

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

No. 108

For Release:

Thursday, Sept. 29, 1960

Press Preview:

Wednesday, Sept. 28, 1960

Visionary Architecture, an exhibition of 20th century projects considered too revolutionary to build, will be on view at the Museum of Modern Art from September 29 through December 4. More than 30 ideas for cities on and over water and under the ground, for buildings that incorporate roads and roads that incorporate buildings, for factories and for houses designed for this country and abroad are shown in enlarged photographs and models.

Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, who selected the show says that the true visionary project usually combines a criticism of society with a strong personal preference for certain forms. "In the past such projects were unbuildable for one or both of two reasons: they may have been technically impossible to execute at the time they were designed or society could find neither the justification nor the money for their construction. Today virtually nothing an architect can think of is technically impossible to realize. Social usage, which includes economics, determines what is visionary and what is not...Visionary projects, like Plato's ideal forms, cast their shadows over into the real world of experience, expense and frustration. If we could learn what they have to teach, we might exchange irrelevant rationalizations for more useful critical standards. Vision and reality might then coincide."

Many of the projects reflect a concern for urgent social and economical problems and offer radical new solutions for transportation and land use. Le Corbusier's plan for a road which is itself a building; Kiyonori Kikutake's city built over water which could be cultivated for food; Buckminster Fuller's dome to shelter Manhattan Island; and Paolo Soleri's tubular concrete bridge which eliminates ascending and descending roads. Other projects such as William Katavolos' proposal for chemical architecture suggests new forms for new material, while Louis Kahn's Philadelphia line center suggests a new solution for street and parking problems.

Frederick Kiesler's Endless House, shown in an 8 foot model and in life-size photo murals of the interior develops the surface of the building as a twisting, continuously curved ribbon wrapped around itself. Paul Nelson's "suspended house," designed in 1938, is also shown in a scale model as is Reginald Malcolmson's Metro-Linear city project, which organizes a community along the axes of a ^{road} head.

Among the forms created by these architects are great cone-shaped structures, glass pyramids, concrete bowls, mushroom-shaped houses, spirals and a building shaped like a flight of steps. They range in date from the 20s to the present. In addition, an historical introduction includes work by Leonardo de Vinci, Piranesi and other architects of the past some of whose visions have proved prophetic.

The exhibition will be adapted for a traveling show and a major book by Arthur Drexler will be published by the Museum of Modern Art.

Further information and photographs are available from Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. CI 5-8900.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

No. 108

For Release:

Thursday, Sept. 29, 1960

Press Preview:

Wednesday, Sept. 28, 1960

310

Visionary Architecture, an exhibition of 20th century projects considered too revolutionary to build, will be on view at the Museum of Modern Art from September 29 through December 4. More than 30 ideas for cities on and over water and under the ground, for buildings that incorporate roads and roads that incorporate buildings, for factories and for houses designed for this country and abroad are shown in enlarged photographs and models.

Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, who selected the show says that the true visionary project usually combines a criticism of society with a strong personal preference for certain forms. "In the past such projects were unbuildable for one or both of two reasons: they may have been technically impossible to execute at the time they were designed or society could find neither the justification nor the money for their construction. Today virtually nothing an architect can think of is technically impossible to realize. Social usage, which includes economics, determines what is visionary and what is not...Visionary projects, like Plato's ideal forms, cast their shadows over into the real world of experience, expense and frustration. If we could learn what they have to teach, we might exchange irrelevant rationalizations for more useful critical standards. Vision and reality might then coincide."

Many of the projects reflect a concern for urgent social and economical problems and offer radical new solutions for transportation and land use. Le Corbusier's plan for a road which is itself a building; Kiyonori Kikutake's city built over water which could be cultivated for food; Buckminster Fuller's dome to shelter Manhattan Island; and Paolo Soleri's tubular concrete bridge which eliminates ascending and descending roads. Other projects such as William Katavolos' proposal for chemical architecture suggests new forms for new material, while Louis Kahn's Philadelphia line center suggests a new solution for street and parking problems.

Frederick Kiesler's Endless House, shown in an 8 foot model and in life-size photo murals of the interior develops the surface of the building as a twisting, continuously curved ribbon wrapped around itself. Paul Nelson's "suspended house," designed in 1938, is also shown in a scale model as is Reginald Malcolmson's Metro-Linear city project, which organizes a community along the axis of a road.

Among the forms created by these architects are great cone-shaped structures, glass pyramids, concrete bowls, mushroom-shaped houses, spirals and a building shaped like a flight of steps. They range in date from the 20s to the present. In addition, an historical introduction includes work by Leonardo de Vinci, Piranesi and other architects of the past some of whose visions have proved prophetic.

The exhibition will be adapted for a traveling show and a major book by Arthur Drexler will be published by the Museum of Modern Art.

