history  
and ecology of the San Francisco Bay Area.  
*By Glen Helfand*

76  
**Do Not Enter**  
The Waste Isolation Pilot Project nuclear dump in  
New Mexico poses a thorny problem: how to build the  
equivalent of a "keep out" sign that will last 10,000  
years. *By Tom Vanderbilt*

September 2001



## DESIGN

99

### Brave New Building

100

### A Mighty Fortress

Erdy McHenry's new headquarters for civil-rights champion the Southern Poverty Law Center stands tall in historically charged Montgomery, Alabama. *By Anne Guiney*



106

### Art and Empire

Vienna opens a vast new contemporary art complex by Laurids Ortner & Manfred Ortner in baroque master Fischer von Erlach's former imperial stables. *By Michael Z. Wise*

116

### Portfolio: Office dA

Four new interiors demonstrate the sophisticated, detail-oriented design philosophy of Boston's Office dA.  
*By Ned Cramer*

128

### Cool Jazz

Mack Scogin and Merrill Elam riff on historic New Orleans architecture in their design for a new dormitory at Tulane University. *By Lawrence W. Speck*

136

### Field of Motion

An intermodal transportation terminal by Zaha Hadid capitalizes on the haphazardness of its suburban Strasbourg setting. *By Joseph Giovannini*

## COVER AND TABLE OF CONTENTS

The clock on this month's cover, photographed by Robin Broadbent, is one of the battered relics of a 1983 firebombing that destroyed the Southern Poverty Law Center's earliest offices in Montgomery, Alabama. The organization just moved into new headquarters designed by architects Erdy McHenry, seen on these pages in a photograph by Timothy Hursley. Story on page 100.

## NEXT ISSUE

From myth to reality: the Great Library of Alexandria

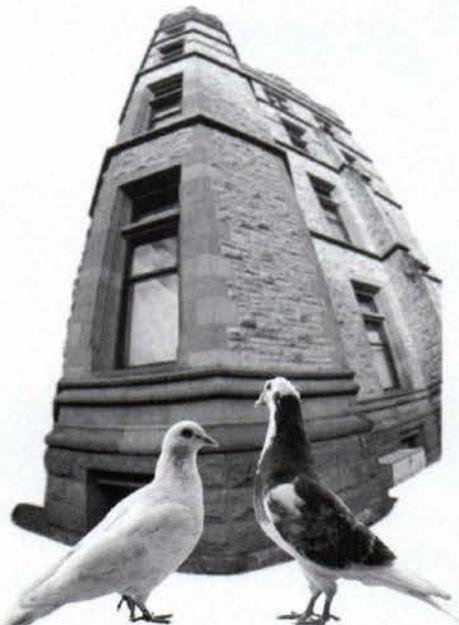
A special report on the untimely—and costly—demise of AEC systems

Germany's new synagogues

Volume 90 Number 9  
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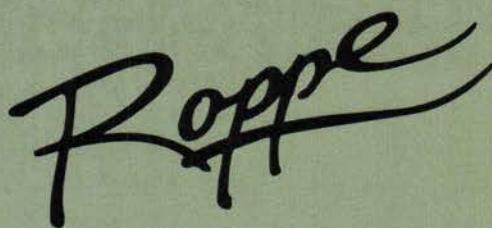
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# Architectural Record

25  
Editorial

30  
Letters

124  
Ad Index

131  
Specifications

136  
In Memoriam

## NEWS

### 35 **Architecture's Usual Suspects Dominate Design Awards**

U.S. Postal Service freezes construction; Mies's Crown Hall landmarked; SCI-Arc at a crossroads; and more. *Edited by Sara Moss*

### 46 **Calendar**

### 48 **On the Boards**

Holy Rosary Catholic Church, St. Amant, Louisiana, by Trahan Architects. *By Alan G. Brake*

## PRACTICE

### 51 **A SPECIAL REPORT Desperate Measures**

Just when things couldn't have seemed worse for the American Institute of Architects, a failed Internet venture pushed it to the brink of ruin. *By Bradford McKee*

## CULTURE

### 65 **Germany's New Synagogues**

The Jewish population of Germany has tripled since the fall of the Wall, raising the question, In what style should they build? *By Michael Z. Wise*

### 70 **Through the Looking Glass**

Photographer Erieta Attali finds the original spirit of glass architecture in a pavilion by Dan Graham. *By Eric Fredericksen*



October 2001

73

DESIGN  
SPECIAL ISSUE

## SNOHETTA'S ALEXANDRIA LIBRARY

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CHRISTIAN RICHTERS, AND  
MAX RODENBECK

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

The spherical planetarium at the Library of Alexandria. Photograph by Richard Barnes.

### COVER

The harbor of Alexandria, with the new library in the distance (at left). Photograph by Richard Barnes.

### NEXT ISSUE

Psst: Wanna buy some zoning?

Washington, D.C.'s memorials master plan  
Aldo Rossi's last works

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# ARCHITECTURE

15  
Editorial

26  
Letters

125  
Ad Index

127  
Specifications

132  
Protest

## NEWS

29

### Site Speculation at World Trade Center

Congress considers the CASA Act; Joe Rosa goes to SFMOMA; the Aga Khan committee names award winners; and more. *Edited by Sara Moss*

40

### Calendar

42

### On the Boards

Education Center at the Swaine Nature Preserve, Park City, Utah, by Prescott Muir Architects. *By Anne Guiney*

## PRACTICE

45

### Brother Against Brother

A proposed addition to H. H. Richardson's celebrated Ames Free Library has started a feud between two brothers. *By Elizabeth Padjen*

48

### The Everywhere People

For 50 years, a Florida company has quietly inspired 2,600 American cities to look alike. *By Jacob Ward*

## CULTURE

61

### Building the Wall

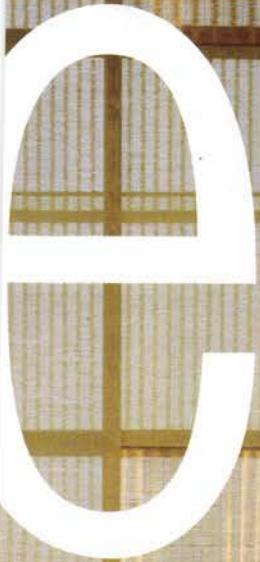
A famous unbuilt work by John Hejduk enters the real world with the posthumous completion of his Wall House in Groningen, the Netherlands.

*By Diane Lewis*

66

### Monumental Task

America's capital is in danger of being overwhelmed by our monumental impulses. A new master plan for Washington seeks to solve the problem of commemoration congestion. *By Jessica Dawson*



November 2001

## DESIGN

### 71 **Sacred Ground**

### 72 **Portfolio: Aldo Rossi**

The recent completion of the late Aldo Rossi's three final projects in the United States gives an opportunity to assess his far-reaching impact. *By Diane Ghirardo*

### 82 **Congregation of the Faithful**

The great age of ecclesiastical architecture is past, but, judging from the crowds flocking to a luminous minimalist church in Munich, contemporary religious buildings also have the power to move people. *By Joseph Giovannini*

### 92 **House of the Virgin**

Sometime in the 13th century, legend has it, angels transported the house of the Virgin Mary from Nazareth to the central Italian town of Loreto. As a devotional cult grew around the humble structure, so did an elaborate basilica complex designed by a peerless group of architects. *By Richard Ingersoll*

### 98 **Constant Change**

Eric Owen Moss's latest building in Culver City, the Stealth, transforms from a rectangle to a triangle over the course of 314 feet. *By Joseph Giovannini*

### 108 **Accounting for Taste**

Rodolfo Machado and Jorge Silvetti take (and give) pleasure in the severity of their new Utah Museum of Fine Arts. *By Ned Cramer*

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Roman Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart in Munich, designed by Allmann Sattler Wappner Architects, and photographed by Christian Richters.

### COVER

A relief carved by Niccolò Tribolo and Francesco di Vincenzo da Sangallo for the Renaissance marble casement surrounding the House of the Virgin Mary; it depicts the angelic transportation of the house from Nazareth to the town of Loreto, Italy. Photograph by Luciano Romano.

### NEXT ISSUE

2002 Construction Forecast  
Housing, Swedish-style  
Tadao Ando's U.S. debut

Volume 90 Number 11  
*Architecture®* (ISSN 0746-0554; USPS 009-880) is published monthly by Bill Communications, Inc., 770 Broadway, New York, NY 10003-9595. Copyright 2001 by Bill Communications, Inc. For subscriptions: Single copies: \$8.95. 1 year: \$59.00. Canada: 1 year: \$69.00. Foreign: 1 year: \$91.00. Allow 4-6 weeks. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canadian Post International Publications Mail Sales Agreement No. 40031729. Printed in the U.S.A.  
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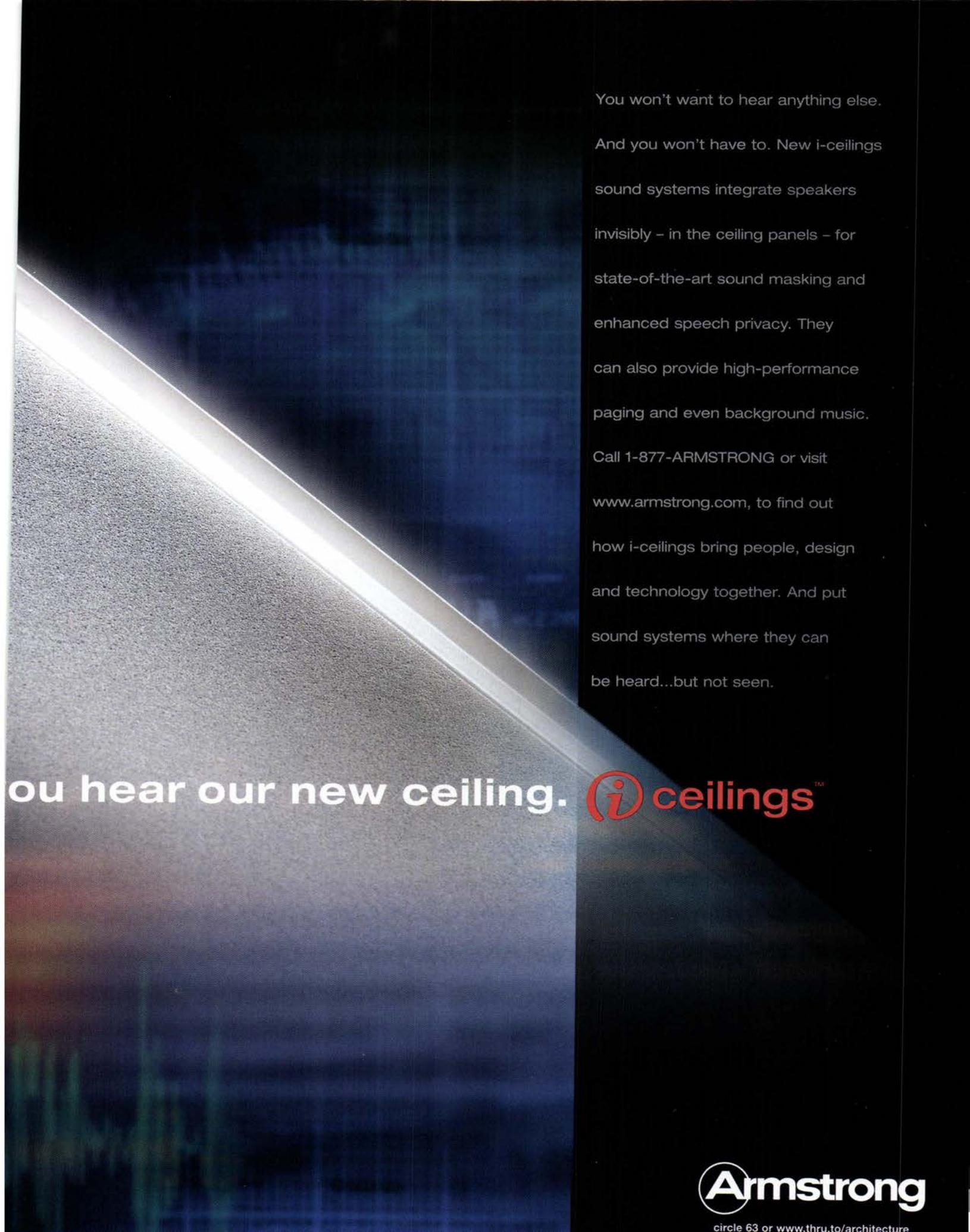
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15  
Editorial

17  
Letters

96  
Ad Index

99  
Specifications

104  
Protest

## NEWS

### 19 **100 Most Endangered, +1**

NAAB announces accreditation term change; liability insurance rates expected to rise in 2002; architects win copyright case.

*Edited by Sara Moss*

### 24 **Calendar**

### 26 **On the Boards**

Forum for Contemporary Art, St. Louis, by Allied Works Architecture. *By Anne Guiney*

## PRACTICE

### 35 **Global Arches**

The McDonald's Corporation designs and assembles its restaurants as scientifically as it does its food. *By Jacob Ward*

### 38 **And Now for the Bad News**

Our annual economic forecast looks gloomy, compared to the boom times we've had. *By Bradford McKee*

## CULTURE

### 43 **Eco City**

A housing expo in Malmö, Sweden, claims to be the "City of Tomorrow," but its vision is blurred.

*By Nicholas Adams*

### 48 **This Is Not Sprawl**

Los Angeles turns out to be the densest metropolitan region in the continental U.S., and that's not the only surprise to be found in two new sprawl studies. *By Eric Frederickson*



December 2001

## DESIGN

51

### Creative Friction

52

### Guns and Roses

Barkow Leibinger Architects takes on a politically charged German military parade field. *By Joseph Giovannini*

62

### Space for Space

Nicholas Grimshaw inflates British enthusiasm for space exploration in his new National Space Center. *By Catherine Slessor*

70

### The Shock of the Familiar

What should a new Japanese Buddhist university in Southern California look like? A Mediterranean hill town, of course. *By Dan Halpern*

76

### A Not-So-Primitive Hut

For a virgin site in the Pacific Northwest, Patkau Architects creates an architecture of natural complexity. *By Adele Freedman*

84

### Ando in St. Louis

This is what happens when a Japanese master comes to a troubled U.S. inner city. *By Ned Cramer*

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Massive earthen berms support the concrete-and-glass roof of Barkow Leibinger Architects' Biosphere building in Potsdam, Germany. Photograph by Margherita Spiluttini. Story on page 52.

#### COVER

A Richard Serra sculpture in the courtyard of the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts in St. Louis. Photograph by Victoria Sambunaris. Story on page 84.

#### NEXT ISSUE

The 49th Annual Progressive Architecture Awards  
Special Section: Architecture After September 11

Volume 90 Number 12  
Architecture © (ISSN 0746-0554; USPS 009-880) is published monthly by Bill Communications, Inc., 770 Broadway, New York, NY 10003-9596. Copyright 2001 by Bill Communications, Inc. For subscriptions: Single copies: \$8.95, 1 year: \$59.00, Canada: 1 year: \$69.00. Foreign: 1 year: \$91.00. Allow 4-6 weeks. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canadian Post International Publications Mail Sales Agreement No. 40031729. Printed in the U.S.A. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Architecture, P.O. Box 2063, Marion, OH 43305-2063.

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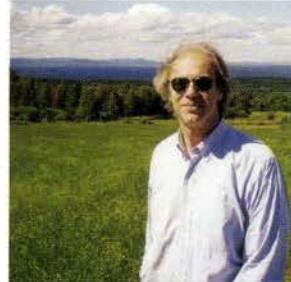
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Nicholas Adams



Marilyn Church



Michael Wise

For his sabbatical from Vassar College, where he has taught architectural history and theory since 1989, **Nicholas Adams** is studying contemporary Swedish architecture. "The last time America was really interested in Swedish architecture," Adams says, "was 50 years ago. It's probably the Scandinavian country whose architecture we know the least about." Adams recently edited *The Architectural Drawings of Antonio da Sangallo the Younger and His Circle* (MIT Press, 2000). He also coedited the December 1999/January 2000 issue of *Casabella*. For this issue, Adams writes for our Culture section on the new bridge connecting Copenhagen, Denmark, to Malmö, Sweden (page 56).

**Marilyn Church** first got involved in courtroom art 25 years ago, while working as a fashion illustrator. "I had a friend covering a big case," she says. "The Queens D.A. was on trial. It really appealed to me so I went to the trial then took my drawings to every station and newspaper in town." She has been working steadily for ABC News ever since, but has also done work for *The New York Times* and the Associated Press. "I've covered some pretty big trials: John Gotti, Bernard Goetz, Robert Chambers, Woody Allen." This month, Church illustrates both our cover and Bradford McKee's feature essay on the controversy surrounding Orlando, Florida's new courthouse design (page 98).

**Diane Ghirardo** has played many roles in the architectural world. For the past 16 years, she has taught architectural history, theory, and criticism, most recently at the University of Southern California. Ghirardo has also written for a variety of publications over the years, including *Lotus*, *Casabella*, *Harvard Design Magazine*, and *Architecture*, among others. She wrote *Architecture After Modernism* (Thames & Hudson, 1996) and *Out of Site: A Social Criticism of Architecture* (Bay Press, 1991), and was president of the ACSA from 1994–1995, as well as executive editor of the *Journal of Architectural Education* from 1998–1999. She writes this month about the new Cannon Dworsky courthouse in Las Vegas (page 118), a project which, she says, "picks up the debate about public buildings."

**Michael Wise** comes to the field of architectural writing after working for many years as a foreign correspondent. He reported from Vienna, London, and Prague for *The Washington Post* and Reuters, and has also written for *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Economist*, and *Artnews*, among other publications. His book, *Capital Dilemma: Germany's Search for a New Architecture of Democracy* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), was generated by an interest in architecture and architecture's power to speak to national identity and political direction. For this issue, he writes the general introduction of *Architecture's* review of the GSA (page 75).

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# GSA Must Still Work to Achieve Design Excellence

By Reed Kroloff

Seven years ago, Edward Feiner, chief architect of the Public Buildings Service of the United States General Services Administration (GSA), embarked on an ambitious—some would say quixotic—mission to elevate the quality of federal architecture. Armed with seed money from the National Endowment for the Arts and the support of successive Public Buildings Service commissioners Kenneth Kimbrough and Robert Peck, Feiner established the hopefully named Design Excellence Program, through which he intended nothing less than a complete overhaul of the way in which the government makes architecture (page 66, and also January, 1996, page 59).

This issue of *Architecture* examines the first significant results of Feiner's program, a group of nine federal courthouses commissioned and completed under the Design Excellence aegis. Courthouses are not the only building type Design Excellence effects. But due to their symbolic and functional importance to the country, they are the linchpin of the program—and the place where Feiner has expended much of his financial and personal capital.

How to characterize the results so far? Relative to how the government hires architects, a tremendous success. Design Excellence has streamlined a notoriously burdensome application process and injected it with a newfound respect for the value of a firm's design reputation. Consequently, many architects—among them signature designers like Richard Meier and Thom Mayne—are now competing for government projects they would previously never have considered.

From a design standpoint, however, the results are decidedly mixed. On the one hand, Meier's strikingly beautiful courthouses in Central Islip, New York (page 78) and Phoenix (page 73) set a new standard for fed-

eral architecture. Gone is the notion that government is by definition and representation a gray eminence, a faceless, ponderous, bureaucratic gathering. Instead, Meier's courthouses argue compellingly that government can still be a grand and ennobling enterprise. These two buildings alone justify Feiner's campaign, and it is important to note that without him, they would never have happened.

Courthouses by Mehrdad Yazdani (page 118), Peter Bohlin (page 110), and Robert Stern (page 102) are also challenging in their own ways. But then there's Omaha (page 72), Brownsville (page 69), and Corpus Christi (page 74), buildings for which the notion of design excellence is a real stretch. More disquieting still is the roster of projects still on the boards (page 128), most of which rest somewhere between uninspired and uninteresting.

There are exceptions among the next generation of buildings, of course (some of which were precluded from publication because their designs have not yet been approved). And certainly many of the designs suggest a greater respect for context and symbol. But on the whole, few of the upcoming projects reflect significant reconsiderations of type, methodology, or intent. Mostly, they represent an aesthetic shift away from the depleted modernism of the 1960s to the more ornamentally robust (and historically inflected) late modernism of the 1990s.

Whether this is an improvement is a matter of taste, and taste is an issue Feiner's program has struggled mightily to avoid. Unlike periods in the past, when federal style was dictated by manuals (some of which, it is important to remember, created magnificent architecture like the WPA's deco-classicism), the Design Excellence program states specifically that "the development of an official style must be avoided." Therefore, for the program to produce a stronger body of work, Feiner's teams of peer reviewers (of which, it should be noted, I am now a member) must be more diligent and forceful in their architect selection and project critiques.

Despite uneven early results, Design Excellence is still the most important, most promising federal architecture program in our lifetimes, and it is just gathering steam. Yes it needs refinement and more critical nerve. But never in more than 50 years have architects had a better opportunity to demonstrate their importance to the cultural well-being of this country. We have Ed Feiner to thank for that. ■

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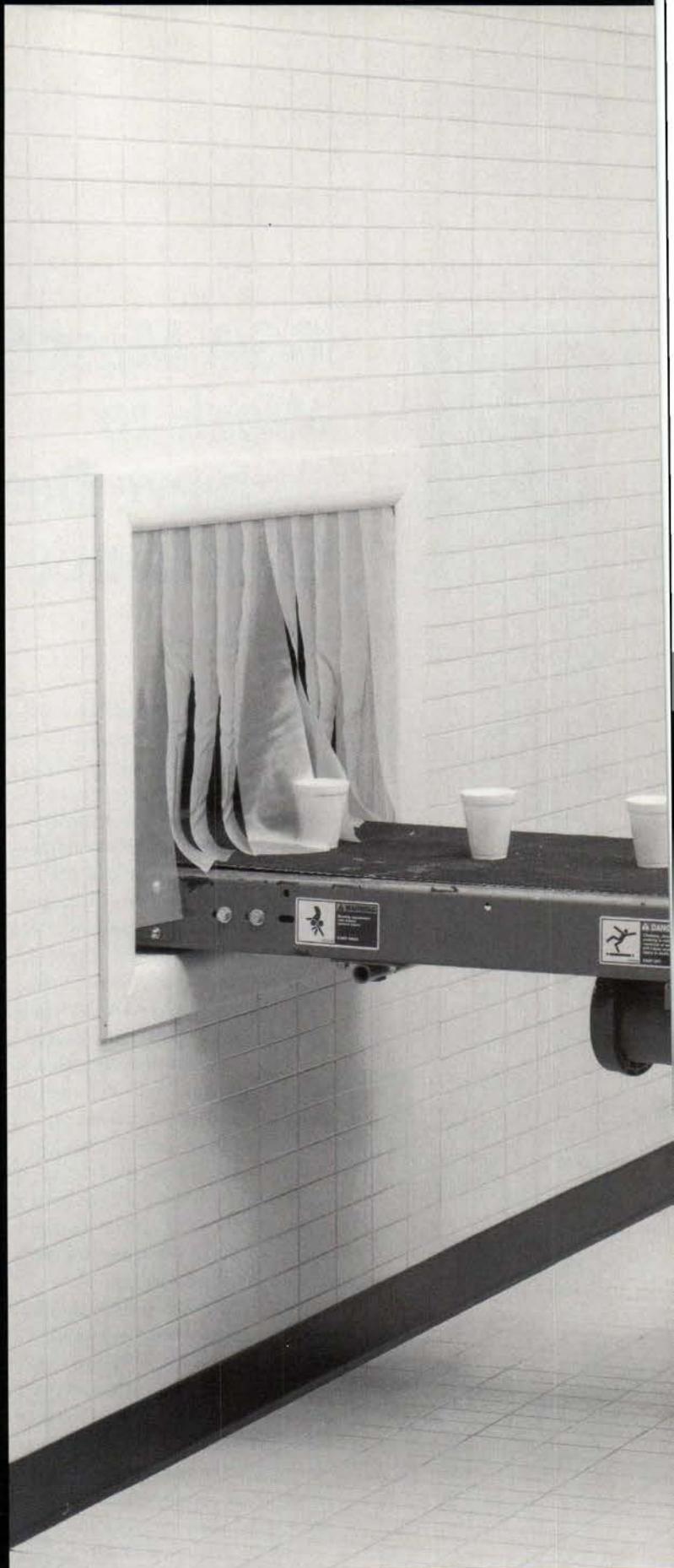
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## Pizza Eaters

I've been an admirer of buildings designed by Morphosis for nearly 15 years now (November 2000, page 132). Unfortunately, Diamond Ranch High School leaves me baffled. The large-scale relationships to the landscape are strong and clear. However, the gray melange of zigs and zags, resulting in spatial collisions, does not unite to make a civic whole—which a high school so longingly needs to be. The photograph at the bottom of page 138 sums it up well: A collection of students slurping sodas, eating chips and Domino's pizza in a gray Kandinsky-like hardscape. The collective memory of their high school's physical being sees the light and mountains beyond the campus' edges. Yet, within their school's walls, all is skewed, abstract, and on edge. What effect does this have on maturing young minds?

Benjamin Schreier  
Affiniti Architects  
Boca Raton, Florida

## Smearing an Icon

While news was circulating about the pending destiny of Gunnar Birkerts' major early work, the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank, there was talk of some sort of respectful rehabilitation. The shock from your article of the proposed horror landed hard with me (October 2000, page 50).

Having followed the project

from its inception, photographing it at its completion, even filming its fascinating construction process, I have the deepest sympathy for Birkerts, and share his frustration.

Multitudes of questions arise: How to arbitrate between distinctive or trivial, how to protect the worthy, deal with change of purpose, revitalize within the environmental fabric based on economic realities, etc.—worthy causes to open an ongoing dialogue. Or should we just shrug our shoulders with the conclusion that in our fast-changing world we have to produce banal, but adaptable, containers and forget about unique solutions for unique problems?

Balthazar Korab  
Troy, Michigan

Thomas Fisher was right to protest the miserable addition planned for the Federal Reserve Bank.

Few architects in the world would argue against the suspension structure's status as an icon of modern architecture. Architects and regular people never fail to identify the Federal Reserve Bank.

The Fed was completed in 1972. It represents the best of its era: clarity of a structural idea that is also expressive of a region. The current plan calls for filling in space under the arch and joining a brainless addition to the Fed's backside. Both design decisions will negate the spirit of the Bank. Mr. Birkerts has stated he would prefer a complete knockdown rather than an addition such as this.

The only solution is to designate worthy buildings from the '50s, '60s, and '70s as historic sites, on local, state, and national levels. If you hear of a developer wanting 25,000-square-foot floor plates in a historically significant building that can only accommodate 12,500, as is the case with the Federal Reserve Bank, help the developer find another location. Then find an owner who could comfortably and happily live with a modern icon.

Kay Kaiser  
San Diego

## The Gift of Greed

**Paul Allen: Seattle's Carnegie?** That is a Pollyanna's distortion of the truth (November 2000, page 63). Paul Allen has not done a single thing for this city that has not been of benefit to his own ego or bank account. In the process Mr. Allen has railroaded his schemes over the objections of the Landmarks Board and Seattle's citizens.

Must I remind Lawrence Cheek that Mr. Allen spent millions of dollars to pay for a sales tax initiative that will pay for a football stadium that only Mr. Allen will profit from? Must I remind your writer that when Mr. Allen bought a portion of Lopez Island to build yet another 18,000-square-foot residence, he demolished landmarked buildings by several of Seattle's best postwar architects?

Paul Allen and *Architecture* have given us some striking photographs of greed made manifest. We are deserving of a more cogent and honest analysis.

Robert Drucker  
Seattle

## CORRECTIONS

The executive architect of the McNamara Alumni Center, University of Minnesota Gateway was Korunsky Krantz Erikson Architects. Lew Moran was the project manager, and David Broesler and Bill Beaupre were the project architects (November 2000, page 118).

The Paleontological Research Institute is privately supported and not formally connected to or supported by Cornell University (November 2000, page 58).

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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# news

**New Guggenheim Approved  
for Big Apple**  
page 29

**British Museum Opens  
Inner Courtyard**  
page 31

**New Blueprints for Churches**  
page 34

**Moscow Mayor Wants  
Better Buildings**  
page 35



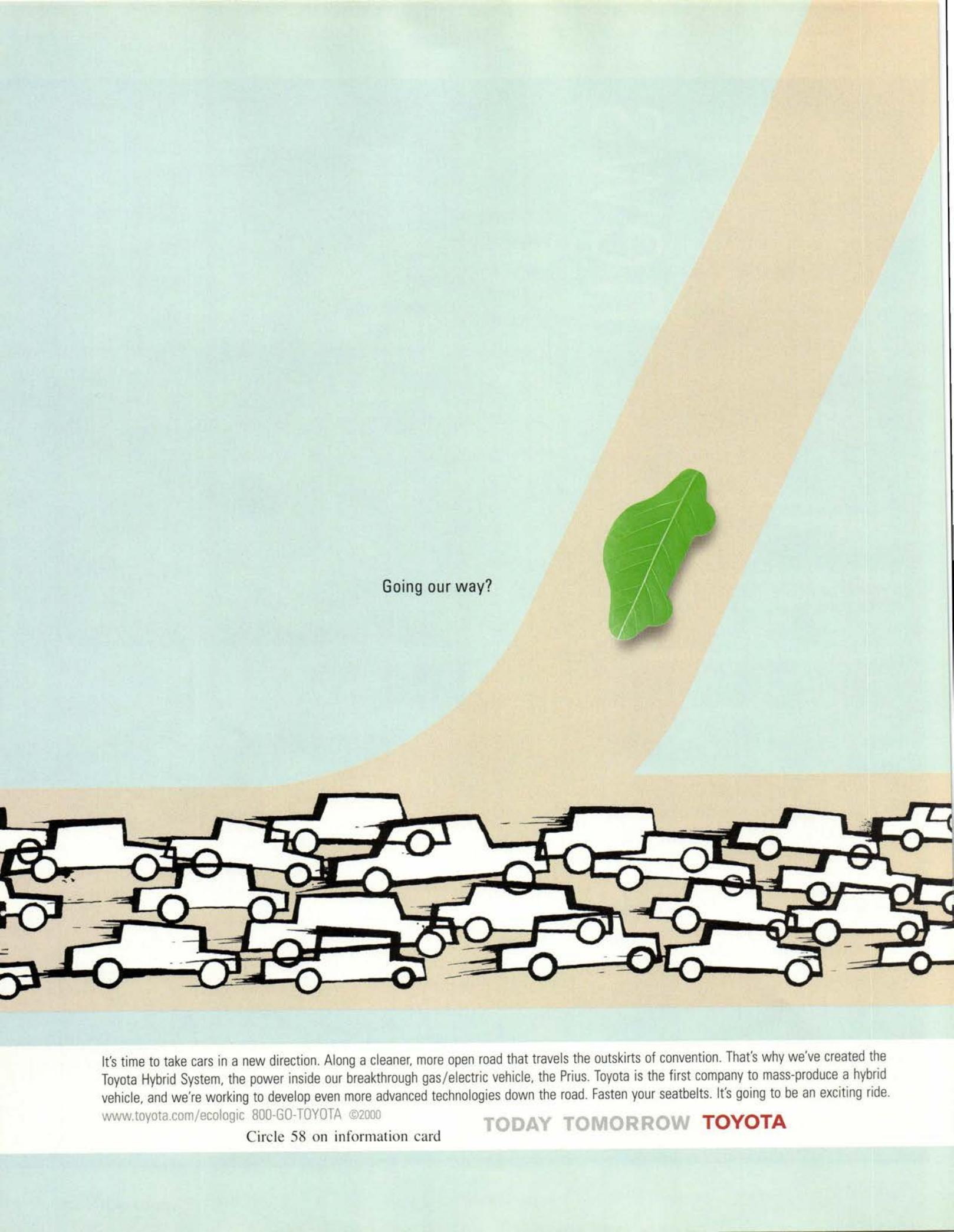
## The Next Hot Color from Graves: Gold

**His rebellious past in the past, Michael Graves receives the AIA's highest honor**

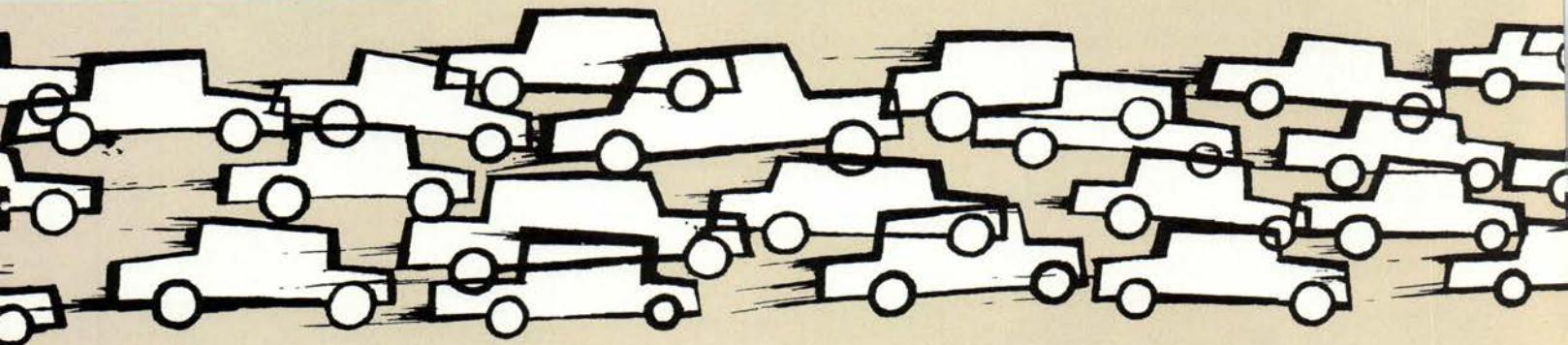
**Award** They love him. They love him not. They love him. After years of blowing hot and cold about Michael Graves, members of the architecture community's largest professional organization, the American Institute of Architects, have taken in the 66-year-old bad boy as one of their own.

Last month, the Princeton professor and product-designer-to-the-masses received the AIA's highest honor, the Gold Medal for lifetime achievement—for which he had been nominated so many times that one wag dubbed him the Susan Lucci of architecture.

Graves rose to national attention as one of the New York Five (along with Peter Eisenman, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk, and Richard



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TODAY TOMORROW **TOYOTA**



The many modes of Michael (clockwise from top left): Scaffolding for repair of Washington Monument (1999); Walt Disney World Swan Hotel (1989); Benacerraf House (1969); Portland City Services Building (1982); teakettle for Alessi (1985).

Meier), hothouse intellectuals also known as the "Whites" for their pristine, chromatically neutral neo-Corbusian aesthetic. Then, in one of the most dramatic about-faces in the history of 20th-century design, Graves embraced the rich colors and historical allusion of postmodernism.

