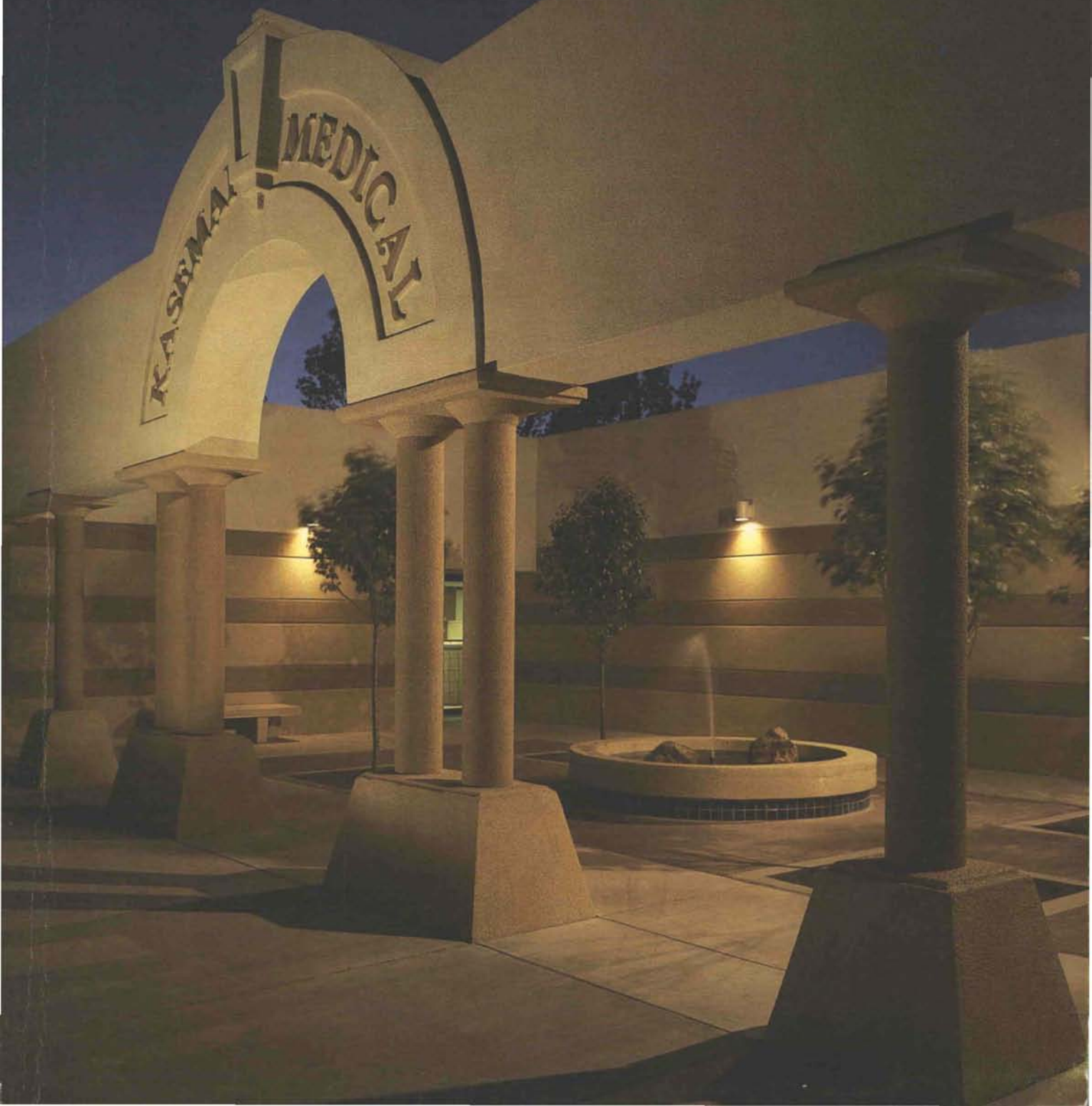


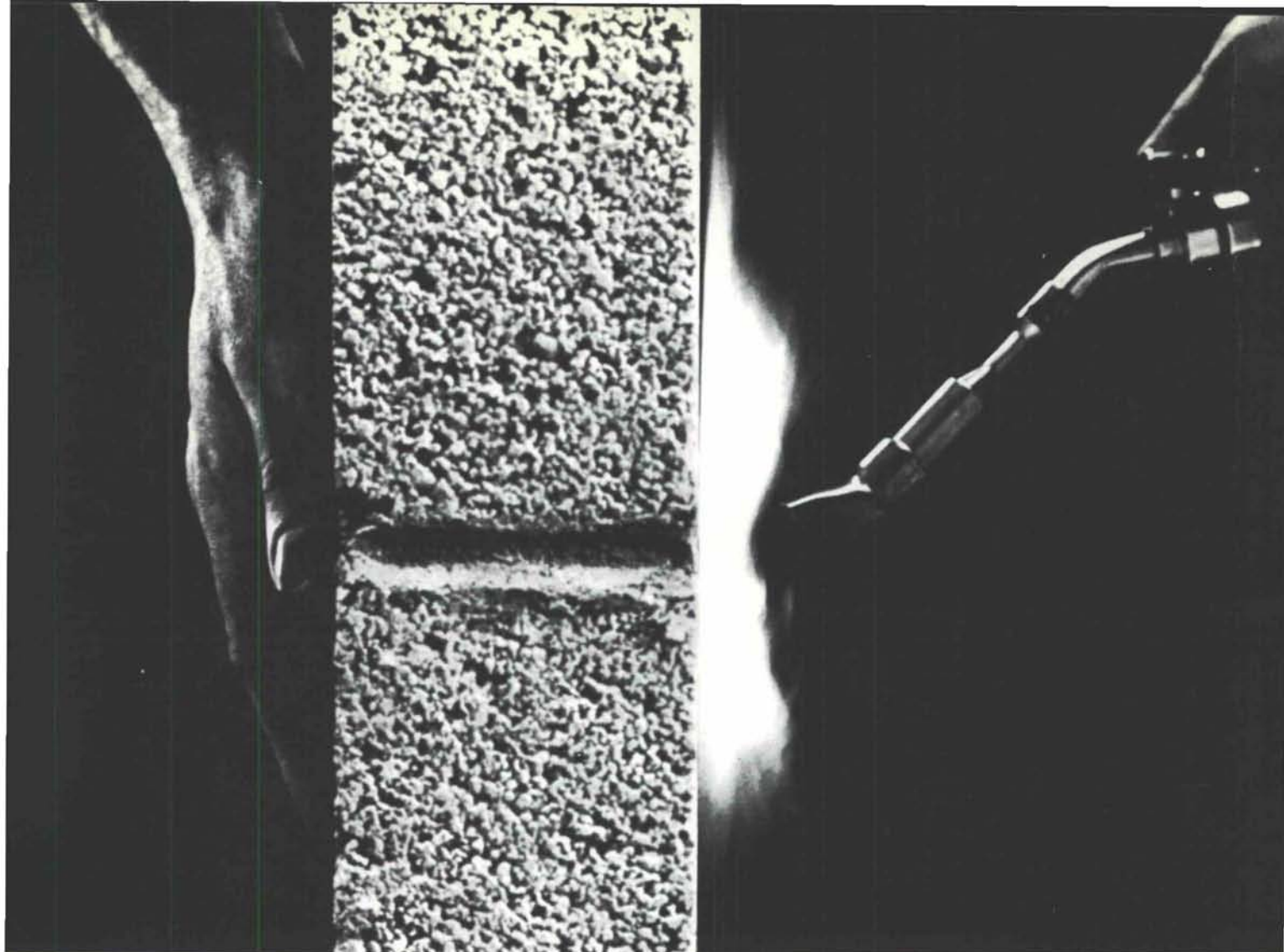
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• vol. 28 no. 1 •

In this issue,

**NMA** looks at architectural photography with articles by William Tydeman, Kirk Gittings and Christopher Wilson. (Chris Wilson prepared the article on John Gaw Meem's Colorado Fine Arts Center in the March/April 1986 issue of **NMA**.) In addition James Caufield gives us a look at the Randell Davey House on upper Canyon Road in Santa Fe; the house is presently owned, preserved and protected by the National Audubon Society and is open to visitors in the summer months.