Further information and photographs are available from Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. CI 5-8900.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Sept. 29 - Dec. 4, 1960

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.

Introductory Statement on the Visionary Architecture Exhibition

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

When an artist wants to paint a picture he obtains the necessary materials and then promptly sets to work painting it. Whether or not his work will be appreciated depends on the quality of both the painting and its audience, but before a painting can be appreciated it must first of all exist.

This is not quite true of music, drama, and architecture. Although actors are essential to Shakespeare's purpose, Hamlet can be read when not heard; and although few people can derive pleasure from reading a musical score, symphonies do have a demi-existence on paper.

Architecture too has an existence prior to its becoming real, and there is a second history of architecture that parallels the real one. It is the history of an architecture unhampered by technical details and uncompromised by the whims of patrons, or the exigencies of finance, politics, and custom.

For the architect, ideal projects afford the sole occasions when he can rebuild the world as he knows it ought to be. And it is the world that the architect wishes to build. When ideal projects are inspired by criticism of the existing structure of society, as well as by the architect's longing for a private world of his own, they may bring forth ideas that make history. These projects may be called visionary.

Merely to be left unbuilt does not qualify a project for this distinction. Some ideal projects please us just because they are superfluous, like the delightful, endless colonnades drawn by Piranesi. In our own day Frank Lloyd Wright, who regularly commuted between vision and reality, often designed pointless but engaging fantasies. The fantasy sketches of Eric Mendelsohn, like some of Wright's, on at least one occasion slipped into reality. And sometimes a design that seems visionary announces developments already under way, as did Mies van der Rohe's 1919 study for a glass skyscraper.

The true visionary project usually combines a criticism of society with a strong personal preference for certain forms. In the past such projects were unbuidable for one or both of two reasons: they may have been technically impossible to execute at the time they were designed; or society could find neither the justification nor the money for their construction.

Today virtually nothing an architect can think of is technically impossible

more....

to realize. Social usage, which includes economics, determines what is visionary and what is not. The distinction varies from decade to decade and from country to country. Here is an instructive example from the recent past:

When buildings for the United Nations were still in the discussion stage, the architect Percival Goodman suggested two solutions quite different from the one finally accepted. He observed that New York City had no pressing need for another skyscraper but could make use of a park. Therefore, he proposed that all U.N. offices be grouped in a long, low building bordering the East River and leaving the site free. He also observed that serious problems would arise in providing housing and hotel accommodations for people working at the U.N. or attending its meetings, and so he suggested that housing be built across the river and made accessible by a ferry service.

Goodman's alternate proposal was that offices and assembly halls be accommodated in a building only a few stories high but covering the entire site. Its roof would be planted to make a park, and four residential and hotel towers for U.N. personnel would rise above it.

Events seem to have confirmed the precision of Goodman's analysis, but when the United Nations buildings were designed, his ideas evidently seemed impractical.

Quite often the architect's ideal is practical enough but does not inspire enthusiasm in others. Some visions are painful or unhappy. Ludwig Hilberseimer's de-populated city, in which furtive automobiles scurry along the bottom of a chasm while million-eyed buildings stare hopelessly, is a vision that would have confirmed Franz Kafka's worst suspicions. Sometimes such ideas may be surpassed by reality, as Hilberseimer's vision has been passed by New York's housing projects.

The frequency with which such disturbing images appear is a clue to the nature of architecture, visionary or otherwise. Architects usually justify their work by citing practical reasons for it. Economy, climate control, functionalism, the expression of structure - all manner of rationalizations (some of them entirely convincing) may be placed by the architect like a veil between the world and his private vision. But the fact remains that good architects find it practical to build what they want to see. And

more....

since architects share with other people the full complement of emotions, it is not surprising that visionary architecture corresponds generally to three images everyone understands.

The first of these categories includes all buildings the forms of which represent an object to be attained, a goal at the end of a journey. Such buildings usually derive from, or are related to, the image of a mountain. Logical variations are cave-like interiors: the hollow mountain and the concealed underground city, difficult of access, are commonplace themes.

The second category includes buildings which in some way relate to the image of the road. Rather than the goal at the end of the journey, such buildings celebrate the journey itself. Variations on the form naturally include bridges and other suspended or floating structures. Quite often dream-like journeys take place in mid-air, and levitation is a familiar theme which modern technology has made consciously acceptable to us.

The third category comprises those buildings derived neither from the image of the journey nor its goal, but from forms which seem to confine and perhaps intensify emotional experience rather than broaden it. Such forms may be drawn from geometry. Modern technology offers them in abundance. Buildings in which technological virtuosity seems to be exploited for its own sake may perhaps constitute a kind of repetitive play activity, through which the journey may be postponed and the goal ignored. The other chief source of inspiration within this category is the variety of form found in nature. Frank Lloyd Wright often compared his buildings to trees or shells, although their actual structure bore no resemblance to them whatsoever. Relatively few projects can be attributed exclusively to either organic or geometric form; when visionary architecture becomes insistently one or the other, it has left the realm of play to become a compulsive pattern of unending activity.