Critics howled, clients gushed, and the rank-and-file steamed (AIA conventioneers once sported lapel buttons reading: "We Don't Dig Graves") as the architect racked up commission after commission and more than a dozen P/A awards, while watching miles of shelves sag under the weight of books and articles about his architecture—and him. Graves also designed furniture, fabrics, and consumer products (including the whimsical birdy teapot for Italian giftware giant Alessi). He was the subject of museum shows. His drawings fetched high prices in galleries. Graves became the first American architect since Frank Lloyd Wright to catch the public eye. He was a star.

Then, almost as quickly as it had appeared, postmodernism began to wane and, with it, Graves's

domination of the architectural spotlight. By the mid-1990s, the popular press had moved on to other subjects, and it was difficult to find his work even in professional publications. Graves lamented the changed climate. "New is news," he snapped in 1997, "and according to the press, I'm old."

His practice never suffered, however—the architect's Princeton office has maintained a staff of 60 for nearly 20 years and is still busy—and with lay audiences Graves remained a darling. In 1999 he rolled out a popular line of eponymous housewares for design-conscious discounter Target. Frank Gehry may have won the hearts of the public, but Graves won their kitchens, bathrooms, and bedrooms, in short, their everyday lives.

Now, with the Gold Medal, Graves is being officially welcomed back into the professional fold. "A lot of what I did ruffled feathers," he recently told *Architecture* in explaining his rocky relationship with the opinion-makers of the profession. "To get an award from the same people, well, that's awfully nice." *Reed Kroloff*

## Buzz

To help make sure the neighbors aren't *displeased*, the developers of Boston's **Big Dig**, a costly road expansion project near the city's heavily Italian **North End**, have proposed buying special bed frames for those nearby who can't sleep (or simply look like they haven't slept in months). Each frame will cost between \$1,500 and \$2,000.

**Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates** and **HLM Design** have been selected by the Denver Museum of Nature and Science to design a \$45 million space-science education center at the museum.

In Philadelphia, **Charles W. Kass** pleaded guilty last month to a federal charge of interstate transportation of stolen property. The former federal labor corruption investigator had allegedly been fencing architectural relics. Authorities say Kass, in one instance, had purchased 7-foot gates stolen from **St. Peter's Episcopal Church** in 1998 for \$600 and resold them to an antique dealer for nearly twice that amount.

Not only do Chicagoans have a better **Sinatra** theme song than New Yorkers, they also apparently have more legroom at theatrical performances than their Big Apple counterparts. While theatergoers on Broadway only have about 32 to 24 inches of legroom, theatergoers in Chicago have about 36 to 37 inches. Of course, this is all according to Chicago architect and theater design specialist **Daniel P. Coffey**, who, like everyone else in Chi-town, is excited about the city's new and renovated theaters.



Submission to the Fresno Museum of History Competition, by Illiad Terra, now with 3D/International, Washington, DC.

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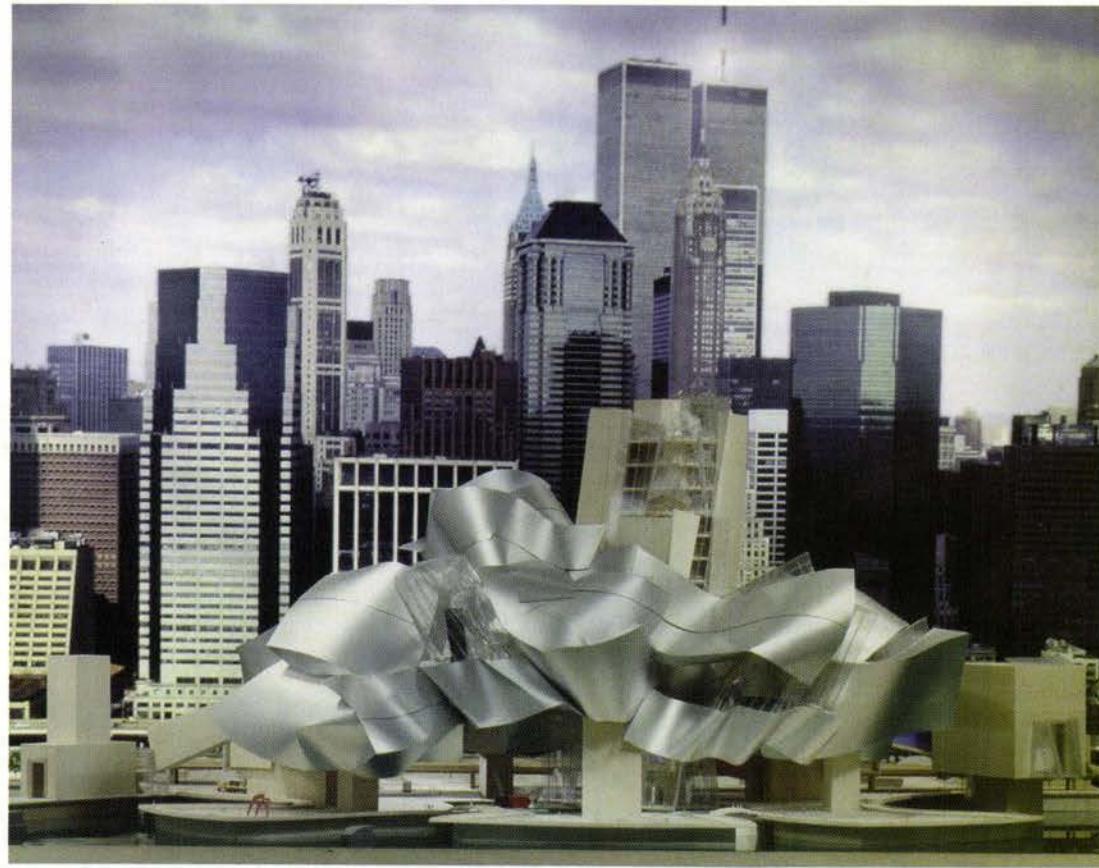
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## New Guggenheim Approved for Big Apple

**Design** In a move whose swiftness startled many in the local architectural and arts communities, the City of New York has endorsed the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation's proposal to build a new Frank O. Gehry-designed complex along the city's East River waterfront, near the southern tip of Manhattan. The city backed its blessing with \$67.8 million in financing, half of which lies in the value of the land.

"It's a spark," Anthony Coles, deputy mayor of New York City, says of the proposed building's economic and aesthetic impact on downtown Manhattan. "And it also helps as a tourist attraction."

Despite the magnitude of the gift, the project still faces many obstacles. First is the rest of the new Guggenheim's \$678 million budget, 25 percent of

which the foundation claims to have in hand. The design also must pass the usual environmental and zoning reviews as well as reviews by the City Planning Commission, the City Council and other government offices. Yet Gehry and the Guggenheim don't seem too worried; their reputations alone could carry the project through. And the design—part warehouse, part cloud—has also been winning local accolades.

The as-of-yet unnamed downtown Guggenheim is an enormous undertaking in other ways as well. At 550,000 square feet, it will be 10 times the size of the Guggenheim's signature Frank Lloyd Wright-designed headquarters on Manhattan's Upper East Side and will be—along with Gehry's MIT project currently under construction—the architect's largest work to date. *Anthony Mariani*

**Arquitectonica** (ARQ) has been tapped by the **Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians** (MBCI) to design and develop the MBCI's Golden Moon Hotel & Casino, part of the tribe's \$750 million Pearl River Resort at Choctaw, Mississippi.

Thanks to the **Jerde Partnership International**, Las Vegas who lose their shirts in ritzy casinos now have a home. The new **Palms Casino Hotel** in Sin City promises to be a "relaxed" resort complex—not some highfalutin establishment where even the dish *washers* wear bow ties and blazers. Word on the street is that locals get two chips for every one food stamp on trade. (Just kidding.)

The **Howard Gilman Foundation** has donated its renowned collection of architectural drawings to the **Museum of Modern Art**, in New York City. The Gilman Collection, curated by Pierre Apraxine, is regarded as the one of the premier holdings of architectural drawings in the world.

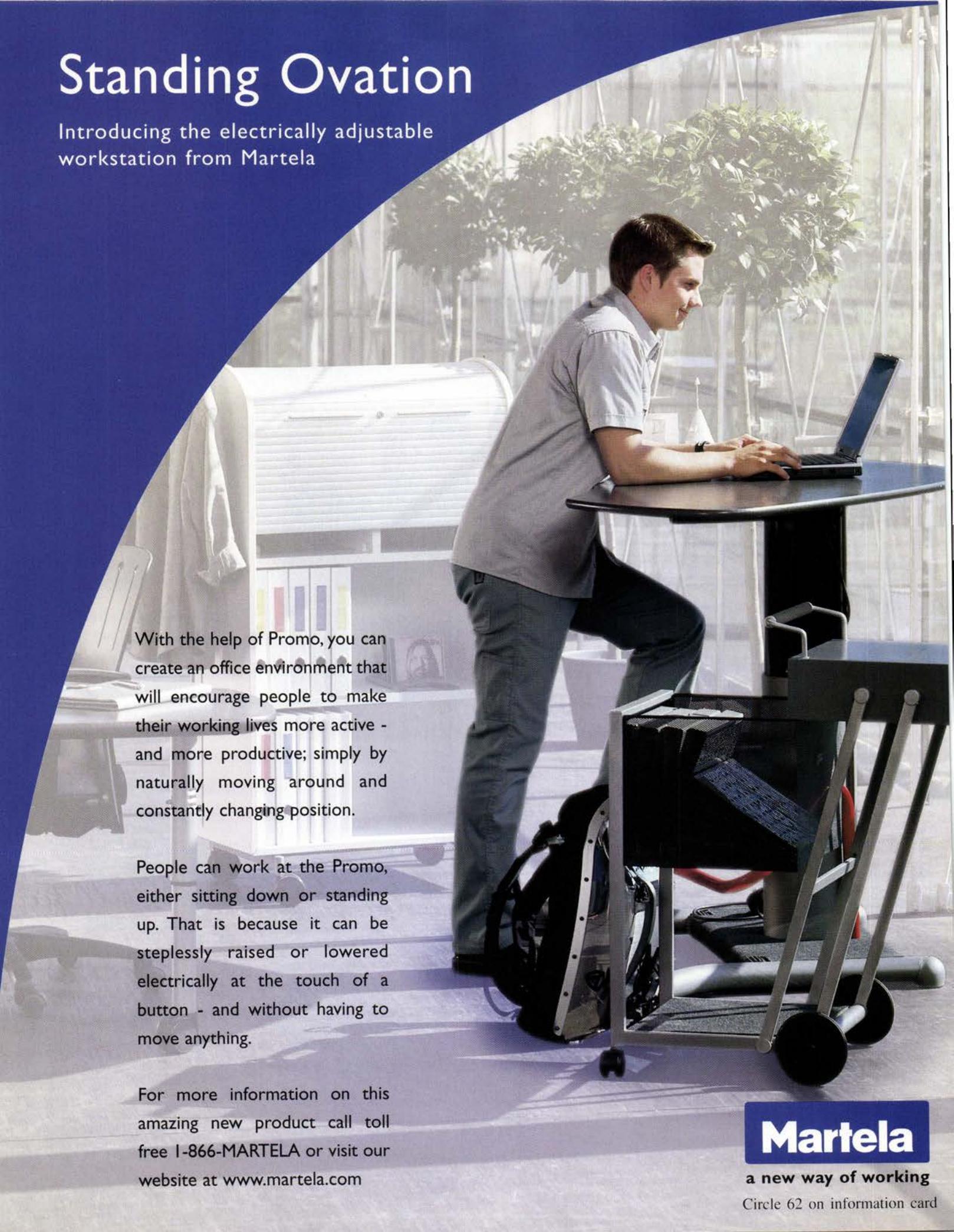
The **National Council of Architectural Registration Boards** (NCARB) has named as its new provider of architectural education evaluation services the **National Architectural Accrediting Board** (NAAB), which will oversee the Educational Evaluation Services for Architects (EESA). FYI: This all happens ASAP.

Construction on the **Meadows Museum Collection** at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, is underway. The building houses one of the largest collections of Spanish art outside of Spain.

In 2001, the **College of Fellows** at the AIA will award a \$50,000 biannual fellowship to an individual to be

# Standing Ovation

Introducing the electrically adjustable workstation from Martela

A photograph showing a man in a light-colored shirt and dark trousers working on a laptop at a standing desk. He is leaning forward, looking at the screen. In the background, there's a large window with a view of greenery, and a whiteboard or chart is visible on the wall. A white coat hangs on a chair in the foreground.

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## British Museum Opens Inner Courtyard

**Design** The former home of the British Library, the London museum's inner courtyard has finally been cleared of its contents, remodeled and reopened to the public after 150 years. Called the Queen Elizabeth II Great Court, the two-acre site is the spirit of arts stewardship in practice. Folks can mingle in the court, beneath the space's 65,000-square-foot glass and steel ceiling, long after museum hours, or stop by during peak visiting periods for the various educational amenities, especially the centerpiece Reading Room (restored to its original glory, dating back nearly to the time of the building's construction, 1850). The court is the product of Foster and Partners. *A.M.*

### Politics

## British Prize Decried as "London-Centric"

London's Alsop & Störmer may have won this year's Stirling Prize, Britain's biggest architecture award, but critics won't let the firm enjoy it.

Naysayers have denounced the shortlist of this year's prize as being "London-centric." "I found it all a bit too cozy," says Richard Murphy, architect of the snubbed Dundee Contemporary Arts Center in Scotland.

Apart from the obligatory European project, the only non-metropolitan work listed was the new art gallery in Walsall. Says Murphy: "There are a lot of quite interesting buildings outside London which possibly should have been on the list."

Detractors nevertheless believe that seeing the awards ceremony televised gave a healthy boost to

modern architecture.

"[The prize has] done hell of a lot for architecture," said Michael Manser, past president of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and chairman of the five-member jury who chose Alsop & Störmer's Library and Media Center in Peckham, South London. "It's a great step forward." Alsop & Störmer beat out six others, including Sauerbruch Hutton, Norman Foster, and Richard Rogers, to take the Riba prize money of about \$30,000.

Manser said that "there's quality all over the country," and reassuringly that "the first Stirling Prize went to a Manchester architect for a Manchester building." *Robert Such*

named the **Latrobe Fellow**. The new grant will be awarded for research that advances architecture.

**Mark Horton/Architecture** has been chosen by the **California College of Arts and Crafts** to design a student resident hall on the college's Oakland campus. Construction on the \$6 million project will begin in Spring, 2001.

In trying to bring some class to **Miami-Dade County**, officials have instead brought in one big headache. No, it's not Katherine Harris but a two-hall performing arts center with a \$75 million gap between the construction budget and the lowest bid, \$280 million.

**Thompson Vaivoda & Associates Architects** have been selected by Spokane developer/investor **Wendell Reugh** and project coordinator **Kiemle & Hagood Company** to design the city's first downtown high-rise office tower in 20 years.

Closed two days after it opened in June because of excessive swaying, London's **Millennium Bridge**—between St. Paul's Cathedral and the new Tate Modern gallery, over the Thames—will need \$7.13 million to be made sway-proof.

**Federation Square** in Australia is six months behind schedule and \$100 million over budget. But nobody's worried. Officials say the extra expenses and building delays will be worth it once the public sees the Times-Squaresque results, sometime late next year.

**Machado and Silvetti Associates** have been commissioned to design three new projects, including a studio art building at the University of

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# Declarations of Bad Taste

**Design** Having bulldozed all opposition to a proposed World War II memorial along the National Mall's Rainbow Pool, the National Park Service announced that it hoped to pave 1,152 square feet of the Mall for a pair of helicopter pads. That's two giant circles of concrete on the western grounds of the Washington Monument. The site lies across 17th Street NW from the planned memorial for which President Clinton formally broke ground on Veterans Day (though a legal challenge to the memorial is still pending in court).

As if the World War II memorial weren't obtrusive enough on the nation's most hallowed ground, the proposed monument will displace the lawn where helicopters now land to deliver heads of state and, sometimes, the president. So the park service suggested the nearest available spot and approached the Commission of Fine Arts, which controls all development on or near federal lands in the District of Columbia, for approval.

In a show of civic restraint not seen in the long, rancorous memorial quarrel, the commission did not bother to debate the landing pad request. Its six members, rather, voted in unison against the idea at a November meeting. *Bradford McKee*



Not allowed to physically break ground (because of continuing lawsuits), President Clinton, Tom Hanks and others turn earth in a sandbox to celebrate the National Mall's prospective WW II monument.

Virginia, a master plan for the American University of Beirut and a public park for the Massachusetts Port Authority.

Visiting Anchorage, Alaska, to speak on his work, **Juhani Pallasmaa**, professor of architecture from Helsinki, Finland, and former director of the Museum of Finnish Architecture, proceeded to trash the place. Verbally, that is. In an article in the **Anchorage Daily News**, Pallasmaa was quoted as calling the Anchorage architecture "completely arbitrary," and saying that he hadn't "experienced anything Alaskan in Anchorage." There was no evidence that the *News* reporter tried to dissuade her guest.

**Santiago Calatrava** of Zurich, Switzerland, has been commissioned

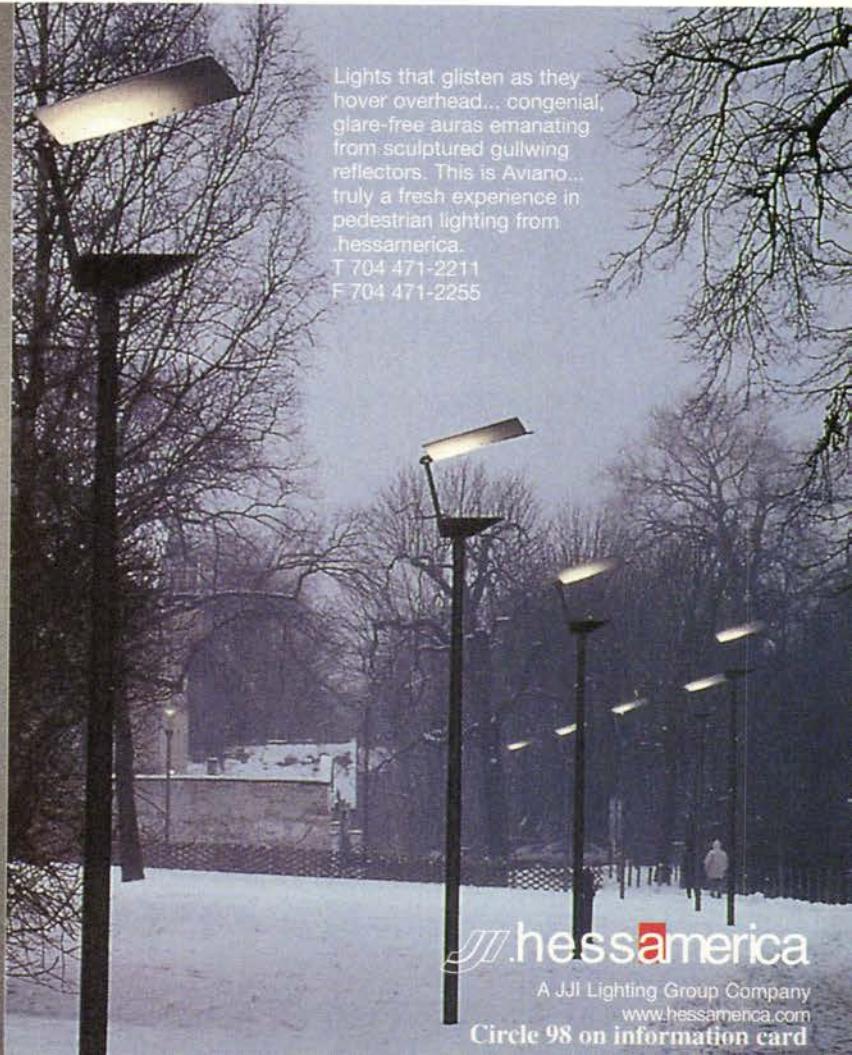
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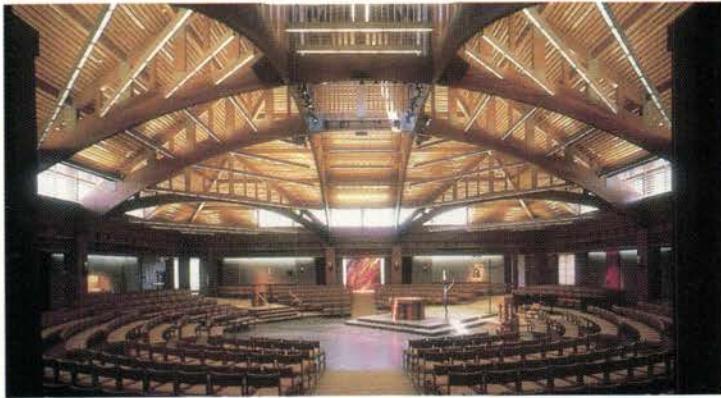
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# New Blueprints for Churches



St. Paul the Apostle (above) in a Dallas, Texas, suburb is one church that exemplifies *Built of Living Stones*, the Catholic Church's new set of guidelines for architects.

**Holy Orders** From Bernini to Richard Meier, the Catholic Church has been a rich patron for architects. But with a few notable exceptions, the Church's architectural record since the 1960s reforms of Vatican II has been distinctly dismal and generally uninspired. That may be about to change.

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops/United States Catholic Conference (NCCB/USCC) conferred recently in Washington, D.C., to hail the release of *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship*, a document regarding art and architecture in new and renovated churches. The text, according to Reverend James P. Moroney, executive director of the NCCB/USCC's Secretariat for the Liturgy, "provides concrete guidance for architects working within the church, although it does not carry the weight of a papal decree."

The new document is careful not to ratify any particular architectural style or approach. It promotes "cultural diversity" and specifies that "the Church is not wedded to a single architectural or artistic form." But the bishops' allegiances aren't hard to figure out. "Art or architecture that draws more attention to its own shape, form, texture, or color than to the sacred realities it seeks to disclose," the bishops write, "is unworthy of the church building." Read: Out with the grandiose.

The bishops encourage collaboration between architects, artists, local pastors, and parishioners. The guidelines also reflect contemporary sensibilities regarding accessibility and better urban design.

Reverend Moroney is careful not to characterize *Built of Living Stones* as the ultimate guide for architects and designers. "It's just the first step in understanding what the Church teaches about art and architecture in Catholic worship." *Edward Keegan*

An advertisement for LAM Lighting Systems. On the left, there is a large, illuminated bridge fixture with multiple heads, casting light downwards. Below it, a smaller inset shows a close-up of a single fixture. To the right, there is descriptive text about the product.

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# Moscow Mayor Wants Better Buildings

**Politics** Moscow Mayor Yury Luzhkov, who is known for his hard hat-clad Saturday morning tours of city construction sites, is putting his foot down, demanding improved standards for the city's woefully inefficient building industry.

Luzhkov announced in November that he was relieving Deputy Mayor Vladimir Resin of his duties as architecture and construction czar for his inability to upgrade quality control. The mayor also declared that contractors doing business with the city—which remains Moscow's chief developer—must be compliant with ISO 9000, the most widely recognized international construction business standard, as soon as possible.

For a city riddled with corruption befitting the best mob films, Luzhkov's stance looks like a step in the right direction. If contractors obtain ISO 9000 certification, then Moscow architecture will be much improved. *Bay Brown*



Moscow Mayor Yury Luzhkov (top), ponders the sorry condition of his city's infrastructure (above), especially its buildings.

to design **Christ the Light Cathedral** for the Catholic Diocese of Oakland, California. The diocese had not yet finalized a budget as of this writing.

**John D. Anderson** of Denver was named president of the AIA. Anderson, of Anderson Mason Dale (AMD), succeeds Ronald L. Skaggs of Dallas.

**Ellen Dunham-Jones** of MIT has been named Director of the Architecture Program and Associate Professor at the **Georgia Institute of Technology's** College of Architecture.

**Through the Looking Glass:** *Celebrating the Octagon's Bicentennial* opens January 19, 2001 at the **Octagon**, the museum of the American Architectural Foundation in Washington, D.C.

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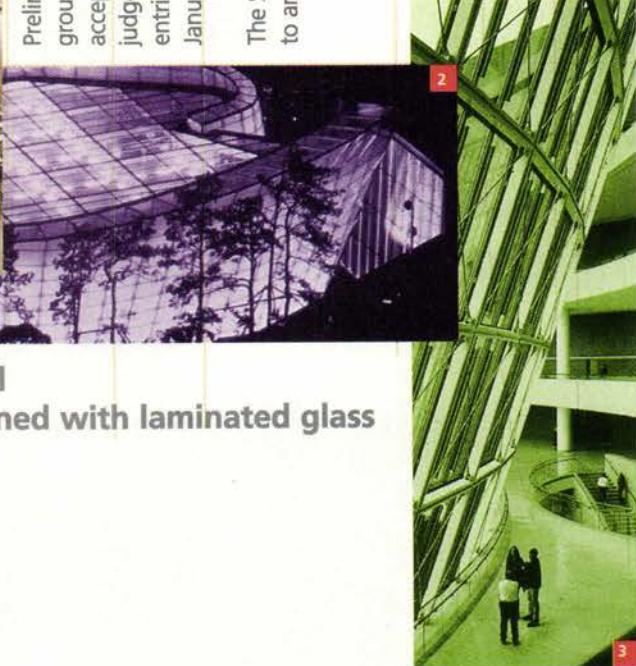
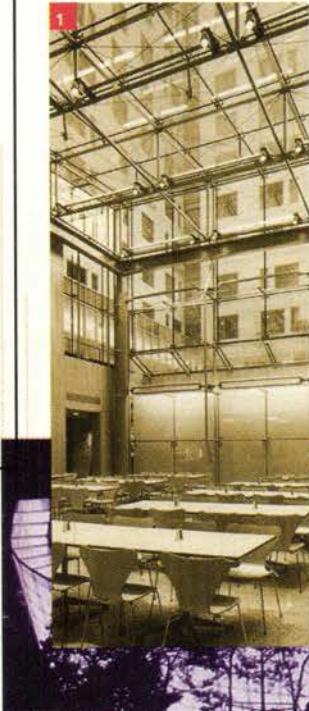
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- 1 New York University Dining Hall Davis Brody Bond LLP
- 2 Samsung Plaza and Rodin Museum Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates PC
- 3 United States Federal Courthouse in Boston, MA  
Pei Cobb Freed & Partners Architects LLP



Preliminary submissions, consisting only of photography and brief background information on qualified architectural projects, are now being accepted. Preliminary submissions require no entry fee, and will be judged by leading professionals in the architectural community. Selected entries from the preliminary judging, and those entries received after January 10, 2001, will submit complete notebooks on their project.

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Deadline for preliminary submissions — January 10, 2001  
Deadline for complete notebooks — March 1, 2001

# THE SAFLEX 2000 DESIGN COMPETITION

Additional information on the awards, preliminary submission requirements and entry forms are located at <http://www.saflex.com>. A complete entry form will be available in the December 2000 edition of *Architecture Magazine*.

Circle 66 on information card

**Calendar****Exhibitions****Austria**

Luis Barragán: The Quiet Revolution at MAK Exhibition Hall through January 28, 2001 (43) 712-80-80

**Chicago**

Skyscrapers: The New Millennium at the Art Institute of Chicago through January 15, 2001 (312) 443-3600

**Denmark**

Vision and Reality: Conceptions of the 20th Century at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (Humlebaek, Denmark) through January 14, 2001 (45) 4919-0719

**Los Angeles**

Live Dangerously at UCLA Hammer Museum through January 7, 2001 (310) 443-7000

**The Netherlands**

Towards Totalscape: Contemporary Japanese Architecture, Urban Design and Landscape Architecture at The Netherlands Architecture Institute through January 14, 2001 31 (0) 10-4401200

**New Haven, Connecticut**

Preserving Corporate Modernism: Assessing Three Landmark Buildings by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill at A&A Gallery, sponsored by the Yale School of Architecture opens January 8, 2001 (203) 432-2296

**New York**

Ruskin's Italy, Ruskin's England at the Morgan Library through January 7, 2001 (212) 685-0008

Architectural Competitions in America at Pratt Manhattan Gallery through January 6, 2001 (718) 636-3471

Masterpieces from the Vitra Design Museum: Furnishing the Modern Era at Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum through February 4, 2001 (212) 849-8420

Living Heritage: Vernacular Environment in China at China Institute Gallery opens January 25, 2001 (212) 744-8181

**Omaha**

From the Sun King to the Royal Twilight: Painting in 18th-Century France from the Musée de Picardie, Amiens at Joslyn Art Museum through February 3, 2001 (402) 342-3300

**Pittsburgh**

Urban Metamorphosis: One Hundred Views of New Tokyo at Scaife Galleries opens January 20, 2001 www.cmoa.org

Fold, Blobs, and Boxes: Architecture in the Digital Era at the Heinz Architectural Center opens February 3, 2001 www.cmoa.org

**San Francisco**

010101: Art in Technological Times opens midnight January 1, 2001 at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco, California, and electronically at www.sfmoma.org/010101 and www.artmuseum.net

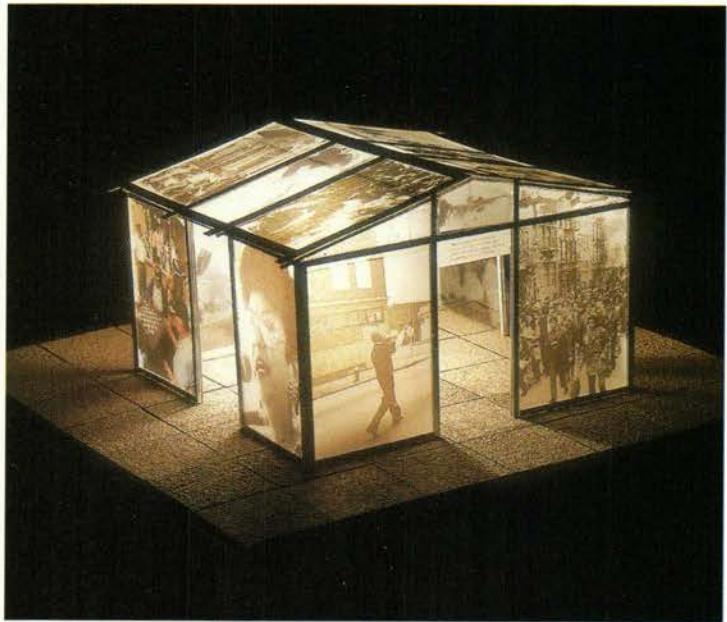
**Tacoma, Washington**

Out of Time: Designs for the 20th Century Future at the Washington State Historical Society through January 7, 2001 (202) 357-2700

**Conferences**

Accent on Design at Jacob Javits Center in New York begins January 21, 2001 www.glmshows.com or e-mail info@glmshows.com

Fourth Annual Academic Symposium on New Urbanism, "Regional, Environmental, Social and Architectural Justice" at the University of Michigan February 8 through 10, 2001 www.caup.umich.edu



Some of the best public art goes beyond hagiography. It illuminates the untold histories of its surroundings; it inspires pride in its neighbors; and, most importantly, it beautifies public space. Opening February 10 at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia is **New Land Marks: Public Art, Community, and the Meaning of Place**, an exploration into public art's functions, with special regard to the Philadelphia area. The show features 18 multimedia proposals for permanent public artworks by artists in cooperation with area community groups. The show runs until April 15, 2001. For more information, call (215) 972-7600.

15th Annual Land Use Law and Planning by UCLA at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles begins January 26, 2001 (310) 825-7885

Hospitality Design Leadership Summit 2001 at Vail Cascade Resort, Colorado begins January 31, 2001 (888) 383-6829

**Competitions**

The Town of Seaside, Florida, in association with the **Seaside Institute** is sponsoring a design competition for a new landmark. Submissions are due by January 23, 2001. For entry forms, call (850) 231-2226

The James Beard Restaurant Design Award is open to any restaurant in the U.S. or Canada that opened after January 1, 1998. Applications due January 31, 2000 Fax (212) 627-1064

The Athenaeum of Philadelphia is accepting applications for research fellowships and summer internships until March, 2001. For more information, write: Chairman, Peterson Fellowship Committee, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, East Washington Square, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106-3794

The Architecture League of New York is seeking entries for its 2000-2001 Young Architects Forum. For entry form, call (212) 753-1722 or visit the League's Web site at www.archleague.org

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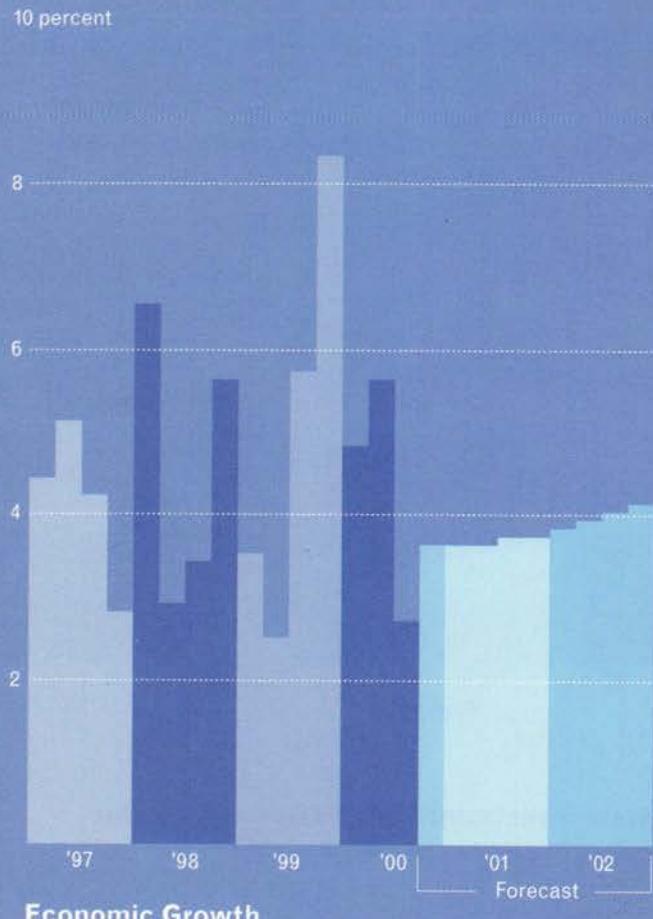
# practice

"Mass immigration is the engine driving the U.S. to double its population next century."

**Politics, page 48**

"If crime rates continue to fall, architects who design prisons may find themselves with fewer projects."

