

# Architecture: A Museum Is Also Art, Exhibition Shows

## 71 Recent Buildings in Diverse Styles House Treasures

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

IF your're counting explosions—cultural, population or other—include the museum explosion.

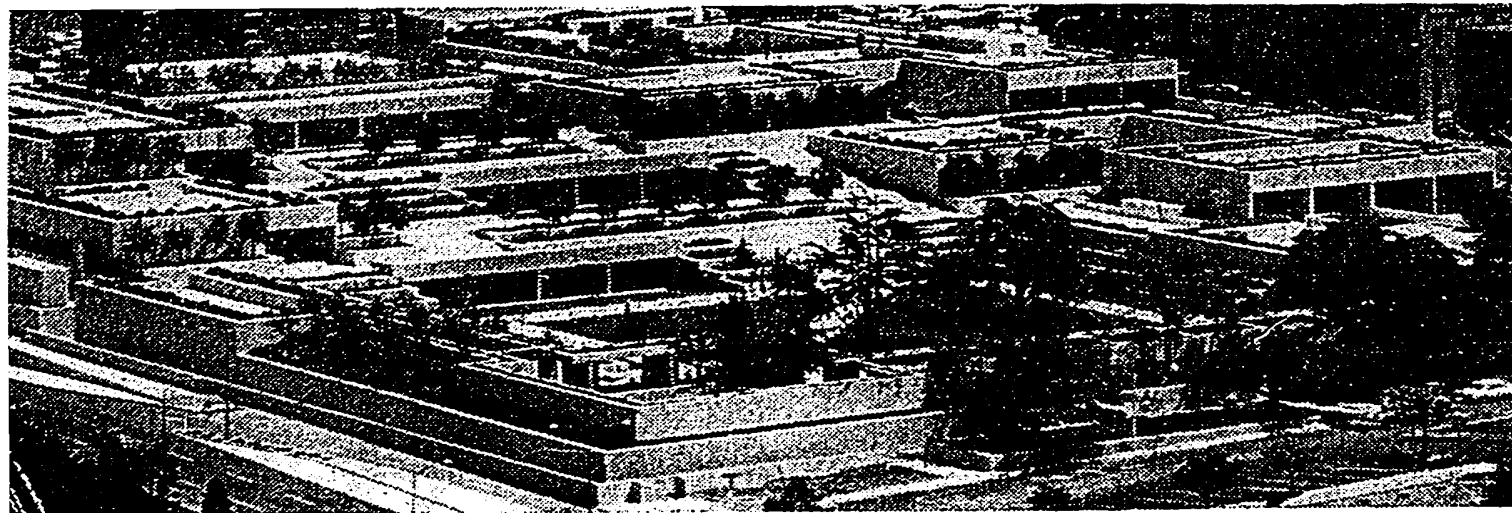
Statistics on all of them have become as familiar and dull as museum visits are supposed to be, but the fact remains that museum visits in this country have increased 500 per cent in 30 years to 300 million annually, and anyone witnessing the phenomenon of Sunday afternoon at New York's august Metropolitan would think that Rembrandts were being given away.

The statistician might also add that the museum explosion, in growth terms, beats the population explosion. The natural corollary could be that art is more popular than sex. The comparison usually employed, however, is that it is bigger than baseball.

