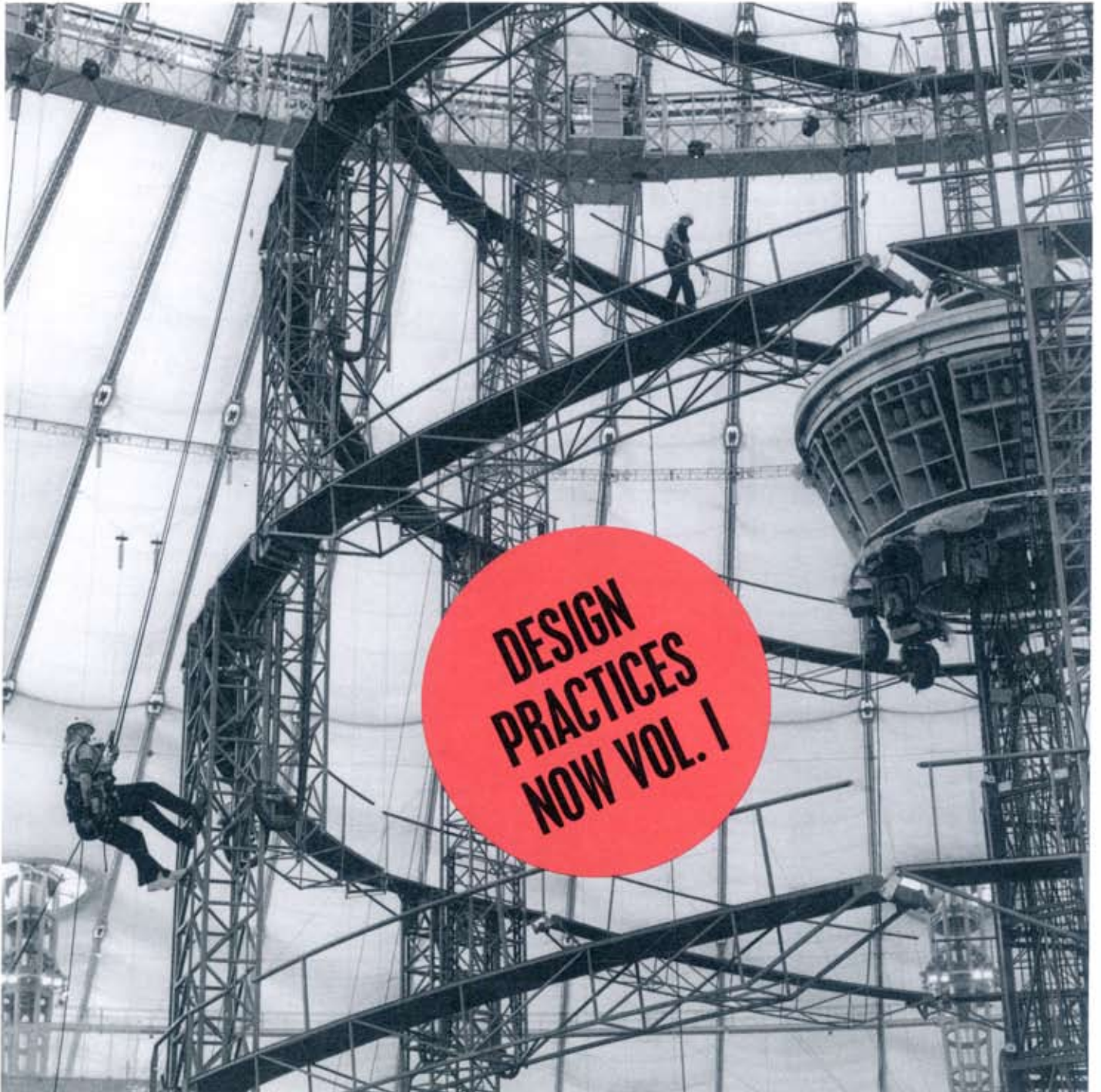


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ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE NOW

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Saunders To put it most simply: Could each of you speak about what is of most concern to you in architectural practice today?

COMPETITIONS

Maltzan Since the economy is so shaky and projects are few, we are motivated to stand back and look critically at where the discipline is. Is this a moment when practice will change radically? The number of firms going after each project is now huge, sometimes over 100. Because so many different designers are begging for work, clients are in the driver's seat, able to choose from a wide range of architects and kinds of practices. For one recent project, we were on a short list of twenty firms—small, medium, and large firms; firms with intense design