**Justice, page 49**



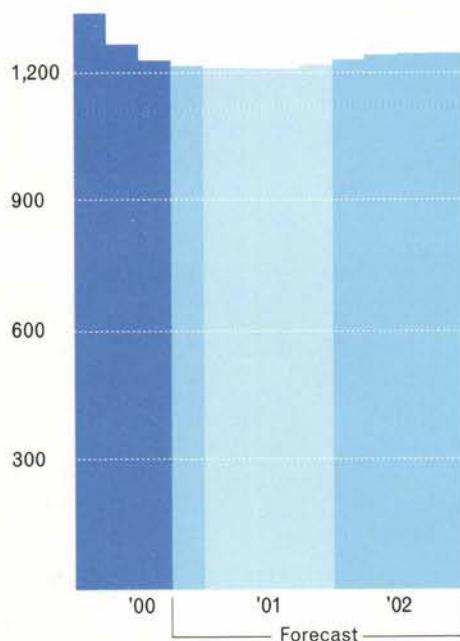
## Worry Later

The millennial boom has been kind to architects, but it won't last forever. **Bradford McKee** keeps hearing forecasters say the words "soft landing."

**Business** Fuel bills shot out of sight in 2000, dot-coms folded left and right, the stock market shivered, tensions in the Middle East blew up again, and the national elections here at home forecasted four years of political impasse. But any architect who tried to pin down a contractor in the past 12 months—good luck!—or get the right materials on time could see that the construction industry has been shrugging off the gloom and charging ahead with the rest of the U.S. economy, which was projected to grow by 4.1 percent by year's end. As of late fall, 115 months of unvarnished prosperity found the nation shouting over the cacophony of hammers, saws, and backhoes. And architects were as busy as they've been over the past five years—which is to say, really busy.

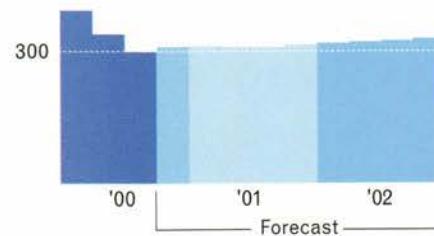
## Single-Family Housing Starts Plotted Quarterly

1,500 thousand



## Multifamily Housing Starts Plotted Quarterly

600 thousand



Housing starts showed the construction industry's only real slump in 2000.

Single-family housing starts slowed from their 1999 peak but remained above historical averages. The prime demographic group for first-time home buying is expected to shrink by 4 percent in the decade ending in 2005. However, the fastest-growing age groups, of 18 to 24 and over 45 years old, include those people most likely to drive multifamily housing construction. Look for a slight drop in multifamily in 2001 before it picks up again the following year as population trends push demand once again.

## Real-Estate Investment Trust Performance Index

Performance by Property Sector and Subsector

Data as of 3rd Quarter of 2000

	Total Return on Investment			Dividend Yield	Number of REITs	Equity Market Capitalization In billions
	1999	October 2000	2000 Through the 3rd Quarter			
All Companies	-6.48	-4.29	16.35	8.04%	194	\$137.9
Industrial/Office	3.35	-4.49	24.26	6.80%	37	\$46.4
Office	4.25	-4.11	26.79	6.73%	20	\$28.9
Industrial	3.90	-6.06	18.58	6.63%	10	\$10.3
Mixed	-.72	-3.78	22.37	7.29%	7	\$7.3
Retail	-11.77	-3.71	9.15	9.00%	49	\$27.4
Shopping Centers	-10.71	-2.74	6.92	9.43%	30	\$12.0
Regional Malls	-14.58	-4.38	13.79	8.52%	12	\$12.5
Freestanding	-4.89	-4.79	.85	9.30%	7	\$3.0
Residential	9.46	-3.61	20.40	6.86%	26	\$29.2
Apartments	10.71	-3.91	21.51	6.83%	21	\$27.2
Manufactured Homes	-2.80	.53	8.27	7.19%	5	\$2.0
Diversified	-14.32	-6.52	15.12	10.50%	19	\$12.0
Lodging/Resorts	-16.15	-4.41	29.74	10.85%	15	\$7.7
Health Care	-28.67	-2.16	13.76	12.32%	13	\$4.8
Mortgage	-33.22	1.57	11.37	10.67%	23	\$1.7
Home Financing	N/A	3.04	3.21	9.80%	14	\$1.0
Commercial Financing	N/A	-.53	23.68	11.94%	9	\$.7
Self Storage	-8.04	-5.46	3.99	6.12%	4	\$4.8
Speciality	-25.70	-7.81	-25.01	7.76%	8	\$3.8

They owe their good fortunes to the "new" economy, construction economists say. The economy is not new simply because of all the amazing electronic information toys that suddenly surround us. What's new is that a combination of surprising productivity gains, practically full employment, and low inflation have conspired to create the longest and most efficient growth period the nation has ever witnessed. "Long-term sustainable growth is at least one and a half points higher than we as economists ever thought it could be," remarked William D. Toal, chief economist for the Portland Cement Association in Skokie, Illinois, at a forecasting conference held by Construction Market Data (CMD) in late October. "The new economy is spreading out to the old economy. We've remade our manufacturing sector over the past 15 years."

Construction activity rose to about \$700 billion in 2000, its highest level ever, after nine years of straight growth. Past building booms went bust in half the time the current one has lasted, but a glut of credit and relatively low interest rates have kept construction volume strong.

We likely would be witnessing an even more feverish building pace but for one question: Who's going to do the work? Good help is scarce. William Rodgers III, chief economist for the U.S. Department of Labor, says the current construction market doesn't suffer a labor shortage, but a "skills shortage." Although construction employment has grown at a decent pace in recent years—creating one of every 10 new jobs—it hasn't kept pace with demand and will not likely grow as much as the economy in the years to come: The economy is expected to grow by 14 percent over the next decade, Rodgers says, but the construction labor force will likely expand by only 9 percent.

Despite all of this activity, economists currently see signs that business is slowing somewhat and should continue to do so with relative grace. The economy raced along with about 5 percent growth in 2000, up from 4.2 percent in 1999. But this year, Toal anticipates that growth will slow to between 3 and 3.5 percent. In 2000, the construction sector grew by about 1.3 percent. Toal expects it to contract by 1.9 percent in 2001 and rise again by 1.3 percent in 2002, "unless something hits us broadside."

Crucially, economists and real-estate analysts point to no significant overbuilding in any sector. The only slump in any major area of the construction industry will be in housing. Housing starts for 2000 stood at 1.59 million, down by about 80,000 from 1999. They will likely drop further, to 1.52 million this year before jumping up again, to 1.56 million, in 2002, projects David F. Seiders, chief economist of the National Association of Home Builders, in Washington, D.C. "We are in somewhat of a slowdown," Seiders told the CMD conference. "Signs of recession are beginning to show up" in weak stock prices and higher interest rates, he added, but he said he expects the Federal Reserve to help captain the economy toward a "soft landing."

Single-family housing starts in 2000 reached 1.26 million, slightly below their 1999 peak of 1.34 million. Seiders predicts that they will fall by about 50,000 in 2001 and then gain about 28,000 in 2002. The current levels approach the highs of the 1980s and 1990s and rank considerably higher than historical averages. But household formation in the

## Billings

### The View From the Studio

On the supply side of architecture, firms are feeling complacent, and why wouldn't they? Most architects have had more work than they can handle over the past few years, and if some now find themselves with lower billings than in recent quarters, says AIA Chief Economist Kermit Baker, just as many find

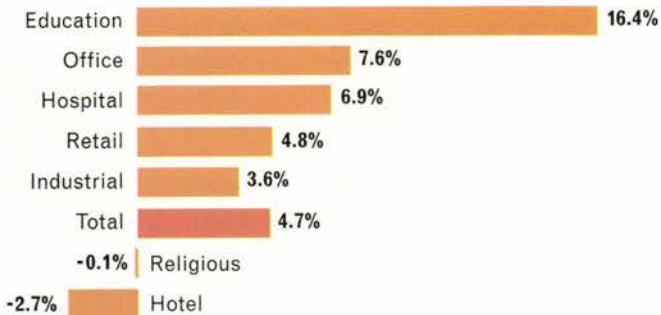
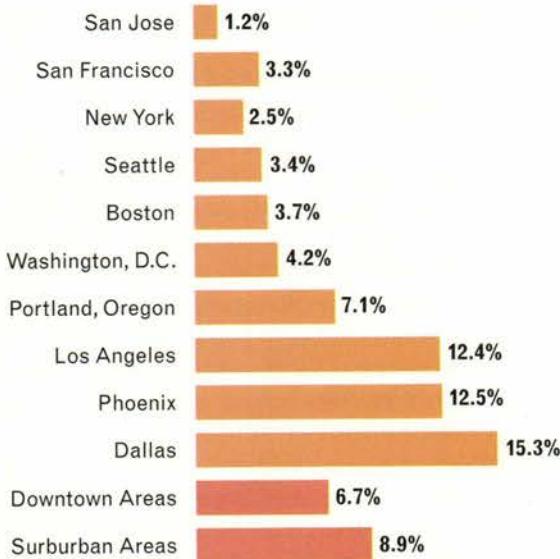
themselves with more. If there's any easing off, it's in growth, Baker explains. Client inquiries were up at mid-year—just not up by as much as they were up a year ago. Firms in the Midwest seemed best off, Baker says. The Northeast has been slow, and though business is "relatively steady" in the West and South, Baker says it's "softening." *B.M.*

25- to 44-year-old age group, which is the prime range for first-time homebuyers, has been "easing back" by a projected 4.4 percent between 1995 and 2005, notes Toal, running behind construction levels in the late '90s.

On the flip side of the housing market, multifamily starts sagged by 2.4 percent in 1999 but were expected to gain in 2000 by 0.3 percent, for a total of about 336,000. (Multifamily's mid-'80s high hit 700,000; the low, in 1993, fell to 200,000.) In 2001, Seiders expects a 7.3 percent drop in multifamily housing before the subsector rises again in 2002. The U.S. Department of Commerce reports that from January through August of 2000, multifamily starts rose 2.1 percent, but the number of building permits for apartments fell 7.6 below those in the same period of 1999.

All is not gloomy for multifamily housing, though, according to statistics from the National Association of Real Estate Investment Trusts (NAREIT), whose membership comprises publicly traded real-estate companies. In October, NAREIT reported that returns generated by trusts investing in multifamily housing stood at 21.5 percent of their stocks' value for the first three quarters of 2000. "Apartment REITs have proven to be the most consistent performer of all property sectors," observes Rod Petrik, REIT analyst at Legg Mason Wood Walker. Further, over the coming decade, the fastest growing segments of the population (18 to 24, and over 45) are precisely the people most likely to choose multifamily housing.

See all those strollers on the sidewalks? The school-age population is rising, too, which bodes well for architects who design for the education market. The number of kids ages 6 to 17 is expected to rise 8 percent by 2005 compared to 1995, after years of decline. Construction spending on schools fell in 1999 by 3.3 percent, but as the baby boomer unfolded and continued to cramp classrooms, building activity grew by 16 percent in the first three quarters of 2000. Indeed, schools made up

**Private Nonresidential Construction***Percentage Change**in Volume from January to August 2000***National Office Markets***Vacancy Rates for Selected Cities*

Education showed the greatest gains in the private nonresidential construction markets in the first several months of 2000, owing to a population boomlet in the 6- to 17-year-old age group. Industrial construction rebounded after a sharp drop in 1999. The hotel sector looks overbuilt in many markets, which accounts for the slight drop in construction volume. In the commercial office arena, the tightest vacancies, and hence the hottest areas for construction, lie around high tech markets on both coasts. Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Dallas, however, still struggle with an abundant supply of empty office space.

the hottest area of nonresidential construction last year, and are likely to continue to do so in 2001.

Schools are not the only ones bursting their belts. The national vacancy rate for commercial office space has fallen from a 1991 high of nearly 20 percent to 8 percent, but vacancies in several major markets were running between 1.2 percent (San Jose) and 4.2 percent (Washington, D.C.). As a result, rents spiked by an annualized rate of 16 percent—higher in technology-driven markets such as Boston, where a square foot of space costs \$41, explains Ray Torto of Torto Wheaton Research. Office construction volume is “returning to the level of the 1980s,” Torto notes. “Construction loans are really picking up and are already back to their previous highs.” But office buildings have moderated in size, with the typical downtown project at about 250,000 square feet and suburban projects averaging about 100,000 square feet, Torto says.

## **Internet-based retailers (or “e-tailers”) have been going under, but online business has helped the conventional retail sector grow at an annual clip of 5 percent.**

Analysts at the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation’s Division of Insurance, however, recently called 13 metropolitan markets at risk for overbuilding, but not there yet. A separate FDIC study found that the number of office markets in balance was greater than the number feeling the effects of oversupply, which came to only three: Dallas, Phoenix, and Salt Lake City are all currently seen as having more office space than lessors can absorb—those cities’ office vacancies stand between 12 and 15 percent. But just about everywhere else, tenants are lining up before new space even becomes available.

Industrial clients, on the other hand, are only now climbing out of the Asian financial turmoil of a few years ago, says Toal, which lowered demand for U.S. exports, swelled inventories, and slowed plant expansions. Industrial companies built 17 percent less in 1999 than they did the year before. But volume was up in 2000 by 3.6 percent.

In the retail world, economists have been watching Internet-based companies such as Pets.com and Garden.com go under, and are rethinking online firms’ potential as the next great new industrialists. It’s not as if there’s a shortage of money in consumers’ pockets; if an e-business won’t fly in this Gilded Age, it’ll never happen. When the current shakeout ends, look for only the most viable “e-tailers,” as they’re called, to survive, and don’t look to them for a lot of architectural business.

Online business has been helpful to the conventional retail sector, however, which has been growing 5 percent annually, says retail specialist Hugh Kelly, chief economist with Landauer Associates. And in case anyone still wonders, he says: E-commerce does not threaten retailers. Established retailers are the ones making *continued on page 104*



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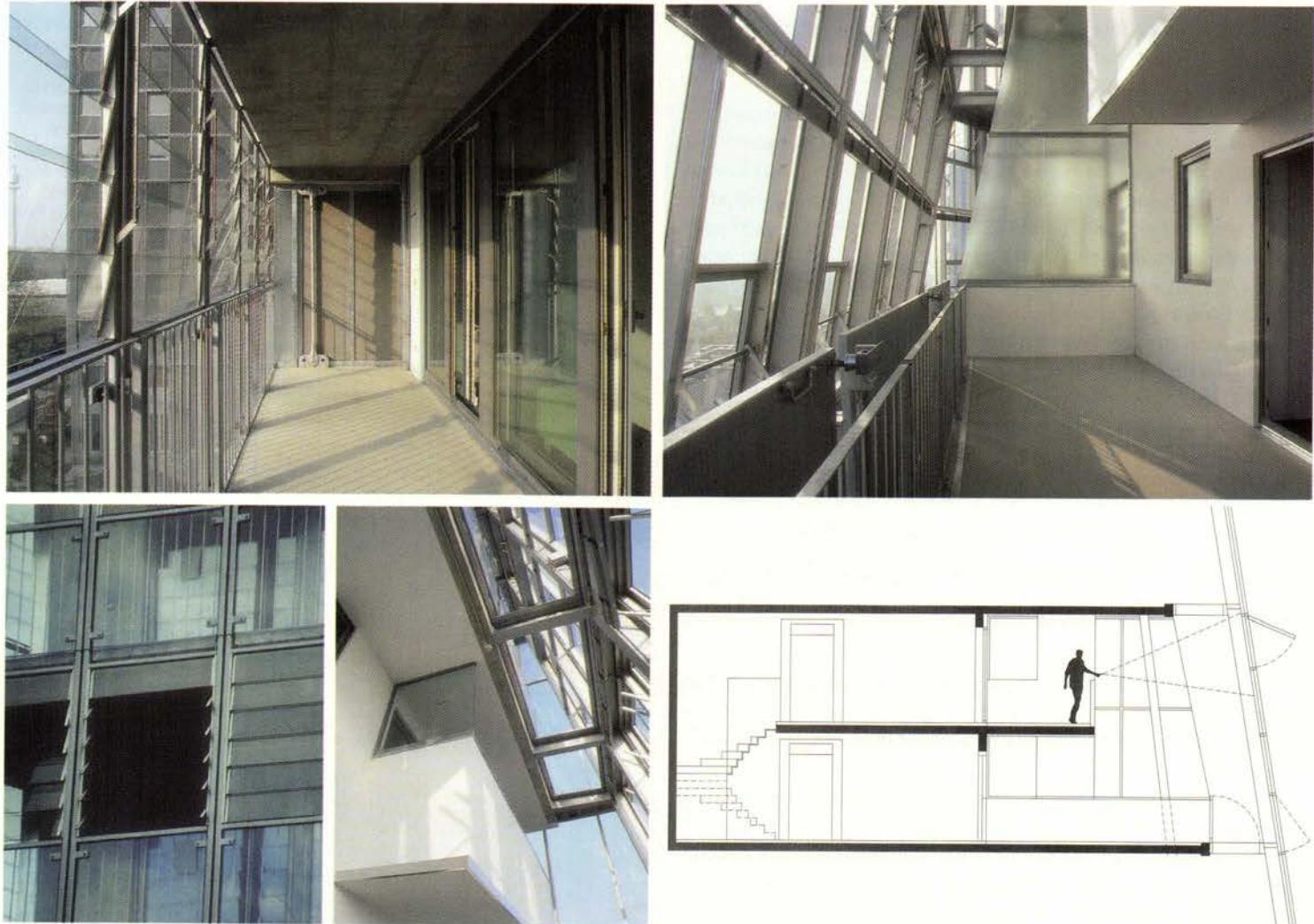
# Green Giant

Coop Himmelblau is known for its radical modernism. **Joseph Giovannini** discovers the firm's soft environmental underside.

**Environment** On an island of the Danube in the new district of Donau City, where Vienna's United Nations complex is located, a neighborhood of social housing towers has recently sprung up, and all but one march to the same drummer. Built with similar massing and height, they differ mostly in exterior styling. In Vienna, as everywhere else in a globalized economy of Manhattanized skylines, high-rise buildings have proved resistant to experimentation and change, constrained by precedent, engineering, codes, real-estate formulas, conservative financing, and the simple physics of the elevator.

Avowed enemies of the box, Wolf Prix and Helmut Swiczinsky, the two principals of Coop Himmelblau, have long believed that varied rather than uniform spaces enrich lives. With the SEG building, a project like any other in the city of Vienna's workaday "social housing" program, they designed a concrete-frame apartment tower that is conventional in its structure and morphology, but they reconceived the façade, public spaces, and air handling systems in ways that cumulatively radicalize the whole, and create the city's most significant "green" building. Each of the innovations is simple and relatively inexpensive, but their sum total proves that in architecture, as in chaos theory, simple systems can breed complexity. The architects paid for their innovations by using industrial materials: Galvanized-metal railings, subway grate fences, and other standardized off-the-shelf parts replaced the one-of-a-kind details and elegant materials that the architects usually try to design into their structures.

It is the SEG's Tower of Pisa profile that first lures people off their usual paths, inviting Viennese to be unexpected tourists in their own town. First, the architects cantilevered each of the 25 floors on the northwest face ever so slightly, so that the entire wall inclines at a 3-degree angle. The coordinated cantilever creates a line of apartments that grows wider on higher floors, so that the top apartments are noticeably bigger than the lower ones, and differently configured: This changing geometry allows different views, and the 3-degree slope of the wall makes the interiors intriguingly, but not uncomfortably, strange.



The dramatically sloped façades of Coop Himmelblau's SEG apartment tower in Vienna (facing page) serve as part of a simple, but effective, passive climate-control system. One façade, fitted with computer-controlled louvers, encloses a winter garden (top right and drawing, above right); tiers of apartment balconies overlook the 14-story space (above center). In other apartments, balconies are fitted with windows that can be opened manually (top left and above left).

On the southwest façade, a building-wide glass loggia with operable floor-to-ceiling louvers acts as a protected balcony that extends Vienna's outdoor season into the winter for all apartments. On the adjacent south-facing side of the building, the architects cantilever generous balconies of differing sizes within a leaning, all-glass, 14-story "climate lobby" fitted with computer-controlled louvers. This vertical winter garden is housed in a corner chamfered to catch breezes and maximize southern light, and residents now water their hydrangeas and geraniums all year long in the company of neighbors above, below, and to the side, as if on the terraced hillsides of Positano, Italy.

Internally the structure behaves like a lung. The climate lobby, an air exchange box on the roof, and an elevator shaft all work together to circulate warm and cool air in summer and winter. Computers control the

louvers on the chamfered and inclined glass wall. Here the louvered glass is independent of each terrace, bypassing the balconies and allowing air to circulate so freely that the louvered wall effectively forms a chimney that exhausts up through a vent at the top of the space. The rising hot air draws cool air through a vent off an elevator shaft. The fronts of each balcony are fitted with vents that flap shut in the event of a fire in the atrium. As on the southwest façade, the louvered wall acts to condition the air that forms a protective environmental blanket around the main structure.

There are 10 two-level apartments with double-height terraces within the climate lobby, as well as flats ranging in size from studios to three-bedrooms. The terraces and balconies on the south and southwest faces provide much-appreciated outdoor space. Enclosed in

glass, these exterior zones act as greenhouses, buffering the interiors with a protective layer of air. "The content is more important than the form," observes Prix.

Architects nurtured in the demonstrations of the '60s are especially conscious about how space helps shape a sense of community, and Prix and Swiczinsky created the open balconies in the climate lobby in what Prix calls a social experiment to warm up the frosty social life which is characteristic of most high-rises. Stacking floors in the usual pancake tends to isolate residents by cutting off any communication between stories, leaving only the lobby, elevator, and landings—venues for passing conversations at best.

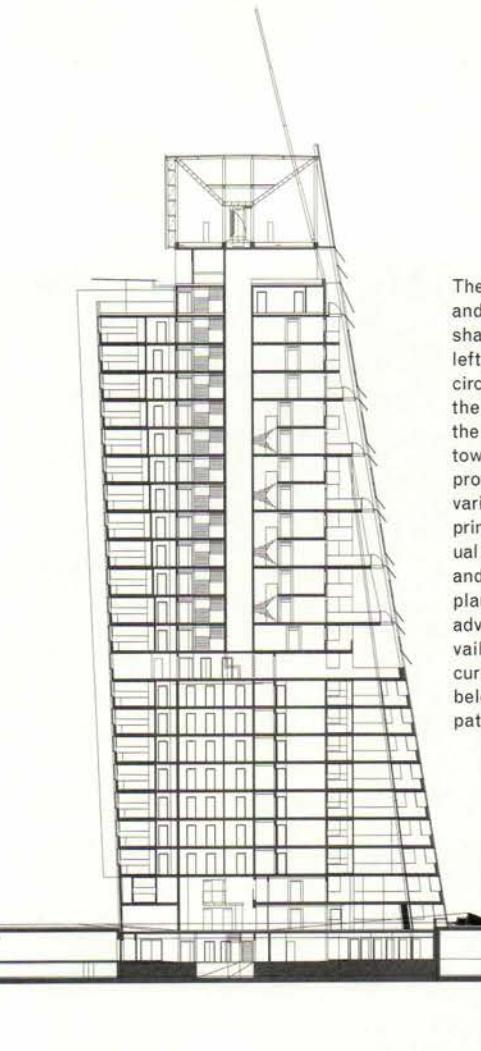
In addition to their Positano-like terraces, the architects have placed a clamorous, glass-enclosed bicycle garage next to a generous lobby to encourage community: On the ninth floor, they introduced a "sky lobby" made of several communicating rooms and a sundeck, for

## **Walter Czerny, on the 20th floor, has become a zealot of his apartment: "This is the spot where I can catch that Himmelblau moment."**

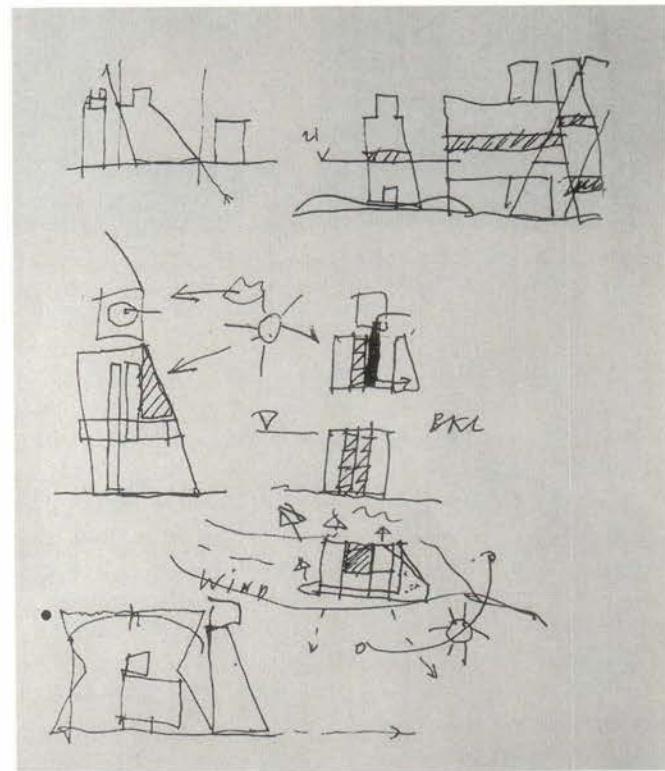
formal and informal meetings. The architects earned the space within unforgiving economics by shaving off several inches from the standard thickness of each floor slab; over the height of the building, the inches added up to an extra floor.

The autobiography as a living building can be read on the balcony façades, where cacti, ficus, and philodendra commingle with jeans and T-shirts hanging out to dry. Books sit on balcony ledges next to TV reception dishes. Walter Czerny, on the 20th floor, has become a zealot of his apartment. He likes to lunch in a corner where the balcony juts beyond a concrete structural wall. The small, angular, breathtaking perch, a little like a trapeze, gives him a vertiginous view of the sailboats and kayaks plying a back canal of the Danube. "This is the spot where I can catch that Himmelblau moment," says Mr. Czerny. "This is where I fly."

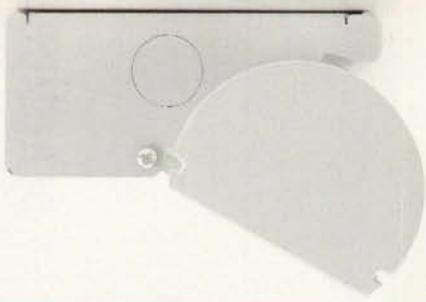
Chicago architect Louis Sullivan said that a tower should soar, but Emily Dickinson advised, in another context, "Make it slant"—that is, cultivate the unexpected. Coop Himmelblau's housing is one of the few buildings anywhere that both soars and slants, while performing the social roles of precipitating a sense of community among its occupants and protecting the environment. Within the tradition of social housing in Vienna, the architects have shifted the paradigm from the old socialist model, where the uniformity of the units emphasized the collective identity of the proletariat. The SEG tower instead is all about the individuality of a different era: the variety of the units, plans tailored to each occupant, the uniqueness rather than conformity of the part within a whole, which itself is deliberately and philosophically eccentric. Rare is the high-rise typology rethought—from its skin to its core. ■



The winter garden and a central air shaft (drawing, left) allow air to circulate through the center of the building. The tower's leaning profile lends variety to the footprints of individual apartments, and is angled in plan to take advantage of prevailing wind currents (sketch, below) and the path of the sun.



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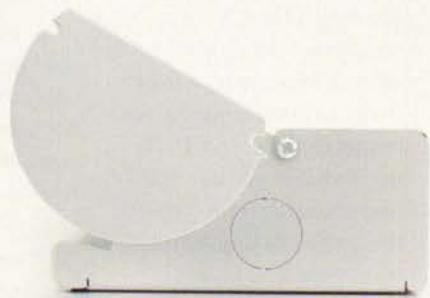
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#### Politics

#### Suburban Sprawl's New Scapegoat

The television ad aired recently in northern Virginia looks predictable enough: It shows traffic-choked roads and earth movers making way for new suburban settlements. A voice warns of the destruction of the region's idyllic horse country by "run-away" population growth. But it's not an environmental group making this doomsday appeal—it's an anti-immigrant outfit called the Coalition for the Future of the American Worker, which is backed by the Federation for American Immigration Reform. But neo-nationalists are not the only ones who have decided that a fear of foreigners feeds handily into anti-sprawl rhetoric: A faction within the Sierra Club that calls itself Sierrans for U.S. Population Stabilization is pushing a referendum within the conservation group to make tighter immigration controls an official policy goal.

"Mass immigration is the engine driving the U.S. to double its population next century," says the maverick Sierrans' Web site, "and thus needs to be discussed as an active component of Sierra Club population policy." The conflict has presented a vulnerability on which, with the mother club's bête noire, the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), has pounced. "The vote is being pushed by rank-and-file Sierra Club activists," not renegades, insists Gary Hambly, president and CEO of the Home Builders Association of Northern California in San Ramon, accusing the Sierra Club of being "connected with anti-immigration groups."

Last spring, the NAHB estimated that the country will need 15 million new homes over the next decade to meet the demand of new households, and attributed part of the demand to immigrants. Slightly fewer than 1 million people immigrate to the U.S. legally each year. The anti-immigrant Federation for American Immigration Reform in Washington jumped on NAHB's statistics nonetheless, claiming that, yes, indeed, mass immigration is one of sprawl's "root causes." This may surprise some recent immigrants to suburbia who arrived to find it pretty well established—by all those immigrants who preceded them. *B.M.*

# Doing Justice?

The prison boom in the U.S. has been good to architects, but how much has it helped reduce crime? New estimates vary. **Bradford McKee** looks at the numbers.

#### Justice

With the popularity of three-strikes laws, mandatory minimum sentences for nonviolent drug crimes, and truth-in-sentencing rules guiding the courts, architects who design prisons and jails have had their hands full of work over the past several years. The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that the nation spends about \$25 billion per year building and operating prisons, about \$1.3 billion of which goes toward construction and renovation of prison facilities. The federal prison budget rose by 160 percent between 1990 and 1996, and the country now has about 2 million people behind bars—four times the number it did 20 years ago. Crime rates dropped dramatically, by as much as 8 to 10 percent nationwide in 1999. But are the two phenomena linked? Several new studies by justice experts indicate that the effect of rising incarceration rates on falling crime rates may be moderate to negligible.

In September, the nonprofit Sentencing Project, a Washington, D.C.-based research group, released the results of a state-by-state survey suggesting that the states with the highest increases in prisoner population saw the lowest reductions in crime. Twenty states where prisoner populations swelled most (an average 72 percent rise) between 1991 and 1998 experienced a 13 percent drop in crime, whereas the remaining 30 states, where inmate populations rose an average 30 percent, saw crime drop by an average of 17 percent. The findings, said Jenni Gainsborough, a coauthor of the study, "shed serious doubt" on the idea that falling crime rates can be attributed to higher incarceration levels.

Texas, for instance, had the highest jump in prisoner population—144 percent—during the seven years the Sentencing Project studied, while crime in Texas dropped by 35 percent. California's incarceration rate, however, rose by only 52 percent and that state saw a 36 percent drop in crime. Figures from New York show that its prisoner count went up by only 24 percent, yet its crime dropped by 43 percent.

The most influential factors in the 1990s nationwide crime drop, the Sentencing Project contends, were a strong economy (especially low unemployment), shifts in the drug trade (particularly the wane of crack cocaine use), and innovative policing tactics.

But the estimated cost of preventing one murder in the past decade came to \$13.4 million per year and, statistically speaking, meant locking up 670 prisoners, says University of Missouri-St. Louis criminology professor Richard Rosenfeld. His latest study, published in a new book



titled *The Crime Drop in America* (Cambridge), suggests that the recent spike in incarceration rates may be responsible for 25 percent of the drop in the homicide rate.

Yet, criminology specialists differ on the degree to which they believe imprisonment has cut crime. In the same book carrying Rosenfeld's study, a report by William Spelman, a public policy professor at the University of Texas at Austin, concluded much the same, that incarceration gets credit for one-quarter of the recent crime-rate drop. Yet another recent analysis by Anne Piehl, a public policy professor at Harvard University, finds that between 1989 and 1999, only 5 percent of crime reduction could be chalked up to incarceration alone.

