

## SPIRO KOSTOF

Cullinan Visiting Professor  
Rice University

### Lectures on Rome

3 November Monday  
13 November Thursday  
25 November Tuesday

13 January Tuesday  
15 January Thursday

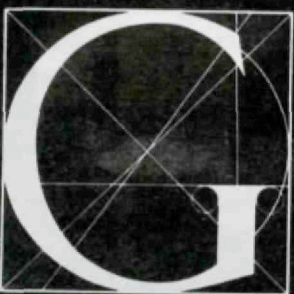
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## Citations

### Regional Cuisine and The Hungry Machine

"New Regionalism: Tradition,  
Adaptation, Invention"  
Sponsored by the Center for the Study of  
American Architecture  
The University of Texas at Austin  
24-25 April 1986

Reviewed by Malcolm Quantrill

Jessen Auditorium was full and the occasion promised to be convivial. The scope of "tradition, adaptation, invention" suggested tension and conflict of interest. All that was needed to complete the notion of a symposium was the free exchange of ideas. But "new regionalism" seemed to be a catch-all, a master key to fit every lock. The trouble lay in the order of speakers; that is, by putting the image-cart (Robert A.M. Stern) before the regional-horse (Kenneth Frampton). Howard Davis rightly said that we had to go beneath the surface and seek the underlying questions: "What is the relation of the image to the experience?" he asked. The only real discussion of those substrata came too late, however, in Frampton's paper at the third and final session.

In addition to the main speakers, all panelists were asked to make presentations. As pleasurable as it was to hear from Antoine Predock and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, this was unnecessarily time-consuming and repetitive: it also denied the audience adequate question time. Ringing the changes on "tradition, adaptation, and invention" also failed to yield real variety of the theme and depth of exploration. But there were memorable jokes. For example: Antoine Predock – "I always thought a regionalist was an architect who couldn't get a job out of state;" John Casbarian – "When we did Corpus Christi City Hall, the clients said: 'We want something that looks like Corpus Christi architecture.' So we asked them if they could show us some, and they answered: 'Oh no, we don't have any of it here'"; and Charles W. Moore (in response to the question "Who's a regionalist?") – "Well, I guess I am."

Stern, who opened the proceedings, found "regionalism" an interesting but troublesome term, "because it does not embrace the architectural task." He thought "tradition" more important because it connects us with the past, allowing us to re-invent forms. America has always been a modern country, he said, with tradition as a baseline reference. Innovation comes from technology not art, he insisted; while the past offers not answers but standards. He counseled: "We must face tradition in a responsible and scholarly way;" although his presentation fell far short of that standard.

Ricardo Legorreta spoke of his work and Mexican culture, finding the term regionalism "easily confusing." "The 16th-century architect knew what he was doing, but today life is too fast and we invent a new tradition every five years." He believed that architecture should mix the feeling of intimacy with a sense of mystery, and ended by showing pictures of his factory for Renault. At that moment we became aware of the omnivorous appetite of the multi-national corporations.

Lawrence W. Speck's paper "Regionalism and Invention" offered the intriguing suggestion that Kahn's barrel vaults for the Kimbell Art Museum bear a striking

resemblance to the bow-topped stock sheds that are so ubiquitous in the area. Gaudí, Wright, Aalto, Barragán, and Kahn all "invented a new regionalism," he said. There were other felicitudes about the Byzantine as a regional style and the Italian Renaissance as a 15th-century patriotic movement, but no adequate analysis of, or fresh insights into, the symposium's theme.

The task of setting the context for new regionalism in the present, with its roots in the immediate past, fell appropriately to Kenneth Frampton. Expanding his original "six points for an architecture of resistance" contained in his 1983 essay "Towards a Critical Regionalism" to become "ten points towards a map of regional practice," his concerns became: tactile presence; the liberative, critical, and poetic traditions of the 20th century – "to continue to ignore Wright's remarkable achievements in his Usonian houses is only one more sign of our pathological philistinism;" the true limits and institutional status of regions; the distinction between *information* and *experience*; the idea of space and place as a phenomenologically bounded domain; the interaction of *typology* with *topography*; the distinction between the *architectonic* and the *scenographic*; the relationship of *artifice* and *nature*; the continuity of the *visual* and the *tactile*; and a final emphasis on the testimony of *information* versus that of *experience*.

