



# RAY KOMAI

*Architectural Forum Covers, 1953-1963*



# **RAY KOMAI**

*Architectural Forum* Covers, 1953-1963

The Graphics Office, New York

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# Ray Komai



Ray Komai, a relatively unknown American graphic and exhibition designer, is overlooked in part because much of his career was with the United States Information Service (USIS) outside of the U.S. His work for the USIS could not be seen in the U.S. because of federal laws against distributing work from the USIS domestically. However, his design is notable and his career was influenced by dramatic cultural and political events. He is one of a group of Japanese-American artists and designers, including Isamu Noguchi, Tomoko Miho, and Ruth Asawa, who were incarcerated in prison camps during World War II. This group made important contributions to American visual arts, despite their treatment by the US government during the war. Komai's career invites reflection on immigration, patriotism, and bias.

This publication focuses on one body of work from Komai's time in New York City, before he left the US to work for the USIS in India. These cover designs for *Architectural Forum* magazine have an obvious visual appeal: some covers look like what we expect of mid-century design, while others are late enough and personal enough that they also have a bluntness and slight awkwardness that signals evolving design trends. The covers track a personal aesthetic course between contemporary visual art and the practical demands of commercial design. Some look like Philip Guston paintings (February 1958 and November 1960) and others suggest Pop Art (March and October 1963). Cover lettering and illustrations recall the work of illustrator Ben Shahn and artist Edward Ruscha. May 1962's cover (Komai's favorite) appears to originate in Komai's own intuitive respect for structure and practice of typography.



Ray Komai was born in California in 1918. In 1942–43 he and his wife were incarcerated in Manzanar, one of the camps the United States government built for Japanese-Americans following the attack on Pearl Harbor. After release from Manzanar, the couple went east, eventually landing in New York City. There, Komai worked for a variety of advertising, furniture, broadcasting, and magazine publishing businesses. Ironically, Komai then became a designer for the United States Information Service, a federal agency that promoted American values during the Cold War. USIS jobs led Komai to postings in India, Europe, and even Japan, where his work helped explain and defend democracy and life in the United States.

Admired by his colleagues for his industry, humor, and talent, Komai's design work was meticulous yet expressive. His spirit and

innate sense of graphic contrast and balance attracted considerable attention and many commissions. A survey of Komai's work reveals a career that transcended narrow national and racial stereotypes. After a long career associated with renowned design offices and projects, he died in Switzerland in 2010.

In 2019 Fordham University in New York hosted an exhibition of Komai's work, which is documented here. This publication focuses on Komai's cover designs for *Architectural Forum* magazine in the 1950s and 60s in more detail than was possible in the exhibition.

# **Architectural Forum**

## **Covers**

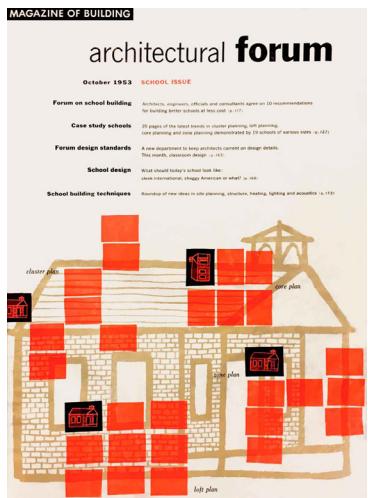
*Architectural Forum*, a prominent American magazine about architecture and the building arts, was based in New York City and traced its history back to the founding of *The Brickbuilder* magazine in 1892. It became *Architectural Forum* in 1917 and stopped publishing in 1974. During Komai's tenure at the magazine, it was owned by Time, Inc., with founder Henry Luce serving as Editor in Chief. Forum's subject matter was unusually specific, its circulation small, and its returns meager compared to the famous general-interest magazines in Luce's stable, including *Fortune*, *Life*, *House & Home*, and *Sports Illustrated*.

Writers and editors at *Architectural Forum* analyzed and critiqued American architecture and urban planning. Some issues featured new buildings on its covers, while others were devoted to larger themes of urban planning, particular building types (schools were a favorite), individual cities, and the general architectural profession. These ambitious themed issues required more symbolic and original cover designs, which are some of Komai's strongest.

Ray Komai's name enters the staff list of *Architectural Forum* as Associate Art Director in May, 1952, after he had worked

as a designer at CBS for six years. Komai went to Forum as a "kind of retirement:" a comfortable, calm place to work after the pressure of working at CBS. Accounts of Komai's time at the magazine come to us from some of the accomplished people who went through its offices, such as graphic designer Peter Bradford and editor/writer/architect Peter Blake. Following are all 46 of Ray Komai's striking covers, designed between 1953 and 1963.

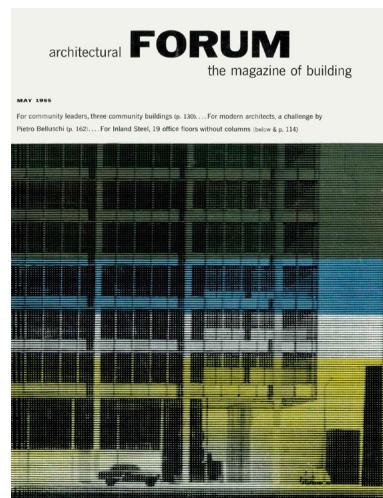
# Catalog of Covers



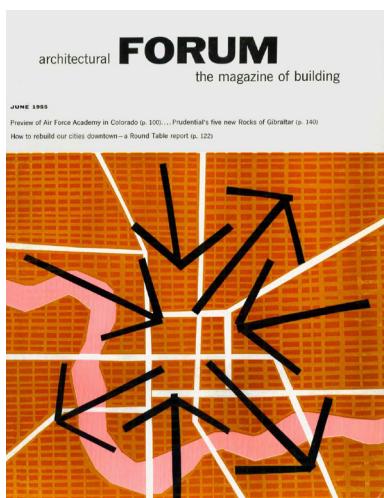
**October 1953**



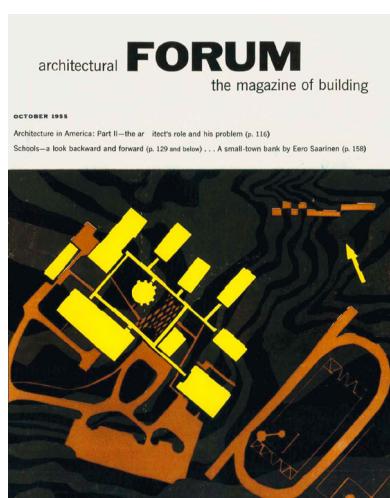
**January 1955**



**May 1955**



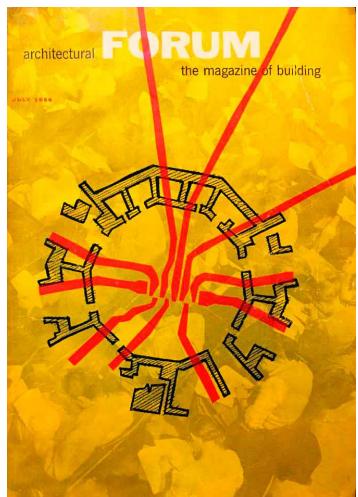
**June 1955**



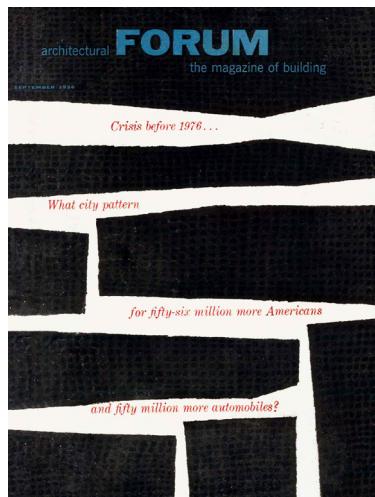
**October 1955**



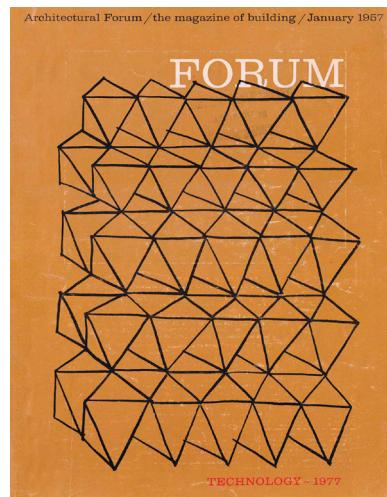
**January 1956**



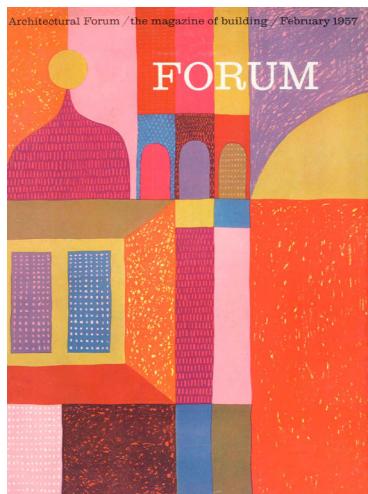
July 1956



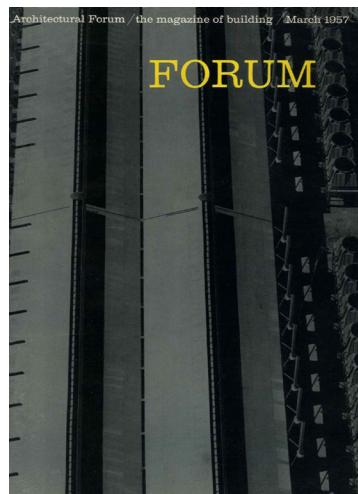
September 1956



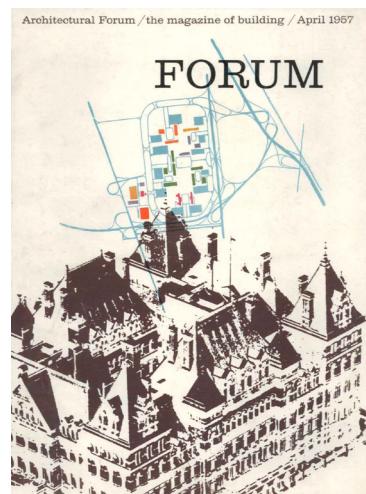
January 1957



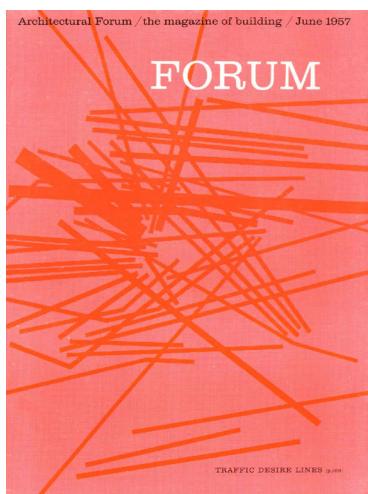
February 1957



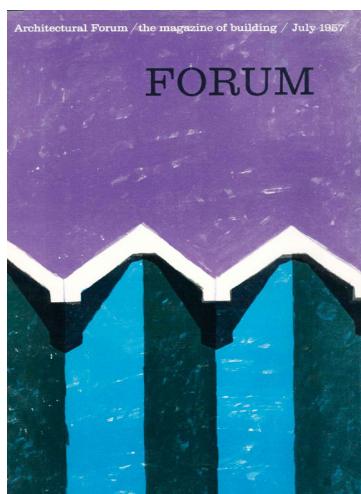
March 1957



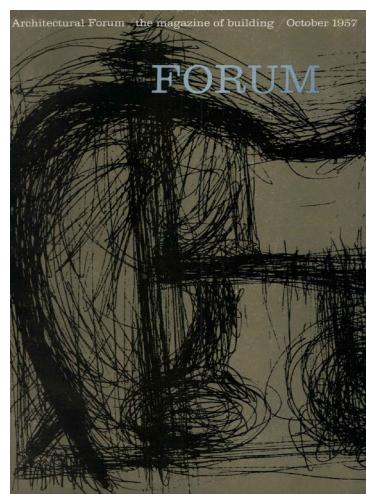
April 1957



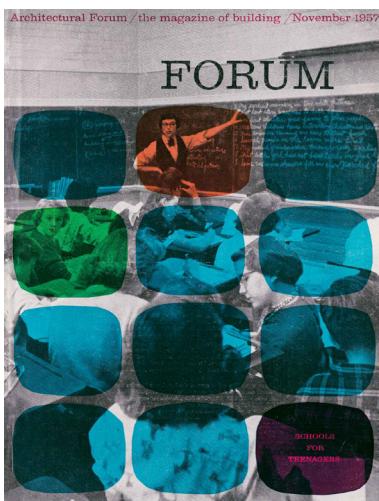
June 1957



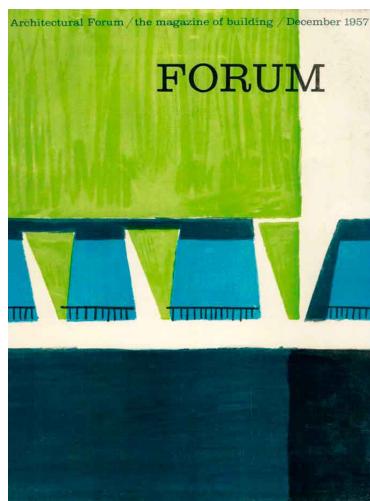
July 1957



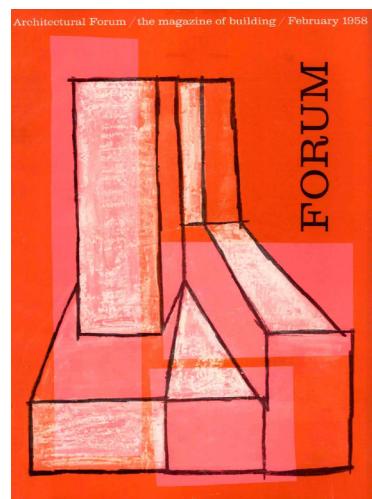
October 1957



November 1957



December 1957



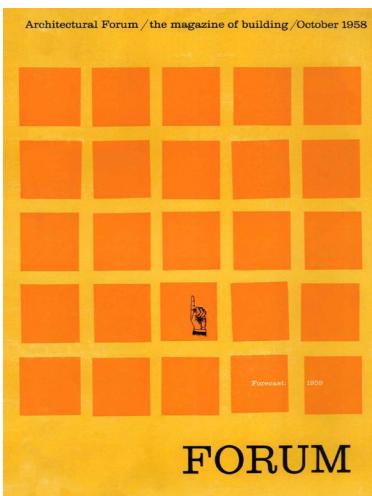
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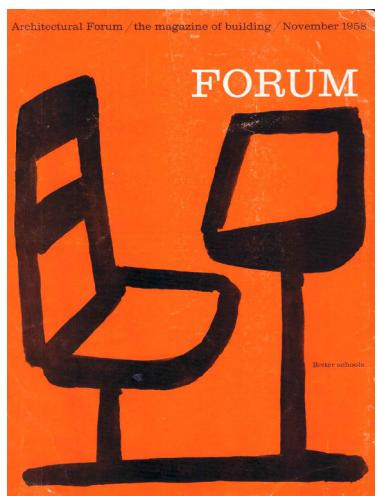
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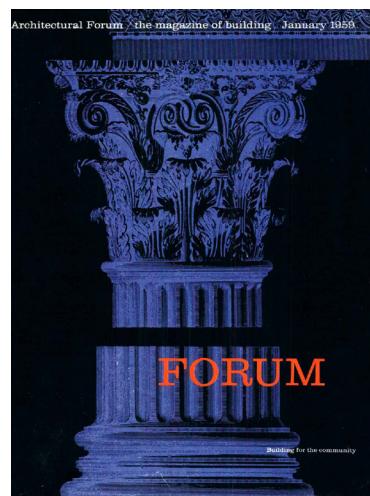
August 1958



October 1958



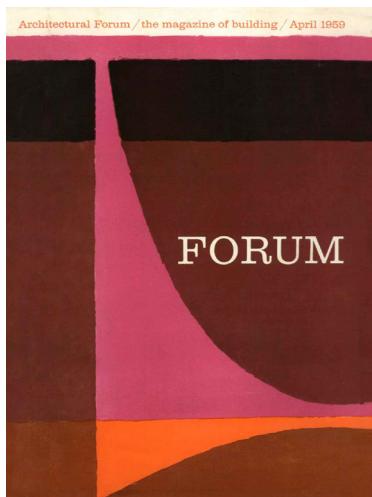
November 1958



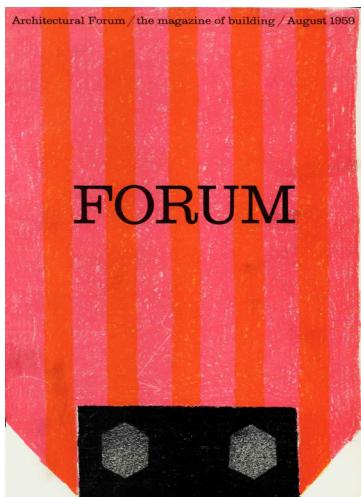
January 1959



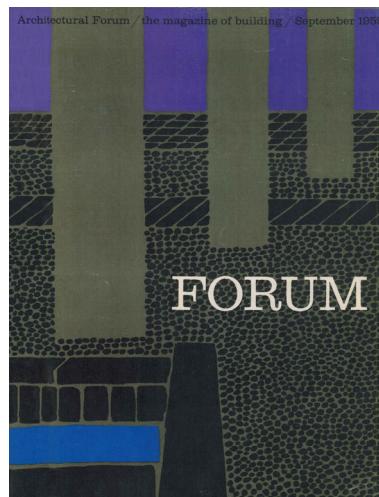
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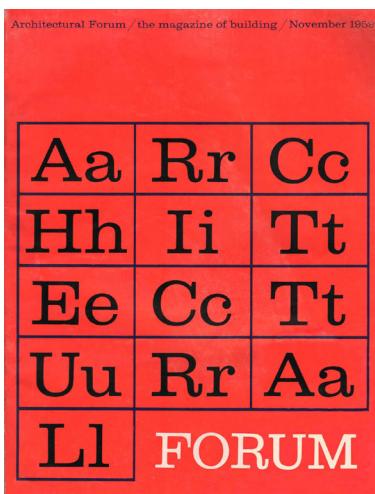
April 1959