Regardless of whether more prisons mean less crime, Rosenfeld

Architect DMJM shaved off the top of Wallens Ridge in Big Stone, Virginia, to build this new prison for the Virginia Department of Corrections. Correctional facilities have become a specialty of DMJM's, which has latched on to the huge demand for prisons and jails nationwide. Falling crime rates, though, may spell a slowdown in that end of architects' business.

maintains, if crime rates continue to fall, architects who design prisons may find themselves with fewer projects. Politicians have had an easy time scaring the public into building more prisons while crime rates were rising. Not only does less crime translate to fewer inmates over time, but as crime rates drop, the public may start to look at those expenditures more skeptically, knowing that, ultimately, they bear the costs of building and operating new facilities. ■

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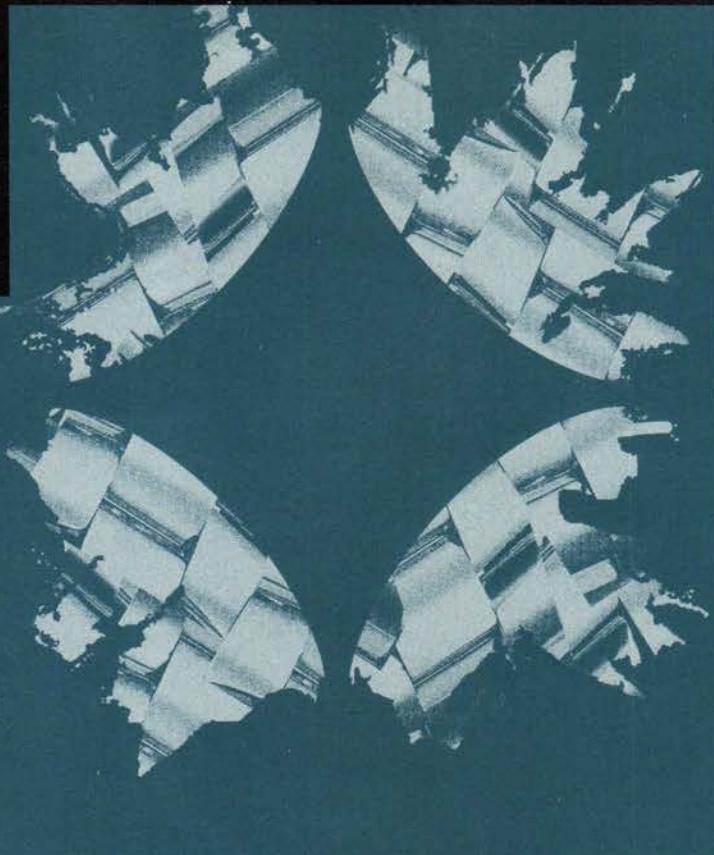
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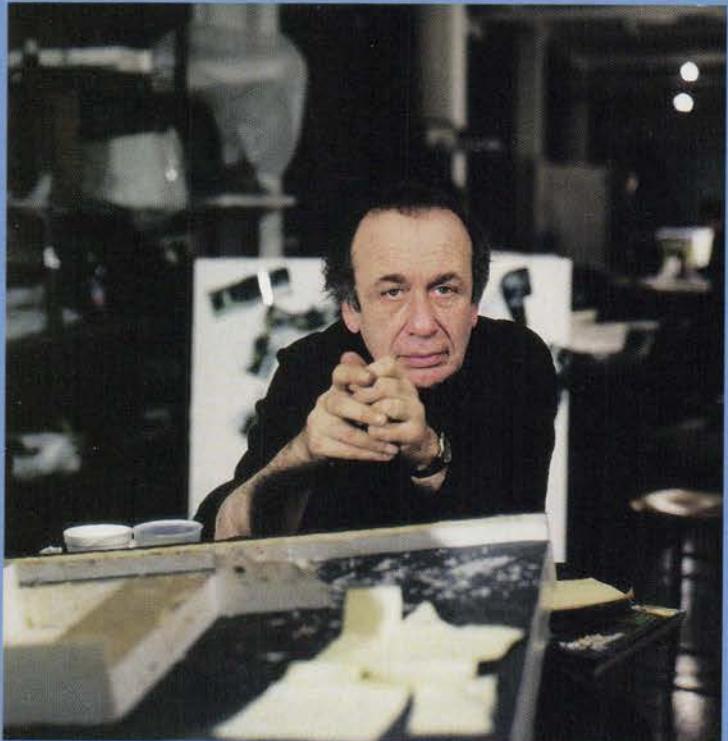
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# Culture

**Nicholas Adams**  
on the Nordic Chunnel  
**page 56**

**Raul A. Barreneche**  
on Aluminium in Design  
**page 58**

**Cathy Lang Ho**  
on *Flight Patterns*  
**page 60**



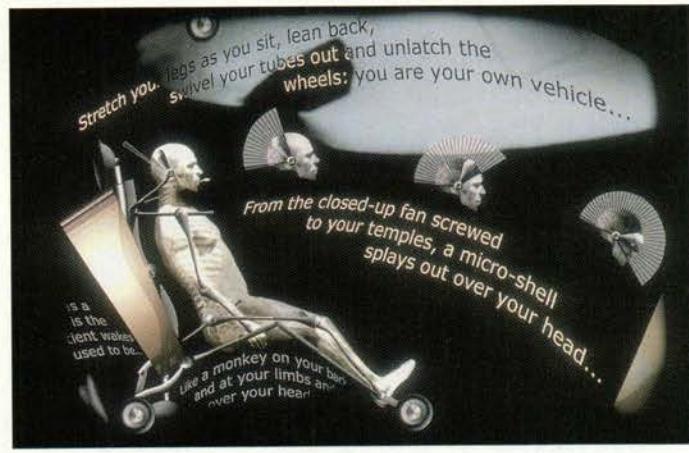
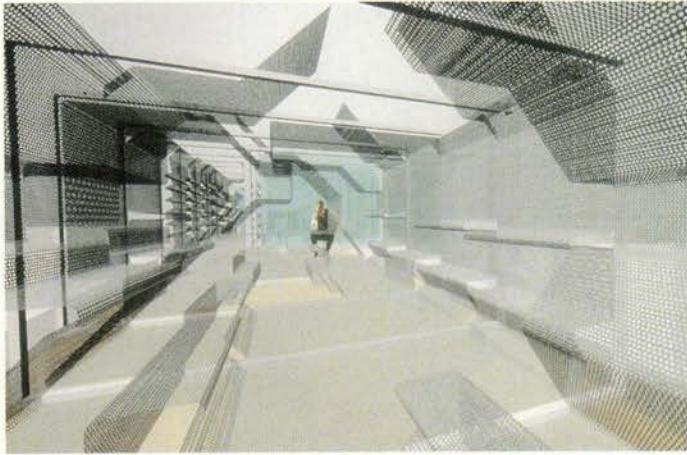
## Curriculum Vito

Since the 1970s Vito Acconci's performance art and installations have actively engaged both people and public places. He tells **Cathy Lang Ho** why architecture is his focus now.

**Interview** Vito Acconci crops up in art histories under a range of categories—conceptual, performance, body, and installation art, to name a few. But he remains absent from architectural annals, despite the fact that, for 10 years now, he has not undertaken independent art projects, having founded his own design practice, Acconci Studio, in 1990. Though not trained as an architect, most of his staff of seven are. Out of his Brooklyn studio, they produce a dozen or so design projects a year, mostly commissions for public works.

**Your arrival to architecture follows an interesting trajectory—from writing to performance to installations to public art. How do you explain this progression?**

When I was writing, I found myself mostly interested in the question of movement—how you move across a page, how you move from left margin



Interior scheme for the MAK Center store (Vienna); the entire space is sheathed in perforated metal, which is bent to form a continuous landscape of benches, counters, steps, and shelves (top). Children can climb inside and outside the Klein Bottle Playground, a sort of 3-D Möbius strip (center). *World in Your Bones* (1998) is a study of exoskeletal architecture (bottom). For a walkway and entrance to the subway station in Shibuya, Japan (2000), screens of mirrored steel and polycarbonate turn passing traffic into flickers of images (facing page).

to right margin, from page to page. I was using the page as a field for movement. I was interested in parts that existed as a route.

But while writing, I always thought I wasn't really a writer. This concern with movement started to become the movement of me: "I do things to myself." Eventually, [the performance pieces] felt too self-enclosed. I had been treating "self" as something that could be isolated, but by the 1970s, a lot of people, including myself, had very different notions of self—we thought of self as a kind of system of feelers that only existed because of a social, cultural, and political system. I felt I had to do something with other people. I began to think of art as a way an artist or a person in a gallery or room could meet other persons in the room. To me, art was a kind of exchange, a kind of meeting place. I started to do more installations, treating the gallery as a sort of town square.

#### **Your art was transforming space into a public forum.**

I had been using exhibition spaces as a place for people to come together anyway, but then I started thinking, Now that they're here, could some community be formed? They have something to see and to listen to, but there's nothing they can do. I started thinking more about how people could create and use the spaces they're in. I always thought of space as a kind of event for people. In the 1980s, the pieces became a sort of "self-erecting architecture." In one piece, there were four panels on the floor, covered with American flags. There's a swing hanging above them, and when a person sits in it and swings, the panels rise up around him, making it an instant house. I guess that's where the pieces started to get more architectural.

#### **Is it worth distinguishing between art that is architectural, and architecture that is artful?**

As far as my own work was concerned, I just started to doubt that it had anything to do with art, and felt it had more to do with architecture and landscape architecture. My work always grew out of its immediate context or the landscape. A lot of my 1980s work played with the conventions of house, but I realized that even if they have a function—as a sign—you still can't live in them. That's when I began to feel that my work had to be more than just demonstrations. I wanted it to be buildings or spaces that *remained*. But projects that are permanent and exist in a public space can't start from one person's work alone. If you start something private, it ends private. That's why I started Acconci Studio [in 1990].

#### **Was the transition difficult to make?**

I did a show at the MoMA in 1988 called *Public Places*, and after that I thought, I have to take this seriously—I really have to do stuff in public places, which means I have to work the way an architect works. What I like about public spaces is that people walk by or pass through them. What bothers me about a lot of art is that people have to first make the decision that they are going to be an art viewer, and then go to see an artwork or installation. I'm more interested in the passerby than the art viewer. People decide for themselves whether or not the space is useful.

culture





Acconci intervened on the lowest and highest points of the Munich Buildings Department Administration Building (2000). On the landscaped courtyard, he incised a ring which turns slowly, powered by a wind turbine atop the office tower. The landscape becomes a barometer: Its movement signals that the wind is blowing.

**But your designs do straddle the ground between art or folly and architectural or landscape design. For example, for your bicycle parking lot in a park in the Hague, you've elevated the lot among trees, which makes its access challenging.**

When we're doing it, a friend of mine said the same thing: "It's so difficult for a person to go up a ramp to park a bicycle." But at the same time, elevating it creates more space below to make something else—a covered garden or something. You also create the opportunity for users to have a more varied experience, different views, and so on.

It's not that we want to make things hard for people. We want these things to mix with the world around them. We are trying to create a fluid, changing space, where you're not sure where the boundaries are. Even

with my early installations, I never wanted to have a thing within a space, but rather, wanted to have a space become a thing, or a thing become a space. I wanted the landscape to become the architecture, or the architecture to sink back into the landscape, so that you would have fluid, continuous space—so you don't separate a thing from its surroundings.

Why is this important to me? The absence of any hierarchy means that a user or person can determine what's more important, at whatever different times. I'm a child of the 1960s, when the thinking was: People are instrumental, they decide how to use something instead of being told how to use it. That is the basis for most of our work.

**How did you come to the equation that public art is architecture?**  
It's important to me that my work is in the public realm, and that it's useful. What do either of these things mean, anyway? "Art" is just a way of thickening the plot. I don't know what separates us from practices like Bernard Tschumi's or Asymptote's.

**You probably face the same dilemma that many experimental architects face: When the work appears to be wild and wiggly, many people have a difficult time relating to them as real, viable design projects.**

Sometimes people like wiggles. Builders don't, but people do. In a lot of our work, we take space and turn it inside out or upside down—and people feel liberated by that. Sometimes wiggles inspire people to feel involved, invigorated. Wiggles can tie people together, just as it ties itself together.

**Is buildability important to you?**

I do think it's important to build. Nothing we do is ever purely fantasy. They might be difficult, they might cost more, but none of these things are impossible—in most cases, the technology to realize them does exist. And every project, whether it's built or unbuilt, is a study, a model. For example, the World Health Organization/UNICEF commissioned us to design a playground that could be produced in numbers and installed in many different countries. We had to have something that would have its own space. We came up with a playground that we're calling the Klein Bottle, which is a sort of 3-D Möbius strip. The neck of the bottle comes out then goes back inside of itself, so that inside and outside get mixed up. It would be transparent, made of some form of molded polycarbonate. It's a continuous space, from inside to outside. I don't know if it's going to get made, but regardless, it will be a model for other things. The Klein Bottle Playground could be the Klein Bottle House. Or it could be a model for a city.

**How does your identity as an artist affect your ability to work as a designer?**

We are fortunate that we are asked to a lot of different kinds of things—like a skateboard park in Avignon, the design shop for the MAK Center in Vienna, a light installation/phone booths in the new San Francisco Airport terminal, a new city on a garbage dump in Tel Aviv. But we would love to be asked to do a building or a private house. ■

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**Aural Fixation****Sound Architecture**

If the elevator spawned the invention of Muzak, what musical genre will arise out of the designer hotel? The answer may be in the hands of London-based consultancy Sound Architecture, which has drummed up a throbbing business over the last year by supplying sounds for those quintessentially dawn-of-the-21st-century spaces, including: the sultanic Serena bar at New York's Chelsea Hotel, various Starck-designed interiors of Ian Schrager's transatlantic dominion and the 100-foot-high atrium of Sir Terence Conran's new Great Eastern Hotel in London.

Fashioning itself as a bona fide design operation, Sound Architecture has a vocabulary to match. The team goes into a new hotel at "hard hat stage," according to cofounder Dan Lywood

(above, at left), a graphic designer turned DJ, sizes up the space, specifies a sound system and then stipulates what to play on it. The result is an "aural interior" design solution to match the caliber of the architecture, he says. At the Great Eastern, for example, with its echoing atrium and mid-century modern furniture, Lywood and his partner Tim Soar (above, at right), also a graphic designer-DJ, designed a soundscape mixing "minimal electronic with lush classical," culminating once a month with a staged performance of esoteric electronica from Germany. "We're trying to get across the idea that if you spend a million pounds on the interior of your hotel, you can't open and expect the music to appear out of nowhere," says Lywood, "or send Bob the barman out to buy some CDs from Tower Records." *Peter Hall*

# Dire Straits

Intended to foster Scandinavia's growth as an economic super-region, the new Øresund bridge appears to be a flop. **Nicholas Adams** jaunts between Sweden and Denmark to find out why.

**City**

Last July, the Øresund Fixed Link, or Øresundbron, connecting Copenhagen, Denmark's capital, and Malmö, Sweden's third-largest city, opened to much fanfare. Designed to heal the 10-million-year-old rift in the earth's surface that placed Denmark on one side a five-mile strait of water and Sweden on the other, the bridge has been praised as both visionary and expeditious: The big idea behind the Øresundbron—a \$2 billion venture funded by both the Danish and Swedish governments, completed on time and under budget—was to stitch together a new super-region that would be able to compete with Europe's economic powerhouses. You could almost hear Mother Europe's corsets pop. Small and Medium had become Large and Xtra-Large almost overnight!

Yet every bridge has its share of potholes. Øresundbron's became apparent when road traffic plummeted from more than 15,000 a day in its opening months to barely 6,000 this fall. Summer travelers melted away with the colder weather, and as the novelty of the bridge wore off, the hard truth of its high tolls hit the pavement. One-way fares of about \$27 have deterred many; even companies with business in both countries have gone so far as to ban employees from using the bridge, instructing them to use the cheaper, if slower, ferries.

The 10-mile link was intended to unify the Scandinavian countries economically—as well as culturally and symbolically. Its planners envisioned Swedes munching pastries in Copenhagen cafes, and Danes taking in art exhibitions across the strait. They also hoped that the "Nordic Chunnel" would boost and spread foreign tourism in the region. But the jaunt is not as easy as it should be. I recently qualified as a perfect candidate for the cultural tourist anticipated by bridge backers: Finding myself free in Lund (north of Malmö), I decided to spend an afternoon sightseeing in Copenhagen. Though admittedly a nervous driver and an English speaker with minimal Swedish, I had difficulty finding the entrance to the bridge! I never saw the word "Øresundbron" or even a bridge symbol. Here I was, eager to experience the new Europe, armed with platinum cards and curiosity, and I couldn't find the on-ramp. Eventually I was set right, but the high tolls persuaded me to make the crossing by the much cheaper train on the bridge's lower deck.

Access to the bridge seems more an insider's backway than a transnational junction, perhaps because the management of auto traffic has been a touchy issue since the project began. With Scandinavia's strong green movement, environmental issues have occupied a significant part of the bridge debate from the outset and played a role in



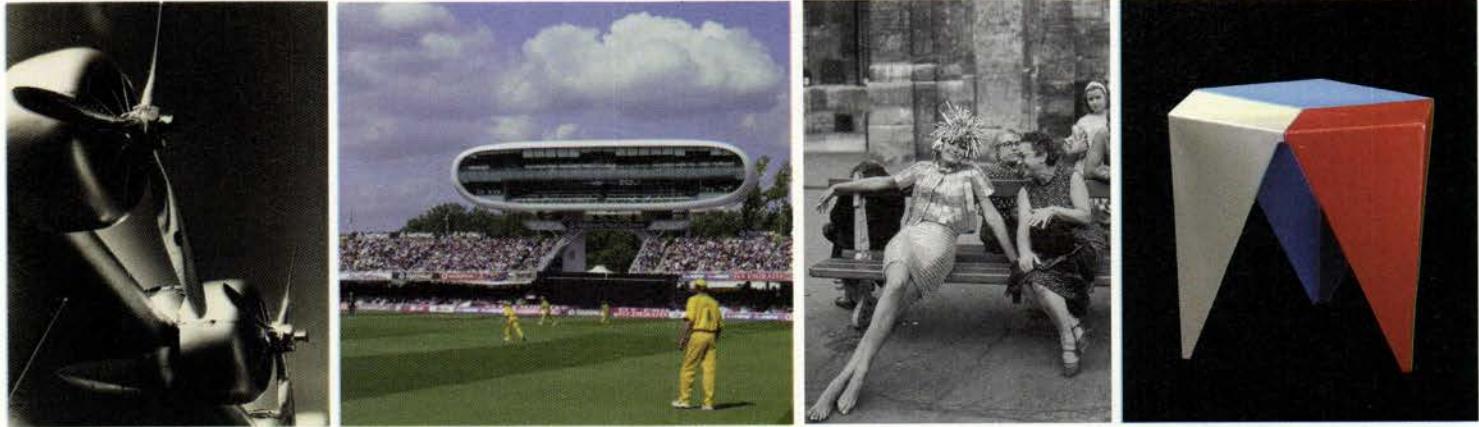
mapping the routes. Environmentalists have acknowledged that engineers did an excellent job of protecting wildlife during the bridge's construction on land and over water. Still, auto traffic is auto traffic, and it spells pollution. Further, the new access roads and entry exchanges have brought—along with office parks for the relatively eco-friendly high-tech firms that every city seems to want—American-style shopping centers and vast asphalt parking lots.

"It is a catch-22," says Anders Roth, formerly a traffic analyst for the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation. "Without more cars, the bridge will not pay for itself and taxes will have to be raised; with more cars they will violate environmental standards and create more pollution." The Øresundbron authorities know on which side its crisp bread is buttered. With a massive debt and pledges to make the bridge entirely self-sufficient, they are now pushing a discount plan for frequent users (the more you travel, the more you save). What all this means, of course, is more cars and more pollution.

Environmentalists and skeptics challenged the bridge for these very reasons all along. Early on, some advocated a shorter link between the

Swedish town of Helsingborg and the Danish burg of Helsingør (north of the current bridge). "It would have been cheaper and more efficient," says urban historian Thomas Hall of Stockholm University. But local politicians in Malmö and Copenhagen favored the fixed link for obvious reasons—more commercial and cultural opportunities. The current site is also more southerly; in other words, closer to Europe. "The goal is to tie the countries to Europe with a modern road system," says Copenhagen architect and journalist Allan de Waal. "Their next project is the cross-Zealand motorway and bridge which will make it possible to drive directly from Copenhagen to Hamburg or Berlin." To American ears it all sounds very familiar. (Is Robert Moses smiling?)

Øresundbron's achievements, so far, are slight. Newspapers have had their fun with stories of Swedes dashing off to Denmark for cheap beer, and Danes going to Sweden for cheap building materials. "The truth is," says de Waal, "while Malmö has many appealing things, I have only been there twice in the last 20 years. And even with the bridge, I am probably not going to change my habits. The Øresundbron is a very long-term proposal." That's exactly what its builders have banked on. ■



Left to right: Margaret Bourke-White's photograph of the Sikorsky airplane, ca. 1934; the NatWest Media Center by Future Systems (1999), at the Lord's Cricket Ground, London. Paco Rabanne disc dress, photographed in Paris (1968). Isamu Noguchi's painted aluminum Alcoa Forecast Program tables (1957).

# Metal-Morphosis

Aluminum has been fashioned into everything from jewelry to dresses, airships to architecture. **Raul A. Barreneche** reviews related exhibitions that explore this once precious, now common metal.

**Review** Andrew Carnegie's steel empire made him one of the world's richest men, and Pittsburgh, his adopted hometown, one of the most polluted cities on the globe. Aluminum production joined steel manufacturing as Pittsburgh's top industries during World War II, just a decade before the city abdicated industrial brawn for cleaner pursuits, like finance, high-tech, and culture. Fifty years later, the legacy of metal is being remembered—appropriately, by one of the institutions that emerged as a result of local robber barons' far-reaching philanthropy.

The Carnegie Museum of Art has produced three related exhibitions devoted to objects made from the once precious, now common metal: *Aluminum by Design: Jewelry to Jets* is a sweeping survey supplemented by *Alumi-Nuts: Collectors' Confessions*, which showcases aluminum decorative objects from the private collections of local aficionados. And, the Carnegie Museum's Heinz Architectural Center has organized *Aluminum in Contemporary Architecture*, a small exhibit of aluminum's architectural applications in the last decade.

*Aluminum by Design* traces the soft alloy's evolution from a decorative precious metal in the mid-1800s to the cheap, recyclable container of soft drinks today. Austrian architect Otto Wagner pioneered aluminum's architectural use in his gilded fin-de-siècle façades, including the Postal Savings Bank in Vienna (1906), in which bolts capped with aluminum heads were both a constructional device and a decorative motif.

Inexpensive, readily available, easy to manipulate, strong, and lightweight, aluminum was a crucial commodity during World War II. After the war, however, manufacturers had to push designers to find new uses for the metal, to keep their idle plants going. Designers from Isamu

Noguchi to Charles and Ray Eames began looking to this polished metal, and along the way, aluminum came to symbolize the very essence of modernity. *Aluminum by Design* charts its evolution and symbolism up to the present, from Paco Rabanne's iconic aluminum-disc dress of 1969 to the innovative recent furniture of Ron Arad and Marc Newson.

*Aluminum in Contemporary Architecture* focuses on nine recent buildings which demonstrate different aspects of the material's suitability to architecture. For Norman Foster's Scottish Exhibition and Conference Center in Glasgow (1998), huge rolls of aluminum are draped on an armadillo-like steel structure. Future Systems' NatWest Media Center at Lord's Cricket Ground in London (1994) is a semi-monocoque aluminum pod, in which the shell is both skin and structure.

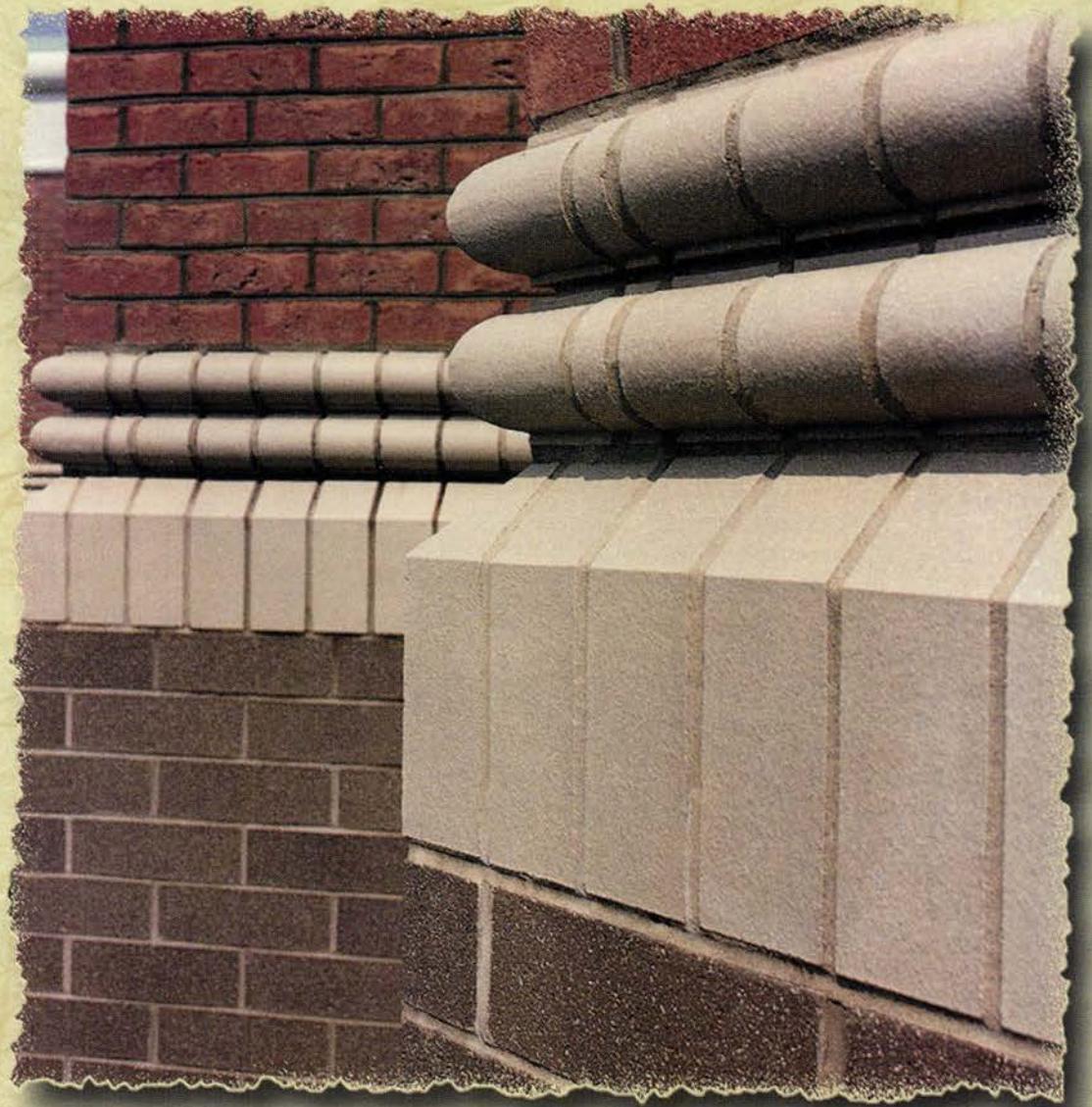
In tracing aluminum's overlooked history, Carnegie's three exhibitions demonstrate that its economy, performance, and seemingly limitless aesthetic possibilities still draw designers to this malleable metal, over a hundred years after its discovery. ■

**Aluminum by Design: Jewelry to Jets and Alumi-Nuts: Collectors' Confessions**, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, through February 11, 2001. Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, New York, March 2-July 15, 2001.

**Aluminum in Contemporary Architecture**, Heinz Architectural Center at the Carnegie Museum of Art, through February 4, 2001.

*Raul A. Barreneche is a former senior editor of Architecture.*

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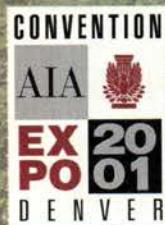
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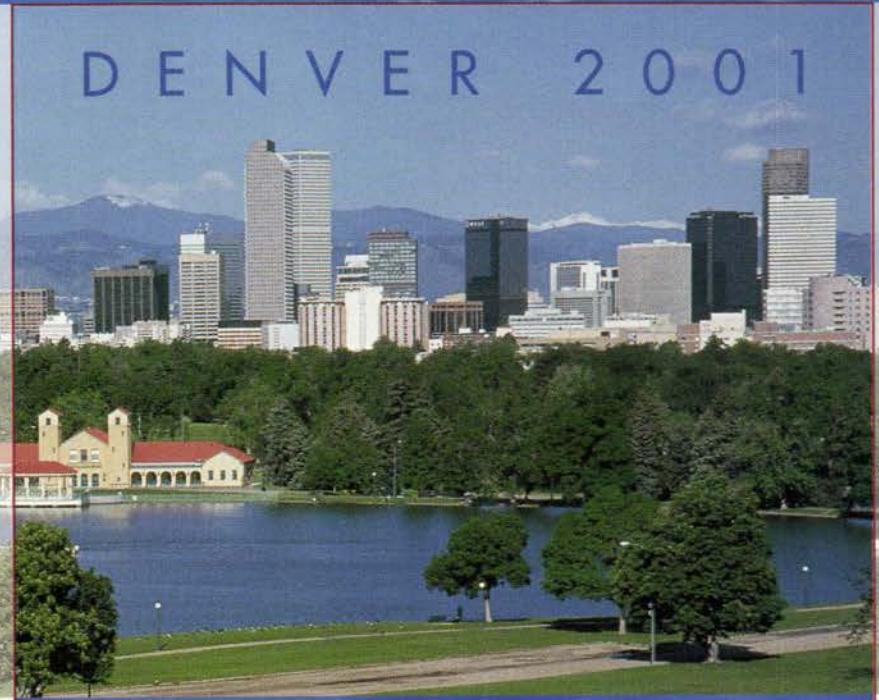
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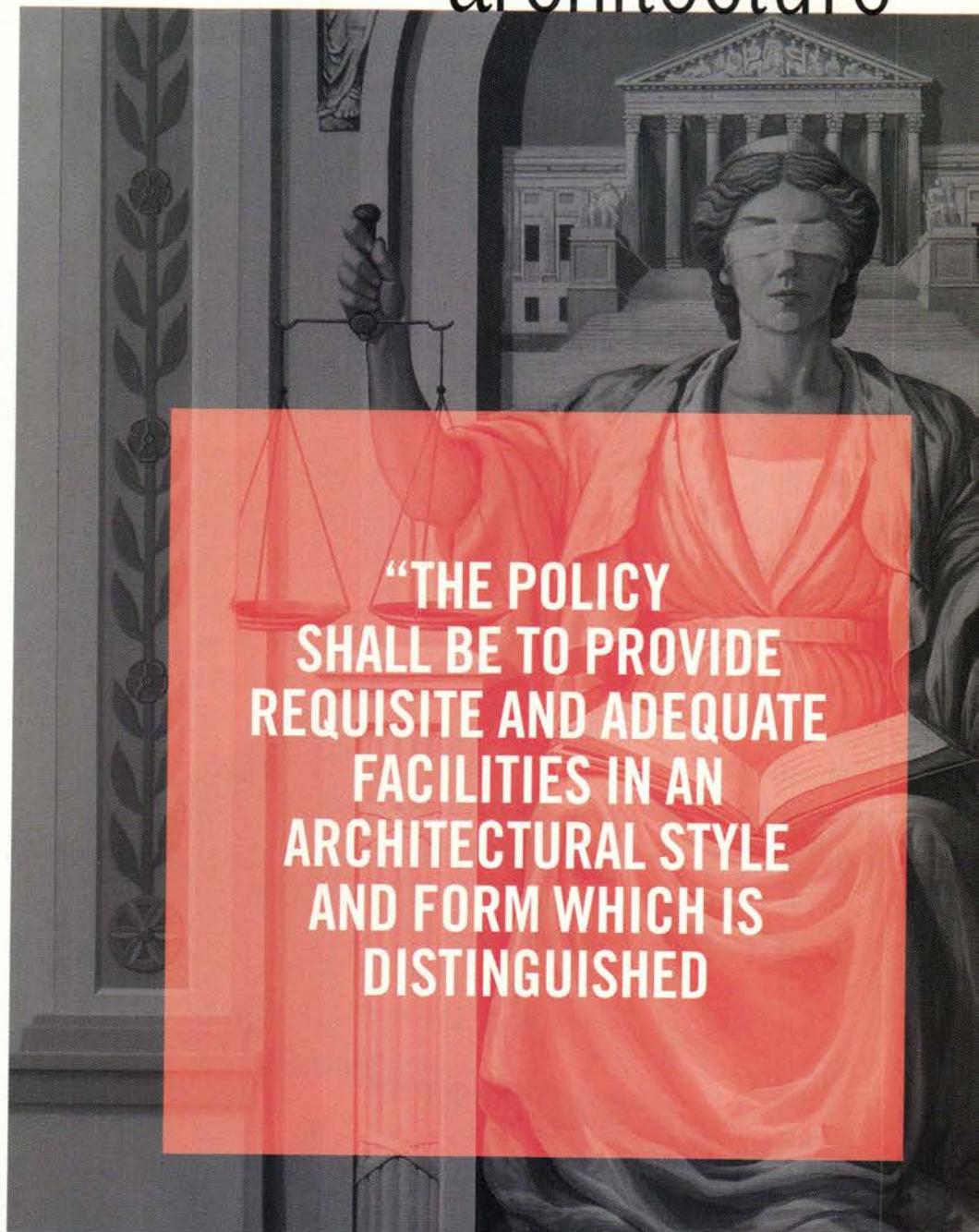
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# architecture



Is the United States General Services Administration's (GSA) much-heralded Design Excellence Program living up to its name? In an age of stylistic pluralism, the program has mandated individual architects to search for a new language of federal architecture. The January 1996 issue of *Architecture* introduced the program, featuring the formally diverse designs of more than 30 new courthouses (most of them under construction or waiting to be built); the cover trumpeted "A New Era" for federal architecture. With a spate of opening ceremonies last fall, the number of courthouses executed from start to finish under the purview of the Design Excellence Program now totals nine (a photo of each appears on the following pages). The new era, it seems, is finally at hand. This issue asks the question, was it worth the wait?

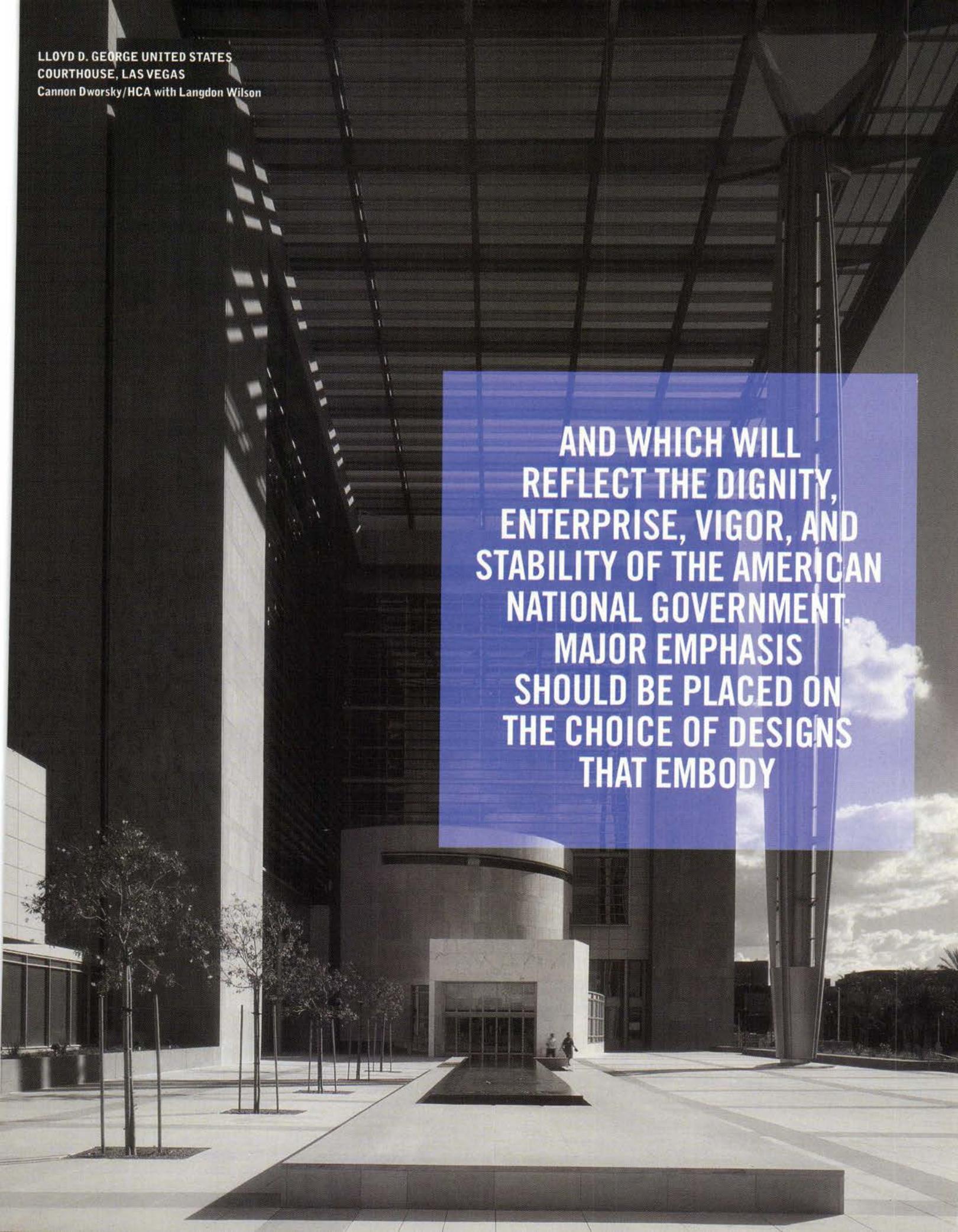
A mural of blind justice, painted by Richard Haas, adorns the lobby of Robert A.M. Stern's Beckley, West Virginia, courthouse and federal building.