Architecture, Frampton told us, is politics! "We are confronted with a paradox: the pace of modernization continues with unabated ruthlessness . . . yet the romance of discovery and invention has lost its popular appeal." Concerning the multi-national corporations, "We should not deceive ourselves as to the total indifference of these conglomerates to the welfare of the society in which they establish their headquarters. Under this hegemony, patriotism is transformed into an absurdity and regional differentiation is a factor to be eliminated." Legorreta has warned us about the dangers of the present speed of information versus the time taken to assimilate experience. Frampton said: "From a cultural point of view, we are confronted with a situation in which everything seems to have already happened. Everything is touched by a sense of being past." He recalled a journalist's interview with a partner of an American corporate practice, which ended with the architect's complacent irony: "Let's face it: this is a hungry machine!"

The published proceedings will be worthwhile for the extended argument of Frampton's position and Wayne Attoe's concluding contribution, "Regionalism and the Search for Identity," a thoughtful analysis of the Competition for the Municipal Government Center at Phoenix, Arizona. But the politesse of the first day, with the virtual suppression of discussion, offered little to advance the realpolitik of regionalism, old or new. ■

## Paul Rand: A Designer's Art

Paul Rand, *New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, 239 pp., illus., \$39.95*

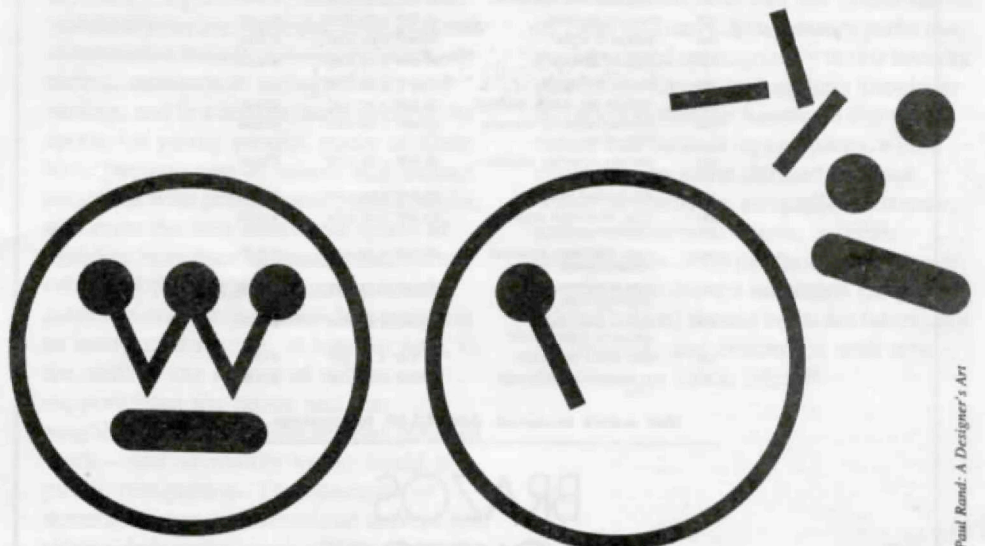
Reviewed by Philip C. Burton

Paul Rand has taught graduate-level graphic design at Yale University since 1956. His sessions with the "kids" are classic Rand performances. At the beginning of the semester the students come one at a time into the seminar room of a 1927 neo-Gothic building and spread their portfolios out over the table. Rand will go over the pieces one by one, identifying a problem when one exists, point immediately to the culprit, and rattle off six different ways the piece could be improved. This routine not only gives Rand an idea of the capabilities of each member of the class but also offers each student the chance to see a master at work. Subsequent sessions involve groups of three or four students presenting their weekly progress. Clarity, succinctness, and vision are the hallmarks of these classes and now Rand has made them available to us all through his new book, *Paul Rand: A Designer's Art*.

At a time when it seems the graphic design profession has come of age, with a national American Institute of Graphic Arts organization, design history books, symposiums, courses springing up all over, and the publication of numerous monographs on significant designers, we are able to read about and see some of the best work of its kind. Certainly the work contained between the covers of Rand's book has influenced many generations of designers.

The fact that art is part of the title is an indication of what's inside. Vasari and Maurice Denis open the first paragraph in the chapter "Art for Art's Sake," in which Rand defines the term graphic design in the context of art at large. In the course of the book, Rand explores many practical aspects of design, including symbols, trademarks, stripes, repetition, the rebus, collage and montage, typography, legibility, packaging, three-dimensional design, and color. All good information. But it is Rand's ability to bring into focus the less tangible features of graphic design – imagination, integrity, and invention – that makes this book truly inspirational.

