

EXHIBITIONS ABOUT ARCHITECTURE, CONSTRUCTION, and other very large-scale endeavors are inherently problematic, because their subject matter is often difficult or impossible to present in physical form. True, a lucky curator might occasionally enjoy the opportunity to present, say, a reconstruction of a preserved room from a historic house, but for the most part, buildings, landscapes, and engineered works defy temporary removal to even the most hallowed halls of museumdom.

Institutions such as the National Building Museum must therefore rely heavily on *representations* of our subject matter, rather than the things themselves, to communicate stories and ideas. Photographs, drawings, and models are our stock-in-trade—a circumstance that has changed little despite the advent of electronic media and other new technologies. New production techniques may enhance the accuracy, realism, and visual impact of these two- and three-dimensional documents, but their fundamental purpose—to describe something other than themselves—remains constant.

Nevertheless, these works can often transcend their purely representational role to become works of art in their own right. This is clearly demonstrated in two exhibitions that are now on view at the Museum. *Symphony in Steel: Ironworkers and the Walt Disney Concert Hall* presents a series of compelling photographs by Gil Garcetti, documenting the daring and skill of those men—and one woman—who built the complex steel structure for the latest tour de force by Frank Gehry. Some of Garcetti's photographs recall the work of Margaret

Bourke-White, capturing the inherent beauty of geometrical patterns in the building's framework. Most stunning are his images of the finished concert hall, masterful compositions of light and shadow that assume a quality and meaning drawing from, but distinct from, that of the architecture.

Also on view is *Envisioning Architecture: Drawings from The Museum of Modern Art, New York*. You must not miss this stunning collection of works by many of the 20th century's greatest architects (the National Building Museum will be the only venue for the full show in North America). As the lead article in this issue of *Blueprints* explains, in the early days of modernism, architects' drawings were often disregarded as mere tools toward the execution of specific design projects. Fortunately, curators and others came to realize that many such drawings had value beyond that role. This wide-ranging exhibition presents works that may be appreciated not just for the buildings they represent, but also for their own intrinsic qualities.

These two exhibitions demonstrate that there are many ways to look at—and talk about—our built world.



Chase W. Rynd

Executive Director
National Building Museum

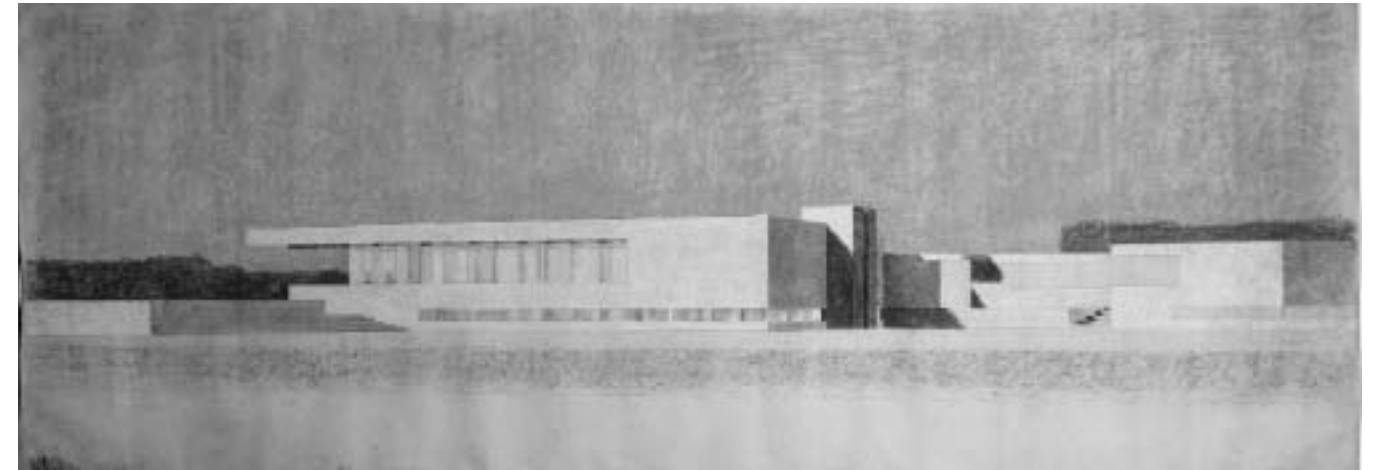
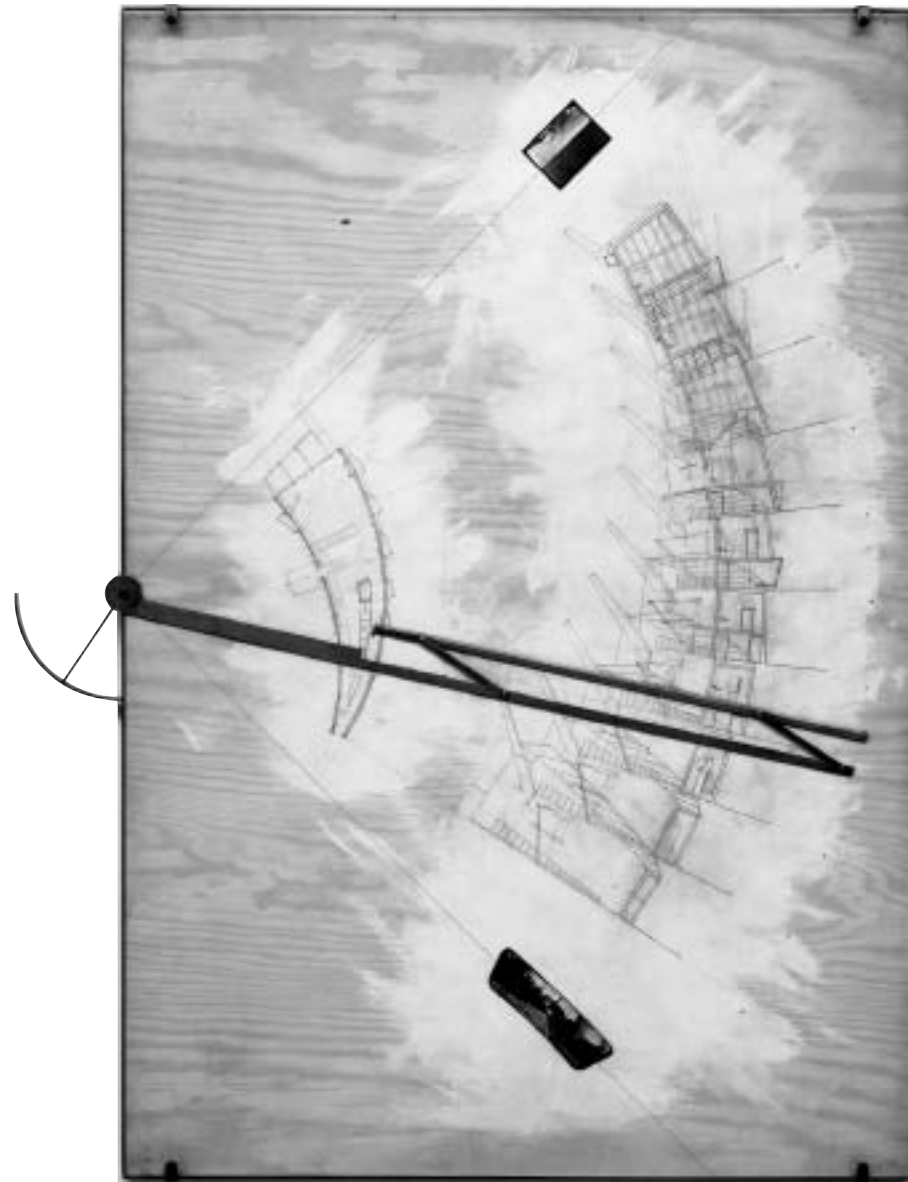
Acquiring Architecture