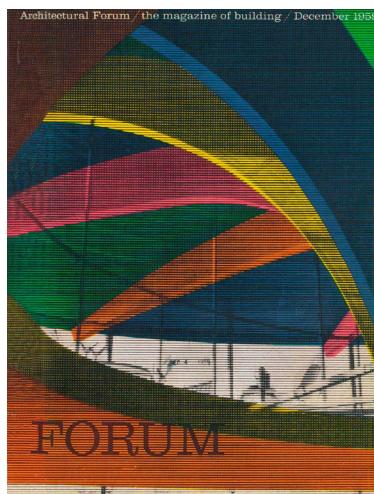
August 1959



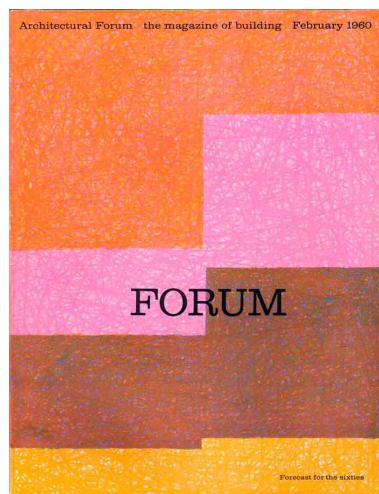
September 1959



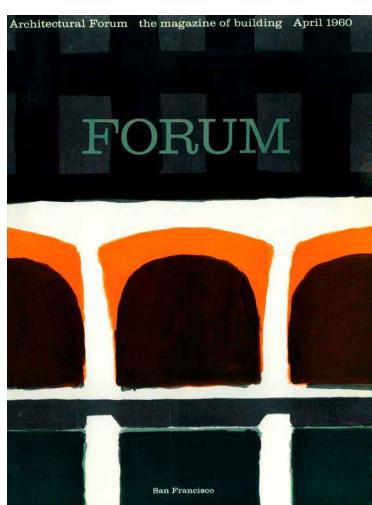
November 1959



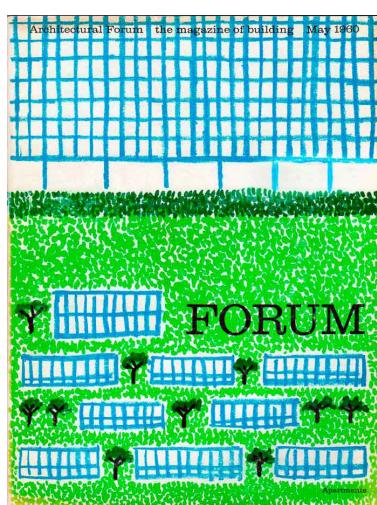
December 1959



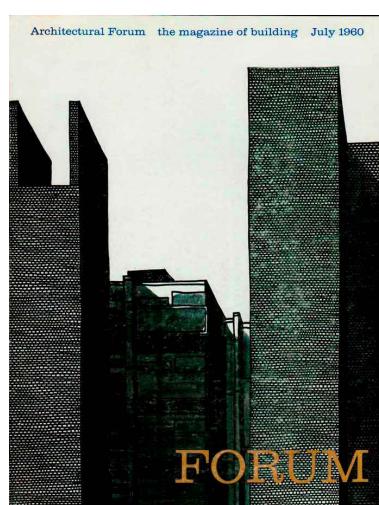
February 1960



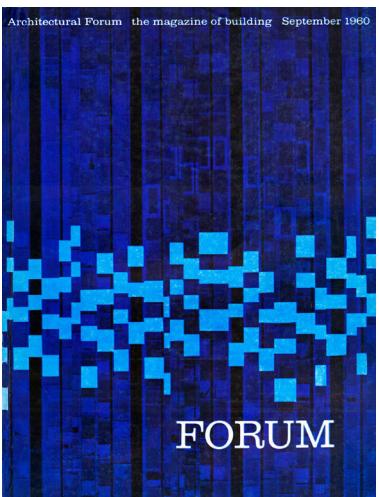
April 1960



May 1960



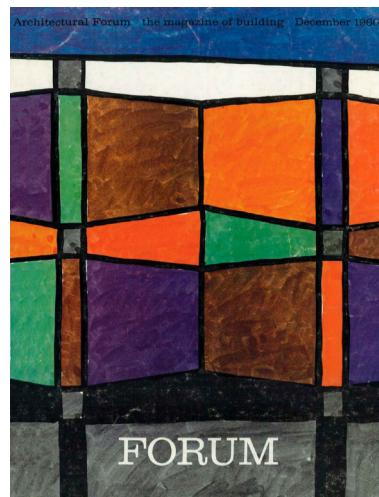
July 1960



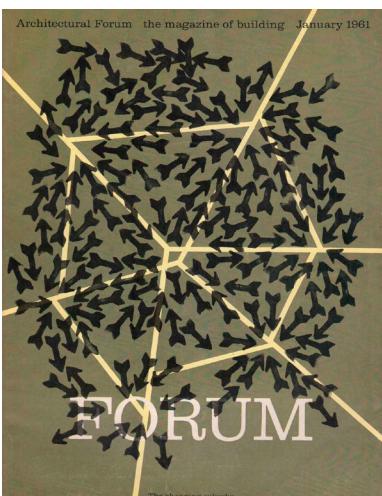
**September 1960**



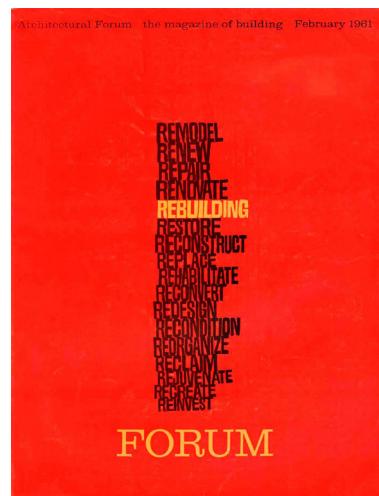
**November 1960**



**December 1960**



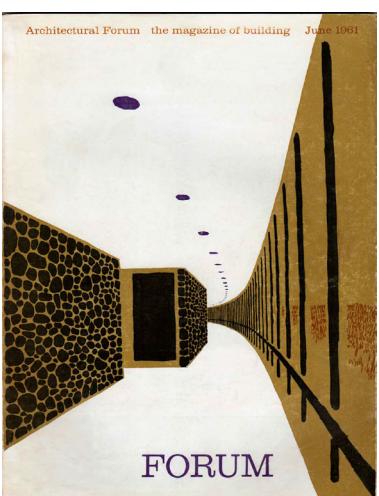
January 1961



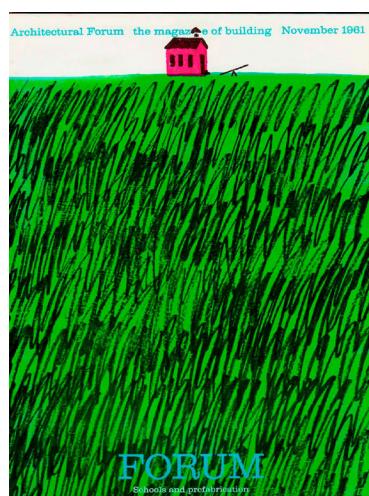
**February 1961**



May 1961



June 1961



November 1961



May 1962



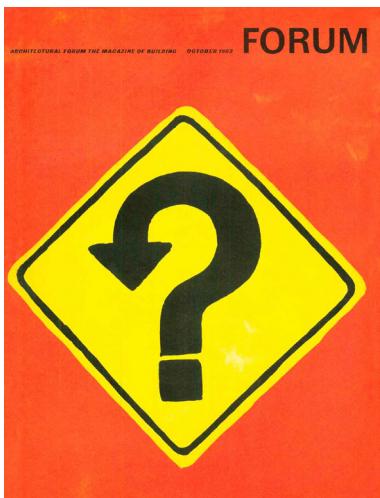
July 1962



January 1963



March 1963



October 1963



# architectural **forum**

October 1953 **SCHOOL ISSUE**

## **Forum on school building**

Architects, engineers, officials and consultants agree on 10 recommendations for building better schools at less cost (p. 117)

## **Case study schools**

35 pages of the latest trends in cluster planning, loft planning, core planning and zone planning demonstrated by 19 schools of various sizes (p. 127)

## **Forum design standards**

A new department to keep architects current on design details. This month, classroom design (p. 162)

## **School design**

What should today's school look like: sleek international, shaggy American or what? (p. 166)

## **School building techniques**

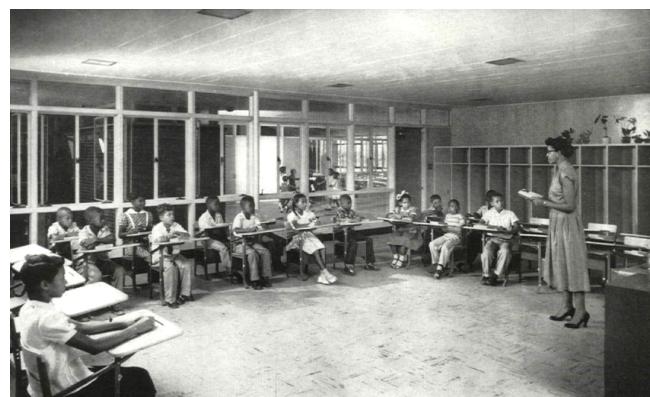
Roundup of new ideas in site planning, structure, heating, lighting and acoustics (p. 172)



# October 1953

A cover for a special issue on education.  
*Architectural Forum* often featured articles about education, and Komai designed many covers about schools.

[Full issue](#)



Phyllis Wheatley Elementary School, Port Arthur, Texas. Photograph by Ulric Meisel

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January 1955

# architectural FORUM

the magazine of building

## **Manhattan's blockbuster**

A preview of the 42-story Socony-Vacuum building and the story of the people who are shaping it (p. 86)

## **The arcade makes a comeback**

Chicago uses it to widen congested streets; in New York City Woolworth uses it to connect Macy's and Gimbels (p. 93)

## **Office of merit**

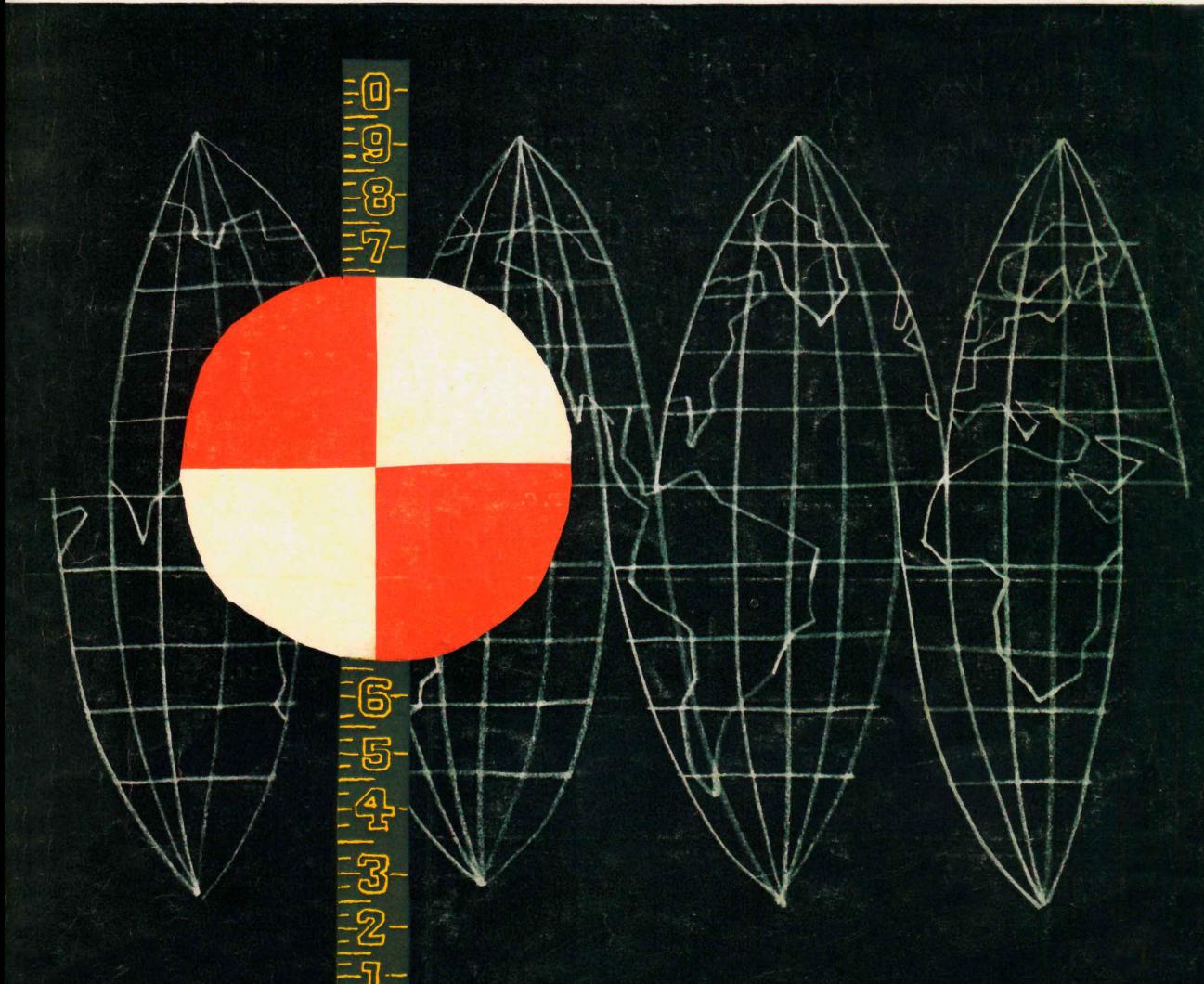
### **Plastics**

An elegant headquarters for the eye of CBS (p. 135)

A review of their uses in today's building and a forward look at promising new materials, new applications (p. 120)

## **US building abroad**

As ambassador to the world, the industry is building everything from radio towers to new towns—including good will (below and p. 98)



# January 1955

This cover uses a stylized projection map to illustrate the article “US building abroad: As ambassador to the world, the industry is building everything from radio towers to new towns — including good will.” Eight years after designing this cover, Komai would leave *Architectural Forum* to work for the United States Information Service, which helped spread American ideas and values around the world.

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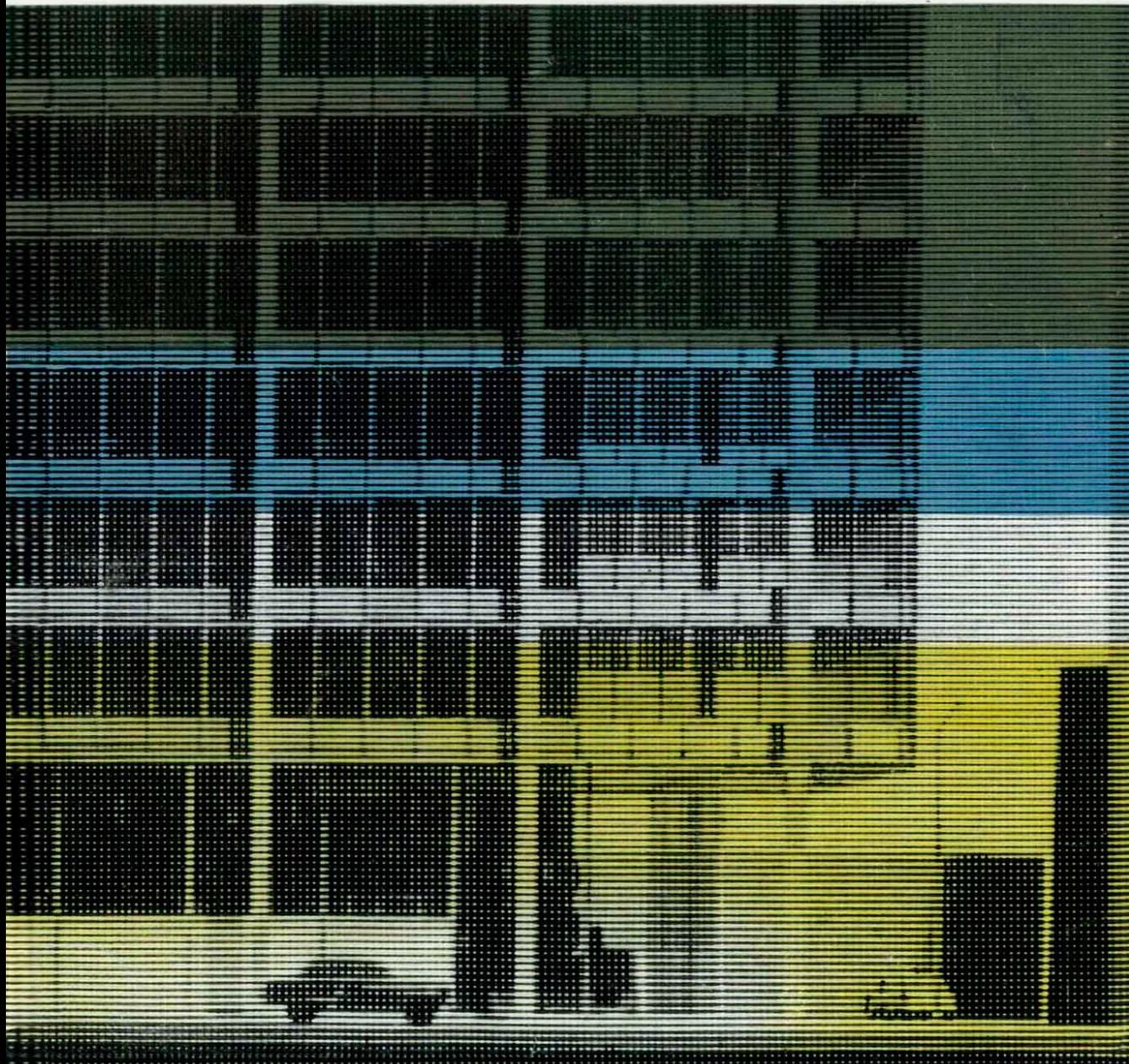
architectural

# FORUM

the magazine of building

MAY 1955

For community leaders, three community buildings (p. 130). . . . For modern architects, a challenge by Pietro Belluschi (p. 162). . . . For Inland Steel, 19 office floors without columns (below & p. 114)



# May 1955

The Inland Steel building in Chicago,  
designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.  
Komai applied a mezzotint screen to the  
original photograph, which is by Ezra Stoller.

[Full issue.](#)



Inland Steel model, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.  
Photograph by Ezra Stoller.

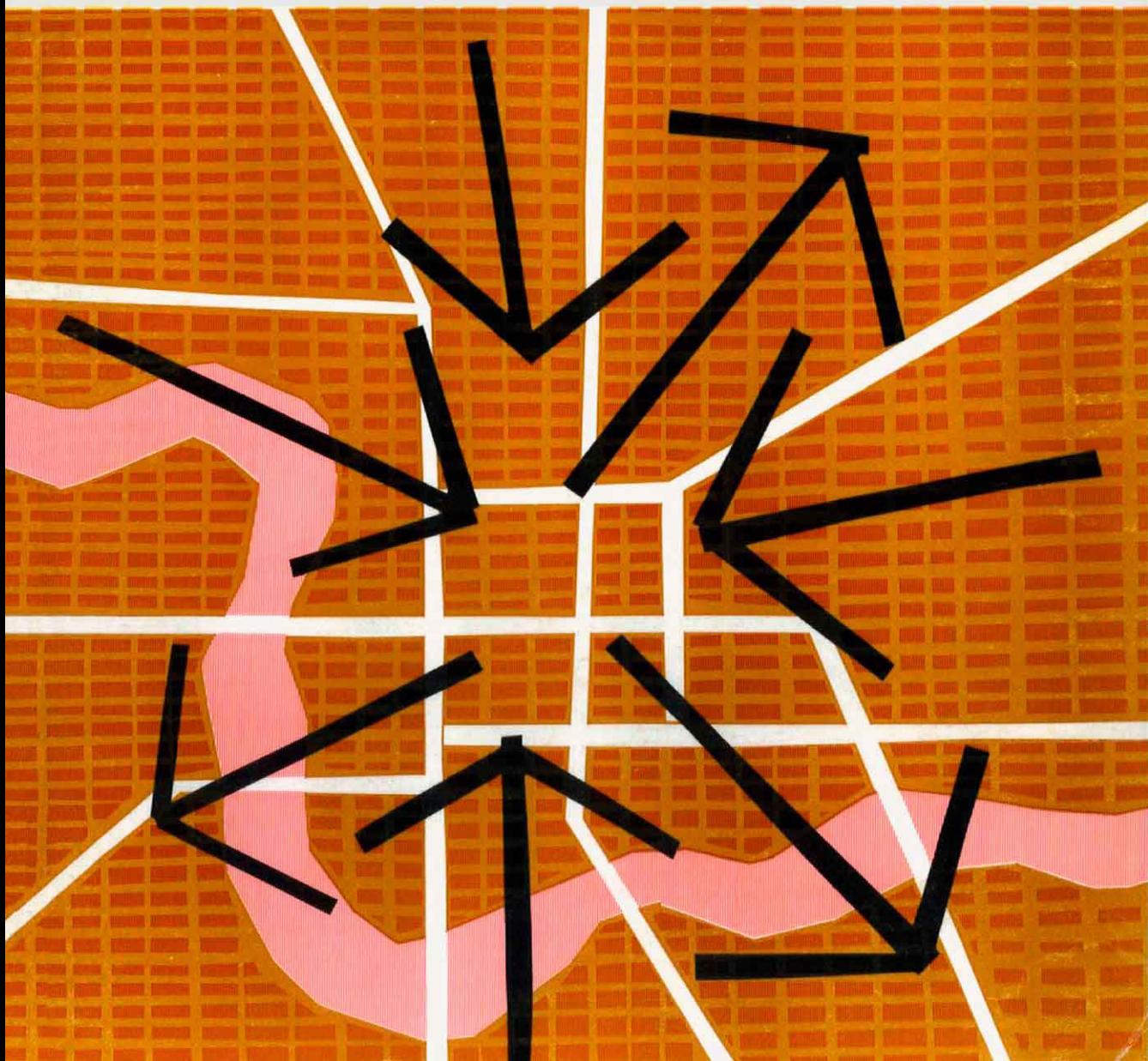
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architectural **FORUM**  
the magazine of building

JUNE 1955

Preview of Air Force Academy in Colorado (p. 100)....Prudential's five new Rocks of Gibraltar (p. 140)

How to rebuild our cities downtown—a Round Table report (p. 122)



# June 1955

A schematic evocation of urban movement illustrates this report from a panel discussion about how to rebuild city centers.

"The shabby, dull, dingy condition that is overtaking our central cities can no longer be tolerated now that the people are being given a new vision of shopping in the country, living in the country, working in the country. Now that new outlying housing developments and indeed new towns spring up overnight, now that there is a migration not only of factories but of large office buildings out into the grass, now that the life-blood of the older center appears to be drained out along every superhighway, the time has come for a major decision whether or not to carry on with the central downtown district of the metropolitan city, and how."

(p. 123 of the issue)

[Full issue.](#)



Attendees at a St. Louis round table on rebuilding urban downtowns. Left to right: Al Fleischman, Philip Talbott, George Hellmuth, and Sidney R. Baer.