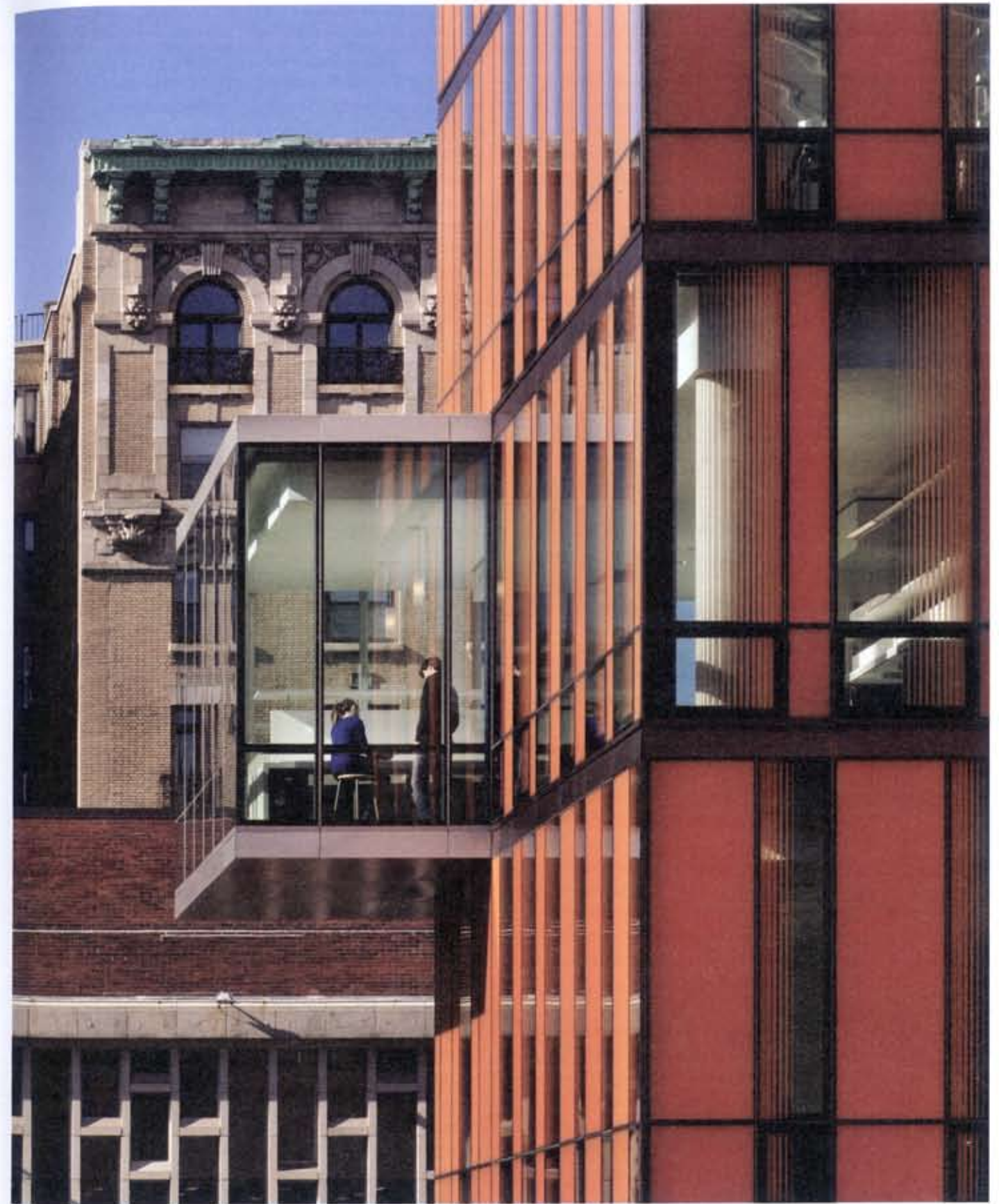
focuses; and firms with a focus on service and production. And the client imagined that any of these firms could do the project equally, even though they all had extremely different cultures and values. Now staging unpaid competitions is also becoming a more prevalent way for clients to choose a firm.

Weiss In this economy, more architects are going after fewer jobs. Both sophisticated, experienced clients and inexperienced clients are making excessive demands on competing firms, asking for more and more for less and less.

A few years ago, we interviewed for a museum after a big effort to move from one of fifty architects to be one of four finalists. Although we enter many competitions, this was explicitly presented as an interview selection process, not a competition.

Weeks later, we were called by someone from *Competitions* magazine who had heard we had lost "the competition." The magazine ultimately published the design presentations, which gave the full impression of a legitimate competition. Choosing not to present a developed scheme at an interview can, with an inexperienced client, give the impression of caring less than others who have delivered a full design. A kind of cheapening of our intellectual and creative capital is occurring.

Cobb If clients acknowledge that they are conducting a competition, then ethical and procedural standards are



Weiss/Manfredi, *DJana Center*, Barnard College, New York City, 2010. Photo: Paul Warchol. Courtesy Weiss/Manfredi

mandated and usually respected. But now we see more and more selection processes in which clients ask for sketches but refuse to acknowledge that they are conducting competitions; they establish no ground rules and leave everyone in the dark about what is expected. Whoever wows them the most will make it to the next round. It's a corrupt and corrupting process that has become almost standard practice during this recession.

Williams But this is all evolutionary animal behavior—the clients have the same raw survival instincts that we have. They want to save money and cast the largest possible net to see what bargains they can catch. That's just the way the world is.

THE NUMBER OF FIRMS GOING AFTER EACH PROJECT IS NOW HUGE, SOMETIMES AS MANY ONE HUNDRED. CLIENTS ARE IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT.

Cobb But what worries me is the false pretense behind unacknowledged competitions: The interview for the job is not what it seems.

Haney Clients ask for your "project approach" and say they are not conducting a competition. If they acknowledged what they were really doing, they would have more responsibility and liability. So we create lots of free conceptual designs.

Cobb The most fundamental statement I would make here is that architecture is of necessity an opportunistic profession. One does whatever one can to capture the client's attention. The client benefits, but it's terrible for the losing architects. Then too there are *acknowledged* competitions, but they offer totally inadequate compensation.