Building a Modern Collection

by Matilda McQuaid

The National Building Museum is presenting the exhibition *Envisioning Architecture: Drawings from The Museum of Modern Art, New York through June 20, 2004, in second floor galleries. The exhibition features drawings by more than 60 architects, including Frank Lloyd Wright, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Eero Saarinen, and Rem Koolhaas.*

In this article, excerpted from an essay in the exhibition catalog *Envisioning Architecture: Drawings from The Museum of Modern Art*, Matilda McQuaid traces the institution's changing attitudes toward collecting architectural drawings. McQuaid is former associate curator in the Department of Architecture and Design at The Museum of Modern Art, and currently exhibitions curator and head of the Textiles Department at the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum.



ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS ARE SURROGATES FOR CONCEPTS and for physical realities. Diverse in appearance and meaning, they can range from quick sketches capturing an essential design idea to computer-generated drawings whose realism leaves little to the imagination. Some drawings are autonomous acts, having no need for the actuality of architecture; others are more practical in purpose, as steps toward a built reality. Whether the ultimate outcome is some form of the preliminary idea or a complete departure from it, or even something finally unbuildable, however, the drawing serves the same end as the study or maquette in painting or sculpture: the development of an idea. What each drawing ultimately reveals is a discrete moment in the thought process and creative imagination of the architect.

The Museum of Modern Art has been collecting architectural drawings for almost seventy years, acquiring nearly 1,000 drawings by the most eminent architects of the twentieth century. (That number excludes the 18,000 drawings in the Mies van der Rohe Archive.) The achievements manifested in these drawings are integral to the development of modern architecture; they have also become bookmarks for events and periods in the history of the Museum's Department of

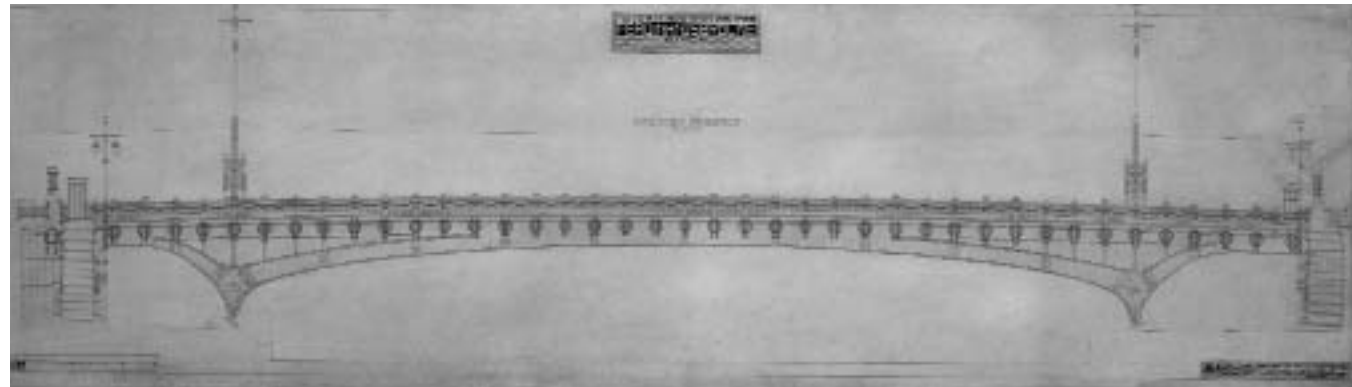
Architecture and Design. Dramatic changes have occurred in the collection during these years, and one fundamental shift has been in the sense of the relevance of architectural drawing. Once seen largely as documentary support material, these drawings have risen to the status of primary object and original work of art.

An equally important shift has come in the works' range of artistic expression: they have quickly broadened in the modern period to include everything from collages to computer renderings, reflecting not only the approach of the individual architect but the technological capabilities of the time. These changes were charted in the Department's exhibitions, especially after the 1960s, when original architectural drawings finally became an integral and significant part of the exhibition program. Exhibitions have played an essential role in the development of the architectural drawing's status as an important collectible. They have sometimes instigated collecting; conversely, they have sometimes followed on the coattails of specific acquisitions.

The Museum's first architecture exhibition was *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition*, organized by Philip Johnson (the first chairman of the Department of Architecture) and Henry-Russell Hitchcock in 1932. This exhibition,

above / Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, *Concrete Country House*. Project, 1923; The Mies van der Rohe Archive, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of the architect. Photograph: Digital Image 2002 © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

opposite / Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio (Diller + Scofidio), *Slow House, North Haven, New York*. Project, 1988–90; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Marshall Cogan Purchase Fund and Jeffrey P. Klein Purchase Fund. Photograph: Digital Image 2002 Jacek Marczewski, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Diller + Scofidio



above / Otto Wagner, *Ferdinandsbrücke, Vienna, Austria*. Project, 1896–1905; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, promised gift of Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder. Photograph: Digital Image 2002 The Museum of Modern Art, New York

a major American showcase for modern architecture both here and abroad, included the work of nine architects, with an additional section devoted to the subject of housing. Comprising mainly models and photographs, it contained very few drawings, and the drawings it did accommodate were mostly floor plans or perspectives of projects unbuilt at the time. Immediately after the exhibition, seven out of its nine models were added to the collection, along with all of the photographs. Two drawings by Le Corbusier for the Swiss Pavilion at the Cité internationale universitaire, Paris, which had been included in the show, were purchased directly from the architect, although they did not formally enter the collection until fifteen years later, when they would number among the Department's first official acquisitions of architectural drawings.

The Department's avid interest in models and photographs, and its early exclusion of drawings from the collection, reflected an attitude in which the building was seen as a work of art and the drawing as relatively insignificant, even though an integral part of the design process. This was a striking departure from the estab-

lished view of architectural drawings, which had been valued and collected for several centuries. Johnson, Hitchcock, and Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the Museum's founding director, seem to have felt uncertain about and even suspicious of unbuilt projects, whether these were experiments and visions—"paper architecture"—or more definite plans that for one reason or another had gone unexecuted. The curators preferred realistic representations of built structures—demonstrations of possibilities that were inarguably within the reach of contemporary construction practices. Models and photographs performed that role, and photography, too, was in addition a specifically modern medium, making its use as a tool to describe another modern form appropriate and consistent.