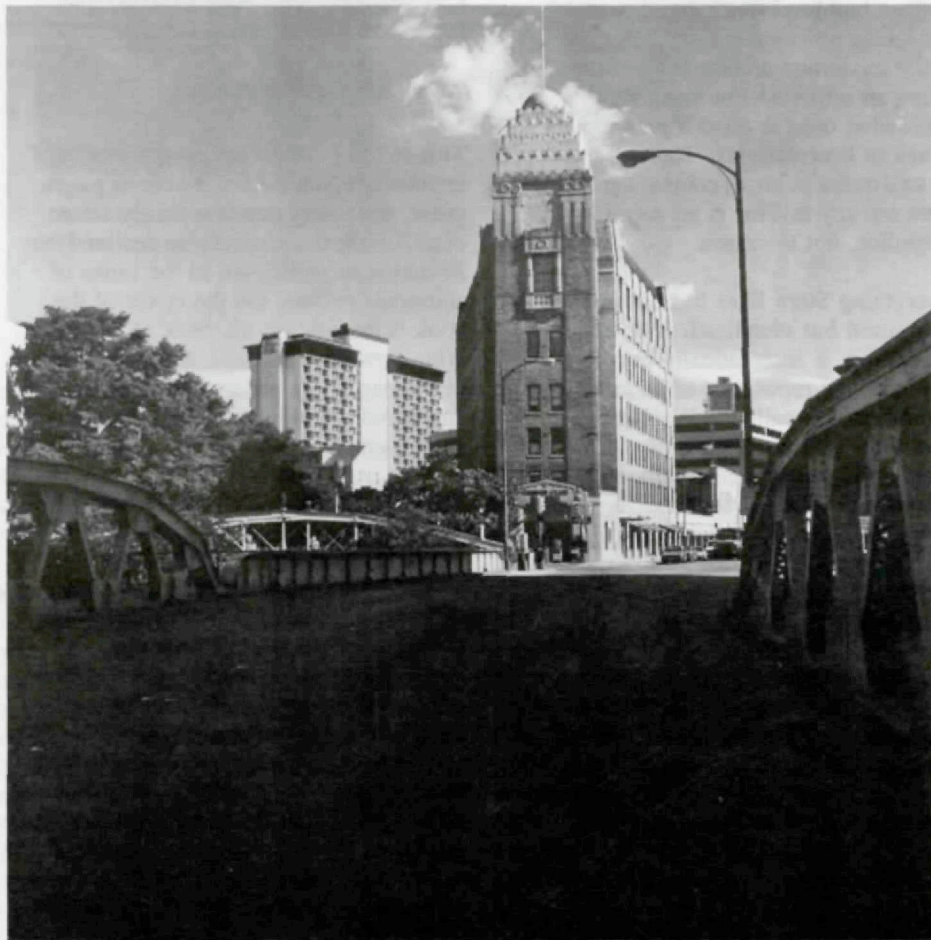
This book allows us to share a very personal world, one filled with curiosity, surprises, and vitality, one that has at its roots classical visual principles that are essential to the designer whether using a ruling pen or a computer. ■



Left: The symbol for Westinghouse Electric Corp., 1960. Above: Newspaper advertisement, Westinghouse, 1968



## A Guide to San Antonio Architecture



San Antonio Casino Club Building, San Antonio, 1927, Kelwood Company, architects

Chris Carson and William McDonald, editors, Larry Paul Fuller, consulting editor, *San Antonio: San Antonio Chapter of the American Institute of Architects*, 1986, 136 pp., illus., \$15

Reviewed by Mike Greenberg

To natives, guidebooks are usually more interesting for their omissions than for their commissions, but *A Guide to San Antonio Architecture* offers a little of each. Produced by the San Antonio Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, this 136-page volume is nearly square in format and nearly square in presentation, but it packs a lot of reliable data into its capsule descriptions of 239 sites. Included are all known winners of AIA design award programs "except in certain instances wherein the current condition of the property precluded its being listed" — an ominous proviso — and sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places, as well as many buildings not on either list. The capsules, each with one or two photographs, are arranged geographically, and each section is introduced with a short historic summary and schematic map of the area surveyed.

