

ARCHITECTURAL ANALOGUES

SEPTEMBER 20 – OCTOBER 25, 1978

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
DOWNTOWN BRANCH
55 WATER STREET

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

All dimensions are in inches unless otherwise specified.

1. ALICE ADAMS
Column with Broken Arch, 1974
Laminated pine and wood lathe:
7'8" x 2'8" x 3'
Lent by the artist
2. SIAH ARMAJANI
House #4, 1972
Balsawood and enamel paint:
4½ x 22¼ x 18
Courtesy Max Protetch Gallery
3. Quicksilver Bridge, 1972
Balsawood and enamel paint:
12½ x 12¼ x 58½
Courtesy Max Protetch Gallery
4. ALICE AYCOCK
Photodocumentation: **Building with
Dirt Roof, 1973**
Photographs on Board:
19½ x 13 1/8 each
Courtesy John Weber Gallery
5. **Masonry Enclosure: Project for
Doorway, 1976**
Pencil on paper, two drawings:
36½ x 52½, 36½ x 26
Courtesy John Weber Gallery
6. JARED BARK
Cold Light House, 1977
Mixed media: 8½' x 10' x 10'
Courtesy of the artist and
Holly Solomon Gallery
7. DONNA DENNIS
**Subway Station with Blue and Yellow,
1975**
Mixed media: 79 x 49 x 65½
Courtesy of the artist and
Holly Solomon Gallery
8. JACKIE FERRARA
Mantel Structure A-187, 1977
Sugar pine: 52½ x 25½ x 21
Courtesy Max Protetch Gallery
9. **Drawing for Mantel Structure, 1977**
Pencil and ink on paper: 21½ x 50
Courtesy Max Protetch Gallery
10. RAFAEL FERRER
Sahara La Vida Secreta, 1976-77
Mixed media: 87 x 228 x 110
Courtesy Nancy Hoffman Gallery
11. GEORGE GRANT
Meagan's House of Impure Hearts #9, 1978
Plaster, wood, steel and acrylic:
53¾ x 19 x 19½
Lent by the artist
12. **Meagan's House of Impure Hearts #5, 1978**
Plaster, wood, steel and acrylic:
53¾ x 19 x 19½
Lent by the artist
13. RED GROOMS
Tower of Babylon, 1975
Watercolor on paper: 42 x 30
Collection Dr. and Mrs. Sidney Merians
14. IRA JOEL HABER
Memorandum, 1974-75
Mixed media: 9½ x 24½ x 10
Courtesy Pam Adler Gallery
15. MICHAEL HURSON
Thurmond Buzzard's Apartment, 1973-74
Balsawood and plexiglas: 8½ x 64½ x 24
Whitney Museum of American Art
16. MARY MISS
Photodocumentation:
Sunken Pool, 1974
Photographs on board: 36 x 25¾
Courtesy Max Protetch Gallery
17. **Drawing for Nassau County Tower, 1978**
Pencil on paper: 22¼ x 29 7/8
Courtesy Max Protetch Gallery
18. ROBERT MORRIS
Photodocumentation: **Observatory, 1977**
Photographs on board: 8 x 10 each
Courtesy Leo Castelli Gallery
19. THOMAS LANIGAN SCHMIDT
Nativity Chapel, 1975
Mixed media: 28½ x 18 x 25
Courtesy Holly Solomon Gallery
20. JOEL SHAPIRO
JS 141, 1975
Cast iron: 2 5/8 x 4 3/16 x 5 5/8
Collection Paula Cooper
21. **JS 90, 1974**
Bronze: 6 x 4 x 4
Collection Joe Zucker

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION continued

22. CHARLES SIMONDS
Film: **Dwellings***
12 minutes, 16 mm, color
Collection Rudolph Burkhardt
23. ROBERT SMITHSON
Spiral Tower, 1971
Pencil on paper: 17 ½ x 14 ½
Courtesy John Weber Gallery
24. KATHERINE SOKOLNIKOFF
**Djenne Mali Mosque with
Surrounding Wall, 1978**
Fired clay, sassafras twigs, epoxy, and sand:
30 x 33 x 14
Courtesy of the artist and Truman Gallery
25. GEORGE TRAKAS
Photodocumentation: **Extruded Routes, 1978**
Photographs: 11 x 14 each
Lent by the artist
26. Photodocumentation: **Transfer Station, 1978**
Photographs: 11 x 14 each
Lent by the artist
27. Photodocumentation: November
installation, 112 Greene Street, N.Y.
Photographs: 11 x 14 each
Lent by the artist

The Downtown Branch is under the direction of David Hupert, Head of the Whitney Museum's Education Department.

