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特集
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エモリー大学、ターナー・ヴィレッジ
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評論: マーク・リンダー

Feature
Seogin Elam and Bray
Turner Village, Emory Univ.
House Chmar and other works
Criticism: Mark Linder



Scogin Elam and Bray

スコギン、エラム・アンド・ブレイ

Criticism:

Mark Linder

Photograph:

Timothy Hursley

Lloyd Bray

Works:

Turner Village, Emory University

Morrow Branch Library

Buckhead Branch Library

House Chmar

Roderique House

A Weekend House

Reston Town Center Gallery

Law Library Expansion

翻訳:

北野恭弘

菊池伸一郎

渡辺弘毅

東宮由香

Is it the essence of the artistic way of looking at things that it looks at the world with a happy eye? Wittgenstein

How is it that our everyday enjoyment of scenes and situations develops into the peculiar satisfaction that attends the experience which is emphatically esthetic? Dewey

The one immediately impressive characteristic regarding the buildings of Scogin Elam and Bray is their nonplussed friendliness, an aspect of the work which rarely finds its way into photographs. Even the drawings and models produced in their office betray the infectious quality that the buildings project. The drawings, invariably plans, sections and elevations (along with an occasional axonometric), are drawn in black ink, and the models are small, white and abstract. Yet for all the deadpan technique and matter-of-fact representations, the buildings somehow become animated with a distinct amicability.

It may appear that beginning a piece of critical writing by first calling these buildings friendly is tantamount to dismissing them, but it is not; this is extremely intelligent, ingenious, and serious architecture. The desire first of all to simply "like" them, suggests the very difficulty of discussing them intellectually. They neither assist nor resist an academic manner; in fact, these buildings are hardly mannered at all. The seeming expressionism or eccentricity apparent in the drawings and photographs is a distortion compelled by our own bad habits, our suppressive wish to read the images as informational or factual clues toward future experience. But it is perhaps the genius of Scogin Elam and Bray to suppress their own desire for experience and to postpone depicting the whole character of their work until that actual construction of the architecture. It is this difficult attitude toward "experience"—a simultaneous recognition of its fundamental value as well as its ultimate poverty if isolated and objectified—that so distinctively marks the work of Scogin Elam and Bray.

1. The first time I saw drawings and models of the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, with its flowing geometries and sweeping roofs, the impression which remained afterwards was of a very indulgent and stylized formalism which resided almost wholly in the logic of the plan (at both the scale of the building and the site). Yet the geometries of the built project, if not subtle, are at least subdued. The building effaces the agitation which the normalized representations seem to magnify and accentuate. The form is not aggressive like the drawing; it asserts itself plainly as a mildly deviant and consistently nuanced cross-axial modernist scheme. The built work explodes gently beyond the self-imposed limitations of the drawings and models to settle at its site. Eventually it is the site, or circumstance, of Scogin Elam and Bray's work that begins to animate our understanding. As Jerry Cullum has suggested, multiple valences map the working field of Scogin Elam and Bray, from the personal (the collaborative nature of their relationship and the organization of their office, attracting some of the most talented students from Georgia Tech who infuse and inform their design practice) to the geographical and cultural (the New South). While it might be said that most of America remains provincial, even as it dominates the world economically and militarily, the American South must be said to be doubly removed. True to the latent aristocracy of its origins, the South retains a confident diffidence towards manufactured popular opinion and culture, as well as toward the presumed intellect of the Northeast. Thus it is a distinct irony, or perhaps a *coup d'état* that Mack Scogin now finds himself at Harvard, after spending almost his entire life in Atlanta, a city which in the course of the last 50 years has gradually lost its deeply Southern graces and grown into the quintessential post-industrial city. Trading on its past as a railroad nexus, Atlanta has built (what is proudly claimed as) the second largest airport in the United States; today a "Southerner" can fly from this efficient and banal facility directly to almost any major city in Europe the United States. This is perhaps the primary reason why Atlanta's boosters now promote it

as an "International City," but its more conspicuous urban quality is an utter lack of metropolitan complexion; instead, Atlanta is a vast convenience facility for "the good life," sustaining even the most divergent forms of that All-American fantasy. Perhaps, then, Atlanta might more incisively be dubbed AIRPORT-OF-THE-WORLD, an appropriately functionary identity for the hub of the 1996 Olympic Games.