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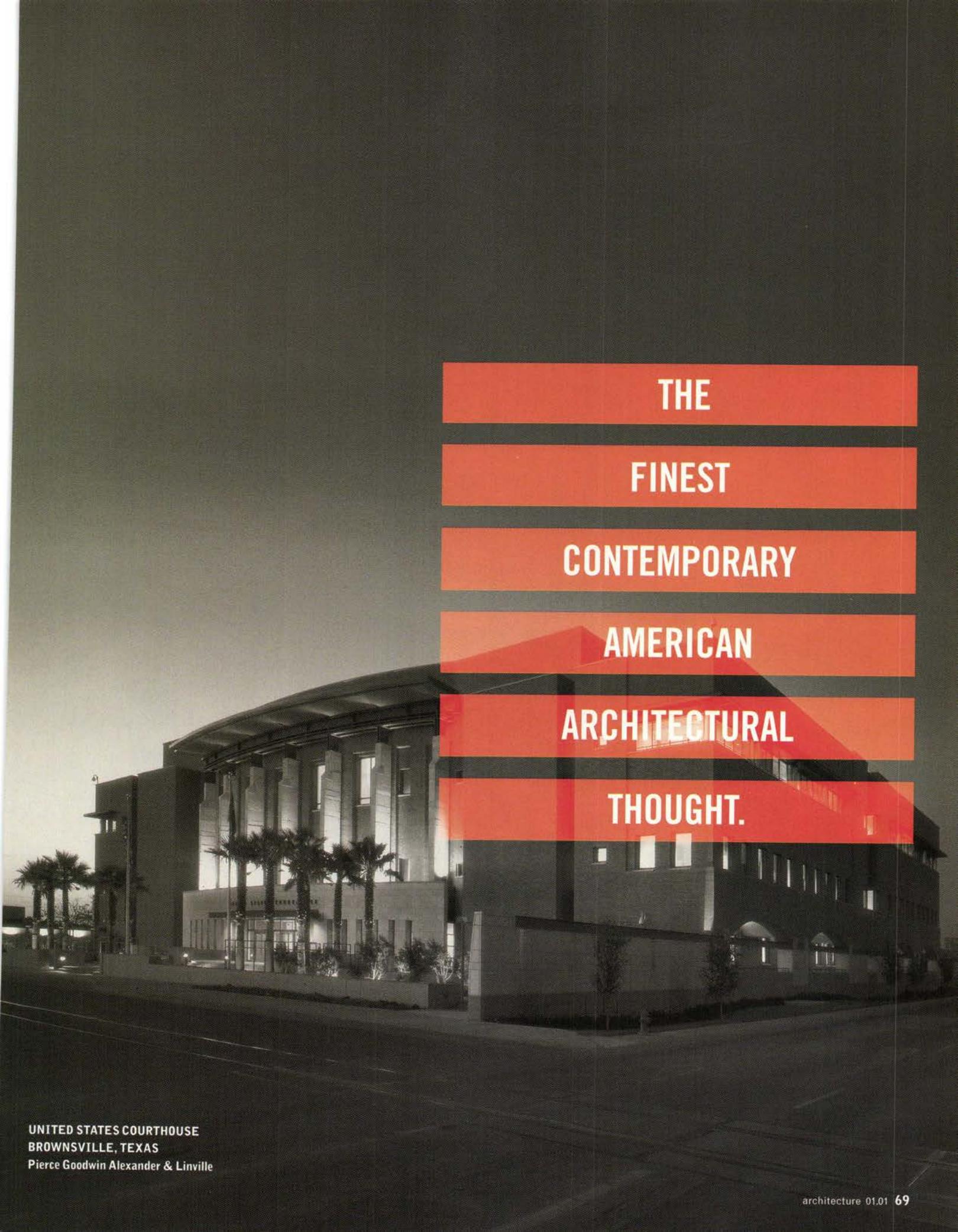
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AND WHICH WILL  
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STABILITY OF THE AMERICAN  
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT.  
MAJOR EMPHASIS  
SHOULD BE PLACED ON  
THE CHOICE OF DESIGNS  
THAT EMBODY

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Richard Meier & Partners and the Spector Group



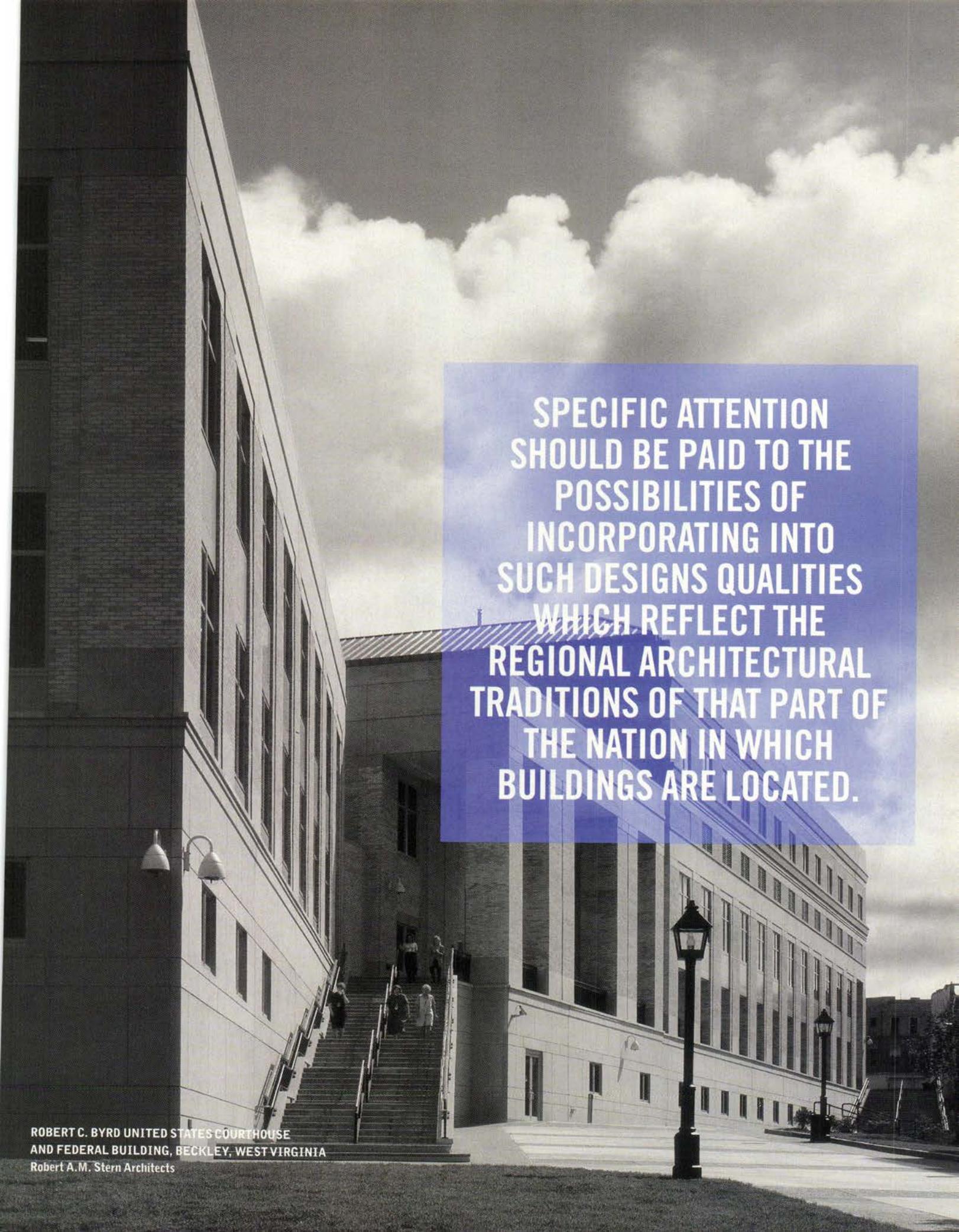


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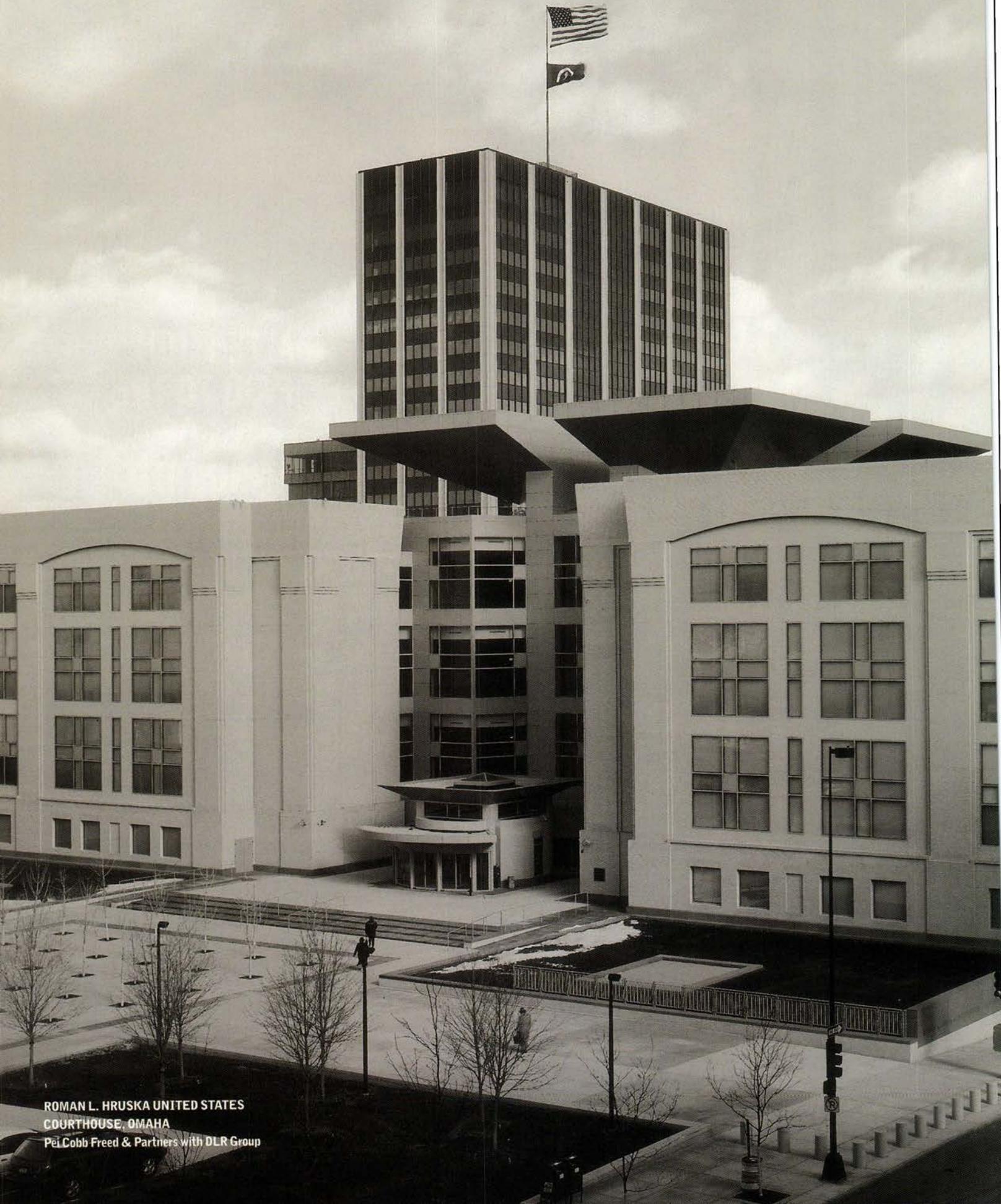
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AND UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE,  
SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA  
Bohlin Cywinski Jackson with Hemmle + Camayd  
and Ricci Associates





SPECIFIC ATTENTION  
SHOULD BE PAID TO THE  
POSSIBILITIES OF  
INCORPORATING INTO  
SUCH DESIGNS QUALITIES  
WHICH REFLECT THE  
REGIONAL ARCHITECTURAL  
TRADITIONS OF THAT PART OF  
THE NATION IN WHICH  
BUILDINGS ARE LOCATED.

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WHERE APPROPRIATE,  
FINE ART SHOULD  
BE INCORPORATED IN THE  
DESIGNS, WITH EMPHASIS  
ON THE WORK OF  
LIVING AMERICAN  
ARTISTS....



**BUILDINGS SHALL BE  
ECONOMICAL TO BUILD,  
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AND SHOULD BE  
ACCESSIBLE TO THE  
HANDICAPPED.**

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**THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF AN OFFICIAL STYLE MUST  
BE AVOIDED.  
DESIGN MUST FLOW  
FROM THE ARCHITECTURAL  
PROFESSION TO THE  
GOVERNMENT,  
AND NOT VICE VERSA....”**

FROM THE *GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FEDERAL ARCHITECTURE* REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT  
BY THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON FEDERAL OFFICE SPACE, JUNE 1962

**ESSAY** Seven years after launching a nationwide drive to elevate federal architectural standards, the agency responsible for federal building projects is proclaiming victory. Indeed, perhaps not since Benjamin Latrobe substituted home-grown corncobs and tobacco leaves for acanthus fronds atop pillars in the U.S. Capitol have American architects so eagerly sought to reinvent the government's built image.

Thirty-one new federal courthouses have now been completed as part of the General Services Administration's \$10 billion building effort, which also involves new border stations, state-run laboratories, and federal offices. In view of the ongoing boom in federal construction—the biggest since the New Deal—the GSA Design Excellence Program didn't come a moment too soon. Nine of the aforementioned 31 courthouses were developed, from start to finish, under the Design Excellence Program's purview, and 31 more courthouses are being built or are in the design phase. Another 100 are planned.

The GSA has also begun sweeping renovations of older buildings, particularly its behemoths dating from the 1960s and 1970s. More rigorous construction standards are being pursued, and, as a “quick fix” to improve first impressions before renovations get under way, the GSA is upgrading older lobbies by eliminating clutter, streamlining security, and unifying signage. Such sensitivity to design and its impact on public perception marks a sea change at the agency responsible for managing over 250 million square feet of federal properties.

The GSA Commissioner for Public Buildings, Robert Peck, recalls his uphill battle 25 years ago when he worked at the National Endowment for the Arts' Federal Architecture Project, a now-defunct initiative intended to engender better official architecture. “We really thought then that GSA was the great Satan,” says Peck, “and quite honestly it kind of was. You couldn't get people in GSA to talk about design except to laugh at you for advocating it.”

**"PEOPLE REVERE IT. THEY DON'T TAKE ANYTHIN'  
THEIR EXPECTATIONS OF WHAT A COURTHOUS  
GOOD NAVIGATION AID. ONCE, I WAS CAUGHT O  
IT HELPED US GET BACK TO SHORE." LORRAIN  
"WITH JUDGES' CHAMBERS JUST OPPOSITE TH  
INTO CHAMBERS FOR A CONFERENCE AND DON'  
TO A DIFFERENT FLOOR." LEONARD D. WEXLE**

UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE AND FEDERAL BUILDING, CENTRAL ISLIP, NEW YORK, RICHARD MEIER & PARTNERS AND T



OR GRANTED BECAUSE IT DOESN'T FIT WITH  
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.S. DISTRICT COURT JUDGE



SECTOR GROUP



## EXTERIOR

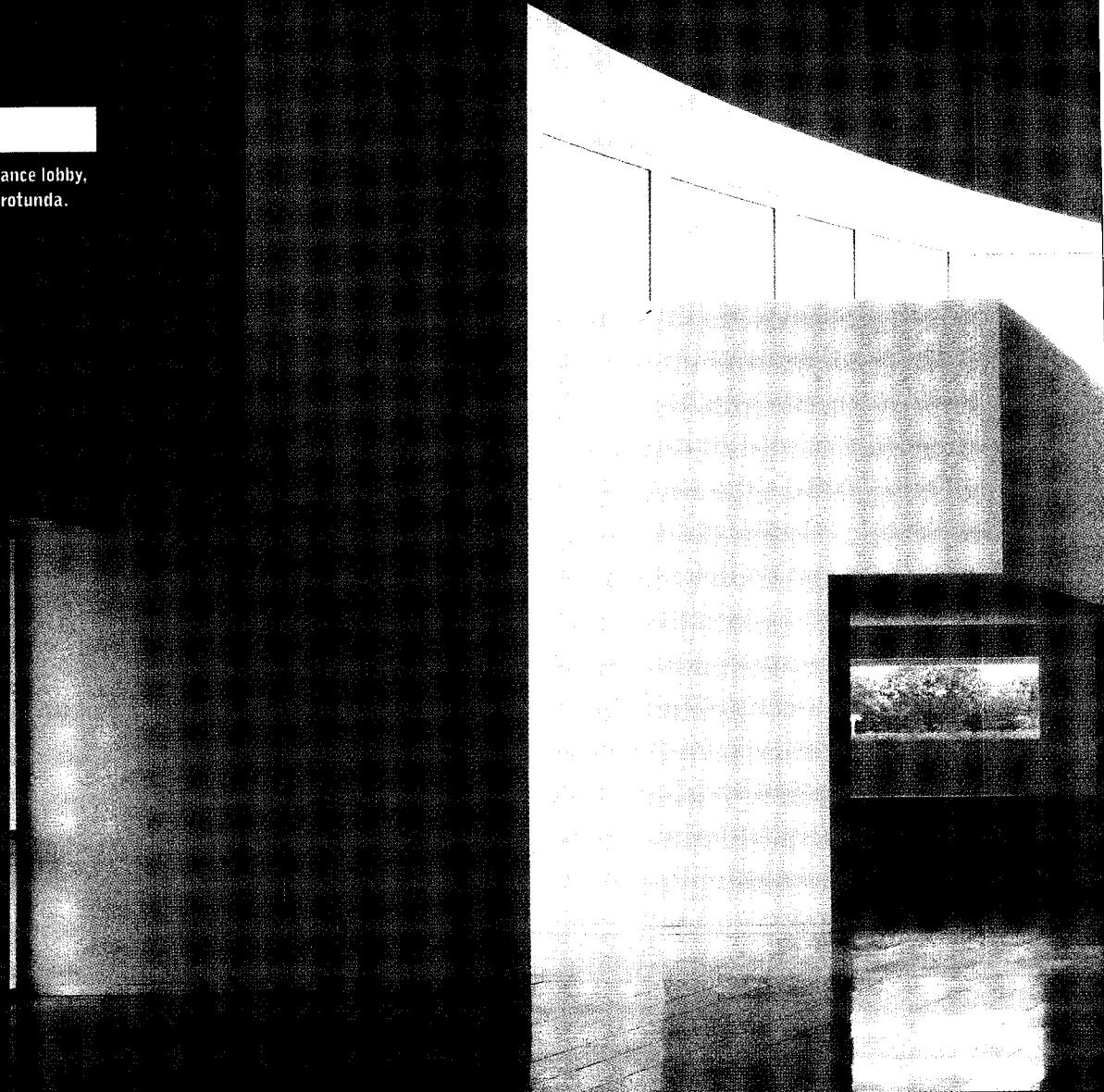
Meier clad the courthouse in his signature white enamel panels. Brise-soleils on the south façade (above) shelter public corridors from direct sunlight. A broad plaza leads to the entry rotunda on the south façade (facing page, top). Directly behind the rotunda, a large glazed atrium rises the full height of the building (below); directly adjacent to it, on the north façade, projects the Special Proceedings courtroom (below center). A canopy projects from the base of the rotunda, sheltering the principal entrance to the courthouse (below right).





## LOBBY

Windows line the base of the conical entrance lobby, a variation on the traditional courthouse rotunda.







## LOBBY, ATRIUM, AND CORRIDORS

Rows of planar balconies form one side of the rotunda (above left). A gridded skylight illuminates the rotunda (above right). Expansive public corridors line the southern flank of the courthouse, and lead to individual courtrooms behind a monolithic granite wall (facing page, top). A glazed corridor (below, at right) leads from the rotunda to a central atrium beyond (facing page, bottom left); where the corridor approaches the rotunda, the floor plate steps back to create enclosed balconies (facing page, bottom right).







## COURTROOMS

Cherry wood paneling lines each courtroom. A circular recess punctures the ceiling of one of 13 district courtrooms (above); tiers of judges' seats line the rear wall of the largely ceremonial Special Proceedings courtroom (below).



**CRITIQUE** In the battle over the design of the Getty Center, one vocal Brentwood resident announced in a hearing that the community didn't want to "hear, see, or smell it." Richard Meier designed defensively, shifting white into beige, grandeur into modesty, acropolis into village. But over in Central Islip, Long Island, in the commission for the United States Courthouse and Federal Building, the General Services Administration's general directives for courthouse design were Solomonic: Federal buildings should "reflect the dignity, enterprise, vigor and stability of the American National Government," but should also "embody the finest contemporary American architectural thought...." Furthermore, "the development of an official style must be avoided. Design must flow from the architectural profession to the Government, and not vice versa."

Meier could design white; he could design big—he could be Meier. Motorists on the Southern State Parkway first come across the 718,000-square-foot courthouse cruising like an ocean liner among the treetops of this mid-Long Island community, 30 miles east of Manhattan. Meier made no attempt to integrate the 12-story, \$200 million structure into a nearby group of bland brick suburban government offices. He staked out his territory with an unapologetic building that creates its own context on its own terms.

Think Chandigarh: Meier's courthouse is a sculptural tour de force sitting on an abstract plane. Cars and parking are banished to a sanitary distance. Meier then further cleanses the palette with a broad concrete plaza that sets off his 600-foot-long, 235-foot-high block. Using an abstract modernist vocabulary of Platonic geometries woven into a tapestry of point, line, and plane, he designs the broad south-facing façade by layering one element atop another, creating a deep, porous, expanded surface: a gently bowed brise-soleil, a glazed expanse of generous corridors (with a southerly view of the Atlantic) that link the courtrooms, and on the far side of the corridor, a granite plane that cuts longitudinally through the whole building.

This is Meier as we know him—abstract, layered, geometric, white—but there is a centerpiece in the façade's composition that signals a different, evolved Meier, and a deviation from the conventional typology of the American courthouse. The monumental façade acts as a backdrop for a tall, conical entry hall planted declaratively on the plaza, and it is this object that beckons us. Working as always within the modernist vocabulary, Meier surprisingly keeps the form opaque rather than transparent. He is positing an object of mystery, closed and unrevealing. Set at a barely perceptible tilt, the cone leans away from the entrance at its base, as though reacting to the vectorial force of a pedestrian. A cubic puzzle forms the entry portal, echoed by another that marks a balcony at the top of the cone.

Vincent Scully has said that what makes architecture memorable is the irrational, and if the ideas presented in the façade determined the whole building's design, it would be merely rational. Many contemporary buildings, filtered through an industrial logic, have lacked iconic presence, and Meier's modernism, though aestheticized and often grand, has in the past hardly demonstrated the symbolic content and

rhetorical posture usually expected of a courthouse. Furthermore Walter Benjamin once observed that glass—which is integral to the see-through porosity in Meier's buildings—cannot embody the aura of character acquired over time. How then could Meier's glassy abstractions, cool to the touch and eye, achieve the dignified and stable character implicit in the courthouse program?

Historically, the image of courthouses is dominantly classical: We have come to associate colonnades with stability and a rational interpretation of the law. But it is the conical entry with its tilted axis that defines the soul of Meier's building. Millions of Americans learned from the O.J. trial and recent presidential elections that the judicial process is not nearly so linear and clear as the granite porticos of traditional courthouses would lead us to believe. Meier's entry announces from the outset that the unexpected may occur in these precincts, that the irrational is part and parcel of the rational.

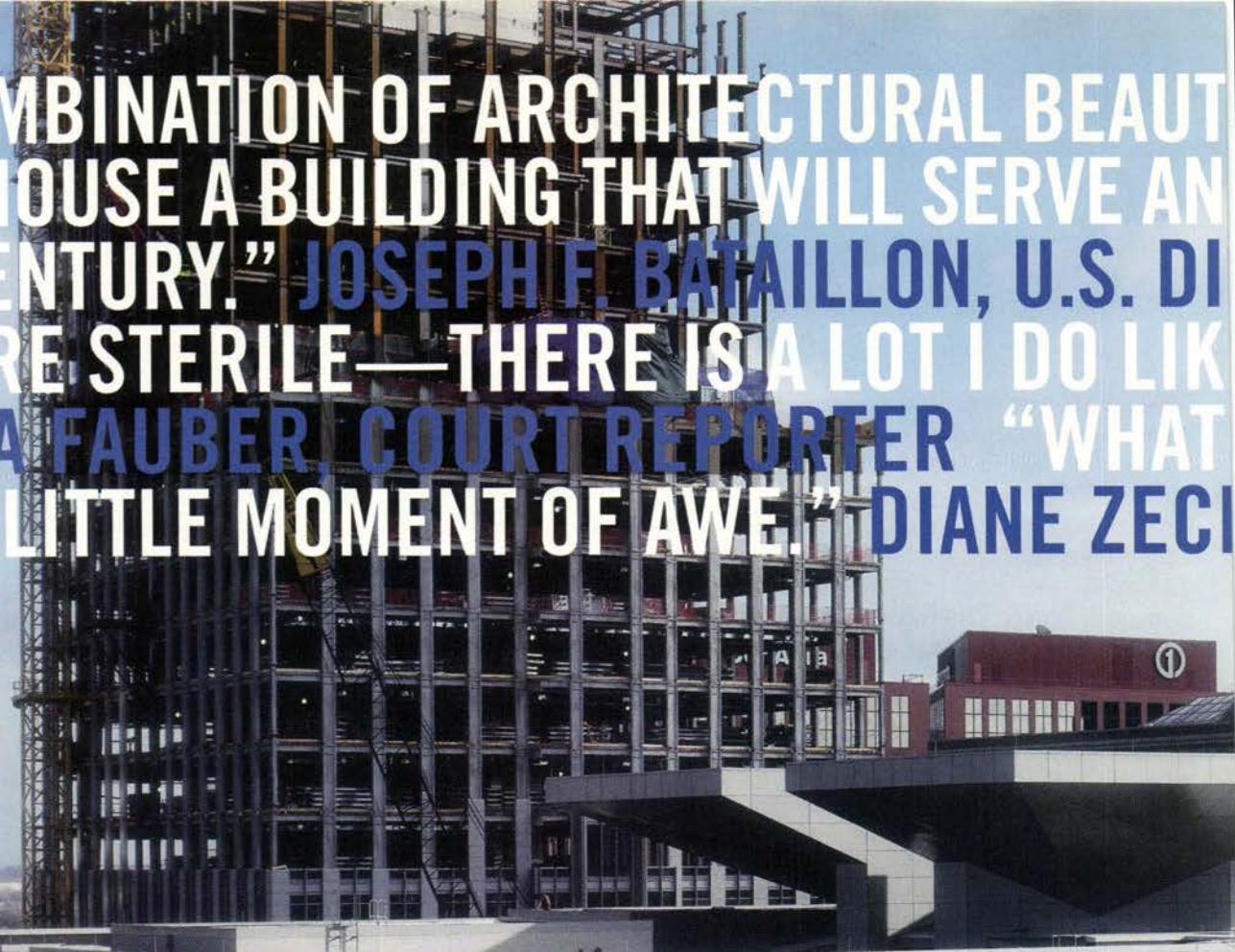
The soaring space inside the cone is breathtaking, with curvilinear walls that register sunlight projected through a complex geometric oculus at the top. The contours distort the light into hypnotically shifting patterns. Like the coffered dome of the Pantheon, the entry provokes feelings of awe through a magical volumetric distortion of light in grandiloquent space.

Beyond the cone in the main building block, Meier surprises us with another 12-story atrium, but this time cooler and more cubic. Here the building explains its organization. A stairway leads around the space up to the second-floor Special Proceedings courtroom, for the swearing-in of new citizens. The criminal and bankruptcy courts lie, respectively, to the west and east of the atrium. Banks of elevators deposit visitors in the corridors behind the brise-soleil, the gently bowed geometry of which angles them toward the courtrooms. Meier separates visitors, prisoners, and judges by layering circulation in separate parallel strips within the block, from the curved public front to more secure areas in the back.

What is intriguing about Islip is that Meier, who worked in-house with former partner-in-charge-of-design Thomas Phifer and project architect Renny Logan, as well as with Long Island firm the Spector Group, has injected a powerful new subject in his work, and in the courthouse tradition. Meier may speak of achieving a new clarity in this project while creating an open, transparent building emblematic of the judicial process in our democracy. But what transports the building into an iconic realm commensurate with the task of housing the courts is the mystifying centerpiece of the composition. Without this cone the building would not be nearly as commanding and compelling, and its presence suggests the next step for Meier is to bring the cone, or its equally mysterious equivalent, more deeply and consistently into the body of his building designs.

At Islip, Meier takes the modernism he has made familiar and makes it unfamiliar—and wondrous. He more than fulfilled the objectives of the GSA's brief, and his own goals as well. This is a fresh and unexpected courthouse, one that earns reverence. It also represents a renewed Meier. **BY JOSEPH GIOVANNINI**

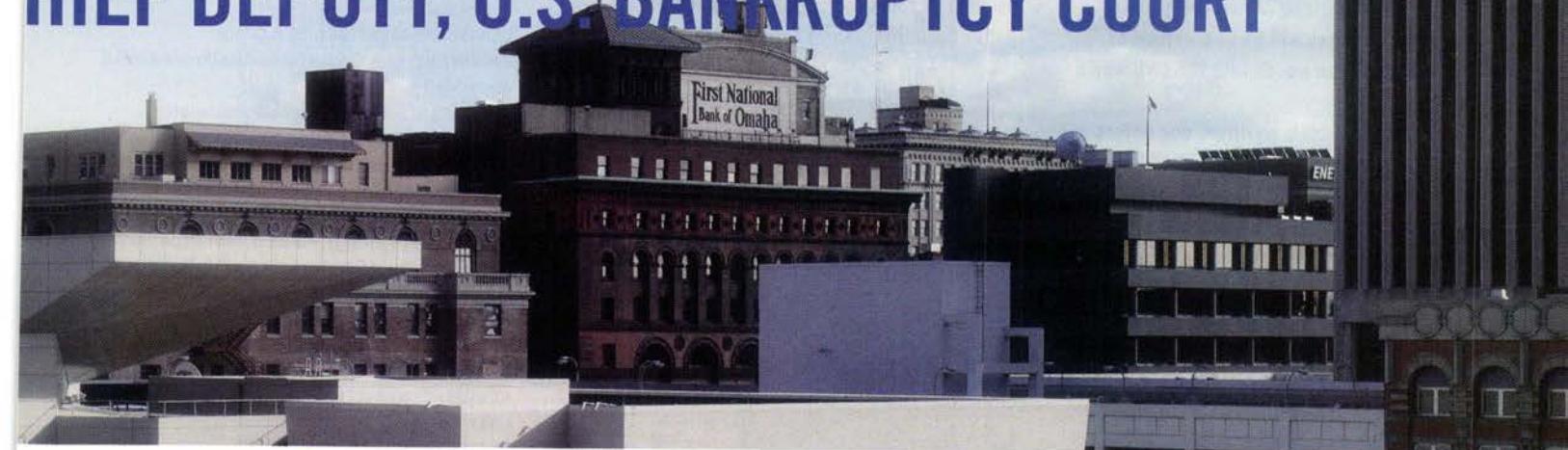
**"THE COMBINATION OF ARCHITECTURAL BEAUTY AND COURTHOUSE A BUILDING THAT WILL SERVE ANOTHER 21ST CENTURY."** JOSEPH F. BATAILLON, U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE  
**SEES ARE STERILE—THERE IS A LOT I DO LIKE**  
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ROMAN L. HRUSKA UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE, OMAHA, PEI COBB FREED & PARTNERS WITH DLR GROUP



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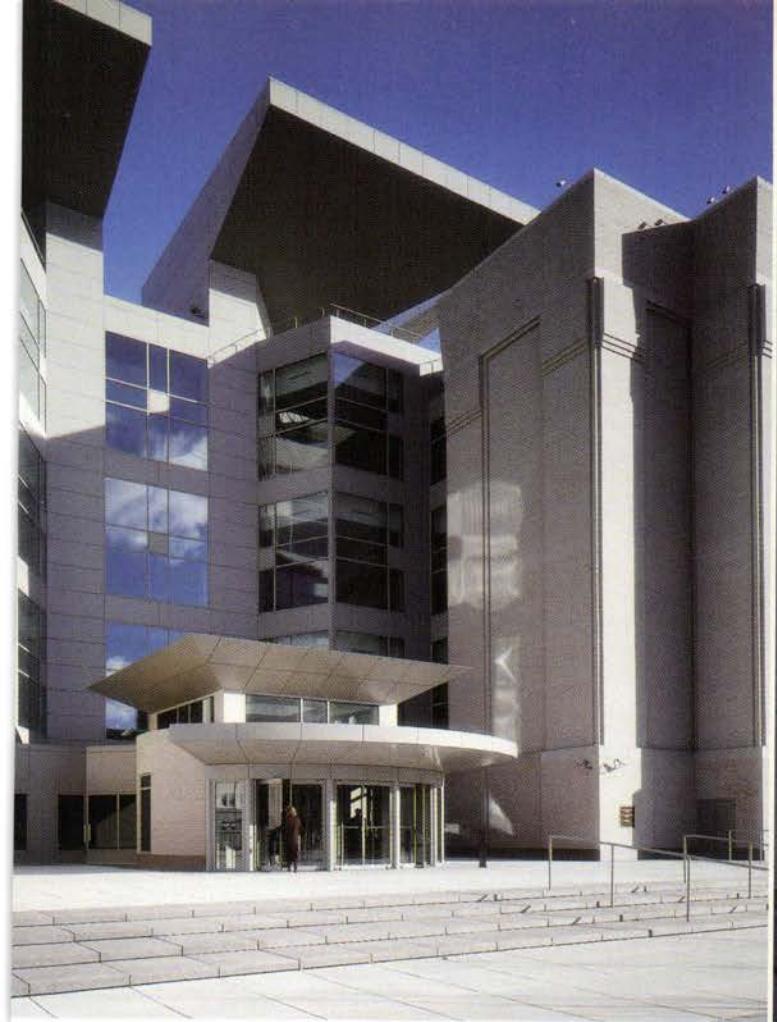




The rear of the Hruska Courthouse (below) faces the downhill side of the site; visitors approach the courthouse via steps (above) that lead to a plaza planted with ginkgo trees. The entry pavilion (facing page, top left and right) is the only public access to the building, and leads to a marble-clad atrium (facing page, bottom). Jury rooms and courtrooms open onto the balconies that line the atrium.

