

THE SECOND YEAR ARCHITECTURAL STUDENT

Charles W. Quinlan

□ *This is the second in a series of articles which are arranged to promote an awareness of the teaching aims and techniques of the Department of Architecture. The article concerning the First Year Architectural Student appeared in the May - June 1960 issue.*

The curriculum of the Department of Architecture extends over a five year period. The first year of the program is devoted to courses in English, algebra, trigonometry, two and three dimensional design, materials and methods of construction and architectural design. The second year of architectural training is a critical one for the student. As in the first year he is plagued with "outside" courses such as calculus and analytical geometry, general physics, and engineering statics. I say "outside" courses because, unfortunately, this is the way that they are too often regarded. I am sure that everyone, at some point in his schooling, has failed to understand the importance of a particular course; but, it appears normal for each architectural student to regard any activity, save design, as superfluous. Frequently this disturbing attitude or a lack of ability in the direction of the supporting courses cause a student's downfall. Assuming, however, that the student can successfully master the required courses, he must, during this second year of formal training, decide if the architectural vocation is an appropriate choice. It is the sentiment of the Department of Architecture faculty that it is unthinkable for a student unsuited to the discipline to go beyond the sophomore level. Every effort, therefore, is made to counsel each class member carefully. The student receives an indication of his academic standing each time one of his projects is graded, but mere passing grades are not the full story for an "A" student may intensely dislike design work, and the barely-squeaking-through "C" student might better give up the struggle. Choosing one's lifetime activity is a difficult and critical responsibility.

This is an account of the second year design program that was followed at the UNM this past year. Two sections of the course were offered in order to establish a more efficient student-instructor ratio. As each student is required to develop personal solutions to the problem, individual attention from the instructor is mandatory. The program started off with a short problem, of two weeks duration, concerned with a fishermen's retreat. Required were rapid solutions to problems of site, climate, circulation and architectural character. Primarily, this first problem is presented to make the student rapidly cognizant of the type of faculty criticism and the caliber of work he is expected to execute during the year.

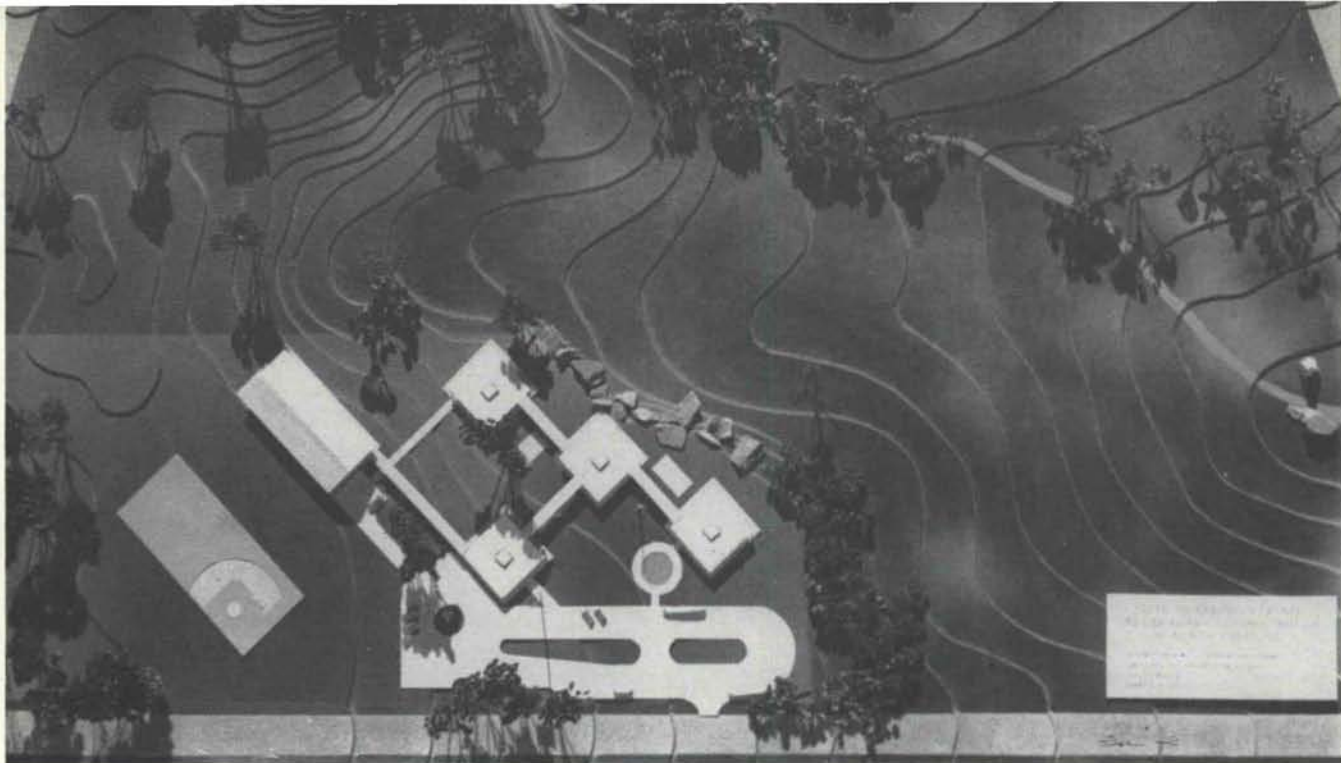
The major part of this first term was devoted to city planning and its ramifications. I like to tell about a class problem my son had at age four and one-half while in day school. The teacher was attempting to make her class aware of the family unit and hit upon the idea of a field trip to find where this family unit resided. Off they went to search the immediate neighborhood, and lo and behold one of those bright four year old girls did spot a house. After a semester of studying the family group objectively, the teacher suggested that perhaps the place that each child leaves in the morning might possibly be a home which contains a family unit. What a gigantic step for their little minds to take.