At least one of Scogin Elam and Bray's buildings, the Clayton County Library Headquarters—which is situated near the airport in a sprawling suburban area where many pilots have homes—tacitly plays upon the impulses of prosperity and mobility which Atlanta's civic hero, John Portman, so zealously capitalized upon with his populist speculation in convention hotels and office buildings. At Clayton County, Scogin Elam and Bray have channelled these same impulses in a different, more indigenous, direction, and merged them with a broad knowledge of modernist precedent, one resource which informs all of their work, regardless of the site. This familiarity with the modernist idiom suggests that while a discussion of Atlanta and the South is necessary to understand particular aspects of the work of Scogin Elam and Bray, perhaps the more significant condition is their position in what might be called the professional and disciplinary matrix of current architectural practice. There exists a clear affinity among several American firms and individuals whose work exploits the primitive, qualitative, and experiential potential of built form. This commonplace, often commonsense, attitude feeds a kind of work that does not depend upon nor provoke pervasive theorization or judgmental criticism. Scogin Elam and Bray, like Gehry, Gwathmey and Hedjuk, stand between two differing versions of contemporary American practice, with one tending toward silence (and occasionally suggesting transcendence), and the other more concerned with explicit communication. The first version might be best represented in the work of Louis Kahn, most obviously in his writings, while the second has been clearly (and polemically) illustrated by Venturi, also in his writings, most vividly in *Learning from Las Vegas*. But a new kind of architectural practice (with very little to say about itself) has begun to flourish between these two versions; and it is in this space of difference which the work of Scogin Elam and Bray manages to lodge itself.

2. The notion of considering the practices of Kahn and Venturi as two divergent versions of modernism, is a (corrupted) variation upon two broader dichotomies proposed by Van Wyck Brooks and Richard Rorty (each of whom, being a good Pragmatist, begins by recognizing and articulating normative dualities as a means to imagining and inhabiting the interval between). Brooks, in 1915, insisted that American society, in a way unique to itself, always has been divided between the two extremes of the "Highbrow" and the "Lowbrow," which he saw as segregated cultures, each refusing to consider the standards of the other.

"So it is that from the beginning we find two main currents in the American mind running side by side but rarely mingling... and both equally unsocial: on the one hand, ... the fastidious refinement and aloofness of the chief American writers, ... resulting in the final unreality of most contemporary American culture; and on the other hand the current of catchpenny opportunism, originating in the practical shifts of Puritan life, ... resulting in the atmosphere of contemporary business life."¹

Brooks portrayed this as a dichotomy similar to that between theory and practice, played out in the twentieth century as a competition between the ethics of the university and those of business.² In effect, the recent exhibition, "High and Low" at the Museum of Modern Art, is yet another variation on Brooks's divisive theme, continuing the academic obsession with the dangers and possibilities of "mingling" high and low, or the exalted and the mean, the same sort of distinction which continues to separate many of the apologists for Kahn and Venturi, while few explore the poorly articulated middle ground.