The editors, Chris Carson and William McDonald, have prepared cogent historical pieces on San Antonio architecture in general and the River Walk in particular. Apart from putting into clear context the major figures and influences on the city's architecture, the historical overview is valuable for its concise statement of the San Antonio outlook of the first quarter of this century:

*Yet it was not stylistic uniformity that made the architecture of this period so compelling, but a tacit architectural agreement, an unformulated set of conventions, that — at least in historical perspective — produced an unobsessive consistency. These conventions imbued San Antonio architecture of the 1920s with an urbanity and sense of local particularity that transcends style. A penchant for rich ornamental detail, affirmation of the primacy of the street façade, a deftness at turning street corners, and a preference for brown tapestry brick were recurring architectural characteristics.*

The salient phrase is "historical perspective." Just as the spectrum of a chemical element represents the wavelengths the material doesn't absorb,

the architectural spectrum of an older city represents the buildings that didn't make way for progress, a disease against which San Antonio had developed a powerful immunity for at least a generation after the start of the Great Depression. Most of the conventions the editors mention were common to many ambitious and prosperous American cities of the period from 1870 to 1930, the period of San Antonio's boom, and it is by an accident of history that so much of that period survived into the '80s in San Antonio. It is those survivals that, collectively, give San Antonio's older neighborhoods their peculiar tonality.

Few of the more recent items in this book, however, are privy to the "tacit agreement" of which the editors speak. Some are good buildings nonetheless; many are not. Seeing so many buildings in this compact format sharpens the contrast between the city's old and new — not just a contrast of styles, but radical differences of viewpoint about urban life.

Important buildings from both sides of the divide are omitted. The Kelwood Company's frighteningly intense Aztec Theater (1926) is mentioned only in passing in another listing, as is the National Bank of Commerce Building (1957), by Kenneth Franzheim and Atlee B. and Robert M. Ayers — the 1950s aesthetic is surprisingly undated in this sturdy, carefully detailed tower of limestone and brick. O'Neil Ford's first buildings for Trinity University are missing, but we get several of his houses. Missing, too, are representatives of the eccentric, amusing — sometimes patently bad — minor buildings that gave San Antonio's neighborhoods their distinct character. The collection is a bit too button-down, like an authorized biography.

A section at the end holds short profiles of nine important architects of San Antonio, from François Giraud (Ursuline Convent) to O'Neil Ford; an architects index would have been a useful addition. Indeed, the principal value of this book is to celebrate the city's architects, both the household names and the less recognized practitioners. It is a joy to thumb through, connecting names with faces, as it were, and tracing lineages. San Antonians, especially, will find many old friends pictured here, along with a few unwelcome in-laws. ■

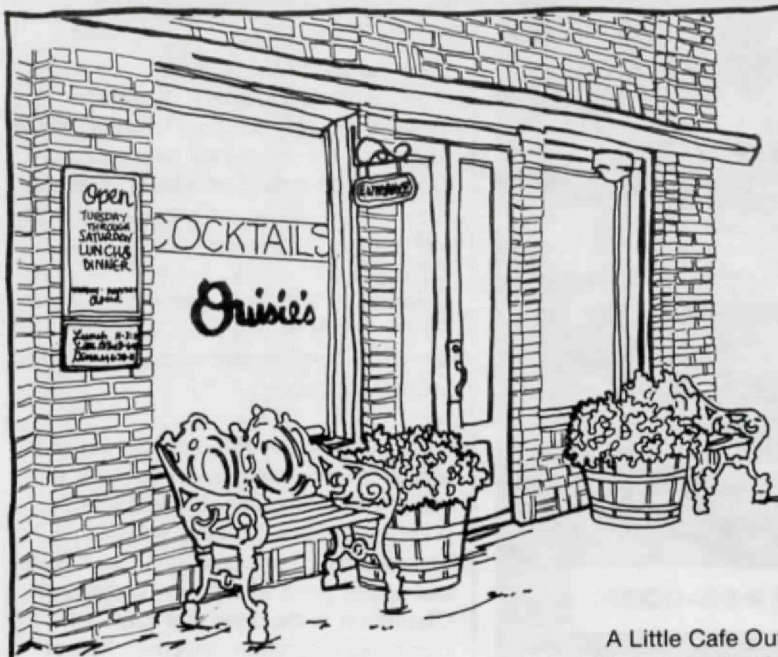
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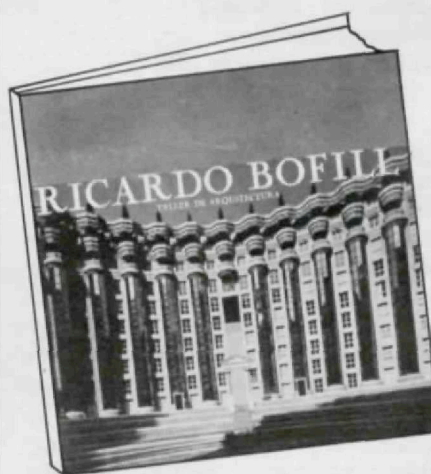
#### RICARDO BOFILL

Introduction by Christian Norberg-Schulz.  
Photographs by Yukio Futagawa.