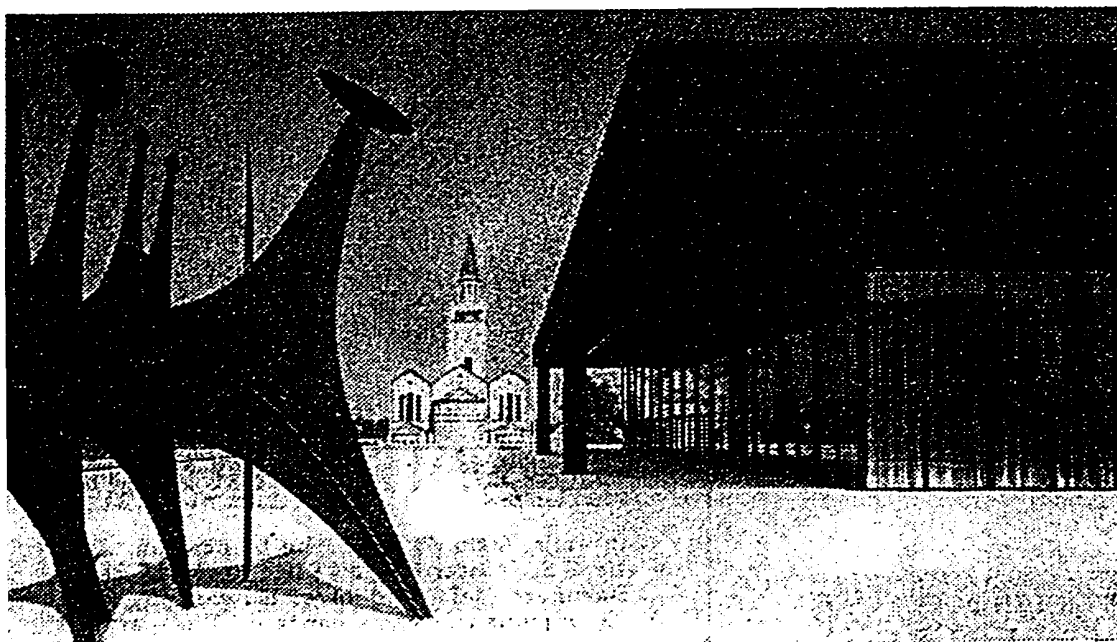
The fallout from the museum explosion is museums. Seventy-one of the newest and handsomest from 22 countries are currently on exhibition, in models, enlarged photographs and slide projections, at another museum, the Museum of Modern Art. Called "Architecture of Museums," the show will be on view through Nov. 11. In one large gallery, and without trying too hard, it documents some of the best building of this century.

What it presents is actually the second museum explosion. The first took place just before, at and after the turn of the century, stamping every major American city with the classical cultural symbol of the great colonnaded monument that served art, science and the general public with consummate architectural cool.

As Ludwig Glaeser, who directed the show, points out in the catalogue, the public museum did not exist before the 19th century; it is one of the great democratic institutions. But by 1917, the museums, stuffed with treasures, were denounced as "cemeteries" by the futurists and slated for



The completed but uninstalled Oakland Museum in California, designed by Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo Associates



Photograph of Mies van der Rohe's National Gallery in Berlin is in architecture exhibition

destruction in their manifestos. The present generation, temperate by comparison, attacks them as showcases of the Establishment.

They are showcases and treasurehouses, still. The best buildings rank with the treasures inside as works of art in their own right. And their range, stylistically, is the whole range of taste and innovation of contemporary design and technology, serving everything from antiquity to the avant-garde.

Their architects include the modern masters — Mies van der Rohe's just-opened National Gallery in Berlin, Frank Lloyd Wright's still controversial Guggenheim in New York and Le Corbusier's National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo.

Included are Marcel

Breuer's Whitney Museum in New York, I. M. Pei's about-to-open Everson Museum in Syracuse and the completed, but uninstalled Oakland Museum in California by Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo Associates of Ford Foundation building fame. In terms of design and environment, Oakland may be one of the most thoughtfully revolutionary structures in the world. The new museums skim the top talent of the 20th century and are obviously meant to stand as chefs-d'oeuvre for the ages.

There are structures for art, anthropology, history, sociology, religion, technology, toys, airplanes, church treasures, a Gallo-Roman lapidary and the peace memorial at Hiroshima. They celebrate life, art and death.

There are even buildings for the work of one artist—the Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum in Duisburg, West Germany, by the sculptor's son, Manfred—and for the private or public pleasure of one collector, such as Philip Johnson's personal underground gallery, or the Washington project for Joseph Hirshhorn's collection by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

The museum was called the "magic box" by Le Corbusier. Here are magic boxes of all kinds: underground and open air versions, variations on the blank-walled solid cube, and some of the most spectacular installations in remodeled European palaces and chateaus.

What the exhibition points

## The Modern Finds Leading Designs of the Century

on producing an objet d'art that shoves the other art works into the wings. There are a lot of Pyrrhic victories around for both.

It is no secret that James Johnson Sweeney fled the Guggenheim's domination for Houston, where he got a more adaptable masterwork by Mies, or that the Whitney, saddled with a nondescript image in a depressingly ordinary building, gained instant status and style, without changes of policy or collection, in its dramatic new home. That may be something for someone to ponder.

Ideally, the good museum is a synthesis of content, creative direction and appropriate form. But with art getting more minimal and architecture enveloping the environment (see Oakland), the examples in the Modern's exhibition suggest that there is a good chance for the 20th-century museum to end up as the whole show.