□ □ □ □

The cover of this issue of **NMA** is sponsored by Stevens, Mallory, Pearl & Campbell, Architects for the building shown and by Kirk Gittings the buildings photographer. The exterior lighting of the building was supplemented by three lights of the photographer (see the article "Creative Empathy" by Kirk Gittings beginning on page 10). This supplemental lighting enabled the photographer to create a heightened mood which contributes to the impact of the post-modern design of the architect Michael Dickson, a member of the Stevens, Mallory, Campbell and Pearl firm.

We certainly appreciate the continuing support of our members and our friends who make possible these handsome and colorful covers.


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The March/April issue of **NMA** will present the architectural awards given by the New Mexico Society of Architects during its annual Conference Banquet.

JPC

# nma

jan.-feb. 1987 • new mexico architecture

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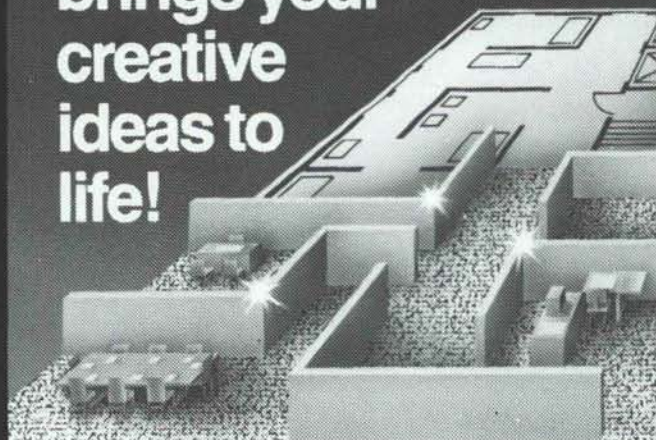
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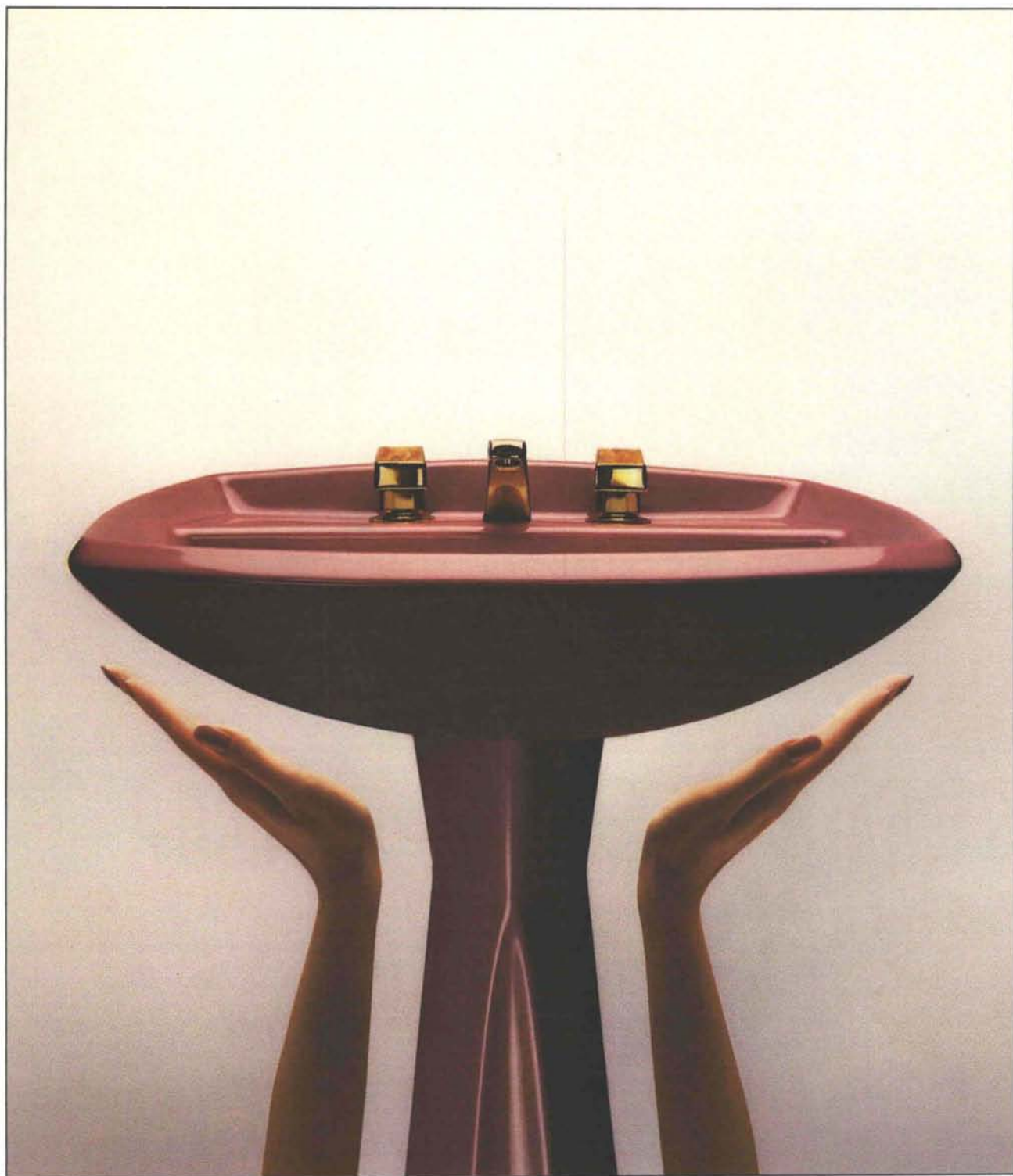
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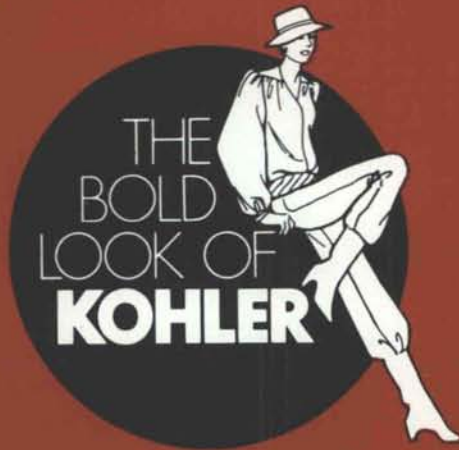


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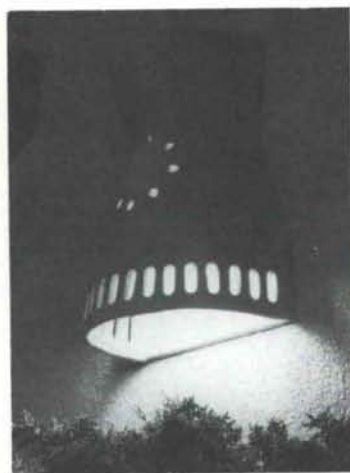
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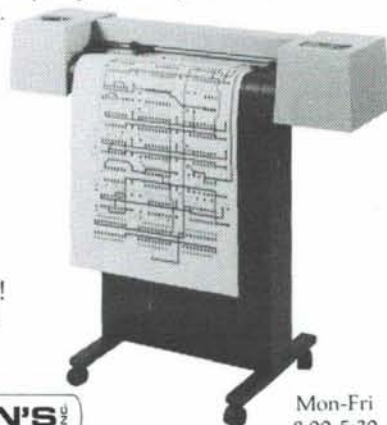
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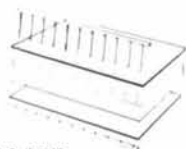
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## W.C. Kruger and Associates Donates 50 Years of Drawings to UNM's John Gaw Meem Collection

W.C. Kruger and Associates, one of New Mexico's oldest architectural firms, today announced that it had donated 50 years of architectural drawings, perspectives, photographs and other records to the John Gaw Meem Archive of Southwestern Architecture at the University of New Mexico.