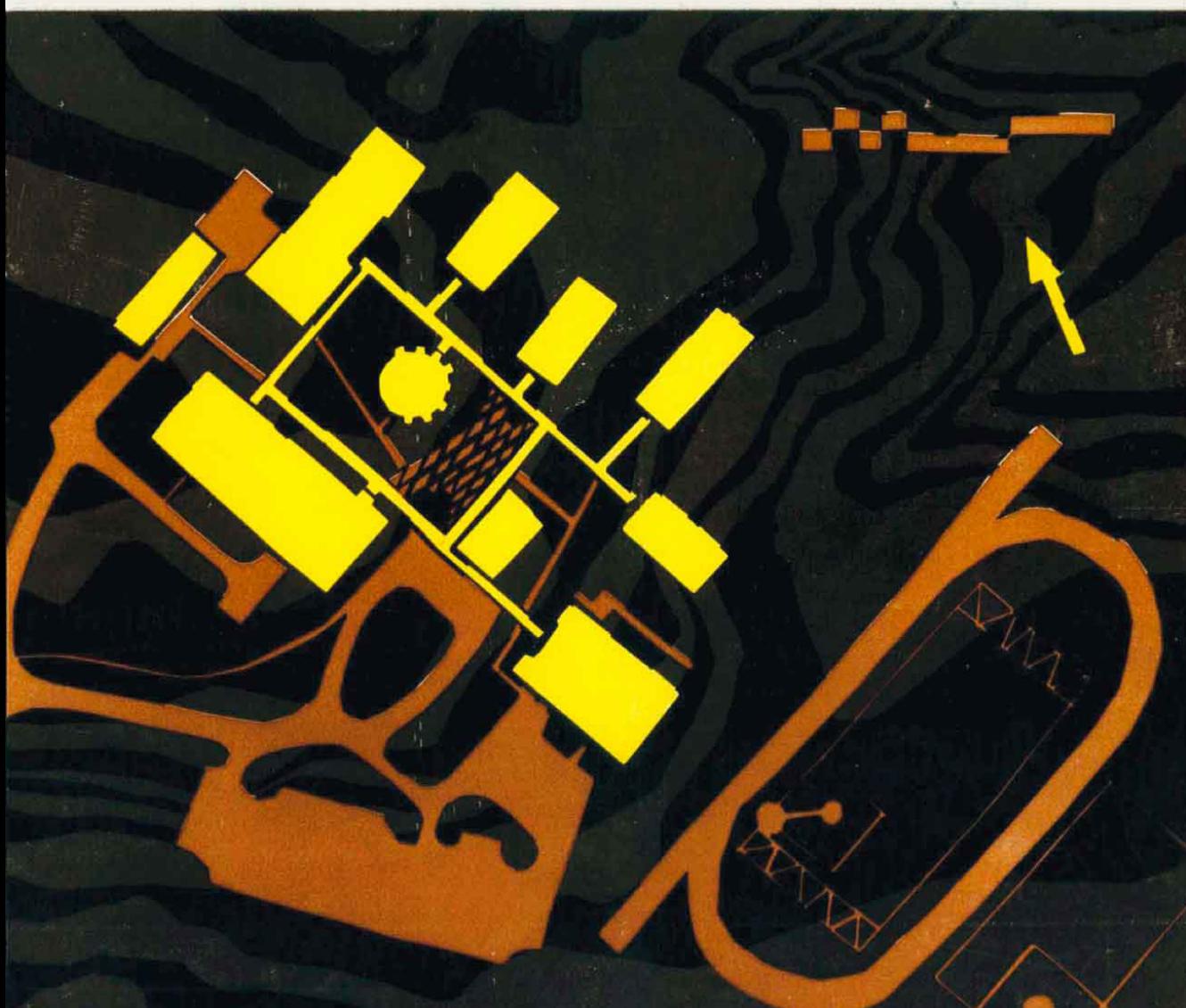
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architectural **FORUM**  
the magazine of building

OCTOBER 1955

Architecture in America: Part II—the architect's role and his problem (p. 116)

Schools—a look backward and forward (p. 129 and below) . . . A small-town bank by Eero Saarinen (p. 158)



# October 1955

The artwork here is based on the plan for a high school in Northport, NY, designed by architects Ketchum, Gina & Sharp.

[Full issue.](#)



Senior High School, Northport, Long Island, designed by Ketchum, Gina & Sharp. Photograph by Thomas Airviews.

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architectural

# FORUM

the magazine of building

JANUARY 1986

Washington: 20th century capital?

# January 1956

“Washington: 20th century capital?” A highly abstracted Washington Monument serves to illustrate a series of articles about urban planning in that city. The articles were written by Jane Jacobs, then a staff writer at Architectural Forum. The background photo of Washington, D.C. is by the US Coast & Geodetic Survey.

[Full issue.](#)



The Old Patent Office, Washington, D.C. Photograph by Robert Mills.

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architectural

# FORUM

the magazine of building

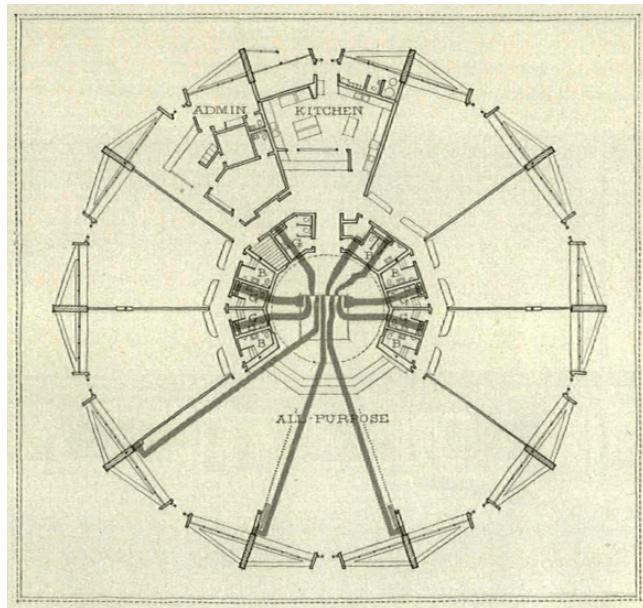
JULY 1966



# July 1956

The cover image incorporates a plan for an elementary school in San Angelo, Texas, designed by architects Caudill, Rowlett, Scott & Associates. This was one of the first schools designed for air conditioning.

[Full issue.](#)



Plan of Belaire Elementary School in San Angelo, Texas, designed by Caudill, Rowlett, Scott & Associates and Donald Goss Associates.

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architectural **FORUM**  
the magazine of building

SEPTEMBER 1956

*Crisis before 1976...*

*What city pattern*

*for fifty-six million more Americans*

*and fifty million more automobiles?*

# September 1956

This simple illustration for an issue devoted to city planning for 1976, twenty years into the future, hints at the urban footprint as well as traffic congestion: “The last ten years have given us an unholy mess of land use, land coverage, congestion and ugliness. This is nothing to what the next twenty promise. Barring annihilation, deep depression, or a more tractable invention supplanting the automobile, we have no way to avert this crisis of growth, no choice but to face it and try to civilize it. Somehow. And not much time to do it.” (p. 103)

[Full issue.](#)

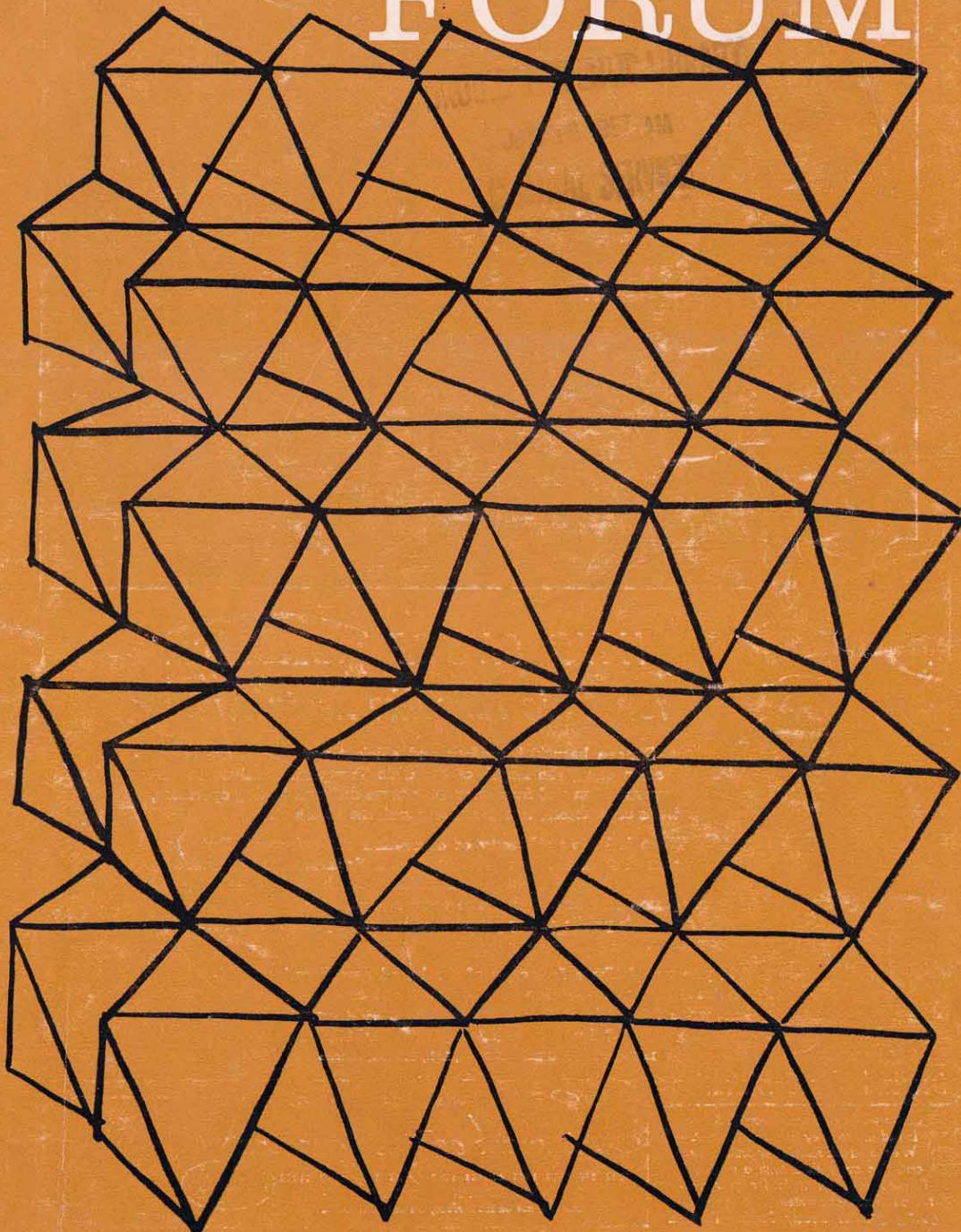


Suburban development in America. Photograph by Thomas Airviews.

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Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / January 1957

# FORUM

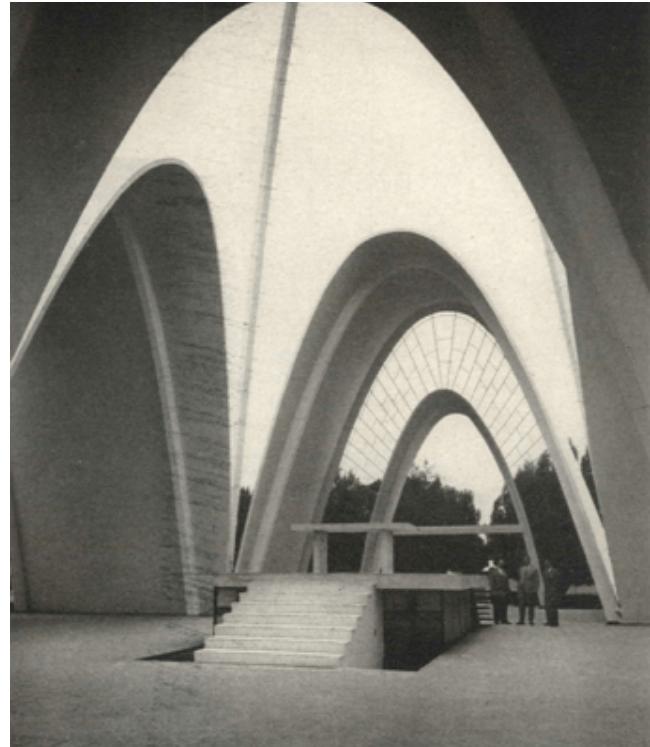


TECHNOLOGY - 1977

# January 1957

The cover drawing by Komai was inspired by the crystalline molecular structure of an aluminum compound. Note a change in the magazine masthead, now cast in the typeface Craw Clarendon. A promotional booklet for the company that made the typeface, American Type Founders, featured a photograph of Komai and stated that "Craw Clarendon's suitability as a part of a modern architectural or display structure is evident in Komai's choice of this face for the cover of *Architectural Forum* as well as for editorial display lines in the magazine. The further use of the type for the magazine's letter head and for its promotional printing has established for *Architectural Forum* an appropriate and consistent recognition as well as an overall identity."

[Full issue.](#)

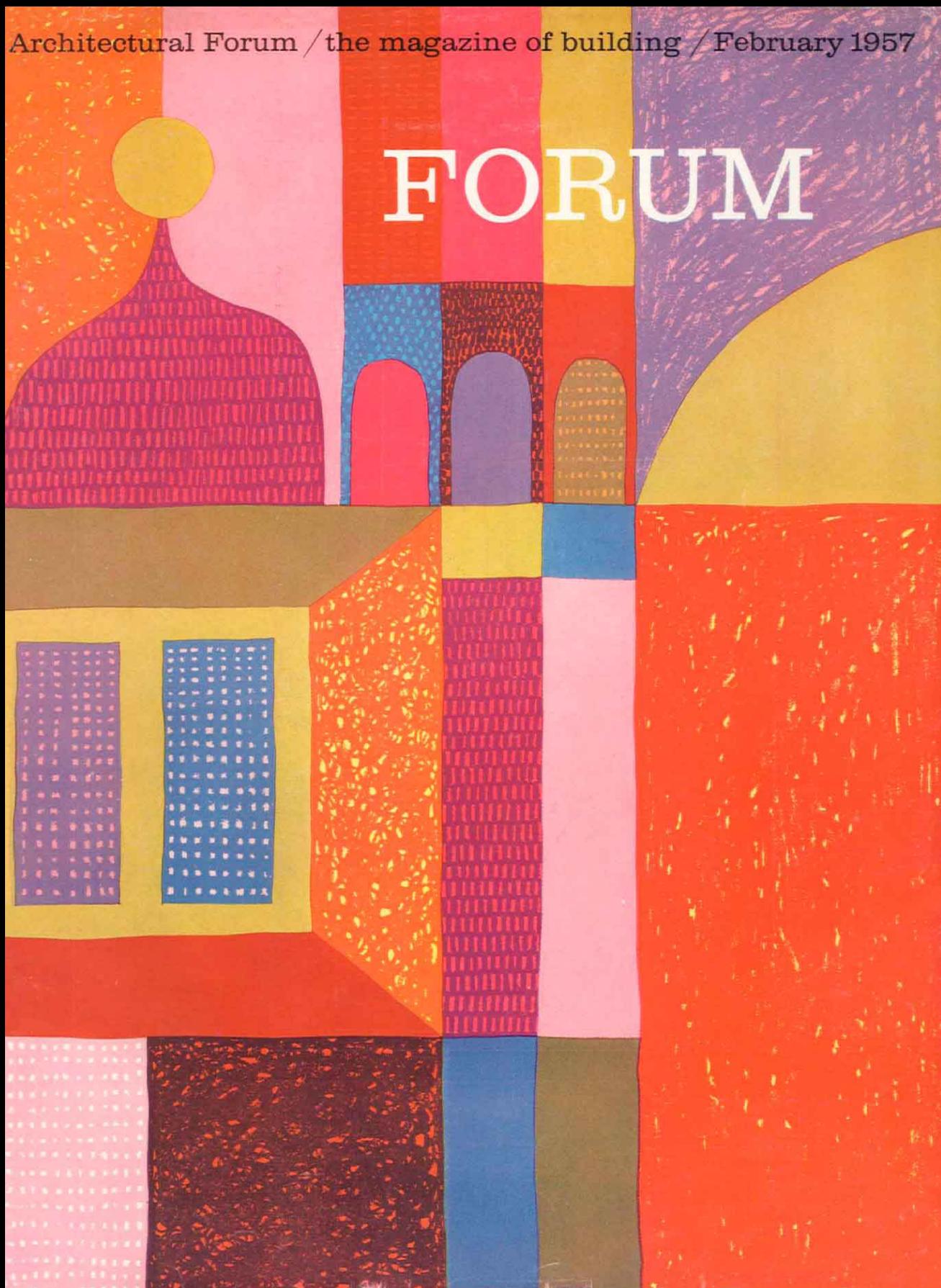


School church at Chapinero, Colombia, designed by architect Juvenal Moya.

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Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / February 1957

# FORUM



# February 1957

Komai's illustration was inspired by wall decoration in the Santa Fe home of Alexander and Susan Girard. The accompanying article, illustrated with photographs by Charles Eames, wryly comments on the contrast between conventional modernism and the Girard's home: "What has become of the that holy household word uncluttered? The answer is that Alexander Girard has swallowed it, and smiled. In a modern period that is fast becoming perfunctory, he has gone his own way, collecting objects around the world which interest or amuse him. ... The house has no central heating but it does not lack a central culture, catholicity." (p. 132)

[Full issue.](#)

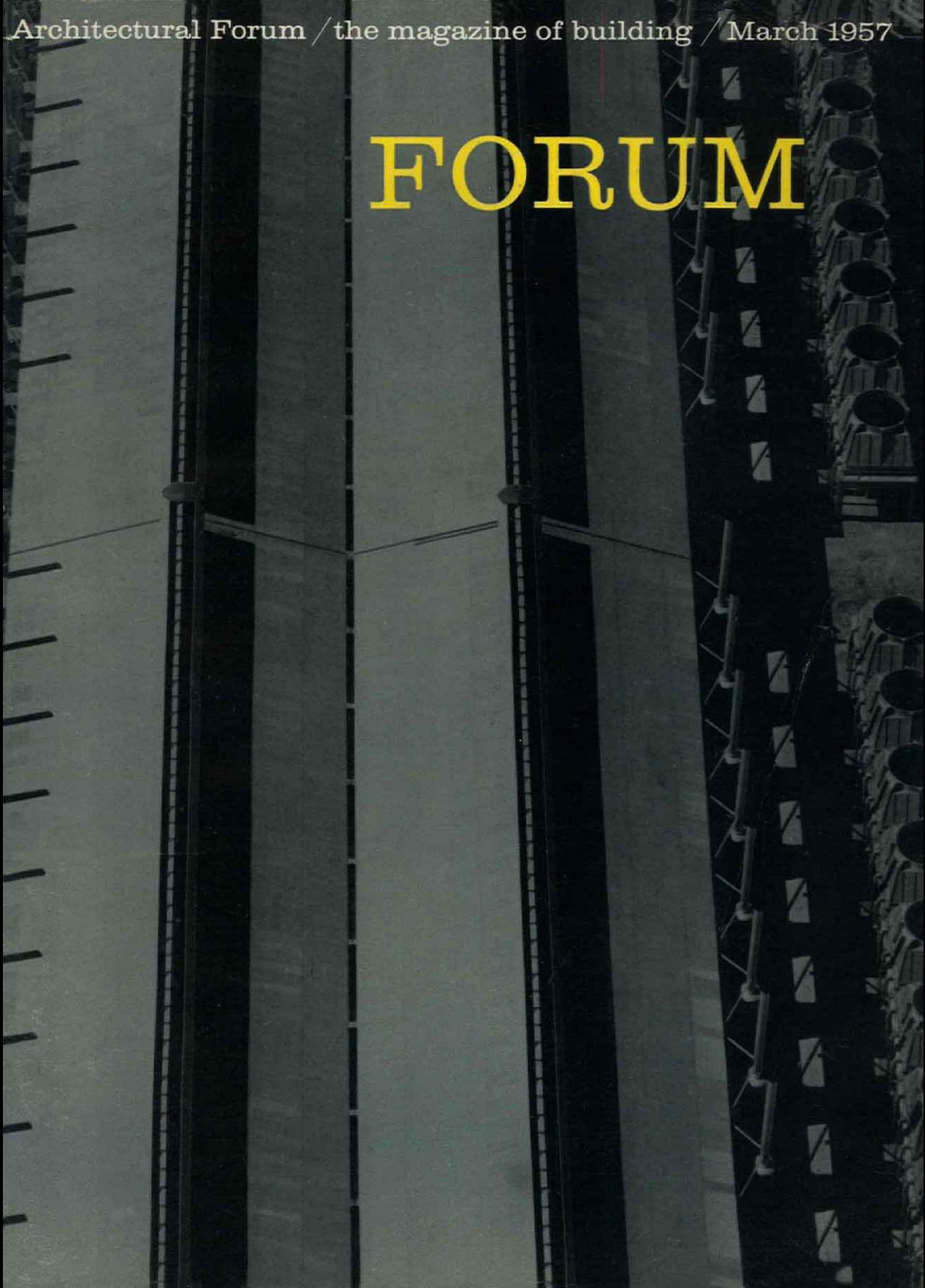


Alexander Girard's house in Santa Fe, New Mexico.  
Photograph by Charles Eames.