Visionary projects, like Plato's ideal forms, cast their shadows over into the real world of experience, expense, and frustration. If we could learn what they have to teach, we might exchange irrelevant rationalizations for more useful critical standards. Vision and reality might then coincide.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

No. 108B

VISIONARY ARCHITECTURE

Sept. 29 - Dec. 4, 1960

Excerpts from wall labels written by Arthur Drexler, Director of the Department of Architecture and Design.

Note: This checklist does not include projects in the introductory historical section of the exhibition.

Gallery

2 van DOESBURG, Theo - Dutch.

Group of Skyscrapers. 1929.

The corner of each building is marked by a slender tower, housing an elevator. Beams spanning diagonally between tiers support the floors, which are set well within the total area. The beams also serve as bridges leading from the elevators into the building proper. The project curiously anticipates some current efforts to articulate more clearly the service elements necessary to modern buildings.

1 ENTWISTLE, Clive - English.

Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, Liverpool. 1960.

The architect's intention was to devise a form embodying the upward, aspiring motion traditionally associated with Gothic cathedrals. For this purpose he designed an unevenly tapered cone, rising from a flared base. Entrance to the building is under these relatively low ceilings; inside, the roof ascends in a sweeping curve to terminate at a point of light. The ribs which form this structure would be enclosed by bands of glass and stone.

1 Civic Center and Crystal Palace.

The central feature of this composition was to have been a glass pyramid. Floor levels are staggered in such a way that daylight is admitted to the very center of the building. The four faces of the pyramid, pitched backward, would reflect sun and sky to make a dazzling monument approached by long flights of steps across superimposed terraces.

2 FINSTERLIN, Herman - German.

Ideal Building. 1920.

Finsterlin was one of a group of architects who resisted the postwar reaction to Art Nouveau and sought to develop the implications of the style by designing spaces almost entirely curvilinear. Finsterlin's plan for a building of unspecified purpose anticipates projects by Frederick Kiesler.

5 FITZGIBBON, James and SIDES, C. D. - American

Bridge City. 1960.

As cities expand, buildings absorb the countryside and replace the natural landscape, but if building components could be designed to bridge over the land it would be possible to leave various features, including small towns and villages, relatively undisturbed. It would also be possible to make use of otherwise inaccessible sites.

This project envisions an elevated bridge complex spanning water or land areas and carrying tubular roads together with large scale apartment houses for 100,000 people. The model shows such a city spanning the Hudson River from 110th Street in Manhattan to the New Jersey shore at Fairview. The map shows ten related city units north and south of Secaucus.

more...

Gallery

2

FULLER, Buckminster - American.

Partial Enclosure of Manhattan Island. 1960.

The enormous increase in strength made possible by construction techniques based on the patterns of molecular structures will eventually make possible space enclosures on so vast a scale that it would be relatively simple to put up a dome over a large part of Manhattan Island. Such an enclosure, with its controlled climate, implies the gradual disappearance of the self-contained units which now constitute the basic elements of architecture. In their place would be landscaped gardens and expandable shelters, protected by the all embracing dome.

2

KAHN, Louis - American.

Center City. 1957.

Louis Kahn has interpreted the theory of functionalism so that it applies to the articulation and expression of service functions as well as structure.

In planning a civic center for Philadelphia, Kahn's concept of "working spaces" is applied first of all to the street. In his own words, "a street wants to be a building... streets are canals that need docks." The plaza of the City Tower gives a detailed illustration of how the street can be given architectural character and, through this, function better than it does now.

The squat round buildings in the large drawing are described by the architect as "vehicular harbors or municipal entrance towers... gateways, the landmarks, the first images that greet the visitor." The street level of such a building may be a market; its perimeter may be used for a hotel or offices and the inner core for parking and storage.

2

KAHN, Louis
Anne Tyng, architect associated. - American.

A City Tower. 1955.

Lateral bracing, rather than vertical and horizontal intersections is the basis of this design. The tower is a framework of pre-cast concrete struts intersecting at every 66 foot level. The intersections are crowned by capitals 11 feet deep, housing storage and mechanical services. Each 66 foot level is a structural floor; the floor-to-ceiling height of the intermediate levels may be varied to suit particular requirements. The floors are not directly over each other but shift in a triangular relationship natural to the geometric growth of the structure. The exterior skin of the building is not shown in the photographs of the model.

2

KATAVOLOS, William - American.

Chemical Architecture. 1960.

