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The Museum of Modern Art

50th Anniversary



ARCHITECTURAL PROJECTS BY ROGER FERRI AND ALLAN GREENBERG ON VIEW AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Architectural projects by Roger Ferri and Allan Greenberg will be on view in the second-floor Goodwin Galleries of The Museum of Modern Art from June 2 through July 15, 1979. Both projects suggest alternative approaches to architecture and to the revitalization of public space.

In his own words, Roger Ferri seeks "to give expression to an emerging set of aspirations and conditions in American culture" and to the possible "reintegration of outdoor space and public life." Ferri envisions "pedestrian cities in which outdoor space is given back to direct communication" rather than the impersonal, fundamentally anti-urban culture that, he believes, has been fostered by technology and "the spiritual vacuity of a presumably value-free consumption." The drawings on view in this exhibition, part of a larger project for a city in America's "Sunbelt" region, are designs for the architecture at the center of this city: The Dome of the Three Races and the six Hypostyle Courtyards that form the approach to it.

Ferri writes that The Dome of the Three Races is "the spatial and symbolic center of the city. Its presence will be felt throughout the urban fabric, and in the landscape beyond. It expresses the aspiration for a spirit of cooperation and unison among a diverse world community." The design for the Hypostyle Courtyards clothes an efficiently engineered structure with naturalistic forms derived from the Brodiaea lilies native

to the western United States. In the arching system of these Hypostyle Courtyards, the top of a central "stem" branches to support a curving spray of six-petalled (hexagonal) flower forms. All the elements would be of structural tile. As Ferri describes it, "Each stem and flower is 42 feet high, 96 of them making a grove enclosed by a high wall of translucent marble. The 'close-packing' characteristic of the hexagonal pattern, in which one module repeats like honeycomb, provides a simple geometric basis for a visually complex arching system. The arches are formed by 'flowers' with six 'petals'. These intersect with adjacent petal elements to form a field of tripartite arches, the simplest of stable structures." The architect identifies the "three-dimensional geometry" of his proposed structure with the geodesic dome, "except here the elements are compressive, rather than tensile-compressive."

"The Hypostyle Courtyards, open to the sky, are public places of gathering and passage," Ferri observes. "The city is organized to sustain a symbiosis between the built environment and nature. However, the architecture of these public places must transcend the utilitarian fact of this relationship to express the aspiration for a higher, spiritual communion with nature. To do so it must speak to the emotions."

Allan Greenberg's project is for a vest-pocket park in New York. In this work, Greenberg has rejected modern architecture in favor of classical themes. The project centers on a fountain pavilion designed as a series of open-air rooms. Of his conception of this project Greenberg notes: "The proposed park connects, at mid-block, 49th and 50th Streets

between Sixth and Seventh Avenues. The existing space, which is defined by an adjacent office tower and older four and five story buildings, has two parts: a square and an allée.

"The design themes of the fountain and allée are announced by their gateways on Fiftieth and Forty Ninth Streets. The classical language of architecture is the vehicle of expression. The fountain design is consciously playful, while the allée and its gate are more restrained. Between them they suggest the tradition of classical architecture from the ancient world to the present.

"The proposed design surrounds the square section of the site with a twenty-foot-high hedge. This hedge defines a semi-circular space in the center of which is an octagonal wall structure with arched and rectangular openings cut into it. Within this octagonal pavilion is a fountain with an elevated water dome, which overflows its basin."

A notable feature of Greenberg's project is its inclusion of a sidewalk cafe. Though the allée would be primarily for pedestrian passage, "the parallel aisles between the paired limestone pilasters and columns provide space for a sidewalk cafe.... Both fountain and allée provide for passage, observation and some degree of privacy."

Taking an overview of the general issues engaged by his project, Greenberg has observed: "The placement of fountains and gardens in cities has occasioned some of our finest architecture.... Fountain design usually celebrates themes associated with water: time, continuity of past, present and future, the power of nature, the oceans, seas, and rivers, rites of purification, play and reflection. Greenery, especially in cities, suggests

related ideas: growth, life, rejuvenation, relaxation, the idyllic. The use of these themes in urban settings is entirely appropriate, for as our vehicles of commerce and culture, cities, in their complexity, take on an aspect of nature itself."

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