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Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / March 1957

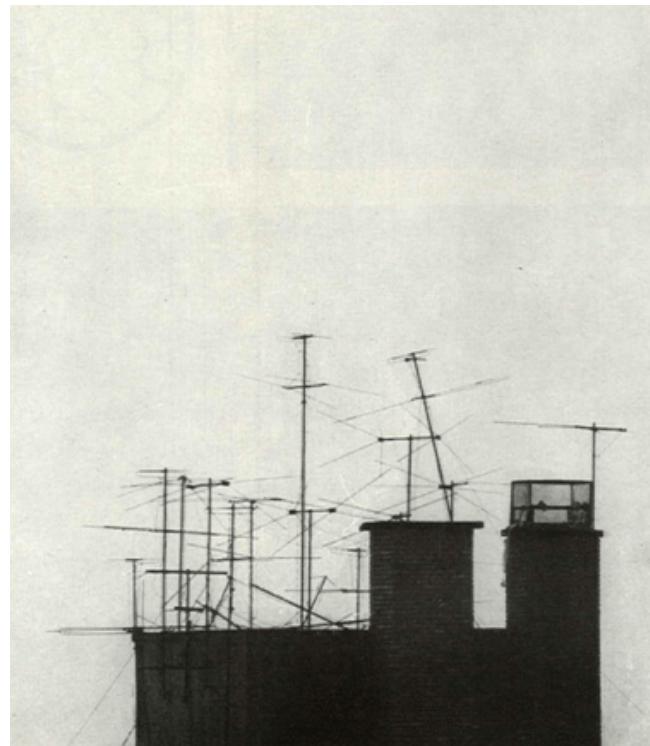
# FORUM



# March 1957

Simple abstraction is the focus of this cover accompanying an article about roofscapes. Photograph by Rotkin for the Reynolds Company.

[Full issue.](#)

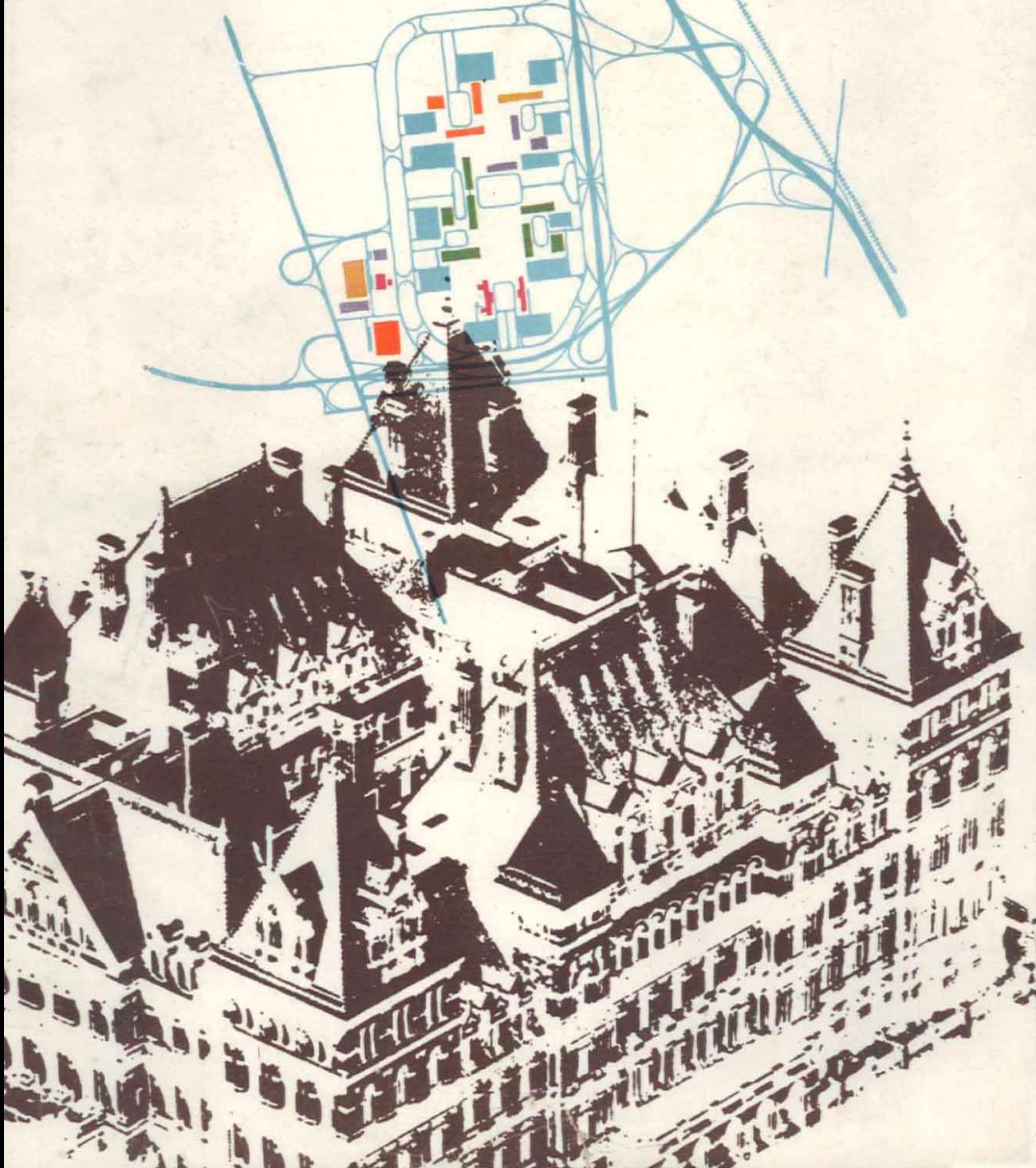


Photograph by Martin Harris from a portfolio of images of roofscapes.

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Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / April 1957

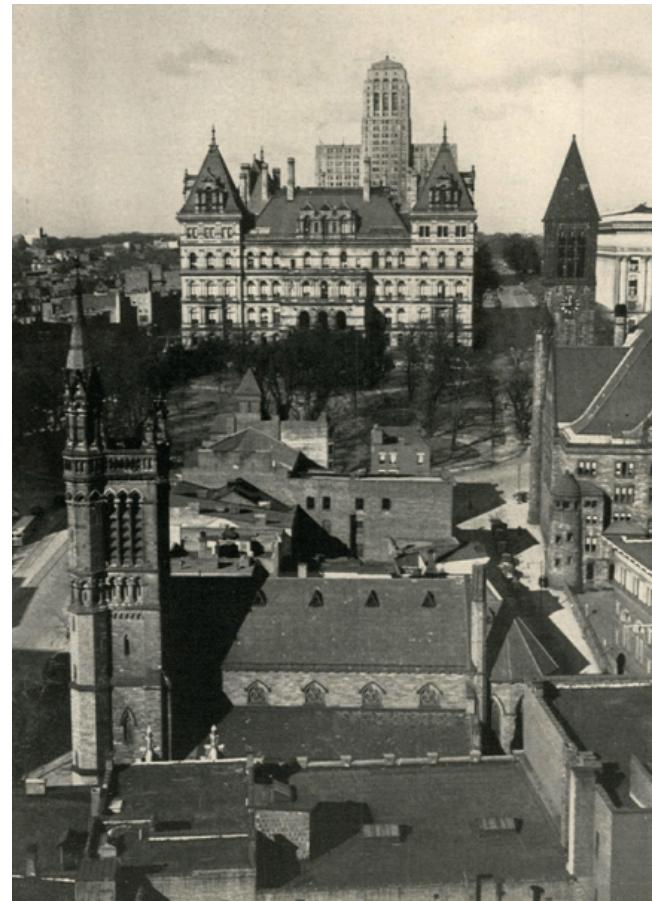
# FORUM



# April 1957

A plan and photograph of New York's old and new state capitols combined for a cover about urban planning.

[Full issue.](#)

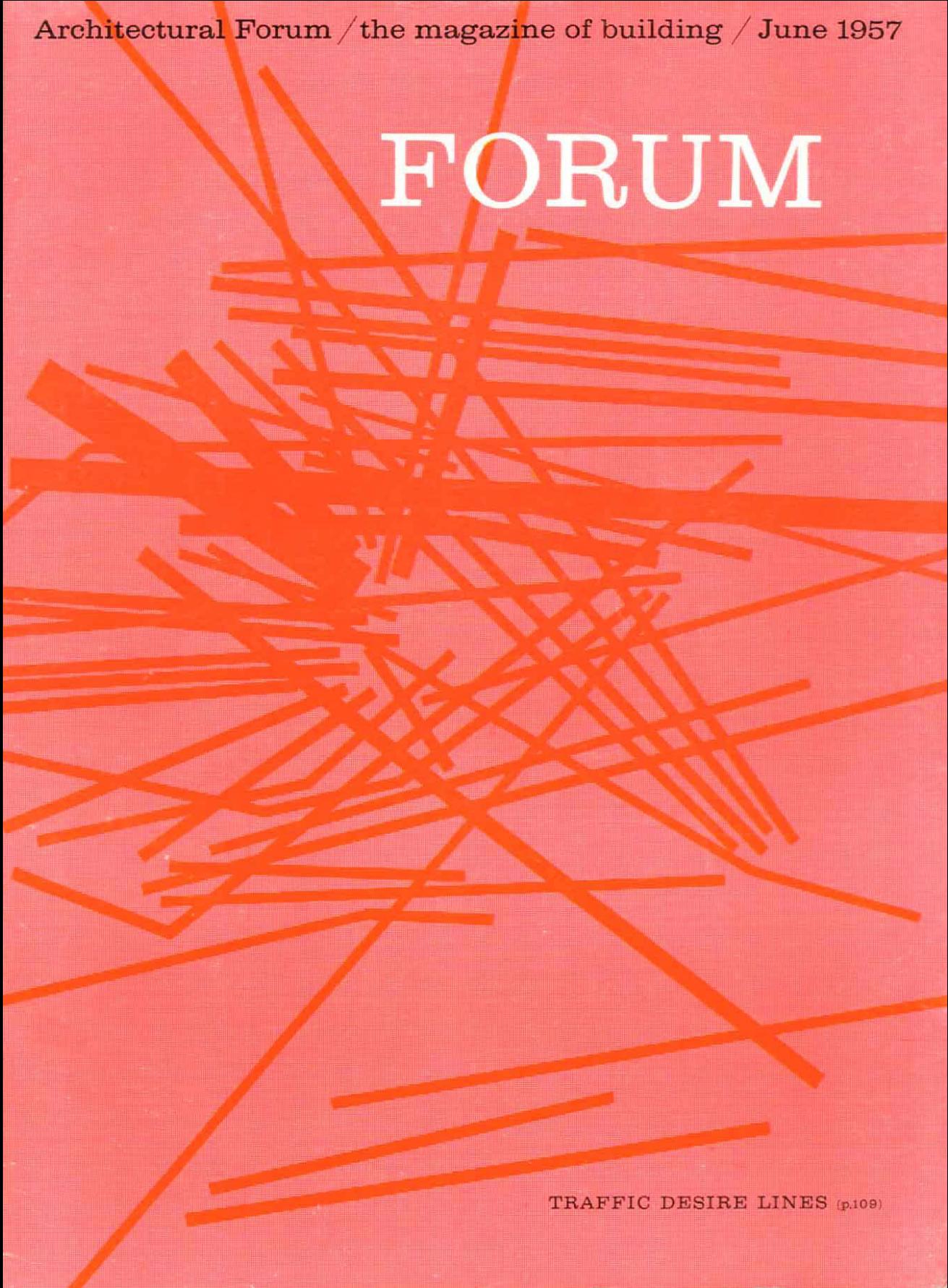


[caption](#)

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Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / June 1957

# FORUM

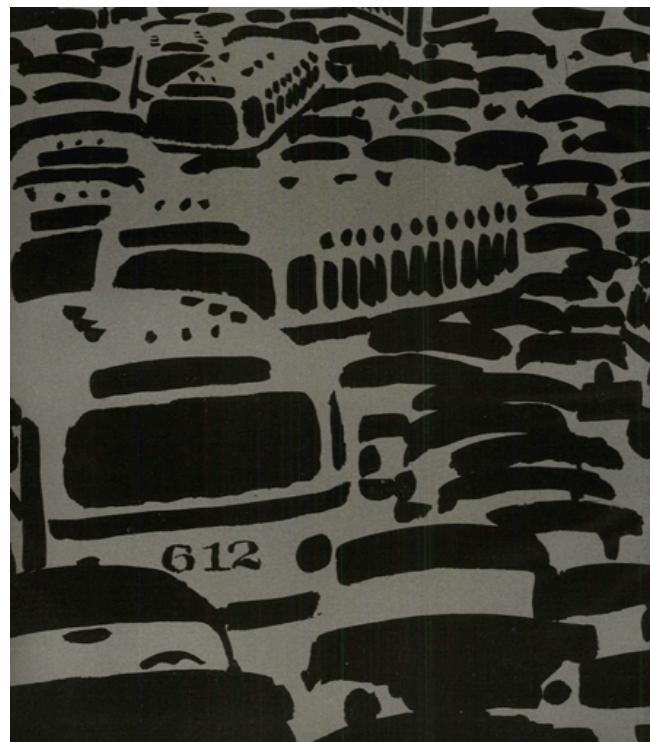


TRAFFIC DESIRE LINES (p.109)

# June 1957

A vigorous abstraction of “traffic desire lines,” traces actual traffic routes taken by citizens in Philadelphia, and illustrates the article “Crisis in City Transit.”

[Full issue.](#)



Uncredited illustration from an article on the crisis in city transit.

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Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / July 1957

# FORUM



# July 1957

Komai's textured and reductive illustration divides the cover. The zig zag form is based on the profile of an executive health center in Aspen, Colorado, designed by Herbert Bayer and Fritz Benedict.

[Full issue.](#)

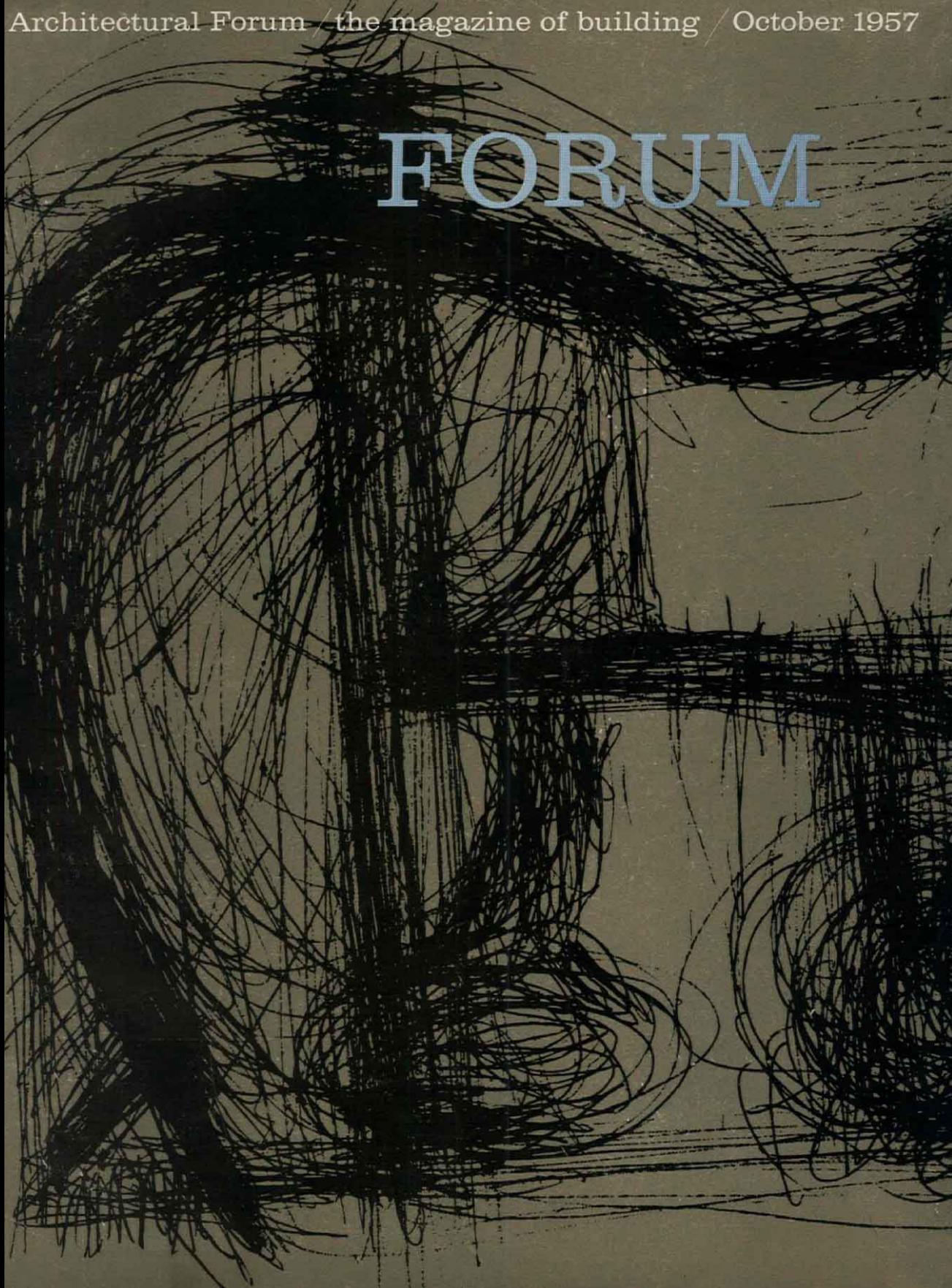


Spa and gym at the Aspen Institute of Humanistic Studies, designed by Herbert Bayer and Fritz Benedict. Photograph by Berko.

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Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / October 1957

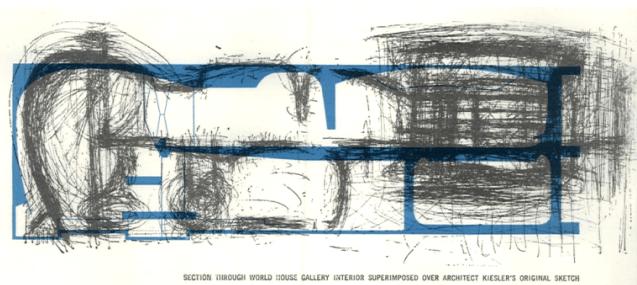
# FORUM



# October 1957

The cover features an enlarged detail of one of architect Frederick Kiesler's original sketches for The World House Gallery in New York City.

[Full issue.](#)



A section of the World House Gallery interior superimposed over architect Kiesler's original sketch.

[Back to all covers](#)

Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / November 1957

# FORUM



# November 1957

Cover for an issue about schools for teenagers. The photograph, by Ed Clark for Life magazine, is overlaid with schematic TV screen shapes, echoing a then-new experiment of "teaching by TV," as discussed in the issue.

[Full issue.](#)



A cafeteria in J. W. Moore Junior High School in Tyler, Texas, designed by Caudill, Rowlett, Scott & Associates. Photograph by Jay Oistad.

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Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / December 1957

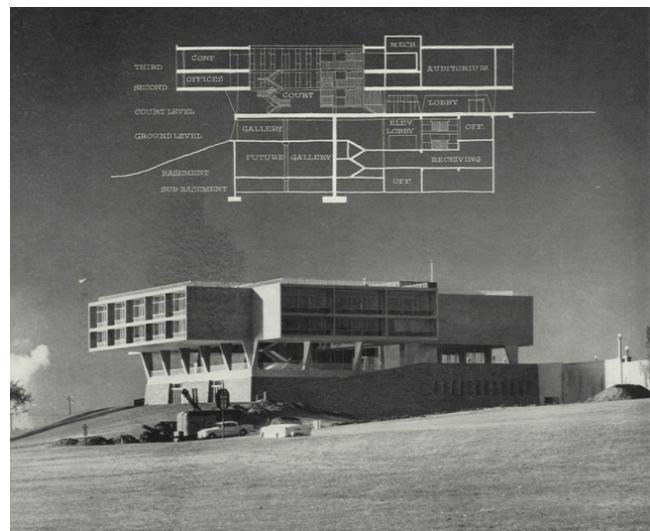
# FORUM



# December 1957

Komai's illustration based on the Milwaukee County War Memorial, designed by Eero Saarinen & Associates.