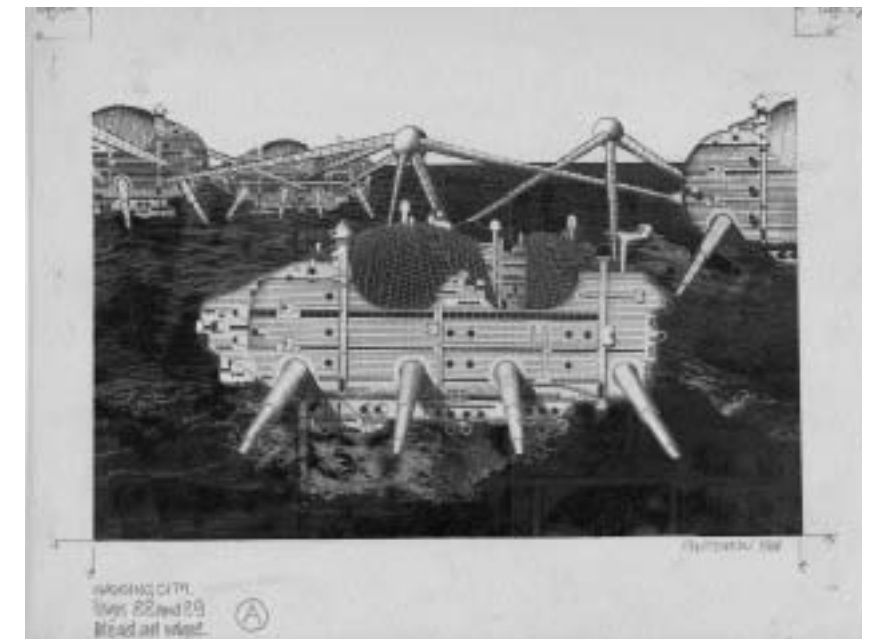
By 1952, Museum records show, there were sixty original architectural drawings in the collection, as well as fourteen models. Only five drawings have acceptance dates before 1952, however; the remaining fifty-five were most likely on extended loan from Mies, in a group that was finally acquired in 1963. It is interesting to note that until this large Mies acquisition, the majority of the Department's

drawings were not by architects but by figures such as the Theo van Doesburg who had other artistic interests. Between 1948 and 1954, for example, the Department acquired three gouaches by the Brazilian painter and landscape designer Robert Burle Marx.

In the Museum's first decades it had only one acquisitions committee, the Committee on Museum Collections, which acquired works of every kind. In October 1967 that arrangement ended and separate committees were formed for each of the five, medium-specific curatorial departments that the Museum then maintained. The catholic nature of the pre-1967 committee may help to explain not only its interest in Frederick Kiesler, Burle Marx, and others whose work translated across various departmental specialties but also its relative slowness in acquiring architectural drawings, whose visual merit may not always have been self-evident to curators more committed to other branches of the arts. An acquisitions committee dedicated to architecture and design was surely more likely to pursue architectural drawing than a committee on which architecture curators were a minority.

As the Department's exhibitions generally began to include more drawings, and as drawings became the specific subject of more of the Department's exhibitions, the collecting effort came to focus not only on works of great architecture but on drawings that were themselves great expressive achievements. The *Frank Lloyd Wright Drawings* exhibition of 1962 had been the first to stress the beauty of architectural drawing as a form. Thirteen years later, *The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts* (1975–76) reiterated this senti-

ment, and if the Wright exhibition had commemorated the extraordinary talent of a single architect in the drawing medium, an underlying purpose of the later show was to celebrate the art of drawing itself.



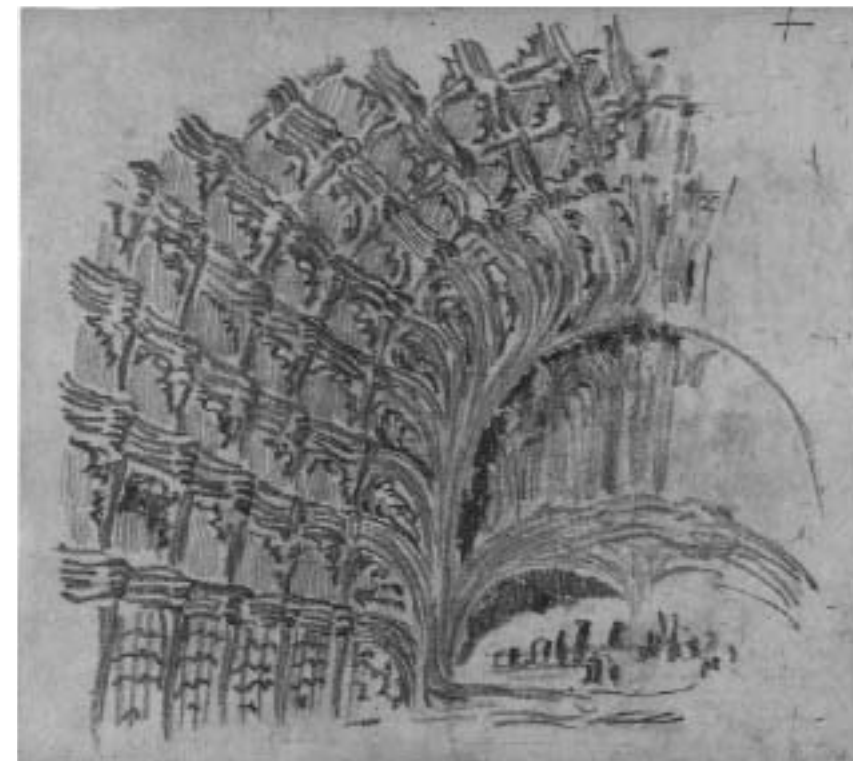
Arguing that the architectural drawing "makes the act of drawing substitute for the real condition of a proposed architectural form," Arthur Drexler, the exhibition's curator, presented beautiful renderings from the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by former students of the Ecole. Part of his intention was to show the influence of such works on certain American pioneers of modern architecture, like H.H. Richardson and Louis Sullivan, but the exhibition was also meant to influence the current practice of architectural presentation.

Since the Wright exhibition of 1962, drawings have been integral, even

above / Ron Herron (*Archigram*), *Walking City on the Ocean*. Project, 1964–66; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of The Howard Gilman Foundation. Photograph: Jon Cross and Erica Staton, Digital Design Collection Project, Luna Imaging. 2002 The Museum of Modern Art, New York

below / Hans Poelzig, *Concert Hall, Dresden, Germany*, Project, 1918; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Henry G. Proskauer. Photograph: Jon Cross and Erica Staton, Digital Design Collection Project, Luna Imaging, 2002 The Museum of Modern Art, New York

right / Louis I. Kahn, *Travel sketch for Sainte Cécile Cathedral, Albi, France*, 1959, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of the architect. Photograph: Jon Cross and Erica Staton, Digital Design Collection Project, Luna Imaging, 2002 The Museum of Modern Art, New York



avored parts of the Museum's architectural exhibitions. The Department has continued to produce shows that reflect its early aims: to present and collect good modern architecture from all over the world. Exhibitions such as *Emilio Ambasz/Steven Holl* (1989), *Robert Burle Marx: The Unnatural Art of the Garden* (1991), and *Tadao Ando* (1991) featured drawings that both revealed significant works of architecture and were beautiful objects in themselves, and that, as such, ultimately joined the collection. Meanwhile developments in technology had enormously broadened the world of architectural drawing beyond the standard medium of graphite on paper.

