

The Museum of Modern Art

West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Circle 5-8900 Cable: Modernart

No. 27
Monday, March 13, 1967
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COMPLEXITY AND CONTRADICTION IN ARCHITECTURE by Robert Venturi, with an introduction by Vincent Scully. 156 pages, 350 illustrations. Hardbound, \$4.95; paperbound, \$2.95. Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in association with The Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in The Fine Arts, Chicago. Hardbound edition distributed to the trade by Doubleday and Company, Inc.

Architect Robert Venturi presents what he terms a gentle manifesto, "only indirectly polemical," in his book **COMPLEXITY AND CONTRADICTION IN ARCHITECTURE**, just published by The Museum of Modern Art in association with The Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in The Fine Arts. In this radical attack on the limitations of orthodox Modern architecture and city planning, Mr. Venturi states his view that the complexity and contradiction in a technologically changing society are elements that the architect should embrace and utilize, rather than reject or try to alter.

350 illustrations document Mr. Venturi's thesis, reflecting his interest in the Mannerist, Baroque, and Rococo traditions. "The historical comparisons chosen are part of a continuous tradition relevant to my concerns," he explains. "I like elements which are hybrid rather than 'pure,' compromising rather than 'clean,' distorted rather than 'straightforward,' ambiguous rather than 'articulated'.... I am for messy vitality over obvious unity." This view creates responsibilities for the architect, since architecture of complexity and contradiction must embody "the difficult unity of inclusion rather than the easy unity of exclusion."

Mr. Venturi also draws upon the writings of such literary critics as T. S. Eliot, Cleanth Brooks, William Empson; architects Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, and Louis Kahn; and historians James S. Ackerman, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, and Sir John Summerson.

In his introduction, Vincent Scully, Professor of the History of Art at Yale University, calls **COMPLEXITY AND CONTRADICTION IN ARCHITECTURE**, "probably the most important writing on the making of architecture since Le Corbusier's Vers une Architecture, of 1923." Venturi's views balance those of Le Corbusier: "The older book demanded a noble purism in architecture, in single buildings and the city as a

(more)

whole; the new book welcomes the contradictions and complexities of urban experience at all scales. It marks, in this way, a complete shift of emphasis and will annoy some of those who profess to follow Le Corbusier now, exactly as Le Corbusier infuriated many who belonged to the Beaux-Arts then...." While Le Corbusier's teacher was the Greek temple, Venturi's primary inspiration seems to be its historical and archetypal opposite -- the urban facades of Italy, "with their endless adjustments to the counter-requirements of inside and outside and their inflection with all the business of everyday life...."

Robert Venturi is^a partner in the Philadelphia architectural firm of Venturi and Rauch and is Charlotte Shepherd Davenport Professor of Architecture at Yale University. Mr. Venturi's initial work on the text was aided by a grant from the Graham Foundation. He was a Fellow in Architecture at the American Academy in Rome from 1954 to 1956. A concluding section of the book is devoted to the architect's own work.

COMPLEXITY AND CONTRADICTION IN ARCHITECTURE is the first in a series of papers concerned with the theoretical background of modern architecture, presenting the ideas and opinions of practicing architects as well as critics and historians. Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, explains in his preface that: "Unlike other Museum publications in architecture and design, the series will be independent of the Museum's exhibition program. It will explore ideas too complex for presentation in exhibition form, and the authors will represent no single professional group."

COMPLEXITY AND CONTRADICTION IN ARCHITECTURE is available in two editions: hardbound, \$4.95, distributed to the trade by Doubleday and Company, Inc.; and paperback, \$2.95. Both editions are available by mail from the Museum's Publications Sales Department or at the Museum Bookstore.

 Review copies and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Patricia B. Kaplan, Assistant, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. Circle 5-8900.