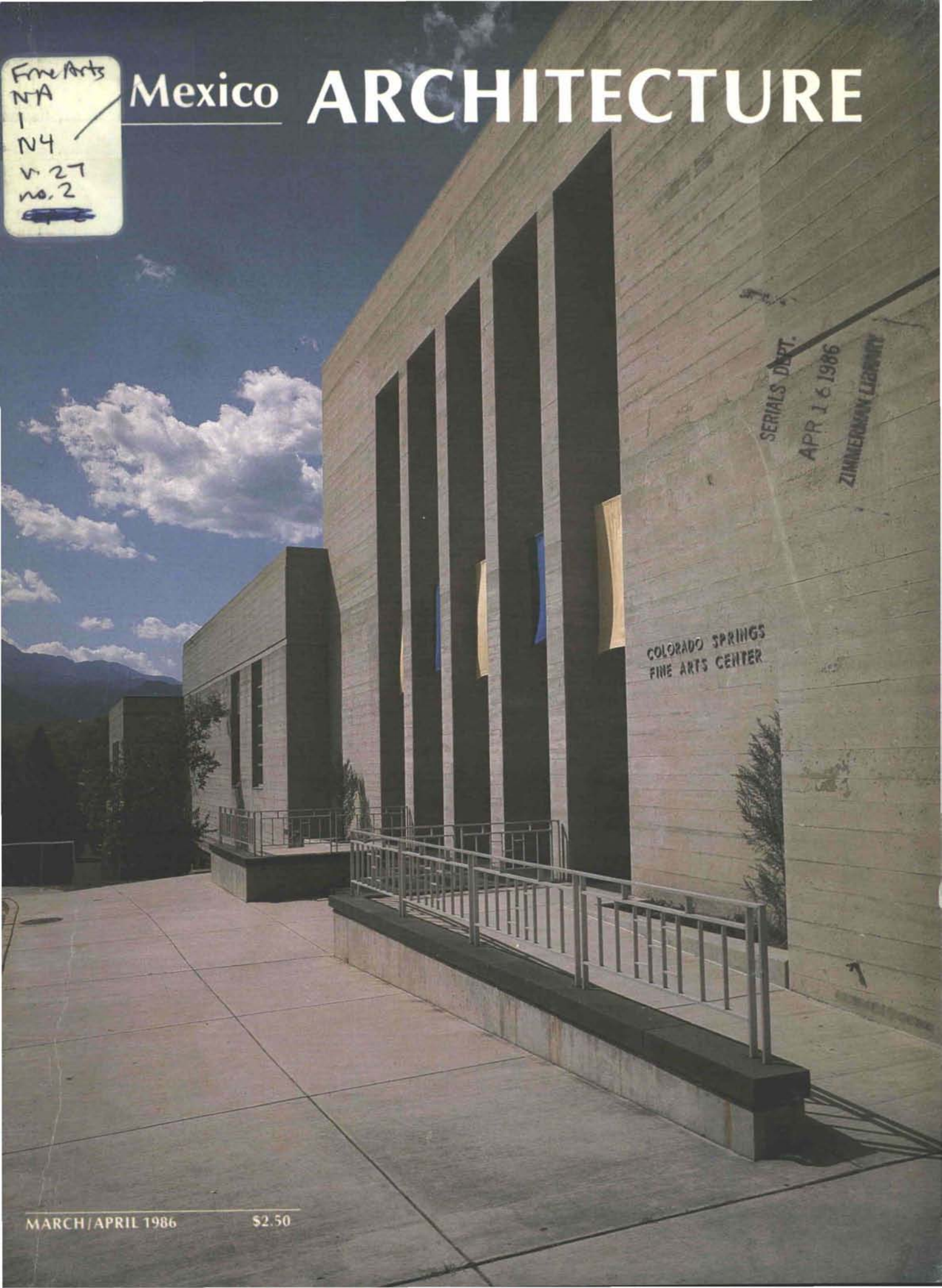


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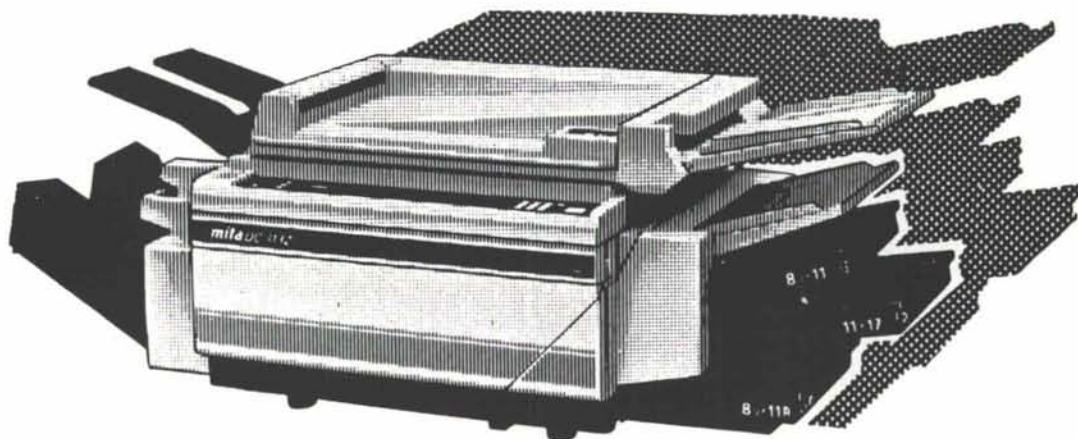
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• vol. 27 no. 2 • march-april 1986 • new mexico architecture

In this issue:

A look at a significant building designed by John Gaw Meem, FAIA. The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center is considered by many to be John's masterpiece. The article has been prepared by Chris Wilson, a freelance architectural historian. Chris has done extensive work researching the architectural past in the New Mexico communities of Las Vegas, Aztec, Santa Fe and Tierra Amarilla. His interests range from folk housing to the architecture of tourism. In addition to his research and writing is very active in the efforts to revitalize the neighborhoods south and west of the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Chris studied under Bainbridge Bunting at UNM.

The cover of this issue of **New Mexico Architecture** is sponsored by Mrs. John Gaw Meem. Faith, we are most grateful for your most generous contribution.

□ □ □ □  
It is again timely and proper to express our thanks to two groups of people who have been financially responsible for the publication of **New Mexico Architecture**. Without the faithful support of our many advertisers we could not print the pages that fill each issue. Without the generous contributions made over the past year for the color covers we would not have been able to do them. These kind and wonderful business firms and individuals have kept alive this magazine. The Staff is deeply thankful for their support. Readers, architects, product specifiers please express your appreciation for and your recognition of their vital contribution to the continuation of this magazine.

JPC

# nma

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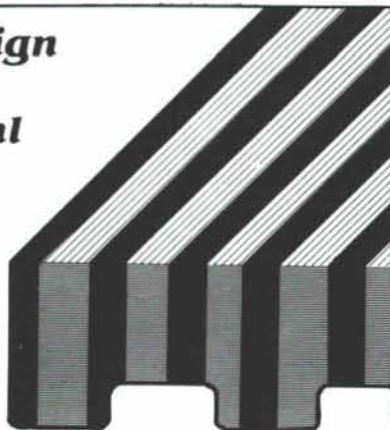
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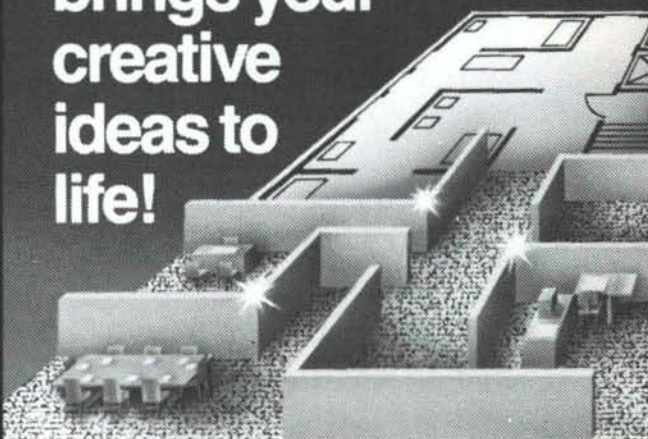
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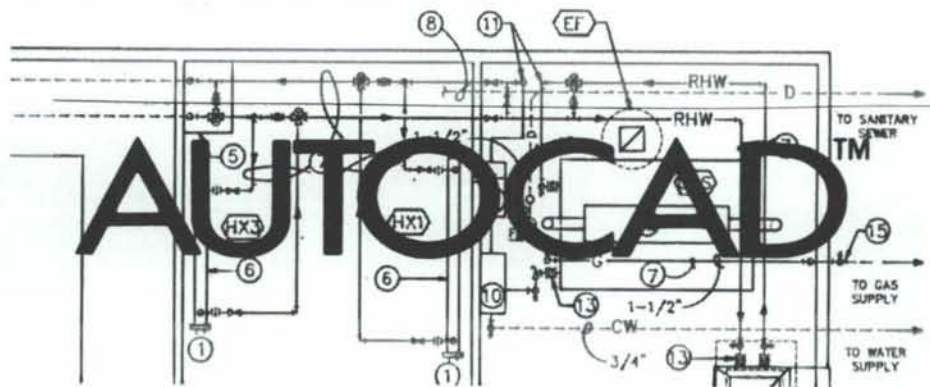
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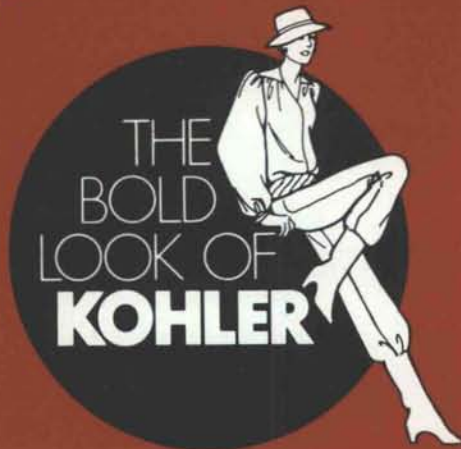
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## ARCHITECT SELECTION PROCESS A DISCUSSION

Don P. Schlegel, FAIA

The New Mexico Society of Architects strongly supported and actively lobbied for the passage of the Procurement Act of 1984. Our hope was that the Act would ensure consistency of selection procedures throughout the state. Various local jurisdictions, however, put various interpretations on the meaning of the Act, with the result that, in many cases, price became the only criterion for choosing an architect or engineer.