[Full issue.](#)

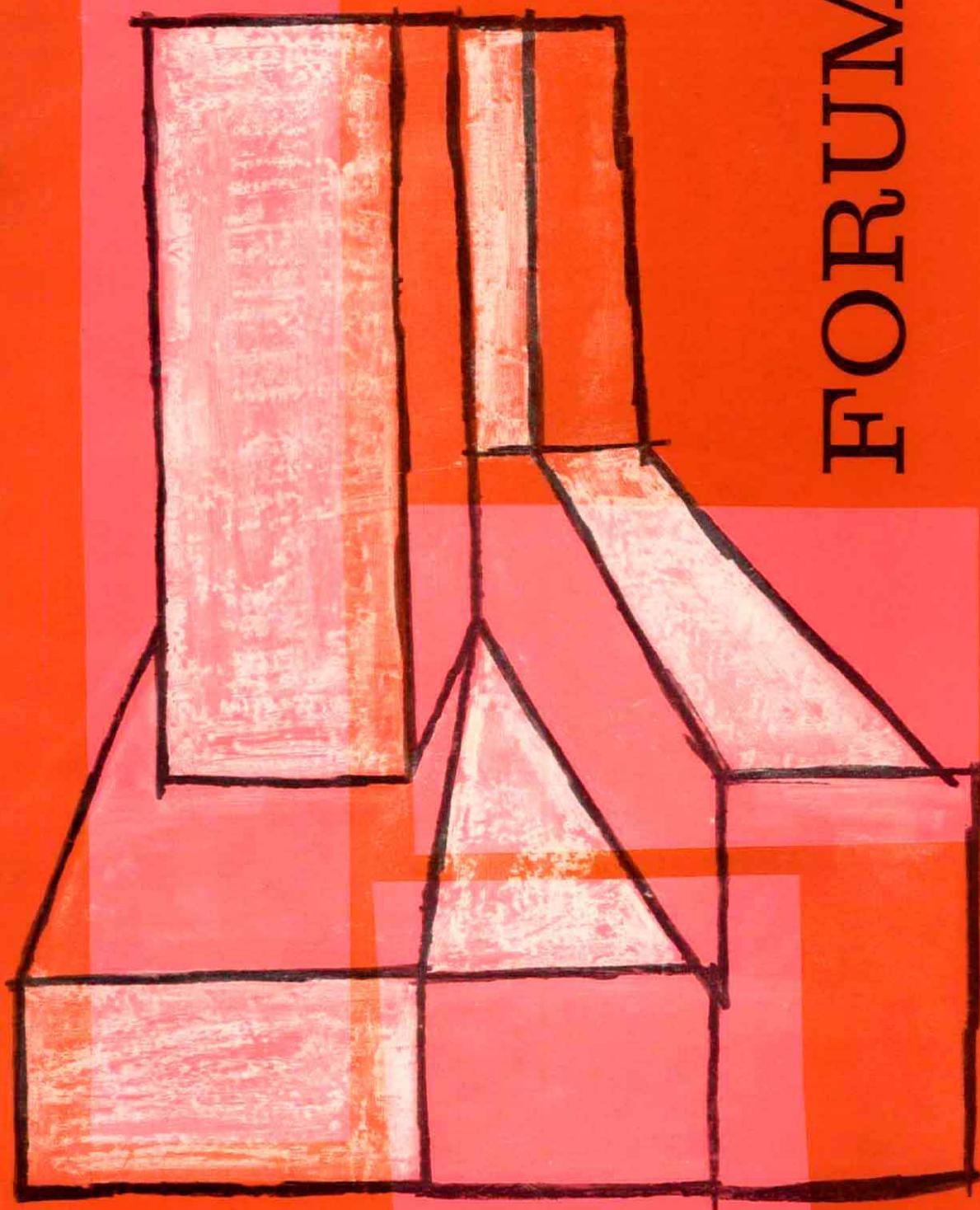


Milwaukee County War Memorial, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, designed by Eero Saarinen & Associates.

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Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / February 1958

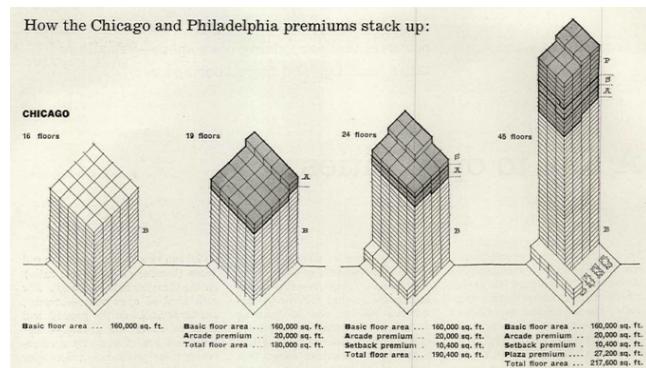
# FORUM



# February 1958

Illustration by Komai based on the theory of bulk zoning, which limits the size and placement of structures on their lots.

[Full issue.](#)



Graph of new zoning proposals in Chicago.

[Back to all covers](#)

Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / June 1958



# June 1958

A dynamic rendering by Komai of the roof structure of the Spanish pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair.

[Full issue.](#)



The Spanish pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair, designed by Ramon Molezun and José Antonio Corrales.

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Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / August 1958

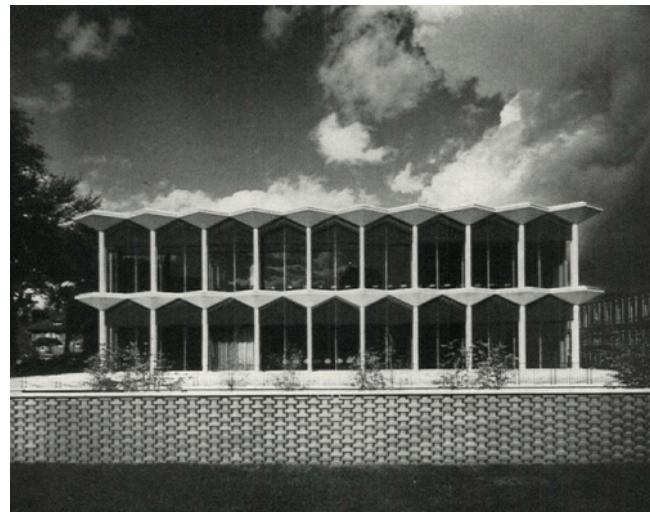


# FORUM

# August 1958

Cover showing the McGregor Memorial Conference Center at Wayne University, designed by the Japanese-American architect Minoru Yamasaki (1912–1986).

[Full issue.](#)



McGregor Memorial Conference Center on Wayne University's mid-Detroit campus, designed by Minoru Yamasaki.

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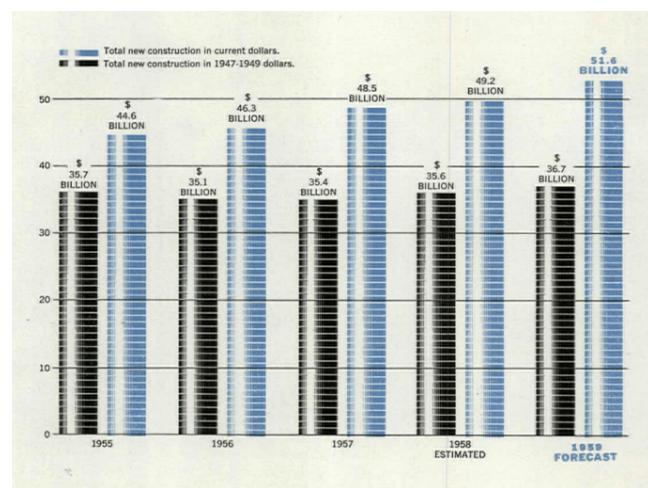
Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / October 1958



**FORUM**

# October 1958

An illustration suggesting the growth of construction activity in the upcoming year.  
[Full issue.](#)



Forecast of building construction spending in 1959.

[Back to all covers](#)

Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / November 1958

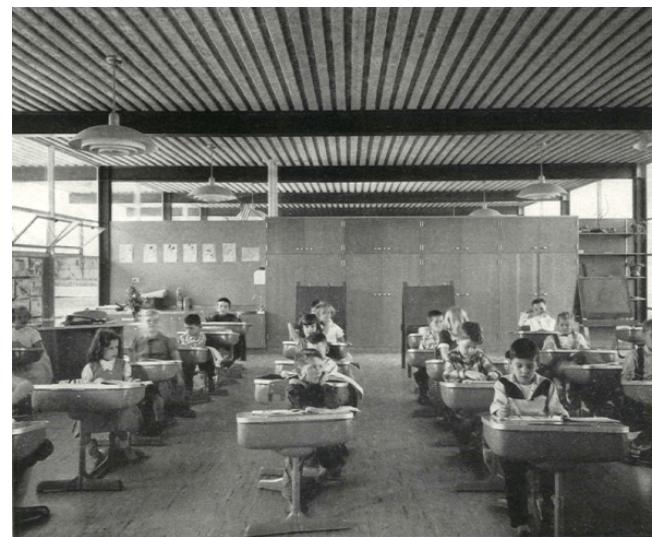
# FORUM



# November 1958

Komai's pared-down brush illustration for several articles about school design.

[Full issue.](#)



A classroom in Sonoma Elementary School, Sonoma, California, designed by Mario J. Ciampi. Photograph by Rondal Partridge.

[Back to all covers](#)

Architectural Forum / the magazine of building January 1959



# FORUM

Building for the community

# January 1959

A Corinthian column engraving from Nicholson's Architectural Dictionary, adapted by Komai for the story "Building for the Community."

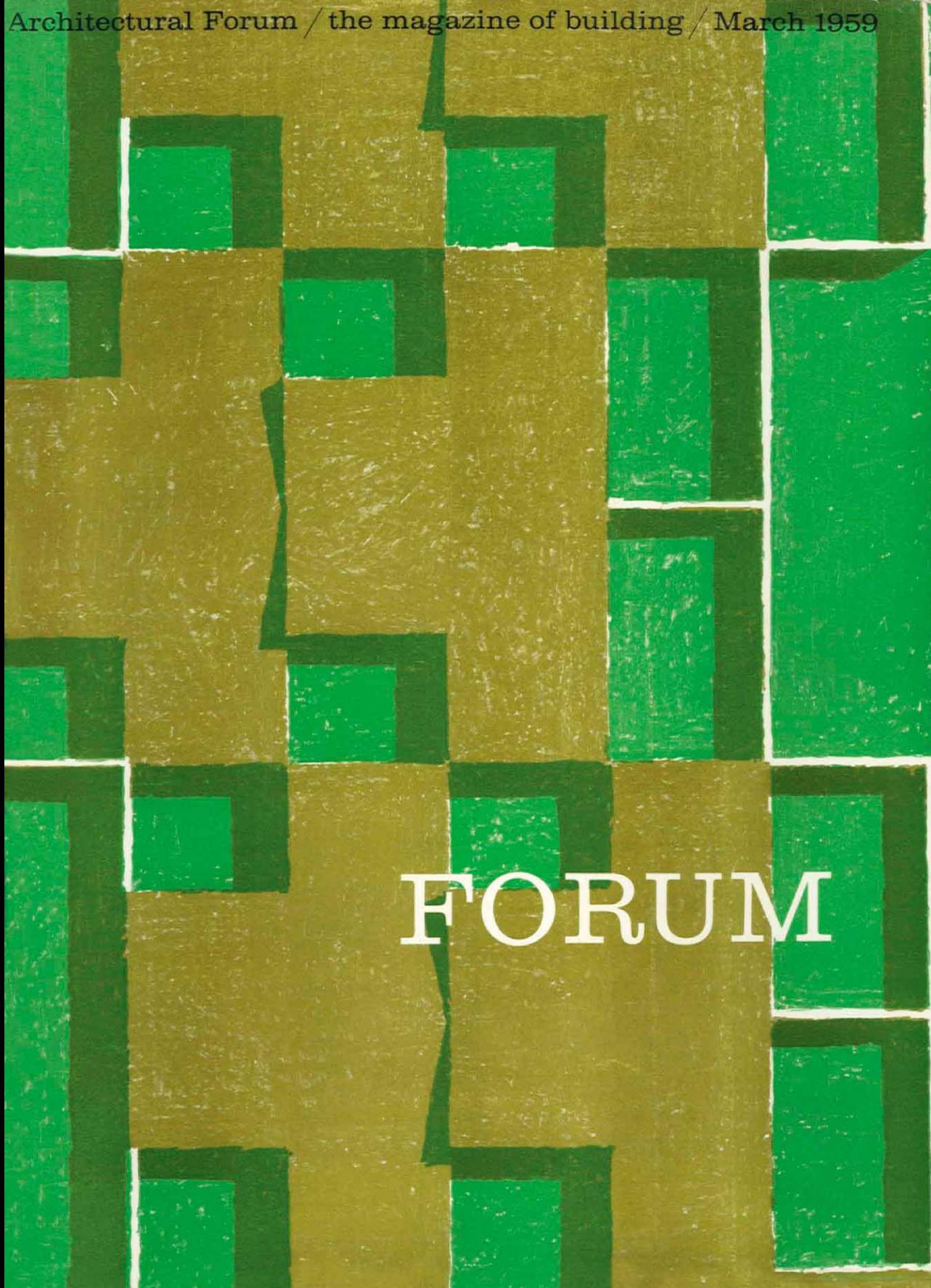
[Full issue.](#)



An engraving of the United States Capitol, Washington, D.C., designed by Benjamin Latrobe.

[Back to all covers](#)

Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / March 1959



A large, abstract graphic design serves as the background. It consists of a grid of squares in two colors: a bright green and a warm, textured gold. The squares are arranged in a staggered, non-repeating pattern across the entire page. This geometric base provides a modern and architectural feel.

# FORUM

# March 1959

Illustration by Komai based on the plan for a new kind of housing project, proposed by students at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

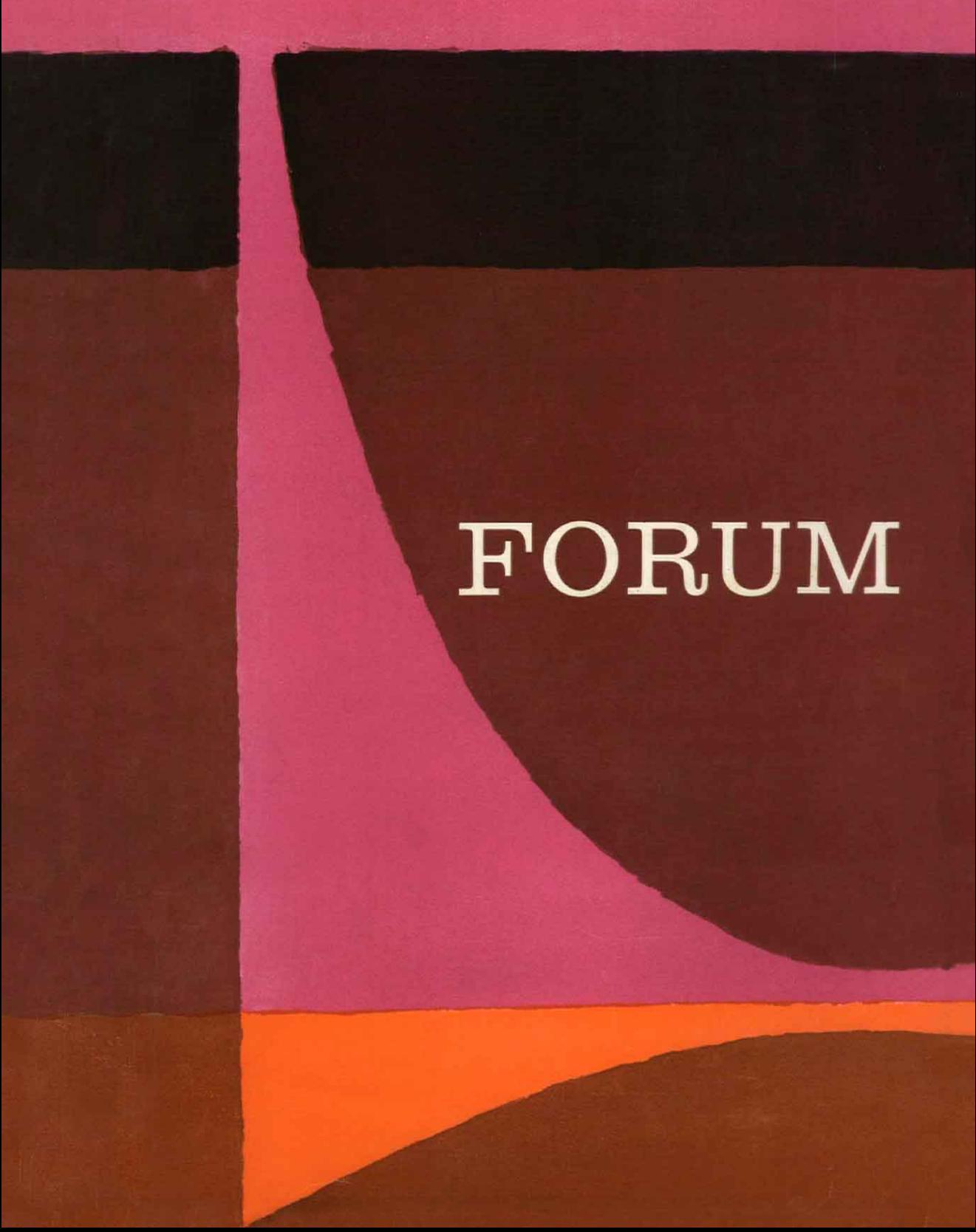
[Full issue.](#)



A model plan for Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / April 1959



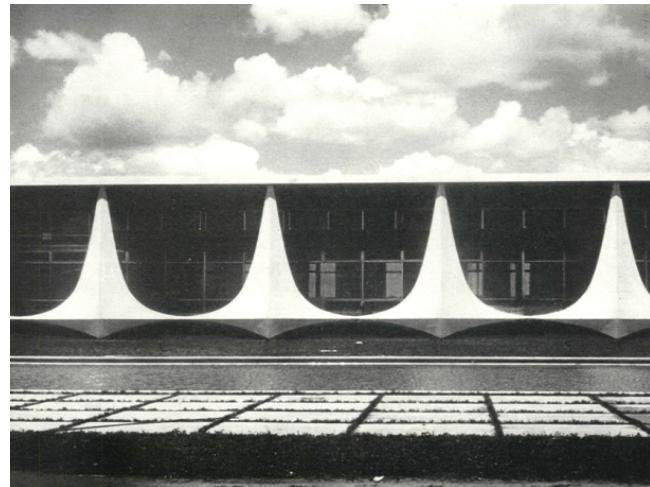
A large, abstract graphic design serves as the background. It features several overlapping geometric shapes in a color palette of black, red, orange, and brown. A thick black horizontal band runs across the top. Below it is a wide red band. The central area is dominated by a large, irregular red shape that tapers down towards the bottom. Behind this red shape is a large, rounded brown shape. At the very bottom, there is a thin, horizontal orange band.

# FORUM

# April 1959

Illustration by Komai based on the iconic president's palace in Brasilia, Brazil, designed by architect Oscar Niemeyer.

[Full issue.](#)



The Presidential Palace in Brasília, Brazil, designed by Oscar Niemeyer. Photograph by Alfred Shaw.

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Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / August 1959

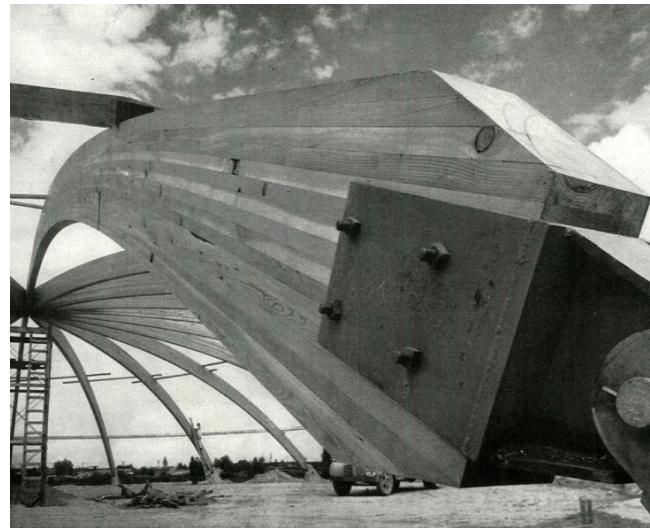
# FORUM



# August 1959

Illustration by Komai based on a detail of laminated timber, for an article entitled "Wood Moves Out of the Woods." The illustration was inspired by the base of an arch in the Hunt School in Tacoma, designed by architect Robert B. Price.

[Full issue.](#)



Arches for the Hunt School cafeteria-auditorium in Tacoma, Washington, designed by Robert B. Price.