## EXTERIOR AND LOBBY







## COURTROOMS

Each floor of the Hruska Courthouse is designed to accommodate four courtrooms like the ones above and below. While there are currently nine in the building, there is space for another three to be built if future caseloads should require it.



**CRITIQUE** Architecture, like the law, often involves evaluating new problems in light of precedent, even when we eventually reject what has come before. But that process turns out to be more complicated than it first appears. Too literal or too superficial a translation of the past into the present can create paradoxes even the best architects cannot hide. An example of this is the new Roman L. Hruska United States Courthouse in Omaha, Nebraska, designed by James Ingo Freed of Pei Cobb Freed Partners, with the DLR Group. Freed embraces precedent in some areas and bucks it in others, but he runs into trouble when applying forms from the past, once full of symbolic power, to functions in which security and efficiency rule.

The building was commissioned as part of the General Services Administration's Design Excellence Program, which recalls a pre-Depression-era precedent in which the nation's leading architects designed federal courthouses. This program counters a more recent tradition in which the quality of the lead designer mattered less than the location of the architects and the qualifications of the whole design team. Such thinking generated the predecessor of this courthouse: a dreary 1960s building that mixed courts, government offices, and the post office, sacrificing design quality and civic presence for an appearance of efficiency and frugality.

Newer precedents, however, do not always deserve to be overthrown. While the GSA considered several locations for the Hruska Courthouse, the city wanted it on a partially built-upon site in a deteriorating section of downtown. Some historic structures stood in the way, and, as the federal government used to do regularly, it tore most of them down. Among other things, Omaha lost an old Masonic temple to make space for a surface parking lot for courthouse employees. The more recent tradition of the federal government acting to save historic buildings did not prevail in this case, and the half block of surface parking makes the area seem more vacant, not more vital.

At the same time, some situations require solutions that cannot draw on the past. The courthouse's site slopes more than 35 feet, which forced Freed to place the entrance on the uphill side, facing away from the street and the center of downtown. "Otherwise the entrance would have been in the basement," says Freed. He made the best of the situation, with a mid-block plaza and a grove of ginkgo trees to announce the entry to the courthouse. Still, from the street, the front door remains hard to find, while the building, ringed by bollards, has a fortresslike feel. This arrangement reflects the dilemma of a violence-prone democracy, in which access to justice seems haunted by security concerns.

Freed organized the complicated program into a simple, four-square, four-story-high block, sitting on a two-story base. Clad in precast concrete and a limestone-colored brick, the building has a symmetrical façade, with large-scale glazing, a single public entrance, and a central rotunda. Above the latter hover metal-clad cantilevered planes—the "umbrella of justice" as Freed calls it—that shade the rotunda's sky-

lights. This metal structure recalls the vaults that historically covered such spaces. The building's organizational clarity serves visitors—often angry or anxious—well.

In courthouses, as in the law generally, precedent is treated with a degree of reverence. The relationship of courtrooms to justice chambers, jury rooms, and holding cells; the arrangement of judge, jury, witness, and attorneys; the separate paths of judge, jury, public, and defendant: all follow well-established rules that offer little room for innovation. "These are program-driven buildings," notes Freed, "with the public spaces being the one area that is not." Yet even in his public areas, Freed bows to the norm, using a central space with the courtroom entrances and horizontal and vertical circulation surrounding it.

But Freed's design also reveals a fundamental tension between what courthouses aspire to and what they have become. The judiciary, says U.S. District Court Judge Lyle Strom, wanted the building to "look like a courthouse, not an office building," a civic structure with tall windows bringing light into the major public rooms. The GSA wanted a flexible, efficient facility, to which courtrooms could be added in the future. Freed responded to these conflicting demands by arranging offices and support spaces around the perimeter of windowless courtrooms, then lining the exterior with a lot of large, "civic-scaled" windows. These windows look as if they illuminate courtrooms, but they don't; courtrooms are wrapped in standard-height offices, and the upper half of the ceremonial glass windows on the exterior have a wall behind them. Meanwhile, whole floors of smaller blank windows run along the side elevations, suggesting offices that don't exist. Freed calls these "symbolic" windows, but what they symbolize is a deep division in how we think about the public and private sectors—something that effects every public building, certainly every courthouse.

The imagery of the public sector is seductive, but we also have a profound distrust of it—witness the rhetoric of the recent election—and so apply to public buildings private-sector measures of efficiency. The blank windows, rather than hiding this dilemma, highlight it. And the GSA's Design Excellence Program, for all of its merits, perpetuates the conflict. Its own literature adopts the current unquestioned faith in the private sector—"fewer requirements and faster GSA response translate to lower costs"—while trying to achieve a better-designed public realm. It's a good goal, but one that it will never be fully achieved because it uses the wrong measures of success.

We once recognized the difference between the public and private sectors and honored that difference with civic environments built with longer time frames, greater durability, more largesse. Nobility mattered much more than efficiency. The organization of this building recalls that earlier tradition, but in the end, it cannot overcome the more recent trend of treating courthouses like office buildings, with some warehouse space for prisoners and cars. If there were ever a precedent worth challenging, this is it. **BY THOMAS FISHER**

# WHEN THE GSA HIRED ARCHITECT ANDREA LEERS TO DESIGN A NEW ORLANDO COURTHOUSE, NOBODY EXPECTED THE PROJECT TO BECOME A FEDERAL CASE, BUT THEN...

## HERE COMES THE JUDGE

BY BRADFORD McKEE

People who know Judge Elizabeth A. Kovachevich say they had never seen her as irate, as beside herself, as she seemed in Washington, D.C., on the morning of October 2, 2000.

Kovachevich, the chief federal judge for the Middle District of Florida, sat looking quite unhappy in her pinstriped suit for much of the morning in a crowded fifth-floor conference room of the United States General Services Administration headquarters in downtown Washington. The judge faced Robert A. Peck, commissioner of the GSA's Public Buildings Service, across the end of a long table lined by GSA managers, among them Edward Feiner, the GSA's chief architect.

The GSA acts as the government's real-estate agent and property developer. Kovachevich had come to tell the GSA one last time—after two years of accusations, recriminations, investigations, and even a federal grand jury inquiry—why she and her fellow judges in her district so dearly dislike the agency's proposed design for a new federal courthouse in Orlando. But Her Honor was not in court; she would have to wait until it was her turn to talk.

Off to the side of the room sat the architect of the courthouse, Andrea Leers of Leers Weinzapfel Associates in Boston, and several of her associates from HLM Design, architect of record for the project. Leers had come to present the design formally to Peck for his final approval.

At the beginning of the meeting, Leers, wearing a dark-gray suit, a string of pearls, and wire-framed glasses, rose and walked to the front of the room. She began her presentation by saying how excited she was about the project—the architect noted that she teaches a course at Harvard on courthouse design with Judge Douglas P. Woodlock of the U.S. District Court in Boston.

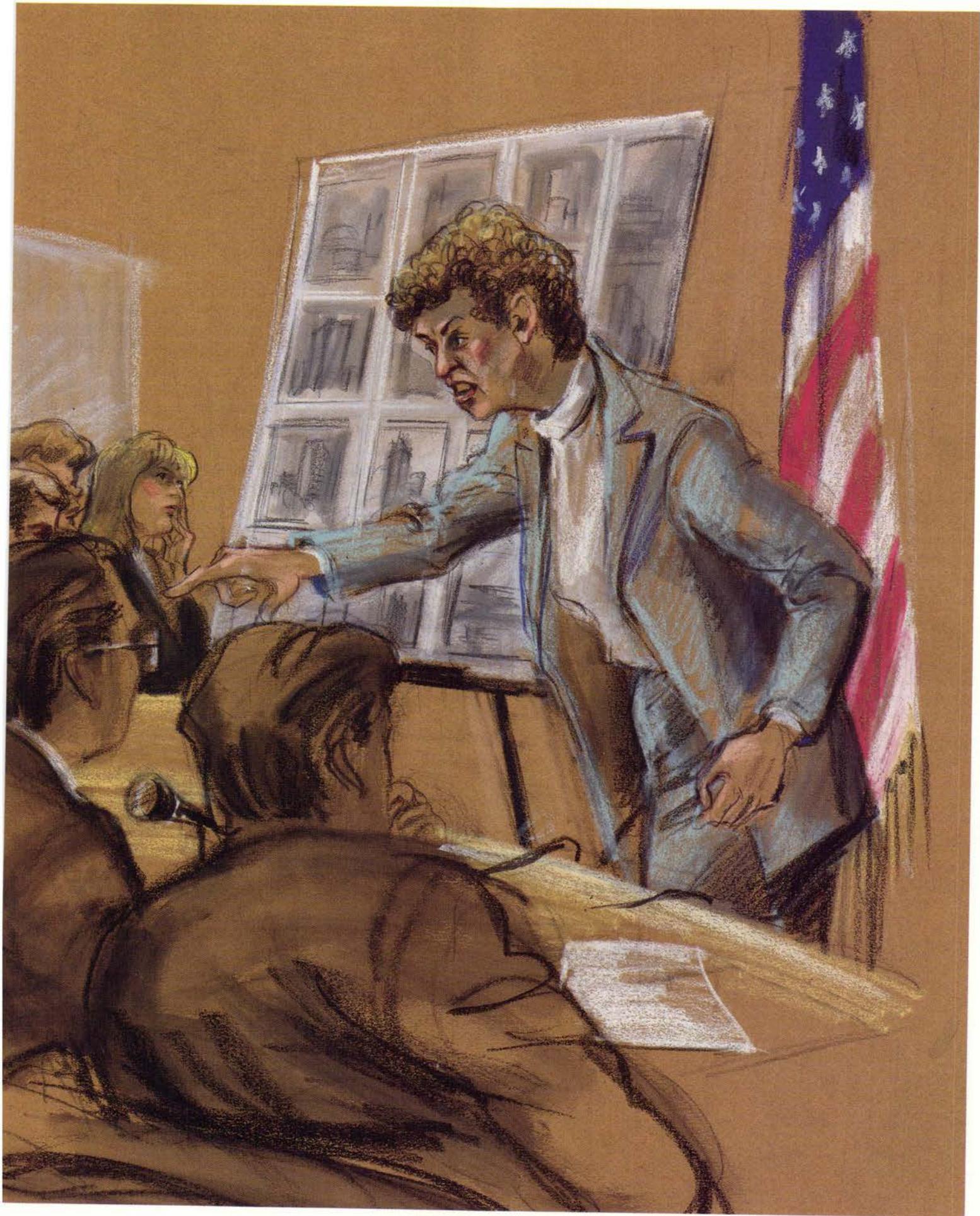
Turning to the boards and scale model of the building behind her, Leers began to explain her design approach. She surveyed the architectural context of downtown Orlando, which she called "recent and eclectic," and detailed the nature of the site along Central Avenue between an elevated section of Interstate 4 and Division Avenue. (Division Avenue literally divides the largely white, downtown eastern area from the African-American neighborhood to its west.) To the north, along West Washington Street, stands the district's current courthouse, an obdurate '60s structure clad in precast concrete.

"It's an environment which, I think, would benefit from a very thoughtful consideration of what a new public architecture could be," Leers said.

Then Leers introduced her proposed building: The new courthouse is to be a stripped four-story rectangle

**Chief Judge Elizabeth Kovachevich (standing) appealed to GSA officials not to build architect Andrea Leers's modern courthouse. But if the GSA has its way, the plan will go forward.**

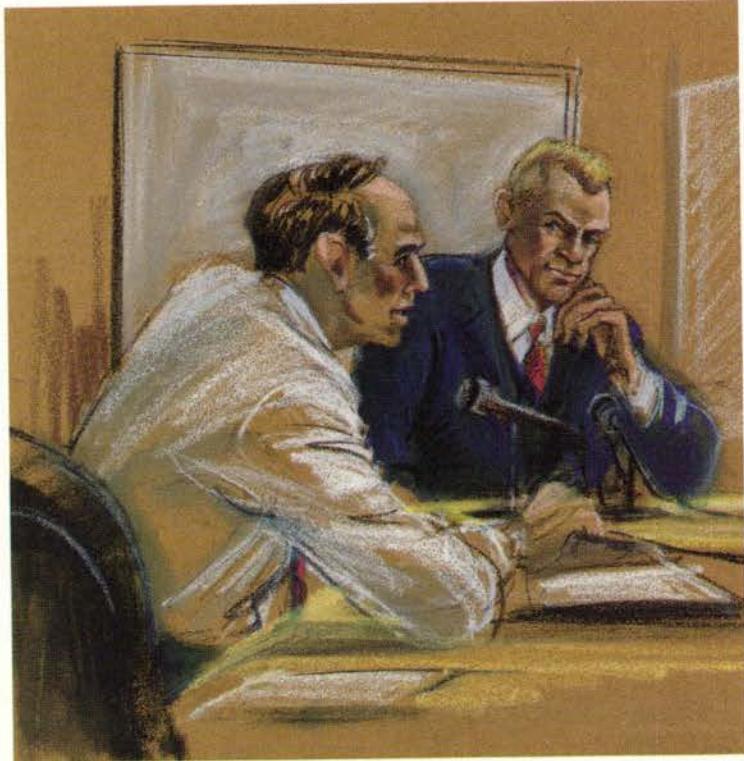




fronted by a huge porch. Behind the porch's double columns sits the full-height glass cube of a public atrium, reminiscent of George Edmund Street's Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand in London, but in a modern, minimalist idiom. On the east side of the building's front, Leers pointed out a floating, chamfered box intended to hold a ceremonial courtroom. Behind these public spaces lie the courtrooms, chambers, jury spaces, holding areas, and space for the U.S. Marshals Service. All of these functions will reside along separate circulation systems for the public, for prisoners, and for judges, much in the manner of a Chinese woodblock puzzle. Leers pointed out that two light terraces and roof monitors will illuminate the interior spaces by day.

"Our goal here," Leers said, "is to create a dignified Modern courthouse that is linked to the great and glorious history of courthouses, but that is a courthouse of its time." She said that she sought "traditional order and measure" in the building, but added that she believes it should be "modern in spirit and detailing, with new materials that we know, and must and can use." Leers then thanked Peck and his staff and took her seat.

**Despite the Florida court's objections, GSA Public Buildings Commissioner Robert Peck (in white shirt, below) backs Chief Architect Edward Feiner (right) and his Design Excellence protocol, by which Leers (facing page) twice won the Orlando courthouse commission.**



### Surprise Selection

The courthouse that Leers Weinzapfel has designed for Orlando is expected to cost \$79 million by opening day—if that day ever comes—but nearly everyone involved with the project already feels as if they have paid for it twice, because shortly after Leers's design was first selected in mid-1998, the federal courthouse literally became a federal case.

The GSA hired Leers by following the protocol for its Design Excellence Program, which it launched in 1994 to raise the level of intelligence in federal architecture. Leers's statement is a clear echo of the GSA's own statement of purpose, which helps to explain the agency's affection for the design. In the program's regular fashion, the GSA began the selection process by vetting 27 responses to a public request for qualifications from architects. From the most promising of the submissions, the agency assembled a group of five finalists—Pei Cobb Freed and Partners, Koetter, Kim & Associates, Garrison Siegel Architects, R.M. Kliment & Frances Halsband Architects, and Leers Weinzapfel—to present possible designs to a peer-review panel. The panel comprised four GSA employees alongside Kovachevich, her colleague Judge Patricia C. Fawsett, and Deborah K. Dietsch, former editor-in-chief of this magazine, who served as an outside professional peer offering criticism and advice, but who was not, by the book, to vote on the design.

When it came time to select the winning design in September 1998, the six-member selection panel met in New York City. Several GSA staff who were most closely involved at that early stage cannot discuss specifics of the process because they have signed nondisclosure agreements with the agency (and, indeed, they spoke about the project only if given anonymity). But this much is clear: The contest, at the end, came down to a choice between Leers's design and one by Henry N. Cobb of Pei Cobb Freed, a firm which has designed two other GSA courthouses since the Design Excellence initiative began, one in Hammond, Indiana, and the other in Omaha, Nebraska (page 90).

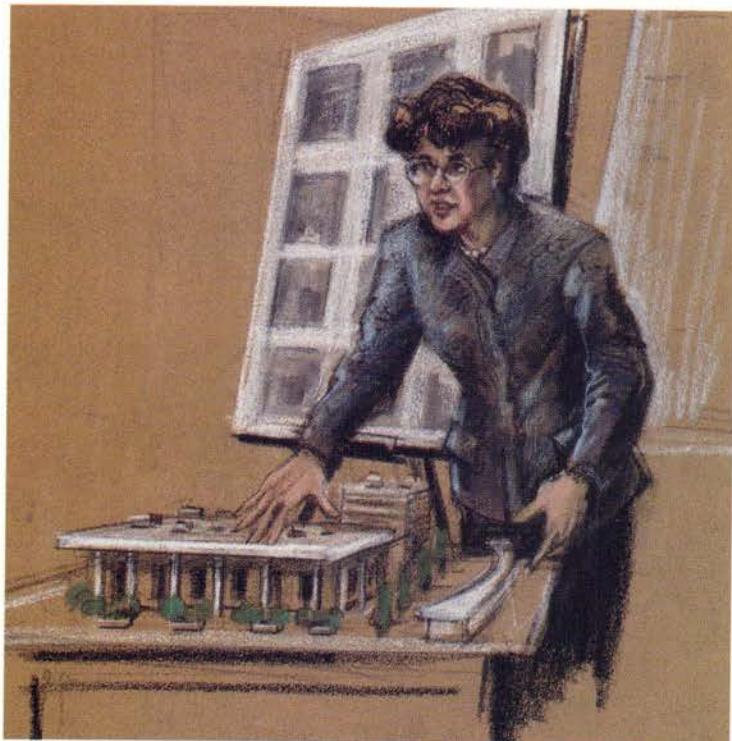
"The courts fell in love with Harry Cobb," says one GSA official. "But we didn't feel that he demonstrated his personal commitment to the project."

All the voting GSA panelists favored Leers's proposal. Yet, after many hours in a closed session with the two formidable judges from Florida, two of the GSA's four panelists "decided maybe they could swing with the judges," says a GSA official, and indicated that they favored Cobb's proposal.

When Kovachevich and Fawsett left the room, says a GSA source, they had every reason to feel confident that Cobb had been selected by a vote of 4 to 2 over Leers.

It was not to end that way. When the GSA panelists who voted for Cobb returned to their home regions, "they called their bosses," the internal source says, "and said, 'I didn't vote my conscience, and I'm going to vote for my original selection,'" which was Leers.

"It sounds like something shaky took place," the source concedes, "but until the selection is final, on paper, you can change your vote 30 times."



## IN BOTH THE COURT'S AND THE GSA'S OWN INVESTIGATIONS, THE ARCHITECT SELECTION PROCESS CAME UP CLEAN. NEITHER REVIEW FOUND EVIDENCE OF ABUSE, INAPPROPRIATE INFLUENCE, OR FAVORITISM ON BEHALF OF LEERS OR ANYONE ELSE.

The vote changes enraged the judges. When Kovachevich and Fawsett learned that Leers, not Cobb, had been chosen to design the courthouse, they immediately suspected foul play. "The judges looked at Cobb as a done deal" when they left the New York meeting, says a GSA employee. "And they thought they'd been had."

It was Fawsett, GSA staff believe, who was the most angry that Cobb did not win the commission. Fawsett, they conclude, most strongly believed improprieties took place within GSA to influence the vote toward Leers. And it was Fawsett, sources add, who ordered a grand jury investigation of the entire process to find out whether collusion took place behind the scenes at the agency. Nearly everyone at GSA who took part in the selection received a subpoena to appear in federal court in Orlando, including Feiner, Deputy Commissioner Paul Chistolini, Project Manager Michele Price, Project Manager Paul DeHaven, accessibility specialist Gilbert Delgado, and peer reviewer Dietsch.

No GSA staff member who testified before the grand jury will comment directly on the details of the inquiry. The court seals the texts of such proceedings. "It was very unnerving," volunteers one. Another describes the court's "inquisition" as intimidating and traumatic. Simultaneously, the GSA's Office of the Inspector General, which probes possible wrongdoing within the agency, began its own review of the matter.

In both the court's and the GSA's own investigation, the selection process came up clean and fair. Neither review found any evidence

of abuse, inappropriate influence, or favoritism on behalf of Leers or anyone else.

Once the investigations wrapped up, GSA decided to continue on with the project, beginning with a fresh selection process in August 1999. It would be the same group of shortlisted architects, but with a new outside peer advisor, Roger Schluntz, dean of the School of Architecture at the University of New Mexico. And this time, the contestants would face an entirely new selection panel of senior-level GSA peers.

The result came up exactly the same: Leers won again.

### Innovation vs. Tradition

If anyone involved in the Orlando courthouse project thought that hostilities would abate with the second and final selection of Leers's design, they were grossly mistaken.

"This is a group of judges who knew what they wanted from the get-go," says a GSA manager. "And here they are in a position where they

lost on the architect selection, so they've got to win on something."

What the judges seem to want, GSA officials gather, is a traditional, symmetrical, neoclassically columned courthouse with massive stone walls. At one point last summer, the GSA staff received an unsigned fax from the courts in the Middle District of Florida that betrayed the judges' genuine wishes. The fax showed a sketched diagram of Leers's front (south) elevation, but with a few changes: It had a Corinthian, rather than unadorned, colonnade in front and an outsized pediment on top, which made the building's profile look strikingly like that of Michael Graves's Dolphin Hotel at nearby Disney World.

The judges have all but admitted to the GSA that it is the proposed look of the building that most displeases them (Kovachevich, who represents her fellow judges in the matter, did not respond to a request for an interview; nor did Fawsett), but they seem to be prosecuting their objection by raising a host of red-herring issues, say GSA staff members. Since it became clear that they were going to have to live with the selection of Leers and her modernist scheme, the judges have tried every potentially deal-breaking device they could find to turn it back. Chiefly, they have cited concerns about security, siting, and noise, all of which passed scrutiny in official reviews by GSA and the U.S. Marshals Service.

"The blast criteria [for potential bombings] and security were all raised as issues," says Public Buildings Service Deputy Commissioner Paul Chistolini. "All have been dealt with." *continued on page 132*

**"YOU HAVE A SENSE OF WHAT THE BUILDING I SEE THE MURALS. YOU GET A SENSE OF JUSTICE. THE GOAL WAS TO HAVE A BUILDING WITH MORE TRADITION. IN SO FAR AS POSSIBLE, I SUCCEEDED."** DAVID A. FABER, U.S. DISTRICT COURT JUDGE  
**SHOT IN THE ARM FOR DOWNTOWN BECKLEY. BUT IT'S BEING BUILT."** LINDA KINDER, ADMINISTRATOR

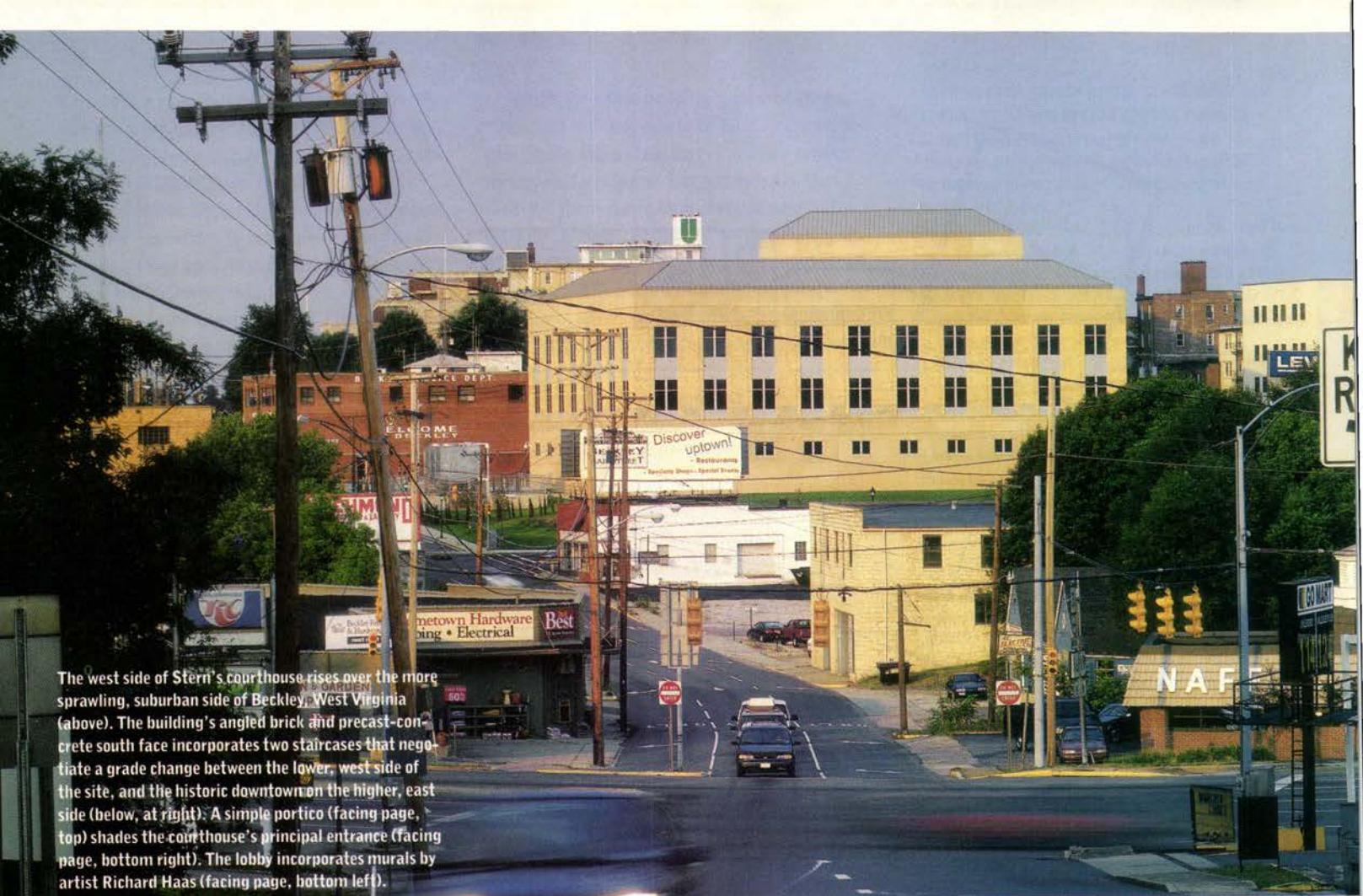
ROBERT C. BYRD UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE AND FEDERAL BUILDING, BECKLEY, WEST VIRGINIA, ROBERT A.M. STEIN



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N WEST VIRGINIA." LARA CRANE, LAW CLERK  
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The west side of Stern's courthouse rises over the more sprawling, suburban side of Beckley, West Virginia (above). The building's angled brick and precast-concrete south face incorporates two staircases that negotiate a grade change between the lower, west side of the site, and the historic downtown on the higher, east side (below, at right). A simple portico (facing page, top) shades the courthouse's principal entrance (facing page, bottom right). The lobby incorporates murals by artist Richard Haas (facing page, bottom left).

#### EXTERIOR AND LOBBY







## COURTROOM AND CHAMBER

Stern paneled the courtrooms (above) and the judge's chambers (below) in oak, laid in a stripped, classical style.



**CRITIQUE** The new Robert C. Byrd United States Courthouse and Federal Building in Beckley, West Virginia, is an unapologetic homage to the architecture of another era. The General Services Administration jury that selected its design in a 1995 limited competition lauded its reference to 1930s WPA style, which they considered to produce "an extremely successful solution to making a public building that looks like a public building." The project's lead designer, Robert A. M. Stern of New York City and New Haven, Connecticut, has long admired this classical, Depression-era expression. It helped create an identifiable face for the federal government in Washington, D.C., and ultimately, as Stern observes, "spread to courthouses, post offices, and other institutional buildings throughout the country."

The courthouse in Beckley bears some remarkable and ironic similarities to its visually very different sister facility in Central Islip, New York, by Richard Meier & Partners (this issue, page 78). The formal vocabulary employed there, which *New York Times* architecture critic Herbert Muschamp has called "a fusion of Le Corbusier and de Stijl," represents an equally unapologetic homage to a different genre of much the same era. Both buildings are erudite formalist essays penned by authors who have reveled in their respective stylistic vocabularies for decades. Both projects are preoccupied with a postmodern predilection for image and visual code. Both offer nostalgic remembrances of sophisticated architectural expressions invented by the generation of their users' great-great-grandparents.

In the case of the Beckley project, Stern advocates his particular historicist approach because he is convinced that "the way to accomplish ... the lasting dignity and sense of stability that is at the heart of the rule of law, is to approach the design of the building from a classical perspective." U.S. District Court Judge David A. Faber, who acted as primary client through much of the project, agrees, asserting that, "Older-style buildings are more in keeping with the dignity of the court." He also believes that citizens "associate courts and law with precedent," making familiar forms more appropriate than new ones. Besides, Faber confesses that he is personally "enamored of old things," and notes with pride, "I love this building because it reflects old values."

The context of the Beckley courthouse also encouraged its client and architects to take a traditional approach. Downtown Beckley, where the building is located, reads like a page out of a history book, with virtually every structure predating World War II. Fortunately, an ideal site was available for the project at the termination of Main Street, on one side of tiny Shoemaker Square—already the focus for the county courthouse and sheriff's office as well as the municipal police headquarters. Formerly an open parking lot, the thin, 500-foot-long site offered challenges of a very irregular configuration and a 30-foot topographical change from the square on the east to First Avenue on the west.

The architects settled the big-for-downtown Beckley building into its site skillfully. They converted the program requirement for three functional elements—the courts, an IRS center, and a civic lobby—into three modestly scaled building volumes. Originally rigidly aligned, the three pieces were skewed a bit at the suggestion of competition jurors to merge even better with surrounding streets and buildings. According to Judge Faber, the sensitive integration of the project in the downtown

fabric has impressed both occupants and neighbors; people in the community feel like it has created an infusion of new life and has contributed to rejuvenating downtown.

Though local reaction to the project is generally favorable, there is also a realization that the architectural quality of the building represents a significant diminution of the tradition it is meant to extend. People are quick to compare the new building to the 1933 U.S. Courthouse and Federal Building which it replaced, just a block away. The old building, with its stone base and fine craftsmanship, is detailed to give a sense of heft and grandeur. The new building replaces stone with limestone-color precast panels; craftsmanship is rare, and façade articulation occurs within a depth range of a few inches. The building has that insipid postmodern thinness that provides an image of a traditional building, but without the real dignity, power, and soul of its predecessors.

Grant Marani, a partner in Stern's office who handled the project day-to-day, acknowledges that the firm had specified higher quality materials in the original scope of the project—e.g., stone instead of precast concrete, lead-coated copper instead of painted metal. The construction budget, however, got into trouble because of unforeseen foundation costs and because new and very expensive security measures were added after the Oklahoma City bombing. The result is that the quality of construction is "not the best," according to Marani.

Economic measures are perhaps most clearly visible on the inside of the building, where, other than a handful of modest exceptions such as the Richard Haas murals in the lobby and dark-stained oak paneling in a few offices and courtrooms, the finishes are quite pedestrian. Stock interiors feature Sheetrock walls, hung acoustical-tile ceilings with lay-in fluorescent fixtures, plastic-laminate elevator cabs and countertops, and off-the-shelf contemporary hardware. The "classical perspective" is barely evident in most spaces.

Is it possible in the current era to realize a really fine public building in a traditional style? This instance paired the talents of one of the country's most capable and experienced architectural firms working in this manner with a committed client looking to upgrade its standards. And yet the building quality of the finished product pales by comparison to its counterparts from the 1930s, even in modest Beckley.