The gift is the largest donation to the UNM collection since the archive was

started in 1975 with the donation of the works of John Gaw Meem, a widely respected New Mexico architect who was a contemporary of W.C. Kruger.

The W.C. Kruger collection includes drawings of approximately 1000 projects that the firm has worked on since its beginning in 1937, including the original Carrie Tingley Children's Hospital in Truth or Consequences, the state capitol complex in Santa Fe, the New Mexico state penitentiary, the masterplan for the city of Los Alamos, Santa Fe Downs racetrack, UNM's Humanities Building, T-VI in Albuquerque, the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, and scores of military installations and hospitals. Now temporarily housed in two rooms in UNM's

Science and Engineering Library, the material fills 149 transfiles, one large vertical architectural file, eight 5-drawer filing cabinets, 120 miscellaneous boxes, 10 scrapbooks and 100 architectural file drawers.

Davia Williams Anderson, a spokesperson for W.C. Kruger and Associates, said that the material had been stored in the firm's warehouse, and members of the firm were afraid that the drawings would be ruined. "So", she said, "we decided to give them to the Meem collection so that students, contractors, and other architects could use the records for remodeling, research or reference. They really are remarkable resources."

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Anderson said that the donation was in conjunction with the firm's 50th anniversary. "The state's been very good to this firm, and this is our way of giving something back, of saying 'thank you,'" she said.

Jan Barnhart, curator of the John Gaw Meem Archive, said that although the University had only had the collection for a week, it had already honored a request for drawings from an architect in Springer, NM, who wanted two specific drawings detailing renovations made to the Miners' Hospital in Raton, and several requests from contractors and engineers requesting information on St. Joseph's Hospital here in Albuquerque. Barnhart said she expects more requests, given the importance of the collection.

"This is a major acquisition for us," she said, "because of the importance of the buildings to the state, and the scope of the material included." She said the collection was also noteworthy because it reflects W.C. Kruger himself.

"He wasn't just an architect," she said, "but an all-around citizen who was very attractive, very personable and very well-connected politically. The firm seemed to have had a lock on designing hospitals, and Kruger himself was very active on various boards and commissions."

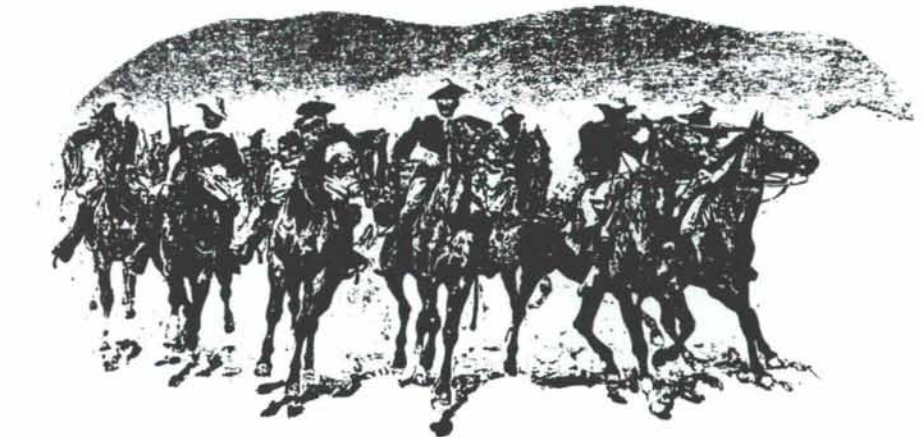
"Once they see this collection," she added, "people are going to be very interested in him as a human being."

## American Institute of Architects 1987 "Institute Honors" go to J.B. "Brink" Jackson and to Mesa Verde National Park

WASHINGTON, DC.—A variety of architectural organizations, individuals, and achievements that "enhance or influence the environment and the architectural profession" have been chosen to receive 1987 Institute Honors from The American Institute of Architects. The Institute Honors will be presented at the 1987 AIA National Convention in Orlando, Florida June 19-22.

Of interest to our readers are two of the six recipients.

—John Brinkerhoff Jackson, founding editor of *Landscape* magazine, as well as author, lecturer, and university professor; termed by the jury "one of the legendary figures in the field of cultural geography in



## New Mexico Historical Review Explores Military Frontier

The expanding military frontier was vital to the development of the American Southwest. The January 1987 issue of *NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW* explores the military frontier in seven wide-ranging essays.

Darlis A. Miller, author of *The California Column in New Mexico*, gives us an in-depth look at the development of a vital Civil War fort in "Los Pinos, New Mexico: Civil War Post on the Rio Grande." Also concerning the Civil War in New Mexico are essays by Charles and Jacqueline Meketa, "Heroes or Cowards? A New Look at the Role of the Native New Mexicans at the Battle of Valverde," and Francis C. Kajencki, "The Battle of Glorieta Pass: Was the Guide Ortiz or Grzelachowski?"

Robert M. Utley, the dean of frontier military historians, contributes a perceptive biographical essay on "Oliver Otis Howard." Monroe Billington of New Mexico State University details the important role of "Black Soldiers at Fort Selden, New Mexico, 1866-1891," and Bruce J. Dinges, editor of the *JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY*, sheds new light on "The Victorio Campaign of 1880: Cooperation and Conflict on the United States-Mexico Border." Paul L. Hedren, of the National Park Service, wraps up this theme issue with a historiographical essay on the state of frontier military history today.

All those interested in military history will want to read this important theme issue.

Copies of this special issue are \$5.00 each. Book dealers and bookstores are eligible for a one-third discount. Subscriptions are available for \$14.00. Orders should be sent to *NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW*, Mesa Vista Hall 1013, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131 (telephone 505-277-5839).

CONTACT the NMHR for other frontier military articles.

the United States" and cited for his "long, tireless campaign to direct sympathetic attention to the problems—and the often neglected virtues—of the common man-made environment."

—Mesa Verde National Park's Anasazi Preservation Work, the preservation and documentation of the remains of a nearly 1,000-year-old civilization in the high plateau country of southwestern Colorado, within the first National Park dedicated to the study and preservation of the works of man, a park that has "labored to preserve and maintain these ancient works and to make them available to the visiting public with dignity and respect to their spectacular landscape setting," said the awards jury.

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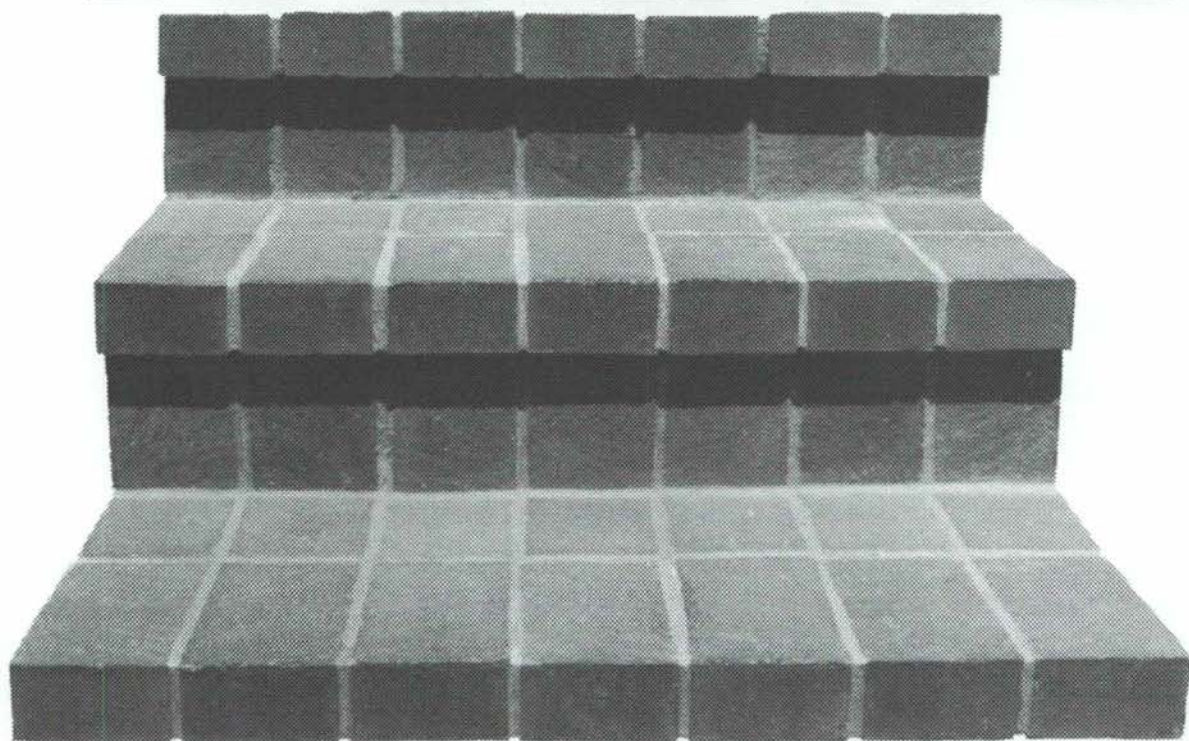
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# BOOKS ON ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHY

