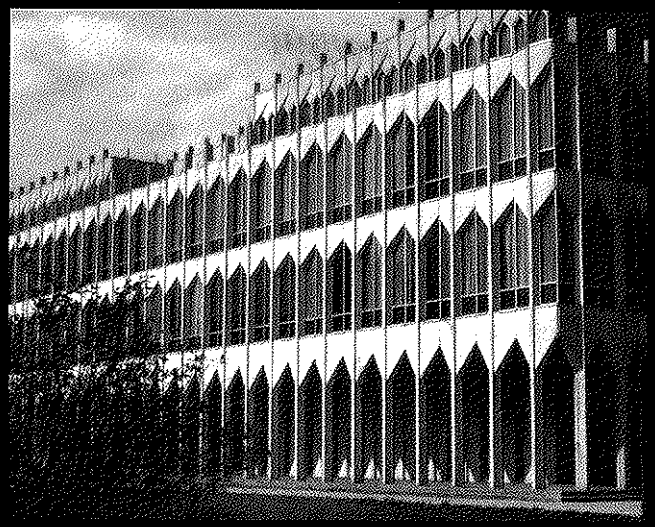
V
Jewett Art Center
Wellesley, Massachusetts
Paul Rudolph, 1955.

V
College of Education Building
Detroit, Michigan
Minoru Yamasaki, 1959.



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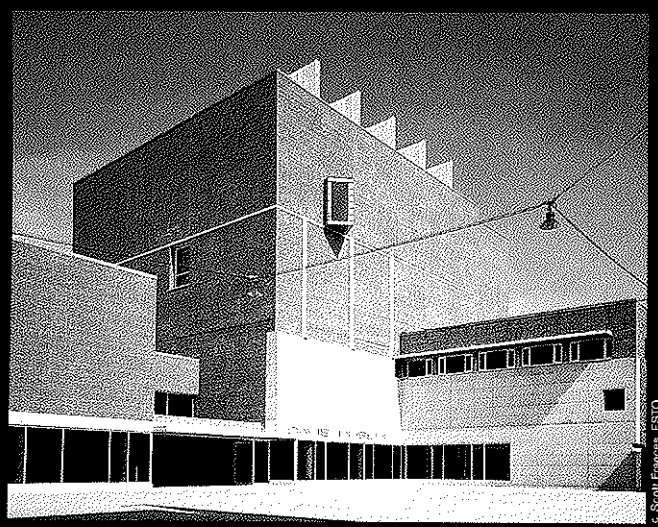
Phoenix Central Library
Phoenix, Arizona
William P. Bruder, 1992.



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Davis Museum and Cultural Center
Wellesley, Massachusetts
Rafael Moneo, 1993.

Rococo Modernism: The Elegance of Style

DEBORAH FAUSCH

"The word 'architecture' related to a judgement upon building, the word 'modern' to a verdict upon history."

—Colin Rowe (1994)[1]

To understand the recent American crop of neo-modernist buildings, these structures must be located not only alongside the international reanimation of the idiom, but also within the sheer variousness of contemporary American modernism. Drawing from the deep repository of modern forms and ideas, William Bruder's **PHOENIX CENTRAL LIBRARY** (1992), for example, with its fabric *brises-soleils* and its weathering metal surfaces, is an exemplification of open planning and the exhibition of "honest materials." Tod Williams and Billie Tsien's **MANHATTAN TOWNHOUSE** (1997) is a practiced and sophisticated abstraction of context in glass and stone, enclosing a flowing layout that recalls nearby residences by both Philip Johnson and Paul Rudolph (Rockefeller Townhouse, 1950; Alexander Hirsch Townhouse, 1966). Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron's **DOMINUS WINERY IN NAPA VALLEY** (1998), with its witty play of piled-up stones perversely gradated from small at the bottom to large at the top, takes its reification of pure surface from the tenets of "classical modernism."[2]

The larger context within which this movement has emerged is far broader, and this context includes tendencies that, although superficially divergent or even antagonistic, take the terms of their disagreements from the same modernist sources. Among the fruits of the modernist tree are not only Frank Gehry's figural bodies and the cool allusions of Rem Koolhaas's streamlined spaces, but also straight revivals like Gensler's San Diego airport (1999), which mimics, without any of the soaring poetry, Eero Saarinen's Dulles Airport Terminal of 1962; structural expressionism like Santiago Calatrava's 1991 proposal to complete the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City; what Robert Venturi calls the "industrial *rocaille*" of such architects as Eric Owen Moss, Morphosis, and RoTo; the critical postures of neo-avant-garde architects and theoreticians; the neo-Baroque lineup recently touted by *Time* as the architecture of the future already camped out on our Main Streets; and the incongruities of the modernist addition proposals for the Museum of Modern Art (1997), an institution founded to promote a continuing revolution in art.[3]

The case of the MoMA addition highlights the idea of modernism as a novel, critical response to the problems of society, opposed in America by the idea of modernism as style. Long before its elevation to the status of a major mode of American building, assessments of modern architecture in the United States began to rehearse the same rhetoric: modernism as record of the times, modernism's crisis of authenticity, and modernism as a style, revolutionary or not. Born, in the words of Colin Rowe, amidst "predictions of an imminent cataclysm" and "prophecies of an effulgent future," founded on assumptions of "ineluctable social change," "irresistible progress," and the existence of a modern zeitgeist, conceived as "establishing moral imperatives which can in no way be rejected," modernism was required to be:

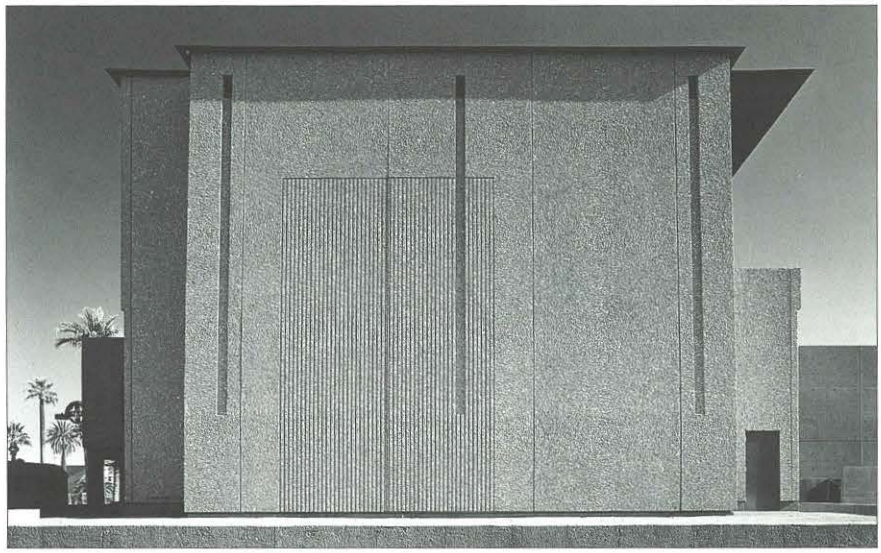
"[a] style which is not a style because it is being created by the accumulation of objective reactions to external events and which, therefore, is pure and clean, authentic, valid, self-renewing, and self-perpetuating."[4]