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## Too Much Pride, Too Little Place

"Pride of Place," produced by KQED-TV,  
San Francisco, 24 March - 12 May 1986

Reviewed by J.W. Barna

A school of psychotherapy formed around the philosopher and anthropologist Gregory Bateson in California in the late 1940s. Searching for a more useful model for the etiology of mental illness than that of traditional psychotherapy, its members took as their starting point not repressed memories but patterns of human communication. All communications, they postulated, have two aspects, the *digital* — what is being said — and the *analogical* — how it is being said. When the two aspects of a communication conflict and other conditions are just right, they found, it can make people crazy.

One was reminded of these "communications theory" therapists during the slowly creeping hours of "Pride of Place," the eight-part series recently broadcast on public television. Starring Robert A.M. Stern, celebrated architect and author, professor of architecture at Columbia University, and head of Columbia's Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture, the series had big problems, both digital and analogical.

To take the digital first: Judging from the series, Stern's mind seems to work this way: "I like this idea. It sounds logical. If I repeat it often enough it will be true." Thus we have, repeated again and again and again, parts of a litany, including: Classicism is the style that knits all American institutions together. Mount Vernon is "the backyard of the nation." Cesar Pelli's Winter Garden in New York's new Battery Park City development is "a living room for the city." (Will New York object if we put our feet up on the coffee table?)

It's not that Stern's arguments are wrong, although many of them are so twisted or so attenuated that they sound thoroughly off the wall. In the picture book that accompanies the series, Stern is at least cogent — describing the complex story of Paul Rudolph's Art and Architecture Building at Yale University, for example, in some detail. On television, however, Stern allows the presentation to be almost bizarrely sketchy — as when he walks down the street at Yale, waving his hands and nodding agreeably as guest Vincent Scully gestures at the Art and Architecture Building and dismisses modernist architects as people "with a vested interest in mediocrity." This misprision of events is related in the midst of a lecture on the folly of ignoring history.

The problem is that Stern seems to think anything he says is self-evident. People, defending Stern's program, have said that complicated ideas can't be dealt with on television. That suggestion, as "Nova" and half a dozen other PBS series attest, is silly. But instead of logical development, Stern gives us some of the most static television this side of C-Span, with a single rhythm: assertion, reiteration, reiteration, summation. The visuals have a curious thinness. We see the same buildings over and over, and the views of the buildings we do see leave out vast quantities of information. The camera goes up, down, around, and back again, but reveals very little. The one thing we see too much of is Stern — modeling various preppy outfits; sawing the air between him and whoever he is talking to; standing on Plymouth Rock, his Gucci shoe buckles flashing; forlornly lugging his baggage around Detroit's Renaissance Center; smirking, with Paul Goldberger, at the gaucherie of Houston's Galleria; and driving his red Chrysler convertible around the water tower at Jones Beach on Long Island not once but half a dozen times.

But here we get into the analogical problems with the series. First, there is Stern's historiography. To Stern, any architect working in any historicist style at any point, particularly if Gothicizing college buildings and offices, was producing something truly American, while modernist architects were merely aping an imported European style. If borrowing once is good *a priori*, why is it bad in later decades? There is much to be said on the point, of course, but Stern does not say it. This is an appeal to prejudice, not to reason.

Everything Stern likes has not just to be praised but sacralized. If he likes a building, it automatically becomes "proud," the repository of national aspiration. He calls the Woolworth Building the "cathedral of commerce" and praises the car-derived details on the Chrysler Building with a little catch to his voice, as if he had just thought of the idea, leaving out the fact that both buildings were not universally esteemed when they were built.

The one guest in the series who substantially disagrees with Stern is Max Bond, a black architect who points out, on the steps of the Capitol in Washington, D.C., that "for black people in America... Classicism has not always been benign." Digitally, this is a valuable counterbalance to Stern's entablature-mania, some historical shading that goes outside the narrow range Stern otherwise allows. But in the same episode, we see Stern and Leon Krier being driven in a carriage around Colonial Williamsburg, praising its urbanism as a model for the nation. The driver is a black man, impersonating, one gathers, a slave from the good old days. So much for historical sensitivity: the analogics win every time.

