

# The Tribune CALENDAR

Sunday, September 28, 1986

Oakland, California



## Here Here

*Gertrude Stein and  
Alice B. Toklas come  
home again in an  
engaging two-woman  
play. — See Robert Taylor,  
Page three*



Stein and Toklas in 1908.

Stein played by Miram Margolyes, left, Toklas by Natasha Morgan

By Gordon Studer/The Tribune

## Music

Fall brings new season  
of tunes for tykes

See Larry Kelp, Page 2

## Architecture

Berkeley architect has foot  
in the door to major project

See Charles Shere, Page 5

## Records

John Fogerty looks through  
the 'Eye of the Zombie'

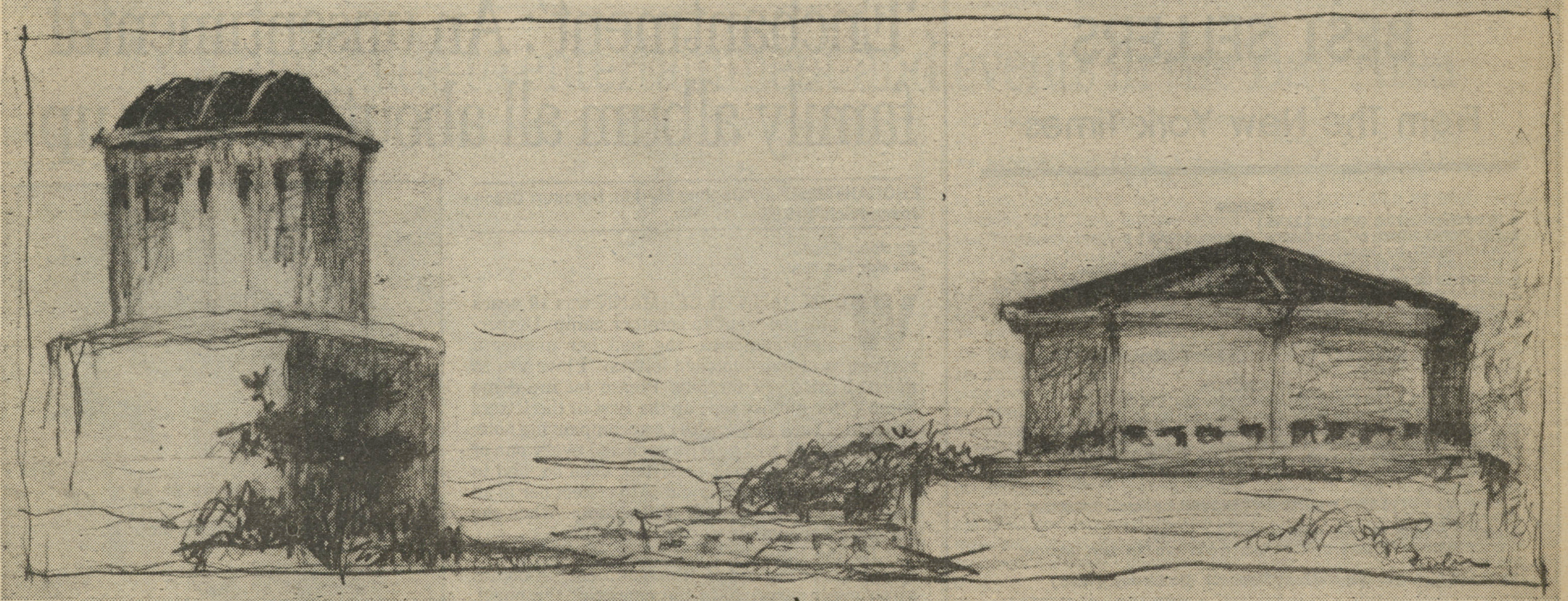
See Larry Kelp, Page 19

## Going Out

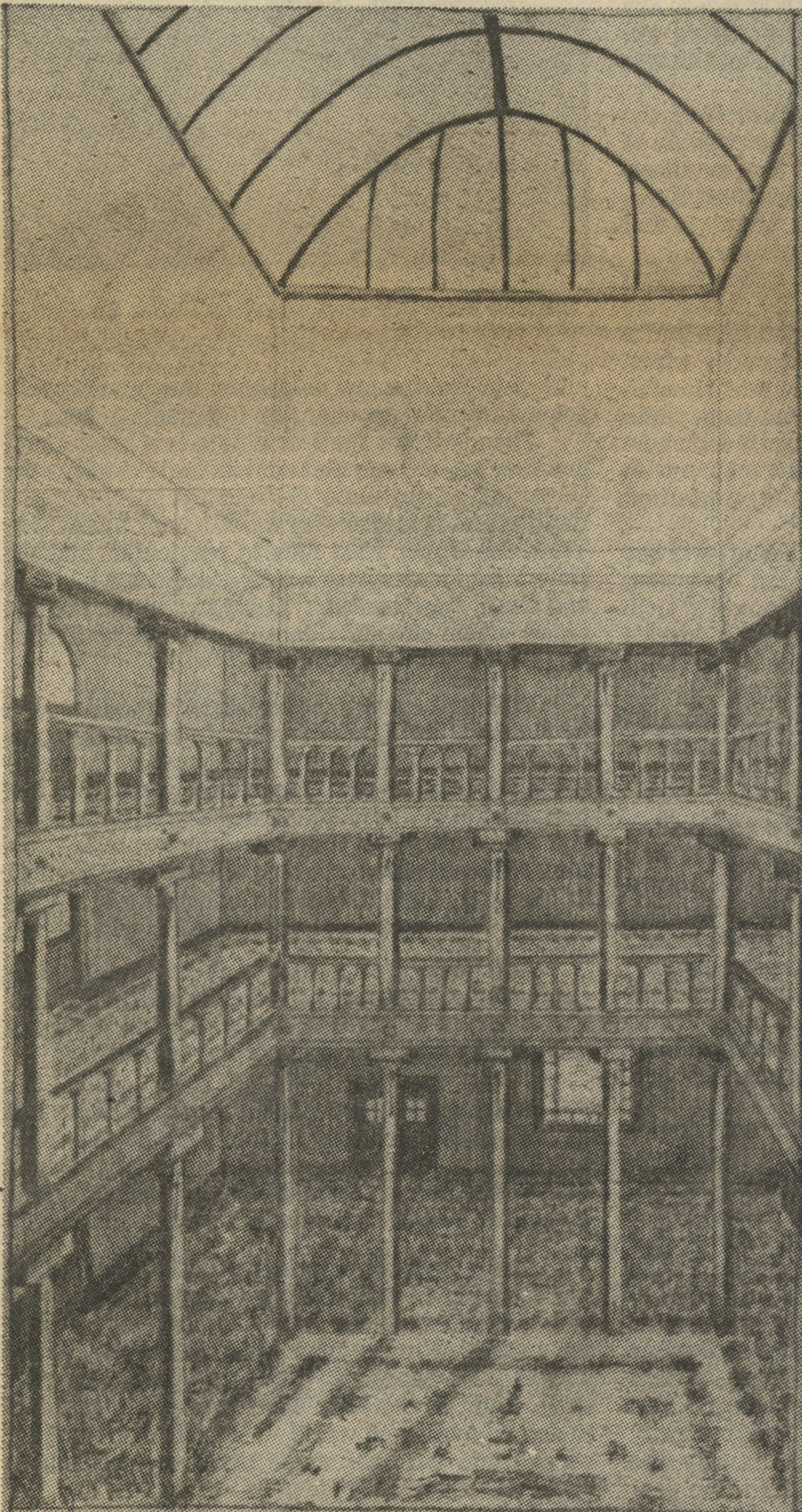
Eight-day guide  
to Bay Area happenings

See Page 7





Two domes, for a city hall, left, and a theater, are hallmarks of Christopher Alexander's plan for Mountain View's Civic Center.



An interior view of the proposed city hall lobby

## Trail-blazing Berkeley architect in running for major civic center

By Charles Shere  
The Tribune

**B**ERKELEY'S MAVERICK, PATH-BREAKING architect Christopher Alexander, granted his due respect more often elsewhere than at home, is in the running for a major project here in the Bay Area.

It would be his first big project in this country, and only the second in his long and honorable career.

The job is the design and construction of the new \$17 million civic center, comprising a city hall and civic theater, for the town of Mountain View.

Alexander's proposal, which has been on public view along with four others, offers a real city center — a place where the daytime, living theater of city business relates logically to the cultural entertainment promised by the auditorium next door.

A big, comfortable plaza, with cafe, strolling and seating areas, links the two purposes. Two domes watch over it, the oval glass dome covering the city hall rotunda and the lower but larger octagonal cupola housing the theater. Added to the central piazza, with its decorative painted frieze of parading life-size horses, the domes lend a warm, Mediterranean note to the complex, softening California's mission-dominated past with the more humanistic expression of Italian villages.