Recent discoveries in chemistry have led to the production of powdered or liquid materials which, when suitably treated with certain activating agents, expand to great size and then become rigid. It is assumed that sufficient knowledge of the molecular structures of these chemicals, together with the necessary techniques, might lead to the production of materials which have a specific program of behavior built into them while still in the sub-microscopic stage. Accordingly, it might be possible to take a small quantity of powder and make it expand into some such predetermined shape as a sphere.

In these drawings the architect has assumed the existence of such materials, and has indicated the growth forms they might take.

6

KIESLER, Frederick - American, born Austria.

City in Space. 1925.

In the 1925 Paris Exposition of Decorative Arts, the architect Frederick Kiesler exhibited a huge model representing a City in Space. Vertical and horizontal buildings were treated as thin slabs suspended between groups of vertical piers, which also carried connecting bridges.

Gallery

6 KIESLER, Frederick - American, born Austria.

Endless House. 1949-60.

The most recent statement of this idea, shown in the model and in photographs, develops the surface as a twisting, continuously curved ribbon wrapped around itself. Such a treatment of the wall surface would produce a building mere like sculpture than architecture. The model and drawings for this version of the "Endless House" were prepared under a grant from the D. S. and R. H. Gottesman Foundation, with a view toward the eventual construction of the house in the Museum's garden.

2 KIKUTAKE, Kiyonori - Japanese.

Marine City. 1959.

Because the population of the world is rising so rapidly, and because Japan's problem in this respect will be among the most serious, this architect proposes to build floating cities. In this project pontoons carry a concrete deck like a raft. Piercing the deck and extending a hundred or more feet below the water are great concrete cylinders, lined with dwellings and other accommodations. Artificial land would form a vertical plane rather than a horizontal plane. Houses would be attached to the wall, not the ground.

1 KORDA, Vincent - English, born Hungary.

Stage set for the film "Things to Come". 1936.

The film version of H. G. Well's novel shows the construction of an underground city in which climate and light are perfectly adjusted. Scalloped walls are linked to each other by bridges for pedestrians or monorail transportation. An elevator in a glass tube rises over the scene, while a crowd gathers in a public garden.

Vincent Korda's image of a unified, totally-enclosed space remains the most compelling vision of the ideal city ever to appear in the films.

5 KUROKAWA, Noriaki - Japanese.

Agricultural City. 1959.

All roads, water services, electricity and monorail transportation are installed four meters above the ground in a rectilinear grid. A second grid structure, just above ground level, incorporates all facilities having to do with group life. Here the architect has placed a shrine, schools and administrative institutions. The basic housing unit consists of a concrete stem incorporating stairs and mechanical facilities and a cantilevered skylighted roof mass which is the dwelling proper. These mushroom shaped houses are scattered at ground level.

5 LE CORBUSIER - French, born Switzerland.

Combined Road and Building for Rio de Janeiro. 1929.

Perhaps 14 stories high and as many miles long, the building would in effect provide artificial land publically owned and maintained. A highway along the roof and perhaps at lower levels would be serviced by regularly spaced parking areas and by interior garages and elevators. The space between each floor level would be rented by the square foot and families would build individual houses. The implications of Le Corbusier's project are that technology and the wealth it generates make possible architecture equivalent to the natural features of the landscape, rivaling mountains and cliffs in scale.

5 Combined Road and Building for Algiers. 1930.

This 9 mile long building follows the contour of the coast; inland, just behind it, are smaller curved units two or three miles long, grouped around an elevated highway which terminates on the roof of a 31 story administration building in the heart of the business center.

Gallery

2

LISSITZKY, El - Russian.

der Wolkenbugel (The Cloudhanger) 1924.

This vertical and horizontal skyscraper straddles a street intersection and was intended, perhaps humourously, to contain elevators which would carry automobiles to the upper floors. After driving through the building they would descend on the other side of the street. This project is interesting in that it illustrates the assumption that 20th century techniques of construction make it possible and desirable for buildings to be freed of the ground to flow mysteriously in the air.

5

MALCOLMSON, Reginald - American.

Metro-linear City.

The Metro-Linear system is based on the linear character of transportation routes; they are the vertebrae of the new city. Therefore the metropolitan center containing cultural and commercial facilities is designed as a ribbon of buildings along the major transportation routes.

By extension from this center, industrial zones can be formed with housing zones on each side. In this way the city as a whole can grow logically by extension, and at the same time, all its parts can be organically linked together.

1

MAZET, Jean-Claude - French.

Ideal City. 1957-58.

This city is contained within a truncated cone divided into three main sections. At each division broad avenues encircle the cone; the setbacks on all other levels are of smaller scale. The cone is not symmetrical, since each level is offset. The park land surrounding the city includes airports, schools and a stadium.

5

NELSON, Paul - American.

Suspended House. 1938.

Metal walls holding diamond shaped panes of glass set at different angles enclose the total space. Within this the rooms float freely and are in effect abstract sculptures. Services are on the ground floor; sleeping quarters are suspended from the roof; as are a round library and two oval studies on an intermediate level. Ramps and spiral stairs connect these units.