Based on the problems presented by these different interpretations, the NMSA agreed to collaborate with the State Purchasing Office to help develop guidelines to assist local jurisdictions. Attendance and presentations at a series of workshops around the state is a first step in this collaboration. What follows is a summary of what is to be discussed at the workshops.

Under the provisions of the Procurement Act, a local jurisdiction has three options: 1) they can call for competitive sealed proposals with the selection based upon qualifications alone; 2) they can call for competitive sealed proposals which include a bid price which becomes part of the evaluation criteria; 3) they can call for bids for professional services and select on the basis of price alone.

The first option is the one we are most familiar and comfortable with — that is selection on the basis of qualifications alone. The large building owners in the state of New Mexico (the State, Federal Government, Albuquerque Public Schools, the City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County) use this method of selection. The firms are ranked and a short list is named — then the agency can negotiate with the firms in order of preferential ranking, until an agreement is reached that satisfies its fee criteria. The State publishes an architectural/engineering rate schedule as does APS and the Federal Government. The City of Santa Fe is in process of developing one. The schedules represent guidelines of what fees should be and are a point of departure from which you begin negotiations.

The second option is the sealed proposal with price as one of the criteria. This presents many of the same problems as the next option and it is recommended to procurement officers that price be given a low percentage of the total criteria. Following this recommendation will allow flexibility in selection, as in the case of a firm with extensive experience in the type of building

## THE STATUE OF LIBERTY WINS THE AIA'S HENRY BACON MEDAL FOR MEMORIAL ARCHITECTURE



The Statue of Liberty, which has stood in New York Harbor for 100 years as a symbol of freedom and hope to millions of immigrants, has been selected to receive The American Institute of Architects' 1986 Henry Bacon Medal for Memorial Architecture.

Named in honor of the 1923 AIA Gold Medal recipient who designed the Lincoln Memorial, the Henry Bacon Medal recognizes excellence in memorial architecture around the world. It will be presented

being proposed with, perhaps, a price that is not the lowest. Experience and qualifications can be weighted and given higher priority than the price.

With the third option it must be understood that a bid for architectural/engineering services is only as good as the specifications outlined by the procurement office. In order to receive an accurate bid, needs must be made specific in every facet of the specification with service required clearly outlined. An example of a proper specification is one developed by Sandia Labs. It clearly outlines what the mechanical system should be, what the structural system should be, what the electrical system should be and what the building materials should be. It comes with a book of standard details which tells the architect or engineer exactly what they have to do. This is a type of specification that allows an architect or engineer to bid a job accurately.

D.P.S.

at the AIA 1986 National Convention in San Antonio, June 8-11.

"It is fitting that, on its 100th anniversary, the Statue of Liberty should be honored by the AIA. It stands as one of the great artifacts of the world, a part of the long procession of huge figures — the Colossus of Rhodes, the statue of Athena on the Acropolis, the colossal Nero in classical Rome," said the AIA Jury on Institute Honors, which selected the Henry Bacon Medal recipient.

"The Statue of Liberty is not just architecture, not just sculpture, not just engineering; it has some of the elements of all three. It is a prime example of collaborative design," said the jury, chaired by Los Angeles architect Thomas R. Vreeland, FAIA.

The jury observed that the statue "has appealed directly to the sentiments of vast numbers of people — as an expression of the affection of one country for another, as a symbol of the most cherished tenet of our country, as a magnificent addition to New York Harbor. The success of this appeal is manifest in the copies — large and small — that people have in their homes, on their placemats, on their T-shirts. It proves that design of the highest caliber can have vast popular appeal."

Now undergoing extensive restoration in time for its centennial celebration this year, the Statue of Liberty was first conceived by the French in 1865 as a monument "to pay homage to liberty and to commemorate the first centennial of America's independence," according to the nomination.

The classical figure of the Goddess of Liberty was designed by the Alsatian sculptor Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi, and the statue's innovative iron skeleton was designed by the famous French structural engineer Alexandre-Gustave Eiffel. Richard Morris Hunt, dean of American architects, designed the statue's monumental 154-foot pedestal, completed in 1886.

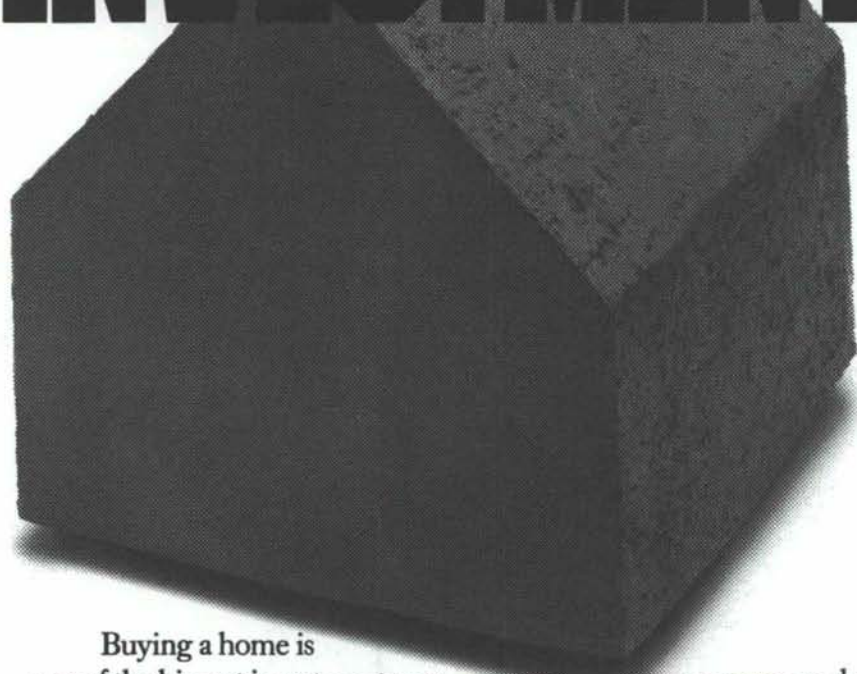
The 305-foot-high Statue of Liberty was unveiled on Bedloe's (now Liberty) Island on October 28, 1886, to an audience of more than one million. The monument, reflecting the enduring friendship between France and the United States, quickly became the symbol of new life to millions of immigrants.

In 1980, the French-American Committee for Restoration of the Statue of Liberty was formed, and the New York City firm, Swanke Hayden Connell Architects, was engaged to head the team of support architects and engineers in supplying plans and specifications for the statue's restora-

News continued on page 9 ➡



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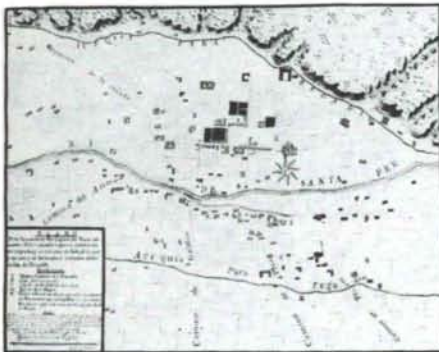
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Continued from page 7

tion. Working in concert with the U.S. National Park Service and the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, the firm is now completing the comprehensive three-year effort to improve the statue's physical condition and enhance visitor access. Restoration is scheduled to be complete on July 4, 1986. □