Recently, Rorty has formulated a broader dualism which evades Brooks's hierarchical cast. His story identifies two strategies which have arisen in the twentieth-century as responses to, and revisions of, what he calls the "scientific" imposition of precise, normative, objectifying systems of thought (in other words, the vain attempt to alleviate distortion between signifier).³ One of these two strategies is exemplified by Heidegger's "poetic" attempt to clear away the debris of language, to provide space for a primal and spiritual presence of language. The spare, elemental architecture of Rossi or Kahn can in this way be seen as an attempt to recover the potency of essential forms, and the primary words of architecture. A second strategy is rooted in romantic figures like Emerson and Nietzsche, each of whom saw it as their literary task to embrace complexity, the new, and expansiveness by putting them to work. Like Eisenman or Venturi, they place importance on invention and the creative potential of metaphor to force the reconstruction of our webs of meaning. To put it dumbly, the second version concentrates upon *making* "texts" and the first is concerned with *finding* "lumps."⁴ Admittedly, this last sentence is a fairly crude characterization of two complex and compelling positions, but it acts out one distinct advantage which many Americans seem to retain in the area of language: a useful and knowing *dumbness*. (I use this word in a way which exceeds and includes both its literal meaning—unintelligibility—and its vernacular use—the lack of intelligence.) Neither obsessed with linguistic priority (Heidegger) nor linguistic impropriety (Nietzsche), such people are often suspicious of language altogether and thus peculiarly able to be intellectually relaxed and laconic, often with astounding and extraordinary results.

3. Yet be *simply* dumb is no virtue, and the work of Scogin Elam and Bray is visually and formally articulate. Like Venturi, Eisenman or Meier they imbued rigorous, though often eccentric, geometries in their plans, deftly recalling precedents. Like Kahn they are architects who find substance in materials and the play of light. But the more resolute aspect of their work is the compulsion not to frame an argument, but to make a difference, a trait that links them to individuals such as Hedjuk and Gehry. Of course, such evasions of intention and rationale all too often result in merely outrageous and detached designs, but Scogin Elam and Bray's work consistently engages and provokes its public. The controversy surrounding their design for the Buckhead Library, with an influential conglomeration of private groups employing the rhetoric of appropriateness to stop the construction of a public building, is a particularly illustrative case, not simply because the architecture attracted the attention of diverse constituencies, but because the architects were able to maneuver productively within this situation of public exchange. Likewise, the loving and lively reactions to the Clayton County library, and the involvement of children in the decoration of the stucco on the Morrow Library, demonstrate an equal concern with engaging the diversity of participants in each situation. In other words, Scogin Elam and Bray avoid the kind of performance and promotion that characterizes much of the more "interesting" work of the contemporary scene. In fact, one might even say that one virtue of Scogin Elam and Bray is that, in the sense a philosopher like Karsten Harries derogates the term, their work is not interesting; there is none of the sheer intellectual play, the dependence upon quotation, or the illustration of theory that makes so much "postmodern" architecture easily discussed, consumed and subsequently dismissed. In keeping with this attitude, Scogin Elam and Bray are reluctant to explain their work in other than the most common manner. They choose to present themselves and their work in the terms of the ordinary, an approach which inevitably leads to a consideration of the vernacular, those "commonsense-places" which at once horrify and fascinate architects, from Le Corbusier's attention to the work of engineers and the cities of North Africa, to Venturi's love of pop art and Gehry's exploitation of the clumsiness of wood framing. Also like Gehry, but in a fashion which is less aestheticized and more droll, Scogin Elam and Bray find a way to admit building "products" into their architecture and to take advantage of the surplus of meaning engendered by this now

pervasive and widely comprehensible system of categorization and distribution.

Appropriately, the architects have called the Clayton County Library a "K-Mart for information," a description which reveals their willingness to make their work available in the way K-Mart makes products affordable by employing mechanisms of availability. This no-nonsense merchandising attracts a large segment of the public and conspicuously avoids conspicuous consumption by offering inexpensive versions of more sophisticated and highly promoted consumer products. Like any K-Mart building, the Clayton County Library does not compete with its more "high-brow" department-store counterparts, but rather offers its contents without manipulative "hype."

