AD HOC COMMITTEE TO SAVE THE WHITNEY
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4 February 1986

Mr. Calvin Tomkins
The New Yorker
25 West 43rd Street
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Dear Mr. Tomkins:

I think you should be in receipt of the enclosed petition and signatures relating to the Whitney Museum. A copy of the enclosed was previously sent on October 1, 1985.

I hope this will be helpful to you.

Sincerely,

Murray L. Levi

Murray L. Levi AIA M.L.

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Board of Trustees
The Whitney Museum of American Art
945 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

To the Board of Trustees,

We strongly urge that the Board of Trustees of the Whitney Museum abandon the presently proposed design for the expansion of the building. The existing museum is internationally recognized as a significant work by Marcel Breuer, one of the major architects of the twentieth century. The expansion, as now proposed, would totally destroy the architectural integrity of the original building.

We do not question the Museum's need for expansion nor the Museum's option to select an architect whose work it feels represents an important current trend in architecture. We are, however, deeply concerned that the Whitney appears willing to allow the destruction of a world-renowned work of architecture in conjunction with its new building program. This is particularly distressing given the Museum's role as a caretaker as well as an exhibitor of the visual arts of our culture.

We believe that it is possible to develop a strong and important new building that would, at the same time, respect the existing museum. We also believe that it is the obligation of the Museum to protect and preserve all works of art, including architecture, for which it has taken responsibility.

cc: Architecture
Architectural Record
Avenue Magazine
City Planning Commission
Community Board 8
Landmarks Preservation Commission
Museum News
New York Construction News
Progressive Architecture
The Architectural League
The Daily News
The Municipal Art Society
The New Yorker
The New York Times
The New York Post
The Village Voice

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NY Times 9/8/66

The Splendid Hothouse

Handsome Whitney Is Superbly Suited For an Art That Thrives on Isolation

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

With three times the gallery space and 10 times the chic of its old building, the new, $6-million Whitney Museum promises to become this year's fashionable focus, or Whitney-a Go-Go, of the jet art set. The new Whitney is a harshly handsome building. It also contains many sophisticated subtleties of design and detail. But the taste for its disconcertingly top-heavy, inverted pyramidal mass grows on one slowly, like a taste for olives or warm beer. It has a constant complement of sidewalk critics. At first, second and third glance, the building suggests a a mannered tour de force in the current mode of architecture for sculpture's sake.

An Appraisal

On fourth, fifth and further inspections, matching interior to exterior, it reveals itself as a carefully calculated design that squeezes the most out of a small, awkward, 104 by 125 feet corner lot with maximum artistry and almost hypnotic skill. Tightly planned and organized, services are removed from the exhibition areas for 30,000 square feet of clear display space.

Mr. Breuer's stark and sometimes unsettling structure may be less than pretty, but it has notable dignity and presence, two qualities not found uniformly in today's art. It will lend these qualities to its contents, by extension and ambience. Occasionally, it wins hands down as a work of art itself, as when it puts sculpture to shame in the use of materials, light and forms in a striking stairwell.

Extraordinary Urbanity

The building has an extraordinary urbanity, which masquerades as a kind of "back-to-structure" crudeness. This "brutalism," as it is called in the trade, is one of the more exotic and popular forms of today's architectural estheticism.

It stresses masses of stone, largely unpolished—in this case a truly beautiful gray granite outside and in—raw concrete complete with board marks of forms, rugged, bush-hammered concrete aggregate for interior walls, bluestone and split-slate floors.

The trick—and again the hand is quicker than the eye—is the subtly scooped curve of a stone stair riser, the shape of a teak rail, or the juxtaposition of a rough-surfaced concrete wall with the extravagant luxury of massive, silky bronze doors. The "close-to-earth" materials have all the peasant simplicity of Marie Antoinette playing farmgirl in the hamlet at Versailles.

This structural and planning legerdemain is the work of Marcel Breuer and Hamilton Smith, working closely with the museum staff. Mr. Breuer is the internationally famous Hungarian-born architect who helped bring the modern style from

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Europe to America in the nineteen-thirties.

Although notable Breuer structures include the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization building in Paris, done with Bernard Zehrfuss and Pier Luigi Nervi; the United States Office Building at the Hague, the Netherlands, and a distinguished assortment of schools, churches and houses in this country, he has been largely an architect's architect. His headquarters for the Department of Housing and Urban Development is under way in Washington, and he recently received the commission for the controversial Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial.

This is his first museum, and except for a few arbitrary, vaguely trapezoidal windows that come equipped with a full battery of irrelevant contains not a single cliché contains not a single cliché.

The virtually windowless structure gains gallery space through its cantilevered upper floors, and digs into the ground for a glass-walled floor below grade that opens onto a sunken sculpture court. Viewed from the street, the court has a suggestion of the jailyard, not entirely dispelled by the stony severity inside or the gum wrappers dropped from the entrance bridge that crosses it. But gum wrappers are pop art, and the view from below is impressive.

Standardized Simplicity

Add to the sophistication of this deceptive and esoteric austerity the most sophisticated technology, and the building is a total 20th-century phenomenon: a superb artificial environment for an art that maintains it is part of its time, but thrives best in hothouse isolation. The Whitney is a splendid hothouse.

The mechanical features include drive-in art delivery, sliding storage racks, "instant" walls and push-button coat checking. Hung, grid ceilings reduce lighting and space division to sleek, standardized simplicity for those inevitable exhibition rat-mazes that are a curator's delight. (One of the most magnificent spaces in the city right now is the still unpartitioned fifth-floor gallery, 17-feet high and 125-feet long.)

The exhibits are now being installed, and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish art from artifact. There is a curious mixture of crushed automobile fenders (sculpture), objets trouvés (art), and electric tools and equipment (construction). It is rumored that a shovel stood by a wall for a week until its status was settled.

In a sense, however, the building is its own exhibit. But unlike the Guggenheim, it is not the whole show. The new Whitney uses the strict, understated fulfillment of a functional program as the basis for a serious and successful work of architecture.

her the rain, the trees, the stream, the beaten walls of the village are felt by the reader as sensations, mostly of pain and despair, since nature's wailings sound like the sighs of the unredeemed. Then, under the storm-bent trees of the forest Mouchette encounters Monsieur Arsène, the young poacher known to the entire province, known also to Mouchette through her father's smuggling operations.

What follows is the typical Bernanosian theme, when the ineffably miserable meets one mired deeper still in the mud of human existence. In the *Diary of a Country Priest* the young curé's meeting, with members of the Count's household, one after the other, revealed his own immense spiritual strength. In the same way Mouchette, with her rudimentary existence, now finds in Arsène a wounded animal, drunk, epileptic, full of fear, with chunks of flesh bitten off his hand in some savage fight. The two beings of the forest communicate in half-words, hardly heard in the storm, and with half-gestures, barely seen in the hut where they seek refuge. Arsène takes Mouchette, not so much from lust as from a desperate effort to find a solid point in the day's confusion. But for Mouchette the act is a sign that someone relies on her, someone perhaps more deeply sunk in hopelessness than she: Arsène will need an alibi when the gendarmes catch up with him. Her vague vagabond existence may now turn into womanly defiance of those stalking her lover.

The following morning Mouchette hears that Arsène has been arrested. It is not the first time and for him might be only an episode. But the man has stirred in Mouchette layers so deep that the girl is now transformed. While almost asleep with exhaustion, she hears an old woman's story that the ebbing of life in one may make another stronger, more vigorous. An hour later Mouchette slips quietly into the shallow village pond and drowns herself. "She could hold herself up in the shallow water by the pressure of one hand on the bottom. Then she twisted over and looked up into the sky. She felt the insidious flow of the water along her head and neck, filling her ears with its joyful sound. She knew that life was slipping away from her, and the smell of the grave itself rose to her nostrils."

It is Bernanos' art that this brutal tale is delicately told, without any cause for revulsion or indignation. The secret of this tact is the understanding of the spiritual; in Bernanos' novels, although his characters live in the depth of misery, whipped in body and soul, every gesture is also a *sign* and nothing is gratuitous. *Mouchette* is one of the few stories in which there are no priests, indeed no religion: the girl might have been a little pagan or just a defiant little rebel. Yet it is not forcing a comparison to say that Mouchette has much in her of the curé d'Ambricourt, the same pride and honor: the acceptance of sacrifice.

Only superior beings are open to sacrifice, and since they seek it out with a kind of Geiger counter, the signs multiply around them. Because they live in a signifying milieu, the sacrifice will be meaningful: no matter who the object, the gain is God's. Mouchette becomes an instrument of charity, and her death, unknown to Arsène, is offered up for him.

There is no other writer today with the same courage, except in Russia where, significantly, the suffering is greatest. I mean the courage to ignore the "social" dimension and hence to ignore "evolutionary optimism," our newest straitjacket. Yet Bernanos writes of ordinary, of little people, and of the most miserable among them: a priest with cancer and another who has lost his faith, of poachers, smugglers, drunkards, rapists, girls turned bad, and slaves of passion (like the other Mouchette, in *Sous le soleil de Satan*). Or of counts, marquis, prelates, carved of the same wood: miserable sinners, woman-chasers, whited sepulchers, boasting yet frail objects of their own pride and appetites. How many opportunities Bernanos had to work out a "social context," to have a thesis, to order around "social types"! He sovereignly neglected to do so. He knew that people carry the burden of a great secret in their entrails and in their hearts, and that even such a one as a Mouchette is an unfathomable mystery.

Art

The New Whitney

PETER P. WITONSKI

The Whitney family, long doyens of contemporary American culture, have presented New York City with its first "camp" museum—a place where Jacqueline Kennedy's *haut goût* is consanguineous to Andy Warhol's *Elizabeth Taylor Period* and Stephen Antonakos' multicolored, neon gargoyles. The new Whitney Museum of American Art, which opened its doors to the public in September, is a monument to the ephemeral and deciduous taste of its jet-set patrons; a $4-million rebellion by Marcel Breuer against the prevailing architecture of Madison Avenue—his bid to surpass the apocalyptic excesses of the late Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum; and a closet in which the emperor's new clothes and, on occasion, the emperor, will hang with sublime familiarity.