As modernism has matured in the United States, this demand for ever-original reflection and renewal has had its difficulties, and where, as in an addition to a modernist building, modernism has become the context for the new rather than the new itself, the incongruities have been even more marked. "Theoretically, MoMA is about newness," Koolhaas remarks in his competition statement for the Museum of Modern Art addition. "Newness is ambiguous. It cannot last; it cannot have a tradition."[5] Buildings designed as self-contained embodiments of the new cannot in theory function as matrices for something still more modern. This is not a problem peculiar to MoMA; other examples include Williams and Tsien's addition to Alden Dow's 1956 **PHOENIX ART MUSEUM AND LITTLE THEATER** (1996), Juan Navarro Baldeweg's extension of Moore and Hutchkins's 1962 Woolworth Conservatory at Princeton University (1997), and Gluckman Mayner's (1998) expansion of Marcel Breuer's 1966 Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

The anomaly of adding onto a modernist icon raises issues that are general to any post-postmodern revival of the style of the ever new.[6] Even such an advocate of modernism as Herbert Muschamp is compelled to acknowledge the historicity of a pure glass façade that turns the Beaubourg inside out.[7] Muschamp calls the Polshek Partnership's recently completed **ROSE CENTER FOR EARTH AND SPACE** in New York "the finest example of glass curtain wall construction ever realized in the United States." Taking a swipe at postmodernism, he accords this addition to the American Museum of Natural History his highest accolade: "architecture, not the theme park simulation of it that has distorted [New York's] cityscape for so long like the convex lens on a rear-view mirror." But he also records the building's historical precedents:

"Whatever your feelings about the old [Hayden] planetarium, you cannot accuse the new one of lacking long-term historical memory. The design is saturated with it. This is a mature modern building, a structure unafraid of revealing the deep roots from which modern architecture arose. The design's historical awareness far exceeds that of buildings that merely ape period styles. ...Does it serve any purpose to peg the Rose Center stylistically? ...[I]t turns out that modern architecture cannot be equated with a particular style. ...Like many contemporary buildings, the Rose Center is eclectic. It absorbs historical elements and contemporary influences into an organic whole. Neo-classicism. Bauhaus. Popluxe. Euro Millennial."[8]

^ **Manhattan Townhouse**
New York City. Billie Tsien & Tod Williams, 1997.



^ **Addition to Alden Dow's 1956 Phoenix Art Museum**
Arizona. Billie Tsien & Tod Williams, 1990-96.

Despite making the obligatory assertion that modern architecture is not a style, Muschamp's tribute to the Rose Center appeals to history for validation, recognizing that no resurfacing of modernism can completely sidestep the postmodernist re-configuration of architecture in terms of reference and history.

The paradoxes involved in regenerating modernism at the turn of the twenty-first century come into sharp focus in two adjacent projects on the campus of Wellesley College in Massachusetts: Rafael Moneo's **DAVIS MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CENTER** (1993) and Paul Rudolph's **MARY COOPER JEWETT ARTS CENTER** (1958). Both built in secure, prosperous times, these two complexes are deeply imbedded in the context of modernism as well as the verdant landscape of a nineteenth-century American college—physical and intellectual settings that place the problem of modernism and history in high relief. Both share a mastery of the modern idiom. For both architects, modernism is a given, simultaneously a secure background and a subject for their work. Modernism is, for both, a style whose terms can be appropriated in the service of the particular situation. Rudolph's building, once rejected as facile, empty styling, now seems, in the light of the skilled structural decoration of much neo-modernist architecture, scintillatingly intellectual and beautiful. Moneo's architecture, suave and sure, embodies the stress on the surface present in all neo-modernist work. But since both buildings are additions—a neo-modern addition to a modern addition to a neo-Gothic college—the sense of history, the understanding of the relationship of the present to the past, is highly developed in both schemes. Whereas for Rudolph, history is something to which modernism must be adapted, for Moneo, modernism is a part of history. Thus, an analysis of the similarities and differences between the two buildings provides an exposition of neo-modernism's complicated relationship to history. It also confronts, yet again, the issue of modernism as style, and perhaps illuminates some of the ironies of the modernist style in the post-millennial present.

Moneo's express intention in the design of the Davis Center is to enhance Rudolph's Jewett Center. As a student in the late 1950s, Moneo had admired Rudolph's building as an exemplar of an "American architecture that would take some liberties with the strict modernism of those years." Moneo's museum, with its theater and café, is intended to "embrace the space [between the two architect's buildings] and give it a certain character, which would, of course, work in favor of Paul Rudolph's building."[9] Now seen as early evidence of the shift toward postmodern contextualism, Rudolph's architecture was during Moneo's student years accounted some of the most accomplished modernism in the United States.

As has been frequently emphasized, Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's three major propositions in their 1932 volume *The International Style*—architecture as volume rather than mass, regularity rather than axial symmetry, and lack of applied decoration—tended to define modernism as a style. Structure and function were honored in the breach, expression of structure being subordinate to the first axiom, and functionalism, although acknowledged as the principle behind the second axiom, questioned as the sole basis for the *art* of architecture. Indeed, Hitchcock and Johnson faulted some American practitioners for adhering to function as a first principle of design.[10] Nonetheless, Walter Gropius, as chair of Harvard's architecture department after 1937, and Sigfried Giedion, in his Norton Lectures at Harvard in 1938-1939, stressed the ideas later recapitulated by Rowe: modernism as a response to a cultural need for revolution, and in architecture connected, through expression of structure and function, to a revolt against the falsity of historical styles.

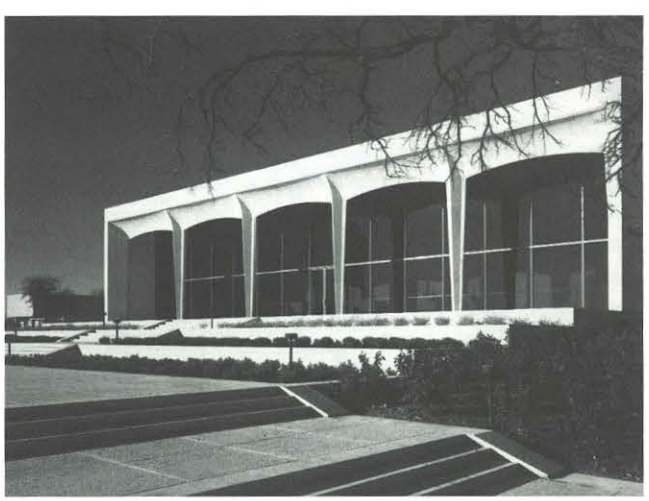
In 1948, only a decade before the Jewett Center's completion, Hitchcock and Johnson's definition of modernism as International Style was reiterated in "What is Happening in Modern Architecture?," a Museum of Modern Art symposium that worried over the devolution of the doctrine of functionalism into cold commercial materialism.[11] As a "Class of 1944" student of Gropius at Harvard, enrolled at the same time as Philip Johnson, Edward Larrabee Barnes, John Johansen, and I. M. Pei , Rudolph imbibed these formal tenets or procedures imbued with positive moral value.[12] Following the rule of modernism, Rudolph's early houses were structurally innovative and, as he himself noted, even over-expressive.[13]

As Rowe pointed out, modernism was deeply concerned with history; while the modern architect "set himself against historical *precedent*, he did so in order to emerge as some protagonist of historical *process*." Rowe noted that: "Some strained and involuted relationship with the historical consciousness is, indeed, one of the most predominant, most obvious, most significantly 'modern' characteristics of the modern movement in architecture."[14]

Although Gropius had, in 1955, reiterated that architecture ought to be the "inevitable, consequential product of the intellectual, social and technical conditions of our age," by the early 1960s Rudolph had concluded something more than adherence to the zeitgeist was needed for the creation of modern architecture: "We cannot pretend to solve problems of space without precedent in form!"[15] In this he echoed Johnson, who had made a similar and pithier observation that "form follows form" as early as 1953.[16]

Thus the historical references in Rudolph's first major nonresidential project, the Jewett Center, come as no surprise. The complex was completed only a year after his appointment to the chairmanship of the Yale School of Architecture, a post he held until 1965.[17] Besides establishing Rudolph's ability to marry the modernist idiom to historic settings, the building helped propel his meteoric career on its rise as one of the most accomplished modern stylists of the 1950s and 1960s.[18] Set on one edge of Wellesley's central quadrangle, the Center is divided into two parts, connected by a bridge under which an elaborate system of stairs connects the lower level campus northwest of the buildings to the higher yard. The Performing Arts Building houses an auditorium, music classrooms, and practice rooms; the Studio Arts Building holds art studios, a slide library, and classrooms. The connecting bridge originally contained a small art gallery, which has now been much expanded by the Davis Center.