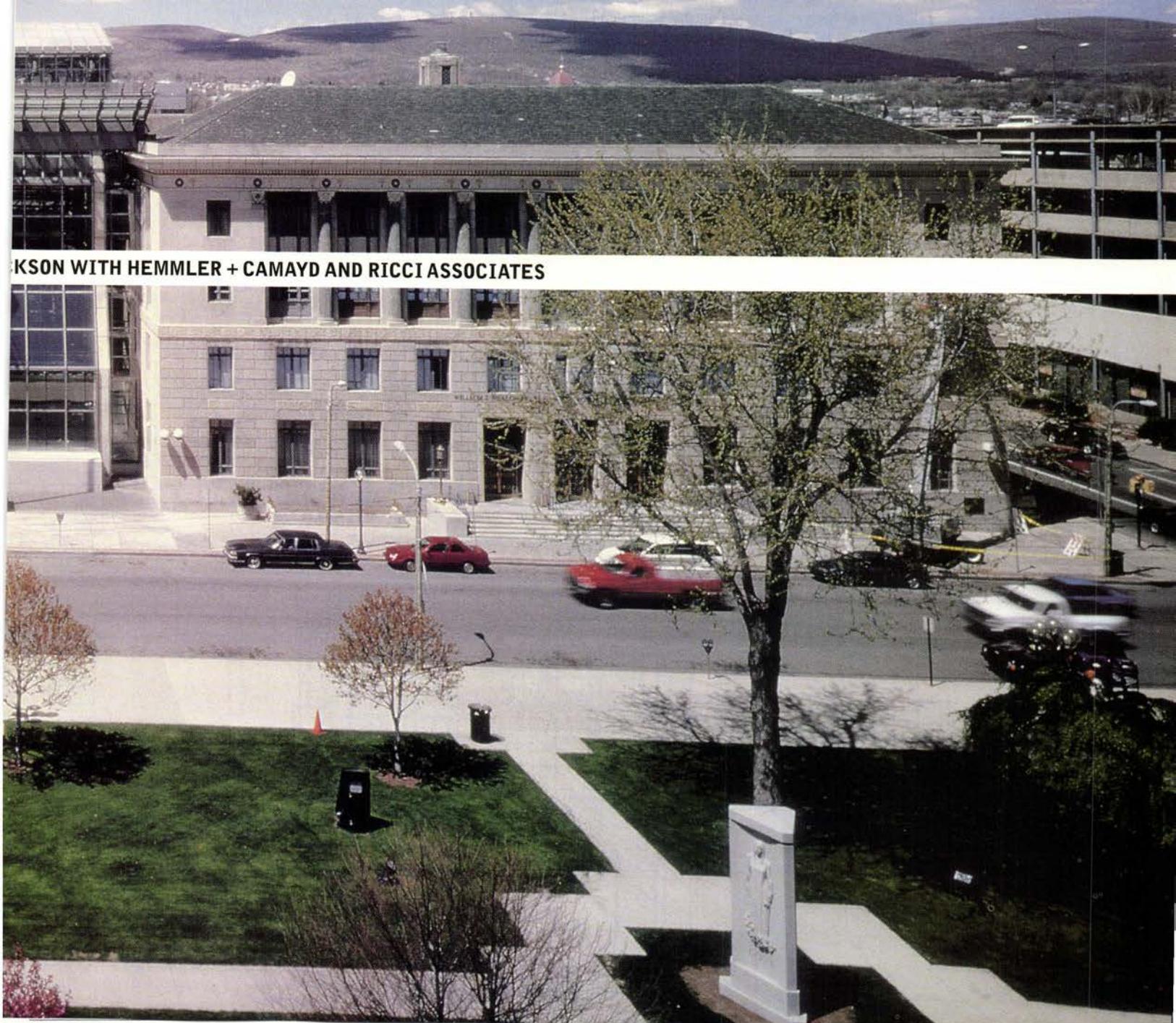
If the federal government in our own very affluent era is going to try to create architecture with the traditional dignity and quality achieved so beautifully in the depressed economy of the 1930s, it must commit substantially greater resources and conviction than are evident in the Beckley courthouse. Working in the genre of another era only makes more evident the diminution of true pride, respect, and esteem our culture today places in buildings for institutions like the federal judiciary. Building great public buildings in a classical style has always required political and monetary commitment beyond basic needs. This has never been more true than today. If public buildings of our own time are not to seem second rate, they must either be granted that kind of special stature or seek their value from sources other than just tradition. Judge Faber rightly observes that "any architecture is representative of the culture it springs from." The representation presented by the new U.S. Courthouse at Beckley should give us pause. **BY LAWRENCE W. SPECK**

"THE DIFFERENT CIRCULATION FOR STAFF, VIS  
WE USED TO WALK DOWN THE HALL AND PAS  
LITTLE INTIMIDATING." MATT HEMPHILL, CONS  
DISTRICT COURTS, MIDDLE REGION "IT IS A  
IN. IT'S INDUSTRIAL, BUT THE DECORATING HA  
IF RELAXING IS THE RIGHT WORD, BUT—INV

WILLIAM J. NEALON FEDERAL BUILDING AND UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE, SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA, BOHLIN CYWINS



RS, AND JUDGES WORKS REALLY WELL.  
RISONERS IN SHACKLES, WHICH WAS A  
CTION PROJECTS MANAGER FOR U.S.  
VITING ATMOSPHERE WHEN YOU WALK  
ADE IT SOMEWHAT MORE—I DON'T KNOW  
G.” KATIE NALEVANKO, DEPUTY CLERK



KSON WITH HEMMLER + CAMAYD AND RICCI ASSOCIATES

First-floor plan 33' 1"

The William J. Nealon Federal Building and United States Courthouse succeeds in making a complex of two buildings that work functionally

materials and system of proportions. The two buildings read as different generations of the same family, unified by a large sky-lit hall

#### WILLIAM J. NEALON FEDERAL BUILDING AND UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE (ADDITION), SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA

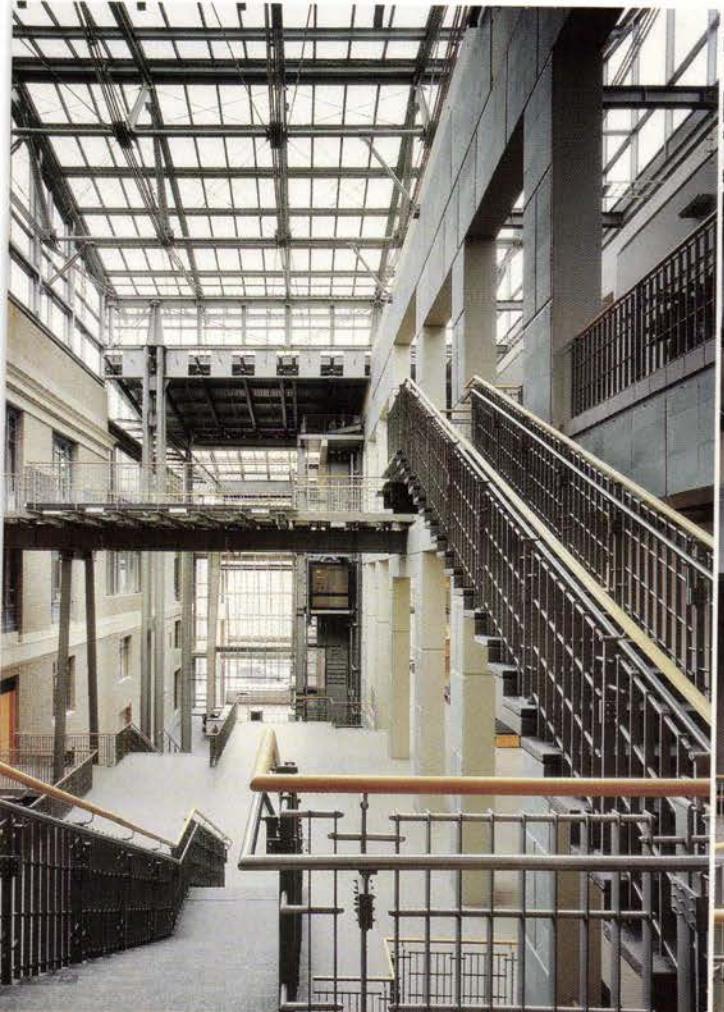
CLIENT: United States General Services



#### EXTERIOR AND ATRIUM

The glass-enclosed atrium (above left) that links the original WPA-era building with BCJ's addition is the primary public space in the new courthouse. Inside, visitors may take elevators (facing page, top, at far left) or the grand staircase (facing page, bottom left, and top, at far right) to access courtrooms, while judges and staff use a series of open footbridges that span the atrium (facing page, bottom right) to move back and forth between private offices. The service and vehicular entrance (this page, below) is tucked in behind the building on the inside of the block.







Clerestory windows admit natural light into each of the four new courtrooms (above) BCJ designed; the firm also restored the two 1931 originals. The six courtrooms are shared by seven judges, and space currently used for offices can be converted to two additional courtrooms in the future.

## COURTROOMS



**CRITIQUE** Once a center of coal mining, railroads, and iron manufacturing in Northeast Pennsylvania, Scranton has the faintly forlorn air of a place that reached for economic glory decades ago, and has now settled into faded maturity. Because it has been largely untouched by urban renewal or commercial development in recent decades, much of Scranton's historic core has been preserved. The downtown is a virtual outdoor museum of late 19th- and early 20th-century architectural styles. James A. Wetmore's 1931 federal building and courthouse is an important part of this handsome cityscape. It is a four-story, 156,500-square-foot beaux-arts palace with a two-story, rusticated limestone base supporting a two-story colonnade of engaged green marble Corinthian columns.

Under the auspices of the General Services Administration's Design Excellence Program, it underwent a \$34 million expansion and renovation which was completed in 1998, and is now the William J. Nealon Federal Building and United States Courthouse. Designed by Bohlin Cywinski Jackson (BCJ) of Wilkes Barre, with Hemmler & Camayd Architects of Scranton, the project successfully joins a thoroughly contemporary addition to the WPA-era federal building that includes a U.S. Post Office and U.S. Marshals Office. The architects have managed both to wed the new building and the old, and to develop a convincing alternative to the art deco-influenced neoclassical ornament of the original courthouse. BCJ has taken the underlying spirit of that ornament—a richness of detail, a superb feeling for materials—and translated it into a truly contemporary idiom. The new complex is also flooded with daylight and full of dignity; it is an inviting place that expresses an attitude of trust and openness to the public.

The design team for BCJ, including Peter Bohlin, Russ Roberts and Frank Grauman, resisted the temptation to create a new, single entrance to the expanded courthouse complex, even though conventional wisdom would have held that one entrance is more secure than several. They preserved the two original entrances of the post office (whose public lobby wraps around the northeast corner of the Nealon Building) intending to maintain the original circulation flow of the building, to activate the city's streetscape with multiple entrances, and to allow the public to move freely through the post office and a small ground-floor commissary. However, each of the three entrances in the expanded federal building leads to a single new security checkpoint in the lobby of the addition. One doesn't enter the atrium, a glass-covered vault which sits between the original structure and the rest of the addition, until passing through this safeguard. After a truck bomb ripped apart the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in April, 1995, the GSA has been extraordinarily careful to make sure all of its new buildings are less vulnerable to attack. But the Nealon Building is less influenced by security concerns than a desire to create an open, accessible atmosphere. "We held fast to our position that this should be a building that welcomes the public," said Thomas I. Vanaskie, chief judge for the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

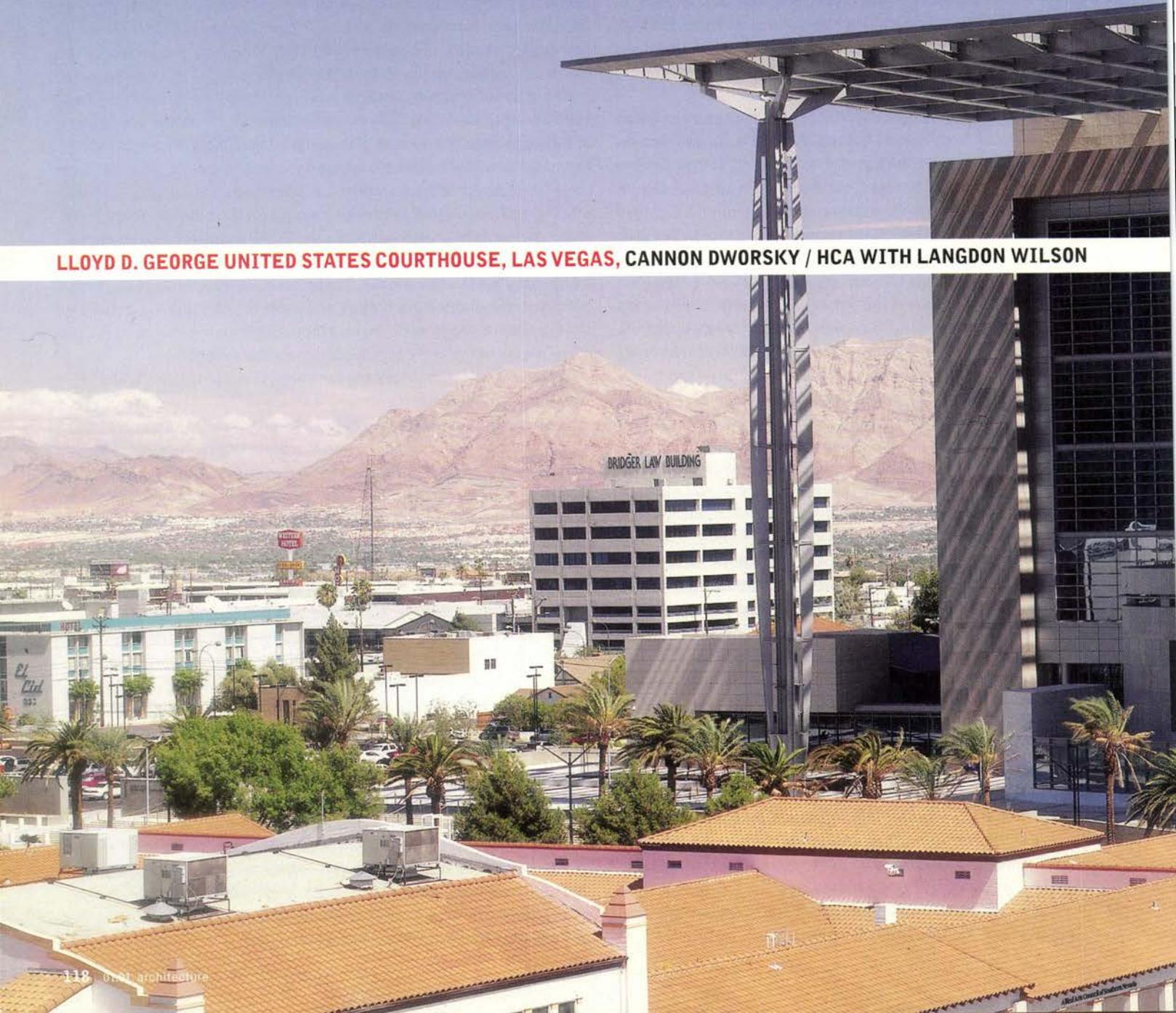
Key to the welcoming quality of which Judge Vanaskie speaks is the atrium, which is also the main visual event of the expansion and renovation. It is here that BCJ clearly reworks such familiar neoclassical ideas, like the rotunda as central gathering place, and yet there is a signal difference: The atrium is literally a glassed-over gap between the old building and the new, a pass-through that the architects made into the heart of their hybrid composition. There is no confusion as to what is new and what is not, because the addition is structurally independent of the older courthouse, whose preserved neoclassical side façades now face into the atrium in counterpoint to BCJ's high-tech structure. The steelwork holding up the 70-foot-high skylighted roof is a spectacular arrangement of exposed columns, trusses and steel tie-rods that evokes varied images, including 19th-century bridges, or the struts and cables of early biplanes. The warmth of the original building's brick gives color to and softens BCJ's palette of stone and steel. A ground-floor waiting room for prospective jurors, which functions as a small building-within-a-building, has a grand staircase running up the side of the original structure to a second-level waiting area. Bridges and terraces overhead link the upper levels of the new and old buildings, and crisscross the lobby with dramatic overlooks. These upper-level walkways have the practical use of allowing judges and staff to pass quickly between offices in both sections of the courthouse, but also impart a sense of visual drama to the building's circulation system.

At certain points, however, the detailing is overdone. The steel framing around the new main entrance canopy to the addition is heavy-handed, and the severe-looking balcony railings inside faintly resemble jail bars. The four-story main façade of the expansion, finished in limestone, strives for a look of sleek, modernist understatement but ends up looking merely spartan. It lacks the richness and inventiveness shown throughout the rest of the design, and one wonders if the architects spent all of their energy on the interior.

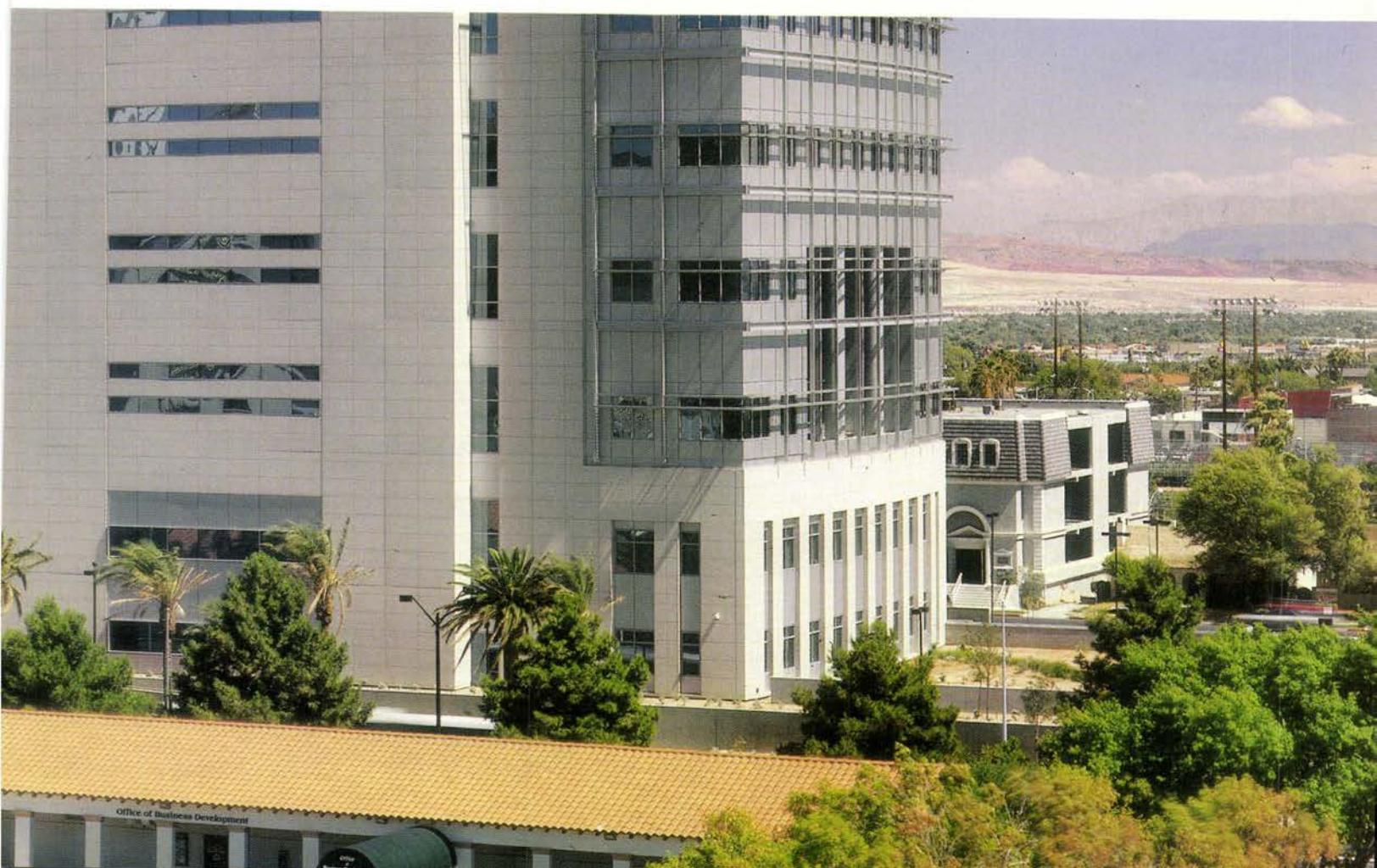
But on balance, this is an exemplary job. The 113,500-square-foot addition expresses the dignity of the federal courts without resorting to historicist imagery. Mainly, it achieves this through the grandeur of its major public spaces, and through fine detailing that creates a contemporary analogue to classical architecture. When one enters the atrium, there is an almost dizzying amount of information: A variety of patterned surfaces are illuminated by light from above, the balconies that line the space project out at landings, bridges and stairways cut across the vault. In the atrium, BCJ has abandoned the older metaphor of material solidity that symbolizes the permanence and reliability of the judicial system, instead making good use of light—or that which illuminates the truth inherent in the law. It's a victory for public architecture in a city that experienced its architectural heyday before the Depression, and a victory for those who believe that creating a space rich in symbolism doesn't require using symbols developed generations ago. Without referencing its neighbors directly, the Nealon Building comfortably takes its place in Scranton's distinguished outdoor museum of architecture. **BY STEVEN LITT**

**"I NEVER TIRE OF WATCHING HOW THE BUILDING CHANGES HOUR TO HOUR, IT IS NEVER THE SAME." BLAIN AND SPECTACULAR VIEWS MAKE FOR AN UPBEAT DAY. EVEN THOUGH I AM A TRADITIONALIST." JIM IRELAND REPRESENTS MANY THINGS OF IMPORTANCE, BUT THE MONUMENT TO COOPERATION." LLOYD D. GEORGE**

LLOYD D. GEORGE UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE, LAS VEGAS, CANNON DWORSKY / HCA WITH LANGDON WILSON



HANGES; FROM DAY TO DAY AND EVEN  
ELSH, U.S. ATTORNEY "THE ABUNDANT LIGHT  
ENVIRONMENT; I LOVE THE BUILDING  
USKY, SECURITY OFFICER "THIS BUILDING  
UT IT IS, IN ADDITION TO ALL ELSE, A  
., DISTRICT COURT JUDGE



The Lloyd D. George United States Courthouse responds to the pervasive image of Las Vegas as a haven of American leisure, the economy of which is based on impermanence, artifice, and a retreat from reality. In Las Vegas, civic life defers to the dynamic activity of the Strip; commercial spaces in front of casinos and hotels replace traditional public space. Located as it is at the entrance to downtown Las Vegas, it is critical that the courthouse reflect its role as an important civic edifice, without appearing insular or restrictive. The design of the courthouse considers this context and attempts to create a new public space that invites the community and inspires civic pride. As an interpretation of traditional courthouses, the Las Vegas Courthouse defines a new precedence for civic buildings by encouraging interaction between the government and the public.

Abundant glazing gives an effect of openness and accessibility, enabling visual contact between the inside and outside of the building. A clearly articulated organization is intended to encourage interaction and exploration of the building. The building materials were chosen to express the integrity and permanence of their

subject. With respect to texture and color, they were inspired by and complement the surrounding desert. Unlike the commercial buildings in Las Vegas, the intention was not to obscure the intense desert sun but create elements that take advantage of and enjoy the light.

The L configuration is a direct response to both the internal layout and external contextual issues, opening up the building as if to embrace downtown Las Vegas. This configuration, accentuated by massing and materials, engages passersby and is intended to elicit an emotional or intellectual response—thus provoking discourse. Formally, the L configuration creates the focus of the building—a public plaza accessed by a grand staircase. This plaza becomes a grand civic space, a modern adaptation of the front porch and a meeting place for informal gatherings. *Mehrdad Yazdani*

#### LLOYD D. GEORGE UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE, LAS VEGAS

**CLIENT:** General Services Administration, Pacific Rim Region—Kenn Kojima (regional administrator); John Petkewich (assistant regional administrator); Abdee Gharavi (director of property development division); Matt Jear (California/Hawaii project executive); Pauline Ma-Senturia (project manager, property development division); Elisa Sanchez (contracting officer, property development division); Honorable Judge Lloyd D. George (senior judge); Honorable Judge Philip Pro (district judge)

**ARCHITECT:** Cannon Dworsky/HCA, Los Angeles—Mehrdad Yazdani (lead designer), Daniel Dworsky, Harry Campbell (principals-in-charge); Robert Levine (project planner); Robert Rosenberg (project director); Craig Norman, Ken Rossi (project managers); Craig Booth, James Braam, John Frane, Bung Ko, Ira Mann, Marios Nimitz, Hadrian Predock, Rey Sacilio (design team)

**EXECUTIVE ARCHITECT:** Langdon Wilson—Asad Khan (partner-in-charge); Niall Kelly (project director); Wai Ki Fong (project architect); Reginald Head (interiors)

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** JW Zunino Associates

**ENGINEERS:** Marin & Peltyn (structural); Southland Industries (mechanical); SASCO (electrical)

**DESIGN PHASE ENGINEERS:** John A. Martin (structural); Martin & Martin (mechanical); Kimley-Horn & Associates (civil) Rosenberg & Associates (electrical);

**CONSULTANTS:** Lighting Design Alliance (lighting); Horton Lees Lighting Design (lighting, design phase); Veneklasen Associates (acoustical, design phase)

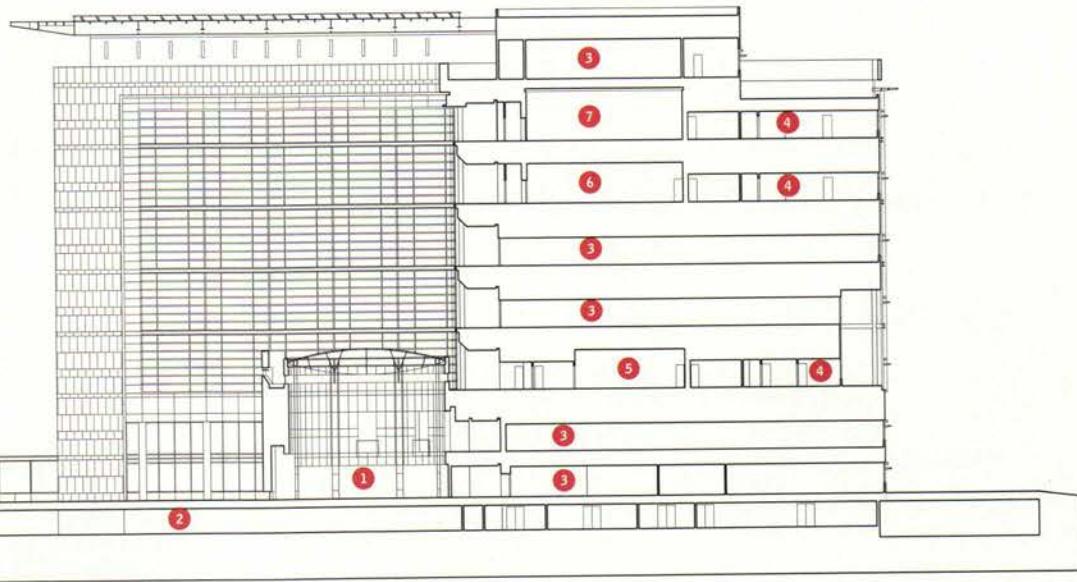
**GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** J.A. Jones Construction

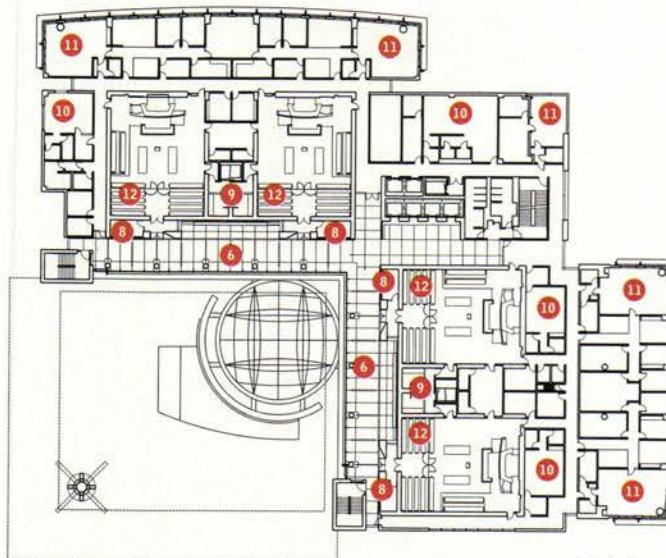
**COST:** \$95 million

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Peter Aaron/Esto

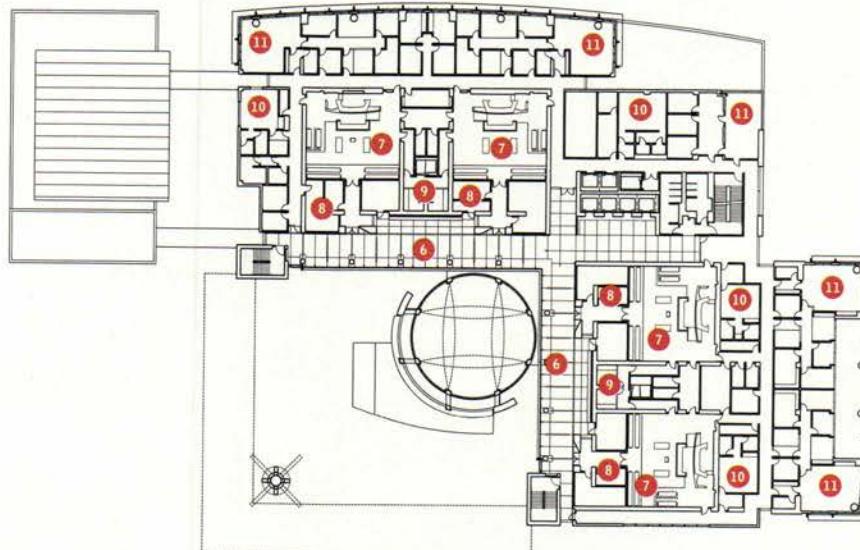
#### ARCHITECT'S STATEMENT

- 1 rotunda lobby
- 2 secure parking
- 3 offices
- 4 judge's chambers
- 5 magistrate courtroom
- 6 district courtroom
- 7 Special Proceedings courtroom

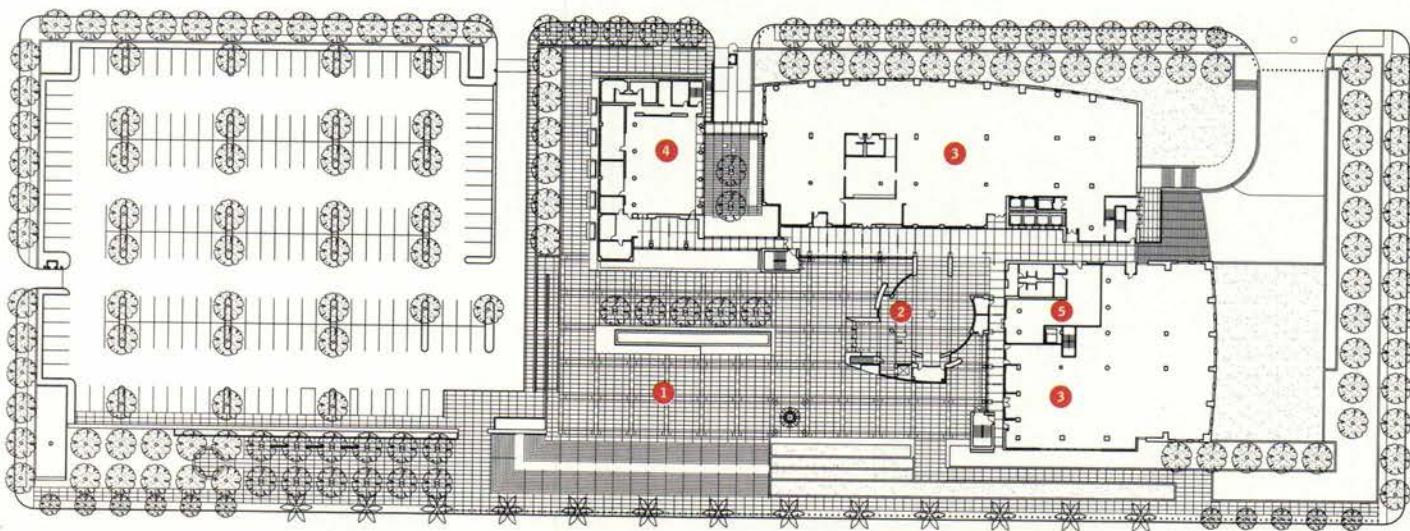




Sixth-floor plan



Third-floor plan



First-floor plan 135' <



### VIEW TOWARDS THE STRIP

Mehrdad Yazdani's abstract, single-column portico holds its own against the haptic faux-historical backdrop of the Vegas Strip.





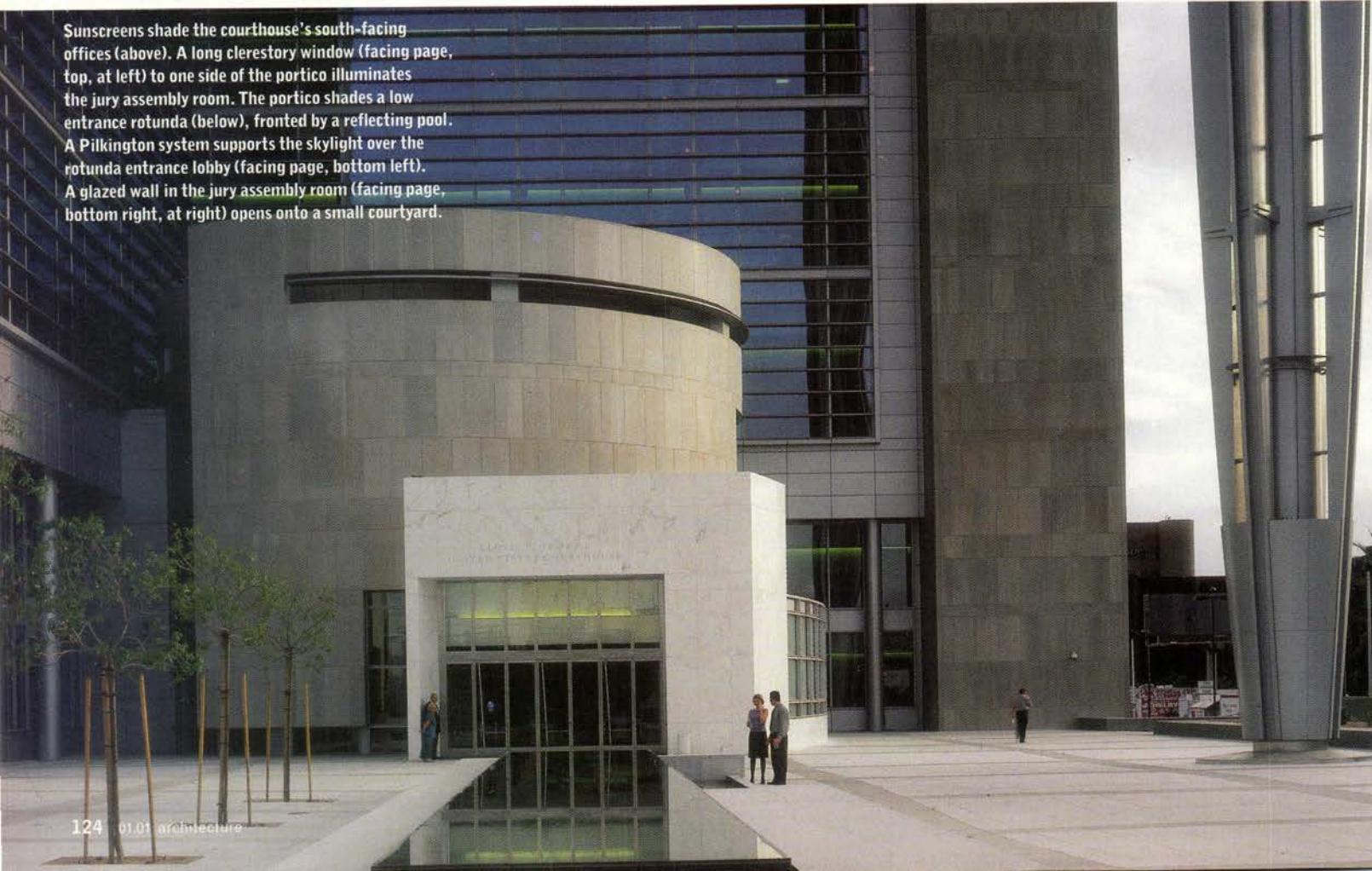
NSB NEVADA STATE BANK

NSB NEVADA STATE BANK



## EXTERIOR, LOBBY, AND JURY ASSEMBLY ROOM

Sunscreens shade the courthouse's south-facing offices (above). A long clerestory window (facing page, top, at left) to one side of the portico illuminates the jury assembly room. The portico shades a low entrance rotunda (below), fronted by a reflecting pool. A Pilkington system supports the skylight over the rotunda entrance lobby (facing page, bottom left). A glazed wall in the jury assembly room (facing page, bottom right, at right) opens onto a small courtyard.