Haney I think competitions are like drugs: Just because they are there doesn't mean you have to use them. But in recessions you almost can't resist. When my backlog is filled, I am very selective about entering competitions; I enter them only if they are well financed (\$200,000 to \$300,000) or if they give me a chance to break into a new building type or get a new client. But now I enter because I have people in the office who have nothing else to do.

Scogin I think this recession is just a blip, but the expectations of clients *have* changed.

Haney If you look at the sixteen potential thorny issues that Bill presented to us to prepare for this discussion, they are not things caused by the recession—digital design, project delivery, authorship, morality....

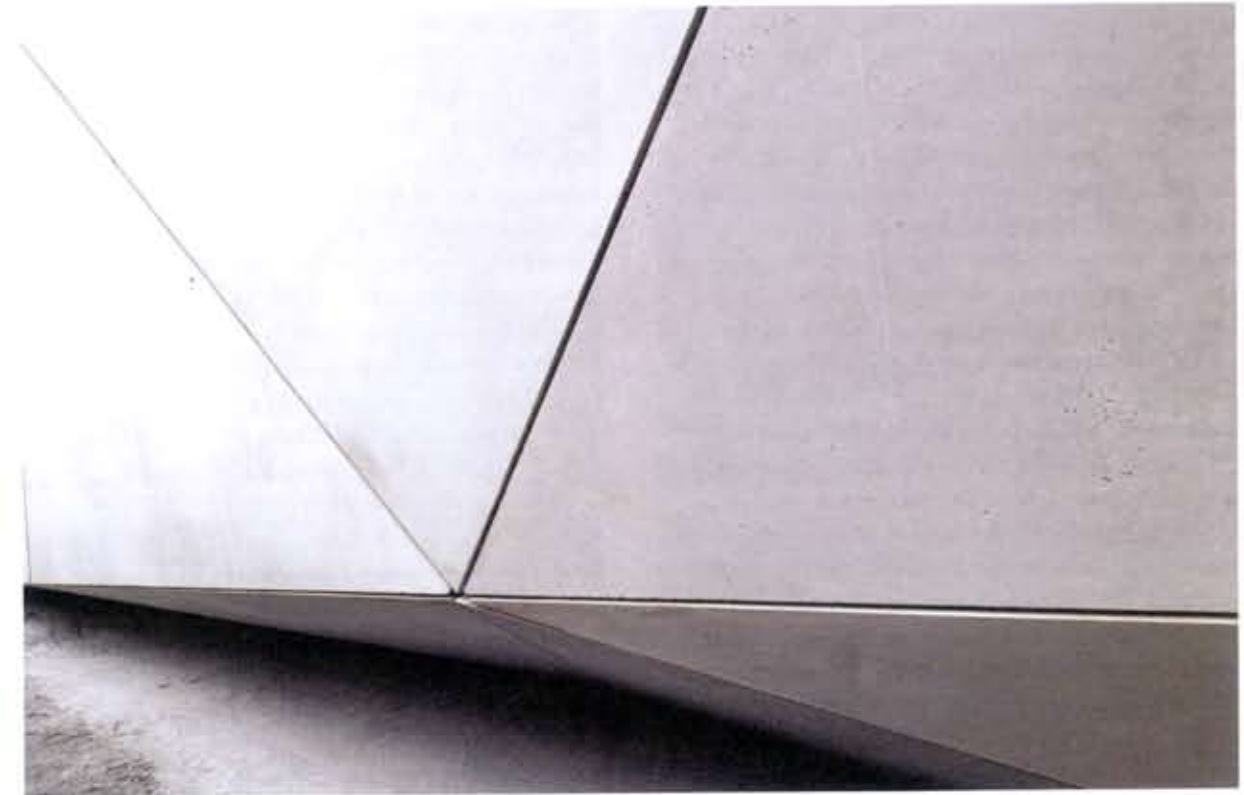
Cohen About the possibility of taking advantage of this situation, architects not normally considered for large projects can occasionally enter these competitions. Clients can recognize that they have a special chance to work with less mainstream people, assemble great teams, and end up with a more interesting project. So designers, including those in academia, have a greater chance to bring new ideas into the field. On the other hand, the young people entering competitions often try to imitate the behavior of the well-off and established offices. And so we see a kind of leveling. What was once an avant-garde practice is now trying to put itself into the mode of ordinary practices. It doesn't produce the innovation we would hope for. Maybe it makes established firms reinvent themselves—I don't know.

Weiss I do think that this more competitive environment allows people who have not been at the table to show up. Often competitions are held when the ambitions are higher than usual for critically interesting work; the scope and kind of expertise required are more hybridized; the unknowns are greater. So we enter because we want to know the terrain of opportunities to support our appetite to do something new. In our *Seattle Olympic Sculpture Park*, artists, architects, and landscape architects were invited to participate, because the client didn't want to preclude the possibility that design leadership for such a complex project could emerge from different disciplinary sources.