## TIERRA INCOGNITA



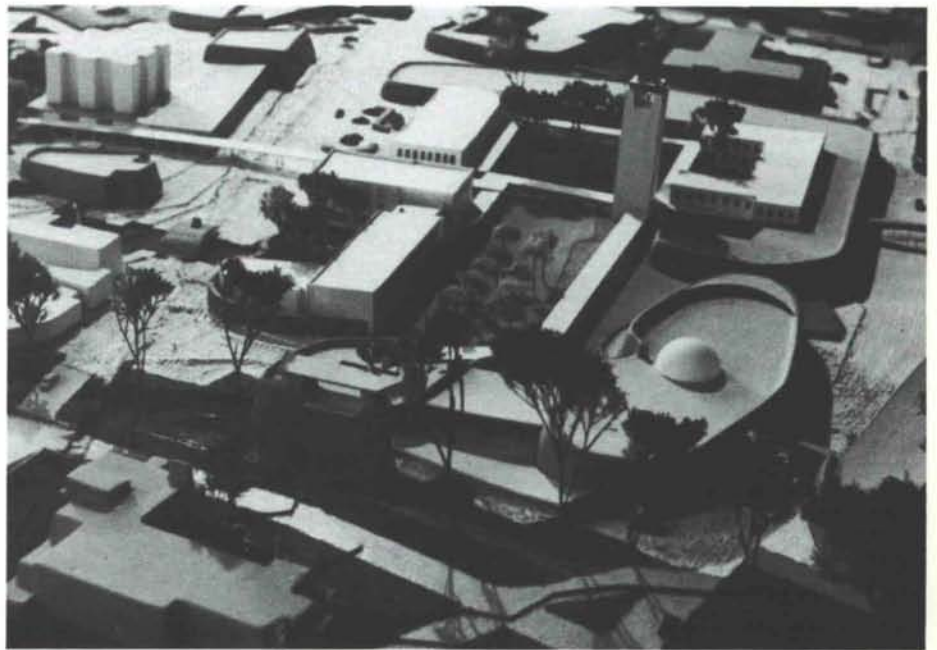
*Plano de la Villa de Santa Fe, Capital de Reino del Nuevo Mexico, by Jose de Urrutia, 1766, from Tierra Incognita.*

*Tierra incognita*, or unknown land, opened last fall at the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, it presents examples of Spanish mapmaking in the Southwest from 1540 to 1821. The maps reflect the discoveries of succeeding explorations — expanding from a time when the rest of the world knew little of the Americas.

"It is more than a show of maps," says Palace director Tom Chavez. "With our interpretive materials it is a garnering of knowledge about the development of the Southwest."

Maps from the historic period covered in this exhibition were executed by artists, members of the Royal Corps of Engineers and Roman Catholic priests. Many of the maps were made in Europe and published there, from information gathered on location in the Southwest. A few were painted or drawn in the field. They included information on vegetation and on the indigenous people, picturing the people and their movements over the years.

The featured piece in this show, drawn from the Museum of New Mexico collection, is a map painted in oil on canvas in 1760 from drawings by Don Bernardo de Miera y Pacheco, who was an alcalde (mayor), soldier, merchant and artist of Santa Fe. The rare Miera y Pacheco map was publicly exhibited for the first time



## Un-Built New Mexico

Represented by the model pictured above, a long-range master plan for the development of the New Mexico State Capitol complex was prepared by Architects Associated in 1962. The plan envisioned a concentrated, pedestrian scaled complex built around the existing tower, as a central element, and with the Legislative Chambers and Executive offices in separate, but adjoining buildings, located at the edge of Santa Fe River.

Architects Associated was a collaborative partnership of Santa Fe architects: David deR. Lent, Philippe Register, Robert E. Plettenburg with John

P. Conron as Partner-in-Charge. The plan received awards from the New Mexico Society of Architects and the Western Mountain Region, AIA.

The plan was conceived under the Republican administration of Governor Edwin L. Mechem and totally ignored by the succeeding Democratic administration of Governor Jack Campbell. By ignoring the plan, its recommendations and guidelines we have the much loved Roundhouse. At a point in the construction of the Roundhouse when the structural frame was about completed, a large sign appeared on the surrounding construction fence: "Christians vs the Lions - Sunday, 3 pm".

when the *Tierra Incognita* show opened at the Museum of Fine Arts in 1983. Chavez calls it "one of the most important artifacts of antiquity in New Mexico."

Ten historic documents from the British Library in London also appeared in that original show, and have been reproduced in color and original size for the Palace. Approximately 35 originals and reproductions are included in the exhibition, and one-half are from the Palace collections. Others have been gathered from Brigham Young University, the Arizona Heritage Center and the California State Museum.

"*Tierra Incognita* is entertaining, aesthetically pleasing and scholarly," says Chavez. "It has broad appeal, original

research, good design and outstanding artifacts."

*El Portal - September-November 1985.*

## PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE COLLECTION

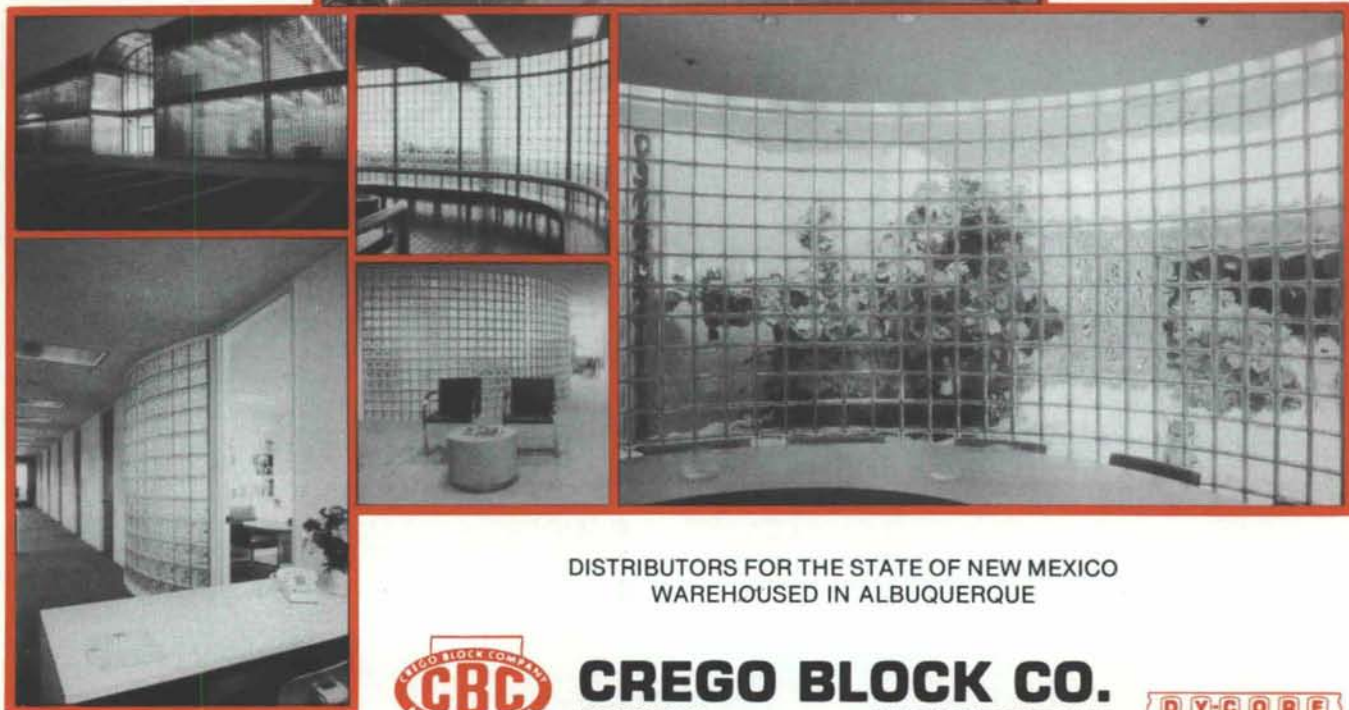
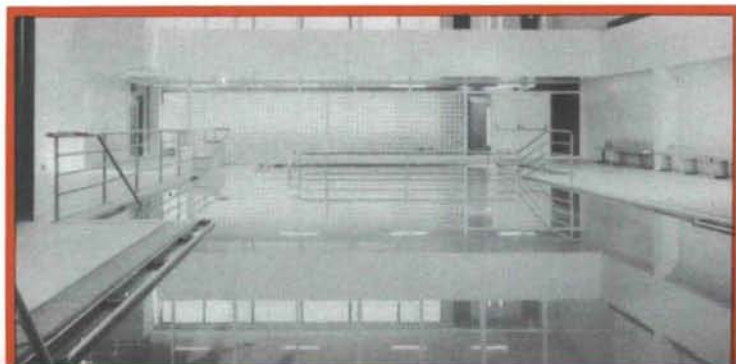
The Museum of Fine Arts has a rich and growing collection of photographs by nationally and regionally known artists as well as creative newcomers. *Photographs from the Collection* is a sampling of recent acquisitions and other works from the permanent collection on view from October 27 through January 5, 1986.

News continued on page 23 ➡



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## FOOTHILLS LIBRARY ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

The Foothills Library, at the southwest corner of Lomas Boulevard and Tramway Boulevard, is a branch library designed by Van H. Gilbert Architect for the City of Albuquerque.

The Library will consist of approximately 13,000 square feet and will contain 50,000 volumes. The building will be sited to take advantage of the views of the nearby Sandia Mountains. An Art Park has been integrated into the site as part of this project. The building will step up toward the northeast, which will create the opportunity for south-facing clerestories. Day lighting is a key energy conservation concept being used. Additionally, trombe walls will be incorporated where feasible. The entrance will be oriented to the southwest, facing Eastridge Drive, with exterior courtyards on either side. The interior will feature an axial circulation pattern and large open areas for flexibility to meet the Library's changing needs and functions in the future. The color of the exterior material will match the granite composition of the Sandia Mountains.