Rudolph described the Jewett Center as "extending its pseudo-Gothic environment" by many means: site planning, structural dimensioning, detailing, and choice of materials.[19] Matched in its overall dimensions to the buildings around it, the complex's fifteen foot structural module also echoes the bay size of the surrounding 1920s neo-Gothic buildings. Its columns are broken down into clusters of four seven-and-a-half-inch square colonettes, a more delicate and "Gothic" arrangement than the same bearing area would be as a simple fifteen-inch-square form. The fretted ornamental window mullions match the ornamental multiplication of structure in Gothic buildings.[20] The twenty-two sharply peaked skylights of the Studio Arts Building recall the steep slopes of the neighboring roofs. Delicate white porcelain enamel-covered aluminum screens, in an abstraction of Gothic openwork, hang over the top floor windows. The flat rectangular armatures from which they are suspended jab into the sky in close alternation with the skylights, creating a serrated roofline that recalls crockets, gables, pinnacles, and flying buttresses. The whole brick ensemble, like the older brick buildings, is tied together with horizontal ribbons, white stripes emulating stone lintels and string courses.



∧ **Amon Carter Museum of Western Art**
Fort Worth, Texas. Philip Johnson, 1961.

∧ **Married Student Housing**
New Haven, Connecticut. Paul Rudolph, 1961.

Although architects such as Philip Johnson had earlier incorporated parts of past styles in their work, the Jewett Center differs from other historicizing buildings of the 1950s both in the exquisite subtlety of its finely detailed contextual references and in its relative faithfulness to modernism. Its ornamental strategy is to abstract and generalize the neo-Gothic elements, replicating their characteristics as structure and function within the modern idiom. Less diagrammatic than Johnson's buildings during this period, such as the **AMON CARTER MUSEUM** (1961), and less figurative than Minoru Yamasaki's works, such as the **COLLEGE OF EDUCATION BUILDING AT WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY IN DETROIT** (1959), it follows a formal logic hovering on the edge of imitation. Yet it looks in retrospect more authentically modern than either Johnson or Yamasaki's work, while at the same time coming closer to being ornamented.

In its site planning as well as its design, the Jewett Center was seen by Rudolph's contemporaries as radically contextual. The complex completes the academic quadrangle. Replicating the long, jointed forms of the neo-Gothic buildings, the site plan explicitly invokes Siena's Piazza del Campo.[21] But while Rudolph's site planning, like his building design, gestures to its historical setting, it betrays its modernism in the details. Whereas the Studio Arts Building is a long volume comparable to the Gothic buildings, the Performing Arts Building is square. Whereas the neo-Gothic buildings are entered at porticoes spaced so as to make intimate contact with the tissue of pathways crisscrossing the lawn, the Jewett Center has only one entry area, raised up and pulled away from the plane of the quadrangle by the convoluted system of stairs that pass under it.

The majority of the complex sits floating in its pool of space on floor plates detached from their surroundings, with no direct access between building and ground. The long volume of the Studio Arts Building has a self-contained power, the two-story slab rising on its columns above a white datum plane at the level of the auditorium lobby and gallery. Below this, however, the columns descend to ground level amidst a series of surfaces that slide out from under the building without resolving into comprehensible volumes. And whereas in the neo-Gothic buildings the solids of the porticoes and the crossing tower mark the entries and building intersections, in both plan and section the Jewett Center's entry point is a hollow between solid wings, articulating a hinge or a void created by the entry stair into the quadrangle from the northwest.

In fact this stair, the pivotal moment in the site, is the place where the incongruities of Rudolph's contextual moves are most clearly seen. From below, it passes under the art gallery to a horseshoe-crab-shape that splits into two returning flights—a design as elaborate as any seventeenth-century urban set piece, and almost as extravagant. One moves up and under, around and back, finally arriving at the door to the gallery between the two buildings. From this landing, raised above the green, one has a view out over the quad. Although the gentle slope of the stairs somewhat slows the tempo of movement, this dramatic spatial succession seems essentially out of place in the pastoral setting of the Wellesley campus. Thus while the Studio Arts Building suits itself to its neo-Gothic environment with delicate elaboration that falls just short of decoration, the complex as a whole also displays its separation from the site. In its ideational as well as physical detachment from its context, it reveals the caesuras in Rudolph's modernist way of thinking about representation and history. Rudolph embedded abstracted quotations and syntactical similarities in a design based on modernist principles of composition and structure, as he embedded his modernist building in a neo-Gothic setting. For Rudolph, modernism could include history, but it was not itself historical.

Although with one exception Rudolph's building designs did not again make such explicit stylistic references, Rudolph's site planning continued to implant Italian urban forms in American settings.[22] European close-cropped urban space was a theme of several of his later projects. The Boston Government Center (1967) is the most important example, but the **MARRIED STUDENT HOUSING AT YALE UNIVERSITY** (1961), and even the entry stair to the Yale Art and Architecture Building (1964), also owe something of their form to Italy. Rudolph's lectures and occasional writings also stressed the relationship of historical to modern planning.[23]

In the years following the construction of the Jewett Center, this urge to consider context and history would become more widespread. Its effects can be seen, for example, in a "seminar by correspondence" held by *Progressive Architecture* three years later in 1961. Entitled "The Sixties: A P/A Symposium on the State of Architecture," it was organized in two parts by Thomas Creighton, the journal's editor. The first portion, "The Period of Chaotism" (the title inspired by systems theorist Norbert Weiner's characterization of the times as ones of increasing "entropy") referred to the perceived lack of clear direction in architectural design. The second, "New Influences on Practice," was occasioned by the prevalence of corporate clients and the problems of an increasingly complex construction industry. In the face of what they saw as willful and idiosyncratic "styling" on the part of architects like Rudolph and Eero Saarinen, on the one hand, and a more conformist clientele on the other, the majority of the respondents echoed modernism's old saws on space, structure, and function, and inveighed against decoration: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe reiterated the view that architecture was an expression of the times; Yamasaki stated that architecture reflected its civilization; Dow insisted that architecture should be honest; and Ralph Rapson stressed the need for "truth" in design.[24]

Most of the participants saw historical references ungrounded in structural and functional necessity as a symptom of the problem, but several of the correspondents invoked tradition or history as an antidote to the proliferation of "styling." John Johansen mentioned recent interest in "remote cultures" and "historic monuments"; Robert Geddes emphasized the consideration of a "sense of 'place'" and "the symbolic meaning of buildings in cities"; and Harry Weese spoke of the need to "form out of the past a program for the future" and the need to create a "tradition for our time."[25] Certain interlocutors also proposed the idea of a style—succinctly defined by Victor Gruen as "the forms of expression peculiar to one or more countries over a long period of time"—as a solution to excessive "styling."[26] For Craig Ellwood, the steel frame and glass curtain wall constituted this style.[27] Karl Koch related curtain wall construction to the building practices of an earlier time, thus locating modernism in a historical continuum of construction types:

"A wallpaper-like curtain wall, which in 20th-Century terms does the same job that the early New England clapboard did in 18th-Century terms, can be just as satisfying and economical a skin for today as the clapboard was then. None of us complains about the standardization of parts, colors, shapes, and surfaces of the old New England Village. ... We mustn't make the curtain wall take all the blame today for a growing addiction to an empty façadism that threatens to outdo the Beaux Arts approach at its worst. We must give new form not to curtain walls but to our neighborhoods made of curtain walls, by building standardized buildings—but with imagination."[28]

Transformed into a positive strategy, the recognition that use of the curtain wall intimates a "façadist" architecture would, of course, soon become a basis of postmodernism. In this symposium, Louis Kahn had already pointed to the implications of the problem Koch hinted at—that twentieth-century construction methods had insured that structure could not be a sufficient cause for form:

"[W]ithin the limitations of such a material as stone there was a fundamental rhythm: you had to conclude with columns at certain intervals which, even if you knew nothing about architecture very profoundly, made a kind of architecture. When you looked at it you said, 'By God, isn't that pretty nice.' In it was built a kind of rhythm that you couldn't help. Today you can span 100 feet; the column is so distant from the other column that rhythm doesn't exist any more. And other qualities have changed: you don't feel the music of it; you don't feel the judgment of it. Is it architecture or is it not?"[29]

Kahn's statement perfectly illuminated the quixotic character of Paul Rudolph's "pseudo-structural" contextualism, with its fifteen-foot bays. However much they had stressed that architecture was an art, the compositional rules of Hitchcock and Johnson had been justified in construction and function. In the rulebook of modernism, historical reference, unless as something to avoid, was not a good reason for form. Indeed, it was precisely this problem that would lead to postmodernism's obsession with language and reference. Koolhaas would restate Kahn's point even more forcefully some thirty years later—that the reasons of modernism, based in its authentic structural and functional nature, were, by the terms of that very nature, irrelevant as architecture.[30]

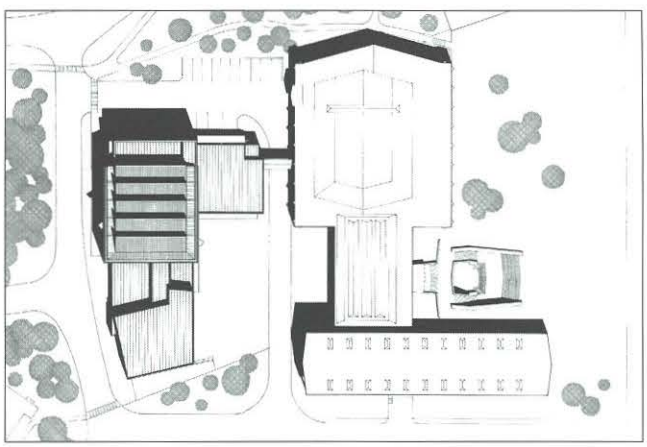
If the Jewett Center is an exploration of the possibilities for an "unnecessary" or even decorative history within modernism, the Davis Center is a proficient performance of modernism as a "historical present." In his description of the building, Moneo says that the Davis Center "enters on tiptoe," but at five stories tall it suffers, despite its modesty, from the problem of appearing more massive than the object to which it is added. Sited to the northwest of the Jewett Center, a level below the quadrangle buildings, the museum nonetheless outstrips the older building's roof peaks, competing for notice with Day and Klauder's neo-Gothic tower. Like Rudolph's complex, the Davis Center appears in site plan to be a jointed building—several squarish pieces connected to each other and to the earlier structures by narrower hinge pieces. A large volume topped with saw-toothed skylights contains the art museum; a smaller mass houses a film theatre and café; and a low connecting wing between the museum and the Jewett Center is devoted to administrative activities.

Modernism is a style so deeply ingrained in Moneo's work that he can present its most important tenets as ideas already perfectly understood, stories so well-worn that only the punch-lines need be told. Here, because Rudolph has already inserted a modern building into the neo-Gothic fabric, Moneo can make do with the slightest of gestures, both to modernism and to the earlier style. In deference to the brick of the Wellesley campus, the Davis Center's concrete slabs and steel frame are surfaced in a smooth pattern of red brick panels whose junctions are picked out by white steel bands. In conformity with Rudolph's reiteration of neo-Gothic elements, Moneo carefully reduplicates specific components of the Jewett Center—the horizontal white strips, the bands of narrow vertical windows outlined in white structural or structurally-derived elements, the steeply-pitched skylights—the same elements, called out also in white, that tie Rudolph's building to the neo-Gothic campus. In contrast to Rudolph's attempt to match the scale and rhythm of the older buildings, Moneo replicates these common elements within a completely different syntax. One example will illustrate the distinction: little triangular bay windows that, in Rudolph's building, are subordinated to an overall order of horizontal bands are, in Moneo's building, individual incidents in the walls of the box.

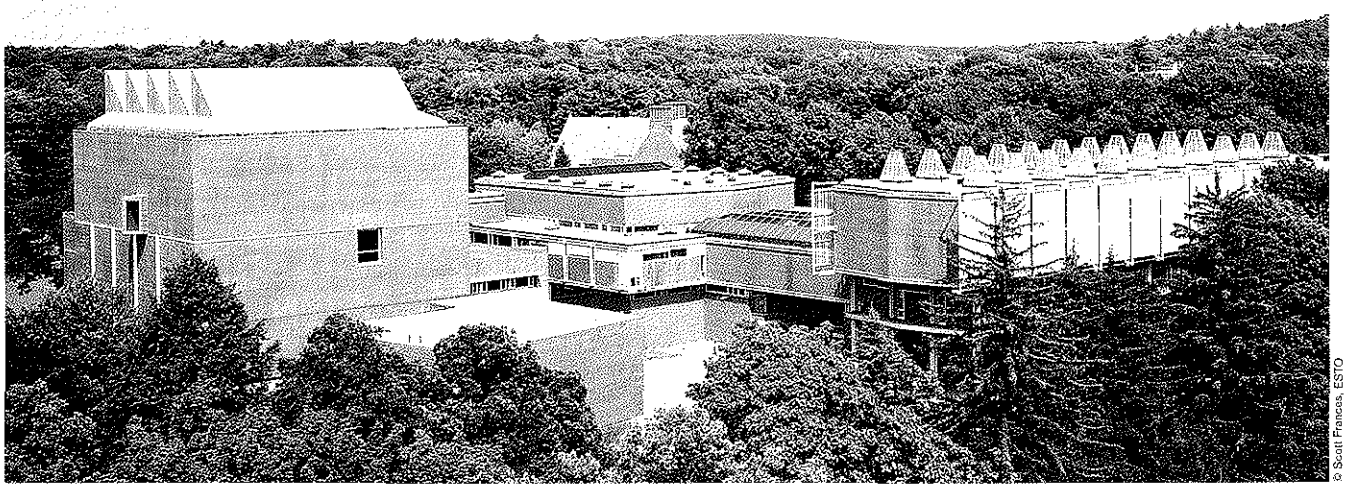
This difference in syntax is closely connected to the lack of structural expressiveness that is the most significant distinction between the Davis Center and the Jewett Center. Rudolph made decoration out of structure and the functions of light. But oddly for a building by an architect who has written about tectonics as a basis for architecture, the Davis Center is neither obviously tectonic nor decorative in any usual sense.[31] For if decoration presumes a division between structure and ornament, this building has nothing that opposes decoration as structure. Instead everything has floated equally to the surface to create a façade that no longer acts as a covering for something more essential, but is itself the whole architecture. In contrast to the extroverted coruscations of the Jewett Center, the brick and concrete paneled skin of the Davis Center has a reticent neutrality that belies all its contextual gestures. The art museum is just as Moneo describes it. Wrapped in brick, tied with ribbons of white, and bowed with skylights, it is a "treasure-box for art" that must be entered to be understood. Inside, the art museum creates—with modest means, as Moneo has pointed out—an ineffable experience of rising up into light. The hollow volume is organized around a series of slow stair runs, which are related to the airy galleries around them by means of asymmetrically placed openings.