But there is more to the new Whitney than ostentatious braggadocio. The Whitney is an idea about the possibilities of American art which transcends all the chatter about Marcel Breuer's tenuously balanced inverted pyramid, and forces the critic to ask certain basic questions. For example, is there now, or has there ever been, such a thing as great—or even unique—American art? The Whitney's answer to such a question is, of course, yes. American art, such as it is, is the Whitney's only reason for existence; it is the stimulus that led the foundress, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whit-

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ney, to renounce the sportive joys of the debutante party for the bohemian atmosphere of her Studio Club (which was the precursor of the present museum) and the companionship of the Ashcan painters, Robert Henri, John Sloan, and George Bellows. It is this almost Emersonian belief in the significance of American art—especially, one sadly laments, contemporary American art—that moves the museum's most ardent votaries ("The Friends of the Whitney Museum of American Art") to lubricate its coffers with an endless supply of money.

That the American spirit (an inadequate but necessary term) has all too rarely sought to express itself in the plastic arts does not seem to bother the museum's arch-supporters, most of whom are quite willing to accept virtually anything as great art. Indeed, one can only imagine their heuristic sense of delight each time they purchase another grotesque "happening" for the Whitney's already absurd permanent collection. One longs for the redoubtable old Campbell's Soup can of yore when confronted with Mark di Suvero's "New York at Dawn (For Lorca)," or Lucas Samaras' cankerous-looking "Untitled Box Number Three" (both gifts of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc.). While American art has never been great in the sense that Flemish or Italian or French art have been great, it certainly has never been as bad as it is today.

It is to the Whitney's credit that its premier exhibition—"Art in the United States: 1670-1966"—served as an overview of the entire panorama of American art, from the earliest colonial primitives down to the present era. Here was certainly American art at its best: the technical competence of Thomas Eakins, the elegant slickness of John Singer Sargent, the Tahitian adumbrations of John La Farge. While lacking the comprehensive totality of last year's American retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum, the exhibition was outstanding in its treatment of such neglected figures as Albert Ryder, one of the most singular of American painters, whose hauntingly melancholy pale horse on a pale rider, in "The Race Track," was one of the most memorable paintings in the entire show. The fact that the Peal family was better represented than Winslow Homer is at least partially alleviated by the attention given Ryder.

Of course, no Whitney opening would be complete without the presence of the Ashcan painters; and so Sloan and Luks and Glackens and Henri were there *en masse*. But what of their greatest representative, George Bellows? He was virtually ignored, save for his powerful depiction of the Dempsey-Firpo fight, which was one of the most popular paintings in the exhibition. Why no attempt was made to borrow Bellows' "Stag at Sharky's"—the brutal apotheosis of Ashcan painting—from the Cleveland Museum, remains a mystery.

Had the retrospective stopped at the Ashcan School and avoided going into the degeneracy of the Pop painters, all might have been forgiven. But when it came to displaying the efforts of Robert Rauschenberg, Larry Rivers and Robert Motherwell, nothing was omitted. Here was one vast heap of junk, perhaps best personified by an untitled opus of Jasper Johns', which consists of exactly nine dirty beer cans and about thirty old paint rags.

In the months to come, the Whitney will devote its attention to John Quidor (who found the works of Washington Irving worthy of illustration), Niles Spencer, Edwin Dickinson, and Stuart Davis. There will also be exhibitions of geometric and abstract painting and sculpture (from the permanent collection), and contemporary American painting and sculpture. The degree to which these exhibitions will be attractive to the public remains to be seen. One thing is certain, however: the Whitney Museum, with all its money and potential for displaying great art, has to date failed to convince (Homer, Eakins, and Ryder to the contrary) that there is such a thing as great or unique American art.

BOOKS IN BRIEF

THE CHINA DANGER, by Richard L. Walker (American Bar Association, $1.00). That split (schism, rift, conflict) between Moscow and Peking has been the subject of all sorts of analysis and speculation. Walker, certainly one of the most astute and solid of our specialists on China, explores the old areas with new insight and uncovers some new materials that have been missed before. For instance, he notes that the great debate about who is doing more to bury the imperialists has served to restore some attraction to Communist doctrine. This is true, he says, because the tirades from both sides are delivered in ideological terms and because Western judgments about the split usually talk in terms of which Communist power is "right" rather than in terms of which "is more divorced from the real world in its ideological commitment." Walker's volume ranges over the entire aspect of Chinese Communist political activity. It is easily the best-written, most logical, and most persuasive work available on the subject. It is short, inexpensive, and completely up-to-date.

W. D. JACOBS

HONEY AND WAX: PLEASURE AND POWERS OF NARRATIVE, an anthology assembled by Richard Stern. (Chicago, $7.95). The stultifier of the anthology racket (and mainstay of publishers) is that anthologies are made of anthologies. The family resemblance as the generations spawn becomes ridiculous. The ingrowth stops only when a man of taste convinces a publisher that he can compete with a new hand. Richard Stern, professor and novelist (*Golk, In Any Case, Stitch*), puts forward an engaging contender. Mr. Stern's selections are wide and, as the title implies, of writing that's rich in matter, executed with the surest touch of a fine craftsman. He is principally interested in displaying narrative that makes an excellent transcription of life, and invites us to appreciate the diversities of manner in which this can be done. Hence there is a letter of Joyce's, a canto of Pound's, a song of Schubert's to words of Heine (the music is printed), and a catholic exhibit of authors. As a broadener of any reader's scope of interest, as a textbook, as a book to keep handy for idle reading, this succulent anthology distinguishes itself. Mr. Stern is himself a writer of fetching talent and originality; his fresh perspicacity as an anthologist shows him to be an excellent critic, as well.

G. DAVENPORT

THE ART GALLERIES

New Museum in Town

I KNOW that all things change, but the trouble is that the changes are usually unpredictable. I was struck a decade ago by the fact that the center of real inventiveness in modern architecture had shifted, with striking effect, from skyscraper and other commercial structures to the ecclesiastical. While office buildings have been bogged down for years in an identical pattern of enormous egg crates done in glass and chromium, church buildings from Vermont to the Riviera have gone A-frame, elliptical, rhomboidal, and any other geometrical shape you can name, including the cruciform. Now, with the opening of the Whitney Museum in its new and much-discussed building on upper Madison Avenue, it has been borne in on me that the focus on venturesomeness in design may be shifting to the museums. Whereas once—and not so long ago at that—the prescription for an art museum's façade was inviolably pseudo-classical, involving a row of massive fluted pillars, usually Corinthian, pedimented, and approached by an intimidatingly high and broad array of marble steps, the limitations on the design (if, indeed, they exist anymore) have grown suddenly more lightsome and variable. The change, I must say, has been generally for the better; for one thing, the old design was frequently so elaborate and costly to maintain that, especially in the case of smaller museums, little money was left over for the contents.

At any rate, the new vogue, or whatever we can call it, began with the Modern Museum, which opened in 1939. Designed by Edward Durell Stone and Philip Goodwin, it was the first to adapt the International Style—glass curtain walls on a boxlike steel frame—to museums. Perhaps they went too far, for they seem to have overlooked the fact that the glass outer walls would sharply reduce the amount of space left for the hanging of pictures, at the same time increasing the amount of outside distraction for the visitor, and it is worth noting that the Gallery of Modern Art, also designed by Mr. Stone, has almost no windows at all. And there was Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim, in 1959, the most radical of all, with its ascending spirals and uncompromisingly curvilinear design. (I can't recall at the moment any structural features or elements of the building that meet at right angles, and even the elevators are cylindrical.) It will be a long time indeed, I imagine, before any architect planning a museum turns his eyes in the direction of the Parthenon.

It must be said that although the new Whitney follows the general line of the other innovators in museum construction, it does so cautiously—and, I think, successfully. The one feature that has been most discussed is the series of overhangs on the Madison Avenue façade, by which, beginning with a basement forecourt set back thirty feet or so from the sidewalk, the upper part of the building is cantilevered out in three stages, until the upper floors are nearly flush with the building line. There are some who find that this feature of the design gives it a disconcertingly beetling quality. I do not. Fundamentally, it's a topsy-turvy application of the setback pattern so often used for office buildings—a sort of inversion of that device, which is designed to get the maximum of floor space while meeting the Building Code regulations about light and air space over a given area of ground. The basement forecourt, with those upper stories shelving out over it, looks a trifle dim and moatlike as one peers down into it from the bridge that leads over it to the entrance. Otherwise, it seems to me that the cantilevering gives the structure—designed by Marcel Breuer and Hamilton P. Smith—an airy springiness, rather than the reverse. The interior, from the smallest to the largest appointments, I thought unexceptionable.

Our main interest here, though, must be in the inaugural exhibition. This, appropriately, is a survey of American art from its very beginnings, called

lobby starts it off, and it proceeds in ascending fashion, more or less century by century, with some overlappings—the second floor being given over to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the third to late-nineteenth-century artists, and the fourth, and final, exhibition floor to the men of subsequent decades, up to the present. Here, too, one might quibble, and I think with more reason, for this cutting off of things floor by floor and century by century is more than a little arbitrary, like slicing off sections of a *bâton* of French bread. It did seem to me that an arrangement taking into account the progression of influences that marked the development of American art might have been more instructive. It might also, of course, have been depressing, for it could have demonstrated more forcibly than ever our almost slavish dependence on European inspiration from Colonial times right up to a generation ago, when we suddenly took things over. On second thought, the Hudson River School was an exception. For all its bombast—or perhaps partly because of it—it was healthily indigenous in spirit. But this again is quibbling, and I've done enough of it. All in all, it's a thoughtfully researched, well-arranged, and handsomely presented inauguration of what is probably the city's most loved museum.

—ROBERT M. COATES

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HUNTER'S MOON

An airborne dragon-
fly, brash with first frost,
buzzed me where I lay
in the open, still,
considering a
juniper lap and
vein of clouds.
Floating
like seaweed or a
mote down the eye's film,
he stained the sky with
four mica-seamed wings,
just able to hold
onto his outrigged
eyes, spying—a head?
—a stone?
Circling or,
in the sunless air,
coasting, he hovered,
the wing whirr missing,
flaking, taking me
again—his insect
candor!—and again
for a window, a
door, a sun-banked stone,
or any warm thing.