Construction of the Foothills Library is scheduled to begin in April, 1986.

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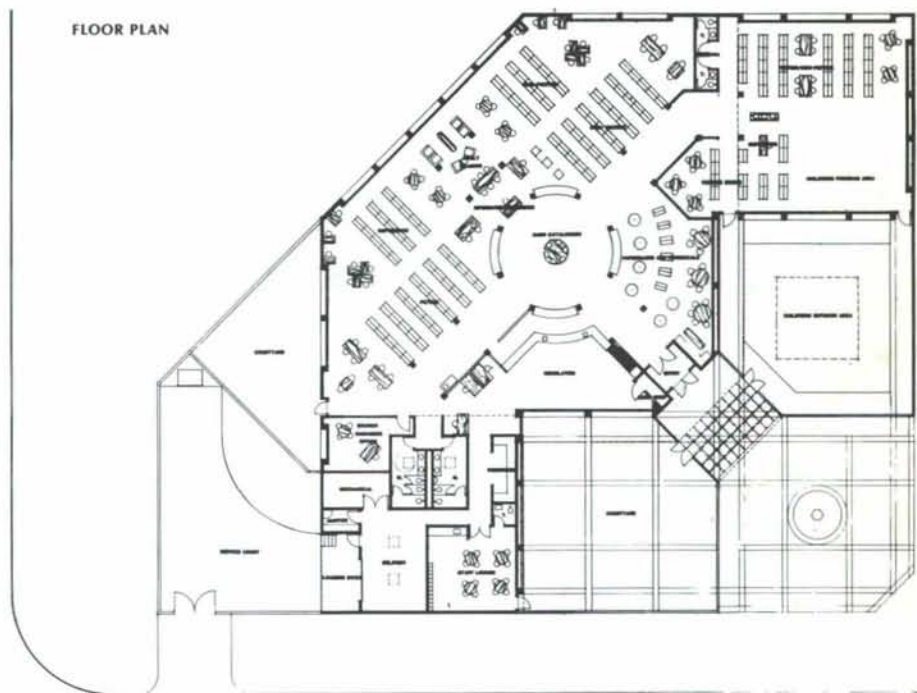
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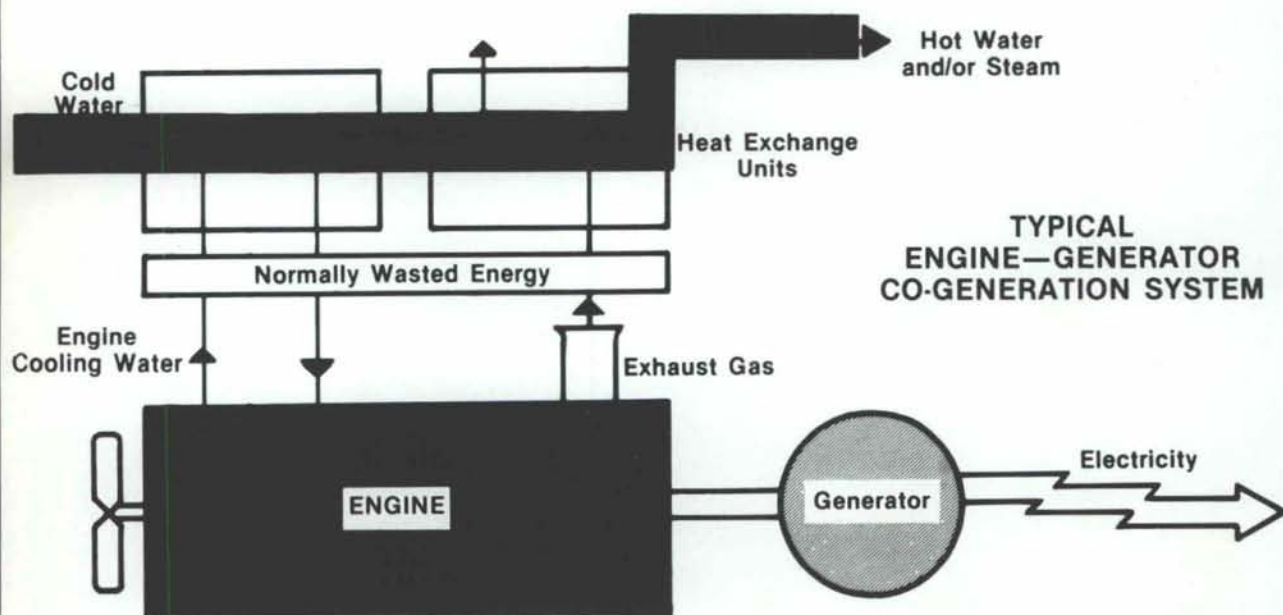
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# IN THE MODERN SPIRIT: John Gaw Meem's Design for the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center

---

Beginning work on the design in the fall of 1932, John Gaw Meem sensed both the complexity and the potential of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, calling it "an opportunity for a major artistic development." Now recognized as his masterpiece, it earned him national and international recognition on its completion in 1936. As his first Modern commission, the fine Arts Center challenged Meem to reconcile his affinity for the regional Pueblo style with the Modernist belief that a building should express the spirit of the times. In the process, he articulated his stance as a creative regionalist, and matured as a designer.

Meem had first taken an interest in architecture in the early 1920s while convalescing in Santa Fe with tuberculosis. After opening an office in 1924, he worked exclusively in the recently developed Santa Fe style — an eclectic revival of local Spanish Colonial and Pueblo architecture. The adobe look of much of his early work, however, was only skin deep; beneath a layer of stucco were modern materials — concrete, brick and hollow clay tile. While his first work was domestic in scale, by the late twenties, he was receiving major commissions, notably, an addition to La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe, and two dormitories at Fountain Valley School in Colorado Springs.

In 1928, Meem met Alice Bemis Taylor who would become the patron of the Fine Arts Center. He was 34 at the time, and she, 51. They shared an interest in the Indian and Spanish art of the Southwest, and grew closer after Meem married Taylor's niece, Faith Bemis, in 1933. Taylor was impressed with Meem's early work and, within months of their first meeting, commissioned him to design a chapel in memory of her husband. She followed this with a request that he design a new library for Colorado College (which was never built), and an Indian Museum to house her rapidly growing collections.

## Evolution of the Idea

In February of 1930, Taylor approached the Broadmoor Art Academy, near her home in Colorado Springs, about purchasing a small portion of their grounds as a site for her museum. The Academy had been established in 1919 in a house donated by the Spencer Penrose family, developers of the nearby Broadmoor resort. As the discussions progressed, two figures new to Colorado Springs assumed leading roles: The Academy's new director Boardman Robinson, a noted illustrator and muralist, and Mrs. Meridith Hare, the head of the Academy's building committee who had worked with Meem on the Fountain Valley School buildings.

Through 1931 and into early 1932, Taylor, Meem, Robinson, Hare and Mrs. Penrose gradually expanded the Indian Museum idea into a more comprehensive arts center. A Little Theatre seating seven hundred and a small library to house Mrs. Taylor's collection of rare books were quickly added. The Broadmoor Art Academy, however, would continue in its existing buildings.

In major cities, cultural institutions had often been consolidated into groups of buildings arranged around formal civic plazas. And at first, Mrs. Taylor's museum, the theatre, library and art school were conceived of as such a complex of separate buildings. But the relatively modest size of the individual elements, the cramped building site, and the inefficiency of separate staff and public facilities for each building caused the rejection of the civic plaza arrangement.

by Chris Wilson

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*To simply express the function of the materials in a building without any reference to tradition leaves the design a little empty, a little less rich than it otherwise might be.*

John Gaw Meem

---

Pushed to a novel solution, Meem consolidated all of the elements into a single new building. In time, this solution would be adopted in medium sized communities across the country. But as far as those involved could determine, it was the first project to combine so many cultural activities in one structure. By the time the building program was formalized in the summer of 1932, its scope had been further expanded to include a music room seating 125 and apartments for a director and building caretaker, in addition to the theatre (scaled down to 400 seats), the library, the Indian Museum with storage and exhibit space, and the art school with studios and its own galleries.