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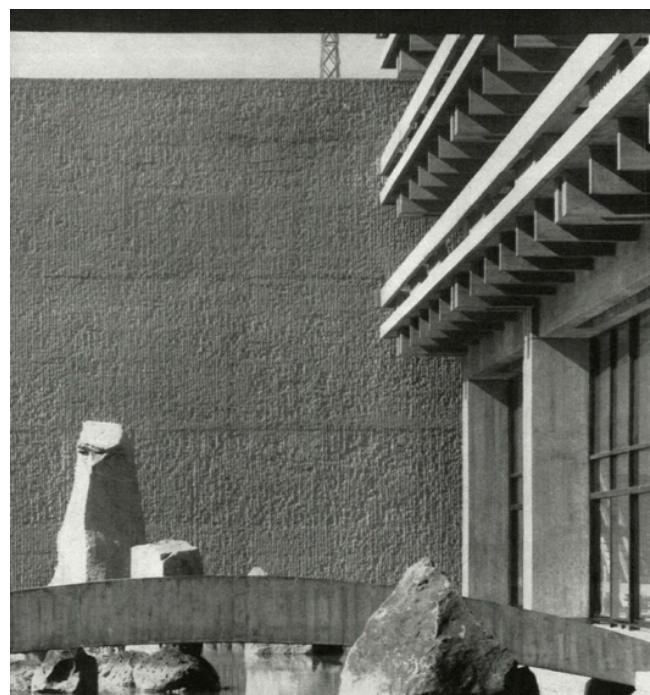
Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / September 1959

# FORUM

# September 1959

This illustration interprets a detail of architect Kenzo Tange's design for the Kagawa prefectural office, a combination county seat and community center in an agricultural district of Japan.

[Full issue.](#)



A detail fo the Kagawa Prefectural Office, designed by Kenzo Tange

[Back to all covers](#)

Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / November 1959

Aa	Rr	Cc
Hh	Ii	Tt
Ee	Cc	Tt
Uu	Rr	Aa
Ll	FORUM	

# November 1959

A clever riff on the periodic table stands in  
for an article on the design of schools.  
[Full issue.](#)

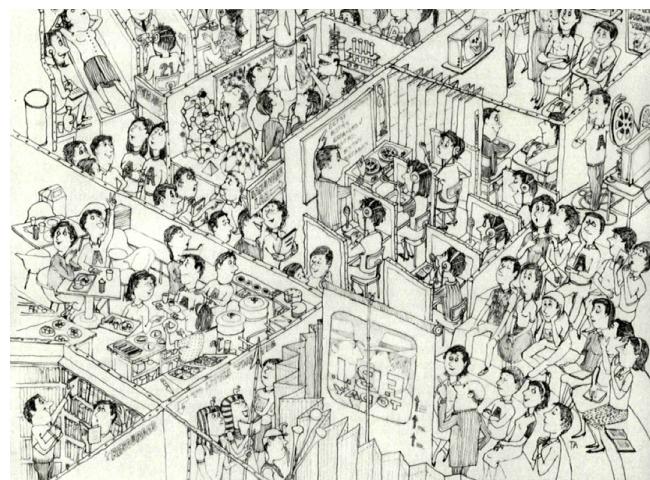
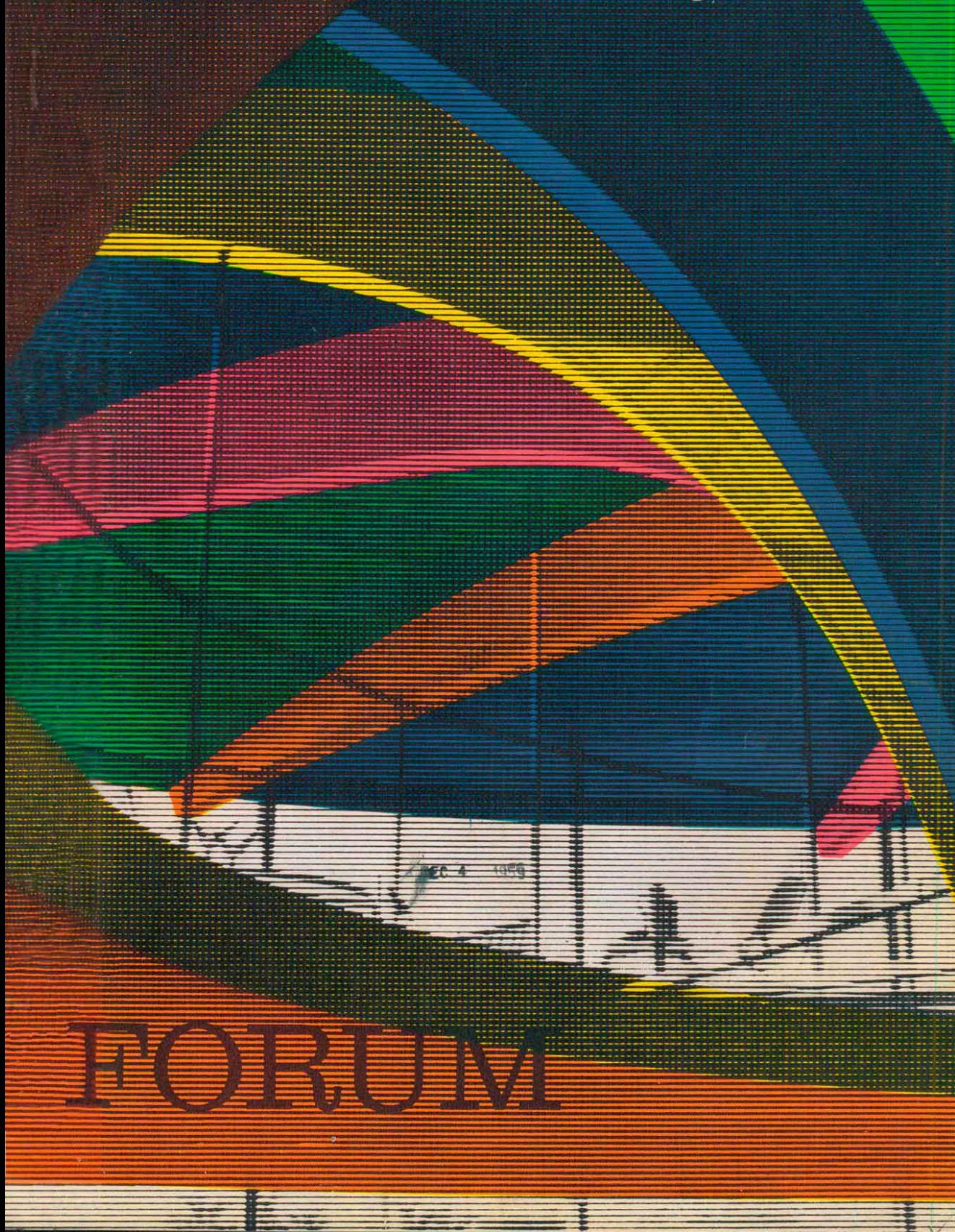


Illustration by Ted Andressakes for an article about productivity in schools.

[Back to all covers](#)

Architectural Forum / the magazine of building / December 1959



# December 1959

The illustration features the dynamic laminated timber support beams in Galloway's furniture showroom in Sarasota, Florida, designed by architect Victor Lundy.

[Full issue.](#)



Galloway's Furniture Showroom, Sarasota, Florida,  
designed by Victor A. Lundy.

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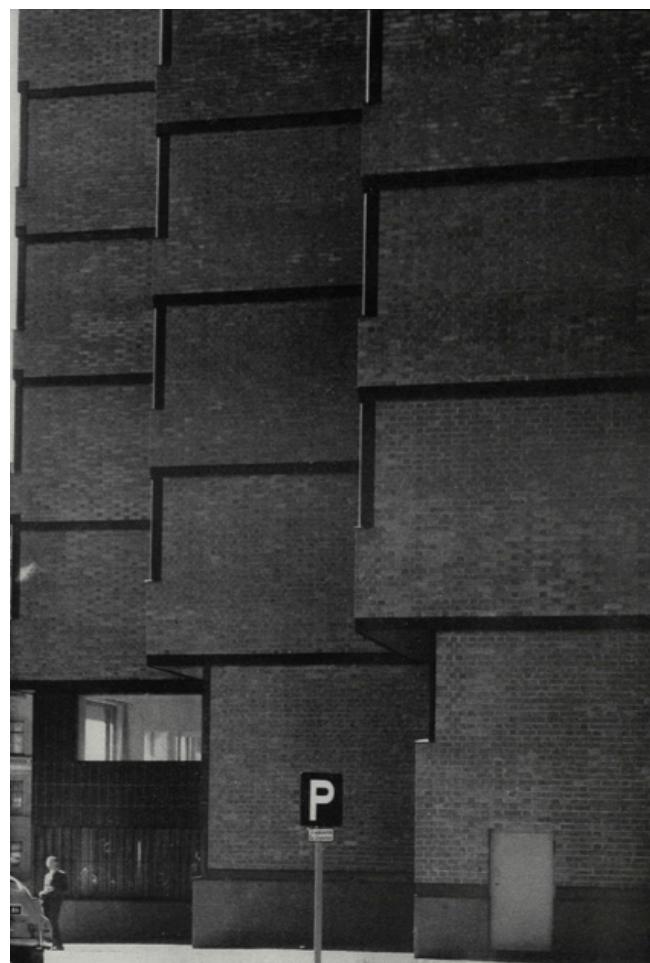
Architectural Forum the magazine of building February 1960

# FORUM

Forecast for the sixties

# February 1960

A subtle drawing by Komai conveys forecasts of growth in building construction.  
[Full issue.](#)

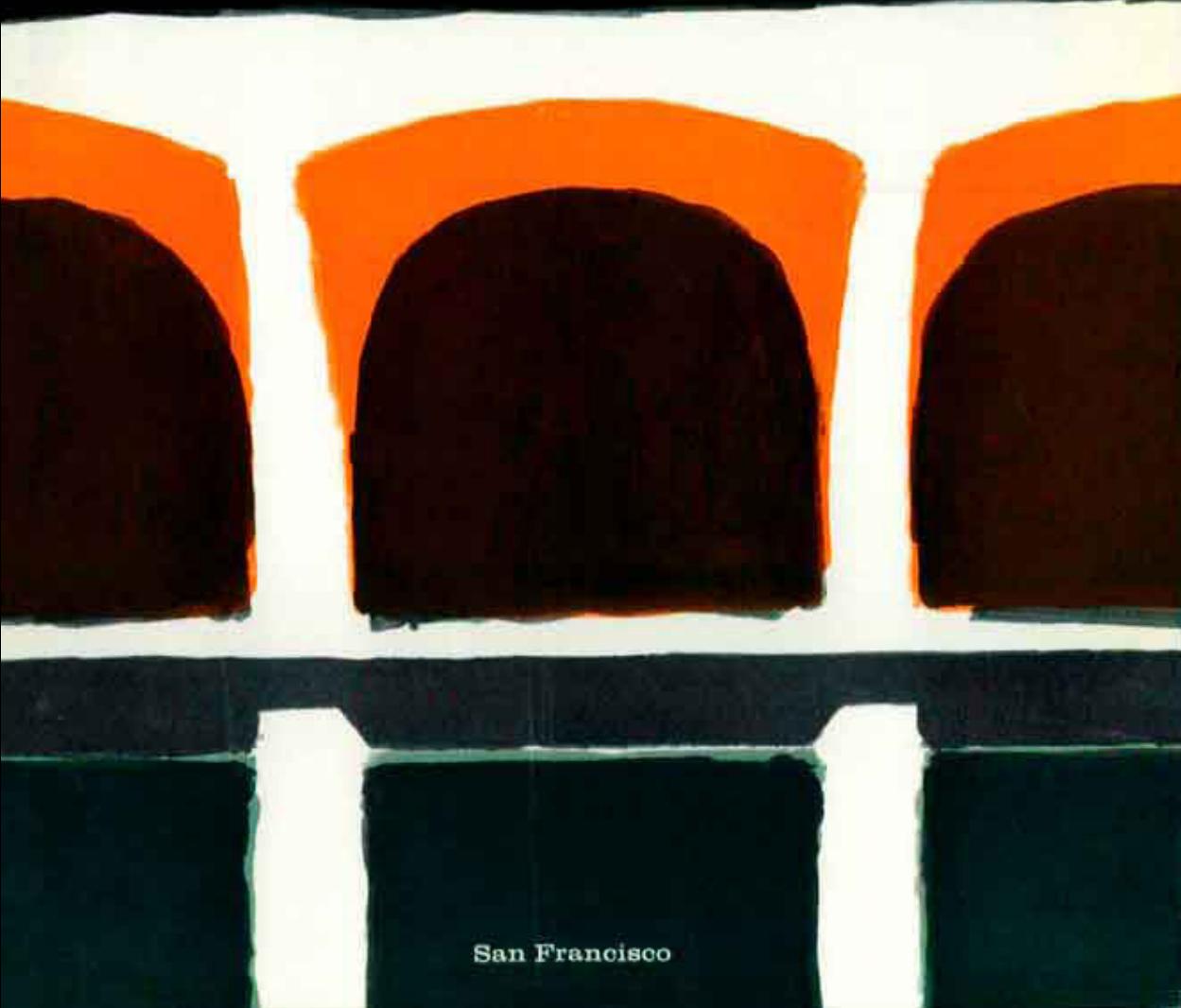


Alvar Aalto's Pension Institute in Helsinki, Finland.

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Architectural Forum the magazine of building April 1960

# FORUM



San Francisco

# April 1960

Illustration by Komai based on San Francisco's John Hancock Building (now the Industrial Indemnity Building), designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

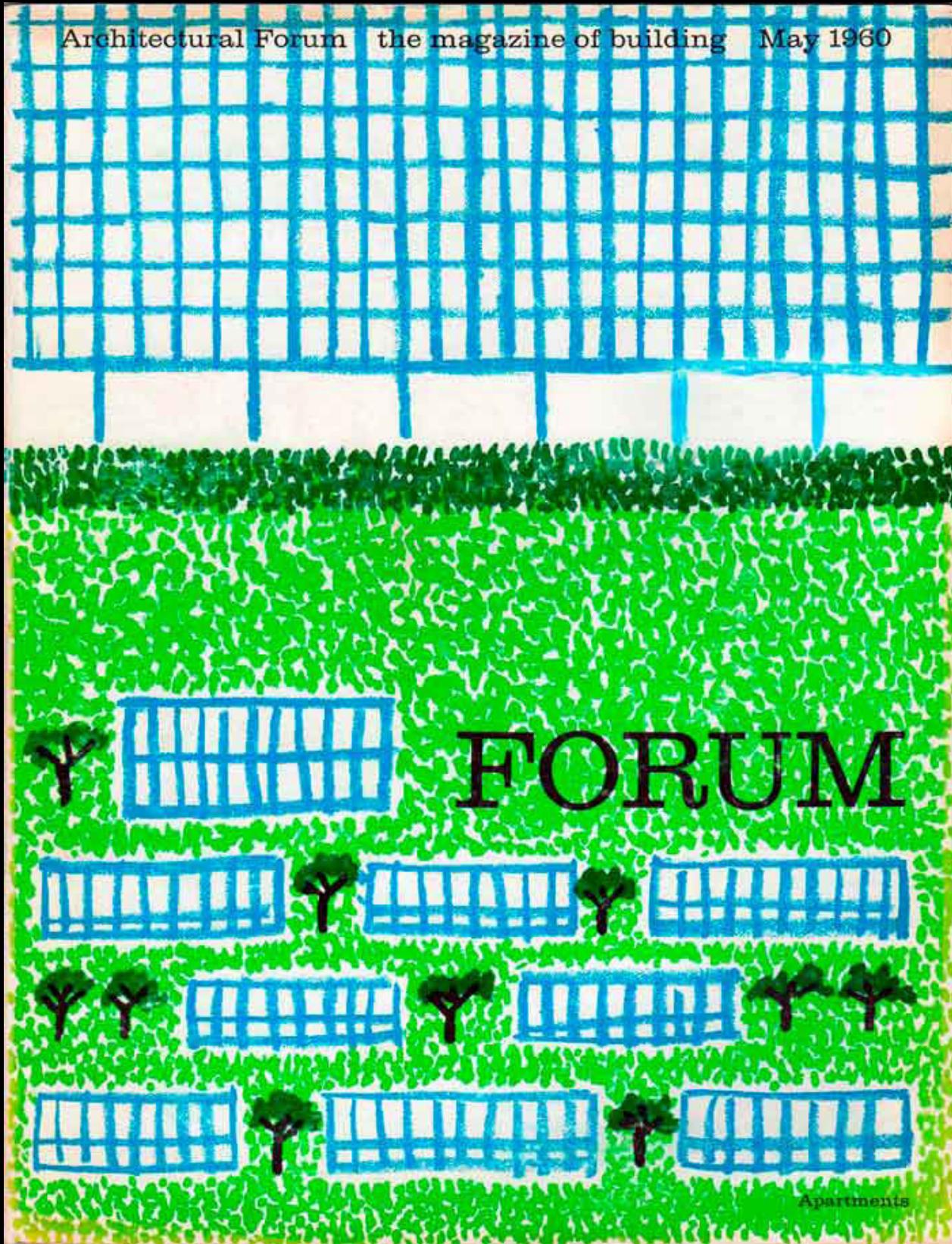
[Full issue.](#)



The John Hancock Building in San Francisco, designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. Photograph by Morley Baer.

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Architectural Forum the magazine of building May 1960



# May 1960

Drawing by Komai of Detroit's Lafayette Park. Mies van der Rohe designed several of the residential buildings in Lafayette Park. This cover reveals another link between American design in the middle of the twentieth century and the Japanese-American incarceration camps. One of the primary architects in Mies's office was Joseph Fujikawa (1922–2003), who spent time in a camp in Colorado.

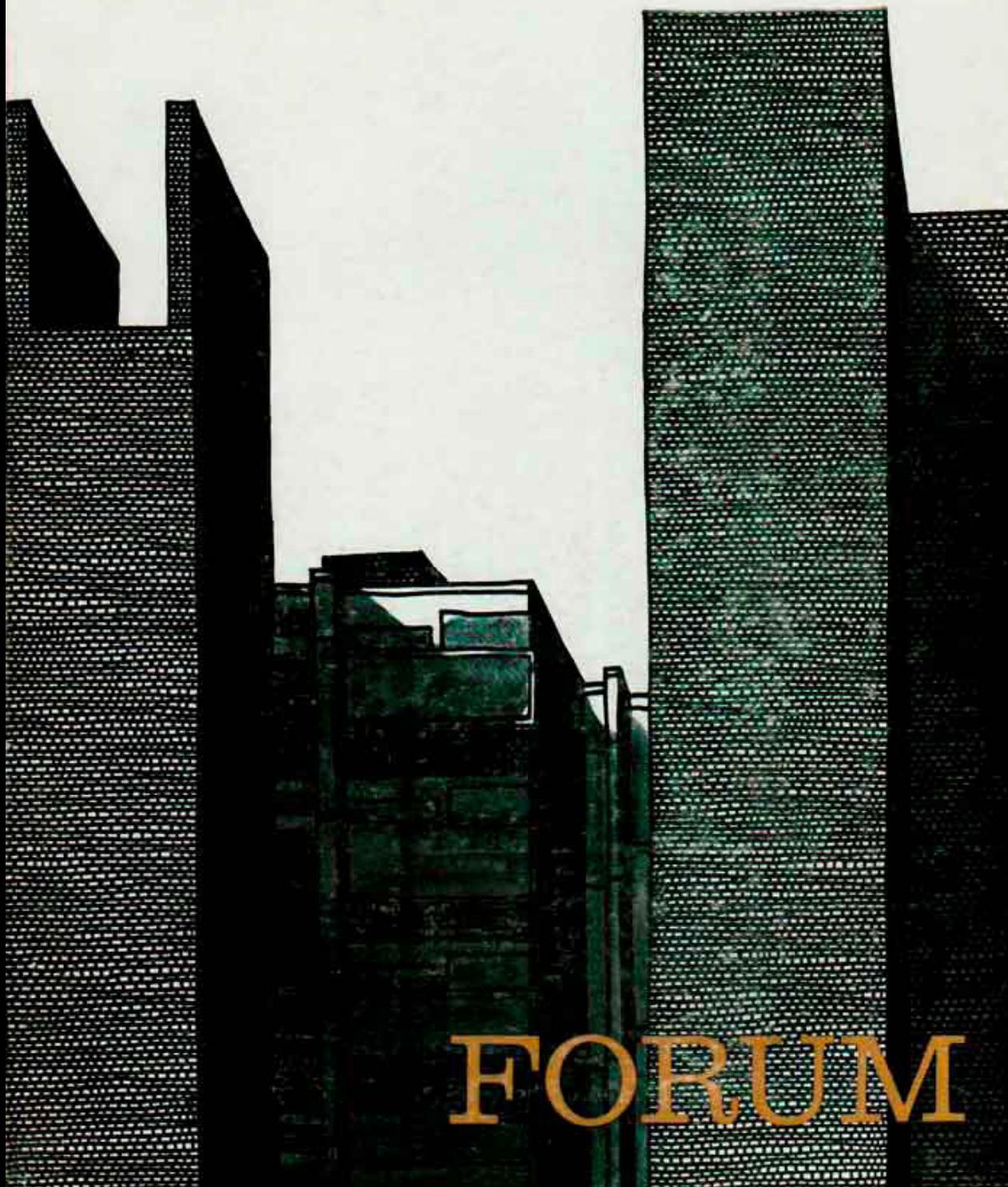
[Full issue.](#)



Lafayette Park Title I Project, Detroit, Michigan, designed by Mies van der Rohe.