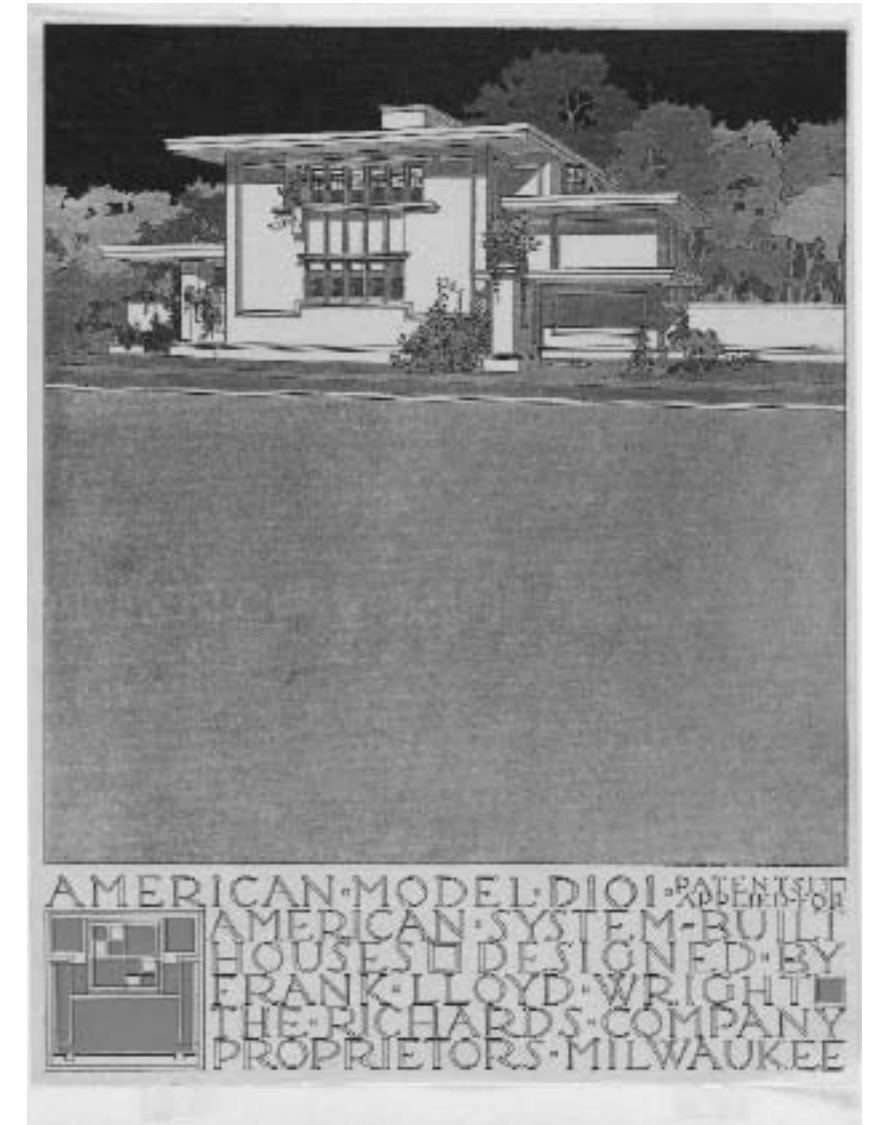


Computer-generated drawings, and various other forms of computerized display, assumed an appropriate place in exhibitions, just as they had been accorded an integral place in architects' offices. Although computer-aided design (CAD) had been used as early as the 1960s, it was not commonplace in architectural practice until relatively recently. The Department first acquired a computer-generated drawing in 1993.

Technology has also transformed exhibitions: far more than they could through the encompassing scale of the photomural, viewers can now enter a virtual world, and this one is interactive rather than passive. The 1999 exhibition *The Un-Private House*, organized by Terry Riley, featured an interactive table that allowed visitors to take virtual tours of several of the buildings in the show. The 2001 exhibition *Mies in Berlin*, organized by Riley and guest curator Barry Bergdoll, contained digital models of a number of the architect's projects, both built and unbuilt, affording the viewer both interior and exterior perspectives and the ability to experience their relationship. Earlier exhi-

bitions at the Museum had used drawings to help the viewer to determine a building's layout and program; the current computer-generated models can offer a more three-dimensional explanation.

In terms of future collecting, has the craft-intensive hand drawing finally won a respectable status in the art world only to be replaced by the computer-generated drawing? Will there be episodes of soul-searching over the status of drawing, of the kind that led to exhibitions such as *Frank Lloyd Wright Drawings*, in 1962, and *The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, in 1975? Probably distinct types of drawing will coexist, as they always have. And as exhibitions increasingly provide outlets for architects to experiment with new forms of representation involving electronic technology, and these diverse mediums gain ground in daily architectural practice, the collection is likely to reflect their fullness and variety. No less than Laurotta Vinciarelli's evanescently beautiful watercolors, themselves a leap beyond the traditional architectural drawing, these works reveal that "architecture is body plus aura." They and the other hundreds of drawings in the Museum's collection are testimony to the fact that drawing is very much alive in our contemporary world. •



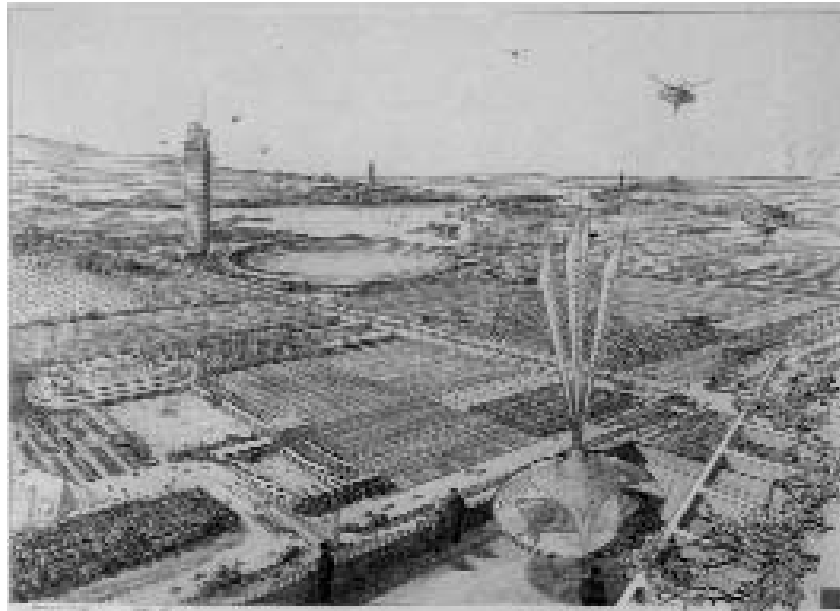
The National Building Museum's presentation of Envisioning Architecture: Drawings from The Museum of Modern Art, New York is made possible by Lt. Col. and Mrs. William Karl Konze, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

above / Frank Lloyd Wright, *American System-Built Houses for the Richards Company, Model D101*, 1915-17; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, David Rockefeller, Jr. Fund, Ira Howard Levy Fund, and Jeffrey P. Klein Purchase Fund. Photograph: Jon Cross and Erica Staton, Digital Design Collection Project, Luna Imaging, 2002 The Museum of Modern Art, New York. © 2002 The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Drawn to the Edge

Meaning at the Margins of Architectural Drawings

by Thomas Fisher



above / Wright's rendering of the proposed Broadacre City, 1934. From *Frank Lloyd Wright and the Living City*, by Jean-Louis Cohen, et al., Skira Editore, 1999.