## Development of the Plan

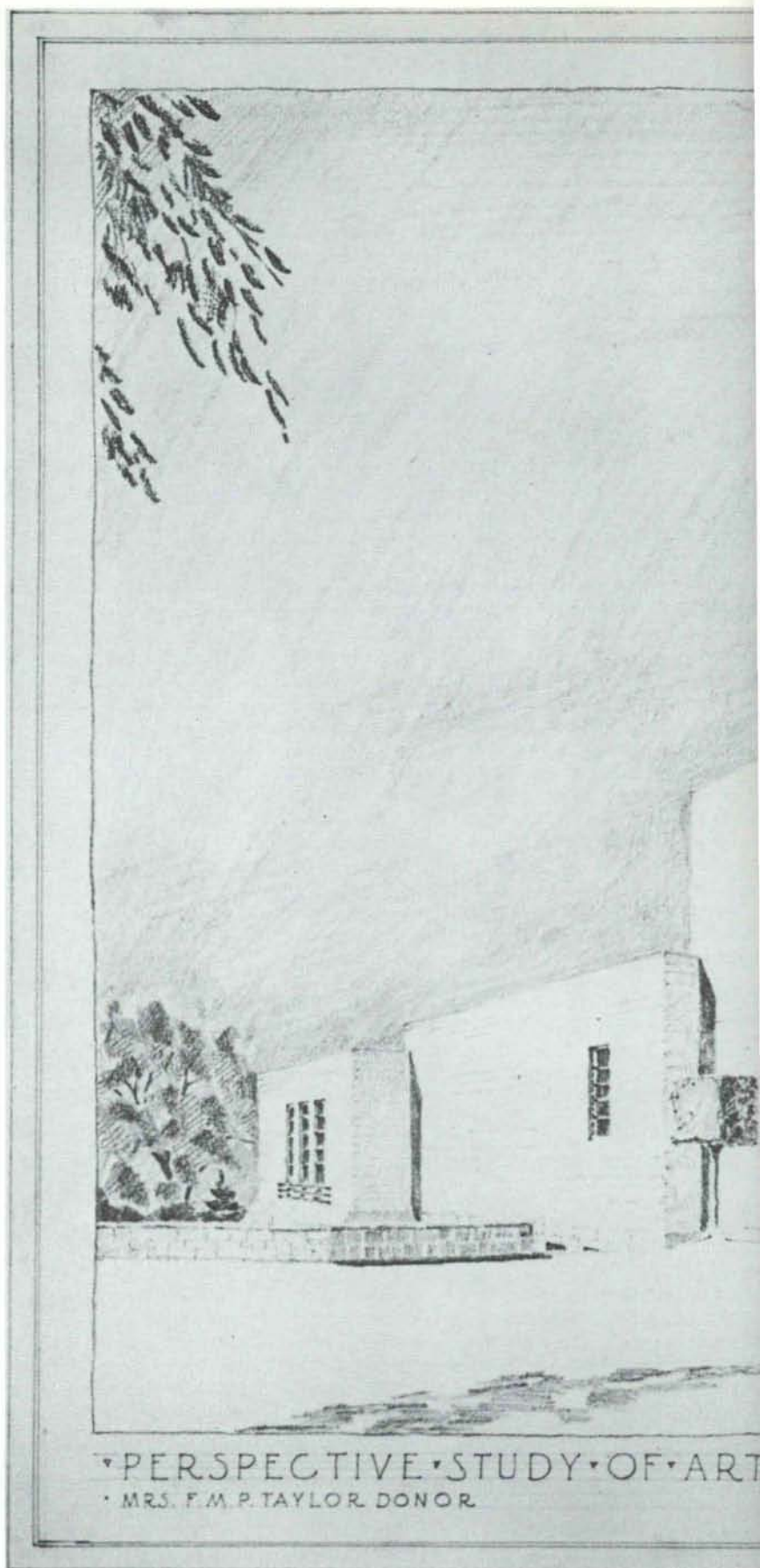
In designing the Fine Arts Center, Meem reconciled many factors, some common to all building projects, others unique or unusually complex here. The site was covered by Penrose family gardens which were to be retained and by buildings which would be used by the art school until the new facilities were completed. The already difficult problem of efficiently integrating the five major functions was further complicated by the fact that the working relations between Mrs. Taylor and the Broadmoor Academy continued to evolve, and were not formalized until after the design was completed. The various functions and institutions needed to be integrated, yet remain somehow distinct, but in what proportion Meem had largely to guess. The combination of a regional museum with a contemporary art school complicated the selection of an appropriate architectural style. And finally, the selection and handling of materials, and the design of the ornamental details required as much attention as the larger issues.

Once the Indian Museum idea had expanded into a fullblown arts center, the original site proved unworkable. It was narrow, dropped nearly seventy feet from its northeast to its southwest corner, had already been landscaped and was approached only by a short cul-de-sac along its south edge, Dale Street. To improve this situation, the museum acquired three small pieces of property to the north and secured permission from neighboring residents to use the alley on the north as a service drive. Amid some local controversy, Dale Street was extended to the west through Monument Creek Park. Even with these improvements, Meem came under constant pressure from Mrs. Hare not to build on any more of the Penrose family gardens than absolutely necessary.

With the constraints of the site somewhat loosened, Meem focused on the location of the largest element — the theatre — as the first step in developing the floor plan. He first considered placing the theatre entrance to the west, on the low end of the property, facing the park. This would have lowered the fly gallery, which would loom over the stage, so as not to dominate the other functions, in particular, the Taylor Museum. This possibility was abandoned as unsuitable because placing the theatre lobby below the other functions would have made interior circulation extremely difficult. In addition, securing automobile access from the park was problematic.

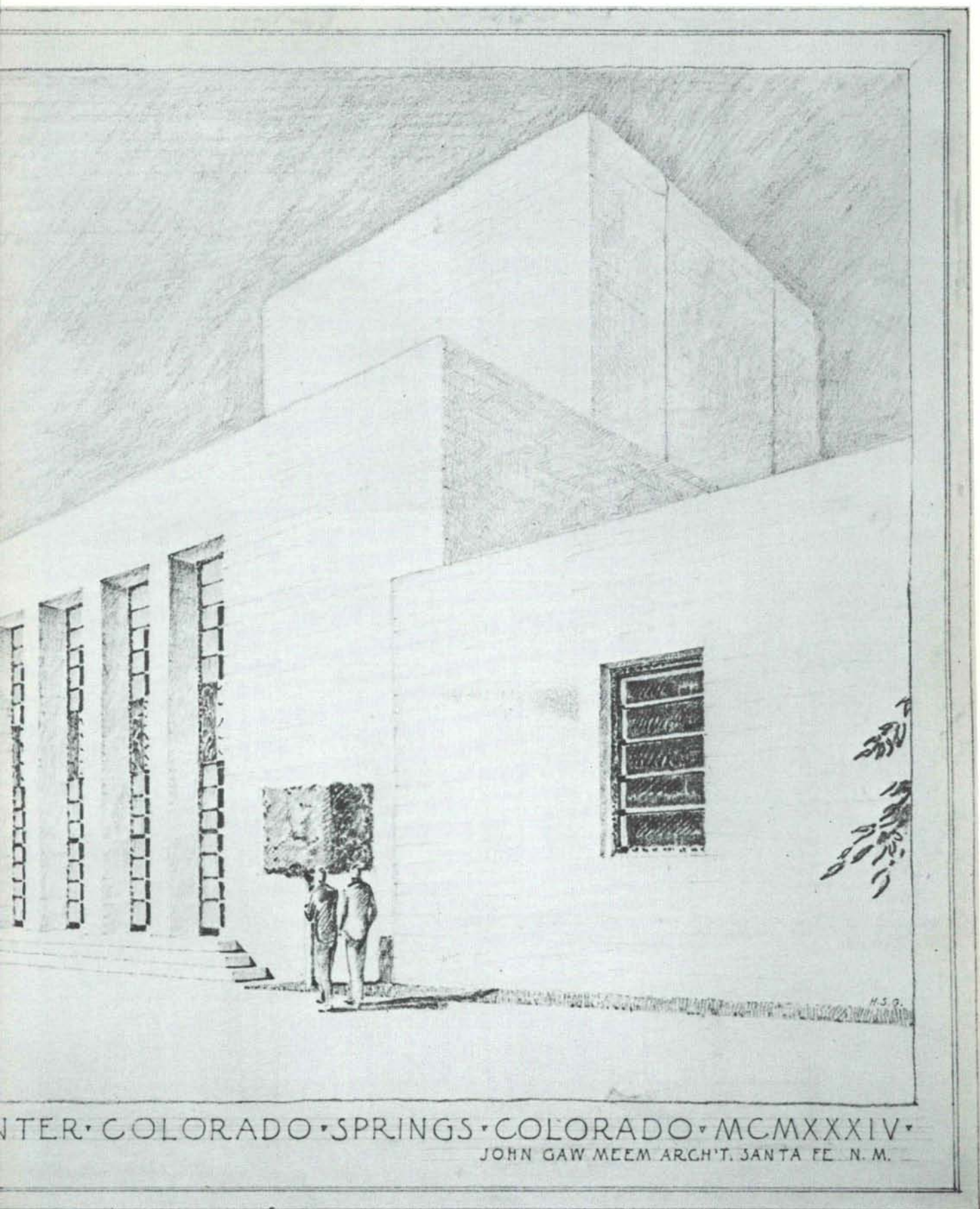
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Entrance perspective, 1934. Delineator: H. Sage Goodwin. (All illustrations courtesy of John Gaw Meem Archives of Southwestern Architecture, Special Collections, Zimmerman Library, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.)