—STEPHEN SANDY

...structural steel and speculative builder. Design Roth style of financial expe- the city's current construction.

How to Solve
The New York
Traffic Mess

Tom Wolfe on
Natalie Wood

Judith Crist on

NEW YORK

THE LIVELY ARTS:
THEATER
MOVIES
MUSIC
RECORDS

Mid Sept? 1966?

Art

The Whitney's New Mad Scene

by Emily Genauer

In this city where old buildings are levelled and new ones set up as quickly and frequently as pins in a bowling alley, even the most preoccupied and jaded passers-by pause these days at the corner of Madison Avenue and Seventy-Fifth Street. They pause—and many of them take on the look not of spectators at a game but of the fragile pins themselves, standing directly in line of a heavy, swiftly-rolling, on-coming ball.

Because the new home of the Whitney Museum of American Art, which will be officially opened on that site on September 28, doesn't just sit there. It's one of the most aggressive, arrogant buildings in New York. Already being called the Madion Avenue Monster, even when viewed from across the street it threatens to reach out and strike the hurrying pedestrian. To someone walking along the grim, gray, upside-down-pyramid of granite, the deeply cantilevered sides hang so heavy overhead as to seem waiting momentarily to crush one. Separating the hundred-foot Madison Avenue facade from the sidewalk is another portentous feature, a stone ditch (called a sculpture garden) about thirty feet wide and fifteen deep, which suggests a tomb built to surround this temple-tower so like an ancient inverted Babylonian ziggurat.

For all its funereal associations, the building, *the first* designed by Marcel Breuer in New York despite his long-standing international reputation, is powerfully alive. Alive as a clenched fist, maybe, but alive. (Why, almost inevitably, their hostility begins to show when architects get commissions to design museums, is something I leave to psychoanalysts to figure out.) The new Whitney is a presence that will have to be reckoned with (even as Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum does) long after its neighbors, however brave, daring or elegant they may seem now, will have sunk into the placid, characterless anonymity.

Its message is "Attention must be paid," which is, of course, what any museum *should* say (and a church doesn't have to). But the Guggenheim Museum goes on to say something else. The exalting experience awaiting the visitor first confronted by that ramp spiralling upward to a glass dome visually opening the soaring space to the sky, says, "There's Something bigger than both of us." What the Breuer-built Whitney Museum seems to say—to artists, in any case—is, "You're not as big as you think."

And this is very curious. Because the Whitney Museum's unique contribution to American artists from its beginning, 35 years ago, has been its almost mother-hen protectiveness toward them. I was reminded of this the other day, studying the concrete structure which bridges the sculpture garden to serve as ramp and marquee between sidewalk and glass-walled museum lobby. Its highly stylized shape suggests an immensely alert, nesting chicken. It is, it seems to me, a perfect symbol of the Whitney's historic role.

In fact, one of the reasons why the Whitney had to have a new building is that American painting and sculpture has, in recent years, grown to such enormous physical proportions that conventional display areas no longer serve to show them properly.

But now see what's happened. The top exhibition floor, largest in the new museum, is almost 18 feet tall. Suddenly the huge pictures that in normal-sized galleries completely enveloped us in what was called an "environment," and the open, cage-like sculptures one didn't look at, or move around, but, virtually, walked into, have shrunk. In the huge new exhibition space (and even the temporary partitions that can be installed in a variety of arrangements will not, I think, basically change a spatial dimension established chiefly by ceiling height), they're dwarfed to what seems like conventional size again. What this will do to the now generally accepted principle that overwhelming, enveloping size is itself an essential part of the new esthetic experience afforded by such works, remains to be seen.

But that's not the only reappraisal of currently fashionable esthetic notions which the Breuer building may spur. The architect's design incorporates, of course, all the technological innovations one would expect in a building like this, plus some that have become his special hallmark.

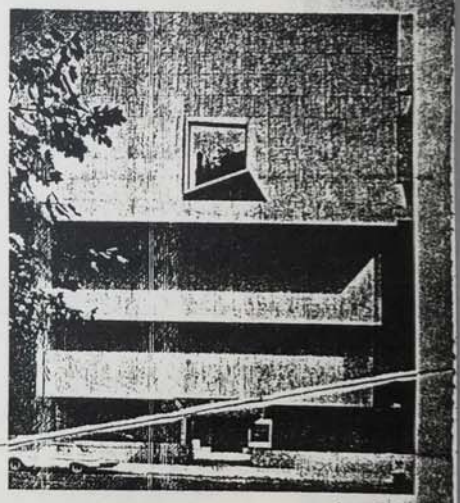
One is the extravagant use of re-inforced concrete, whose surface retains the richly grained imprint of the wooden forms in which the material was poured. Another is the use of controlled ventilation and lighting, so windows are made unnecessary and, indeed, even undesirable in a small area where they reduce hanging space. Breuer therefore eliminated them from his building as strictly functional elements, introducing a few (six small ones are placed irregularly on the Seventy-Fifth Street side; one large one opens out on Madison Avenue) only "to establish contact with the cityscape," he says. Shaped like the projecting facets of a jewel (or, perhaps even more, like an early abstract drawing by Josef Albers, Breuer's friend and colleague at Bauhaus, Germany's internationally famous school of art and architecture in the '20s), their glass planes, tilted out at an angle from the flat building surface, reflect changing glimpses of trees, buildings, clouds.

But wood-grain, jewel-like windows, glass reflections, are only the beginning of the surprising, sensuous, incidental notes which make the forbidding structure take on a romantic note as one looks longer. There are also the play of sun and shadow on cool materials; the juxtaposition, inside the building, of wood with granite, slate with carpet, glass with greenery; the use in the galleries of irregular, unevenly surfaced flagstone floors, restful to both feet and eyes.

What have these to do with the art on display? Suddenly this brute building which would seem to be all mechanical process and technological invention, looks more like sculpture than much of the sculpture it presents. Breuer, to be sure, as a student and teacher at Bauhaus, held with the school doctrine that a building, even a piece of furniture, can be as significant an esthetic expression as a painting or a sculpture. One remembers, in this connection, the glass and stone model house he designed for the Museum of Modern Art garden back in 1949, a handsome structure in which, however, almost as if house and art were in competition, next to no space was provided for hanging pictures.

Things have been reversed since then. A whole new school of artists—"minimal," or "cool," or "ABC," is what they're being called, and the Guggenheim Museum will be showing them in a couple of weeks in its first event of the season—has lately developed, holding that a work of art ought to be as anonymous, as sleek, as textureless, as machine-made-looking as something actually turned out by a machine. You can see some of them now, through the Whitney's glass walls, arranged about the street-level lobby.

In comparison, the Breuer building looks positively romantic, a great big hunk of abstract sculpture in which can be found small but subtle variations in surface, tone, texture, material. I'm not sure the future of the new "cool" art will be helped by its new showcase.



That, said Breuer the other day, is part of what any artist is supposed to do—"concentrate attention on those qualities in life and art which are lacking." Apart from what it may do to the new art forms, the new Whitney Museum, for all the fact that it looks undeniably dated-Teutonic will also change the city scene. It introduces drama to a bland Madison Avenue; force to an architecture that has grown flaccid.

But it also concentrates attention on one lack it has actually aggravated. And that is the lack of space. Why a building of such importance and cost ($6,000,000, with land) had to be constructed on a small corner plot, I cannot imagine. Surely more space could have been purchased. The needed floor area, for example, had to be from six to seven times greater than the existing site, yet the building could reach no higher than 85 feet. Lacking footage, the structure had to be designed with heavy overhangs, Breuer explains, since, after necessary main-floor space was allotted for coat-rooms, front desk, unloading platforms, and the like, next to no room was left for the display of art. The second floor projection, at the same time, had to be held close to the building facade so light could reach the below-street-level sculpture garden. The third floor projects a little further, and the fourth extends out sharply to the property line.

Breuer figured out a vigorous, tough-minded, logical, interesting solution to a problem that shouldn't have existed; lightened the result with the mysteries of sun and shadow, and the nature of material.

The result is Instant Stonehenge . . . stunning in both senses.

". . . The new home of the Whitney . . . is one of the most aggressive, arrogant buildings in New York . . . the Madison Avenue Monster . . ."

Art

Knocking a Building Won't Knock It Down

by Emily Genauer

Criticism in the field of architecture is a futile, frustrating business. A new building that fails remains a horror to be endured. Outrage over the throttling Pan Am Building, vexation over the gaudy State Theater at Lincoln Center, grumbling over the hulking Whitney Museum, already hanging heavy over upper Madison Avenue as it nears completion, will change them not a whit. (Criticism won't change a picture either. But the picture doesn't remain forever in sight.)

Something more effective than criticism after the fact is required. Maybe it is something as simple as popular education. For in the creation of architecture, unlike that of paintings, the public has a collaborative role. The public is the business man, the government official, the home-owner who commissions architects.

It is for this reason, combined with the fact that architecture, as a result of the great rush of post-war building, has never before so powerfully impressed itself on popular consciousness, that the Museum of Modern Art's new exhibition, *Modern Architecture, U. S. A.*, opening on Tuesday, is brilliantly timed and conceived.

For it is not an argument, a lesson or a chapter of history. It's a statement. (What else, for an architecture show? No architect, as anyone knows who has talked with one, ever designs a building any more; he "makes a statement.") The statement that the museum, through Arthur Drexler, head of its department of design and architecture, is making in this collection of some 75 large color transparencies (some are six feet tall) of buildings designed by American architects from 1895 to the present, is that our architecture is vital and varied, that it has gone through some fallow and fertile periods and that no aspect of it is, in theory, necessarily better than another.

That may seem a safe, reasonable, undoctrinaire proposition. Actually, it is quite extraordinary in the embattled area of architecture, where practically everybody in a position to influence taste has long been partipris. This is especially true within the halls of the Museum of Modern Art, whose architecture department was for almost a decade deeply committed to the so-called International Style of Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier. (In the beginning, it saw and saluted even Frank Lloyd Wright as a powerful talent but a maverick who, for all of his unquestioned individualism, was really a throwback to 19th-century romanticism, and, as such, could little affect the ineluctable course of modernism.)