Thomas Fisher, former editorial director of *Progressive Architecture*, is dean of the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota. In this article, he explores the significance of marginalia in architectural drawing.

THE NOVELIST AND ESSAYIST UMBERTO ECO has written extensively about the medieval qualities of modern life and art. In his book *The Aesthetics of Chaosmos: The Middle Ages of James Joyce*, for example, Eco notes how Joyce's interest in the marginal aspects of life, as evident in books like *Ulysses*, harked back to medieval manuscripts, whose drawings in the margins often visually overwhelmed the text. When we look at modern architectural drawings, we might take our cue from Eco. While we usually look to the drawing's center for its subject, the edges of such drawings can tell us a lot about what is going on in the architect's mind, consciously or not. In depicting the context of a building, architects will often manipulate the appearance of its surroundings or alter the context outright to indicate the world as they see it or would prefer us to see it.

Consider the drawings that came out of Frank Lloyd Wright's office during his practice in Oak Park, Illinois. The early renderings by Marion Mahoney in Wright's office often show houses in what looks like virgin forest or untrammelled prairie, even though most of these structures occupied suburban lots. While those bucolic settings may have reflected how Wright's suburban clients wanted to see their surroundings, they also indicated Wright's romantic vision of life lived closer to nature.

Sometimes in Wright's drawings, as in the illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages, the edges ultimately took over the entire page. This was true in Wright's drawings of Broadacre City, envisioning landscapes filled with many unbuilt Wright-designed structures pulled from the office drawers. The work at the margins of Wright's practice, in other words, took over the drawings of Broadacre City, becoming the subject matter itself of a city designed according to Wright's principles of organic architecture.

The drawings at the edges of the illuminated manuscripts sometimes had a fantastic quality. Architectural drawings, such as those produced by Rem Koolhaas and Madelon Vriesendorp in the book *Delirious New York*, often engage in similar fantasy. Koolhaas and Vriesendorp's drawings show blocks of New York City containing the oddest assortment of structures: an Art Deco ziggurat, the Plan Voisin towers of Le Corbusier, and the Trylon and Perisphere from the 1939 World's Fair—all on podiums, like so many curious specimens in a museum. Another drawing of theirs, of Roosevelt Island, contains miscellaneous buildings designed by Koolhaas or admired by him, such as the United Nations or Rockefeller Center. This is architectural drawing as a kind of stream-of-consciousness. With such a mix of the real and surreal, Koolhaas, like James Joyce in *Ulysses*, seems to question the assumption that there is a singular, stable view of the world, suggesting instead that modern life offers us many possibilities, many interpretations.

Another characteristic of the illuminated manuscripts was the presence of running commentaries in the margins, annotating the text. In similar fashion, architectural working drawings typically have notes and dimensions running around the edges, describing or explaining the content of each sheet. But marginal



notes can have a more polemical role as well, as they did for Joyce, who layered his texts with asides. An example of this would be the drawings and photo-collages of Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, who used cartoon balloons to indicate the multivalent meanings of ordinary objects and environments. These ironic and often humorous asides at the edges of drawings and photos suggest that all representations send coded messages and contain suppressed meanings, a

above left / Fanciful drawing of Roosevelt Island, by Rem Koolhaas and Madelon Vriesendorp. From *Delirious New York*, Monacelli Press, 1997.



right / A drawing in comic book style by Archigram. From *Archigram*, Princeton Architectural Press, 1999.

thought worth remembering whenever we look at architectural renderings.

Cartoons have inspired other architects as well. Modernism and medievalism, as Eco notes, have both had an affinity for the child-like vision, be it the baby's babble that opens Joyce's book *Finnegans Wake* or the child-like directness of Christ, questioning those in power. An irreverent architectural equivalent might be the cartoon-like drawings by members of the firm Archigram. They depicted their science-fiction visions of a "Walking City" or "Plug-in City" in the flat, line-drawing style of cartoons, sometimes collaging their drawings onto grainy photos of cities such as New York and London as they then existed. On occasion, as in the publication *Archigram 4*, they conveyed their ideas in comic-book form, complete with characters reacting to their environment with voice and thought balloons. Here, genres at the

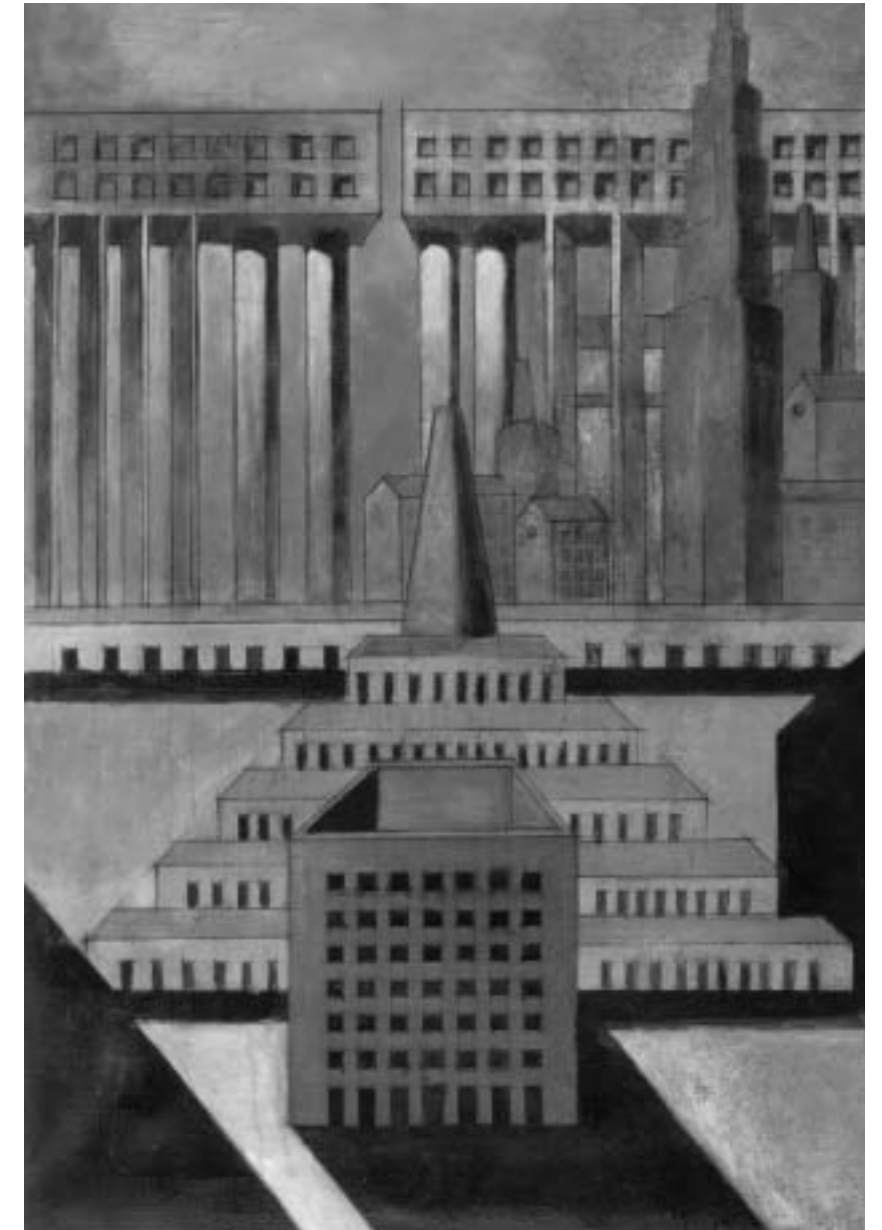
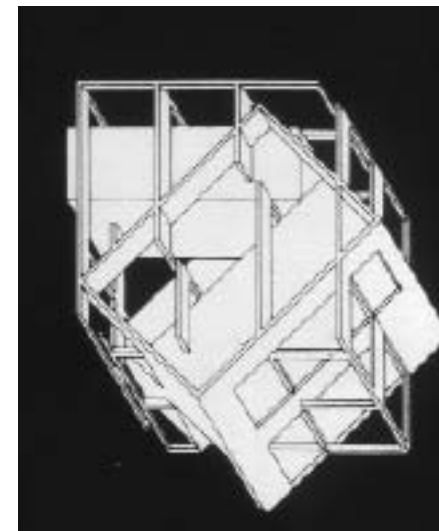
margins of art—the cartoon and comic book—convey the primary content of the architectural drawings.