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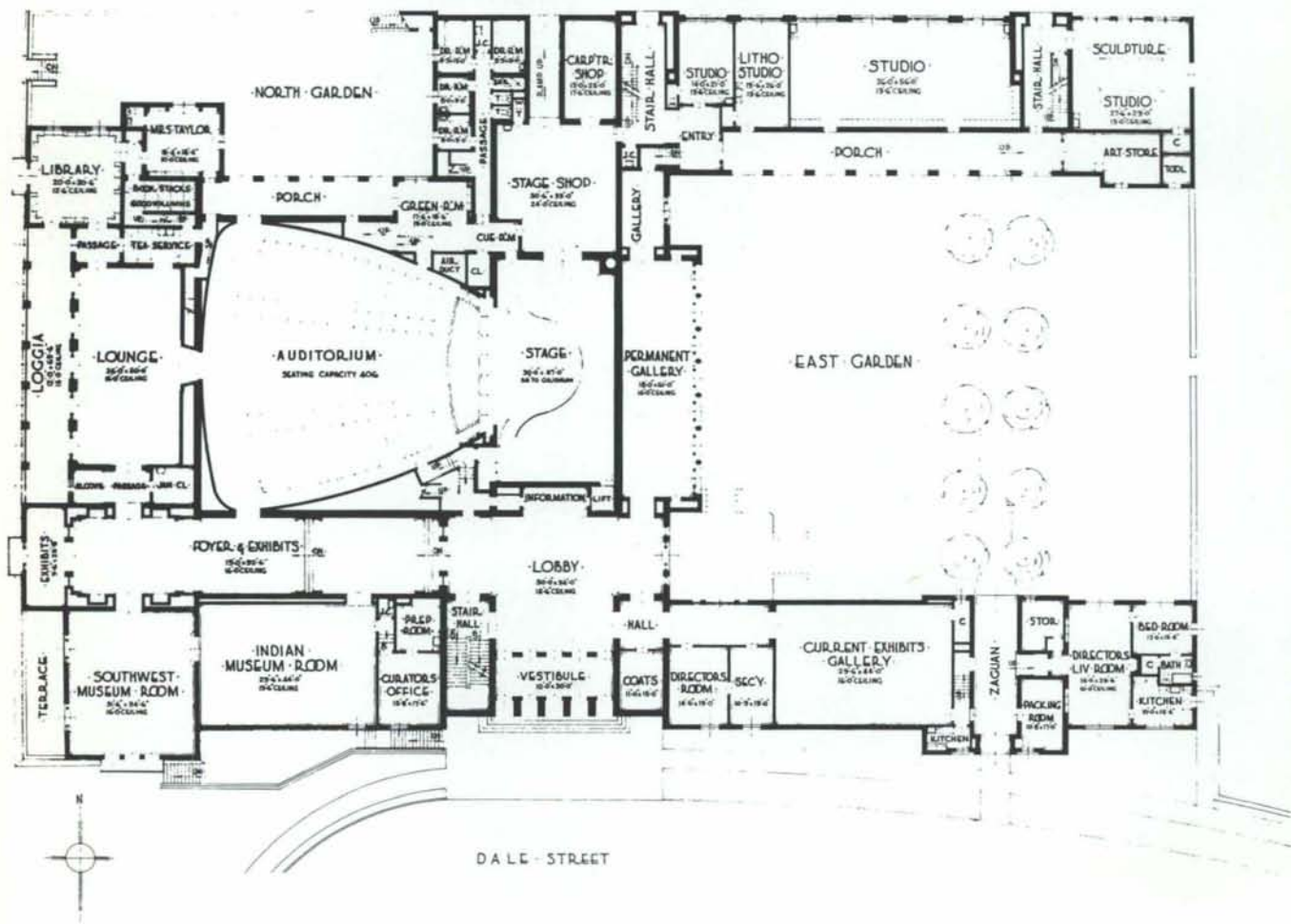




Top: First model, September 1934.  
Middle: Second model, October 1934.  
Bottom: Plan of first floor, ca. May 1935.

With the theatre raised to the level of the other functions its fly gallery became the unavoidable focus of the exterior composition. The desire to maintain the existing gardens dictated that the auditorium be located to the west of the stage. The main entrance was next located on Dale Street as far west as the fall-off of the site allowed. The awkwardness of running a hall from the main entrance beside the theatre to the lobby was finessed by enlarging the corridor into an exhibit gallery. This space was articulated with two sets of stairs marked by quietly fluted piers. Large windows framing Pike's Peak were placed at its west end as a visual goal for visitors. Ornamental gates added to the Indian and Southwest rooms allowed them to be closed during evening theatre performance.

The lobby was designed as a central control point to be staffed by a single attendant. To the right were the contemporary galleries and beyond them the garden and school, to the left were the theatre, Taylor Museum and library. An imaginary line along the back wall of the stage became the division between the school and other functions. Meem nevertheless experimented with ways to move the school's permanent and current galleries to the west of this line to preserve more of the gardens. But the western half of the site was already completely occupied by the Taylor Museum, library and the theatre.





A small piece of land to the northwest became available at the last minute, too late to allow for a major restructuring of the plan but permitting a general loosening up of the western end of the building. Enlarged and shifted to the north, the lounge lined up better with the auditorium. An office for Mrs. Taylor was added off the library, and the remaining unused space became the north garden.

With these basics of the plan determined, placement of the remaining rooms was based largely on their effect in the exterior composition of the building. The music room was located above the lobby so it could be used without opening any of the galleries. But more importantly, located there it contributed to an impressive main entrance. The building then stepped from the towering mass of the theatre fly gallery down to the two-story components — the auditorium, studio block and entrance. The remaining one story portions, doors and windows were adjusted to balance the composition. The overall effect was thought to evoke terraced pueblos, but the underlying aesthetic was European, relying as it did on picturesque composition — the subtle adjustment of asymmetrical yet balanced elements.

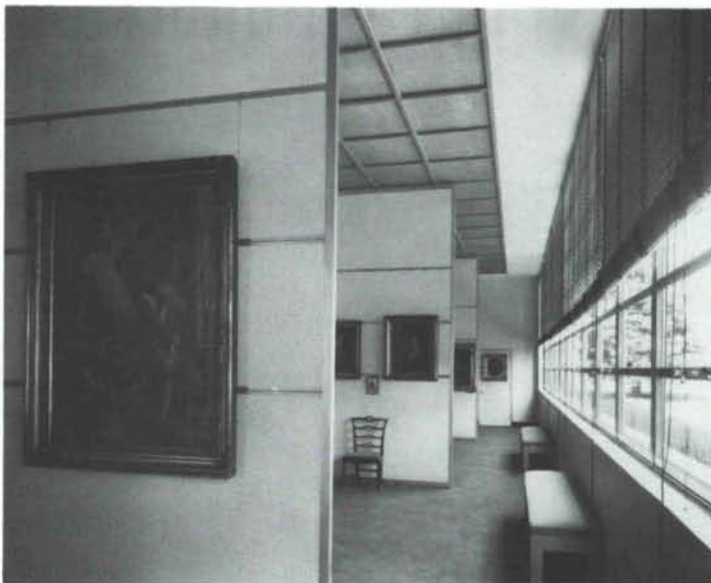
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*The theatre's fly tower became the unavoidable focus of the exterior composition.*

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Of course, the windows were more than accents in this exterior composition; their light was an active element used to vary rooms. The theatre lounge was given a full wall of French doors facing Pike's Peak which flooded the room with afternoon sunlight. In three of the exhibit areas — the Foyer, Indian Room and Current Exhibits Gallery — the contemporary practice of combining skylights with concealed artificial lighting was followed. In the Academy's Permanent Gallery, Meem tried a modern experiment — a glass wall along an entire side with adjustable blinds to control light. Since thin aluminum columns outside carried the actual load, the glass wall became a visual paradox, "supporting" the massive concrete fly gallery above.

According to Meem, the Southwest Room, "was treated as a normal room with light from two sides with no attempt at control as it was felt this type of lighting was best suited for the exhibits of Southwestern artifacts shown there." Best suited aesthetically and psychologically, perhaps, but unsuitable by today's museum standards which avoid natural light because of the damage it can do the artifacts. In recent years, the original variety of lighting schemes has largely been lost as gallery windows have been covered and all skylights removed.




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Top: Foyer, late 1935. Photo: Laura Gilpin. Middle: Permanent Gallery, late 1935. Photo: Gilpin. Bottom: Lounge, late 1935. Photo: Gilpin.



## Modern Regionalism

By the late 1920's, Meem had already begun to grapple with Modernist architectural theory and his internal dialogue found a tangible outlet in the Fine Arts Center commission. For a committed regionalist such as Meem, the most disturbing aspect of Modernism was the suppression of ornament and historical association in favor of the expression of the spirit of the modern age. This expression generally assumed an industrial, machine-like vocabulary emphasizing the exposure of a building's structure, and the undisguised use of contemporary materials such as steel, glass and concrete.

When the museum was first conceived in 1930, the Spanish Pueblo style seemed best suited to the project, especially since Mrs. Taylor's collection included both Spanish and Indian art. But after it had expanded to include other functions and a site had been selected in a decidedly Anglo-American neighborhood of Colorado Springs, a Modern style seemed more appropriate. "I of course am thrilled," Meem wrote to Mrs. Hare,

"at the opportunity of designing a building strictly in keeping with modern times, something I have not yet undertaken. At the same time I feel more confident in tackling this problem because its modernity will in a sense be based on a tradition which I understand. I have a feeling that to simply express the function of the materials in a building without any reference to past experience leaves the design a little empty, a little less rich than it otherwise might be."