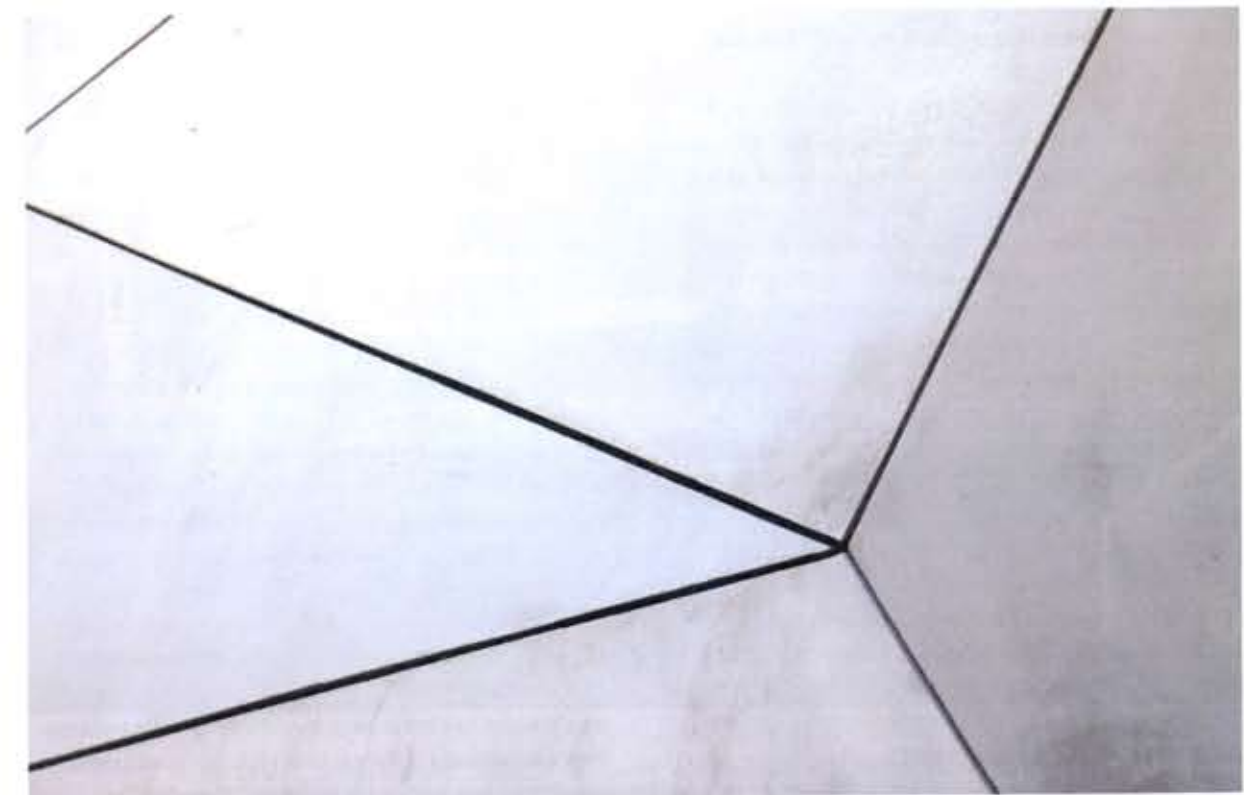
INTERDISCIPLINARITY, COLLABORATION, AND LEADERSHIP

Maltzan Being opportunistic in this way helps broaden our field. Projects like Weiss/Manfredi's park in Seattle are happening more frequently. We are finishing our first landscape project, a park that grew out of a building project. Looking at the building's context in a broad way led us into a conversation about the landscape. That probably wouldn't have been possible five years ago. Younger practices are trying to move much more across disciplines. Being opportunistic in this way allows you even to rewrite the brief in going after a project.

Cohen This raises the issue of expertise, of what the architect is being entrusted with. This thirst for interdisciplinarity—when we try to break the boundaries between interior design and architecture, for instance—



Preston Scott Cohen, *Tel Aviv Museum of Art, facade detail*, 2010. Courtesy Preston Scott Cohen



may lead to an expansion of the architect's agency if we can prove that we can take back some of these territories, including landscape.

Weiss This is taking you right back to the Renaissance.

Williams This is a thrilling moment. I was raised to be a "design architect," to focus on buildings alone, but now I am learning that I do have contributions to make to interiors, landscape, urban design, technology, and so on.

Cobb This broadening of the scope of practice is important. Of course when I was a young designer, we were saying that architecture is everything, and everything is architecture. I still believe that. Both disciplinary purity and multidisciplinary collaboration are crucial. I see the present broadening of scope as a matter of collaboration. It's not a matter of broadening my *scope*, it's one of broadening my *communication* with other people, and in the process I become much more engaged with landscape or interiors or whatever. The nature of the collaboration with other disciplines is much richer than it used to be, especially with landscape but also with the engineering disciplines. One of my failings is to be perpetually optimistic. And I see integrated project delivery as actually positive for me, even though I have little contact with its organizational and digital mechanisms. It's a cultural change in our discipline and our attitude toward other disciplines. I feel more strongly than ever about the autonomy of the discipline of architecture, but I'm also keen on the new high-quality collaboration and the mutual respect it brings.

Weiss Collaboration can really strengthen design when very different kinds of expertise come together. But increasingly, complex projects require big teams with diverse but often overlapping expertise. This raises new questions. Who owns the master plan now? Urban designers? Planners? Landscape architects? Architects? Each discipline is thrashing it out. Depending on the circumstance, one might be in a better position to lead than the others. Everyone always wants to say collaboration is terrific, but the team formation needs to be so well done and led that everyone is indeed contributing something unique as opposed to struggling for power within the same sandbox.