While these examples indicate what can happen when things at the margins take over a drawing, the opposite—eliminating the margin or context of a drawing—also occurs. Akin to the otherworldliness of medieval manuscripts, in which events occur in an eternal present, the drawings of architect Peter Eisenman, especially in his early analytical phase, showed his buildings in an empty space, devoid of cues such as scale, or even a clear sense of what is right side up. Expressive of his search for an architecture that avoided idealizing either the future or the past, Eisenman's drawings eliminated the margins where such idealizing often occurred. That, paradoxically, also marginalized the drawings themselves, rendering the subject matter so abstract and so hard to decipher that they became more like graphic exercises than true architectural drawings. Like the medievals or modernists like Joyce, Eisenman has used drawings less to convey information about a building than to envision an entire world of his own, one with many possible meanings.

These are extreme cases. Most architectural drawings do make some effort at depicting the actual context of the buildings rendered, although even here, the way in which this is done says a lot about the architect's vision of the world. Aldo Rossi, for example, typically drew his buildings in settings that had a surreal quality, often devoid of people or nature and cast in a brilliant, raking light, recalling the dream-like paintings of Giorgio de Chirico. Here, the context expressed Rossi's view that cities help us process our collective memories, much as dreams do for individuals. Mies van der Rohe's renderings conveyed a related idea. He often depicted his buildings in precise,

hard-line drawings, but populated the context with shadowy, attenuated human figures or trees, as if they existed in a fog. These Giacometti-like elements in Mies's drawings recall another strain in both medieval and modern thought: the uncertain role that the subjective and personal play in the world.

One response to such uncertainty has been to assert the subjective aspects of drawing even more. Like the sinuous borders drawn along the edges of illuminated manuscripts, Frank Gehry's sketches consist mainly of complex, squiggling black lines. While they have a graphic power, these drawings are so personal as to be unreadable as buildings, and it is only when we see the models of Gehry's buildings that his drawings of them make sense. Another almost private language occurs in the drawings of Daniel Libeskind, many of which seek not to depict buildings at all, but architectural ideas or spatial concepts, rendered in ink and consisting mainly of lines, curves, and dashes. The results have a spatial but decidedly mysterious quality, like a building captured during an explosion. Here, the architectural drawing becomes more



about a process than a final product, more a tracing of what a building might be rather than of a building itself.

Another direction, evident at the edges of many recent architectural drawings, has been to refer to historical conventions in the depiction of context. In James Stirling's drawings, for example, the foreground to his buildings often consisted of people in almost classical poses, as if to indicate the virtuous behavior the architect

left / Drawing by Peter Eisenman. From *The New Paradigm in Architecture: The Language of Post-Modernism*, by Charles Jencks, Yale University Press, 2002.

above / Aldo Rossi, *Urban Construction, project*, 1978, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the Architecture and Design Committee in honor of Marshall Cogan, 2001. Digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by Scala/Art Resource, NY

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Recording a Built Symphony



by Martin Moeller



Symphony in Steel: Ironworkers and the Walt Disney Concert Hall is on view in first floor galleries until November 28, 2004. The guest curator for the exhibition was Alan Z. Aiches.

ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHY generally celebrates buildings as completed works of design. Through artfully composed perspectives, carefully manipulated lighting, and the use of sophisticated equipment such as parallax-correcting lenses, the photographer creates highly deliberate images that capture—and sometimes strongly influence our perceptions of—a building's character and identity. Such photographs often have an aura of inevitability about them, and in some cases, individual images may become as iconic as the buildings they ostensibly represent.

The ultimate character of a given building is, however, far from inevitable. It emerges gradually, usually over a period of at least several years, as the project moves through the design and construction phases. The development of a given design is almost

always well documented through the architect's sketches, drawings, and models, but the construction process—so fascinating to watch at the time—is typically evanescent, recorded only by memory.

One day in 2001, photographer Gil Garcetti happened upon the site of the Walt Disney Concert Hall under construction in downtown Los Angeles. He stopped and watched in astonishment as ironworkers fearlessly scrambled over the nascent structure, deftly coaxing gigantic steel beams and columns into their preordained resting places. The workers' exploits were especially impressive because of the nature of the building, a geometrically complex composition by architect Frank O. Gehry. Comprising roughly 12,000 pieces of steel, no two of which were exactly alike, the intricate structural frame demanded

impeccable coordination, precise assembly, and rigorous quality control.

Garcetti resolved to return the next day with camera in hand to photograph the ironworkers on the job. He kept coming back, and soon he befriended key workers, earned their trust, and became comfortable clambering over the steel frame himself, snapping pictures at every opportunity. By the time the concert hall was finished and opened to the critical

acclaim Gehry's works so often enjoy, Garcetti had produced something quite rare—a comprehensive visual record of the construction process that yielded a great work of architecture.

A broad selection of Garcetti's images is now on view in the National Building Museum's exhibition *Symphony in Steel: Ironworkers and the Walt Disney Concert Hall*, which runs until November 28, 2004. Complementing the photographs of the building under construction are still more images taken after its completion. These final pictures—elegant and sometimes surprisingly abstract—bring Garcetti's visual symphony to a stirring finale. The photographer has captured the art of architecture, while creating new art that speaks for itself. •



All photographs Gil Garcetti, *Untitled*.
© 2001–2003 Gil Garcetti.

Symphony in Steel is made possible through the generous support of Ron Burkle and The Yucaipa Companies and the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers. Additional funding provided by Affiliated Computer Services, Inc. (ACS), Commerce Construction, M. A. Mortenson Company, The Herrick Corporation, Arden Realty, The Charles Schwab Corporate Foundation, Ironworkers Local 433, Iverson Yoakum Papiano & Hatch, J. Ned, Inc./Nederlander, Neil Papiano, Roy and Patricia Disney, and Shamrock Holdings of California.