In the present show the museum recognizes that many things can and will affect that course—indeed, includes only works that *have* affected it, whatever their origin. Not all the buildings chosen are necessarily great. Several fine and famous ones are left out. The measure was, did the architect in a particular project, state or recognize a problem that had relevance for more than his immedjate client, did he solve it, and did his solution contribute to the vocabulary of American architecture?

Applying this measure, Drexler shows us Philip Johnson's glass-box residence in New Canaan, but omits his State Theater (he does include an interior view of its grand promenade "because," he believes, "it's a great public room built when public rooms, like Penn Station, are being torn down").

He includes, among several buildings by Edward Stone, his magnificent United States Embassy in New Delhi (the only building in the show outside Continental United States) because the architect's now famous facade grille represented a brilliant exploration of beguiling surface at a time when international architecture had grown too austere and antiseptic.

He shows several of Wright's accomplishments, of course, among them his 1909 Robie House, in Chicago, for the use in it of exposed cubic forms expressed in a stunning harmony of sweeping horizontal eaves and interlocking masses, as well as for its unadorned materials anticipating the stripped-down bare-bones surface of the International Style. He includes *Falling Water*, at Bear Run, Pa., because it was the first reinforced concrete house Wright built, as well as for its cantilevered slabs reaching out over a waterfall so it becomes, in effect, part of the structure; the Guggenheim Museum, principally because it is a great forerunner of the new "road" approach to architecture.

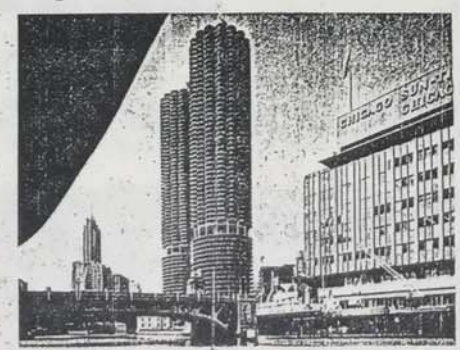
Marcel Breuer, who disagreed with Wright's principle that a house must relate to nature, feeling, rather, that as an object made by man, not God, it should not stand as something that "grew," is represented by works of singular interest. One is his 1945 Geller House, at Lawrence, L. I., chiefly because it is built on the bi-nuclear plan of separate wings for living and bedroom areas, connected by an entrance hall. Breuer's lecture hall on the Bronx campus of N. Y. U., is seen because it embodies his shift away from the austerities of the International Style to a new preoccupation, although mannered and self-conscious, with sculptured form.

So the exhibition goes, with photograph after photograph representing the development of an American architecture, by the great names of the present and recent past, as well as by a few pioneers in the vigorous, pragmatic, experimental Chicago school of 1895.

Gropius' 1938 house in Lincoln, Mass., is here, his first use in the United States of the pared-down look of the International Style—only in Massachusetts, in white-painted stucco, it suddenly looked New Englandly.

Alvar Aalto's dormitory for M. I. T. is here, because the fluidity of its serpentine brick walls overlooking the Charles River represented an escape from the inhibiting discipline of the glass-box school.

Mies van der Rohe's and Johnson's Seagram Building is here for many reasons, among them its monumental projection of quality at a time when materials and techniques grow increasingly shoddy.



Marina City, Chicago office building and residence.

". . . Architecture, as a result of the great rush of post-war building, has never before so powerfully impressed itself on popular consciousness . . ."

Goldberg's Marina City, in Chicago, is here, primarily because its stunning yet delicate spiral structures illustrate the possibilities of round structures, as well as the use of land on a multi-purpose basis.

Harrison and Abramovitz's Phoenix Mutual Life Building, in Hartford, Conn., is here, because the reflections of its great curved glass walls project an intense experience of weightlessness.

Which, of course, brings up some important questions. *Should* a great office building look weightless? Should a building be a piece of sculpture, like Saarinen's TWA building sitting on its site at Kennedy Airport like a friendly grounded bug; or Bruce Goff's 1950 Bavinger house, in Oklahoma, which is also sculpture, incredibly intricate, made of coal and slag glass? Should a building wall be a veil, like Stone's, or like Yamasaki's in his Gothicized exteriors for Wayne State University, in Detroit, concealing essential structure? Should it be a glass curtain exposing internal activity and offering an exterior view one cannot control? Should a business building, like those of Lundy (here in New York we have his I. Miller shoe store), suggest, in its soaring laminated beams, the exaltation of Wells Cathedral? Are separated wings of a house, a la Breuer, a good idea when they decrease accessibility? Is it necessarily a virtue that an office skyscraper (like the Seagram Building) have the dignity and sobriety of a symbol devised for eternity?

The exhibition's answer is, "Why not?" It's a good answer if the resulting structure works, although one may not know this for years. Wright used to berate the U. N.'s Secretariat as a coffin stood on end. But it has become a throbbingly alive symbol of single purpose and strength. Wright's own Guggenheim Museum, so widely detracted on its completion as an egotistical monument to himself, reveals more of its extraordinary qualities each year, to the point where it may be said that its usefulness is limited only by the imagination of those using it. The Seagram Building was in some quarters counted far too self-importantly heavy and domineering for its site and purpose. But McKim, Mead and White's little Racquet Club, across the street, holds its own splendidly against it. Even the once-monotonous, anonymous commercial facades that line the midtown canyon of Park Avenue begin to take on an ingratiating airiness, now that the Pan Am Building seals the area at its southern end.

Only the client's role has perhaps been insufficiently considered in the exhibition. Shall he be content to serve as a peg on which is hung another chapter (its cost underwritten by himself) in the story of American architecture? Can esthetic satisfactions (not to mention promotional value, if the building is an industrial one) justify the continuing abrasion caused by even distinguished architects' functional lapses (like leaking roofs, bad acoustics, glare)?

But that's another exhibition, to be given to architectural refinements and polish, rather than to giant steps forward. The accomplishment of the present one is to chart the steps, each the expression of highly varied, but equally valid creative concepts, and see what paths they indicate for the future.

THEATER

Skin Deep

Alienation, terror, the hunger for roots, sexual warfare, self-deception—these have been Edward Albee's themes ever since his auspicious debut with "The Zoo Story" seven years ago. They are the themes, in one form or another, of most serious drama and literature in this century—and of a great deal of pseudoserious, imitative work. Albee's imitations may frequently be skillful and entertaining but they are imitations nevertheless—of Strindberg, O'Neill, Genet, Ionesco and now of Harold Pinter and, most heavily, of himself. His latest play, A DELICATE BALANCE, is effective and interesting up to a point; but the point is precisely the line which separates the appropriated, the derivative and general, from the new, the independent, the specific and self-propelling.

In the kind of urbane living room which has become Albee's unmistakable scenery, six characters enact a parable of human responsibility and estrangement. The atmosphere at first is that of Noel Coward laced with a bit of the domestic savagery of Albee's own "Virginia Woolf." A wealthy middle-aged couple go through a long and boring recapitulation of their circumstances, which include their mutual tolerance, if not love, their well-cutted habits, the disturbing presence of the wife's alcoholic sister and the equally disturbing existence of their 36-year-old, much-married daughter. But then, in the kind of movement which in all of Albee's plays marks an uneasy transition from realism to fantasy, the couple's best friends burst in, having been frightened by some mysterious power. They bring with them a whiff of Pinter and their quasi-metaphysical presence provides the generator for the subsequent events.

Constriction: They have come because they are afraid to be alone and have decided to live with their best friends, since what is friendship for if not to provide what is needed? Taken aback, the couple find themselves assailed from another quarter when their daughter, having left her fourth husband, arrives home and demands her room—her haven from the "dark"—which the friends have moved into. The wife, hardheaded, practical, the fulcrum of the "delicate balance" between the family and the outside world, wants the friends to leave; her husband, tortured by his realization that he doesn't love them, insists that they stay in order to oppose by will the constriction of his feelings. In the end they go, for everyone has come to realize that they are all incapable of love, that their friendship has been a matter of habit and convenience and contains no principle of sacrifice, and that, in the end, "the only skin you've ever known is your own."

It is this latter kind of cliché that is all too prominent in Albee's rhetoric—whenever, that is to say, he aspires beyond the hard-bitten repartee with which he alone feels comfortable. "When all the defects are admitted, memory takes over and corrects facts and makes them tolerable," someone says. This inflated dialogue attempts to fill in for true action, both physical and verbal—to state the case which Albee has not otherwise succeeded in making. For a "case" in drama is something realized, incarnated, made palpable, so that there is no division between theme and procedure. In "A Delicate Balance" the division is extreme.

Alix Jeary

Cronyn, Tandy: 'Memory takes over'

And yet there are several moments in which something direct and authentic breaks through. One is a scene in which the husband, solidly and adroitly played by Hume Cronyn, recounts an anecdote, reminiscent of the long central one in "The Zoo Story," about a cat which unaccountably stopped liking him; another is his passionate, broken plea to the friends to stay. Rosemary Murphy, playing the conventional role of a wise drunkard with unconventional wit and force, provides a few more, as do Henderson Forsythe and Carmen Mathews as the friends. As the wife and daughter, however, Jessica Tandy, with her narrow range of movement and voice, and Marian Seldes, with her forced hysterics, seem to epitomize the forced and narrow side of Albee.

ART

The New Whitney

Curbside critics have disparagingly referred to it as "Madison Avenue's Alcatraz," "Breuer's Big Blooper Bunker," and "Culture's Folly." Others have wondered "when they're going to tear it down and put it right side up." Some wags have suggested that all traffic and pedestrians "stay away from it in case it falls over." But many have proclaimed it to be a "landmark" and a "milestone" and have gone so far as to call it "Manhattan's best piece of architecture."

There is no doubt that the new Whitney Museum of American Art, which Jacqueline Kennedy will help dedicate in gala ceremonies this week, has caused as much of a stir as Frank Lloyd Wright's spiraling Guggenheim Museum when it opened in 1959. Located on Madison Avenue in the midst of Manhattan's "gallery belt," the $4 million museum, designed by Marcel Breuer with Hamilton Smith, is a startling, brutish boulder of a building. With its revolutionary inverted stepped-pyramid profile it looms among its neighbors like an upside-down Babylonian ziggurat.