This is just the broad picture, of course. Alexander's plans develop their people-related, comfortable but workable atmosphere in detail as well — the integrated fountains and seats offering intimacy in a big public square; the windows provided at nearly every city hall work station; the balance of stage and seating in the theater, which — very much like the Berkeley Repertory Theatre — emphasizes audience communication among itself without sacrificing attention to the stage.

Alexander is well known for this integration of detail and effect — a sharp contrast to the prevailing postmodern architectural concern for applied superficial ornament at the expense of the organic, living use of space.

Alexander's work is not unknown in this coun-

### Five finalists competing for civic center project

Berkeley architect Christopher Alexander is one of five finalists in the current competition for a new civic center in Mountain View. The others are:

■ A.J. Diamond, a Canadian architectural firm, working with the Peninsula contracting firm Tanner Van Dine.

■ Moore, Ruble, Yudell and VBN, the Los Angeles firm headed by architect Charles Moore.

■ William Turnbull Associates, of San Francisco.

■ Carrasco Associates and Richard Elmore, of Palo Alto.

The five finalists were selected by a city evaluation committee representing city planning and the city manager's office. The Mountain View

See FINALISTS, Page 17



Christopher Alexander  
Civic center design

try. In two books, "The Timeless Way of Building" and "A Pattern Language," Alexander elaborates an orderly, logical method of analyzing universal human needs and desires, often going to folk and peasant architecture and town-planning for his sources, in order to find the building blocks of a holistic approach to contemporary building.

Three other books, "The Linz Cafe," "The Production of Houses" and "The Oregon Experi-

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# Finalists

Continued from Page 5

ment" (all published by Oxford University Press) describe the practical application of his ideas in projects outside of this country.

The Linz cafe was a restaurant built in Austria in 1980. "The Production of Houses" describes a public housing project in Mexicali, on the Mexico-California border, where owner-residents planned and built their

# Architect

Continued from Page 5

city council will make the final decision among the finalists early next month.

Christopher Alexander's books, published by Oxford University Press, trace his return to timeless and universal architectural concepts, extending basic human ways of ordering experience and needs, as practiced by societies all over the world, to research and new development in a sophisticated society.

In this return to vernacular, even to peasant values, Alexander joins contemporary structuralist philosophy to the movement toward holistic approaches to everyday problems.

Alexander's approach questions many of the high-tech values of contemporary society, though, and this has won him a devoted following among many independent architects and builders but very unpopular with architects who have a more institutional orientation.

Alexander's first two books, "The Timeless Way of Building" and "A Pattern Language," also make direct appeals to thinkers in other disciplines concerned about the lack of common languages in the fine and applied arts in today's society.

own modest homes under Alexander's guidance.

He recently finished a major undertaking in the 20-building campus of the New Eishin University near Tokyo — planned and achieved with the participation of the students, employees and residents who will use the campus.

This humane orientation makes Alexander's concepts crucially important to American

architecture (and, even more, planning) today: The human scale must be re-integrated in business, pleasure and residence if human values are to be re-asserted in daily American life.

As if to emphasize the point, Alexander is currently working on a shelter for the homeless in the redevelopment area of downtown San Jose, also with the full participation of the workers and residents it will affect.

Now a Bay Area city has a rare opportunity to profit from this sane, humane approach to contemporary building in a major public architectural statement. Indeed, the Mountain View competition, already unusual in encouraging such a proposal and in inviting citizen participation in its choice, would be logically and suitably climaxed by a commitment to his plan.

In addition to finding a proper

center, gracefully linking its overdesigned but salvageable business district to the Pioneer Park civic center, Mountain View would be assisting a significant entry of Alexander's concepts into public life in his own area — and a strong argument that human values and real citizen involvement can work in today's complex, technological society.

Charles Shere writes on art and music for The Tribune.

Now at work on a new book probing deeper into the basic elements of "A Pattern Language," Alexander is aware of the Jung-like ambition of his search for archetypes. He remains equally committed to both teaching and building, however, happily juggling a three-pronged career.

"The whole situation is drastic," he says, referring to the mindlessness of so much of contemporary life — including, of course, planning and architecture.

"But common sense will prevail. I can't think in any other terms; I'm an optimist."

— Charles Shere

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687 1100 Complex <b>CENTURY</b> PLEASANT HILL	820 4831 CINEMA <b>CROW CANYON</b> SAN RAMON	848 4300 Theatre <b>BERKELEY</b> BERKELEY	223 2288 Plitt's <b>HILLTOP MALL</b> RICHMOND

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— Michael Medved, SNEAK PREVIEWS

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