You actually do not see and understand until you do on the spot research, but once a situation is investigated thoroughly there is no difficulty in applying research techniques to similar problems. In much the manner of the day school class, our sophomores used Belen as their subject for research. Here they discovered that physical layouts of all cities have many features in common and that it is possible to discover the underlying factors which govern growth patterns. For this case study an expeditionary force invaded Belen for first hand study of local conditions. Team reports on vegetation, drainage, soil conditions, rock outcroppings, water supply, climate, transportation, public utilities, public and private lands and buildings were developed; a land-use map was prepared. The physical layout of Belen was then studied in relation to urban planning done in ancient and medieval periods as well as modern times. Outstanding residential developments and planned "utopias" were also reviewed. The next phase of the problem dealt with the depicting of Belen as each designer envisioned it twenty years hence. A degree of existing conditions in Belen were to be respected and knowledge of city planning principles was to be demonstrated in the problem solutions. Succeeding aspects of the problem dealt with certain common building types which one would find in such a locality: a neighborhood shopping center and multi-family dwelling units. But here we did not want to get beyond general planning concepts and basic architectural character. Thus, after spending the better part of a semester, the cityscape, which at first appeared quite nebulous, was gradually defined in understandable and relatable terms.

A degree of flexibility is necessary in any syllabus. Based on problems submitted during the first semester, it was obvious that more attention should be paid to graphics. A bit of juggling was done to fit in a week of rendering exercises.

Two sections of sophomore design were continued in the spring semester as almost all students continued with the course. An effort was made, however, to switch instructors to allow the student's exposure to a different personality. The initial design problem of the second semester was involved with site planning an elementary school. Each student was asked to manipulate five buildings to satisfy circulation and site conditions. The space relationships involved three classroom units, an administration unit and a multi-purpose building. After considering drainage, slope, sun, safety, vehicular and pedestrian circulation patterns, the solutions were presented in the form of models.

Sprinkled between regular assignments are sketch problems, a carry over from the old *esquisse-esquisse*. These problems, of short duration (4 hours) and fanciful nature, are calculated to rejuvenate the designer by playing upon a possible sudden exuberance. One such problem was concerned with a temporary flower stand which was to be placed in a public park. Schemes were to be presented in prespective form, thereby forcing practice in graphic techniques.



A very successful series of seminars were conducted this term on the achievements of various prominent architects. Many students harbored disproportionate admiration for relatively unimportant architects and as a consequence these group talks proved iconoclastic in nature. Images of many architects were evaluated and put into proper perspective. Such well-knowns as Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe were discussed as well as lesser figures like Gio Ponti, Frederick Kiesler and Juan O'Gorman. Each personality was investigated as to education, experience, works completed and influences. Speculation was made as to what the future would hold for the man's design philosophy. These reports, plus appropriate bibliography, were stenciled and assembled in a handy booklet for future reference. Reports on urban planning of the previous term were also preserved in this same fashion.

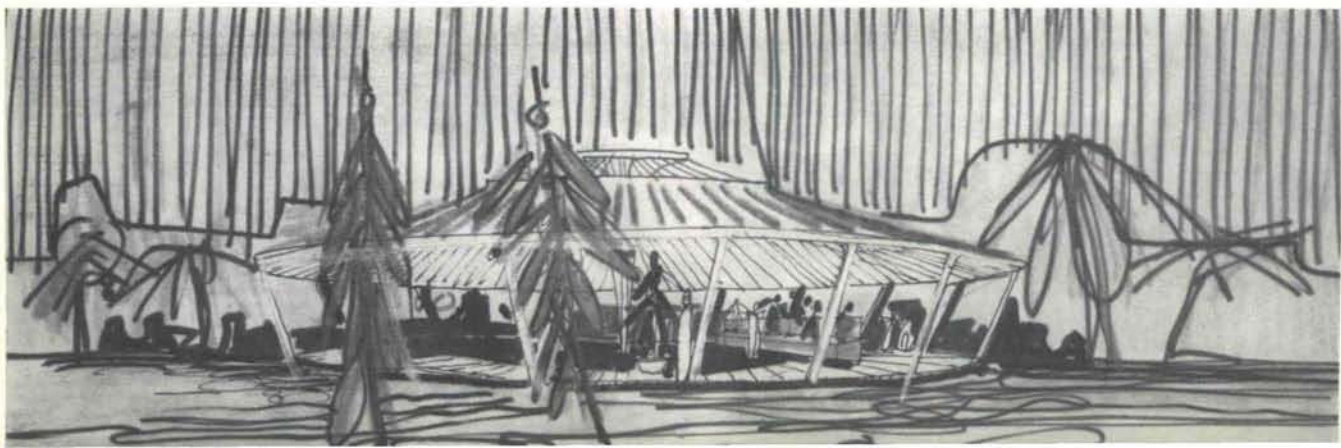
The site planning problem was followed by the annual competition problem, this being done in collaboration with the College of Pharmacy. Each architectural student was assigned a pharmacy senior who served as client for the design of the interior of a pharmacy. Retail circulation and selling techniques were studied using perspectives and large scale building sections. Much time was spent deliberating the best way to handle the numerous sundry items which often ob-