4. Each of the buildings published here, as different as they are, is built of two main components, a rigorous and inclusive formalism and a discerning selection of idiom, imagery and icon. From these two sources, or between them, these architects make their difference. A further difference is made between the two principal partners, Mack Scogin and Merrill Elam, Elam's sensibility produces work which is often conventionalized but always quirky, for example the color, patterning and detailing at both the Clayton County and Morrow Libraries. Scogin tends toward an elaborate but rigorous formalism which is not unlike Venturi's. Both formalisms are primarily plan-based, with a coincident ability to disguise, hybridize or weaken the supremacy of the plan, but Scogin doesn't play Venturi's game of "virtual" order, that is, the attempt to imply a missing or incomplete totality without actually imbedding a simple *parti* or typology. Still, like Venturi, Scogin's plans are often clearly diagrammatic or emphatically fragmentary, yet always irresolvable. Jerry Cullum's apt phrase, "small beginnings,"⁵ suggests a more salient but elusive sentiment which drives the work of Scogin Elam and Bray. Through their innumerable photographs, many taken with an automatic pocket camera, we catch a glimpse of their world. Mack Scogin and Merrill Elam's beautiful and often comic "snapshots" remind one of the way William Gass uses photography to do philosophy, but while Gass insists upon remaining on the surface of his images and endeavors to recover them (in Barthes's sense) with a kind of interpretive narrative, Elam and Scogin are at once less painterly and more incisive. The images they capture make no claim to general meaning. They are interventions in happenstance and event: it is essential when viewing them to consider who decided to record this moment. The decision and the specifics of the view are less framed in the classic sense than they are collected; their cameras are not used as instruments of reproduction or mechanisms to produce art works, but like the most primitive devices of photographic history, they are simple boxes. In this case the boxes function something like the ones an entomologist or archaeologist carries; they are not meant to categorize and control their specimens but merely to order and preserve them until they can be dissected, identified or cleaned. But Scogin Elam and Bray reject that final stage of analysis. The snapshots rest in the boxes, to be repeatedly and tirelessly viewed, but never taken apart in thought or articulated in words. These snapshots are "taken," so they eventually will be put to use—vicariously reformed, reconstructed, replaced and reconstituted—in architecture. These snapshots are moments of art, moments of interest or moments of architecture. Scogin Elam and Bray look among the things we collectively have made, from garbage dumps to opera houses, hoping to find architectural clues among the vernacular and the shared. This method, or attitude, is connected to the actual buildings: we find traces of snapshots (artifacts, shapes, fragments of experience) lodged in the construction, but they are transformed, or reformed as if by a violent discipline like surgery. It is in that way that Scogin Elam and Bray's work is perhaps deconstructive; it is not a matter of how it looks, but in its constitution. It is assembled as a complex collage, the assemblage of incommensurable disciplines, facts, images, styles and orders in a way which is neither the disassembly of a prior whole, nor the reassembly of a group of unmodified fragments. These buildings inhabit a textual space which is not disrupted, not alienated, not

chaotic; they do not wear a tragic face. These buildings are joyful in a way that the classics of modernism could not be. The elation of high modernism was perhaps a tragic smile, and that of postmodernism is a "forced smile," as Emerson called the expression we wear when we fear displeasing our interlocutor. The Scogin Elam and Bray smile is not forced, or sardonic, or conflicted about what it cannot say outright. But this enigmatic smile leaves us with questions. What is it about our current predicament in architecture that makes us suspicious of a smile whose satisfaction does not derive from theoretical ingenuity or practical triumph? Why it is so hard to write about buildings which are so happy? What is it that Scogin Elam and Bray know so well but are not telling us?

5. The following retort, offered in 1918 by Van Wyck Brooks, is perhaps still a frighteningly viable, but still risky, option, for now, for us.