BY Chris Wilson

Architectural photography is something of a specialized subject — a cross between two fields. Nevertheless, it has been the topic of over ten books (most published since 1970) as well as numerous articles and chapters in photographic manuals and encyclopedias. The best bibliography of this literature appears in *Dean's Architectural Photography* (see below). Three of the most useful and interesting books are briefly discussed here.

**The Photography of Architecture and Design.** Julius Schulman. New York: Watson-Guptill, 1977. 238 pages.

Schulman was recognized for over twenty-five years as one of America's top architectural photographers. His book is primarily a discussion of his own approach and work, represented by over 300 photographs, often comparing alternate views of one structure. In a sense, the reader is allowed to look over Schulman's shoulder as he focuses the camera and hear him talk aloud about the specific factors that shape each image. The results are instructive, at times, even fascinating, and should be of interest to photographers and architects concerned with the representation of their buildings.

An interesting comparison to Schulman should be provided by *Photographing Buildings Inside and Out* by Norman McGrath, a leader of a younger generation of architectural photographers, which is due out from Watson-Guptill in June of 1987.

**Architectural Photography: Techniques for Architects, Preservationists, Historians, Photographers, and Urban Planners.** Jeff Dean. Nashville, American Association for State and Local History, 1981. 132 pages. Bibliography.

While Schulman focuses on the highest level of professional architectural photography, Dean addresses those who sometime must make architectural photos but are not primarily

photographers. He gives practical suggestions for improving the quality of photographs taken by knowledgeable amateurs, especially those working with 35mm equipment.

The major shortcoming of this camera format is that with wide angle lenses, which are so often required to get a full view of a buildings, perspective is distorted causing annoying, converging parallel lines. Dean's chapter on the use of special, perspective control lenses for 35mm is especially useful.

Dean's emphasis is on the documentation of historic buildings. However, the book will also be of particular use to architects needing to document their own work.

**Photography and Architecture, 1839-1939.** Richard Pare. Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1982. 282 pages. Bibliography.

This exhibition catalogue has 147 handsomely-reproduced photographs, biographical sketches of 80 photographers and a brief historical essay. It is a good introduction to the topic, surveying everything from the first monumental efforts to document the world's cities and architectural monuments through the Bauhaus photographer's meticulous, sharp-focus images which reflected the spirit of the new, modernist architecture. But when architectural photography became a commercial enterprise in the 20s and 30s, Pare suggests, "the photographer began to function entirely as an instrument of the architect, his photographs a gloss on the architect's vision of his structure rather than an interpretive vision." But this is all he writes about this dichotomy in architectural photography between promotion and documentation. A full history of architectural photography which delves into this issue would be a fascinating and valuable book.

C.W.

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## New Challenges For An Old Conservationist

by James Caufield

By the time of John James Audubon's death in 1851, a stone and adobe saw mill on Upper Canyon Road in Santa Fe, New Mexico, built to produce lumber for the construction of nearby Fort Marcy, had been in operation for nearly five years. By 1920, the saw mill operation had ceased and the property was purchased by American born artist Randall Davey for his home and studio. The property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1970, and by December of 1983, the Davey house and grounds had become the property of the National Audubon Society for use as a State Office in the Southwest.

Named the Randall Davey Audubon Center, the property is unique among Audubon facilities in that it is designed to fulfill each of the major Audubon Society missions: issue activism, environmental education, and wildlife and habitat protection. During the year, a variety of on-site natural history programs are offered to the local community. With the stewardship of the Davey property, the Audubon Society is facing a new conservation challenge — the preservation of endangered historic structures. The Randall Davey Center encompasses 135 acres of largely undeveloped northern New Mexico landscape along with four significant historic stone and adobe structures. The Santa



1. Photograph showing north (primary) elevation of the Randall Davey House/Studio. The two story central portion is the residential conversion of the 1849 saw mill structure.

Photo Credit: CAUFIELD•CAUFIELD, 1985

Continued on page 18 





## Architectural Photography — Creative Empathy

by Kirk Gittings

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Amongst commercial photographic specialties, architectural photography confronts unique aesthetic challenges. These challenges revolve around the central point that *no other genre in commercial photography is so totally preoccupied with the interpretation of another art form*. As a result a common tendency amongst students and novices is to shy away from highly personal interpretation, opting instead for documentation. However, mere documents are rarely effective at truly illustrating the spirit or essence of architecture. To be successful the architectural photograph must recreate not just a visual representation of a structure but *recreate the essential experience of three-dimensional form and mass within the seemingly limited confines of a two-dimensional rectangular image*. The photographer must translate one aesthetic language into another. This is certainly not an easy task.

Such translation cannot be effectively achieved mechanically through a distanced documentary or literal description of a building, which "lets the architecture speak for itself." The results are either lifeless or awkward, much like what happens when someone in a literal manner attempts to translate poetry into a foreign language. The power of the original piece is lost.

Students learning architectural photography (particularly students of architecture) often argue that in interpreting design one runs the risk of misinterpreting the design according to one's own whims and creating images which more reflect the pre-occupations of the photographer than truly reflecting the intrinsic strengths of the design. They say it is better (safer?) and more ethical to distance oneself and let the architecture stand on its own. Seemingly without exception, students representing this argument turn out the duller work. Their images emasculate the spirit of architectural form and metaphor. Certainly documents are useful and necessary, but the most successful images of architecture, the "quintessential images" are those that are the most visually interesting—reflecting a photographer's personal vision of design.

There is, of course, a danger in going too far with personal interpretation. It is possible to create an image which is simply too far removed from the subject to effectively illustrate it; successful perhaps as a photographic work of art, but a failure at illustrating the essence of a particular work of architecture. In capturing the essence of a structure one must maintain what Richard Pare has called "empathy" between the architecture and the photograph<sup>1</sup>.

Empathy can largely be seen in images where the photographic style is *formally resonant* of the architectural style. In other words, if the building is Modernist, premised on the orchestration of abstract masses and geometric form, then the image must photographically emphasize that by addressing the formal qualities of the image in a like manner. Only by focusing in on the central aesthetic issues of the architecture, emphasizing or even exaggerating them, can one photographically animate those issues. Therefore, for an architectural photograph to be genuinely effective it must fulfill two seemingly contradictory imperatives—passionately interpret while remaining aesthetically faithful to the design. The power of the interpretation is dependent on the sensitivity and creativity of a photographer's vision, whereas empathy is achieved by aesthetically premising the style of the photograph on the style of the architecture. A few images from my files may serve to illustrate the above points.

## A Modernist Approach

From a photographer's perspective it may be said that Modern architecture is largely a formalist pursuit.<sup>2</sup> That is, a pursuit in quest of powerful form for its own sake abstracted from human, historical, or metaphorical reference. The key here is *abstract form*, and the photographer's task is to transform the spirit of the subject's form and mass into a photographic equivalent. The form of the subject must be conceived as essentially *plastic* in that it can be manipulated photographically by careful editing (selection of

camera position, framing, etc.) lighting (choice of time of day, etc. to emphasize planes or create negative space), and controlled distortion through choice of lens. One starts with what exists but is not dependent on it. This manipulation is not only possible but necessary if one is to create exciting images.