Just as in the Jewett Center, however, it is the site planning that reveals most clearly the principles of the Davis Center's relationship to history. His architecture is supremely contextual in its overall approach. Some of Moneo's recent buildings, such as the Museum of Modern Art and Architecture in Stockholm (1998), seem almost to disappear into their sites, their status as entities dissolving into a flow of small parts. Here, however, the Davis Center faces the back of the Jewett Center across a piazza, as Moneo terms it—a hard-surfaced space quite unlike the informal quadrangle to which it is appended. This court is approached from the northwest by steps laid out on line with Rudolph's monumental stair, moving up under the hinge between the Davis Center's auditorium and art museum. While Rudolph's cluster of buildings is oriented toward the quadrangle a level above, the main entrances to Moneo's group are necessarily from this piazza. Rudolph's Jewett Center was just beginning to learn the lessons of mannerly relationships with older neighbors, but it could not help asserting its modernism by the details of its siting. The forms of the Davis Center are determined by the small site available and by the views they provide of the Studio Arts wing of the Jewett Center, as Moneo's sketches and his description demonstrate. This means that the large volume of the art museum is placed as far away as possible, and the two wings on either side of it are kept low and inconspicuous. Yet the design of the piazza gestures not towards the picturesque green above, but toward a more closed, more complex, harder-surfaced urbanism. This urban strategy does not work as well here as it might in a denser fabric. The southwest faces of Rudolph's buildings, meant to be a "back side," were not designed to be rubbed up against, as the piazza forces pedestrians to do. And the curtain wall of Moneo's building that runs around the piazza introduces a different referent yet: American postwar commercial architecture in its unmitigated juxtaposition to the sidewalk, blank glass at right angles to concrete. The piazza becomes an unresolved intersection of two or three different kinds of urban design.

Moneo's addition thus attaches a third, hybrid form of site planning to the other two—the neo-Gothic and the late-modern—already cohabiting in one spot. All three are concerned with the creation of an arena for the modern public activity of circulation and unspecific gathering, and all three are "referential" in the sense that they point back to historical conditions of gathering. Moneo's contextualism allows him to marshal the moves of the Mediterranean urbanism that Rudolph's generation was beginning to emulate—piazza as outdoor room, building as facade, procession of vertical stages—as well as might be done on this site which is unequivocally a back stage. One could interpret Moneo's stair and piazza as an homage to the late-modernist hunger for pedestrian-scaled space. It is more interesting, and more exact, to view it as an index of the existence of an international historico-modern lexicon, in which pre-industrial European urbanism functions as some sort of architectural Esperanto for the concept of context. As the distinction between structure and decoration has dissolved into surface, so the antagonism between the historical and the modern is dissolved into the context.



< **Davis Museum and Cultural Center**
Wellesley, Massachusetts. Rafael Moneo, 1993. site plan.



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^ **Davis Museum and Cultural Center**
Wellesley, Massachusetts. Rafael Moneo, 1993.

"Beauty is not today familiar in an architectural vocabulary. Architects seem to be absorbed by the idea that architecture is simply the reflection of a culture at a specific time. So many architects now seek to manifest motion instead of stability, the ephemeral instead of the perpetual, the fragmented instead of the whole and the fictitious instead of the real... When the building enjoys being itself ...then pleasure and truth engender the feeling of plenitude that seems to me to be felt when we are close to something which emanates beauty."

—Rafael Moneo (1996) [32]

"The whole duty of the rococo... was to release art from being the carrier of preconceptions; it need not contain a religious message, nor a moral one, and ultimately need not be serious at all."

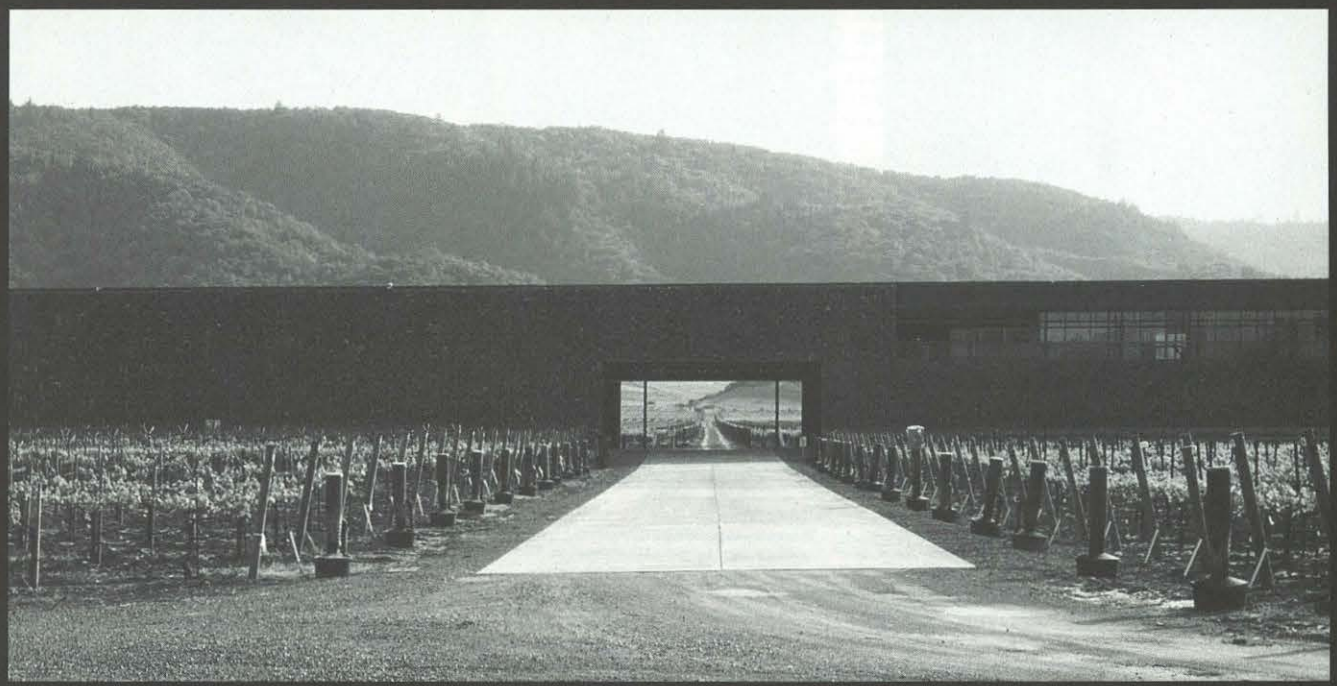
—Michael Levey (1966) [33]