"What is important for us? . . . The more personally we answer this question, it seems to me, the more likely we are to get a vital order from the anarchy of the present."⁶

To begin to answer this question requires what William James first called "anti-intellectualist tendencies."⁷ James drew a distinction between anti-intellectuals, who are antagonized by, and antagonistic towards, all forms of bookish activity, and anti-intellectualists, who are often intellectuals, yet argue against rationalist and idealist claims to knowledge, for example Nietzsche and Emerson. It was this tendency that Wittgenstein so loved about James; both involved themselves in problems of dumbness, in other words. They tried to articulate their thoughts without stating them outright. Architects, by virtue of their medium, are forced into such a condition, but this basic muteness of habitable form is rarely faced head-on. This is a problem which captivated Wittgenstein, as presented strikingly in his allegory of the "builders," an imagined community which possesses a language of only four words (beam, block, pillar, slab), each of which corresponds exactly to the four elements of their architecture, implying that their architecture, however well-formed, could in fact have nothing to posit about anything other than itself. I imagine Scogin Elam and Bray to be constructing within a more complex, but nonetheless qualitative, condition, still at a loss for words which would explain their actions, and prompting a Wittgensteinian fascination with what he called the "CLICK": the experience immediately after the wordless moment when something is on the tip of one's tongue. Paraphrasing William James, Wittgenstein writes of this moment:

"What a remarkable experience! The word is not there yet, and yet in a certain sense is there,—or something is there, which *cannot* grow into anything but this word,—But this is not experience at all. *Interpreted* as experience it does indeed look odd. As does intention when it is interpreted as the accompaniment of action. . . . The words 'It's on the tip of my tongue' . . . are frequently followed by *finding* the word. (Ask yourself: what would it be like if human beings *never* found the word that was on the tip of their tongues?)"⁸

This liminal condition is precisely the one I have a sense that the work of Scogin Elam and Bray is inhabiting, as though mute yet still articulating clearly what *might* be said. Oddly, it is the seeming definitiveness of the drawings and models which defers and engenders this ultimate condition of being at a loss-for-words. Happily, like Wittgenstein in his aphoristic writings, Scogin Elam and Bray never "just come out and say it." They portray a respect for articulation at the same time that they respect its limits. The work spans a gulf between transcendence and commonsense at the same time it is neither. This is an architecture of transgression; it is not complacent; because while the architects are reluctant to attach words to their work, they are not silent, but like their architecture, dumb-founded when called upon to speak definitively, leaving us with the same happy smile of puzzlement with which Wittgenstein teases us.

Note:

- 1) Van Wyck Brooks, *America's Coming of Age*, (New York: B.W. Huedsch, 1915), 9–10.
- 2) *Ibid.*, 7.
- 3) Richard Rorty, "Philosophy as Science, as Metaphor and as Politics" in *Essays on Heidegger and others*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- 4) Richard Rorty, "Texts and Lumps," *New Literary History* 17:1 (Autumn 1985).
- 5) J.W. Cullum, "On Southern Identities and Difference: Marginal Notes for Mack Scogin and Merrill Elam," *Assemblage* 7 (October 1988): 87.
- 6) Brooks, "On Creating a Usable Past," *The Dial* (April 11, 1918): 341.
- 7) William James, *Pragmatism*, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981), 29. (Also see Morton White, "Anti-Intellectualism in America" in his *Pragmatism and the American Mind*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 78–92 and Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, (New York: Vintage, 1963).
- 8) Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd. ed., (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 219.

Mark D. Linder: Studied architecture (MA, 1986) and Environmental Design (MA, 1988) at Yale Univ., studied science and architecture (BA) at Univ. of Virginia (1982). Adjunct Assistant Professor at Univ. of Illinois, Chicago and has taught at Georgia Tech., Rice Univ. and Yale Univ. ■

Scogin Elam and Bray Architects

Mack Scogin was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1943. He received a Bachelor of Architecture Degree at the Georgia Institute of Technology in 1967. He is a Principal at Scogin Elam and Bray Architects, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia and Chairman, Department of Architecture and Adjunct Professor at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. Mr. Scogin has received a number of national and regional awards and recognitions for his work in architecture. He has served as adjudicator for a number of academic institutions, professional organizations and design awards programs, including the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, the Georgia Institute of Technology, the New York Chapter AIA, the Chicago Chapter AIA, the San Diego Chapter AIA, the R.S. Reynolds Memorial Award, and the *Progressive Architecture* Awards (1989). He has lectured extensively at universities and organizations throughout the U.S.