The Whitney, wrapped somberly in a smoky-gray granite, is separated from the sidewalk by a concrete bridge over a sculpture court protected from the weather by the building's dramatic 14-foot overhangs. "I saw the building as a mass and shaped it like a sculpture," says the famed 64-year-old Breuer, delighted by his first structure in Manhattan. "Maybe I built it to rebel against skyscrapers and brownstones. I didn't try to fit the building to its neighbors because the neighboring buildings aren't any good."

Trapezoid: The Whitney's stark mask is relieved by a unique splayed trapezoidal window on the façade and six miniature trapezoidal windows placed on the 75th Street side in seemingly random fashion. "I wanted to show the unique social role of art in its environment by closing it off with much wall and little fenestration," says Breuer. "They are psychological windows more than anything else—so that the museum visitors can have some reference point and don't feel as if they're imprisoned."

The interior of the Whitney gives the same impression of stark strength as the exterior. It is extremely simple, uncluttered by columns so that the visitor's attention is focused on the exhibits and not the esthetics of the building itself—which is often not the case at the Guggenheim. The floors are of split slate, blue flagstone and teakwood, and the walls are a natural textured concrete. The top gallery is 17½ feet high to accommodate today's huge paintings and sculpture. Breuer has installed special floodlights with diffusion lenses and

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be attractive to a potential speculative builder. Design

streets and avenues with the Roth style of financial expe-

than can be said of most of the city's current construction.

small mirrors that distribute light evenly. The floor-to-ceiling portable gallery walls enable museum officials to work with any space pattern from an open floor to a 4- by 4-foot cubicle.

'Machine': But the galleries account for a little less than a third of the building's 77,000 square feet of floor area. The Whitney is equipped with cafeterias, shops, receiving and shipping areas, an entire floor of storage and another of offices. Breuer treated the interior of the Whitney as a "machine." "I had to see what happened to the paintings and sculpture step-by-step," Breuer recalls. "I had to know how they were unloaded, stored, transported, hung, lit, crated, shipped and looked at."

The new Whitney is a far cry from the small brownstone Whitney Studio Club on MacDougal Street in Greenwich Village which Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, great-granddaughter of railroad magnate Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, formed in 1918. Mrs. Whitney's studio became a rallying place for John Sloan, George Bellows, George Luks, William Glackens and other new realists. One of the Studio Club's mottoes was: "What Is Home Without a Modern Picture?"

John Clancy, owner of the Rehn Gallery and dealer for many of the "American old masters," recalls one incident when "Luks trailed Mrs. Whitney doggedly at one of her gallery's openings. Finally Mrs. Whitney asked Luks: 'George, why do you keep following me around?' He replied, 'Mrs. Whitney, because you're so goddam rich'."

Cowboy: A courageous fighter for new art, Mrs. Whitney was herself a solidly conservative sculptor. Artist Rockwell Kent, one of the last surviving members of the Studio Club, recalls that "she was such an avid exponent of realism that when she was doing an equestrian statue of Buffalo Bill, she commissioned two cowboys to bring her a Western horse for a model." Kent recalls how Mrs. Whitney, concerned about the two cowpokes lost in the big city, commissioned him to take them out on the town and "get them two nice girls." Kent not only found two nice girls in a Broadway chorus, but "with the unlimited funds at my disposal" had a red carpet rolled from the street to the lavish table laid for the dazzled wranglers.

By 1929, when her collection included every big name in American art, Mrs. Whitney offered the whole thing to New York's Metropolitan Museum and was bluntly turned down because "we don't want any more Americans. We already have a cellarful." So, in 1930 the Whitney Studio Club became the Whitney Museum of American Art, under the directorship of Juliana Force, Mrs. Whitney's long-time assistant and art adviser.

This was the first American institution devoted solely to the country's own art. In the 1940s a merger between the Metropolitan and the Whitney was attempted. The Whitney didn't like the Metropolitan's "conservative" attitude toward contemporary art and didn't want to be considered simply as "the American wing" at the Metropolitan.

Newsweek—Tony Rollo

Goodrich: Preserving a heritage

Unfortunately, since its rebel days in Greenwich Village, a "wing" aura has clung to the Whitney—in the brilliant conclave of New York museums its force and function have become somewhat blurred. The Metropolitan is the American Louvre; the Museum of Modern Art is the archive and spearhead of all the modern arts from Gauguin to Garbo; the Guggenheim attempts to follow the vicissitudes of contemporary esthetics; and there is a rich profusion of smaller and more specialized institutions such as the enterprising Brooklyn Museum; the Museum of Primitive Art, the Jewish Museum, whose name no longer expresses its wide-ranging interests; the brilliant and scholarly Morgan Library; the avant-garde Riverside Museum, and the anti-modern art Gallery of Modern Art.

Newsweek—Robert R. McElroy

Breuer: Building for the future

The Whitney saw itself as the historical recorder of American art, but its often indecisive and bet-hedging "Annuals" of painting and sculpture reflected its uncertainty in that role. And after 1954, when it moved uptown into a modern structure on land generously donated by the adjoining Museum of Modern Art, that uncertainty became chronic. "Being near the Modern wasn't good for either of us," Whitney director Lloyd Goodrich told NEWSWEEK's David L. Shirey. "There was always confusion in the public mind. Now it'll be much more clear-cut."

Many critics felt that the confusion was in the Whitney itself. "They've always dropped the ball," snaps critic Clement Greenberg. Artist and American art authority Lawrence Campbell says that the Whitney "has been comprehensive, but has never had a point of view. With the Whitney everything is like a big accident." Art News editor Thomas B. Hess sees the Whitney's defects as a consequence of its humane virtues. "If ever a great museum was a schlemiel it's the Whitney," he says. "But if bad art was shown, it was shown for the best reasons. The Whitney is the only museum which seems to judge a man on his merits as a man, and if Mr. Nice Guy is a rather mediocre painter, the museum has been willing to let its shows suffer by his presence."

Friends: This old-fangled humanism is epitomized by 69-year-old Goodrich, who has been with the Whitney since 1930 and director since 1958. A distinguished scholar who is proud of his championship of Edward Hopper back in 1927, Goodrich is confident that his brilliant new building signals a brilliant new beginning for the Whitney. He expects the Friends of the Whitney Museum, whose contributions supply the funds for purchases, to jump from 300 to 500 this year, and the permanent collection of 2,600 works to multiply in the tripled space Breuer has given him. "And if there's a good American show anywhere in the country I want it here. The Thomas Eakins show I selected for the National Gallery never came to New York. I don't want that to happen again."

"We intend to go into fields we haven't touched before," says Goodrich. "One of the main things is to redevelop a historical approach to American art. We want to preserve the best of America's art heritage, to have an outline of history under one roof. And as for the present, well, Eakins was completely neglected by his generation. I hope we won't neglect the Eakins of our day."

On the next four pages, color photos of the new Whitney and some of its American art, new and old.

way to put structural steel and | speculative builder. Design | streets and avenues with the | the city's current construction.

N.Y. Times 9/8/66

WHITNEY MUSEUM HOLDS A PREVIEW

Curbside Critics Are Stirred by Zig-Zagging Pyramid on Madison Avenue

By MILTON ESTEROW

The new Whitney Museum of American Art, a five-story, $6-million inverted, zig-zagging pyramid of flame-treated gray granite and concrete at Madison Avenue and 75th Street, opened its doors briefly yesterday for its first official press preview.

Three weeks before its public opening on Sept. 28, the museum has generated something of a debate among curbside critics and appears to be on the way to becoming the most discussed museum since Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum opened at Fifth Avenue and 89th Street in 1959.

The Whitney will be dedicated on Sept. 27 at a ceremony in which Mrs. John F. Kennedy will participate. Mrs. Kennedy, who has been a trustee of the museum since 1963, is chairman of the museum's national citizen's committee, composed of 44 prominent persons active in the arts. The aim of the committee is to develop a broad, nationwide expansion of activities.

Several Innovations

Designed by Marcel Breuer and his associate, Hamilton P. Smith, with Michael H. Irving as consulting architect, the building has such features as:

¶Floodlights with diffusion lenses and tiny mirrors that spread light evenly on art objects. In many museums, light is focused on only one section of the object.

¶Wall - to - wall flagstone. "The slightly irregular surface is easier on your feet than a smooth, polished surface," said John I. H. Baur, the museum's associate director.

¶Floor - to - ceiling portable gallery walls—partitions that fit into suspended ceiling grids, enabling museum officials to create a wide variety of space patterns, from an open-floor plan exhibitio nto a 4 by 4 feet cubicle displaying one object.

¶Lights that can be plugged into every 6 inches of ceiling, providing a lighting system as adaptable as the do-it-yourself walls.

365 Works to Be Shown

Comments on Madison Avenue yesterday ranged from "it looks like a fortress" and "it looks like a garage" to "it's striking," "romantic" and "they ought to tear it down and build it rightside-up."

Inside the museum, workmen were still making preparations for the opening exhibition, "Art of the United States: 1670-1966." The show will fill all the 30,000 square feet of exhibition space and will include 365 works by 275 painters and sculptors — from Alberts to Zorach.

The works, assembled by Lloyd Goodrich, the museum's director, constitute one of the most comprehensive surveys of American art ever brought together under one roof.

One feature noticed by the visitor approaching the building is that the second, third and fourth floors each project farther than the one below (14 feet, the architects say.) A concrete bridge leads the visitor over a sunken sculpture garden into the street-level lobby.

White and Gray Decor

The second, third and fourth floors are devoted to galleries. All the walls are white and the concrete ceiling is a light gray. There are offices on the fifth floor.

A section of the second floor, with cherry veneer paneling, will be called the Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney Memorial Gallery in memory of the museum's founder.

Part of the second floor has a teak wood covering that will be used as a dance floor for benefits and other occasions. Nearby is a small gallery area that can be transformed into an auditorium that can seat 110 persons. A screen is recessed into the auditorium ceiling and a projection booth is situated behind a concealed door.

"We've never been able to show our collection in depth," Mr. Goodrich said. "Now, with three times the space we have before, we'll be able to do so."

In a small room on the fourth floor is the restoration laboratory. It is equipped, Mr. Baur said, "with a specially designed explosion-proof telephone and lights encased in heavy glass. That's because of the varnish fumes."