Meem sought to express the building materials of the Fine Arts Center in a modern manner, while also basing its forms and massing on the pueblos and missions of the Southwest which he had studied in such detail.

View from southwest, winter 1935-36.  
Photo: H. L. Stanley.



Certainly he had this problem in mind when he wrote in *American Architect* magazine as he was beginning the design of the Fine Arts Center:

It would seem, then, that old traditional forms are to be retained and used only if they fit in with the fundamental form of the time... Particularly in the Southwest, architects who use old forms need do no violence to the ideas of contemporary architectural thoughts. On the contrary, the fundamental form of the time can best be expressed in a language native to the region.

In the Fine Arts Center, Meem reconciled the regional tradition and the modern spirit to his satisfaction. Although he would never again design such an openly modern building, he viewed his subsequent Pueblo style commissions as modern expressions which legitimately extended a valuable regional tradition.

Artists who contributed murals and sculptural reliefs to the building best described the mixed images which it evoked at the time. Denver sculptor Arnold Ronnebeck spoke of "the grandeur of the design and the combination of *Neue Sachlichkeit* [the German term for Modernism] with a so far not yet existing western architecture, based somehow on the pueblo idea without in any way copying it." "You have designed one of the purest buildings in America," wrote Andrew Dasberg from Taos, "— it has a quality of universality that totally transcends all local origin — Massive yet light — Cement that has the dignity of stone — The first time I have seen it not imitating something else." A compatriot of Dasberg, Kenneth Adams, added: "I like the clean severity of its lines — 'no fuzziness' — a fine clarity of its shapes that make it 'modern classic' if there is such a term."

The Fine Arts Center was at once Modern and Southwestern, and even somehow Classical. The relative lack of ornament, the flat roofs, and the innovative use of concrete made the building clearly Modern. Everyone expected something Southwestern from Meem, which was quickly confirmed by the building's ornament, especially in the Taylor Museum wing. The massive, terraced shapes of the building revealed an even deeper sympathy with Pueblo architecture.

Of course this massiveness contributed to a feeling of grandeur, as did the building's underlying current of classicism, a current which was often overlooked. In fact, a stripped Neoclassicism had been a mainstay in the repertoires of Beaux Arts-trained architects in the 1920s and often remained as an undercurrent in their early Modern designs. The main entrance and porches of the Fine Arts Center employ a primitive classicism akin in its simplicity to the Greek Doric style. The main entrance recalls a classical portico; the western balcony, a loggia. Recessed channels divide the theater's flytower into three sections; the A/B/A rhythm of the smaller sections flanking a larger center section is abstracted Palladianism. This unifying motif was extended to the division of windows and bays into threes, fives and sevens.



Exploring the building at its opening in 1936, one man became convinced that Meem had employed a system of dynamic symmetry based on whirling squares in his compositions. Meem wrote to a friend:

I think he was disappointed, when I told him I had used nothing but my eye. Mr. Kirkpatrick, the pianist, also asked what geometric formula I had used. I told him my method consisted merely of achieving the correct floor plan and then raising the ceiling to a point satisfactory to my eye.

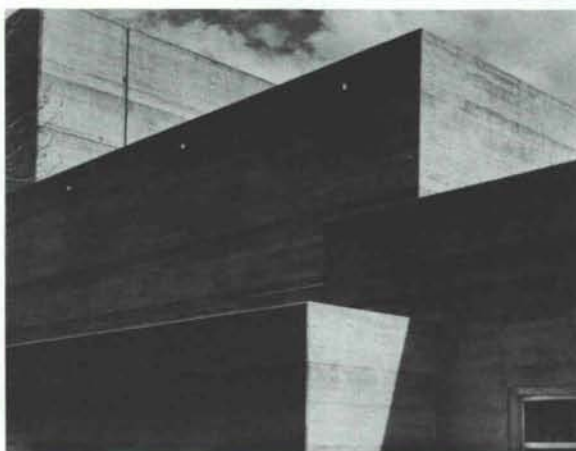
Plainly, Meem's eye was trained to classical proportions.

## Material and Ornament

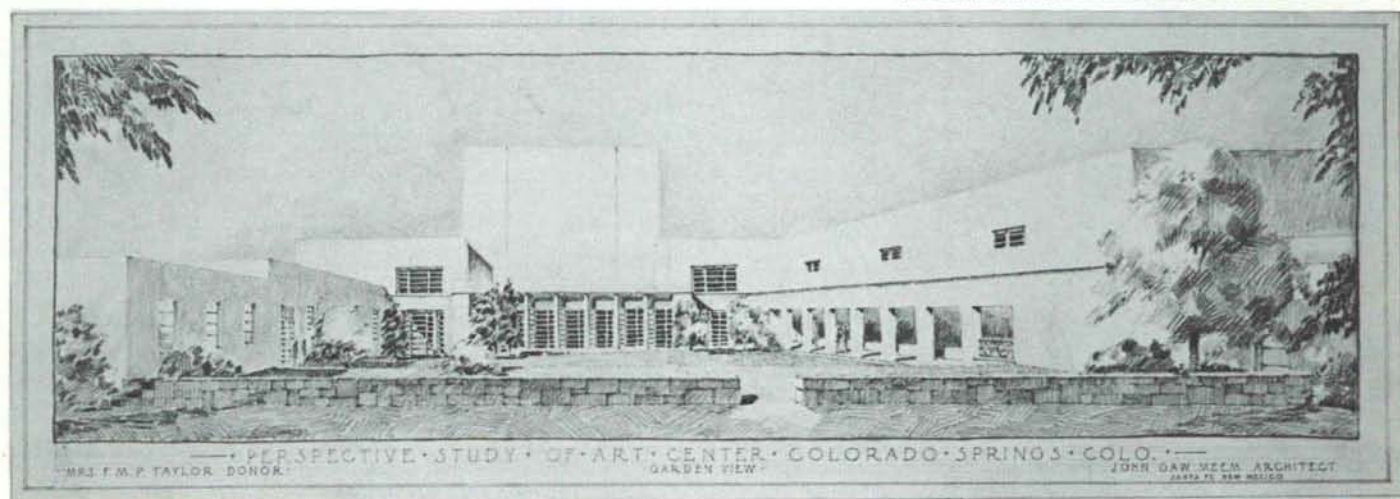
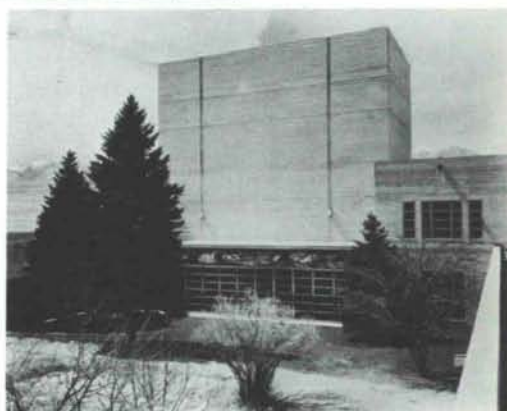
Stone was traditionally considered a noble material, appropriate for a civic building such as the Fine Arts Center, but its cost had become increasingly prohibitive. One also suspects that the use of stone as a non-structural veneer conflicted with Meem's tentative adoption of the modernist precept of structurally honest expression of materials. Concrete met the cost and theoretical considerations, but had been used locally only for utilitarian structures such as the Denver University Stadium and the sheep pens at the Denver Union stockyards.

Associations with such structures were avoided by subtly altering the appearance of the concrete. Meem's associate Hugo Zehner and the builder George Teats — who associated with Platt Rogers, the main contractor for the project — conducted extensive tests to find a mixture of local aggregates which would give the desired surface. The typical "ugly gray-green cement color" was altered to a warmer beige tone with a mixture of Ideal Portland cement, Monument Creek sand and Cripple Creek Rhyolite. These aggregates also produced a smoother than normal finish which contributed to "getting a wall that looks like cast concrete but at the same time will be admired for the craftsman-like manner in which it was erected."