scure the prescription counter in the non-ethical pharmacy.

Next came a fun problem — serious fun. Each student was asked to determine what characterized exhibition buildings by developing a temporary structure to display information gathered during the International Geophysical Year. The I.G.Y. of 1958, as you know, saw the greatest concerted study in man's history of his planet and its surroundings. Perhaps, what is more important is the fact that *all* nations united in this monumental project. The students' problem lay, then, in creating an atmosphere suitable for displaying information gathered during this formidable effort and in such a way as to make it attractive to the non-professional.

An entire week was next devoted to the practice of opaque water-coloring. Other delineation techniques will be examined at the first opportunity. The remaining three weeks of the school year were allocated to the architectural space relationship of a long-span structure and a small adjacent building as might be needed for an industrial complex.

Twenty-seven of the beginning class of 33 sophomores will now move up to third year work which is essentially the same in nature, although slightly increased in scope and detail. Failures and drop-outs were

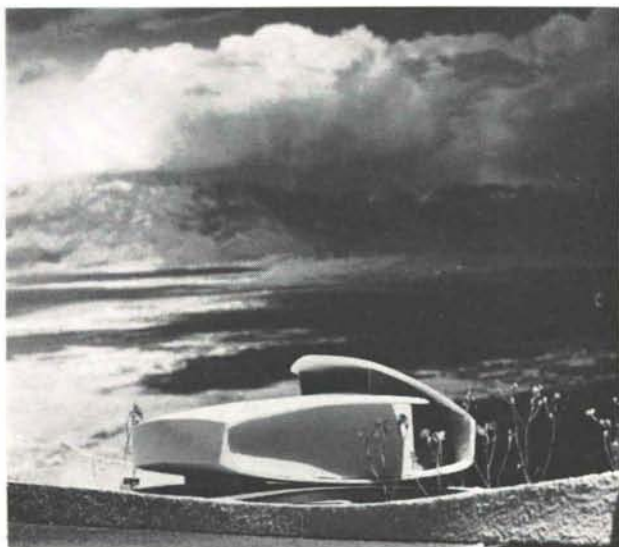


not out of proportion when compared to other departments. It is most important that only the well-prepared reach this junior level for each submission should indicate an increased proficiency in architectural solution, presentation and comprehensive understanding. It is anticipated that eventually ten of this class will complete the undergraduate program in architecture.

The primary objectives of sophomore level problems are to define precisely space relationships, circulation and architectural character. The students' projects are judged by the department faculty, ably assisted, quite frequently by some member of the architectural profession.

The curriculum of the Department of Architecture is so arranged as to acquaint the student with the profession of architecture. In this respect the success of instruction is of vital interest to the practicing architect and to the building industry. Upon completion of the University requirements, the graduate enters your office to participate in the architect-in-training program. The Department of Architecture remains alert to advances in teaching methods and to the changing scope of the profession of architecture.

—Charles W. Quinlan

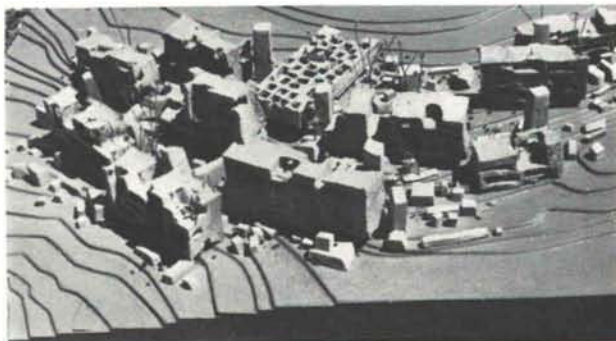


Upper left. Stanwood Formes, second year. Three week site problem: A School.

Lower left. Leroy Velasquez, fifth year. Four hour sketch problem: A Retail Flower Shop.

Above. Jimmy Sumida, fifth year. Senior thesis: A Concert Hall for Albuquerque.

Lower. Anthony Predock, fourth year. Six week problem: A Resort Hotel for Juno, Alaska.



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