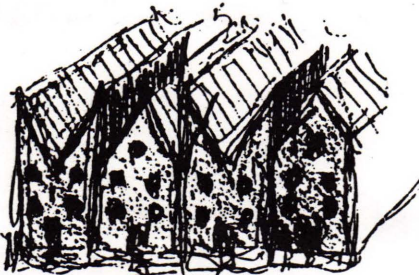


OCULUS

an eye on new york architecture

The New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

Volume 52, Number 4, December 1989



Architecture Books *at a Glance*

*The Lecture Circuit
in Five Minutes*

ARCHITECT ABUSE: The Sharks and the Guppies



OCULUS

LETTERS



Dorothy Alexander

Brentano's, formerly Scribner's.

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Cover: Drawings from Lake Baikal (left) and the index (right) to Vladivostok by John Hejduk (Rizzoli). **Back cover:** John Hejduk's Southern Friedrichstadt housing, Berlin.

Dear Editor:

In case a poll is taken about the new editorial style of *Oculus*, please register me as against.

I find it to be too flip, too undignified, too slangy, and I recommend a return to the previous style. The editor should strive for polished English and good taste to represent our profession.

Charles K. Hirzel

We'll try some polished Latin: "de gustibus non est disputandum."—Ed

Dear Editor:

Regarding "Scribner's Fate: Fast-Food Books?" (November, page 7): my, my, how elitist! Perhaps we have been so busy patting ourselves on the back and passing around awards for projects, a goodly portion of which remain unbuilt paper exercises, that we have forgotten about reality. We are part of the masses

and working stiffs that strut and fret their hour upon the stage and then are heard no more. Whether Waterstone's books, Waldenbooks, or Waldo books line the shelves, book browsers will have the opportunity to experience this wonderful built space called architecture.

Gerald Fritz

Obituary

Percival Goodman, who died at age 83 in mid-October, was both an architect and a provocative thinker. A fellow of the AIA and a former professor at the Columbia School of Architecture, Goodman designed more than 50 synagogues throughout the country and wrote extensively on visionary planning. In 1947 he wrote *Communitas* with his brother, the philosopher Paul Goodman. A look at utopian plans of the 20th century, the book prophetically attacked the destructive and decentralized qualities of Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse plan.

Goodman was an early opponent of Robert Moses's elaborate highway systems, which he believed siphoned off funds that could be better used "improving the center and making livable neighborhoods." It is ironic that Goodman's primary commissions, suburban synagogues distinguished by strongly sculptural design, could not have materialized without the highways, the postwar suburban migration, and the growth that planners like Moses promoted.

—A.C.

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On the Lecture Circuit

with Alex Cohen

In case you missed anything...

October 5:

Sparks flew in a brief panel discussion following The Architectural League's premier of **Michael Blackwood's** "The Deconstructivist Architects." Critic **Herbert Muschamp** commented, "If I lived in Kansas, I'd want to see this film, but I don't. This is what an audience in Kansas wants to see and know about architecture." He added that the "promotional movie uncritically packaged an architecture represented by its participants as subversive in a format [that was] safe, fun, and easy to watch."

Joseph Giovannini, writer/narrator of the documentary, responded that indeed "decon is quite a suspicious movement and criticism of it can be found in my upcoming book, *The Deconstructivists*. Muschamp retorted, "I'm still waiting for that book."

Muschamp went on to say that while he did not object to the architecture per se, it was presented as "liberal," and "was brought into the film to validate a school of philosophy that is essentially not liberal."

October 6:

As part of "New Schools for New York," the Architectural League brought together architects **Herman Hertzberger** and **Christopher Alexander** to present their recent work and discuss school design. **Kenneth Frampton** intervened after two rather verbose presentations by commenting, "The 'élan' [that Hertzberger strives for in his work] and the 'feeling' Alexander hopes to evoke have quite different ideological roots. Elan is essentially a 20th-century idea of creating a modern society equivalent and superior to the ancient society, a myth which appears to have suffered a recent setback. Feeling has an old root, quite close to religious evocation, and has a different pedigree than élan completely."

October 10:

"Toward a Civilized City," the Historic Building Committee/Landmarks



Herbert Muschamp

Preservation Foundation forum, took an uncivilized turn early on in developer **Fred Rose's** remarks. Attacking landmarking as a discretionary zoning tool, Rose stated that anyone who voted to landmark Mt. Neboh Synagogue (since demolished) should be "shot." Critic **Paul Goldberger** responded, "How clever of Fred, in this election year, to be the first to connect two critical issues: he has coupled historic preservation with capital punishment."

Hugh Hardy remarked that "while the value of existing buildings may be enhanced to generate a profit, a developer can usually create wealth only by increasing density, a value often at odds with the interests of preservationists." Hardy later said that preservationists "have a tendency to want to see things only through sepia-colored glasses."

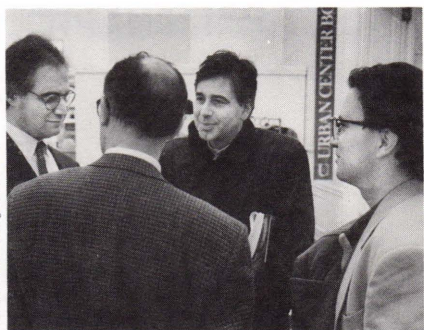
October 16:

Alexander Cooper, power broker, took time off to discuss his work with **Paul Goldberger** as part of the 92nd Street Y's "Shape of the City" series. To a deferential lay audience he explained, "When **Donald Trump** asked us to just fix up the open space in **Helmut Jahn's** Trump City plan, we declined. But when he was ready to redefine the project, it became an assignment too hard to walk away from."

In a moment of boosterism, Cooper added, "Donald Trump has incredible visual sense. He cares about the way things look. That's important in a client."

October 17:

Before deteriorating into a family squabble between the "theatered" Durst and Schubert families, Cooper Union's colloquium on the "42nd Street Redevelopment Project" **George Sternlieb**, laissez-faire planning activist and founder of Rutgers's Center for Urban Policy Research, posed a conundrum: "To what extent is attracting new businesses and theatergoers to Times Square dependent on a cleanup of 42nd Street? And how much is paying for this sanitizing ... dependent on ... the developers finding tenants?"



Ralph Lerner, Mario Gandelonas, Bernard Tschumi, Michael Rotondi

October 30:

Steven Holl, undoubtedly an Architect with a capital A, decried in a 92nd Street Y discussion the "failure on the part of architecture-school deans to demand quality architecture on their campuses." According to Holl, Dean Harrison Fraker of the University of Minnesota, for which Holl has completed work on an architecture and landscape building, "is committed to great architecture." Instead of "tacking an addition on the side," Holl claims he has transformed the whole academic complex by "connecting the departments and studios with a unifying figure-eight promenade walk."

November 2:

Few provocative comments came out of the Architectural League's sold-out discussion with deans **Ralph Lerner** of Princeton, **Michael Rotondi** of Sci-Arch, and **Bernard Tschumi** of Columbia. While Rotondi (who dissolved the board of directors that hired him) and Tschumi have both increased personal control over their schools by restructuring, only Rotondi explicitly defined his mission as "confronting and subverting the status quo by consolidating power and authority."

With moderator **Mario Gandelonas** was directing little of the discussion toward a relatively unconcerned Lerner, Rotondi took the opportunity to label the "profession" of architecture a "loggerhead to institutions of architectural education." He added that architecture schools cannot and should not be "geared to support the profession; architecture must be considered a discipline that can be changed on the margins, not from within."



Christopher Alexander

Richard Garfunkel

Cervin Robinson

Cervin Robinson