Despite the differences between its surface modernism and Rudolph's structural style, the Davis Center attains a quiet elegance with respect to its complicated historical context. Whereas Rudolph's architecture does not always seem conscious of how it relates the historical and the modern, in Moneo's building the elements, including the modern ones, all are equally historical, and all are equally present, without reference to any underlying reality of societal or structural truth. This surface quality of Moneo's work is shared by other American neo-modernist projects. In "Tectonic Masks," Sandro Marpillero has called attention to a similar phenomenon in two other recent buildings, Steven Holl's **SAINT IGNATIUS CHAPEL AT SEATTLE UNIVERSITY** (1997), and Juan Navarro Baldeweg's addition to the **WOOLWORTH CENTER OF MUSIC AT PRINCETON UNIVERSITY** (1997). He points to the incommensurability between structure and both interior volume and exterior "expression" in both buildings. This incommensurability derives, through a figural opacity, from the truths of each buildings' construction. Marpillero connects these projects to traditional modernist values, viewing the design of surface as the agent of a Freudian reconciliation, assimilation, or accommodation of the material and spiritual. The surface is thus a symbolic layering that refers, obliquely, to a tectonic underlayer.[34] In the case of the Davis Center, however, the building's construction is so much taken for granted that it is not made thematic, but rather functions as a kind of unstated understanding, a quality also present in Navarro's and Holl's buildings. Structure, in other words, has no special role as truth, but operates as formal.

Thus although it takes the shape of modernism, the value of the surface embodied in these buildings cannot be explained by modernist theory. This break from modernist essentialism, and from the oppositions into which it has driven architectural thought, can be seen in Moneo's 1996 Pritzker Prize acceptance speech, in which he discusses his practice in terms of beauty. Banned from the architectural vocabulary for most of the past century, the word "beauty"—that tender, sweet, stereotypically feminine value, adjusted to the human (not royal or godlike) scale, but also, since the Romantic period, that complaisant, even possibly immoral trait—ought to claim our attention. Surprisingly, Moneo connects the quality of beauty with both pleasure and truth. Like Paulette Singley's recent characterization of Philip Johnson's work as "sincere style," Moneo's speech equilibrates two values that would be placed on opposite sides of a modernist moral system—momentary pleasure opposed to the enduring universal value of truth, and skin deep beauty at odds with structure that gets down to the heart—or the bones—of things.[35]

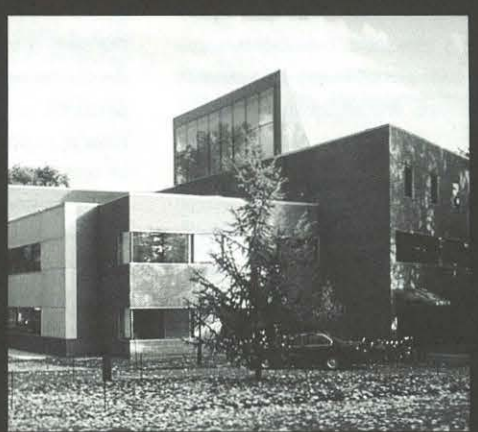
Moneo himself does not follow his own lead—his speech condemns current work that reflects what might be called the "millennial zeitgeist," criticizing it for being mobile, ephemeral, fragmented, and fictitious—all terms that would, in the modernist glossary, be classed with beauty as being other than truth. But as Hélène Cixous once observed, the Other can only be seen in its multiplicity when it emerges from the shadow of the One. Moneo's words are suggestive of some additional ethical/aesthetic system, one in which pleasure and beauty, as well as fiction, fragment, and style, would be arrayed on the side of a certain kind of truth which is not *the* essential truth.

The qualities of such a system, which would include the mobile, the ephemeral, the fragmented, and the fictitious, are among the principles advocated by contemporary architects who, citing Gilles Deleuze and invoking the name of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz, have advanced their work under the auspices of the Baroque.[36] The surface brilliance their architecture exhibits has, however, more usually been deemed the accomplishment of the artists and architects of the Rococo. Succeeding the official classicism of Louis XIV, the Rococo was human rather than heroic, intelligent rather than impressive, graceful and exuberant rather than powerful, decorative rather than structural. Most often thought of as an age of frivolous excess, it was also true, as Michael Levey noted, that Rococo artists were in no danger of "mistaking fiction for truth—being utterly of their century in their commonsense. ... And it



∧ **Dominus Winery**
Napa Valley, California
Herzog & de Meuron, 1998.

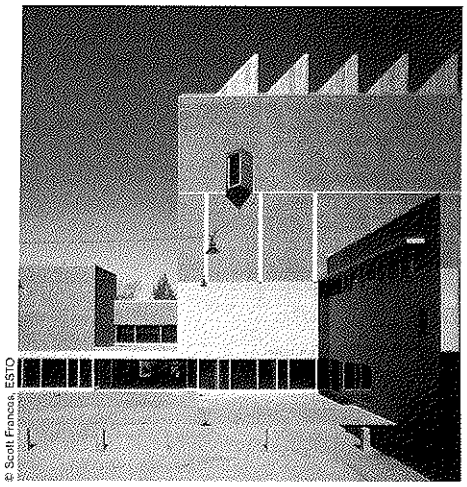
∧ **Saint Ignatius Chapel**
Seattle, Washington
Steven Holl, 1994-97.



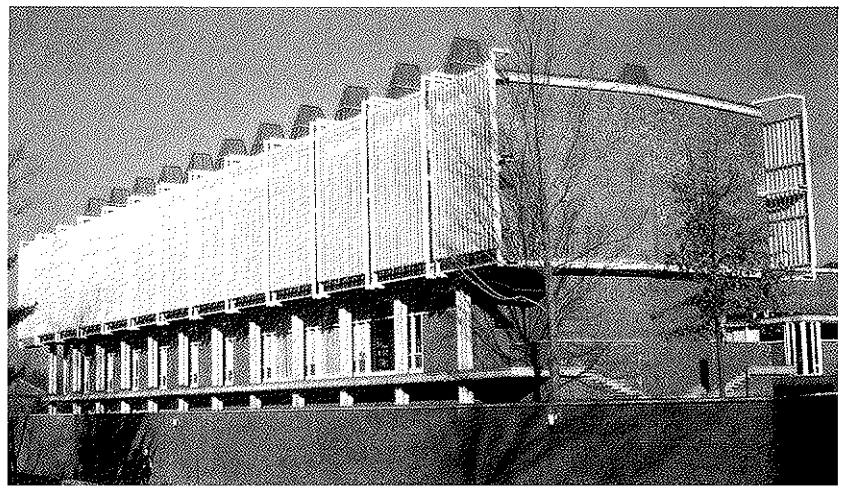
∧ **Extension of Moore & Hutchkin's 1962 Woolworth Music Conservatory**
Princeton, New Jersey
Juan Navarro Baldeweg, 1997-98.

∧ **Rose Center for Earth and Space**
New York City
Polshek Partnership, 2000.

∧ **"What Will Our Skyline Look Like?"**
Time Magazine, February 21, 2000.



^ **Davis Museum and Cultural Center**
Wellesley, Massachusetts. Rafael Moneo, 1993.