And finally there is the use of Stern's own work. It comes in the first episode and practically sinks the whole series. After describing how the modernist office buildings in Manhattan had disrupted his boyhood dreams, Stern takes us to a building site where a building crew in colonial drag is putting up a timber-frame house. A couple of camera jumps and we find ourselves looking at modern workmen putting up a house that Stern, he informs us, designed himself. The problem is the music. Harsh on the Manhattan skyline, it goes pseudo-classical when we cut to wood framing, and turns into a gloppy hymn when we arrive at Stern's house.

Is this what Stern intended? Maybe not, but in normal television terms the progression is clear: having seen a bunch of bad buildings, we are now going to see architecture the way it's supposed to be. Stern is presented as the fulfillment of the promise of American architecture. Even for television, to which the most vegetative standards of intellectual vitality are normally applied, this is just too much. The analogical Stern, whatever his digital intentions, makes himself into the architectural Sylvester Stallone, invoking a misty-eyed patriotism only to wrap himself in it.

Most of this seems to be the fault of Murray Grigor, the show's director, who gave us the equally soporific "Cosmos," in which Carl Sagan was presented not as scientist but as magus, spouting about "billions and billions" of this and that long past the point of bathos.

One hopes that Spiro Kostof and his projected PBS series, with a different sponsor and a different production crew, as well as an inestimably better narrator, will fare better. The story of American building will have to wait for someone a little less willing to confute it with his own dreams. ■

## Mask of Medusa

Kim Shkapich, ed., New York: Rizzoli,  
1985, 463 pages, illus., \$49.95

Reviewed by Ben Nicholson

This 463-page, awe-inspiring monolith of architecture, interviews, notebook pages, prose, and poetry stands as the testament of an American architect who declined the invitation to participate in the ranks of consumer culture. On the cover of the book is the title, at the back of the book is his drawing of Medusa, and in between, in the pages, we are invited into the unfettered workings of John Hejduk's autobiography.

To open the book, Daniel Libeskind has written two extensive introductions in which he circumscribes Hejduk's contribution perfectly, remarking: "His work seeks to heal the rift or wound in architecture that is a result of the lacerating penetration of practice by sophisticated expedience." The book then is divided into two parts, joined in the middle by a "crossover" that serves as a paginated index separating the critical texts from the architectural projects. The two parts are then further divided into seven time frames, taking us from Hejduk's school days to the present.

The critical text includes every facet of Hejduk's career. We can find the nine-square grid problem, an essay on photography and architecture, and two interviews with Don Wall. In one interview Hejduk's profound relationship to Le Corbusier is revealed in a chilling story formulated after his visit to Villa La Roche. In this apparently domestic townhouse, he presents its Janus-like façades to reflect Dr. Blanche's psychic activity. Through intuitive reasoning, Hejduk is able to transfigure the library, balcony, and refectory table into a choir stall, pulpit, and altar, and thus restore a spiritual dimension lacking in the common perception of Le Corbusier.

The work pivots in 1974 after completing a scholarly ablation of western art and architecture, manifested by nearly 40 house projects and the completion of the Cooper Union Foundation Building remodeling in New York City. Hejduk states, "[in] the Modern Movement there were only programs of optimism... we are entering a program of pessimism in architecture. But this pessimism is not necessarily negative."

In the subsequent frames, shot through with poetry, he leaves the solitude of the private house and comes to the black and white city of Venice to make the *Silent Witnesses* and the *House for the Inhabitant Who Refused to Participate*. After 1979 he produced the Berlin, New England, and Lancaster Hanover Masques, bending the English tradition, started by Inigo Jones, of a poetic manufacture of program, substantiated by enlightened construction to one of simultaneous story-telling and building stories to reconstruct the world from the ground up.

Time is a recurrent query in his recent work and is indicated by obsession with clocks. In the Berlin Masque, the clock tower is divided down its length by the numbers 1-12. No doubt this is mirrored by the bookcover's numbers 1-12 and 12-1. *Mask of Medusa* has seven frames (7 PM?), and we wait with bated breath for the coming of the nocturnal hours from 8 PM till midnight.

The sublime quality of this book suggests an inherent danger that provincials will abuse the work, borrowing from its generous style. This is guarded against by the Gorgonian text, so be warned of *Mask of Medusa*: Reflect upon those careful words lest you go too quickly and be cast irrevocably into stone. ■