Prior to founding Scogin Elam and Bray Architects, Inc. (originally organized as Parker and Scogin Architects, Inc.), Mr. Scogin was with Heery and Heery Architects and Engineers, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia for over seventeen years. He was President and Chief Operating Officer, Director of Design of that organization before resigning to form his own firm in 1984.

Lloyd Bray was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1951. He grew up near the city center and later attended Tulane University where the visual richness of the city of New Orleans caused him to become interested in recording images via photography. He was student president of the School of Architecture and received the Alpha Rho Chi award for leadership upon graduation with a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1976. Upon return to Atlanta, he joined the firm of Heery & Heery, Architects & Engineers where he was a project architect and associate. In 1984, he left Heery & Heery to become one of the founding principals of Scogin Elam and Bray Architects, Inc.

At Scogin Elam and Bray, Mr. Bray's activities include participation in design, organization of project activities, construction administration, business matters, and photography of the firm's projects and models. From time to time he lectures and serves as juror at schools of architecture and for design awards programs.

Merrill Elam was born in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1943. She received a Bachelor of Architecture at Georgia Institute of Technology in 1971 and a Masters of Business Administration at Georgia State University in 1983. She is a Principal of Scogin Elam and Bray Architects, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia. Her work has received both national and regional awards and recognition. She has served as adjudicator for a number of academic and professional organizations, design programs, and has lectured and taught at universities throughout the U.S. She is currently the 1991-1992 William Wayne Caudill Visiting Lecturer at Rice University. ■

マック・スコギンは1943年、ジョージア州アトランタ生まれ。ジョージア工科大学で建築を学び、1967年に卒業。現在、アトランタでスコギン・エラム・アンド・ブレイを主宰、ハーヴァード大学建築学部のディーンおよび非常勤教授を兼任している。またその建築功績については地域的にも国際的にも数々の賞が贈られている。その他、ハーヴァード大学大学院、ジョージア工科大学、各地のAIAの活動に携わり、P・S・レイノルズ記念賞、PA賞（1984）などの選考委員を務める。アメリカ国内の大学、組織で幅広く講演活動を行う。大学卒業後、アトランタのヒーリー・アンド・ヒーリーに17年間勤め、1984年に独立、パーカー・アンド・スコギン・アソシエイツを設立。その後スコギン・エラム・アンド・ブレイと改め、現在に至る。

ロイド・ブレイは1951年ジョージア州、アトランタ生まれ。アトランタの中心街で育ち、チューリン大学で建築を学ぶ。そこでニューオリンズの豊かな景観に触発され、写真を通じてイメージを記録することに興味を抱くようになる。在学中には自治会長を務め、その実績から1976年の卒業時に、アルファ・ロー・カイ賞を受賞。その後アトランタに戻り、1984年にスコギン・エラム・アンド・ブレイを設立、現在に至る。その活動は多岐に渡り、講演や建築学生の指導、学生デザイン賞の審査なども行う。

メリル・エラムは1943年、テネシー州、ナッシュビル生まれ。ジョージア工科大学で建築を学び、1971年に卒業。1983年にはジョージア州立大学で経営修士号を取得。スコギン・エラム・アンド・ブレイを主宰する。多くの大学や団体、デザイン・プログラムの活動に携り、アメリカ国内の多数の大学で教鞭をとり、講演会を催すなど広く活動している。また最近ではライス大学における1991～1992年度のウィリアム・ウェイン・コウディル講座の客員講師を務める。■