^ **Jewett Art Center**
Wellesley Massachusetts. Paul Rudolph, 1955.

was perhaps the very sureness of their grasp on reality that allowed them to go off into such firmly-controlled and fully-realized fantasies, spiced with wit."[37] If "Rococo art aimed solely to delight a leisured, indeed idle, society, in which the only sin was to be boring," still, its architecture also became more convenient and more intimate than the Baroque royal palaces designed to deify a monarch's every movement.[38] If some Rococo work was "faintly iridescent, bubble-blown, run up out of a few twists of silk and some feathers," it was also created "with an assurance which is itself attractive, and an economy of detail that delight[ed] the eye... [N]othing [was] very solemn, or solid, but it beautifully fulfil[led] its function."[39]

Many of the virtues as well as the vices of the Rococo are present in the architecture of our fin-de-millennium age. Current practices, seemingly predicated on opposing philosophies, can instead be seen as linked by the intelligence and wit, the sure grasp of the human, the attractive economy, and the grace, charm, and beauty possessed by the architecture of the Rococo. In particular, both the Rococo period and our own are marked by a change in the relationship to nature and history. The Rococo stepped down from embodying a divine nature that underwrote human action and hierarchy, to mirroring the refinement of human nature. In place of heroic enactments of history were the *tristes* pastimes of Antoine Watteau's nostalgic mythological scenes; Gabriel Germain Boffrand's interiors were no longer the scenes for the making of history, but rather for the living out of social relationships.[40]

Like the Rococo, our times are now post: post-industrial, post-structuralist, post-functionalist, post-truth, post-authenticity, post-crisis, post-modernist, and even post-millennium. We are beyond modernism and even beyond postmodernism, in the same way that the Rococo was beyond the Renaissance and the Baroque. In the Rococo period, understanding the forms of art and architecture was predicated upon a knowledge of the classical past.[41] This is now true of much of the architecture of our time—both neo-avant-garde *and* neo-modern—but it instead refers back to modernism. Bernard Tschumi's refracted plans as well as Herzog and de Meuron's foregrounded façades exhibit, in their play on modernist ideas and forms, the same essential relationship to the classical style of modernism that Moneo's Davis Center does. They surface from within modernism, they take their terms from the discourse of modernism, they historicize equally modernism and themselves. Thus while it is still our inescapable vernacular, our style, "the forms of expression peculiar to one or more countries" (or perhaps the post-industrial region of the globe) "over a long period of time," no neo-modernist move can now be other than historical. When Muschamp extols the Rose Center's beautiful water glass as "the transcendent material envisioned by architects who pioneered its use in the early 20th century," he inevitably elegizes what he evokes.[42]

Our style is profoundly urbane, intelligent, both complete and assured, deeply connected to a present that includes the past. Of Watteau's paintings, Levey said that they showed that "sincerity in art does not have to be uncouth, and that perfection of form does not mean poverty of content."[43] As the modernist style becomes ever more intelligent, beautiful, and bittersweet, it neither looks ahead to a millennial future nor back to a lost utopian past, but is content with the goal of making architecture suitable to its present situation. Some of the best of our current architecture exhibits the economy, the elegance, and the assurance of this kind of style.

Notes

[1] Colin Rowe, *The Architecture of Good Intentions: Towards a Possible Retrospect* (London: Academy Editions, 1994) 17. The book is a publication of Rowe's Preston H. Thomas Lectures, given at Cornell University in 1982.

[2] See "William Bruder, New Phoenix Central Library," *A + U* 321 (June 1997): 60-73; William J. R. Curtis, "Desert Illumination (Phoenix Central Library, Arizona)," *Architecture* 84 (October 1995): 56-65; Margaret Seal, "Scarpa in the South-West (Phoenix Central Library)," *Architectural Review* 199 (March 1996): 48-53; "Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, New York City House," *A + U* 321 (June 1997): 30-43; Karen Stein, "Family Home or Modern Icon? Williams and Tsien Do Both at Once (House, New York)," *Architectural Record* 185 (April 1997): 76-83; "Herzog & de Meuron: Dominus Winery, Napa Valley, California," *A + U* 331 (April 1998): 4-23; Aaron Betsky, "Swiss Reserve," *Architecture* 87 (June 1998): 122-127.

[3] See Ned Cramer, "Copy Cat," *Architecture* 87 (June 1998): 67; William Bryant Logan, "The Gothic According to Calatrava: Completion of the New York Cathedral," *Lotus international* 72 (1992): 64-69; Robert Venturi, "Sweet and Sour," *Iconography and Electronics Upon a Generic Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996) 6, originally published in *Architecture* (May 1994): 51-52; "Toward the New Museum of Modern Art," *A + U* 321 (June 1997): 10-11; Joanna Merwood, "Ten Projects for the MoMA," *Lotus international* 95 (1997): 27-45; "The MoMA Expansion: A Conversation with Terence Riley (Symposium),"*October* 84 (Spring 1998): 3-30; Allan Schwartzman, "Why Does MoMA Matter?" *Architecture* 87 (June 1998): 102-103; Joseph Giovannini and Terence Riley, "Fisticuffs on 53rd Street," *Architecture* 87 (June 1998): 104-108; R. E. Somol, "Statement of Editorial Withdrawal," *Autonomy and Ideology: Positioning an Avant-Garde in America*, ed. R. E. Somol (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997) 19-30; Richard Lacayo, "What Will Our Skyline Look Like?," *Time* 155 (February 21, 2000): 80-82.

[4] Colin Rowe, "On Architectural Education," *Form Work: Colin Rowe*, *ANY* 7/8 (1994): 48-49; originally given at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies conference "Architectural Education/USA: Issues, Ideas, and People," 1971.

[5] Rem Koolhaas, "Architects' Statement," in "Toward the New Museum of Modern Art: Sketchbook by Ten Architects," www.moma.org/expansion/charette/index.html.

[6] Following Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), recent proponents of an architectural neo-avant-garde have proposed to elide the incongruities of modernism's aging by distinguishing between an autonomous modernism and an engaged avant-garde, taking the latter as the basis for a contemporary critical stance. The term neo-avant-garde thus replaces the Deleuzian and Derridean "post-structuralist" or "deconstructivist," awkward appellations to apply to buildings, as the positive valuator for a critical position with respect to contemporary society. It takes over, too, the former terms' inclusive character, embracing a shape-shifting succession of forms. In the introduction to the 1996 conference "Autonomy and Ideology," Robert Somol subsumes under this label such disparate figures as Rem Koolhaas, Bernard Tschumi, and Peter Eisenman. But as I will argue later, even a neo-avant-garde cannot escape the loss of a critical position for architecture.

[7] The career of Piano and Rogers's Centre Pompidou (1977) exemplifies one drastic solution to the problem of the waning of the new. A building conceived on the premise of shock, its coming-of-age has been violently enforced by means of a renovation that has damaged the premises of the original design. See Paul Goldberger, "Beaubourg Grows Up: Paris's Pop Monument Has Undergone a Controversial Renovation," *The New Yorker*, 22 May 2000: 88-91.

[8] Herbert Muschamp, "It's Something New Under the Stars (And Looking Up)," *The New York Times* 13 February 2000, Arts & Leisure Section: 1.

[9] Rafael Moneo, "Excerpts from an Interview with Rafael Moneo, Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley College," *A + U* 294 (March 1994): 70.

[10] Alfred H. Barr, Jr., quoting Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's *The International Style*, "What is Happening to Modern Architecture?," *The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* XV, no. 3 (Spring 1948): 6.

[11] In 1947, Lewis Mumford wrote a "Skyline" column in *The New Yorker* in which he proposed a "native and humane modernism" that he called the "Bay Region style" as an alternative to the abstractions of modernism then being produced in the United States. In "What is Happening to Modern Architecture?," Mumford again championed a modern response to West Coast vernacular wood construction as exemplified by the work of Galen Howard, Bernard Maybeck, William Wurster, and others. Lewis Mumford, "The Skyline [The Bay Region Style]," *The New Yorker* 11 October 1947: 106, 109; Barr, *MoMA Bulletin*: 2-21.