1

POELZIG, Hans - German.

Festival Hall, Salzburg. 1920.

These charcoal drawings show a hilltop walled and terraced to become a building; and long arcades leading to this and other structures. The character of this extraordinary design, however, derives not from Poelzig's genuine solutions of technical problems but from his conviction that the history and atmosphere of Salzburg required an architecture that was itself musical, fantastic and perhaps mysterious.

1

Friendship House, Istanbul. 1916.

The building is shaped like a giant flight of stairs. At each of the major setbacks there were to be gardens and arcades from which one could view the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn. Within the mass of the building itself were interior courts, and an interplay of single and double story rooms in a plan carefully worked out to accommodate study halls, recreation rooms and living quarters.

Poelzig's imaginative use of setbacks for ample terraces and a clear orientation toward a view are practical almost prosaic, advantages. The power of the design rests not so much in this as in the hypnotic image of ascending steps used as pleasure gardens of mythical grandeur.

more...

5 SOLERI, Paolo - American, born Italy.

Long-span Concrete Bridge. 1948.

The road and the structural element by which it is carried are combined to make a continuous beam. Although only one road bed is visible, the space below it - inside the tube - is used for trucks and other heavy traffic. The aesthetic power of this ingenious design derives from the sense it conveys of effortless, almost dreamlike motion.

2 Theological Center of Biotechnic City. 1959.

The Center consists of a great bowl which contains smaller units for various religious orders. Each building is a concrete bowl without openings on its outer surface. The inner surface is ridged to form deep shelves for enclosed space. These remarkable studies suggest the possibility of a monumental architecture directly based on natural forms. It is interesting to imagine a desert landscape decorated with these giant ornaments.

3 TAUT, Bruno - German.

Alpine Architecture. 1917.

Taut's proposal was that the Alps be improved. This was to be done primarily by faceting the mountains into ranges of crystal-like forms, and secondly, by decorating them with monumental domes and arches of colored glass. But not even Taut could escape being pursued by reality. Architects and engineers have now begun to think of architecture as beginning with the alteration of the earth's surface itself.

2 WEBB, Michael - English.

Office Building. 1959.

Office requirements have been separated and contained in individual, sculpturally modeled units. Wherever feasible, they would be pre-cast, lifted by crane and then inserted in a conventional skeleton frame, like bottles in a rack. The articulation of individual spaces is carried so far as to produce separate, visible forms for horizontal corridors and ramps and vertical elevator and stair shapes. Together with the bulbous shapes of the lecture hall and office units, they suggest organic forms not usually associated with technology.

4 WRIGHT, Frank Lloyd - American.

Mile High Skyscraper (The Illinois). 1956.

Ten such buildings could house the entire office population of Manhattan, leaving the surrounding area free for parks.

Transportation within the building would be by 56 atomic-powered elevators. Covered parking for 15,000 cars is provided at the base, on four levels above ground and one below. There are two decks for helicopters. 130,000 people would be accommodated.

4 Civic Center, Pittsburgh. 1947.

For this triangular site, Wright proposed an enormous spiral ramp. Inside the circle formed by the ramp Wright proposed to place, on the ground and in the air, dome-shaped spaces for a planetarium, a zoo, a stadium, a museum, an opera house, a concert hall, and theaters. At the very top, visitors would find more gardens and a fountain cradled in an enormous glass bowl.

In this project Wright has turned a road into a hollow mountain hiding a luminous cavern. It is difficult to think of an architectural image more subtly related to those myths about a hero who makes a long journey to a mountain and finds a gratifying treasure inside it.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
 11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.
 TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-3900

No. 108B

VISIONARY ARCHITECTURE

Sept. 29 - Dec. 4, 1960

Excerpts from wall labels written by Arthur Drexler, Director of the Department of Architecture and Design.

Note: This checklist does not include projects in the introductory historical section of the exhibition.

van DOESBURG, Theo - Dutch.

Group of Skyscrapers. 1929.

The corner of each building is marked by a slender tower, housing an elevator. Beams spanning diagonally between tiers support the floors, which are set well within the total area. The beams also serve as bridges leading from the elevators into the building proper. The project curiously anticipates some current efforts to articulate more clearly the service elements necessary to modern buildings.

ENTWISTLE, Clive - English.

Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, Liverpool. 1960.

The architect's intention was to devise a form embodying the upward, aspiring motion traditionally associated with Gothic cathedrals. For this purpose he designed an unevenly tapered cone, rising from a flared base. Entrance to the building is under these relatively low ceilings; inside, the roof ascends in a sweeping curve to terminate at a point of light. The ribs which form this structure would be enclosed by bands of glass and stone.

Civic Center and Crystal Palace.