### COURTROOM CHAMBER

Yazdani incorporated cherry wood paneling in the courtrooms (above) as well as in judge's chambers (below). The courtroom ceiling repeats the grid pattern of the paneling; granite appears behind the judge's bench.



**CRITIQUE** In cities such as Las Vegas, where buildings seem to turn over only slightly less rapidly than the sevens on a one-armed bandit, where images are vigorously if not rigorously assembled from anywhere, where rhetorical hyperbole, size, and opulence are without peer, where the gaming houses—great from afar but far from great—hold the skyline hostage, how is it possible to erect a public building which honors the spirit of the General Services Administration's 1962 resolution to encourage federal buildings that "reflect regional architectural traditions?" The short answer is to ignore the Strip; the long answer is to engage the city's largely forgotten downtown and civic identity with buildings that accommodate the diverse necessities of public life. The commanding design for the Lloyd D. George United States Courthouse, by Mehrdad Yazdani of Los Angeles-based Cannon Dworsky does both, with a dignified and richly contemporary language.

The overwhelming mass of casinos on the Strip makes it easy to forget that there is another Las Vegas in the old downtown, where city, county, regional, and federal administrative structures stand close by gaudy wedding chapels and the city's older, smaller casinos. From this largely nondescript assemblage, the new courthouse emerges with a distinctive profile that turns its back to the Strip: An L-shaped structure along the southern and eastern flanks of the site frames a generous plaza and a reflecting pool, as well as a soaring, tapered steel column holding aloft a gridded steel canopy. Approaching on the freeway from McCarran Airport, it is clear that this is not another squat office tower, nor a spirited and extravagant casino, but a structure with a unique presence—even if just what it might be remains a mystery.

Had Yazdani followed the instincts of some of the Las Vegas District Court judges whose chambers are in the new building, and designed a traditional, temple-front courthouse, its program would have been apparent from afar. Although instant recognition may be crucial for merchandising, it may be less so for public buildings—and indeed, in the environment of Las Vegas, a temple front would simply have joined the Eiffel Tower and Piazza San Marco as yet another themed environment. Conversely, a 1960s-era federal building would have represented yet another lost opportunity in a long roll call of earnestly dismal efforts to produce excellent public buildings. In fact, most of the Las Vegas courthouse's governmental neighbors are straightforward modernist blocks of varying quality.

Such buildings illustrate in worrisome fashion the dangers of encouraging architects to design so as "to embody the finest contemporary American architectural thought," as the GSA does. How then is it possible to avoid the embarrassments typical of the 1960s and 1970s, to encourage fine architecture without being hamstrung by classicism? Not an easy task, and judging by some of the courthouses going up elsewhere in the southwest, abandoning classicism is no guarantee of excellence. Still, Yazdani's design exceeds GSA goals for contemporary architecture.

By all accounts, once Yazdani had been selected as architect, the success of the design rested not only his talent as a designer, but on his ability to listen, and listen carefully, to his clients: the judges, but also

representatives of every group which would ultimately work in the building. He offered a variety of solutions for each problem, working closely with the clients to choose the most appropriate ones, a process that resulted in what Judge George aptly terms "a monument to cooperation."

The resulting courthouse offers compelling evidence that, at least here, the GSA's Design Excellence Program is accomplishing its objectives: This is a fine building indeed. Its generous public plaza and elegant atrium signal the importance of the activities that take place within, reminding visitors that it is not a casino but a place where the rule of law is worked out every day. The elegantly tapered column, the gridded canopy, the limestone revetment at the entrance, the high plinth, and even the precast concrete panels that emulate stone all contribute as vestigial reminders of traditional courthouse architecture. Cherry paneling and granite revetments behind the benches in the courtrooms recall some of the most characteristic features of 19th-century courthouses, conveying the austere dignity of the court without succumbing to fussy, classical details. All of the complicated features of courthouses, such as separate access by the public, the judiciary, and prisoners, have been rendered clearly and comprehensibly, while the courtrooms incorporate both the latest computer technologies as well as sufficient flexibility to accommodate the rapid changes in those technologies.

Yazdani's design celebrates the breathtaking geography of this corner of Nevada, aligning offices and chambers on the outside of the L to permit panoramic views of surrounding mountains and deserts (not to mention the casinos to the south) while shielding them from the harsh summer heat by overlaying a steel grid that supports a system of louvers. Hallways on the interior of the L overlook the reflecting pool and downtown Las Vegas, as well as the mountains. Even in this inhospitable climate, the building contains a garden courtyard for the jury assembly rooms and small office facilities for those waiting to be called—making jury service less onerous than normal.

Of all the spectacular achievements of this building, among the most significant are its security features. In the post-Oklahoma City world of federal buildings, one might have expected the GSA to commission fortified, bunker-like enclaves with a forbidding public presence, or, alternatively, environments bristling with cameras and other apparatus that foreground high-technology surveillance systems. For the Lloyd D. George United States Courthouse, Yazdani did neither: He used design to achieve security. Setting the structure back on a high plinth provides the first line of defense from car or other types of bombs; blast-resistant materials and a steel frame designed not to suffer structural collapse add to the building's ability to resist damage in the event of an attack (specifically to avoid the devastating structural failures like those in Oklahoma City). These decisions allowed for a public building that is dignified, generous, and open without sacrificing security; a building that accounts for its setting and local characteristics; a building that, in short, sets a high standard for other public buildings in the GSA program and, one can only hope, helps raise the bar for design in Las Vegas itself. **BY DIANE GHIRARDO**

**Seattle**  
**NBBJ**  
**United States Courthouse**  
**615,000 GSF**  
**\$150,000,000**  
**estimated completion date:**  
**Spring 2004**

# COMING TO A CITY NEAR YOU

OVER THE NEXT SIX YEARS, DOZENS OF GSA BUILDINGS WILL OPEN ACROSS THE COUNTRY...



When the dust settles in 2006, the General Services Administration will have spent \$10 billion on new construction and renovation, and the U.S. will have acquired 21 more federal courthouses. Scattered throughout 17 different states, these courts are the next batch produced under the auspices of the Design Excellence Program. Several border stations and administrative buildings—including the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Headquarters, recently awarded to Moshe Safdie & Associates—will also be constructed. Like all Design Excellence projects, these were chosen through peer review, a process that lets judges, architects, critics, and GSA staff take part in the selection. Some projects amend existing structures, completing federal campuses; others occupy entirely new sites. Seven are currently under construction; three are to be completed within the next year. Do these projects promise Design Excellence? You be the judge. *Sara Moss*

#### Fresno, California

**MOORE RUBLE YUDELL ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS (WITH GRUEN ASSOCIATES)**  
United States Courthouse and Federal Building  
400,000 GSF  
\$101,500,000  
estimated completion date: Spring 2005



#### Portland, Oregon (selected)

**MORPHOSIS**  
United States Courthouse  
265,000 GSF  
\$61,000,000  
estimated completion date: 2005

#### Salt Lake City, Utah

**THOMAS PHIFER & PARTNERS (WITH MAYLOR WENTWORTH ARCHITECTS)**  
United States Courthouse  
320,000 GSF  
\$65,000,000  
estimated completion date: 2004



#### Denver

**ANDERSON MASON DALE ARCHITECTS (WITH HOK ST. LOUIS)**  
United States Courthouse Annex  
318,000 GSF (Phase I)  
\$80,000,000  
estimated completion date: Summer 2002

#### Little Rock, Arkansas

**RTKL ASSOCIATES (JOINT VENTURE WITH WITSELL, EVANS & RASCO)**  
U.S. Courthouse and Post Office (renovation and expansion)  
Renovation: 249,500 GSF Annex: 132,000 GSF  
\$50,000,000-\$60,000,000  
estimated completion date: 2006



#### Greeneville, Tennessee

**HNEDAK BOBO GROUP/ ALLEN & HOSHALL (WITH KALLMANN MCKINNELL & WOOD)**  
James H. Quillen United States Courthouse  
150,000 GSF  
\$26,000,000  
estimated completion date: Spring 2001

#### Cape Girardeau, Missouri

**ROSS BARNEY + JANKOWSKI ARCHITECTS**  
United States Courthouse  
150,000 GSF  
\$31,500,000  
estimated completion date: Fall 2003

#### London, Kentucky

**SPILLIS CANDELA & PARTNERS (JOINT VENTURE WITH CHRISMAN MILLER WOODFORD)**  
United States Courthouse  
87,417 GSF  
\$14,100,000  
estimated completion date: Summer 2002



#### Hammond, Indiana

**PEICOBBA FREED & PARTNERS (WITH GRUZEN SAMTON ASSOCIATES)**  
United States Courthouse  
269,000 GSF  
\$57,000,000  
estimated completion date: Spring 2001



#### Jacksonville, Florida

HLM DESIGN (WITH KBJ ARCHITECTS)

United States Courthouse

400,000 GSF

\$77,550,000

estimated completion date: Fall 2002

#### Orlando, Florida

LEERS WEINZAPFEL ASSOCIATES  
(JOINT VENTURE WITH HLM DESIGN)

United States Courthouse

308,300 GSF

\$60,000,000

estimated completion date: Spring 2005

#### Miami

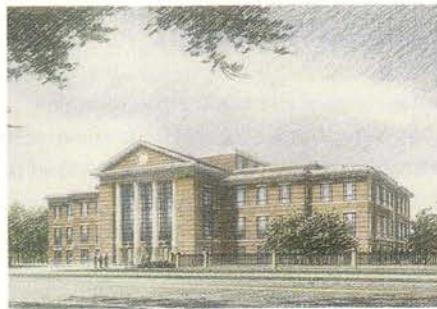
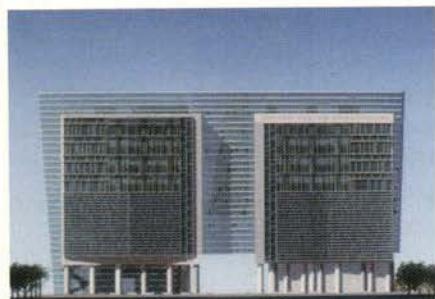
ARQUITECTONICA / ARQ (WITH HOK)

United States Courthouse

550,000 GSF

\$101,000,000

estimated completion date: Fall 2004



#### Columbia, South Carolina

SHEPLEY BULFINCH RICHARDSON AND  
ABBOTT (WITH STEVENS & WILKINSON)

Matthew J. Perry, Jr. United States Courthouse

160,000 GSF

\$29,200,000

estimated completion date: Summer 2002



#### Wheeling, West Virginia

GOODY, CLANCY & ASSOCIATES  
(WITH HLM DESIGN)

United States Federal Building and Courthouse

90,000 GSF

\$20,600,000

estimated completion date: Spring 2004

#### Youngstown, Ohio

ROBERT A.M. STERN ARCHITECTS (WITH  
URS GRENIER WOODWARD CLYDE)

Federal Building and United States Courthouse

49,282 GSF

\$10,000,000

estimated completion date: Fall 2002



#### Erie, Pennsylvania

DAN PETER KOPPLE & ASSOCIATES  
(JOINT VENTURE WITH KSBA)

Erie Federal Building and Courthouse

155,400 GSF

\$25,837,000

estimated completion date: Fall 2004

#### Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

SHALOM BARANES ASSOCIATES  
ARCHITECTS

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(renovation and expansion)

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\$40,000,000 - \$50,000,000

estimated completion date: 2004

#### Washington, D.C.

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VENTURE WITH SMITHGROUP)

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\$93,000,000

estimated completion date: 2006



#### Springfield, Massachusetts

MOSHE SAFDIE & ASSOCIATES  
United States Courthouse

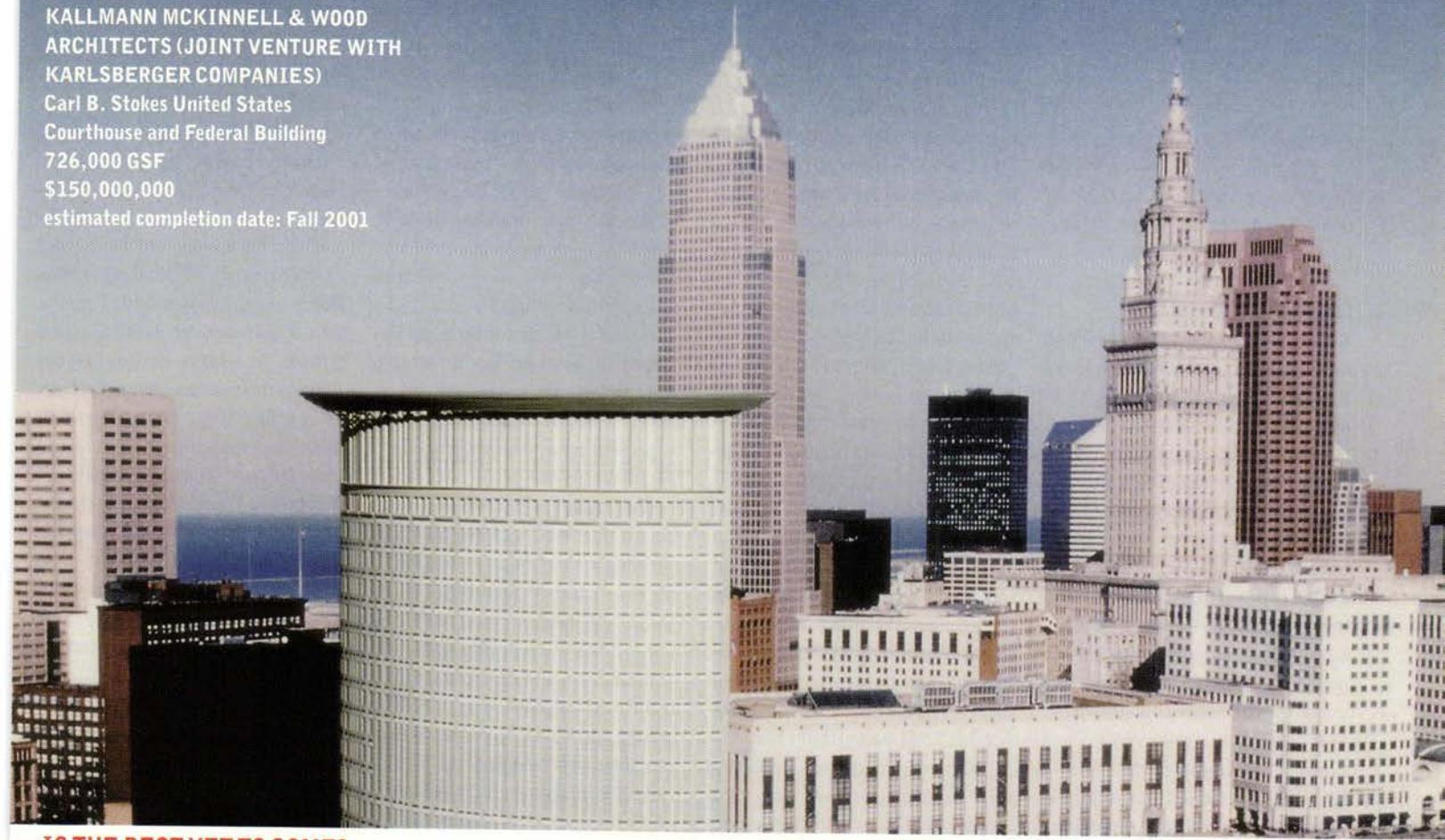
150,000 GSF

\$44,000,000

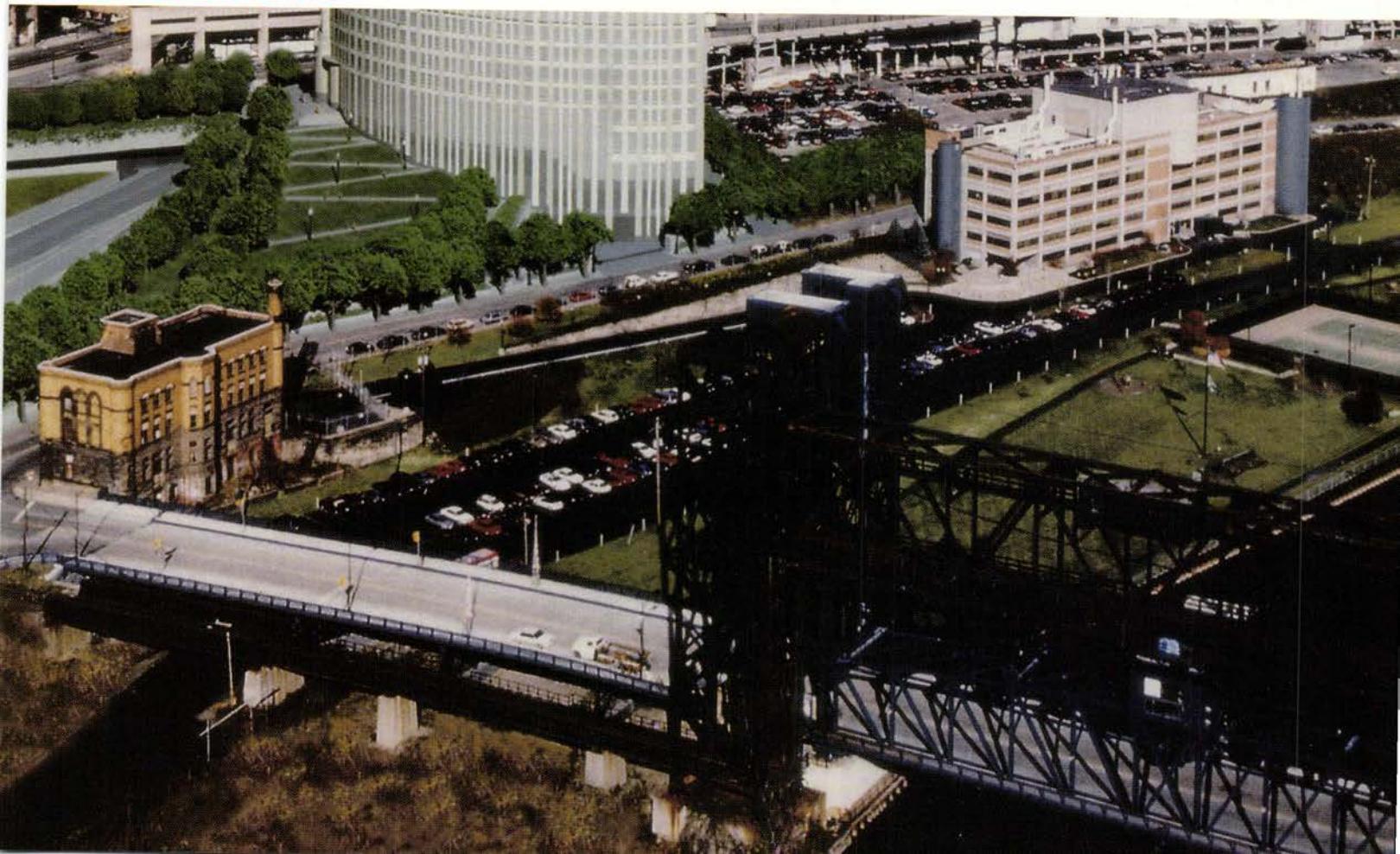
estimated completion date: Fall 2004

**Cleveland**

**KALLMANN MCKINNELL & WOOD  
ARCHITECTS (JOINT VENTURE WITH  
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**Carl B. Stokes United States  
Courthouse and Federal Building**  
**726,000 GSF**  
**\$150,000,000**  
**estimated completion date: Fall 2001**



**IS THE BEST YET TO COME?**



## Here Comes the Judge

continued from page 101

[The courts are] masking the real issue: a modern design vs. a traditional building."

### Dissenting Views

At Leers's presentation to Peck on October 2, Peck seemed relaxed in a crisp white shirt, tie, and suit pants with no jacket. "Courthouses," the commissioner began, "are, except for the Capitol, the ultimate expressions of our values as a society." He scrolled back through the evolution of federal designs, from Jefferson and Washington's disagreements over neoclassicism to the federal government's regrettable performance in design through the 1970s and '80s. In the early '90s, Peck noted, the judges of the federal courts pushed the GSA to "get the best design possible" for judiciary buildings. In the case of Leers's building, he said, he believed his agency had.

"I think it's a crisp, elegant design which seems to satisfy the need for functionality," declared Peck. "I'm encouraged, and would love to see this project go ahead." He paused and looked around the room. "But I'm aware of dissenting views," he said. "I think we need to open [the discussion] up."

All eyes in the room fell on Kovachevich.

The judge testily asked Peck how much time she had, and interrupted him each time he tried to utter a response. Finally, the judge took the front of the room. Kovachevich announced that the 14 active and six senior judges in her district had recently discussed Leers's design, via videoconference. "The judges of the court unanimously have determined that they do not approve this building—with all due respect to architect Leers." (Throughout the meeting,

the judge consistently referred to the designer as "architect Leers.")

Kovachevich then launched a discursive attack on the building. At times she hectored her audience as if she were a varsity coach, and it was difficult for some in the room to discern her central point. She criticized the building's appearance by drawing an analogy to the semiotics of military uniforms, which convey "a sense of duty," she stressed. "Honor. Pride."

She emphasized that the courthouse needed a stronger presence than Leers had given it, especially in the South, with its violent civil-rights legacy. "It was the South that took the stand" during the civil-rights movement, the judge barked. "And the judges were being threatened at the time with having their homes burned down and still [went] to those courthouses and [made] that stand."

She produced a map marking the locations of various neo-Confederate militia and hate groups in the U.S., with the largest concentration shown in her district. Until recently, she said, the Middle District of Florida had the highest number of threats to federal judges. The building Leers had designed, the judge concluded, offered a "soft target" vulnerable to terrorists, especially with its large expanse of glass in front.

Nobody in Orlando likes the building, the judge claimed. Not the mayor, the police department, or the community—and especially not the African-American group trying to move ahead with a \$53 million rehabilitation of the adjacent Parramore neighborhood. "The black commissioner [of the Parramore development] came and said it's not consistent with what they're developing," Kovachevich said, pacing the floor. The Parramore group has several projects pending, and is trying to persuade Florida A & M University in Tallahassee to relocate its historically black (now integrated)

law school to a site across West Washington from the GSA site.

It would be more sympathetic to those plans, she said, to move the south-oriented courthouse to the northern edge of the site, where it could face the school. Tracing back to the issue of terrorism, Kovachevich mentioned several minutes later that A & M's law school had recently been the target of a foiled bomb attack, which, several observers whispered afterward, confused her argument about the courthouse's security somewhat.

Eventually, with time running out on the meeting, Peck got up to take back the floor. He zeroed in on the issue of security. GSA's security criteria for new buildings around the nation, he explained, contemplate all types of threats—from hate groups, drug cartels, gangs, and so on. "Security starts way beyond the edge of the battlefield," Peck reminded the judge, and she agreed. "Most threats," said Peck, "are never carried out. And most attacks are by people who didn't make a threat."

After a bit more wrangling over disputed details of the building and the supposedly negative local reaction to it, Peck sealed the purpose of the meeting: "I'm prepared to go ahead with this design," he said, "and I do formally approve it."

The judge sat still, wearing a frown of disapproval.

### A Public Trial

Because the judges in the Middle District of Florida themselves have been unsuccessful in pressing their case to the GSA, they have now turned to local legal and law enforcement officials—the police, the sheriff, the Latin-American, African-American, and Orange County bar associations—as well as to the media for help in raising a chorus of opposition to the Leers design.

Orlando's chief of police, Jerry L. Demings, wrote to Peck in

September to raise vague security concerns about the building, but also to suggest that "[a] more traditional design such as that of the current federal building, state building, and Orlando Police Headquarters building complements the architectural flare [sic] of the corridor." Philip B. Williams, the sheriff of Brevard County, wrote Democratic Rep. Corrine Brown, in whose congressional district the courthouse will reside, to complain that "The current proposal includes glass siding facing Interstate 4, thereby making it extremely vulnerable to terrorist attacks." The local NBC affiliate, Channel 2, reported that "the image of the Oklahoma's [sic] Federal Building in shambles came to mind when local officials first saw the proposed design for the new Orlando Federal Courthouse." The station went on to quote Orange County Director of Public Safety Tom Hurlburt as saying that the proposed courthouse "looks like a soft target." Whether the basis for the judges' complaints about the design are real or imagined, there is no doubt that their public-relations war is making its mark locally.

Of all the personal invective and professional aspersions cast by, and on, all the players in the courthouse battle, one insult stands out to illustrate the meanness of the conflict: GSA staff take great umbrage at the judiciary's suggestions—both oblique and frank—that the agency would put federal employees at risk and "build another [Alfred P.] Murrah [Federal] building," the one that Timothy McVeigh blew up in Oklahoma City in 1995, says an agency official. "GSA lost people in the Murrah building. We don't design buildings that way any more."

Now that the drama swirling around the Orlando courthouse commission has played itself out in the *continued on page 134*

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## Here Comes the Judge

*continued from page 132*

courtroom, in GSA, and in the community, it is likely to move on to Congress. That stage of the battle will prove crucial, because Congress, having released \$11.4 million for the site purchase and design, must now authorize at least another \$60 million for construction.

But Congress can simply call off the project if legislators believe the courthouse is too problematic. Members of the Florida delegation—especially Brown and Democratic Senator Bob Graham—may not like what they're hearing from the project's opponents in Orlando, who have written numerous complaint letters to Congress. GSA has responded to those complaints in writing, but "at the same time our request for funding is crossing [the Office of Management and Budget]'s desk, those letters are crossing, too, from constituents saying, 'We don't want [the courthouse]'," notes a GSA official. "We're still in a state of limbo. And we are in serious danger of not getting construction funding." Peck himself acknowledged the thin line the GSA is walking by going

ahead with the courthouse. "Frankly," Peck said, "this project is in jeopardy."

And it is possible that the Orlando debacle could cause Congress to scrutinize the entire Design Excellence initiative more closely. The Design Excellence protocol has provided the GSA an orderly framework for realizing complicated designs for federal buildings that disguise their formidable security requirements within a cloak of contemporary dignity. Ironically, it is exactly those two objectives, security and beauty, on which the Orlando judges' contempt for Leers's design ostensibly rests. It may turn out that the only people for whom the courthouse provides an assailable target are the judges themselves.

It's a scenario that GSA peer Roger Schluntz predicted years before this conflict ever arose. "There needs to be absolute clarity about who makes the decision of which architect to select," Schluntz remarked at a 1995 gathering of GSA peers in San Francisco. "It shouldn't be the judges. They may give input, but then they ought to be removed, the selection made, and they should be bound to live with it. They're not the taxpayers. They're not going to be in that courthouse as long as it will exist." ■

## Worry Later

*continued from page 42*

online commerce work—it's the "clicks and mortar" strategy that analysts say holds the most promise. And, Kelly adds, most retail transactions take place in spaces smaller than 75,000 square feet. Take that, Wal-Mart.

Most architects at some point or other will find themselves working for the public sector, which throughout the '90s kept firms fed when private clients disappeared. Today, says Toal, public works continue to provide a quarter of the cash flow for architects and builders. Most local and state governments and, certainly, the federal government, are flush with surpluses. Public construction rose by 4.4 percent in 1999 (highway construction rose 6.4 percent), but "unexpectedly" slowed in 2000, says Toal. The money is there, he says. It's

been budgeted, but for some unclear reason has not been fully flowing to projects in the past year; volume fell by 0.7 percent. Nevertheless, Toal expects public construction to rise by 3.8 percent next year.

Of course, nobody ever really knows for certain what's going to happen, and these economists are the first to admit as much. But between the lines, it seems that no one expects anything catastrophic to happen in the next year or so, as it did in the early '90s. These years haven't been sober ones for our economy, which has stretched limits that many highly paid number crunchers had thought impossible. The boom has lasted longer than anybody thought it would, but nobody ever said it was sustainable. It's likely that the "new" economy will get old fairly soon. Market watchers "have been predicting the slowdown for three straight years and keep moving it forward," says Petrik of Legg Mason. "Sooner or later they will be right." ■

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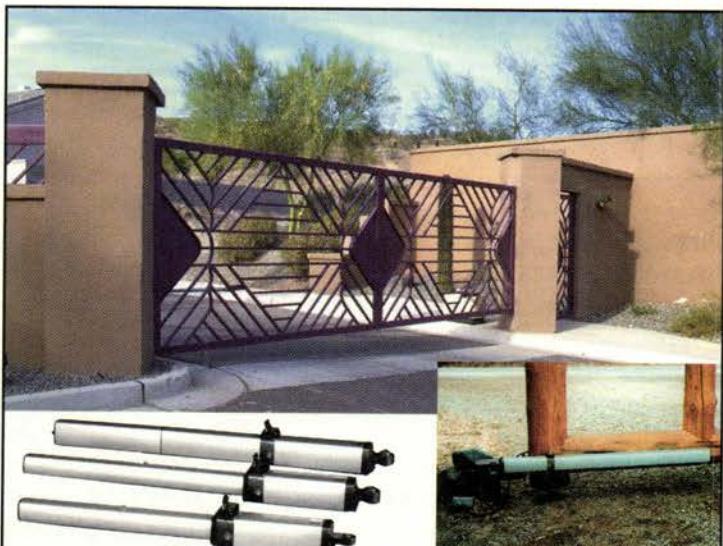
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# The Face of Greed

Misusing prime Chicago real estate by creating bland, land-hogging buildings is how the John Buck Company has turned its back on conscientious development. **Edward Keegan** picks through the pieces of its North Bridge.

If greed needs an architectural face, the John Buck Company's North Bridge development in Chicago is all smiles. North Michigan Avenue, where the development is located, was planned during the 1920s as an elegant Parisian-style boulevard. And while recent constructions along the avenue are bereft of the stylistic pretensions of the original, North Bridge is an act of architectural recklessness whose only reasonable *raison d'être* is avarice.

North Bridge's program should have been a city planner and architect's dream: 2.1 million square feet of space on nine prime downtown blocks, comprising a rich mix of retail, restaurant, hotel, and entertainment possibilities, between Chicago's two thriving retail strips, North Michigan Avenue and North State Street. But John Buck and his ragtag team of architects decided to lavish most of their ill-conceived attention on North Michigan Avenue, treating the remainder of the district as back alley space.

Once off North Michigan, each of the buildings is "finished" in some variation of exposed concrete. The architecture is so frightfully banal that a parking structure by architect Solomon Cordwell Buenz, playfully draped in a metal grid rotated to match the ramps, may be the district's architectural highlight. And while these horrid little streets are tourist friendly, thanks to presence of places like Disney Quest, ESPN Zone, and a California Pizza Kitchen, pedestrians are likely only to scurry between the unrelieved concrete canyons that link each of these destinations.

Nordstrom, one of the North Bridge's prime occupants, is also one of North Bridge's biggest headaches. The clothing retailer demanded a full city block for its store and a prestigious North Michigan Avenue address. Developer Buck and architect Anthony Belluschi/OWP&P complied, placing Nordstrom's blank box structure a block behind the landmark McGraw-Hill Building and convincing the City of Chicago to grant them the unprecedented use of air rights above Grand Avenue, an adjacent cross-street. Here the architects placed the project's eponymous "bridge," a 95-foot-tall glass structure that inelegantly houses an infor-



North Bridge's Nordstrom demanded a North Michigan Avenue address. It got its way.

mation desk and escalators while blaring Nordstrom's presence to the passing North Michigan Avenue pedestrian. A four-story suburban-style shopping mall (called "The Shops at North Bridge") links the bridge's front door to Nordstrom's through the lower floors of McGraw-Hill. Since the original 1929 McGraw-Hill structure, built as an office building, wouldn't allow the new uses without complex structural gymnastics, the builders chose the bizarre solution of razing the landmark building and saving only its limestone façade for reuse on a new frame.

What is most disturbing about North Bridge is not only the greed. It's the about-face developer John Buck has pulled. Previously, Buck has brought Chicago such architectural luminaries as Philip Johnson, Kenzo Tange, and Kevin Roche. At North Bridge, which could have made a significant contribution to Chicago's downtown, Buck has shown the dark side of the developer's art, the ability to maximize profits while minimizing architecture and urban planning. ■

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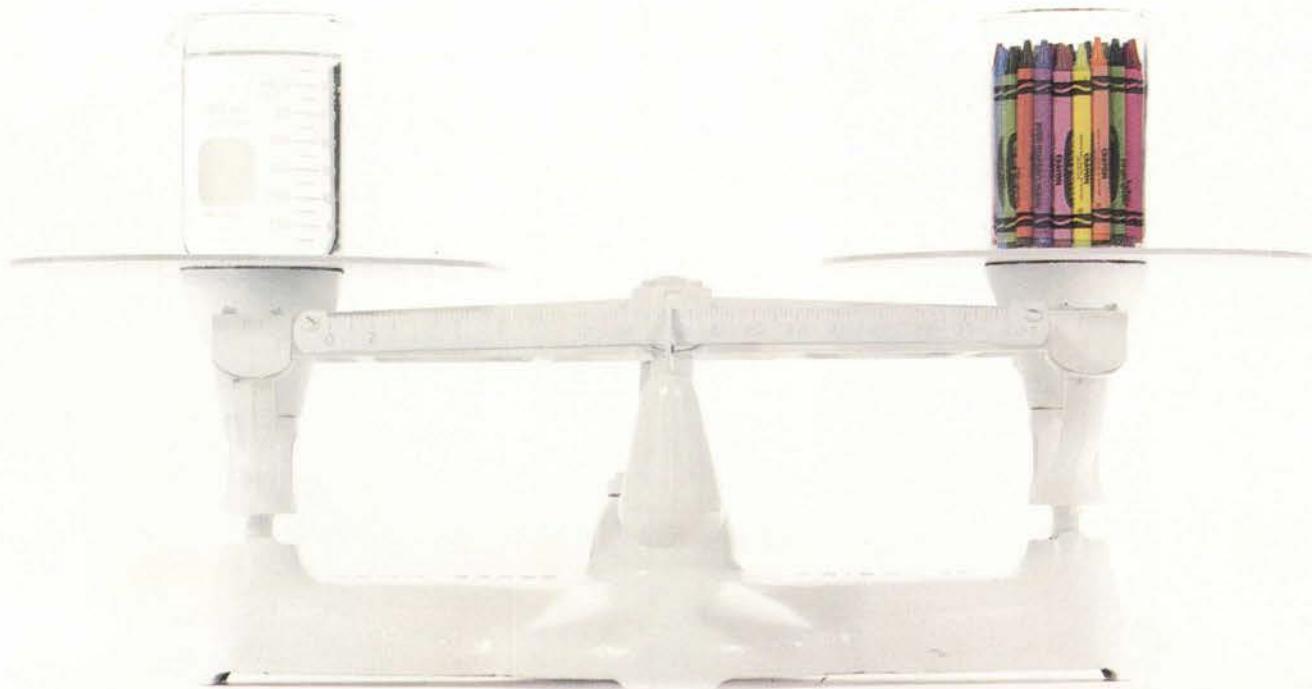
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