Figures 1 and 2 are some of the more successful images of Late-Modern architecture in my files. The design is by Harry Weese and Associates of Chicago. Distinguished by exaggerated angles and "extravagantly sculptural" form and mass, this firm's designs can be a sheer joy to work with photographically.<sup>3</sup> This joy is found in the simple revelation of exciting form on the ground glass.

Figure 1 was first attempted from a greater distance with a 210mm lens (on a 4x5), but the forms were compressed and static. By moving in with a wide angle lens (90mm), the curve of the rim of the pool became a great sweeping gesture against the expansive planes of the building. More than just a simple device to lead the eye into the image, the rim of the pool and the dark plane of water it contains became a key formal element in the overall balance of the image, *assuming much more significance than in the actual building design*. However the exaggeration of that rim is valid because it accentuates the *spirit* of the design. It visually forces a recurrent theme in the building curve vs. angle. Through exaggeration and distortion, i.e. interpretation, a more effective illustration is achieved.

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## Photographing Post-Modern architecture is as much an emotional and intellectual exercise as it is visual.

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Though somewhat different in feel, Figure 2 takes a similar approach as Figure 1. With the perspective exaggeration of a wide angle lens (90mm), the structure of the atrium becomes a dynamic overlay on the building. The effect is a series of powerful trapezoidal shapes framing equally powerful fragments of the exterior. It was possible in a literal manner to frame the same segment of the exterior from outside the atrium, but the overlay of the grid heightens the Modern vocabulary of the image, creating a much more dynamic and graphic view of the exterior. Again, through a unique photographic translation of the building, an image is created which vivifies the feel of the design rather than just documenting its outward appearance.

## Post-Modernism

A contemporary style of architecture which demands a very different photographic response is Post-Modernism. Post-Modernism has commonly been described as architecture with historic style reference and period metaphors.<sup>4</sup>

As opposed to Modernism's pre-occupation with pure abstraction, Post-Modernism relies on references to human experience and scale. The photographer, in attempting to effectively illustrate Post-Modern design must then use the medium to evoke the ambience of the suggested historic references and related metaphors.

Figure 3, of the offices of Holmes, Sabatini, Smith and Eeds Architects, is an effective example of Post-Modern architecture. With rather whimsical references to Greek architecture, this interior space exudes a lively Tongue-in-Cheek ambience of classic grandeur. Photographically it called for theatrical lighting and symmetrical framing. The lighting adds to the mystery where the symmetry hints at Greek order. The necessary ambience is created in the image by paying attention to such nuances. However if the image had been left at that, without some intimation of humor, it



would appear pretentious. Hence the palms and directors chairs are included to secondarily relieve the heavy drama and add a touch of humor.

In a related vein is Westwork Architect's "Duncan House," an example of Post-Modern architecture with regional historic references; specifically Pueblo Indian art motifs and architecture. Again at issue here is not abstract form (though details of the house can be and were dealt with in that way) but the ambiance of ancient ritual suggested by the architects through an imaginative blend of those ancient motifs.

In Figure 4 the doorway is derived from a weaving motif and the overhang from the thunderbird symbol. By juxtaposing the two in one image, the overhang takes on the anthropomorphic presence of a guardian spirit protecting the entrance to some enigmatic and perhaps ritual structure. Hence an appropriate ambiance is created in the photograph by treating design details as interacting entities. The historical references are enlivened by that ambiance.

Photographing Post-Modern architecture is as much an emotional and intellectual exercise as it is visual. In addition to paying attention to effective composition, etc. one must also bring to life the ideas in the architecture. This requires a qualitatively different mindset than when photographing Modern architecture. Students in particular have extreme difficulty shifting rapidly between these different styles of architecture. This is particularly acute when they do not consciously proceed from an understanding of a central aesthetic premise of a particular architectural style.

## Conclusion

As the illustrations in this article suggest, architectural styles today are rampantly diverse. The resulting aesthetic demands on photographers are great. Not only must one have a unique personal style, but that style must be flexible and adaptable to be sensitive to diverse and changing architectural styles. While all commercial photography requires flexible vision, architectural photography seems to be unique because it requires from us both creativity as well as empathy for the *art* that is our subject. As a starting point we must understand the aesthetic concerns of our clients work. This understanding begins in discussions with the client and from thorough knowledge about the history and current practice of architectural design. But that initial knowledge merely sets the tone, establishes the basic syntax of the photography. From there in each particular situation an exciting photographic solution must be found. These solutions don't just magically erupt from ones imagination, more often they are drawn from past visual experience. The greater and more diverse that experience, the better prepared one is for solving new problems. In this regard it seems that students with a firm foundation in the history of visual art are the best prepared. Carrying around in you head images by the likes of artists such as Turner, Joseph Stella, Mondrian or Michaelangelo would certainly help one solve diverse visual problems, as they arise. More often than not there is always a historical precedent, which can be adapted to both the situation at hand and one's individual vision. When most effective this adaption takes place on a largely subconscious level, and is not used in a cookbook fashion.

What has always separated the run-of-the-mill architectural photographer from masters like Ezra Stoller, Ken Hedrich or Julius Shulman is a balance of creativity and empathy with the design. (These sentinel figures are largely associated with Modern Architecture). In addition to that balance, today's situation requires a tremendous flexibility coupled with an extensive visual knowledge base. Perhaps as no time in recent history has architectural photography been as challenging or stimulating. K.G.



## Footnotes

1. Richard Pare, *Photography and Architecture 1839-1939* (Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1982), p. 26
2. Charles Jencks, *Architecture Today* (Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 1982) p. 16
3. Robert Sobieszek, *The Architectural Photography of Hedrich-Blessing* (Holt, Reinhart and Winston, New York 1984), p. 8
4. Jencks, *Architecture Today*, p. 16

*Architectural Photography: Creative Empathy*, by Kirk Gittings.



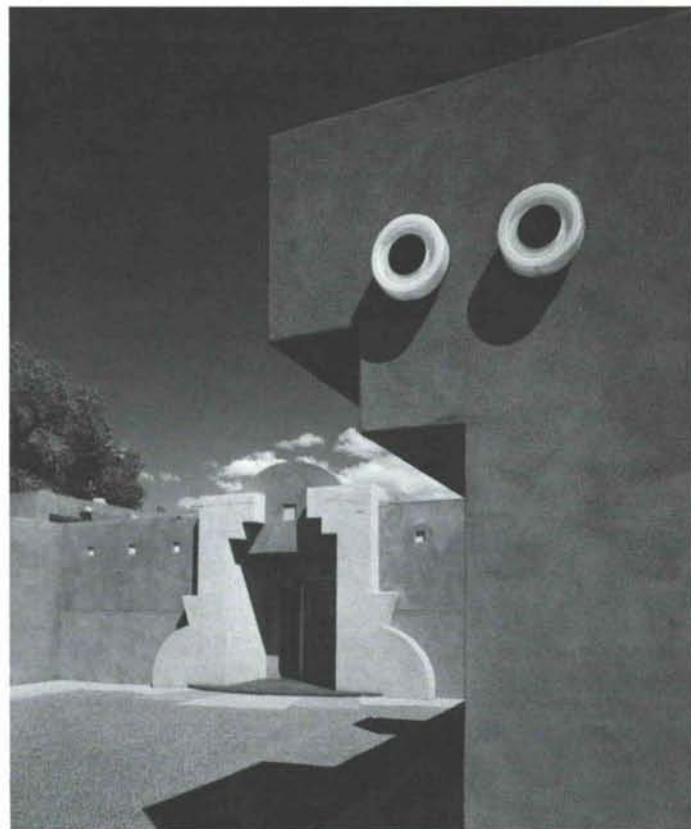


Figure 1, Page 10. First National Bank by Harry Weese and Associates, Chicago (from color original). © 1980 Kirk Gittings/SYNTAX.

Figure 2, Left. View from the atrium of First National Bank. © 1984 Kirk Gittings/SYNTAX.

Figure 3, Above. Offices of architects Holmes, Sabatini, Smith and Eeds (from color original). © 1985 Kirk Gittings/SYNTAX.

Figure 4, Below. The "Duncan House" by Westwork Architects. © 1984 Kirk Gittings/SYNTAX.