The central feature of this composition was to have been a glass pyramid. Floor levels are staggered in such a way that daylight is admitted to the very center of the building. The four faces of the pyramid, pitched backward, would reflect sun and sky to make a dazzling monument approached by long flights of steps across superimposed terraces.

FINSTERLIN, Herman - German.

Ideal Building. 1920.

Finsterlin was one of a group of architects who resisted the postwar reaction to Art Nouveau and sought to develop the implications of the style by designing spaces almost entirely curvilinear. Finsterlin's plan for a building of unspecified purpose anticipates projects by Frederick Kiesler.

FITZGIBBON, James and SIDES, C. D. - American

Gallery
2 van DOESEBURG, Theo - Dutch.

Group of Skyscrapers. 1929.

The corner of each building is marked by a slender tower, housing an elevator. Beams spanning diagonally between tiers support the floors, which are set well within the total area. The beams also serve as bridges leading from the elevators into the building proper. The project curiously anticipates some current efforts to articulate more clearly the service elements necessary to modern buildings.

1 ENTWISTLE, Clive - English.

Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, Liverpool. 1960.

The architect's intention was to devise a form embodying the upward, aspiring motion traditionally associated with Gothic cathedrals. For this purpose he designed an unevenly tapered cone, rising from a flared base. Entrance to the building is under these relatively low ceilings; inside, the roof ascends in a sweeping curve to terminate at a point of light. The ribs which form this structure would be enclosed by bands of glass and stone.

Civic Center and Crystal Palace.

The central feature of this composition was to have been a glass pyramid. Floor levels are staggered in such a way that daylight is admitted to the very center of the building. The four faces of the pyramid, pitched backward, would reflect sun and sky to make a dazzling monument approached by long flights of steps across superimposed terraces.

2 FINSTERLIN, Herman - German.

Ideal Building. 1920.

Finsterlin was one of a group of architects who resisted the postwar reaction to Art Nouveau and sought to develop the implications of the style by designing spaces almost entirely curvilinear. Finsterlin's plan for a building of unspecified purpose anticipates projects by Frederick Kiesler.

5 FITZGIBBON, James and SIDES, C. D. - American

Bridge City. 1960.

As cities expand, buildings absorb the countryside and replace the natural landscape, but if building components could be designed to bridge over the land it would be possible to leave various features, including small towns and villages, relatively undisturbed. It would also be possible to make use of otherwise inaccessible sites.

This project envisions an elevated bridge complex spanning water or land areas and carrying tubular roads together with large scale apartment houses for 100,000 people. The model shows such a city spanning the Hudson River from 110th Street in Manhattan to the New Jersey shore at Fairview. The map shows ten related city units north and south of Secaucus.

more...

FULLER, Buckminster - American.

Partial Enclosure of Manhattan Island. 1960.

The enormous increase in strength made possible by construction techniques based on the patterns of molecular structures will eventually make possible space enclosures on so vast a scale that it would be relatively simple to put up a dome over a large part of Manhattan Island. Such an enclosure, with its controlled climate, implies the gradual disappearance of the self-contained units which now constitute the basic elements of architecture. In their place would be landscaped gardens and expandable shelters, protected by the all embracing dome.

KAHN, Louis - American.

Center City. 1957.

Louis Kahn has interpreted the theory of functionalism so that it applies to the articulation and expression of service functions as well as structure.

In planning a civic center for Philadelphia, Kahn's concept of "working spaces" is applied first of all to the street. In his own words, "a street wants to be a building... streets are canals that need docks." The plaza of the City Tower gives a detailed illustration of how the street can be given architectural character and, through this, function better than it does now.

The squat round buildings in the large drawing are described by the architect as "vehicular harbors or municipal entrance towers... gateways, the landmarks, the first images that greet the visitor." The street level of such a building may be a market; its perimeter may be used for a hotel or offices and the inner core for parking and storage.

KAHN, Louis
Anne Tyng, architect associated. - American.

A City Tower. 1955.

Lateral bracing, rather than vertical and horizontal intersections is the basis of this design. The tower is a framework of pre-cast concrete struts intersecting at every 66 foot level. The intersections are crowned by capitals 11 feet deep, housing storage and mechanical services. Each 66 foot level is a structural floor; the floor-to-ceiling height of the intermediate levels may be varied to suit particular requirements. The floors are not directly over each other but shift in a triangular relationship natural to the geometric growth of the structure. The exterior skin of the building is not shown in the photographs of the model.

KATAVOLOS, William - American.

Chemical Architecture. 1960.

Recent discoveries in chemistry have led to the production of powdered or liquid materials which, when suitably treated with certain activating agents, expand to great size and then become rigid. It is assumed that sufficient knowledge of the molecular structures of these chemicals, together with the necessary techniques, might lead to the production of materials which have a specific program of behavior built into them while still in the sub-microscopic stage. Accordingly, it might be possible to take a small quantity of powder and make it expand into some such predetermined shape as a sphere.