The Downtown Branch of the Whitney Museum of American Art, located at 55 Water Street, is supported by the business community of lower Manhattan and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Independent Study Program is sponsored by the Helena Rubinstein Foundation. The museum is open Monday through Friday 11-3. Admission is free.

Sculpture and architecture have shared a long and intimate relationship. For centuries sculpture was often at the service of architecture as embellishment and ornamentation, confined to zones of a building designated by its structural members. Only in this century has sculpture left the niche and pedestal to stand free on its own, as architecture always has. Simultaneously, architecture has rid itself of excess embellishments, reducing form to symbols of industrial efficiency—to the essential. The austerity and geometric precision of the Bauhaus and International Styles of architecture have parallels in contemporary developments in painting and sculpture. The emergence of abstract sculpture has decreased the visual distinction between it and architecture.

Architecture and sculpture share very basic properties. If architecture did not serve a utilitarian purpose, its definition would be equivalent to sculpture's—a three-dimensional form, defining, articulating, and actively displacing space. Architecture is as much an embodiment of social, moral, and spiritual values as any other art form. It transmits human intelligence and imagination and gives form to our thoughts, strivings, and aspirations. The architectural historian Vincent Scully has observed that architecture "is the creation of a special environment for human life imaging the thoughts and actions of human beings as they have wished and believed themselves to be. It reveals basic truths of the human condition and plays a part in changing and reforming that condition."¹ In short, architecture serves not only physical needs but symbolic and psychic needs as well (i.e. peace, privacy, space, harmony, order, dignity, pride).²

Sculptors are currently raiding the enormous inventory of architectural forms—from bridges to towers, castles to tombs, tents to skyscrapers. This new work, uninhibited by functional requirements and material conventions, explores architecture as an agent of movement as well as a source of imagery with mythological, psychological, and personal associations. It does not constitute a style but represents a common interest in space, scale, and the vocabulary of architectural forms. This exhibition focuses on some recent art that is located in an ambiguous territory between sculpture and architecture.

All art has antecedents and this work is no exception. Since it is not stylistically cohesive, sources can be located in almost every major movement of the 20th century. Cubism, Constructivism, Pop, Minimalism, and Surrealism, in particular, have contributed to the genesis of this work. The Surrealists were the first to create objects detached from a pedestal or base—objects which intrude into the fabric of the viewer's space. These objects elicit a sense of dramatic time, provoke an encounter, and address our consciousness of the present. The temporal element, the presentness of the "Surrealist object," and the heightened continuity between the viewer's world and the ambience of the work are key aspects of this new work as well.

Much of the recent sculpture also inherits the Surrealist preoccupation with private fantasy, myth, primitivism, oneirism, eccentric forms, and incongruous materials. It does not, however, share the specific Surrealist commitment to psychoanalytic theory and the primacy of unconscious life. Thomas Lanigan Schmidt's elaborate embellishment of the **Nativity Chapel** with foil and cellophane evokes fetishism, and bizarre ritual. Rafael Ferrer's tent, **Sahara—La Vida Secreta**, radiates with exoticism and primitive energy

while Katherine Sokolnikoff's organically seductive clay mosque recalls a subliminal memory of primitive, elegant, basic forms. Ira Joel Haber creates miniature environments of quite a different mood—nightmarish, holocaustal, garishly colored, and visceral, exploring unknown territory in a dream time. In Haber's work, the house, traditionally a symbol of serenity and security, is victimized by the brutal forces of nature. George Grant, on the other hand, celebrates the growth and evolution of his own family in his series **Meagan's House of Impure Hearts**. Gaston Bachelard has written, "The house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories, and dreams of mankind . . . It is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word."³ Each artist has created a personal architecture to express an emotionally intimate space, a product of mixed memory and reverie.