Article originally appeared in *The Journal of American Photography* Vol. Three  
o. Kirk Gittings, owner/photographer of Syntax Productions, is one of the  
architectural photographers in the Southwest. His current projects include  
n the mission churches of Northern New Mexico (with Michael Miller) and  
uquerque (with V.B. Price) - both books are being published by U.N.M.

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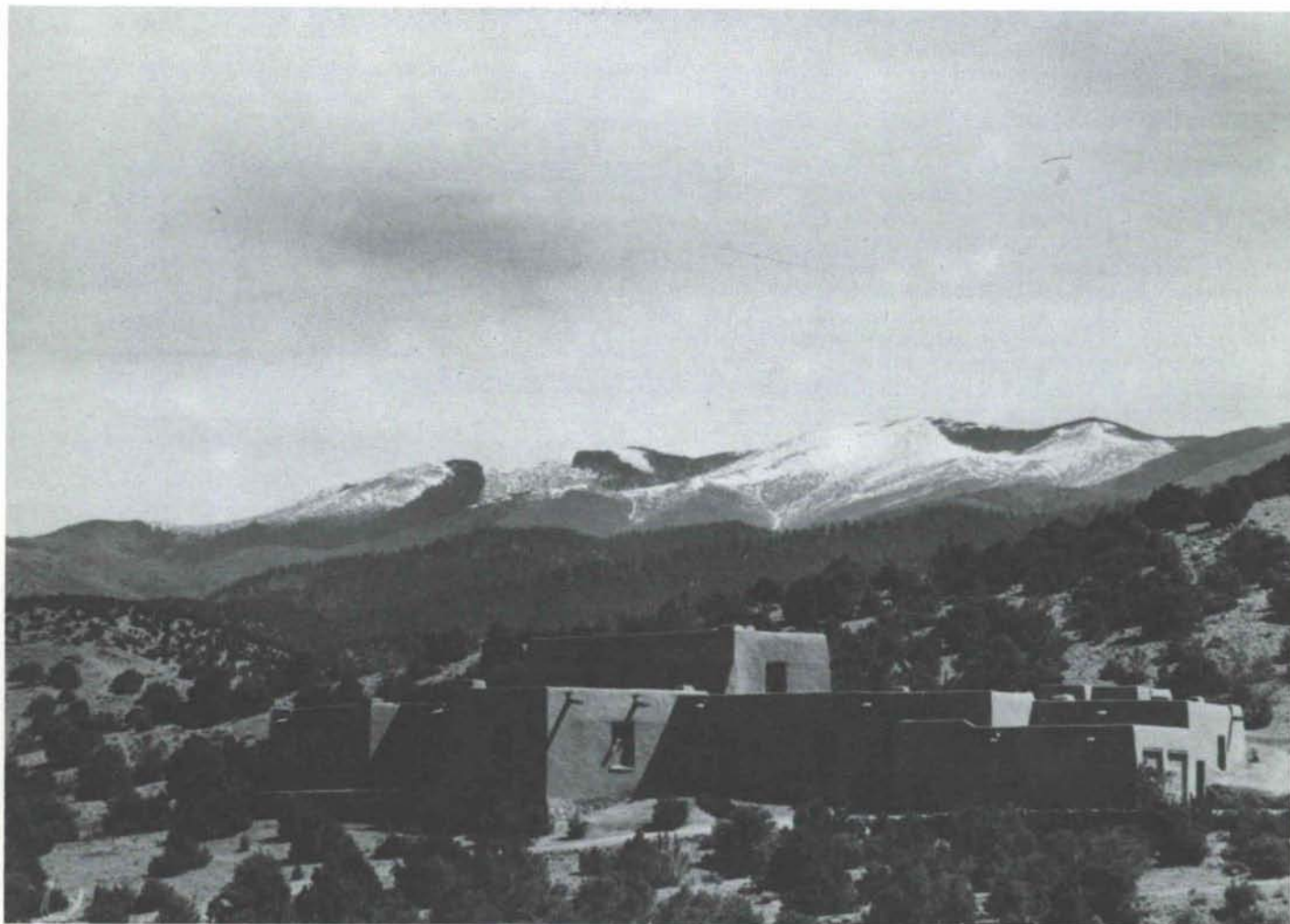
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# "LATER I PAID PEOPLE TO DO NICE PICTURES"

## John Gaw Meem and Architectural Photography

---



by William E. Tydeman

John Gaw Meem was only a few days short of his 84th birthday when he was interviewed by the *Los Alamos Monitor*. The reporter was taken with a water color sketch Meem had done of the Fuller Lodge. Meem acknowledged that the water color rendering was one he had done personally. But with characteristic understatement, he went on, "Later I paid people to do nice pictures...."<sup>1</sup> These pictures, photographs to be exact, represent one of the most interesting phases of John Gaw Meem's architectural career. Over the years, Meem hired some of the region's finest photographers. Ansel Adams, Tyler Dingee, Laura Gilpin and Ernest Knee all did commissioned work for the Meem firm. From our present perspective, this remarkable body of architectural photography is one of his most important legacies to the architectural history of the Southwest.

Meem was introduced to architectural photography at a crucial phase in his life. In 1920 he came to Santa Fe's Sunmount Sanatorium to recuperate from tuberculosis. At times, Sunmount seemed more like an artists' retreat than a tubercular ward. Dr. F.E. Mera's dynamic leadership brought artists and writers to the sanatorium for readings and lectures. At Sunmount John Gaw Meem had the luxury of time and contemplation. The years there

gave Meem unplanned freedom to think spontaneously about the things he considered interesting. More and more Meem thought about architecture — an architecture that arose from the historic roots of the Franciscan missions. There, too, Meem met the artist, photographer and jack of all trades Carlos Vierra.

Vierra had come to New Mexico in 1904 to take the "rest cure." Vierra had supposedly developed tuberculosis from a chest injury suffered when sailing around the Cape of Good Hope. He arrived in New York after his voyage and studied art for two years. Vierra worked at maritime painting until he was advised to go west to cure his T.B. But Vierra's hands were skilled with more than a paint brush. Prior to meeting Meem he had designed and built his own adobe home in the pueblo style in 1913. Vierra was reputed to be amused when before the windows and doors were installed, tourists referred to the residence as "the ruins near Cutting's."<sup>2</sup> (Legend has it that the kitchen was included only at the last moment.) Sailor, painter and amateur architect, Vierra was also a

---

*Photograph Above. The Amelia Hollenbeck House, Santa Fe. Ansel Adams, Photographer.*

---



photographer. Prior to the construction of the Fine Arts Museum in 1917, Frank Springer commissioned Vierra to photograph and paint all the surviving Franciscan missions and chapels in New Mexico. The peripatetic Vierra was soon expanding his scope and photographing all the indigenous architecture of New Mexico.

Vierra's photography and his knowledge of Pueblo style architecture were an important influence on Meem's thinking. Meem was so impressed with Vierra's photography that he later proposed writing a book on the architecture of New Mexico based largely on the Vierra photographs. The wealthy patron Cyrus McCormick, Jr. backed the project and Walter Goodwin (later to start Rydal Press in Santa Fe) agreed to take the book for J.P. Lippincott in 1931. Meem and Vierra were to be co-authors and publication of *Spanish Pueblo Architecture of New Mexico* was scheduled for 1933. Tragically it never appeared. Vierra died unexpectedly in 1938 and it is likely that Meem's heavy schedule of government projects did not allow any time for the book in the intervening years. Today we only have the seven albums of photographs collected by Vierra and a penciled outline by Meem.<sup>3</sup>

In the early 1920s Meem met Laura Gilpin. Meem served an architectural apprenticeship with the Fisher and Fisher firm of Denver. Gilpin, a Colorado Springs native, tried desperately to make a living from her photography. Her financial status was always shaky and Gilpin welcomed commissioned work from the Fisher firm. Over the years her finances changed very little. When she moved to New Mexico she photographed several Meem buildings. Her photographs of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center and the University of New Mexico Library are architectural photography at its best. Gilpin's direct, frontal style and her sensitivity to the qualities of the environment created a remarkable correspondence to the spirit of place that Meem sought in his buildings. Though better known for her ethnographic and landscape photographs, her interest in the light, texture and form of Southwest architecture remained an abiding interest throughout her life.<sup>4</sup>

In the late 1920s Meem met Ansel Adams. Adams had made two trips to New Mexico in the late 1920s. Like so many other photographers he was infatuated with the New Mexico landscape and the particular qualities of the New Mexico light. Like Gilpin he was young and struggling to make a living. Mary Austin (with whom he would later collaborate on the stunning book, *Taos Pueblo*) introduced Ansel and his wife to the rollicking social whirl of Santa Fe and he obtained several commissions from Meem over the next couple of years. Adams photographed the La Fonda Hotel, the Laboratory of Anthropology and a number of private residences — the Conkey, Hallenbeck, Stedman, Clarkson and Tilney houses.