In these drawings the architect has assumed the existence of such materials, and has indicated the growth forms they might take.

KIESLER, Frederick - American, born Austria.

City in Space. 1925.

In the 1925 Paris Exposition of Decorative Arts, the architect Frederick Kiesler exhibited a huge model representing a City in Space. Vertical and horizontal buildings were treated as thin slabs suspended between groups of vertical piers, which also carried connecting bridges.

KIESLER, Frederick - American, born Austria.

Endless House. 1949-60.

The most recent statement of this idea, shown in the model and in photographs, develops the surface as a twisting, continuously curved ribbon wrapped around itself. Such a treatment of the wall surface would produce a building more like sculpture than architecture. The model and drawings for this version of the "Endless House" were prepared under a grant from the D. S. and R. H. Gottesman Foundation, with a view toward the eventual construction of the house in the Museum's garden.

KIKUTAKE, Kiyonori - Japanese.

Marine City. 1959.

Because the population of the world is rising so rapidly, and because Japan's problem in this respect will be among the most serious, this architect proposes to build floating cities. In this project pontoons carry a concrete deck like a raft. Piercing the deck and extending a hundred or more feet below the water are great concrete cylinders, lined with dwellings and other accommodations. Artificial land would form a vertical plane rather than a horizontal plane. Houses would be attached to the wall, not the ground.

KORDA, Vincent - English, born Hungary.

Stage set for the film "Things to Come". 1936.

The film version of H. G. Well's novel shows the construction of an underground city in which climate and light are perfectly adjusted. Scalloped walls are linked to each other by bridges for pedestrians or monorail transportation. An elevator in a glass tube rises over the scene, while a crowd gathers in a public garden.

Vincent Korda's image of a unified, totally-enclosed space remains the most compelling vision of the ideal city ever to appear in the films.

KUROKAWA, Noriaki - Japanese.

Agricultural City. 1959.

All roads, water services, electricity and monorail transportation are installed four meters above the ground in a rectilinear grid. A second grid structure, just above ground level, incorporates all facilities having to do with group life. Here the architect has placed a shrine, schools and administrative institutions. The basic housing unit consists of a concrete stem incorporating stairs and mechanical facilities and a cantilevered skylighted roof mass which is the dwelling proper. These mushroom shaped houses are scattered at ground level.

LE CORBUSIER - French, born Switzerland.

Combined Road and Building for Rio de Janeiro. 1929.

Perhaps 14 stories high and as many miles long, the building would in effect provide artificial land publically owned and maintained. A highway along the roof and perhaps at lower levels would be serviced by regularly spaced parking areas and by interior garages and elevators. The space between each floor level would be rented by the square foot and families would build individual houses. The implications of Le Corbusier's project are that technology and the wealth it generates make possible architecture equivalent to the natural features of the landscape, rivaling mountains and cliffs in scale.

Combined Road and Building for Algiers. 1930.

This 9 mile long building follows the contour of the coast; inland, just behind it, are smaller curved units two or three miles long, grouped around an elevated highway which terminates on the roof of a 31 story administration building in the heart of the business center.

Gallery

2 LISSITZKY, El - Russian.

der Wolkenbugel (The Cloudhanger) 1924.

This vertical and horizontal skyscraper straddles a street intersection and was intended, perhaps humourously, to contain elevators which would carry automobiles to the upper floors. After driving through the building they would descend on the other side of the street. This project is interesting in that it illustrates the assumption that 20th century techniques of construction make it possible and desirable for buildings to be freed of the ground to flow mysteriously in the air.

5 MALCOLMSON, Reginald - American.

Metro-linear City.

The Metro-Linear system is based on the linear character of transportation routes; they are the vertebrae of the new city. Therefore the metropolitan center containing cultural and commercial facilities is designed as a ribbon of buildings along the major transportation routes.

By extension from this center, industrial zones can be formed with housing zones on each side. In this way the city as a whole can grow logically by extension, and at the same time, all its parts can be organically linked together.

1 MAZET, Jean-Claude - French.

Ideal City. 1957-58.

This city is contained within a truncated cone divided into three main sections. At each division broad avenues encircle the cone; the setbacks on all other levels are of smaller scale. The cone is not symmetrical, since each level is offset. The park land surrounding the city includes airports, schools and a stadium.

5 NELSON, Paul - American.

Suspended House. 1938.

Metal walls holding diamond shaped panes of glass set at different angles enclose the total space. Within this the rooms float freely and are in effect abstract sculptures. Services are on the ground floor; sleeping quarters are suspended from the roof; as are a round library and two oval studies on an intermediate level. Ramps and spiral stairs connect these units.

1 POELZIG, Hans - German.

Festival Hall, Salzburg. 1920.