Most of the artists in this exhibition are in their thirties and forties—members of a generation that grew up with Minimalism and the attendant formalist polemic. The Minimalist concern with simple shapes and sequences that define and activate space and possess an architectural concreteness and presence is sometimes reflected, more often rejected in much of this recent work. Autobiography, private fantasy, and intuition are stressed over reason, analysis, and problem solving. Much of the work falls within the category of post-Minimalism and reflects a continued interest in focusing the viewer's attention on perception and structural clarity while rejecting Minimalism's impersonal geometry and self-referential formalism. Structure is clearly revealed in the wooden constructions of Alice Adams, Siah Armajani, and Jackie Ferrara. The eccentric architectural forms, detail, and hand-crafted quality replace the general geometry of Don Judd's and Tony Smith's work. Joel Shapiro, while maintaining a level of impersonality in his work, tempers the austerity of Minimalism, with the recognizable and emotive form of a house. Michael Hurson's **Thurmond Buzzard's Apartment** is smooth-textured, homogeneous, perfectly formed, and uninhabited, yet the small scale and delicacy of the balsawood convey intimacy and fragility.

Much work using architectural forms that is being done today is outdoors and environmental, work that cannot be accommodated in a gallery or museum. This independence from the art institution is often an aspect of the artist's intention. Several large outdoor project pieces by Alicy Aycock, Mary Miss, Robert Morris, and George Trakas are documented in photographs here. However, the work resists photographic representation as it concerns the primary reality of perceptual experience, shaping space, and directing the flow of the viewer's experience. The photograph increases the distance between the viewer and the object while the work itself decreases the distance by actively engaging the viewer and encouraging participation. Ironically, since much of the work is temporary or geographically remote, we must rely increasingly on photographs as evidence of its existence.

These large outdoor pieces have roots in earlier indoor environments (Surrealist, Pop, etc.) and particularly in the site-oriented earthworks of the '60s which encompass and surround, involving one in movement through space and experience of time. Aycock, Miss, Morris, and Trakas use architectural forms as instruments of phenomenological investigation of spatial perception and behavioral response to motivated, directed experience.

While avoiding many architectural conventions in their play between function and non-function, all four of these artists use the traditional building materials, wood and steel, and actual building techniques (i.e., excavating, trussing, jointing). The evidence of the building process contributes a sense of strength, durability, and seriousness (toughness) to the work. (It is interesting that many women figure prominently in this type of work.) In contrast, evidence of construction is de-emphasized and concealed in the two large constructed indoor installations by Jared Bark and Donna Dennis. Our attention is directed away from the process of construction toward the details of the surface and the nature of the interior space.

Our environment is becoming increasingly homogeneous as aesthetic priorities shift and economically advantageous mass production and modular construction suppress variety in architecture. Could this new art be a protest against "the stripping crusade that hid a variety of human impulses in a neat but often empty geometry?"⁴ Is it a romantic response, accompanied by an interest in anthropology and myth, engendered by opposition to technology in this time of cultural atomization?

This work does indicate a resurgent interest in imagery after a long period of predominantly abstract sculpture. Architecture alludes to figuration without actually being figurative. Man created architecture to accommodate and protect his body and the two "are interdependent like the snail and its shell."⁵ Although the distortions in scale, lack of function, and highly personal interpretation constitute an abstraction of architecture, the work refers to a known class of forms. The metaphoric associations of these forms trigger memory at an unconscious level and also suggest a narrative (architecture = environment for human activity). The ambiguous location of this new work between abstraction and representation is the underlying source of its tension and vitality.

Lisa Phillips

NOTES

1. Vincent Scully, *Modern Architecture* (New York: Braziller, 1977), p. 10.
2. Rudolf Arnheim, *The Dynamics of Architectural Form* (Los Angeles: UCLA Press, 1977), p. 3.
3. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 4.
4. Arnheim, *Dynamics*, p. 2.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 73.