Cobb Collaboration ought not to be a matter of fuzzy blurring, but rather of allowing the leadership of others to occur for different aspects of the work, so that the autonomy of other disciplines is acknowledged without diminishing one's own.

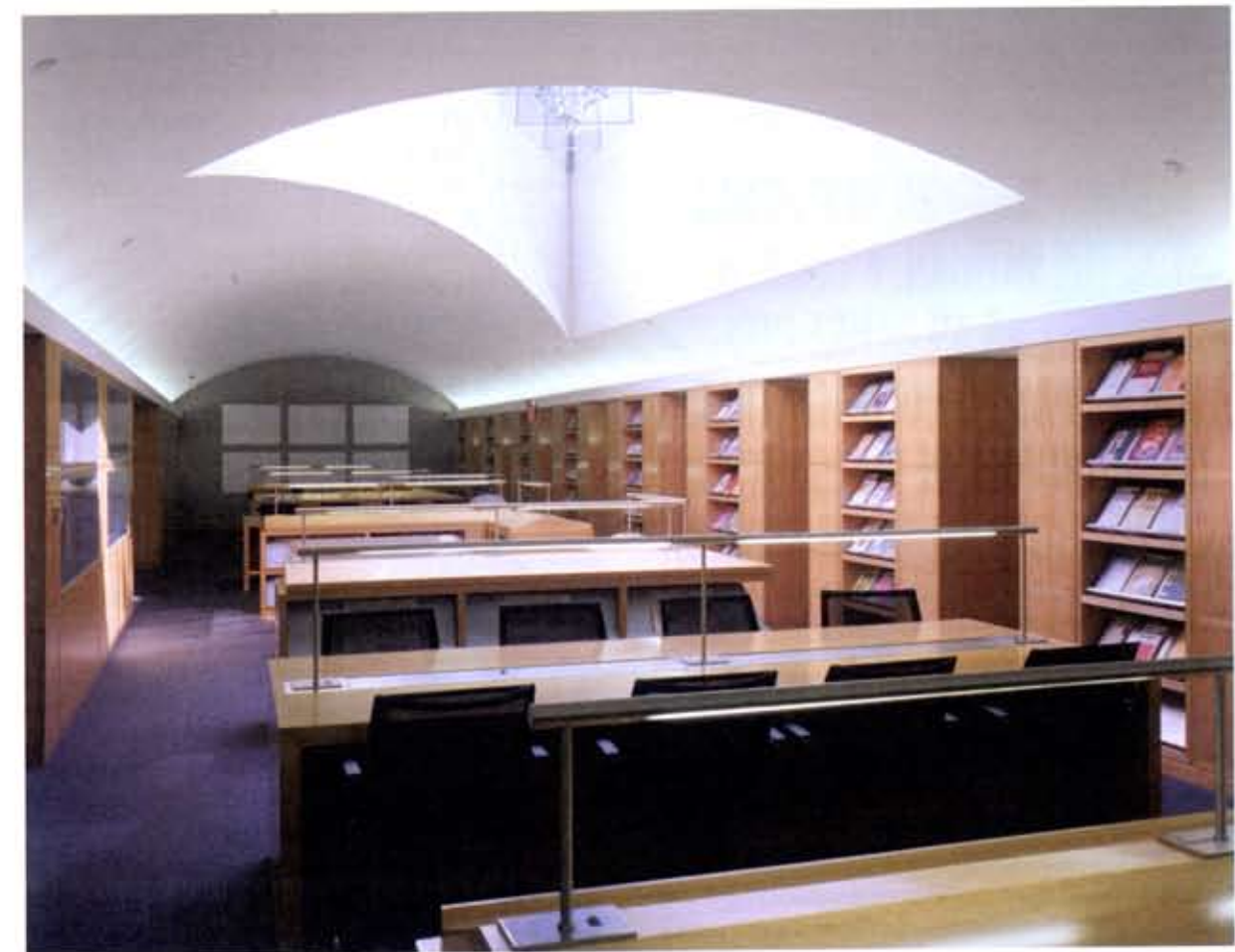
[Toshiko Mori joins the discussion.]

Williams Architects who let interior designers and landscape architects tromp all over them and who don't understand that these too are their territories deserve to fail.

Weiss A while back we all accepted disciplinary boundaries, then everyone said let's blend, let's hybridize. Hybridization, like collaboration and sustainability, has become a buzzword. The codification of administrative boundaries between disciplines has been reinforced by both academic institutions and professional expectations, especially on applications for projects that require at least one professional from each discipline. But if all this synthetic work is going to be realized, the amplification of disciplinary distinctions works at odds with this concept, implying that a complex project cannot be conceived coherently without an overwhelming roster of separate experts. By comparison, if we look at the Renaissance and into the baroque period, it was not uncommon for someone like Bernini to design vestments for the Vatican, a church, as well as an entire city. There was no question that the authority of design itself could cross all these scales.

ARCHITECTS NOT NORMALLY CONSIDERED FOR LARGE PROJECTS CAN OCCASIONALLY ENTER THESE COMPETITIONS. CLIENTS CAN RECOGNIZE THAT THEY HAVE A SPECIAL CHANCE TO WORK WITH LESS MAINSTREAM PEOPLE.