In 1933 they carried on a professional, but spritely correspondence that illuminates the attitudes and working methods of both parties. On August 28, 1933, Meem wrote to Adams requesting photographs. "As I remember it, I commissioned you to take photographs of the Hallenbeck residence and therefore feel responsible for all the good ones you might have of that house."<sup>5</sup> On October 4, 1933, Adams wrote Meem. "A set of prints go to you today. I hope they will meet with your approval. They are very pleasing to me; I feel I have caught something of the mood of the landscape and something of the mood of the architecture itself. They are all in my new manner, and are much better photographs than these I made for you before."<sup>6</sup> Later when Meem wrote requesting additional photographs of La Fonda to be used by the Harvey Company for articles on the hotel in *Vanity Fair* and *Town and Country*, Adams responded: "Of course there is no reason why all of the pictures I made for you cannot be reproduced. I had always thought that was the prime reason for pictures of architectural subjects."<sup>7</sup>

John Meem couldn't have agreed more. The obvious reason for having buildings photographed was for publicity. As Meem more elegantly put it "...one of my primary ideas in having the buildings photographed was to use them in connection with an ar-

ticle in one of the architectural magazines, or other high-class publications."<sup>8</sup> Throughout his career, architectural photography for documentation and publicity continued to be Meem's primary emphasis. Later on he would hire other photographers like Ernest Knee and the underrated Tyler Dingee. On his most important buildings he often hired more than one photographer — Knee, Gilpin, and Dingee all worked on the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center and the University of New Mexico Library. The choice of more than one photographer on a particular project often created animosities,<sup>9</sup> but the general rule applied: the more important the commissions, the more photographs were made. There is even evidence that on his less significant commissions, he did his own photography.

Meem clearly had a discerning eye for photographic excellence, but his aesthetic criteria were left unstated. Many projects had routine progress photographs made and Meem usually relied on a local photographer or studio.<sup>10</sup> On his important buildings Meem appears to have given the photographers free rein to compose and choose the subject. His selections were made often times from inspection prints. The photographers retained the negative. He was generally scrupulous about crediting the photographer in publica-



*Ceiling, U.N.M. Library. Ernest Knee, Photographer.*

tions and he paid a fair wage. Always the diplomat, Meem simply didn't buy what he didn't like. Direct, clear frontal images that made complexity appear simple and form seem organic were his obvious preference.

Meem's concern with documenting his accomplishments served him well. By 1953 when the first major retrospective of his work was prepaid by the Museum of New Mexico, he had accumulated an impressive body of architectural photography. In his later years when requests for information and exhibits rolled in, he could supply photographs from his collection. At best, financial profit accrued to both architect and photographer. Architectural magazines over the years could publicize the aspect of Meem's building. His judicious choice of photographs often permitted the photographs to illuminate the meaning of his buildings as well.

In retrospect, it is Meem's choice of photographers that seems central to establishing his reputation. He never sought to use architectural photography as a tool for architectural criticism. While he clearly provided a subsequent generation of architectural students the visual documents to judge his accomplishments, he never used photographs in dynamic ways. He was clearly oc-



cupied with the finished building. Progress photographs are dreary and routine. Only Tyler Dingee's photographs show a concern for interiors with unusual configurations or perspectives. Little of the commissioned work reveals an interest in the contextual environment or the excitement of the construction process.

Perhaps this is one of the few demonstrations that in his use of architectural photography Meem was a product of convention. (It's worth noting that today the situation is hardly different.) Concerned with documenting the formal aspects of the completed structure, John Gaw Meem chose with unerring skill photographers who captured the spirit and essence of his buildings. Meem seems to have always understood that written documents alone give us a thin record of the built environment.

W.T.

#### Photographs:

Top: M.V. Conkey Residence, Santa Fe. Ansel Adams, Photographer.

Middle: First Presbyterian Church, Santa Fe. Tylee Dingee, Photographer.

Bottom: Student Union Building, U.N.M., Laura Gilpin, Photographer.



#### Endnotes

1 Mary Beth Bogart, "Fuller Lodge Celebrates 50th Year," *Los Alamos Monitor*, 5 November, 1978.

2 "Carlos Vierra Dies Here Today Following Attack of Pneumonia," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 20 December, 1937.

3 "Book of Spanish Pueblo Architecture," John Gaw Meem Papers, Zimmerman Library, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

4 Marni Sandweiss, *Laura Gilpin: An Enduring Grace*. Fort Worth, Texas, 1986, p. 49-50.

5 John Gaw Meem, letter to Ansel Adams, 28 August, 1933, John Gaw Meem Papers.

6 Ansel Adams, letter to John Gaw Meem, 4 October, 1933, John Gaw Meem Papers.

7 Ansel Adams, letter to John Gaw Meem, 4 October, 1933, John Gaw Meem Papers.

8 John Gaw Meem, letter to Ansel Adams, 30 October, 1933, John Gaw Meem Papers.

9 Sandweiss, *Laura Gilpin*, p. 64.

10 His later contracts at the University of New Mexico often called for the building contractor to supply progress photos.

William E. Tydeman is Head of the Special Collection Department at the University of New Mexico and Co-editor of *Reading into Photography*, UNM Press, 1982.



Fe territorial style buildings on the property include Davey's nine room house and studio with a museum quality collection of American and European art and furnishings, and two smaller residential buildings used for staff accommodations. An adjacent building, originally built as a horse stable and expanded after Davey's death by his sister-in-law to serve as a gallery, is now used as an office/classroom/interpretive facility for the Center.

Davey's most personalized touch to the house, however, was his painting. During his residency on Upper Canyon Road, he painted doors, interior and exterior walls, and floors. This painting shows the artist's desire to decorate his private surroundings in a style very different from his more formal, public work. Subject matter for this private work ranges from mythical and religious American Indian motifs, to, as Art Conservator Anne Rosenthal describes, "female nudes in a fanciful landscape" of palm trees, pools, apes and birds. The later motif decorates Davey's wife's dressing room walls.

Since this artwork is literally part of the historic fabric of the house, and because it was painted by Davey, it has become among the most significant historic features of the entire property. Because of the techniques used by Davey to perform this private work, and some of the surfaces he chose to paint, this artwork is also posing conservation challenges to the Audubon Society unlike any of those generally part of the Society's undertakings.