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Architectural Forum the magazine of building July 1960

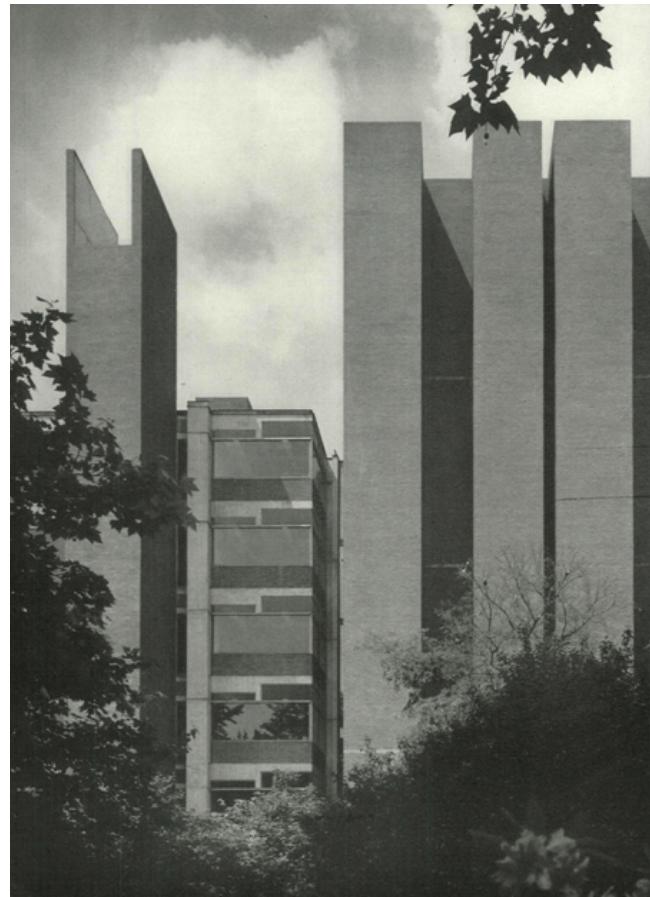


**FORUM**

# July 1960

Drawing by Komai of architect Louis Kahn's medical research building on the University of Pennsylvania campus.

[Full issue.](#)



The Richard Medical Research Building at the University of Pennsylvania, designed by Louis Kahn  
[Back to All Covers.](#)

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Architectural Forum the magazine of building September 1960



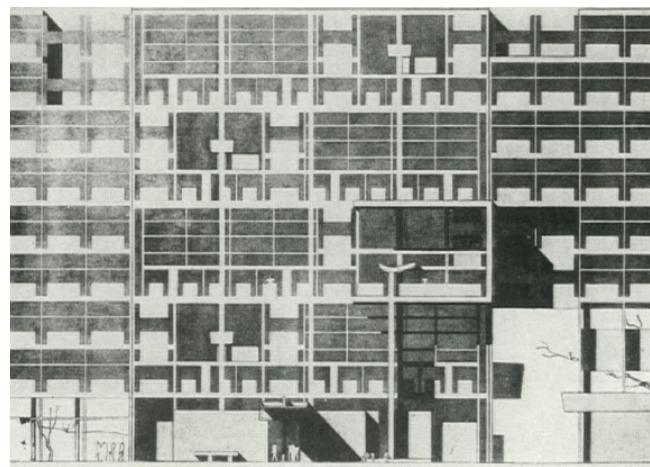
A large, abstract graphic design occupies the central portion of the cover. It consists of a grid of vertical black lines and a cluster of horizontal blue squares at the bottom. The blue squares are arranged in a way that suggests a stylized, upward-pointing shape or a cluster of flowers. The background is a dark blue color with some subtle texture or noise.

# FORUM

# September 1960

A cover illustration for an article about jazz and architecture hints at the sympathetic rhythms between the two.

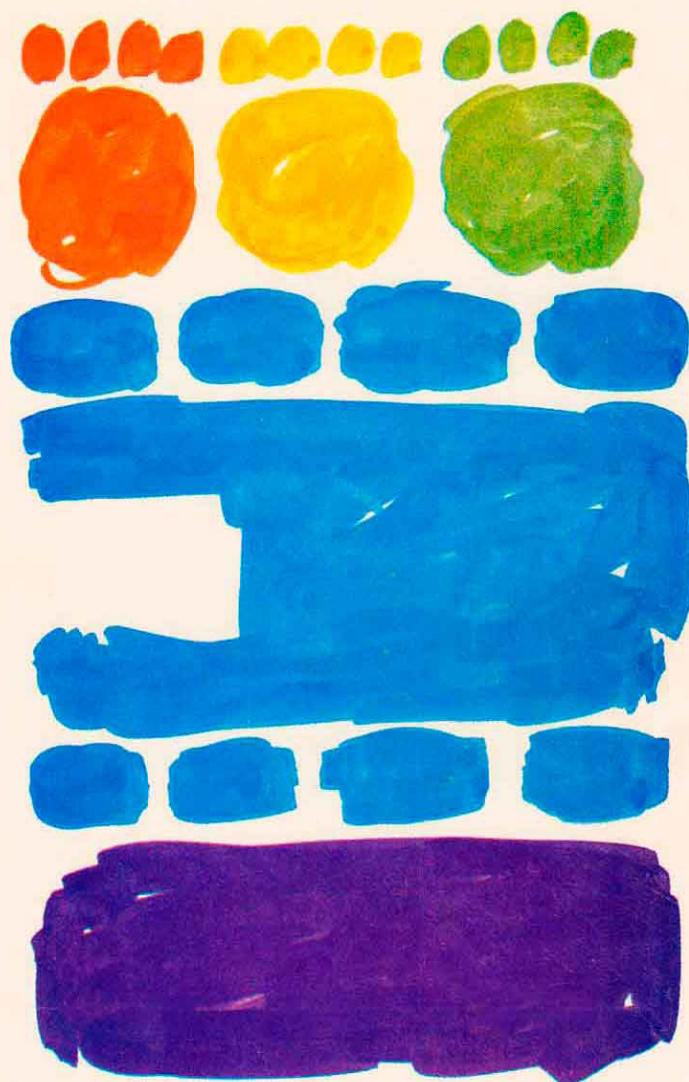
[Full issue.](#)



Le Corbusier's Secretariat Building in Chandigarh, India, 1953.

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Architectural Forum the magazine of building November 1960



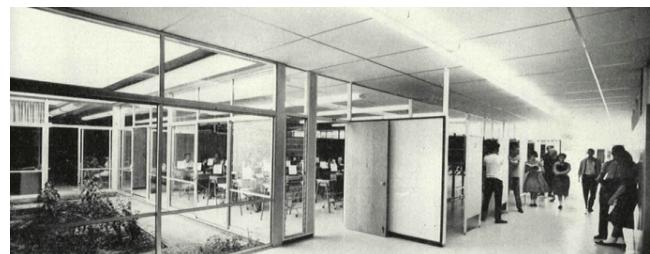
# FORUM

High school developments

# November 1960

Komai's colorful, child-like illustration based on the plan of a high school classroom in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

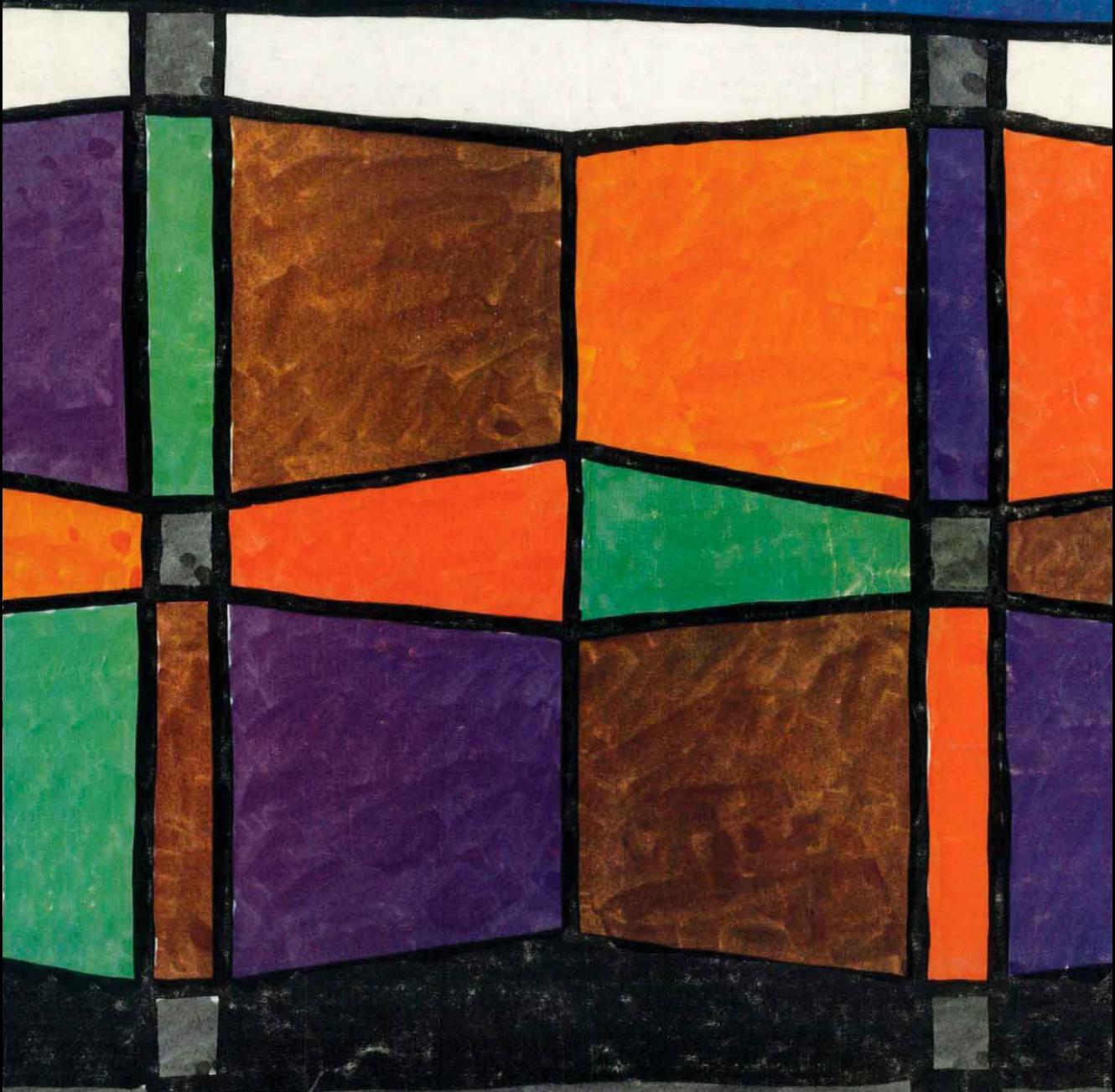
[Full issue.](#)



Stillwater High School in Stillwater, Oklahoma, designed by architect John Rowlett of Caudill, Rowlett and Scott. Photograph by A.Y. Owen.

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Architectural Forum the magazine of building December 1960



A large, abstract stained glass window design occupies the upper two-thirds of the cover. The window is composed of numerous panes in various colors including purple, green, orange, and brown, separated by a dark, thin grid. The colors are applied in a textured, layered manner, creating a mottled effect. The overall shape of the window is roughly rectangular with some irregular edges.

# FORUM

# December 1960

The illustration abstracts details of the façade of Lake Erie College's commons, designed by architect Victor Christ-Janer.

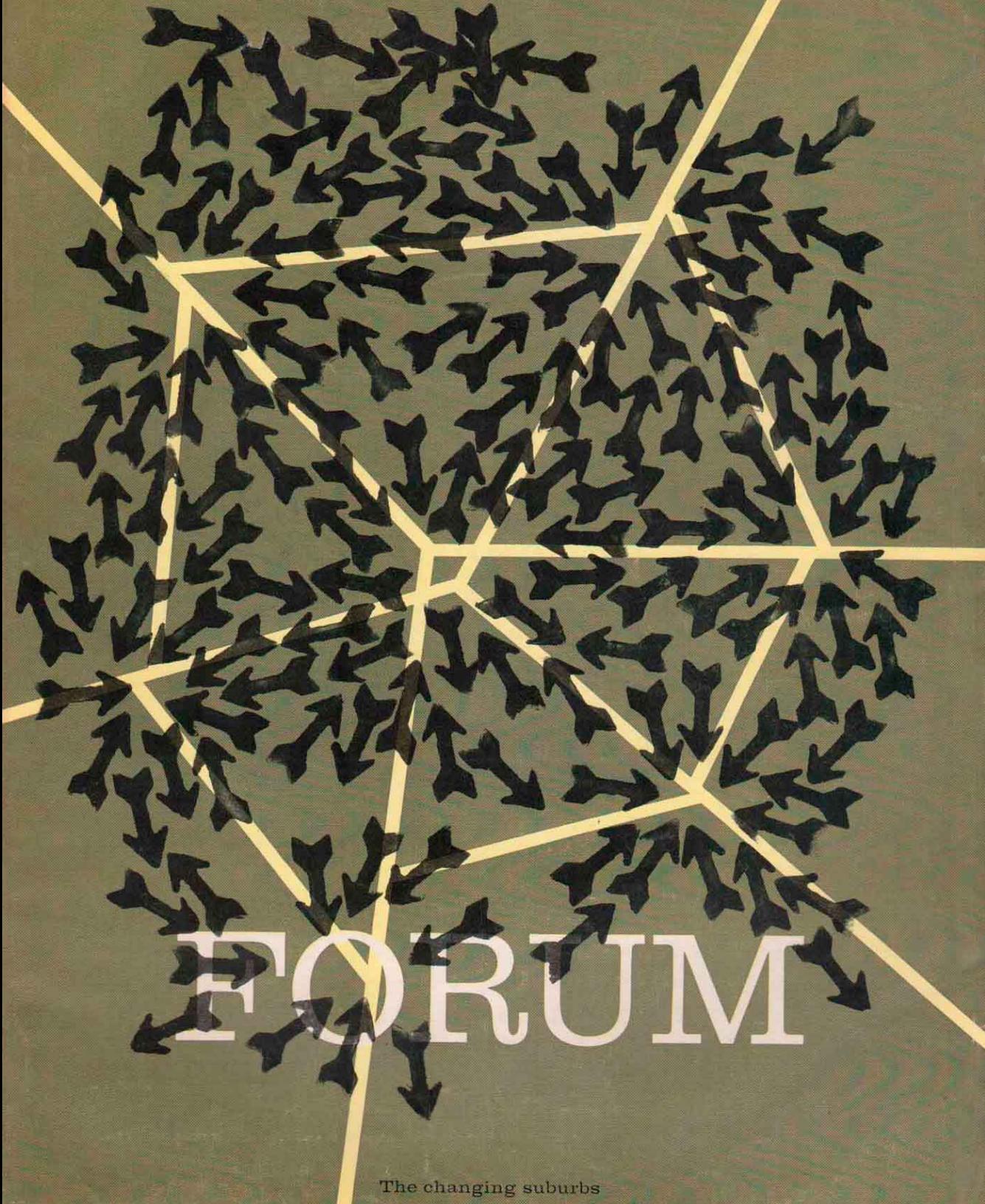
[Full issue.](#)



Lincoln Hall social hall at Lake Erie College, Painesville, Ohio, designed by Victor F. Christ-Janer & Associates.

[Back to all covers](#)

Architectural Forum the magazine of building January 1961



# January 1961

For an issue focusing on changing suburbs,  
Komai evokes mass urban shifts.

[Full issue.](#)

Working in the suburbs

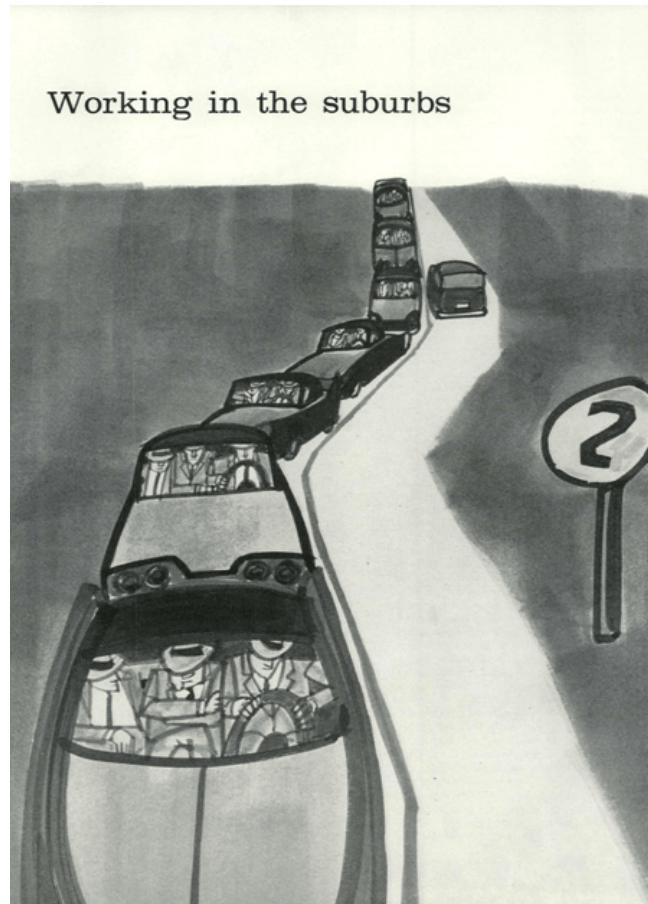


Illustration by John Suzuki for an article entitled  
“Working in the Suburbs”.

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Architectural Forum the magazine of building February 1961

REMODEL  
RENEW  
REPAIR  
RENovATE  
**REBUILDING**  
RESTORE  
RECONSTRUCT  
REPLACE  
REHABILITATE  
RECONVERT  
REDESIGN  
RECONDITION  
REORGANIZE  
RECLAIM  
REJUVENATE  
RECREATE  
REINVEST

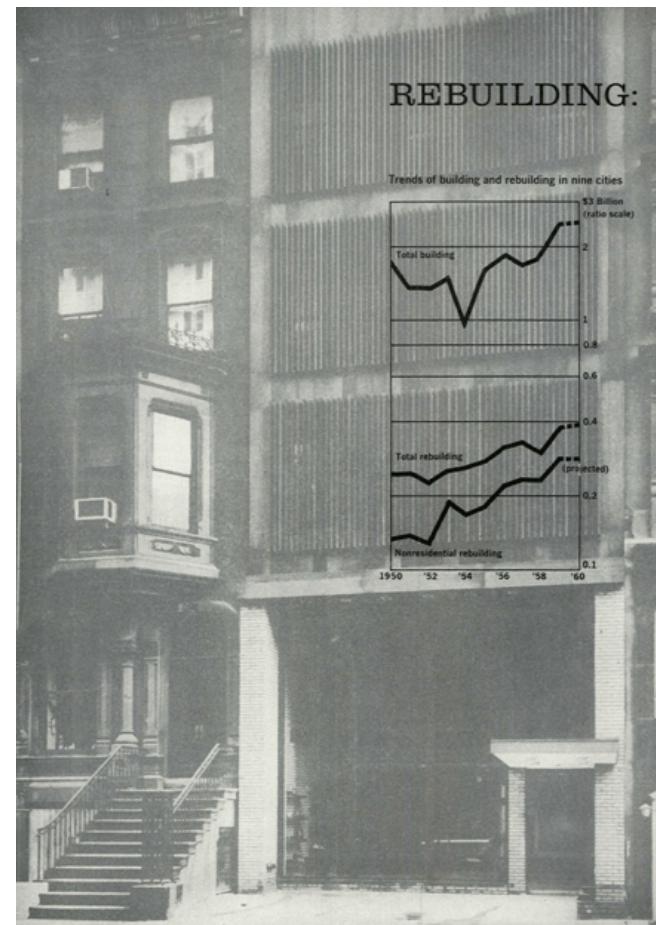
**FORUM**

# February 1961

Komai's stacked lettering forms a structure  
for an issue about rebuilding.

[Full issue.](#)

REBUILDING:



Photograph by Louis Reens for an article on the re-building business.

[Back to all covers](#)

Architectural Forum the magazine of building May 1961



FORUM

# May 1961

Illustration by Komai based on the design of the headquarters of the Sacramento Municipal Utility District, designed by architects Dreyfuss & Blackford. Another example of Komai's striking ability to render architectural form in strict abstraction.