[12] Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, in her monograph on Rudolph, described these tenets as: "no façade, no visible roof, no ornament, no regional adaptation, no separation of enclosing form from enclosed space, no individual taste beyond standardized materials and techniques—and back-to-back plumbing." Introduction to *The Architecture of Paul Rudolph*, eds. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy and Gerhard Schwab, (New York: Praeger, 1970) 9. Klaus Herdeg's *The Decorated Diagram: Harvard Architecture and the Failure of the Bauhaus Legacy* (1983; paperback edition, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985) 4 provides information about these Harvard students' tenure. See also Stephanie Williams, "Class of '44," *World Architecture*, (1992): 28-47.

[13] Moholy-Nagy and Schwab 10.

[14] Rowe, *Good Intentions* 27-28.

[15] Walter Gropius, *Scope of Total Architecture* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1955) 75, cited in Rowe, *Good Intentions* 26; Rudolph quoted in Moholy-Nagy and Schwab 21.

[16] Philip Johnson, "The Responsibility of the Architect," *Perspecta* 1 (1952): 50-52. As part of his interest in precedent, Rudolph was an early proponent of regionalism; his houses built with partner Ralph Twitchell in the south were regional in what Sibyl Moholy-Nagy called a "nonromantic, nonfolkloristic response to the place." Moholy-Nagy and Schwab, 10. On Rudolph's regionalism, see his "Regionalism in Architecture," *Perspecta* 4 (1957): 12-19.

[17] On the Jewett Center see Moholy-Nagy and Schwab, *Architecture of Paul Rudolph*, 50-55; "Fitting the Future into the Past," *Architectural Forum* 105 (December 1956): 100-106; "The Mary Cooper Jewett Arts Center," *Architectural Record* 121 (February 1957): 166-169; "Wellesley's Alternative to 'Collegiate Gothic,' " *Architectural Forum* 111 (July 1959): 88-95.

[18] It was a career that would end abruptly, however, with the perceived failure of his Yale Art and Architecture Building (1963), whose burning in the late 60's also immolated Rudolph's prospects. Withdrawing from the limelight, Rudolph spent many years essentially in retirement before enjoying a second period of success building high-rise towers in Southeast Asia from the early 80's until his death in 1997.

[19] Rudolph, in Moholy-Nagy and Schwab 50.

[20] These bear a marked resemblance to some of Wright's more exuberant ornament. Moholy-Nagy called Wright Rudolph's "earliest and most lasting inspiration." Moholy-Nagy, Introduction 10.

[21] Rudolph shared with his peers a self-professed preoccupation with Italian urbanism, which animated discussions of site planning in the late modern and postmodern period. Rudolph described his project for the City Hall in Syracuse, New York (1964), as defining a "sense of place," creating a "plaza," and forming an "amphitheater for public celebrations and ceremonies." Rudolph, in Moholy-Nagy and Schwab, 108. In "Remarks on Continuity and Change," *Perspecta* 9/10 (1965): 291-298. Kevin Lynch whose studies of Italian urbanism culminated in *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: MIT, 1960), and those of Robert Venturi, who noted, "Our generation discovered Rome in the 50's. ... As post-heroic Moderns reading Sigfried Giedion, we rediscovered history and acknowledged a traditional basis for architecture and urbanism." Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, "A Definition of Architecture as Shelter with Decoration on It, and Another Plea for a Symbolism of the Ordinary in Architecture," *A View from the Campidoglio: Selected Essays 1953-1984* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984) 62; first published in *A+U* 87 (January 1978): 3-14.

[22] The exception is the 1964 John Wallace Residence, a theatrical modern evocation of a Greek Revival southern mansion built in Athens, Alabama.

[23] For example, Paul Rudolph, "Paul Rudolph Cites Old Principles as Bases for an Analysis of Today's Work," *Architectural Record* 131 (January 1962): 12, 62, 74, 84.

[24] Paul Schweikher complained in a way that recalled the Jewett Center: "Architecture may be defined as a logic of space. ...Architecture is also structure. ...Its philosophy is involved in problems of order and proportion. These are its constants. Many are impatient with the definition and impatient or contemptuous of structure. There is a revival of ornament and decoration: one makes structure ornamental, another uses decoration as an appliqué of inconsequential elements." In "The Sixties: A P/A Symposium on the State of Architecture: Part I," *Progressive Architecture* 3 (1961): 128. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Minoru Yamasaki's comments appear in "The Sixties: A P/A Symposium on the State of Architecture: Part II," *Progressive Architecture* 4 (1961): 167-168; Ralph Rapson' in "The Sixties, I,"129.

[25] John M. Johansen, in "The Sixties, I," 124; Robert Geddes, in "The Sixties, I," 128; Harry Weese, "The Sixties, I," 131.

[26] Victor Gruen, in "The Sixties, I," 130. In *What is Happening to Modern Architecture?* a similar definition of style had been proposed by Walter Gropius: "a successive repetition of an expression which has become settled, as a common denominator." Walter Gropius, in *What is Happening to Modern Architecture?*, 11.

[27] Craig Ellwood, in "The Sixties, I," 131.

[28] Karl Koch, in "The Sixties, II," 169.

[29] Louis Kahn, in "The Sixties, I," 127.

[30] "Bigness," Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S, M, L, XL* (New York: Monicelli Press, 1995).

[31] Rafael Moneo, "The Idea of Lasting: A Conversation with Rafael Moneo," *Perspecta* 24 (1988): 146-157.

[32] Rafael Moneo, "1996 Pritzker Prize Acceptance Speech," in "Rafael Moneo, Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate,1996," http://www.pritzkerprize.com/moncere.htm#RAFAEL MONEO.

[33] Michael Levey, *Rococo to Revolution: Major Trends in Eighteenth-Century Painting* (New York: Oxford UP, 1966) 35.

[34] Sandro Marpillero, "Tectonic Masks," *Lotus* 99 (1998): 52-75.

[35] Paulette Singley, "The Importance of Not Being Earnest: 'Trivial Comedy for Serious People,' " in *Autonomy and Ideology: Positioning an Avant-Garde in America*, ed. R. E. Somol (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997) 178-179; see also Somol, "Statement," 23.

[36] See Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibnitz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

[37] Levey 90.

[38] Stephen Jones, *The Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985) 10; Wend von Kalnein, *Architecture in France in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1995 [*1972*]) 2.

[39] Levey 39-42.

[40] "The crisis of the last years of Louis XIV's reign had compromised the verisimilitude of history—that is, its claim to a higher truth—and cut loose mythology from its mooring at the center of royal apotheosis. Prey to the manipulations of a noble and *mondain* society determined to regain lost political ground, myth became a vehicle both for exposing the underside of the *raison d'état* and for exploring the nature of influence alive in a court society." Katie Scott, *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Spaces in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 211.

[41] "The rococo... invoked classicism expressly to demonstrate a refusal to receive it passively. Instead, the rococo parodied, criticised and reworked classical precepts and formuli, relying on an assumed and implicit knowledge of tradition to accomplish a novel and astonishing contrast. However, if originally the rococo had worked above all to relativise and subjectivise standards of taste, at the hands of mid-century critics it became not an alternative to but the antithesis of classical, or good, taste. The symbiotic relationship between the cultural categories of classicism and rococo, ancient and modern, upon which so much of rococo pleasure and enlightenment depended, was thus effectively broken. Instead, the rococo was re-presented as an absence—an absence of proportion, harmony, symmetry, balance, sense, judgment, taste—and thus the liberation that it had offered by its aggressive meddling in canonical cultural matters was reinterpreted as a license, a weakness, which undermined by impotence the bases of French civilisation." Scott 263.

[42] Muschamp 37.

[43] Levey 56.