A Sculptural Contrast

Explaining the seven oddly shaped windows on the front and on the side of the building, Mr. Breuer said:

"As windows have lost their justification for existence in this building, we have only a very few. These few openings, free from the strict requirements of ventilation and lighting, can now be formed and located in a less inhibited fashion, as a purely sculptural contrast to the strength of the main building contours."

The windows project from the building at angles of 20 to 25 degrees. "By having it at an angle you don't get the direct sunlight," Mr. Breuer said.

The museum was built by the HRH Construction Corporation of 515 Madison Avenue. Edison Price was the lighting consultant.

The building has a cafeteria and a restaurant. Admission will be 50 cents. The museum will be open daily from 11 A.M. to 5 P.M. On Sundays the hours will be from noon to 5 P.M.

building, but for the cheapest way to put structural steel and be attractive to a potential speculative builder. Design streets and avenues with the Roth style of financial expe- than can be said of most of the city's current construction.

Sunday, December 22, 1963

SOMETHING AWRY

Three New Buildings Pose Big Problems

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

THREE buildings in the news last week were of more than casual interest, and response to one of them showed a lively concern for the city's architectural standards.

Plans were announced for two fairly routine blockbusters of a size noticeable even in New York: the 42-story tower incorporating a new post office at Third Avenue between 54th and 55th Streets, and a 40-story office building for the east blockfront of the Avenue of the Americas, between 53d and 54th Streets. The third building was of a quite different type—the new home for the Whitney Museum, a small, seven - story structure to be built at the southeast corner of Madison Avenue and 75th Street.

This odd but significant trio, representing a Federally sponsored design, a typical large-scale commercial product, and a noncommercial, esthetically orientated effort for a cultural institution, invoked a curiously inverse reaction. Criticism of the Whitney Museum poured in. Outrage was the opening conversational gambit of the week. But while abuse was heaped on its small gray granite head, no one mentioned the other two buildings, or objected to them in any way.

What About the Big Ones?

Surely this reveals something considerably awry in the city's architectural attitudes. Why is no one concerned with the standard of design set by the Federal government for a structure approximately 25 times the size of the modest Whitney? What, if anything, will make New Yorkers care whether the gargantuan commercial skyscrapers that they take so for granted are good or bad?

Call it unawareness, or apathy, the result is the same: an anything-goes level of lowest common denominator mediocrity in the city's biggest buildings, justified with a shrug in the name of practical economics.

This is not design; it is a profit formula dictated by investors, detailed by captive architects. No one comes to these men for a distinguished building, but for the cheapest way to put structural steel and curtain wall components around maximum rentable space for maximum return on exorbitant land costs. And when their dull, tasteless and inescapable mammoth products add up to the shoddy-new face of New York, setting its tone, quality and appearance, it is time to ask if civic and architectural responsibilites have not been violated, and whether the downgrading of the city is a justifiable objective of free enterprise.

NEW WHITNEY: "Impressive in a stygian way, or it may be a miniature Alcatraz."

Certainly no one loves the results except real estate men. The public dislikes them; the critics deplore them. The image of the city is harmed by them. But if no values are acknowledged except the greatest private economic good—by the investor, the architect, or the public—there is no alternative to the lowest esthetic result.

What have we, for example, in the new post office building? Because the Federal Government starts with the premise that it is cheaper to have its construction undertaken by a private firm, which will then own and operate the building so that the Government can merely lease its quarters, the design has been developed to be attractive to a potential speculative builder. Design quality will not be a factor in the bids. Under these limiting conditions, what price much-touted Federal standards of architectural excellence in Government - sponsored projects? Too high a price, obviously. This proposal by the architect Max Urbahn is just another package for profit; a smaller version of Pan Am.

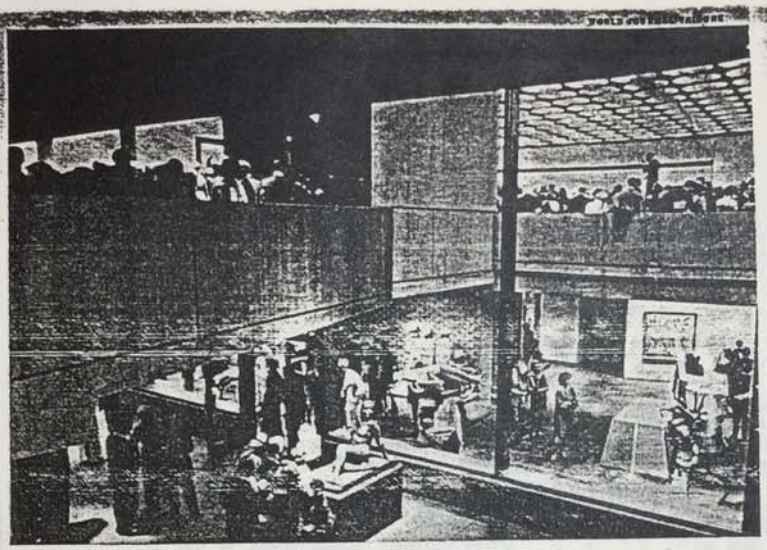
More of the Same

The West Side skyscraper is even more symptomatic. It is a Seventh Avenue "adaptation," as they say in the fashion business, of a Park Avenue original, by Emery Roth and Sons and Horace Ginsbern and Associates. But even its saving clean-lined verticality and setbacks from the street, and those of the post office building as well, are due to the new zoning regulations rather than to architectural inspiration. Without the new law it would have been wedding cake, as usual.

It is a stunning fact, if one cares to stop to consider it, that Emery Roth, the most efficient of the investors' architects, is as responsible for the face of modern New York as Sixtus V was for baroque Rome. This is a Roth city. The Roth firm has lined Manhattan streets and avenues with the Roth style of financial expediency. Richard Roth, an honest and engaging man, says frankly that this is what he understands, and discussions of esthetics leave him grimly disconsolate. He asks, sincerely, how can you turn curtain wall parts into good architecture? He makes a good weathertight cost formula, and that is enough for him and his clients. But is it enough for New York?

As for the Whitney—it may be too somber and severe for many tastes, but it is still a careful, conscientious search for a creative solution by a first-class designer, Marcel Breuer. The almost windowless dark gray granite, the bulky overhangs and the sunken sculpture court that suggests swirling little dust storms among the statues below grade, all promise to be pretty gloomy. (Certainly the Whitney seems to carry some kind of a jinx for the heavy-handed and uninviting from site to site.)

The new building may turn out to be impressive in a stygian way, or it may be a kind of miniature Alcatraz on Madison Avenue. But it will not be cheap, thin, tinny, thoughtless, dull, facile, shoddy or routine, and that is more than can be said of most of the city's current construction.



NEW WHITNEY'S GALA OPENING
Proceeding like a Sardinian baker.

MUSEUMS

Cliffhanger on Madison Avenue

It is like no other building in New York. Huge, cantilevered stories jut outward rather than recede, as in most commercial buildings. The ground floor is cut off from the street by a sunken sculpture garden, already dubbed "the Moat," spanned by a partially canopied bridge. As last week's opening-night throng of 4,000 quickly discovered, such architectural novelty has certain distinct advantages. Arriving in the pelting rain, the guests had no sooner ducked under the stone canopy than they discovered that the bridge ahead of them (*see opposite*) was bone dry, sheltered by the towering, projecting museum wings overhead. While still outside, they were already protected and being beckoned within.

It was the first, but only one of the many surprises tucked behind the granite-sheathed façade of Manhattan's new Whitney Museum of American Art. Even in a time that has seen museum design change from the Roman palazzos favored by turn-of-the-century architects to the spiraling extravaganza of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim, and Mies van der Rohe's austere glass cube for Houston's Museum of Fine Arts, the $6,000,000 Whitney, designed by Marcel Breuer and Hamilton Smith, was the event and talk of the evening.

Jungle Identity. Not that the exhibition within—"Art of the United States: 1670-1966"—was overlooked. It hardly could be, for rarely, if ever, has a better survey of American art been assembled under one roof. But what won over the first nighters was Breuer's dramatic exterior combined with spacious, almost handcrafted interiors, including white canvas and plywood walls, split bluestone floors, and precast concrete grid ceilings, that seemed to recede impassively behind the art work on display. Thus the museum is two different experiences: monumental on the outside and functional, well-lighted and roomy on the inside. This is precisely what Architect Breuer had hoped for. "A museum in Manhattan," he said, "should not look like a business or office building. Its form and material should have identity and weight in the dynamic jungle of our colorful city."

Signature Window. Breuer's problem began when he was handed a small corner plot only 104 ft. by 125 ft. To create within five stories a total floor space seven times as great as the site, he proceeded much like a Sardinian baker, who, with every piece of dough he subtracts, adds it back some place else in the loaf. Thus to compensate for space lost by the indoor-outdoor sculpture garden and the host of first-floor functional requirements, from coat racks and publications desk to unloading platforms, Breuer designed cantilevered upper floors to produce progressively larger galleries culminating in a lofty, sky-lit top gallery.

Realizing that a glass façade would only allow the polyglot architecture of Madison Avenue to intrude, Breuer walled off his neighbors with concrete blinders and nearly solid walls. Controlled ventilation and artificial light may make windows obsolete, but lack of them has the drawback of inducing claustrophobia. To allow "visual contact with the outside," he added seven trapezoidal windows, including the largest on the front façade, which acts as both a signature and a beacon.

Original Dream. With its new building, the Whitney is also writing a new charter. Officially founded in 1930 by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, a Manhattan blueblood who fled the debutante life to study with Rodin and became a sculptor in her own right, the family-dominated museum all but lost its identity when it moved next to the Museum of Modern Art in 1954. Even its decision to sell its distinguished collection of historical U.S. art in 1949 now seems to have been a miscalculation.

Today, with triple the space and a national committee headed by Jacqueline Kennedy, the Whitney intends to make up for lost opportunities. It will selectively restock its historical collection, expand its once-eminent print collection, exhibit traveling shows of American art that have been bypassing Manhattan for lack of space. But Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's original dream will not be forgotten. In cutting the ribbon, her daughter dedicated the new building "to the ideal that the Whitney has always stood for—the service of this country's living art." And to keep the museum's view broadly national rather than parochial, the Ford Foundation gave the Whitney a handsome birthday present: $155,000 to pay for a five-year talent search among artists living outside New York.