D.C. Builds Exhibition Series Examines The Anacostia Waterfront



above / Visitors admire the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative model at the exhibition opening.

below right / Detail of the AWI model.

The guest curator for D.C. Builds: The Anacostia Waterfront was *Mary Konsoulis*.

MANY GREAT CITIES ARE CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH RIVERS. Washington, of course, is most strongly identified with the Potomac. Surprisingly, however, Washington's often-neglected second river, the Anacostia, figured at least as prominently as the Potomac in the early days of the city's history. Originally an important thoroughfare for agricultural trade for both native Americans and, later, European settlers, the Anacostia quickly became the new capital's primary shipping artery, and was even selected as the site for one of the country's earliest major navy yards. The river soon fell victim to its own success, though, as run-off from farmland and the growing city clogged the waterway with silt and debris. By the late 19th century, the once-vital Anacostia had fallen into disuse, and the 20th century only brought greater degradation as industrial waste, an archaic sewer system, and a broad socioeconomic decline in surrounding neighborhoods left it polluted and isolated from civic life.

Rediscovering the Anacostia

In recent years, Washington has experienced a significant urban renaissance, marked by brisk residential development, surging land values, and ambitious commercial and public projects such as a new convention center. This rapid physical and economic renewal has placed increasing pressure on the city's core, as businesses and residents alike wrestle for precious real estate. As a result, city planners and private developers are rediscovering underutilized urban areas as potential sites for large-scale renovation and construction, as well as for new parks and other much-needed civic amenities. The Anacostia River, with its long, meandering waterfront and proximity to many of the region's landmarks and commercial centers, clearly presents unparalleled opportunities for revitalization.

Recognizing the great potential of this civic resource, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, working in an unprecedented partnership with the District Department of Transportation and nearly 20 other local and federal agencies, established the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) to devise a coherent, environmentally sound plan for the area's renewal. The initiative's Anacostia Waterfront Framework Plan calls for the creation of 20,000 new residential



units, 5 million square feet of office space, and 25 sites for museums and memorials. City officials also expect that the plan will yield thousands of new jobs, miles of riverfront recreational areas, and dramatic improvements to transportation infrastructure. Evocative drawings produced under the AWI suggest an auspicious future for the river, spanned by beautifully designed bridges, lined with parks easily accessible to nearby residents, and providing attractive venues for various mixed-use developments.

Restoring an Urban Ecosystem

Planners and many other civic leaders agree that the first step in the revitalization of the Anacostia waterfront is a concerted effort to clean the river itself. This is a major undertaking, but one likely to have profound and far-reaching benefits. The Anacostia, after all, flows into the Potomac, which in turn empties into the Chesapeake Bay, which grows increasingly fragile as nearby communities continue to sprawl. Moreover, the urban portion of the Anacostia is actually just the mouth of a watershed covering more than 170 square miles, comprising a substantial part of eastern Maryland. The rejuvenation of such a vast ecosystem will require unprecedented public and private investment, cooperation among local, state, and national governmental agencies, and many years to accomplish.



Through coherent planning and a concerted clean-up effort, the Anacostia can return to its former place as a true civic asset for the entire Washington metropolitan area. •

D.C. Builds: The Anacostia Waterfront was made possible by the Government of the District of Columbia and the Summit Fund of Washington. Additional funding provided by The Chesapeake Bay Foundation, PEPCO, and the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority.

top left / Kingman and Heritage Islands. Rendering by Michael McCann.

Courtesy of District of Columbia Office of Planning

above / Proposed parks and riverwalk near Southeast. Rendering by Michael McCann.

Courtesy of District of Columbia Office of Planning

Festival Sets Record...Again!



The Festival of the Building Arts was made possible by the Associated General Contractors of America and This Old House Ventures, Inc., the official sponsor of family festivals at the National Building Museum. Lead sponsorship was provided by GMC. Washington Parent was a local media partner.

ON SEPTEMBER 13, 2003, amid the sounds of saws, hammers, and truck horns, 5,816 visitors joined 144 demonstrators for the National Building Museum's popular *Festival of the Building Arts*, setting a new attendance record. Included in this number were 294 scouts, plus 174 adult chaperones. A troop of deaf scouts visited the festival for the first time, and along with their sign language interpreters, spent a large part of the day there. Out-of-town visitors came from as far away as Philadelphia and New York City. Return festival-goers were heard to declare the *Festival of the Building Arts* "...exceptional...one of my all time favorite children's activities!"

Programs at the festival appealed to both families and adult visitors alike. Two presentations by Tom Silva and Rich Trethewey, home improvement experts and stars of the popular PBS television show *This Old House*, gave festival-goers the chance to ask questions about those all-important home renovation projects. Children of all ages were able to contribute to the construction of a continually growing pipe sculpture and help build the walls of a log cabin.

There were opportunities for everyone to try a hand at woodworking, stone sculpture, bricklaying, blacksmithing, and even dry-wall finishing, just to name a few of the 25 crafts being represented by hands-on demonstrations. And with two cranes, two dump trucks, a concrete mixer, and several backhoes outside at the Construction Vehicle "Petting Zoo," everyone got a chance to sit in the driver's seat!

Visitors at the festival also got a chance to view all of the Museum's current exhibitions. *Up, Down, and Across: Elevators, Escalators and Moving Sidewalks* opened to the public that day. Also on view were *Tools as Art: The Hechinger Collection—Instruments of Change* and *Saving Mount Vernon: The Birth of Preservation in America*. •



above / Record crowds filled the Great Hall for the 2003 festival.

right / A youngster enjoys the opportunity to sit in the operator's seat at the Construction Vehicle "Petting Zoo."

In Memoriam

John W. Hechinger, Sr.

TO ACHIEVE PROMINENCE IN BUSINESS, public service, or the arts is quite an accomplishment; to become a recognized leader in all three realms is extraordinary. John W. Hechinger, Sr. was such a leader.

A long-time trustee and loyal supporter of the National Building Museum, John died on January 18, his 84th birthday, following a long illness. He was best known as an astute businessman who turned an eponymous family business into a thriving chain of hardware and building material stores with outlets across the eastern United States. John's personalized license plate, which read simply "DIY," proclaimed his deep pride in the company's vital role in the burgeoning "do-it-yourself" movement. Following his retirement in 1996, the Hechinger Company was sold to outside investors, and, to John's great sadness, it ultimately folded under competitive pressure from new, national chains that largely followed the Hechinger model.