Cohen The idea of interdisciplinarity benefits architects more than landscape architects. While architects are motivated to extend their work to encompass greater territory, landscape architects do not need to think about architectural space inside and out. The landscape architect rarely participates in the development of interior space, except in very special cases or during particular historical periods, such as the early 20th century, when seamless continuity between the inside and the outside was an important and viable idea. Today, the interiors of buildings are almost always segregated from the site because they are thermally isolated. Only architects must think about the deep interiors of buildings. Therefore, at a



Pei Cobb Freed, Library Skylight, Center for Governmental and International Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2005. Photos: Brian Vanden Brink. Courtesy Pei Cobb Freed

fundamental level, the collaboration between architecture and landscape architecture is not actually reciprocal. **Mori** Landscape architects do think about spatial interiority. When they talk about gardens, all their language is about interiority and continuity. The issue for them, and for architects as well, is whether they think about the progressive integration of scales. It's the architect's problem if we conceptually isolate interior and exterior. **Williams** I agree. Landscape architects are certainly interested in the intimate. But I think most architects don't understand the dimensional sense of interior things—the height of a table, the size of a plate, and so on. Design has to start as small as the hand, both for the planet and for the building. It's thrilling that we now recognize that all these things flow together. **Haney** I find this whole discussion odd, because I've spent my whole career in an interdisciplinary firm. I have partners who are engineers, interior designers, urban planners, mechanical engineers, and so on. But most of these people are also architects. I don't see a problem with collaboration or leadership. The educational process is another story. In terms of our practice, there is no difference in the extent to which we value these disciplines.

BERNINI DESIGNED VESTMENTS FOR THE VATICAN, A CHURCH, AS WELL AS AN ENTIRE CITY. THERE WAS NO QUESTION THAT THE AUTHORITY OF DESIGN ITSELF COULD CROSS ALL THESE SCALES.

Williams In larger corporate firms you need those experts, but in smaller firms architects need to have expertise in these areas. I never work at as large a scale as SOM does, but it's a part of my DNA—I can think about the planet and the plate. As my firm gets larger, it is true that there is only so much work I can be fully engaged with, but it's a basic requirement for architects to know these other disciplines. **Cobb** I don't think it's about knowledge. It's about sensibility and a way of thinking. For example, think of Lou Kahn, who certainly saw architecture as embracing everything and who was not burdened with a large firm. Yet one of his greatest works was transformed by the advice he got from Luis Barragán, who told him, when he was trying

to fill that space at the *Salk Institute* in La Jolla with trees, not to. That was the *sensibility* of a landscape architect contributing. **Williams** That's the architect listening rather than turning things over to someone. **Cobb** I agree that architects need to take everything in hand, but they need to know also that it is not just expertise that informs design. They are looking for a different way of thinking about the world and incorporating that. **Cohen** The architect has much to learn from the landscape architect. But in our new interdisciplinary direction, the real challenge will be to determine how or if the landscape architect should learn from architecture. **Scogin** I have worked for [landscape architect] Michael Van Valkenburgh on several projects. Right now he is in charge of a large waterfront project in Toronto. He is doing landscape architecture, urban design, planning, architecture, sustainability, and more. His team is running the collaboration of about fifty-five governmental agencies and consulting firms. Harry preempted my point: Architects don't have a lock on the only way of thinking. I love Michael's different sense of spatial conditions. I can't figure it out. It is exterior oriented. He cannot figure out architectural interiors. **Williams** Architects should hold interior designers and landscape architects within *their* territory. **Scogin, Saunders, others** I am not sure about that. **Cohen** Give me an example of a landscape architect being profoundly altered by an architect's way of thinking. **Saunders** Modernist landscape architecture is highly architectural in composition. **Mori** At Borneo Sporenburg in Amsterdam, Adriaan Geuze of West 8 was influenced by an architectural typological transformation strategy that gave rise to necessary variety to help tie together various scales in master planning and housing. **Maltzan** I'm not sure the issue is architecture and landscape architecture. Gary spoke of SOM's interdisciplinarity—that kind of collaboration runs throughout history, all the way through Modernism, very often on social and large-scale problems. What seems to have dropped out of the equation is urban design. It doesn't exist as it did through the 1960s and 1970s. We are having this debate because there are consistently emerging broad urban challenges and issues of technology, environmentalism, and social and political structures for which urban planning and design haven't risen to become the primary coordinating voice. **Haney** That's profoundly true. What happened in our firm is that architects took that over. Urban design is being



Toshiko Mori Architect, Eleanor and Wilson Greatbatch Pavilion, Visitor Center for Frank Lloyd Wright's Darwin D. Martin House, Buffalo, New York, 2009. Photo: Paul Warhol. Courtesy Toshiko Mori Architect

expanded by some really giant firms like AECOM—it is dealing with things like water supply, sewage, transportation, and the whole urban environment. Watch what it's doing: It is buying architects, landscape architects, water experts, and other professionals. AECOM is run by civil engineers. They come to clients who are building new cities, clients who don't come to us. **Weiss** If we think about the fundamentals of what architects can do, the success of the architect as the primary stylist has perhaps minimized the expectations of what an architect might bring to creating a robust infrastructural network in, say, a greenfield site in East Africa. The civil engineers you describe are smart and have leverage because they speak authoritatively about technical requirements.