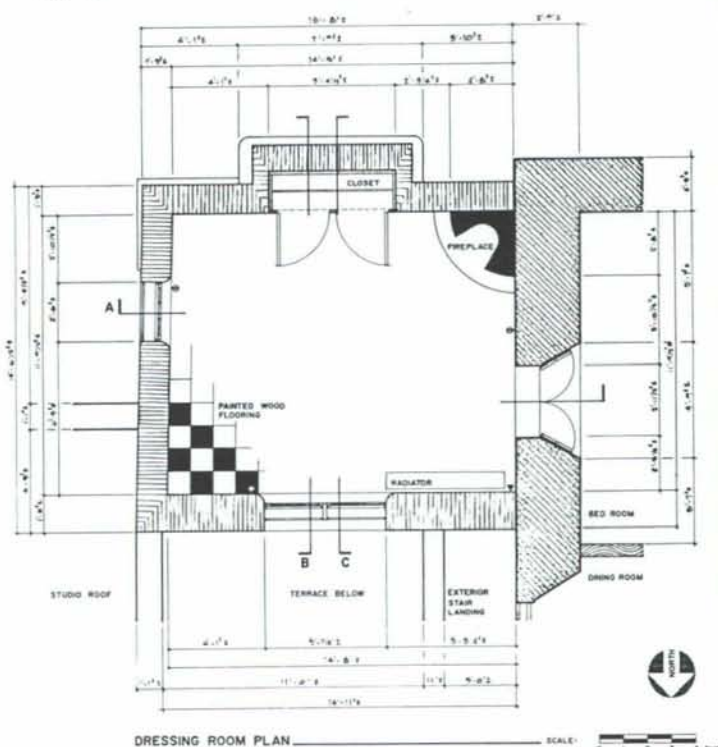
Instigated by the deteriorating condition of the dressing room murals, the Society is looking at a long range program of stabilization, restoration and conservation of the Davey house and the other associated buildings on the site. As a start to this program, the Society, using grant funds from The National Trust for Historic Preservation, The Historic Santa Fe Foundation, and the New Mexico Arts Division, Office of Cultural Affairs, hired the Albuquerque based Historic Preservation Consulting Firm of Caufield-Caufield to investigate the condition of the dressing room and recommend procedures to stabilize the apparent deterioration processes. Caufield-Caufield, working with consultants Anne Rosenthal, Art Conservator, and Bill Miller, Civil Engineer, produced a report with an in-depth analysis of the dressing room and a prioritized stabilization plan. Findings of the report include:

1. The dressing room is, in fact, an addition to the original saw mill structure, and was constructed prior to Davey's ownership. The most convincing evidence of the room being an addition is the finished west wall of the dressing room crawl space. This west crawl space wall had originally been part of the exposed east wall of the mill structure.
2. The dressing room mural, painted by Davey in the early 1940's was the final finish layer on a sequence of wall finishes applied during Davey's residency. A total of seven layers of paint and plaster were discovered on the adobe walls.
3. The ongoing cycle of moisture entering and travelling through the adobe walls of the dressing room has resulted in a hierarchy of deterioration of the walls various finish layers and of the mural itself. The deterioration ranges from minor cracking of the painted mural surface, to severe



Credit: CAUFIELD•CAUFIELD, from 1985 Stabilization Report.

Credit: CAUFIELD • CAUFIELD, from 1985 Stabilization Report







4. Photograph showing the interior of the dressing room and a portion of the Davey murals.

Photo Credit: CAUFIELD•CAUFIELD, 1985

delamination of the mural and its plaster substrate from the adobe walls, to some areas of complete mural loss.

4. The moisture problem evident in the dressing room walls was initially assumed to be the result of the house being built into the side of a hill and a subsequent rising damp condition. The wet condition was actually determined to be the result of deteriorated brick coping, faulty roof flashing, and numerous wall penetrations primarily from electrical services into the house. Wall core drillings to analyze the moisture content of the walls revealed dry conditions at the bottoms of the walls and wet conditions at the tops.

The dressing room study has completed the first phase of the Society's long-range stabilization, restoration and conservation program at the Randall Davey Center. The Society hopes to be able to continue the effort with subsequent investigations into the remainder of the house, the studio and the site's various associated buildings including the guest houses and the office/classroom building.

All of this work, both completed and planned, is intended to result in a comprehensive preservation plan for the Davey structures that will include a cyclical preservation maintenance program for ongoing upkeep and conservation activities. The Society's efforts continue to support visitation and interpretation of the property as a significant historic site to Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the Nation. The Randall Davey Audubon Center is open year-round and the house is open for guided tours in the summer.

J.C.

Jim Caufield is a partner in CAUFIELD•CAUFIELD, an Albuquerque based Historic Preservation Consulting firm that provides consulting services to owners of historic property, developers, architects, and public and private agencies. Specialties of the firm include preparation of historic structures reports, nominations to the National Register of Historic Places, historic surveys, and assistance in receiving state and Federal investment tax credits for the rehabilitation of historic property. The office can be reached by writing P.O. Box 36811, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87176, or by calling 505-265-8590.



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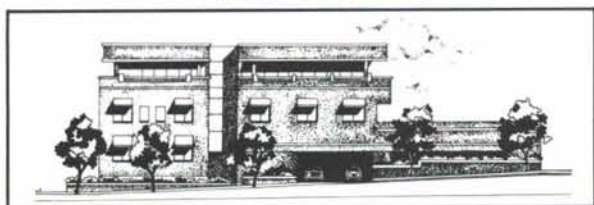
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Concept/Thru Development/To The Printed Piece

#### FEATURING

Commercial and Residential  
Renderings

BY LAURA KING

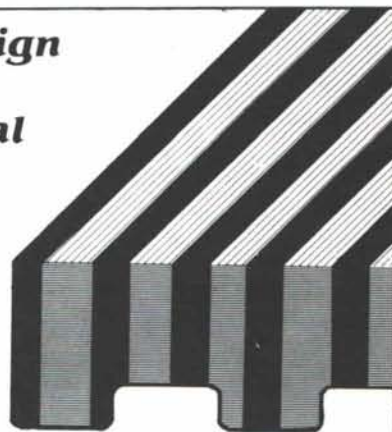
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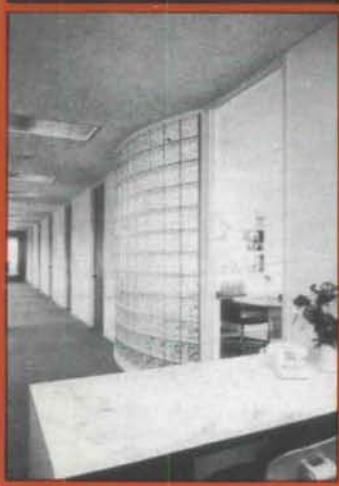
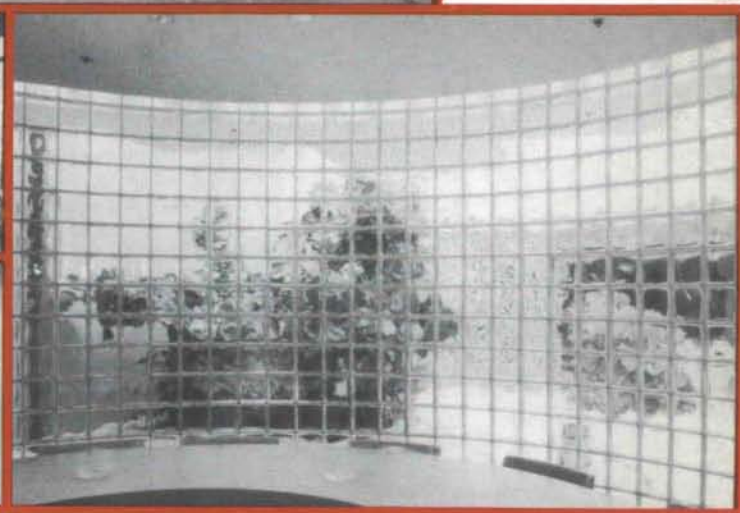
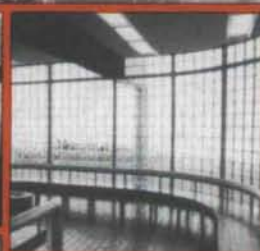
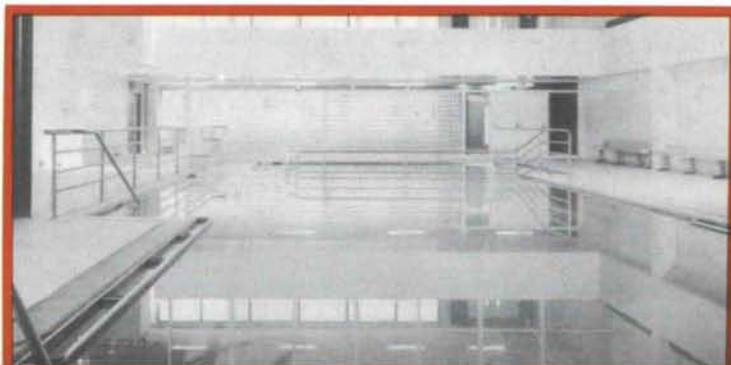


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