TIME, OCTOBER 7, 1966

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
DAILY TIMES
— D. 25,796 —

OCT 1 1966

New Museum Stirs Up Gossip

NEW YORK (AP) — The newly opened $6 million home of the Whitney Museum of American Art is bound to be a conversation piece for a while, because architecturally it is an art form in itself.

But it hardly seems likely that it will stir up the sort of popular commotion that was created a few years ago by Frank Lloyd Wright's design for the Guggenheim Museum — which some people say looks like a beehive with a spiral ramp inside.

Nor is it like the classically colonnaded facade of the much older Metropolitan Museum of Art, nor the business-like, plain appearance of the Museum of Modern Art, nor the luxurious marble exterior of the Gallery of Modern Art.

Externally, the new Whitney at first glace is a little unorthodox in shape. But in the several months that it has taken structural form on Madison Avenue at 75th Street, there have been no great public outcries.

From Madison Avenue, the building seems like an inverted pyramid—some say an inverted ziggurat — because its upper stories grow increasingly larger as they project over a sunken court where sculptures will be shown. The entrance into the lobby is across a bridge over the court.

It is a building of gray granite, irregular in texture, and to some dissenting observers it may seem a bit grim.

Because the main exhibition galleries are artificially lighted, there are few windows, and these few are odd-shaped and oddly spaced, just to break up the plain outer surface. From the inside, these random windows serve only to throw natural light into secondary areas and to relieve the possibility of giving visitors claustrophobia.

Internally, the building is functional to a degree seldom found in museum buildings.

The principal architect, Marcel Breuer, has designed the main halls on the second, third and fourth floors so that they are large, uncluttered areas without supporting beams or columns. The largest hall, on the fourth floor, is more than 100 feet long. To accommodate the largest murals and constructions, the ceiling is more than 17 feet.

The key to the design is flexibility. Each exhibition floor has a grid structure overhead. It serves two purposes. Movable partitions, in two - foot panels, may be locked into these grids in innumerable combinations to form mazes and sections to enlarge the picture space.

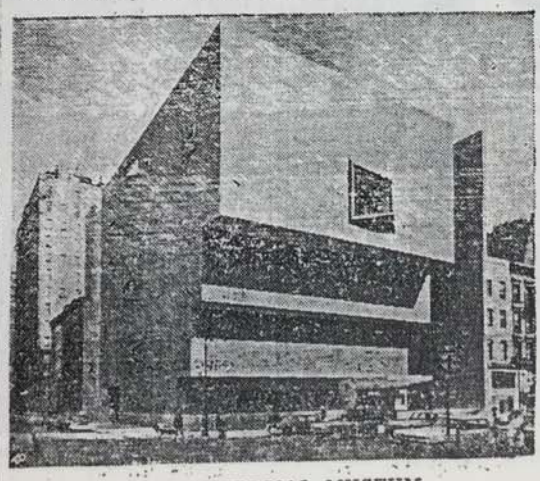
Each of the overhead grids is crammed with electrical conduits, so that individual spotlight units may be "stuck on" to the ceiling at every point, for every possible combination of lighting.

The exhibit space, about 33,000 square feet, is nearly three times that of the Whitney's latest home on West 54th Street. It also is about three times the exhibition area in the Guggenheim Museum and Huntington Hartford's Gallery of Modern Art.

In the interior, Breuer has used rough - textured surfaces for all the main areas—rough concrete in many walls, flagstone in most of the floors. In contrast, the smaller side galleries are carpeted softly and resemble discreet, low - key lounge areas of a home or office.

This is not a cloistered haven of antique art. It is far from the pompously fusty old museums where dark Old Masters used to be shown against a background of dull red velvet. It has a modern, focal concentration on the art objects themselves. Technically, it is an advance in visual communication.

The museum's director, Lloyd Goodrich, calls the building "a great work of art in itself. It is completely functional—and that is seldom true in museum buildings. The space is utilized fully."



CONTROVERSIAL MUSEUM

Art's 'upside-down pyramid'

By Jane H. Kay

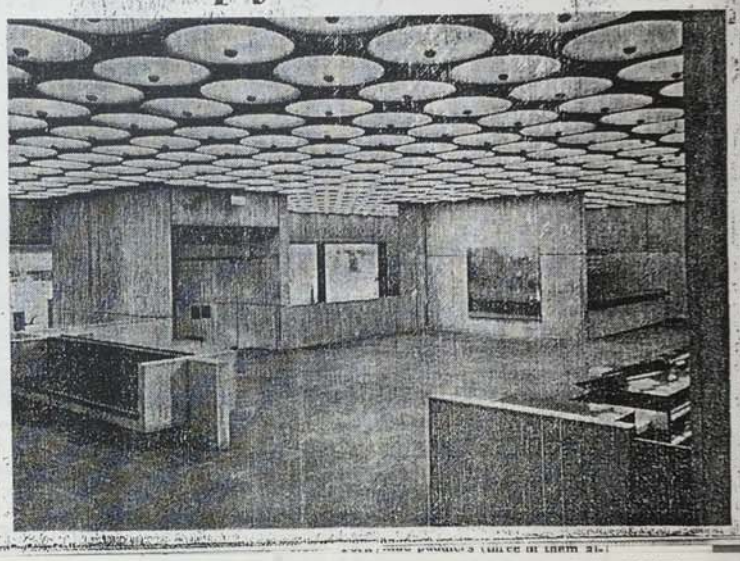
New York

A new art museum, like a new office building, a new wardrobe, a new season, invites expectation of change. More than that, when the usually aloof, critical, and commentating art institution itself becomes creator, it invites special criticism.

The Whitney Museum, opening to the public today with a designed-to-stir structure by Marcel Breuer, elicits still more. From a position of physical and aesthetic subordination to the linked 53rd St. Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney has moved off.

It has constructed an "upside-down pyramid," a monument to individual standards. This should topple conceptions not only about the museum and its art-exhibiting colleagues along Madison Avenue, but also about all museum and sky-climbing structures in all cities.

Before even entering the building, the exterior of the Whitney demands a blink and adjustment. Each solid-stone level squares off and laps out over the next above an open-air sculpture garden for the passerby. The over-all shape has an underlining of independence and isolation in a small corner lot where it touches yet ignores its flat-faced neighbors.



Independence and isolation are stressed in the new Whitney Museum, according to the adjoining article. Opening today, the building was designed by Marcel Breuer. This is the entrance and lobby.

Older collection

Inside, differences are more restrained. But the "psychological windows" admitting no air, no light, but only a sense of release, and the wide-opened, easily paneled exhibition areas with their irregular floor surface, also demand some reorientation.

With artistic lebensraum to install permanently its older collection of American art and a stunning new structure, anticipation quickly established that the museum would shed older policies as well as its old structure. (It is now in a storage annex for the Museum of Modern Art.) Some said the 35-year-old institution founded by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney for American artists would go back to an earlier policy and look backwards in time—or at least backwards to the point where the museum sold off many historic works to provide for current purchases.

Despite the change suggested by its new building, the new Whitney in a sense seems likely to carry on like the old Whitney. "There's no basic change of policy," says John I. H. Baur, the associate director. He is most intimately linked to the Breuer building.

Old balance

"There's simply an expansion in our coverage. For a long time we gave up the earlier periods. What we're going to do is start collecting again in this field." Not to equal a Metropolitan but to make itself accessible to earlier art, it seems, as "a kind of introduction and background" to art of now.

Just opened

The increase will probably only preserve the old balance. For the "principal responsibility of the Whitney Museum is to the living American artist." While attention may be directed outside the New York City exhibition axis to find other artists, the new Whitney may have aroused too much anticipation of change. "It's not a very radical change of policy as you can see," says Mr. Baur.

Still, though, physical factors do impinge on aesthetic ones. Living in what Mr. Baur calls a "museum man's dream" must inspire new reactions, if only to the push-button division of the massive exhibition hall, or the flick of a finger for light adjustments.

Moreover, even in a season spiced with the opening of the new Metropolitan Opera House and highlighted by the Metropolitan Museum's acquisition of the country's prize Tiepolo murals, the Whitney begs for a reaction. Even its press coverage has quadrupled in the last month.

Like Wright's Guggenheim or Stone's Huntington Hartford Museum it sets itself off—at long last—as a place with an identity.

For a museum whose activities long seemed to occur under a pup tent compared to the Museum of Modern Art's three-ring circus, a comment-culling status is enough. (Indeed, with the faddish city's proclivity to make yesterday's avant-garde today's passé phenomenon, some seek out the Whitney to provide the thrill-a-minute that the aging MOMA might not now provide.)

ARTS
ENTERTAINMENT

That the Whitney raised close to the requisite $8 million to make the move augurs well for the institution. Not only the recently founded Friends of the Whitney (at $250 a year) but other art-minded individuals sprang to the support of a growing museum whose modest budget allots only some $16,000 a year for art purchases (plus about the same amount from the Friend funds).

So with a physical symbol, if not an outspoken policy change, the Whitney may indeed expand far more than even its operators anticipate.

It aims now to start an education department, to arrange more travel for curators and directors ("so that they really comb the country for the good work that's done outside New York"), to acquire work from early periods, to expand endowments, exhibitions, and "so many areas."

No.