Jim Stirling was my professor. I asked him once, "How do you get clients excited about doing your weird designs?" And he said, "I never talk about design. I only argue about things from a technical point of view. It's the only way to get work done." That's brilliant. **Mori** Antoine Picon argues that the division that occurred between Beaux-Arts and Ponts et Chaussées schools aligned landscape designers with civil engineering. So there is a natural affinity for landscape architects to embrace infrastructure projects. **Saunders** I feel ignorant here, but shouldn't we really be talking about the rising out of the earth of greater and greater pressures to think about large-scale ecologies? Because of that, landscape architecture has become a more important profession, and architects have to begin

to think outside their boundaries. Do ecological pressures change architecture in some essential way?

Williams It returns us to where we should have been and where we were years ago.

Weiss It takes us to the fundamentals that we relinquished over time. There is understandably great suspicion of the architect as god, but architects are uniquely capable of synthesizing and leading, just as they have in the past.

Saunders But isn't synthesis a value of landscape architecture and urban design too?

Weiss No, I am going back about 700 years. Landscape architecture is a relatively new profession.

Cobb I think you're wrong to suggest that architecture is an old profession. Everything we are talking about happened in the tiny period of the last 200 years. Before that, architects were artists evolved from stonemasons, like Bernini and Borromini, or from philosophers like Alberti. Architects have no special birthright!

Williams But the question is about whether we have a tiny or a broad base. The base is incredibly broad, and we have been giving it up.

Cobb Its broad base is cultural, not physical. It has nothing to do with scale.

Mori I agree it's about the broad culture, and now we have limited ourselves in a self-imposed, narrow professional disciplinary boundary.

Cobb There are lots of different ways for the culture of architecture to intervene. Many of the challenges clearly are at urban and infrastructural and ecological scales; architects should be engaged in those. If AECOM has created an institutional mechanism by which architects can intervene at that scale, I say all power to them, provided the architects don't get suppressed into some kind of subservient role. Again, it's opportunism. I can imagine a young architect deciding to join AECOM and making architecture a significant enterprise there.

Haney They have 45,000 employees.

Scogin SOM is smaller, but it has proven what Harry just said. There can still be inspirational work within the structure of large and complex practices.

Cobb I am going in the opposite direction. Even though I am happy to have you, Tod, looking at the whole world, I don't want to lose what I learned from looking at your door hinge. Maybe if you bring the same sensibility to the city, I would learn equally from that. But I don't want to sacrifice one for the other.

Weiss Can you say that our capacity as architects is to have this synthetic clarity at a larger scale but with a tactile, sensual, habitable, visceral capacity to make it real?

Cobb Then you run into the Jane Jacobs problem: If, as she famously declared, "A city cannot be a work of art," then how can or should design operate at an urban scale? At different scales, the intervention has to be quite different. At some scales, attention to the finest detail is of the essence, and at others a big idea to be executed by many others is of the essence.

Saunders Earlier we seemed to be talking about a new condition: a desire and a need to listen more attentively and more often to specialists in other areas—climate engineers like Transsolar, for instance. The teams are much more equalized. Is that fair to say?

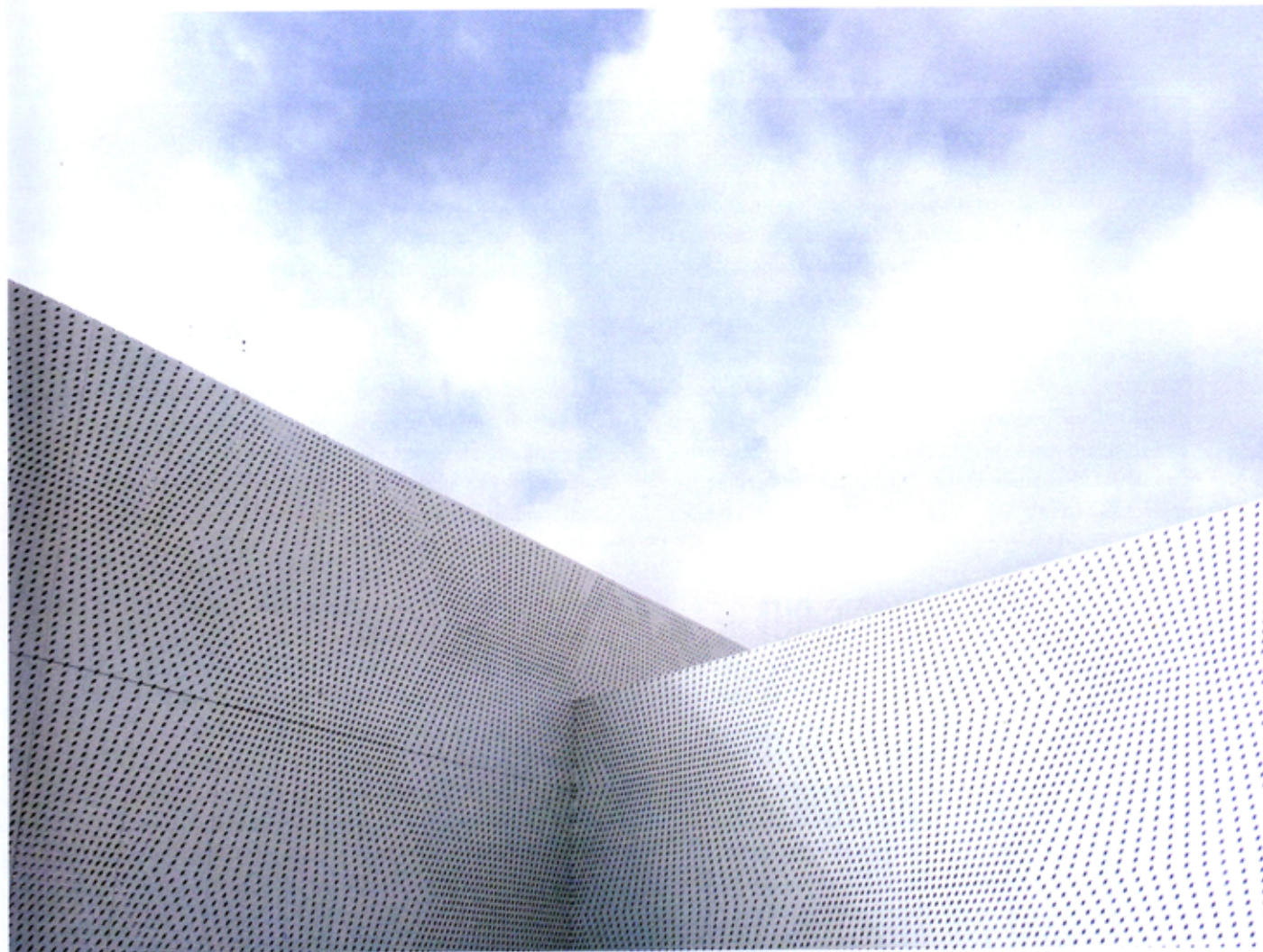
Williams They shouldn't be equalized. The architect must be the composer, the conductor, and the instrumentalist—there has to be a leader.