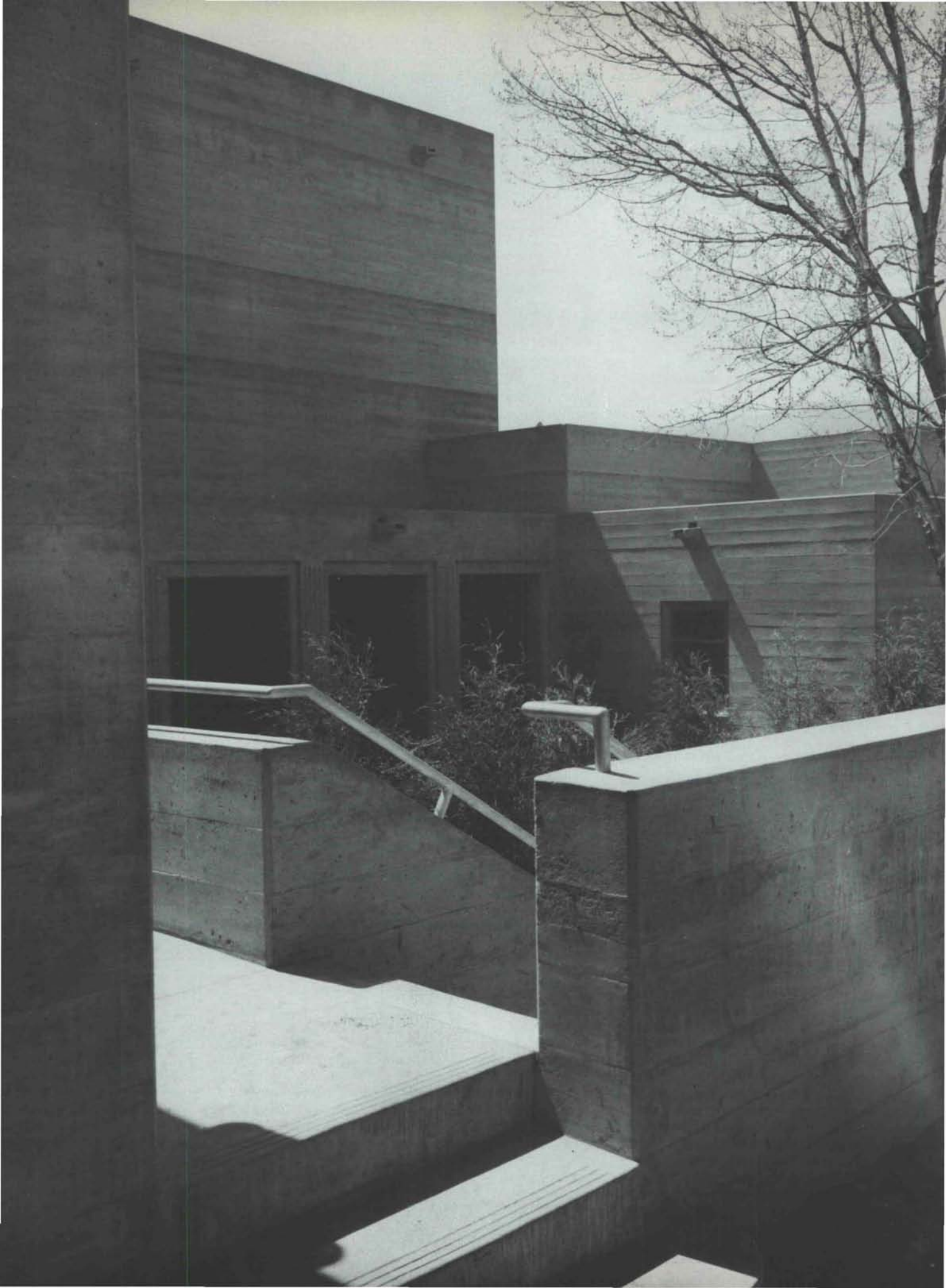
Bainbridge Bunting has called our attention to subtle finishing accents in the concrete work, from the beveled corners of the entrance to the



Top to Bottom. Main entrance with murals by Boardman Robinson, winter 1935-36. Photo: Stanley. North side of Theatre, winter 1935-36. Photo: Ernest Knee. Garden facade with théâtre fly gallery and murals by Frank Mechau, winter 1935-36. Photo: Stanley. Garden perspective, 1934. Delineator: Goodwin.









slight setback of the upper edges of the large masses. In addition, the marks of the wooden forms heighten the underlying paradox of a cultural center built with utilitarian concrete. The marks indicate craftsmanship, regularity and precision, but at the same time draw attention to the concrete and set up a pattern of horizontal lines which, at certain times of day, in strong cross light, stand out against Meem's elegant composition.

Meem abstracted Southwestern motifs for interior ornamental details in the same manner that he abstracted terraced pueblo forms for the exterior. This regional inflection was even more pronounced in earlier stages of design. One model of the building included geometric designs based on pueblo pottery in the exterior mural spaces. Although these murals took a different form in the hands of Academy artists Boardman Robinson and Frank Mechau, pottery motifs were retained in cut-out ornaments over interior doors. Ornamental gates were similarly abstracted from Navajo blanket designs, while the herringbone pattern of the theatre lounge ceiling was modeled after a type of wooden ceiling used in Spanish Colonial New Mexico. To enhance the ceiling's imagery, the form work boards were carefully chosen to give its concrete surface a pronounced wood grain.

*Architectural Forum*, the leading journal of the day featured the Fine Arts Center as its building of the month in April 1936, commenting:

Here is a building which is modern, monumental, and unlabored. Its simplicity reveals assurance, not sterility. Its character is local, but is not the result of any attempt to fake a pueblo.

Meem had once expressed confidence in tackling this modern building because it would be based on a familiar tradition. This now reversed as he approached subsequent commissions with a new confidence that, though most were in the regional style, they would be grounded on modern principles.

## Acknowledgements and Sources

This piece is adapted, with the generous permission of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center (CSFAC), from "A Unique Opportunity: John Gaw Meem and the Design of the CSFAC" which appears in *CSFAC: A History and Selections From the Permanent Collections*, (CS: CSFAC, 1986). That volume is available from the Fine Arts Center.

David Kammer, Faith Meem, Paul Piazza and Josie Kerstetter, offered valuable advice on the original essay. The layout is by Carolyn Kinsman of TypArt. William Tydman, Director of Special Collections, University of New Mexico Library, and Rod Dew, Librarian of the Fine Arts Center made their Meem materials available.

Copies of the material from UNM's Meem Collection and from the Center's Library quoted and consulted for this essay have been placed in notebooks at the Meem Collection and the Center's Library. Published sources include:

Bunting, Bainbridge. *John Gaw Meem: Southwestern Architect*. Albuquerque: 1983.

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"John Gaw Meem and the Regional Tradition." Entire issue of *Mass* (Journal of the School of Architecture and Planning, University of New Mexico), Spring, 1983.

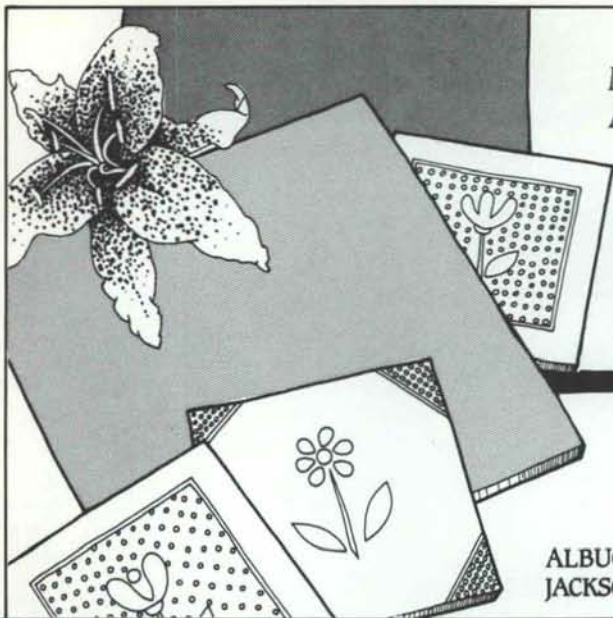
Meem, John. "Old Forms for New Buildings." *American Architect*, November, 1934, pp. 10-21.



Left: North garden, winter 1935-36. Photo: Gilpin. Top: Lounge ceiling and light fixture, late 1935. Photo: Gilpin. Bottom: Directors hall to Current Gallery, late 1935. Photo: Gilpin.







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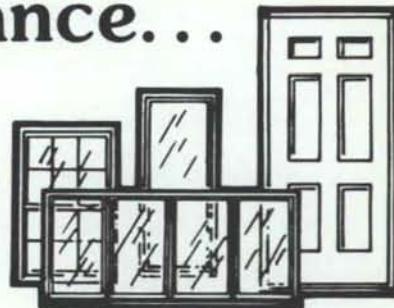
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Continued from page 9



*Laguna, New Mexico #2, 1933, photograph by Willard Van Dyke from Photographs from the Collection.*

The exhibition's range and vitality demonstrate the versatility of photography as an art form. Images in color and black and white express a wealth of photographic traditions, approaches, subjects and techniques.

"This show is our way of thanking the private sector for its crucial support in

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Nineteenth-century photographic portraits by the Frenchman Nadar and Scottish collaborators David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson bring a historic dimension to the show. Working in the mid-1800s, these European artists were pioneers in the art of photography. Their works are now part of the Photo Archives of the Museum of New Mexico's history collection.

Representing the contemporary scene are American artists Walter Chappell, Joel Meyerowitz, Bernard Plossu, Eliot Porter, Willard Van Dyke, Brett Weston and others.

## BUILDING A COLLECTION

The Museum of Fine Arts is offering an exhibition from October 4 through January 5, 1986, which features paintings borrowed from private collectors, galleries and artists. The pieces in *Building a Col-*

*lection: Potential Acquisitions* were chosen because their acquisition would enhance the museum's permanent collection. Besides offering visitors a view of excellent art works, the show will appeal to potential donors who wish to contribute to the acquisition of a particular work for the museum collections.

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Congratulations to the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center on achieving 50 years of outstanding service to the community and best wishes for continued success over the coming 50 years!

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