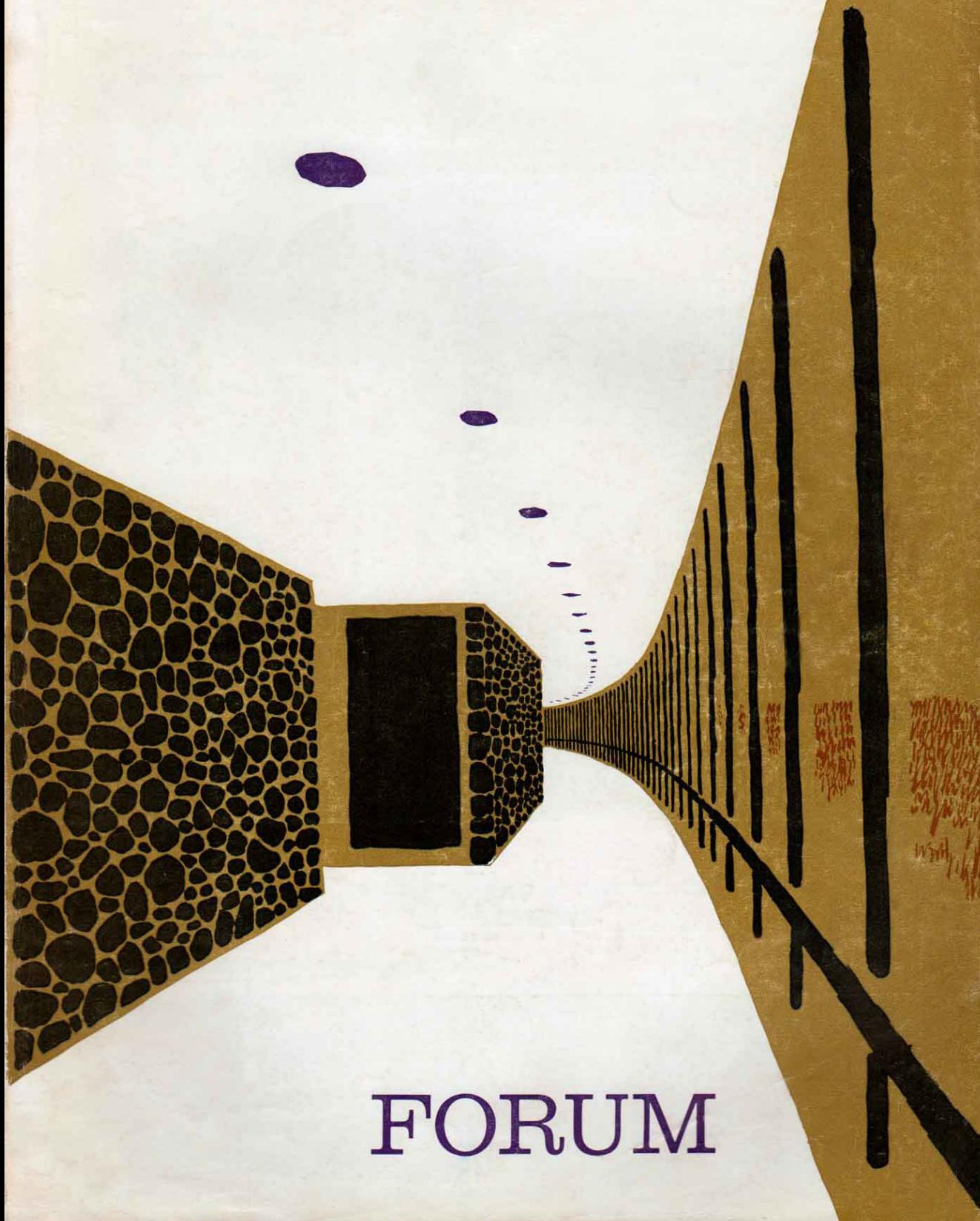
[Full issue.](#)



Municipal Utility District Building, Sacramento, California, designed by Dreyfuss & Blackford.

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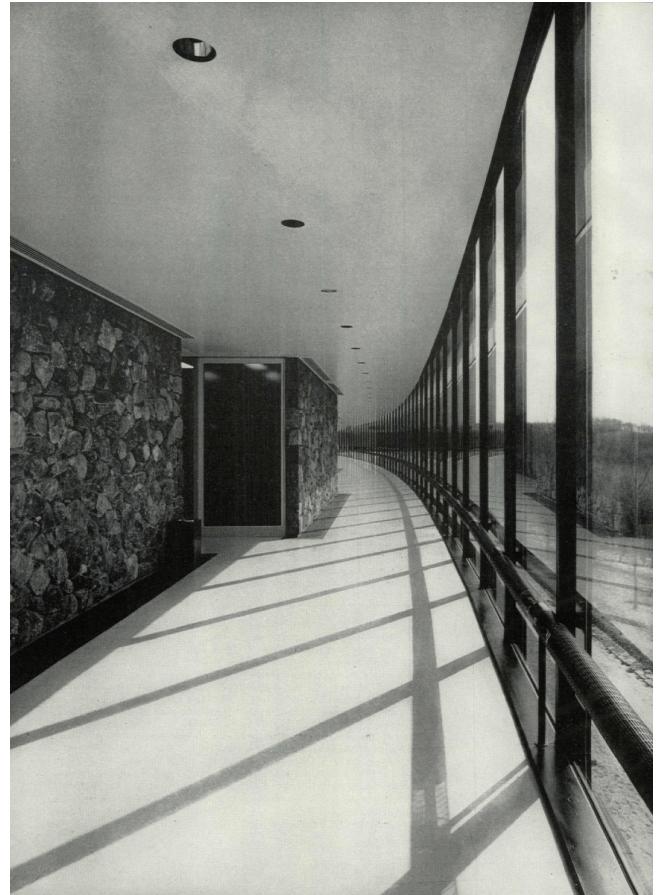
Architectural Forum the magazine of building June 1961



# June 1961

Komai's somewhat more realistic drawing  
of Eero Saarinen's IBM research center in  
suburban New York.

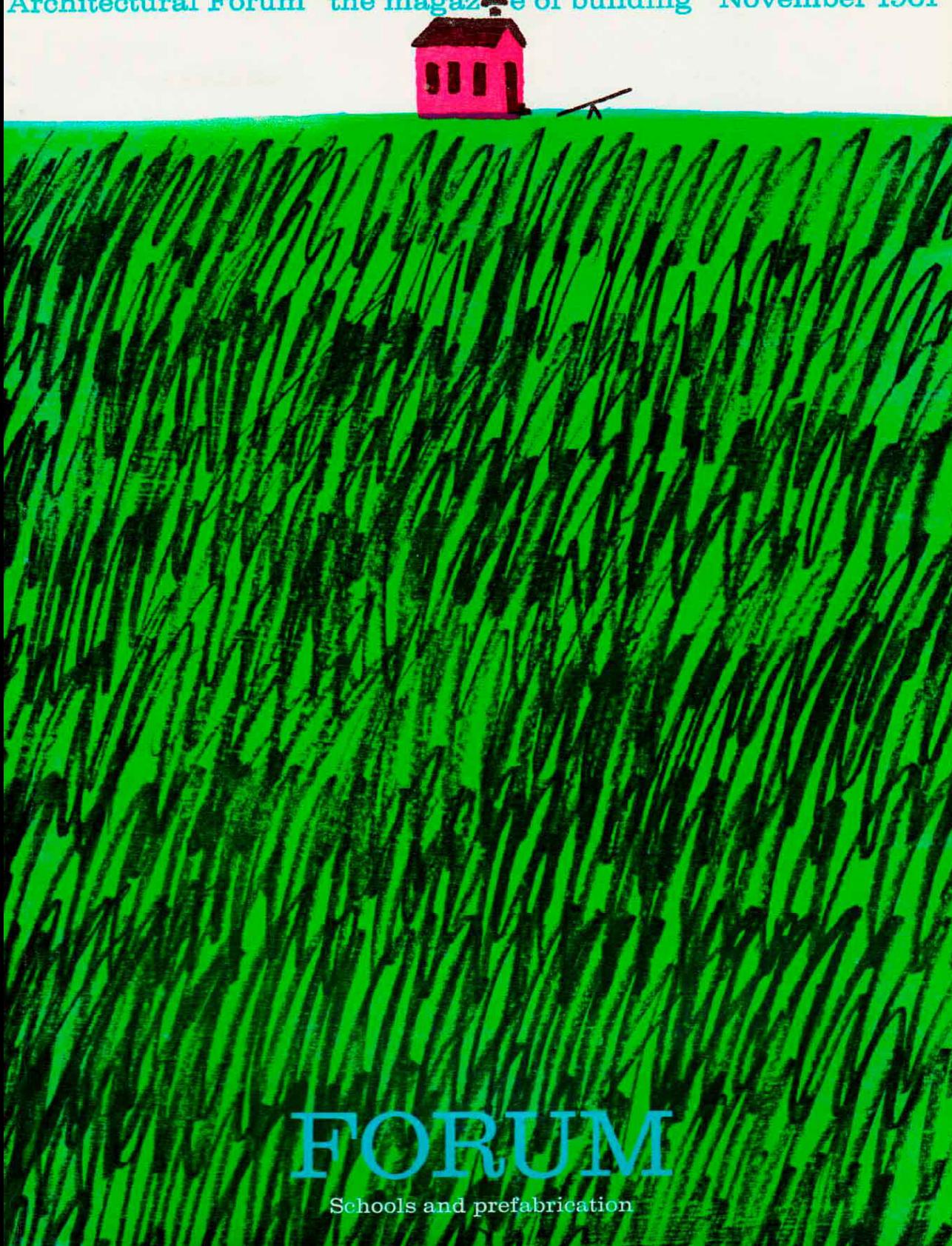
[Full issue.](#)



IBM's Thomas J. Watson Research Center, Westchester County, New York, designed by Eero Saarinen.

[Back to all covers](#)

Architectural Forum the magazine of building November 1961



# FORUM

Schools and prefabrication

# November 1961

An illustration by Komai squeezes the emphasis of the horizon line to the very top for a special issue on schools and prefabrication.

[Full issue.](#)



Minnie Jeffries Primary School, Detroit, Michigan,  
designed by Linn Smith Associates, Inc.

[Back to all covers](#)

# FORUM

# May 1962

Komai's typographic skyline for an issue about architecture in Chicago was his favorite cover for Architectural Forum. It was chosen for "Graphic Arts USA," the exhibition of American graphic design that was organized by the United States Information Service. For the exhibition, the English masthead was replaced with a Russian version that read "Artistic Design." In 1963 the exhibition opened in Kazakstan, visited Moscow and two other cities in 1964, and completed its tour in Romania in 1965. The cover was Komai's calling card to the diplomatic world; in 1963 Komai went to work full-time for the United States Information Service.

[Full issue.](#)

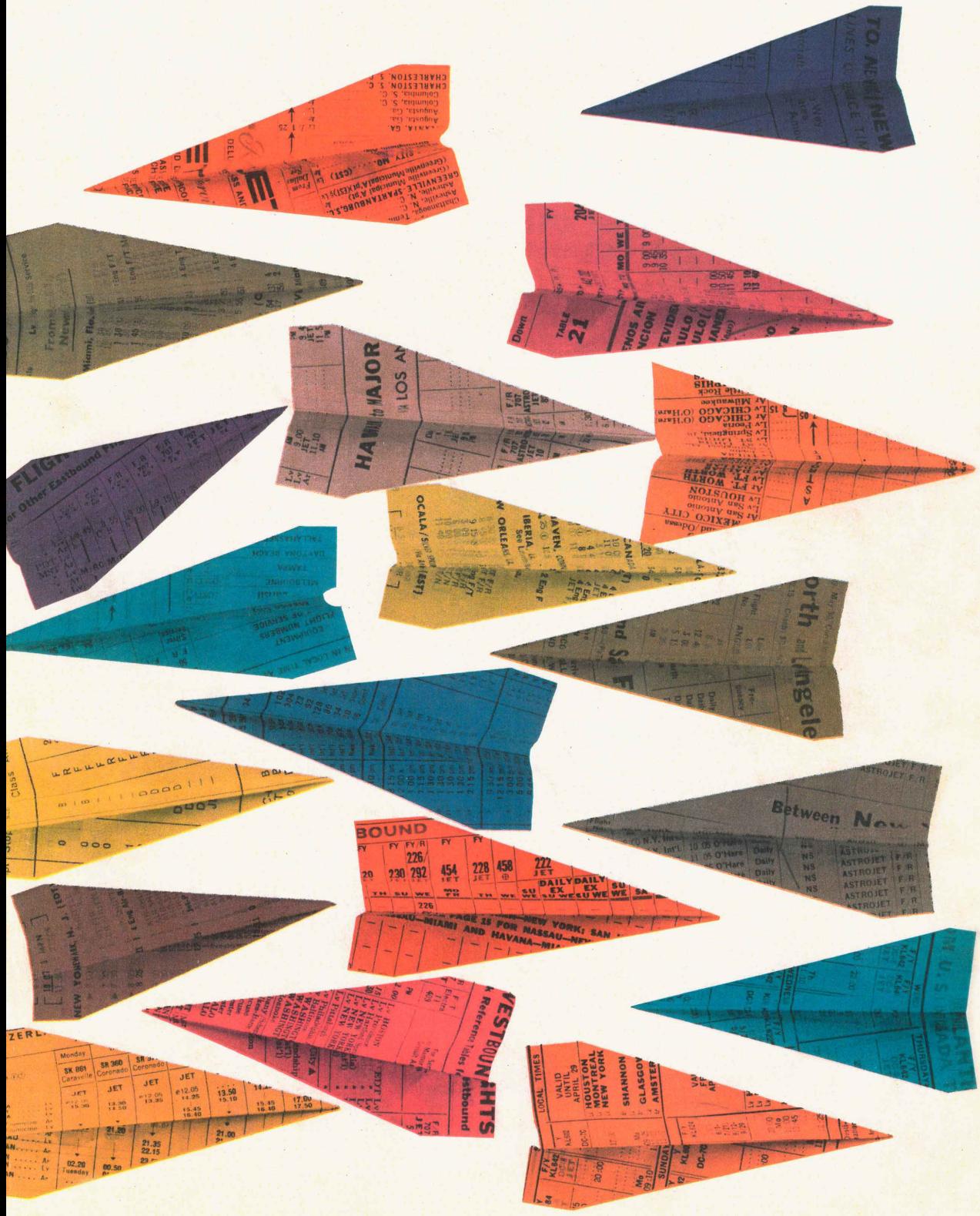


Marina City, Chicago, under construction. Designed by Bertrand Goldberg. Photograph courtesy of Portland Cement Association.

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**ARCHITECTURAL FORUM** THE MAGAZINE OF BUILDING JULY 1962

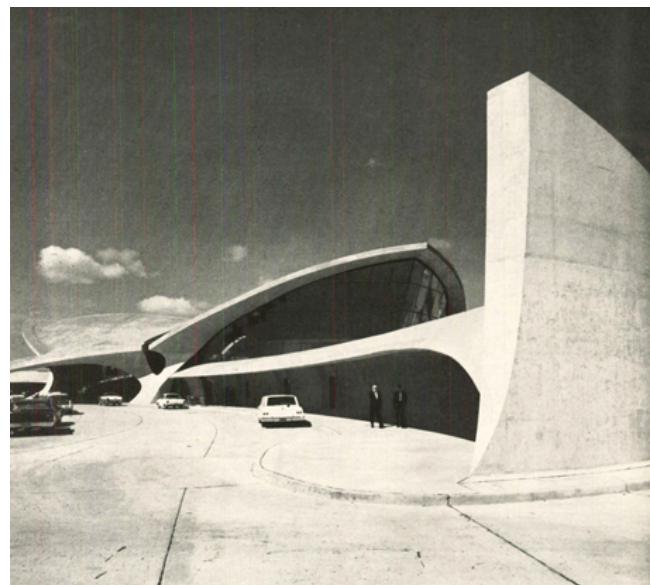
# FORUM



# July 1962

For an issue on new airports, Komai folded airline schedules into paper airplanes, then photographed and colorized them into an animated fleet.

[Full issue.](#)



Eero Saarinen's Trans World Airlines terminal at Idlewild Airport (JFK Airport).

[Back to all covers](#)

# FORUM

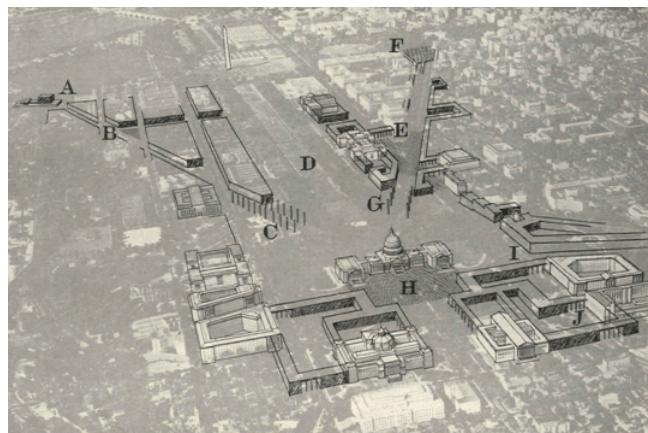
ARCHITECTURAL FORUM THE MAGAZINE OF BUILDING JANUARY 1963



# January 1963

Peter Blake, managing editor of *Architectural Forum* at the time, wrote of this cover: "Ray disappeared for a week or two, very mysterious in his elegantly Asian way, and made everyone extremely nervous; was he going to meet our printer's deadlines? And what on earth was he going to produce? With a few minutes to spare before the printer threatened to shut down the presses, Ray Komai walked into our offices and unwrapped what looked like an odd sort of pillow: he had sewn together a wonderfully zany fake 'souvenir' — a kind of pillow case of the sort that souvenir peddlers might (but never did) sell to Washington's millions of tourists."

Former staff designer Peter Bradford, then no longer at *Architectural Forum* but working nearby, wrote of this cover: "...they called me and I ran over. I laughed at the thing, it was so silly, so thoroughly apt. I stood there, still wondering after so many years, who was this guy anyway? Who would go to such lengths and pains to embroider a once-and-gone cover?"



Architect Paul Rudolph's design suggestions for improving Washington D.C.

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# FORUM

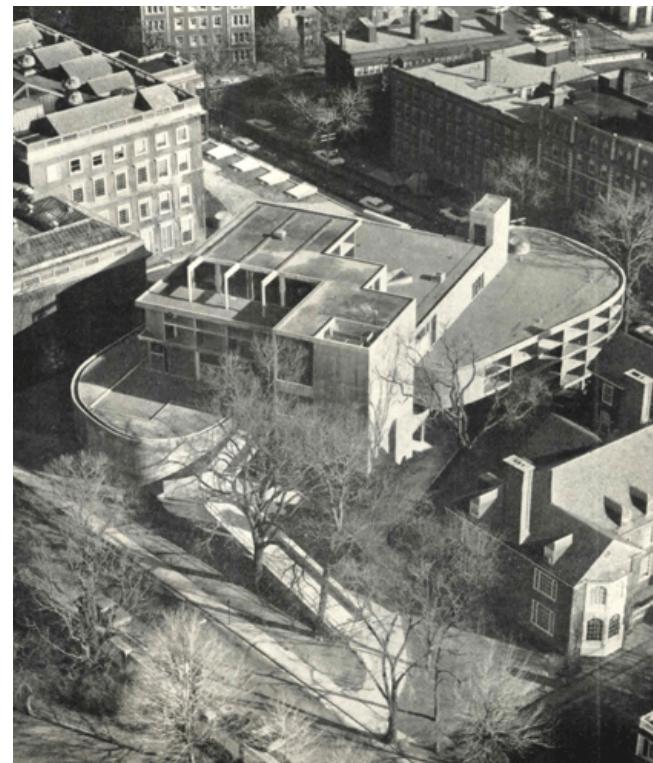
ARCHITECTURAL FORUM THE MAGAZINE OF BUILDING MARCH 1963



# March 1963

A varsity “C” cover for an issue about the design of colleges.

[Full issue.](#)



Le Corbusier's Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University.

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ARCHITECTURAL FORUM THE MAGAZINE OF BUILDING OCTOBER 1963

# FORUM



# October 1963

A question mark becomes a road sign on the cover of an issue about urban transportation.  
[Full issue.](#)



Photograph by Michael E. Bry for an article on urban transportation.

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# Contributors

This site was created by The Graphics Office, an exhibition and graphic design firm in New York City ([thegraphicsoffice.com](http://thegraphicsoffice.com)). Angela Voulangas and Doug Clouse are the office founders and principals.

The following people and organizations made this site possible, and we are grateful for their help:

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Ken Komai.

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Kris Thayer from the Minneapolis Institute of Art for her support and tips for using Quire.

# About

*Ray Komai: Architectural Forum covers, 1953–1963* presents large images of 46 covers of *Architectural Forum* magazine that were designed by Ray Komai. The project includes an introduction and brief descriptions of each cover. Embedded in the cover descriptions are related photographs from the original issues, as well as links to scans of the full magazines on the website of usmodernist.org.

This project accompanies a book about Ray Komai by Doug Clouse of the Graphics Office, published by Counselor Books, and was inspired by an exhibition based on the book at Fordham University in 2019. The magazine covers were the most popular visual element in the exhibition but there was not room in the exhibition to provide descriptions of each cover. This project presents those descriptions, while also providing The Graphics Office an opportunity explore the online publishing. Online publishing offers museums opportunities to share information and exhibitions in new ways.

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