THE KANSAS CITY STAR, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1966

A Look at New York

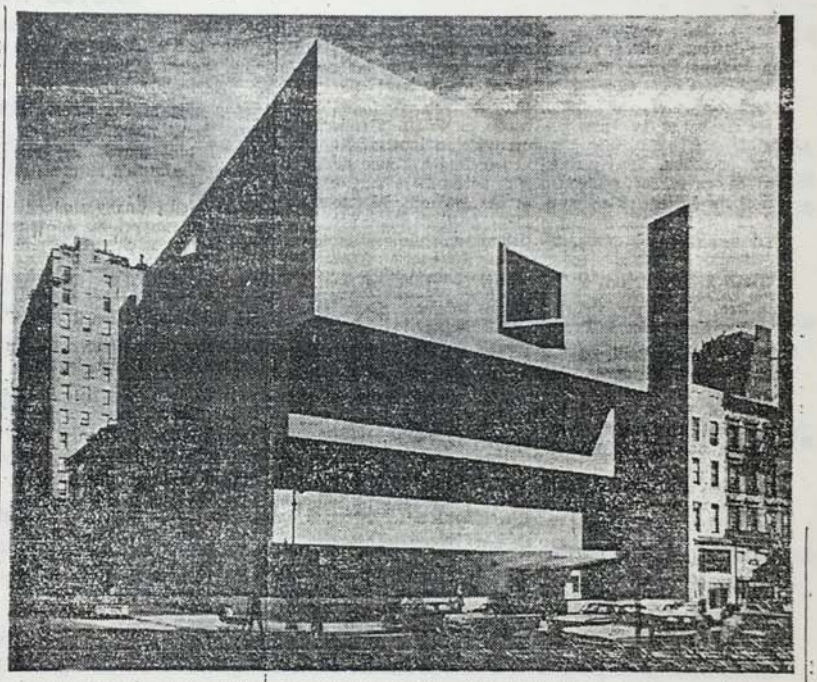
Ancient Design to Be Revived

By Joseph Kaye
(The Star's New York Correspondent)

NEW YORK—A building in the style of the ancient Babylonian ziggurats will soon become another of Manhattan's features. On September 28 the Whitney museum will open its new home at Madison avenue and Seventy-fifth street. Its architect, the renowned Marcel Breuer, has fashioned the building something like a ziggurat, the old temple structures in reversed pyramid form. The museum also is a temple—to art of course.

The impressive building is sure to become an esthetic oddity here, just as the Guggenheim gallery on Fifth avenue, with its winding floors, is an architectural novelty. It is massive in bulk, expanding as it rises, and has several windows, of peculiar sun-shielding shape, jutting out from the walls. Within, it is both sumptuous and utilitarian, the temple-like chambers built to do full justice to the exhibits.

The inside walls have the strange texture of pebbled concrete which has been pitted by hand with chisels. The exterior walls are of gray granite. A stone bridge leads from the street into the big foyer, passing over a sculpture garden below.



The new Whitney Museum of American Art at Madison Avenue and Seventy-fifth street, New York.

What should a museum in Manhattan look like? That was the question asked by the architect. His answer: "Its form and material should have identity and weight in the neighborhood of 50-story skyscrapers, of mile-long bridges, in the midst of the dynamic jungle of our colorful city." The new Whitney is a successful realization of this concept. The cost was more than 6 million dollars. It will open with a great exhibition of "Art in the United States: 1670-1966." The works of 275 artists will be shown.

The Whitney museum was founded 35 years ago by the late Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, a sculptor as well as a wealthy lady. It was in Greenwhich Village, then moved uptown, adjoining the Museum of Modern Art.

The latter gallery will now take over the vacated building. The tradition of the Whitney is to exhibit and aid American art, which is defined as art by men and women who live in the United States and create their work here.

No holds are barred by the gallery. Andy Warhol will also be in the opening show with a pop art portrait of Marilyn Monroe.

★ ★ ★ ★

IGNORING SOME of the sad aspects of the New York World's fair, the officials of the upcoming Montreal fair used this city for a big publicity kick-off. The other day, 10 canoes filled with "voyageurs" ended a race from Montreal to Manhattan on the Hudson and arrived at the Seventh-ninth street boat basin of the river. They were greeted with pomp by city, state and Canadian government representatives. This race was a trial for a bigger race next year, to begin in the Canadian Rockies and finish in Montreal; at fair time, naturally.

Each crew, representing a Canadian province, comprised nine paddlers (three of them alternates) and a "commodore," or director of the boat. Picturesque as these men were, some in stage buckskins, but others genuine Eskimos and Indians, were in this business for money.

They are all professional paddlers and engage in important canoe races, of which there are several each year. They manage to earn in prize money, one of them said, from $7,000 to $10,000 annually.

GUGGENHEIM NEIGHBORS

GUGGENHEIM NEIGHBORS PROVIDES THE LEGAL DEFENSE AND PUBLICITY FUND FOR THE OPPOSITION TO THE PROPOSED ADDITION TO THE GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM. We have retained the law firm of Berle, Kass, & Case which is highly regarded for its expertise in zoning, landmark, and environmental law. The firm represented the victorious opponents of Westway. We are working with prominent members of the faculty at Columbia University, The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, and Carnegie Hill Neighbors to preserve Wright's visionary masterwork — his only building in Manhattan — and clearly the most precious item in the Guggenheim Collection.

The Fine Arts Federation, CIVITAS, and The Municipal Art Society have all issued statements opposing the Museum's plan. The Departments of City Planning and Environmental Protection have declared, "The proposed project may significantly impair the character or quality of an important architectural resource." The American Institute of Architects, in selecting the Guggenheim to receive its 1986 Twenty-Five Year Award for design of enduring significance, described the building as "a major architectural landmark and a monument to the memory of its architect Frank Lloyd Wright."

Below is a photo of the model of the museum with the proposed addition. The cantilevered box is a disturbing image inconsistent with Wright's design, and intended entirely for office, storage and conservation space. Approximately three-quarters of the total expansion is for functions other than displaying art which could be housed in other locations.

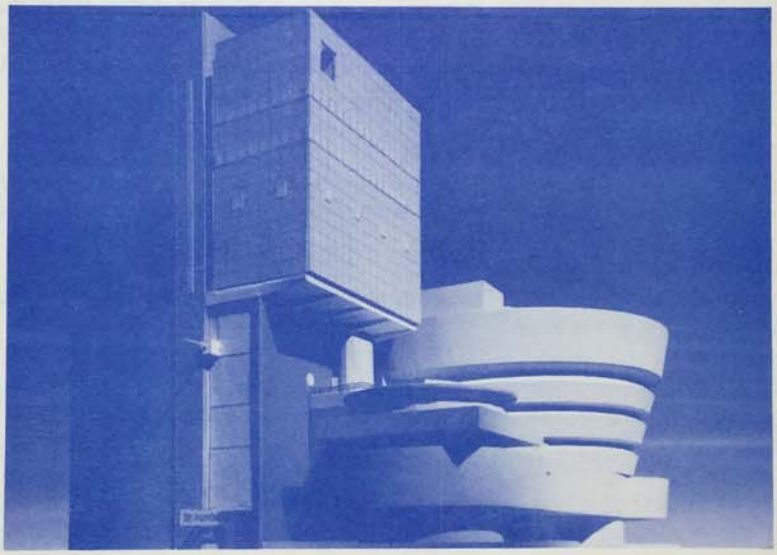


Photo By Louis Checkman

Although the Guggenheim has been universally acclaimed as a landmark since its inception, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission cannot consider a building for designation until it is thirty years old. The Guggenheim is twenty-seven years old. Also, the boundaries of the Carnegie Hill Historic District have not yet been extended to include the Museum.

A PUBLIC HEARING TO REVIEW THE MUSEUM'S ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND APPLICATION FOR A ZONING VARIANCE WILL BE HELD AT THE BOARD OF STANDARDS AND APPEALS 25 JUNE 1986 AT 10 AM. WE URGE INTERESTED PERSONS TO ATTEND (ADDRESS BELOW). PLEASE MAIL LETTERS OPPOSING THE ADDITION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO:

Hon. Sylvia Deutsch, Chairperson
BOARD OF STANDARDS AND APPEALS
161 Sixth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10013

Hon. Herbert Sturz, Chairperson
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
2 Lafayette Street
New York, N.Y. 10007

Please mail copies to Guggenheim Neighbors.

Substantial legal and architectural fees are involved in preparing our challenge to the Museum's plan. Many friends and neighbors have already contributed generously. The J.M. Kaplan Fund has given a grant to the Cultural Council Foundation to assist Guggenheim Neighbors. Please give us your support.

TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION CHECKS SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO CULTURAL COUNCIL FOUNDATION AND MAILED TO GUGGENHEIM NEIGHBORS AT 4 EAST 89 STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10128. (212) 722-8381.

Please See Reverse Side

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL / Manuela Hoelterhoff
"The Guggenheim is trying to murder a major modern monument. . . As astonished observers have not ceased pointing out, the combination of a round receptacle jutting into an upright wall unmistakably resembles a huge toilet. . . The Guggenheim shows about 3% of its holdings. The addition will double that. For this we're sabotaging a major museum? No, of course not. You've forgotten about the staff. The entire cantilevered section holds offices, conservation labs and storage facilities. There is not a single gallery in this sunny section."

PROGRESSIVE ARCHITECTURE
"The fundamental issue isn't whether this addition is right or wrong, compatible or crushing, but whether there should be any addition at all, let alone one of this size, on this location."

THE NEW YORK TIMES / Paul Goldberger
"For whatever its merits, the addition is hardly a discreet work of architecture. It may be tight, well-composed and disciplined, but it is still a huge mass looming over one of the greatest buildings of modern times. And if it is built it will change the facade, the profile and the overall image of the Guggenheim for all time."

ARCHITECTURAL RECORD / Michael Sorkin
"The real tragedy of this proposal is the Guggenheim's willingness to trash a treasure for so little benefit. . . Second guessing genius is the purest folly. To build this new addition would be ruinous."

NEW YORK MAGAZINE / Kay Larson
"The Worst Unintentional Pun of 1985: The proposed addition to the Guggenheim forms the tank of a toilet, and Wright's spiral is the bowl."

PAPER / Kim Hastreiter
"Frank Lloyd Wright's landmark is being threatened with an alteration which would destroy the integrity of this unique architectural icon."

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT
"For the first time, a building has been designed which destroys everything square, rectilinear."

NEW YORK POST / Guy Hawtin
"Architect Frank Lloyd Wright's swirling concrete confection stands as a warning from the grave to trustees contemplating a departure from their benefactors original concepts.

THE VILLAGE VOICE / Andrew Sarris
"I feel free to make the point that the 'toilet effect' will not be felt as strongly from my apartment on the East Side as from the apartments across the park on Central Park West."

HOUSE & GARDEN / Martin Filler
"The full breadth and sweep of Wright's vision. . . can be much better appreciated now than it could possibly be if this act of cultural cannibalism were perpetrated."

OCULUS / Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.
"Alas, the new design is grotesque artistically and functionally."