These charcoal drawings show a hilltop walled and terraced to become a building; and long arcades leading to this and other structures. The character of this extraordinary design, however, derives not from Poelzig's genuine solutions of technical problems but from his conviction that the history and atmosphere of Salzburg required an architecture that was itself musical, fantastic and perhaps mysterious.

1 Friendship House, Istanbul. 1916.

The building is shaped like a giant flight of stairs. At each of the major setbacks there were to be gardens and arcades from which one could view the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn. Within the mass of the building itself were interior courts, and an interplay of single and double story rooms in a plan carefully worked out to accomodate study halls, recreation rooms and living quarters.

Poelzig's imaginative use of setbacks for ample terraces and a clear orientation toward a view are practical almost prosaic, advantages. The power of the design rests not so much in this as in the hypnotic image of ascending steps used as pleasure gardens of mythical grandeur.

Gallery

5

SOLERI, Paolo - American, born Italy.

Long-span Concrete Bridge. 1948.

The road and the structural element by which it is carried are combined to make a continuous beam. Although only one road bed is visible, the space below it - inside the tube - is used for trucks and other heavy traffic. The aesthetic power of this ingenious design derives from the sense it conveys of effortless, almost dreamlike motion.

2

Theological Center of Biotechnic City. 1959.

The Center consists of a great bowl which contains smaller units for various religious orders. Each building is a concrete bowl without openings on its outer surface. The inner surface is ridged to form deep shelves for enclosed space. These remarkable studies suggest the possibility of a monumental architecture directly based on natural forms. It is interesting to imagine a desert landscape decorated with these giant ornaments.

3

TAUT, Bruno - German.

Alpine Architecture. 1917.

Taut's proposal was that the Alps be improved. This was to be done primarily by faceting the mountains into ranges of crystal-like forms, and secondly, by decorating them with monumental domes and arches of colored glass. But not even Taut could escape being pursued by reality. Architects and engineers have now begun to think of architecture as beginning with the alteration of the earth's surface itself.

2

WEBB, Michael - English.

Office Building. 1959.

Office requirements have been separated and contained in individual, sculpturally modeled units. Wherever feasible, they would be pre-cast, lifted by crane and then inserted in a conventional skeleton frame, like bottles in a rack. The articulation of individual spaces is carried so far as to produce separate, visible forms for horizontal corridors and ramps and vertical elevator and stair shapes. Together with the bulbous shapes of the lecture hall and office units, they suggest organic forms not usually associated with technology.

4

WRIGHT, Frank Lloyd - American.

Mile High Skyscraper (The Illinois). 1956.

Ten such buildings could house the entire office population of Manhattan, leaving the surrounding area free for parks.

Transportation within the building would be by 56 atomic-powered elevators. Covered parking for 15,000 cars is provided at the base, on four levels above ground and one below. There are two decks for helicopters. 130,000 people would be accommodated.

4

Civic Center, Pittsburgh. 1947.

For this triangular site, Wright proposed an enormous spiral ramp. Inside the circle formed by the ramp Wright proposed to place, on the ground and in the air, dome-shaped spaces for a planetarium, a zoo, a stadium, a museum, an opera house, a concert hall, and theaters. At the very top, visitors would find more gardens and a fountain cradled in an enormous glass bowl.

In this project Wright has turned a road into a hollow mountain hiding a luminous cavern. It is difficult to think of an architectural image more subtly related to those myths about a hero who makes a long journey to a mountain and finds a gratifying treasure inside it.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

Sent to: Poster list and Municipal Art Society Members

Visionary Architecture, the exhibition of 20th century projects considered too revolutionary to build and now on view at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street had elicited a variety of comments:

The New York Times: "... the exhibition is not only entertaining enough to attract a wide audience but also potentially the most important one the Museum has staged since its 'Modern Architecture' of 1932."

"a far out show... the season's shocker."

Herald Tribune: "Too often one feels, studying their projects, that motivation was less the desire to ameliorate man's lot than to push him around, less to face and attempt to solve such problems as traffic than to capitulate to the automobile entirely."

"Fortunately there is nothing imminent about the designs and models on view."

Time Magazine: "a lively show!"

Nation: "... most of the ... immense schemes shown at the Museum could probably be built today."

Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, who selected the show says:

"Social usage determines what is visionary and what is not. Visionary projects cast their shadows over into the real world of experience, expense and frustration. If we could learn what they have to teach, we might exchange irrelevant rationalizations for more useful critical standards. Vision and reality might then coincide."

You are cordially invited to visit the exhibition, which includes more than 30 projects including cities over and under water, under the ground, roads that incorporate buildings, buildings that incorporate roads. The Museum is open daily from 11 a.m. until 6 and on Sundays, from 1 to 7 p.m. The exhibition will remain on view through December 4.