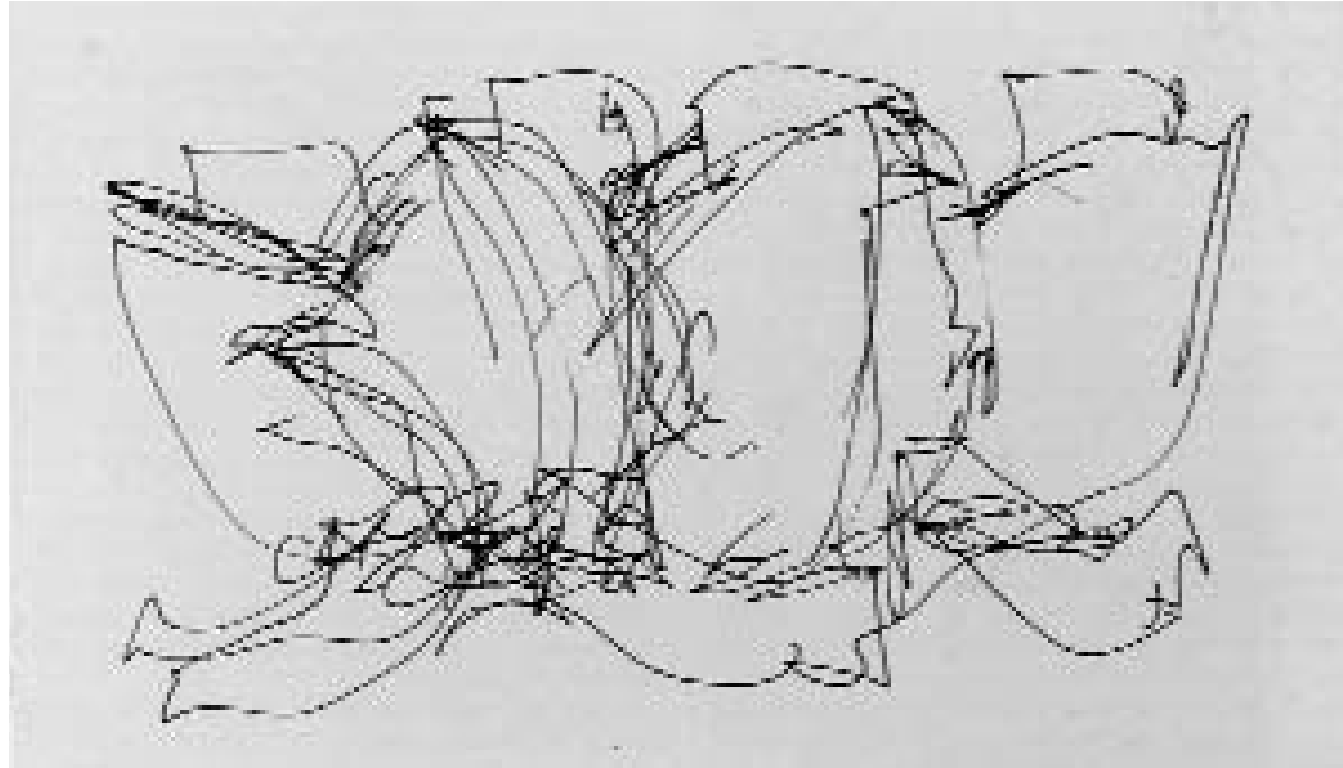
While actively leading his company, John became an influential political leader, who served as the first chairman of the new D.C. City Council, appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1967. Though never actually elected to public office, John remained active in civic affairs through a wide variety of voluntary roles, and is fondly remembered by many Washingtonians as a tireless advocate of home rule for the District of Columbia. He frequently used his business clout to effect positive civic change, as when he developed the Hechinger Mall in northeast Washington, a venture that, though financially risky for the Hechinger family, was broadly praised for bringing valuable economic activity and a symbolic new center to a struggling community.

John and his wife, June, demonstrated an early interest in design when they commissioned famed modernist Walter Gropius and his firm, The Architects Collaborative, to design their house. Elegant but unpretentious, the Hechinger residence is among the few residential examples of the International Style in Washington. It also proved to be a wonderful venue for the display of the family's art collection. John began collecting tool-related art as a means of inspiring employees in the company's headquarters. Over the years, he assembled nearly 400 pieces either made from, or depicting, the literal tools of his trade, including works by such prominent artists as Jonathan Borofsky, Arman, Jacob Lawrence, and Berenice Abbott.

Not long after the National Building Museum opened to the public, John graciously offered to lend the young institution a number of pieces from what had come to be known as the *Tools as Art* Collection. Thus was born a series of exhibitions under the title *Tools as Art*, which were consistently among the most popular attractions at the Museum. Meanwhile, John served on the Museum's Board of Trustees from 1990 to 2000, and remained active as a member of the Trustees Council until his death.

A pillar of the community in every respect, John was a faithful friend and avid supporter not only of the National Building Museum, but of many arts, cultural, and civic organizations in the Washington area. The countless people whose lives were enriched by his philanthropy and activism all mourn his loss. •

continued from page 11



above / Sketch by Frank Gehry.
From *Architectural Drawing: A Visual Compendium of Types and Methods*, by Rendow Yee, Wiley, 1997.

hoped to instill in passersby. Likewise, Michael Graves's drawings will frequently show his buildings in settings that have the same storybook quality, with hills, clouds, and other structures recalling his own forms. Such historical references are, as Eco suggests, another form of modernism: the free interpretation and appropriation of the classical past that characterized medieval art as well as books such as *Ulysses*.

The marginalia of architectural drawings matter, in part, because of the change overtaking this form of communication. With the advent of digital photography and high-quality graphics software, architects have found it increasingly easy to place accurate computer-generated images of their buildings in photo-realistic depictions of the actual site. While this technology makes it easier for clients and the public to understand what a building might look like in its context, these new digital tools have assumed that the more realistic the depic-

tion of a setting, the better, an assumption that overlooks the imaginative role that the edges of drawings have traditionally played.

Two things may come of this. As architects become more facile with these new tools, they may begin to manipulate the digital images of a context as they did in traditional drawing. The media of marginalia may have changed, but not the potential of the margins to add meaning to architectural drawings. Meanwhile, this new technology, as Marshall McLuhan predicted, may turn the old one into an art form per se. Hand-drawn architectural renderings may play less of a functional, and more of an aesthetic and expressive role, in which case the margins of drawings may become even more important in the conveyance of meaning: echoes of Umberto Eco. •

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Mystery Building



above / Fort Jefferson

THE MYSTERY BUILDING pictured in the Winter 2003–04 issue was Fort Jefferson, which occupies one of seven small islands comprising the remote Dry Tortugas National Park, about 70 miles from Key West in the Gulf of Mexico. Conceived in the 1840s as an integral component of the United States' coastal defenses, the fort never really played an important strategic role, and indeed, was never even truly finished. During the Civil War, the structure found a temporary purpose as a military prison for captured deserters. Soon thereafter, the fort achieved a measure of notoriety when several convicted conspirators in the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, including Dr. Samuel Mudd, who had given medical care to the fugitive John Wilkes Booth, were sentenced to serve time there. The military abandoned the fort in 1874, but in 1908, the desolate island was rediscovered and designated a wildlife refuge.

The National Park Service, which now manages the site, claims that the fort is composed of 16 million bricks. Shockingly, that would put it ahead of the National Building Museum's historic home, which is



believed to be made of 15 and half million bricks! Do we have any volunteers to conduct a comparative count for verification?

Congratulations to the five readers who correctly identified Fort Jefferson: Jon C. Babb, Jan D. Carline, Carl Thomas Engel, David Kleimann, and Peter S. Tannen.

This issue's Mystery Building brings us back to the 20th century. Can you identify the building, its architect, and its location? Send responses to: Mystery Building, National Building Museum, 401 F Street NW, Washington, DC 20001.

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