Cobb I agree. That's quite independent of so-called professions. I agree that the role, if not the profession, of the architect goes back to antiquity—the capacity to give substance to thought in space and form. The mechanisms by which that happens always change. We should, especially in schools, be aware of what's happening in the profession and be preparing our students not to be suppressed or confined by professionalism. I am skeptical about this discussion because architecture is in its essence not really a profession but rather a way of thinking about the world.

URBAN DESIGN IS BEING EXPANDED BY SOME GIANT FIRMS LIKE AECOM DEALING WITH WATER SUPPLY, SEWAGE, TRANSPORTATION—THE WHOLE URBAN ENVIRONMENT.

Maltzan Design intelligence is often thought of as being able to coordinate lots of information in the specifics of a project. Whereas Transsolar may bring a great expertise that aligns with current cultural mandates, the thing that is always missing is how its knowledge is lifted to a cultural level. That's not architect as mere coordinator.

Cohen There is a current tendency to confuse contingent issues (for example, climate change, poverty, technical means and limitations, and so on) with the fundamental idea of architecture, which of course itself evolves when these contingencies radically shift. Mies brought architectural refinement to a whole new industrial means of



Michael Maltzan, *Benedict Canyon Residence*, gallery skin, Beverly Hills, California, 2009.
Courtesy Michael Maltzan Architecture, Inc

construction, and this transformed architecture. Yet an architectural way of thinking, not industry itself, was still the progenitor. Using environmentalism in architecture is like thinking that the safety codes after the 1915 San Francisco earthquake should drive a whole new way of thinking about architecture. That's how many architects are thinking today, imagining that environmental issues can be translated into architecture.

Weiss This discussion of contingencies also relates to Jim Stirling's unique design agility. Do you know the story of his Cornell theater building with the tower on the street? He was well into design development when he realized he wanted a tower there to strengthen the urban presence of the building. There was no budget for it, so he convinced the client that creating a tower for all the mechanical systems would yield a net savings from the very expensive stone excavation required for the

basement mechanical system. He then placed a couple of offices at the top. The faculty ended up fighting to get those offices. He ultimately succeeded in leveraging contingencies late in the design process.

Cohen Now everyone is turning leverage into architecture. That is the crisis we are in.

Williams Stirling had to use mechanical systems to leverage, but he should have used the power within him to convince people about architectural values.

Mori Who is deciding what contingency is? We have to be. We are simply reacting to all the requirements for architecture to be sustainable. Unless we define the terms and identify for engineers the correct problems to solve, they cannot do the work. Passively receiving quantitative information and trying to turn it into design is wrong. Our power is in creating values in the quality of designs.

ARCHITECTURE AS PROFESSION AND AS A WAY OF THINKING

Scogin Do we need to continue to be a profession then?
Cobb The profession is a snare and a delusion. It's an imperfect mechanism that might be strengthened; it is evolving rapidly because of the tools available to us and the problems we face. But it's only important insofar as it is supportive of the core function of architecture. In Modernism, the ideas of the architectural were transcendental, not professional. The loss of a sense of the transcendent leaves architecture open to being subverted by things like sustainability—things that we of course cannot and should not ignore. But in the end Tod's hinge is more important.

ISN'T THERE A RISING OUT OF THE EARTH OF GREATER AND GREATER PRESSURES TO THINK ABOUT LARGE SCALE ECOLOGIES? DO ECOLOGICAL PRESSURES CHANGE ARCHITECTURE IN SOME KEY WAY?

Scogin You see many students these days looking to those contingencies, but they are also interested in broader gratifications and consequences. We have a former client, a famous journalist, who told me he feared newspaper journalism was dying because no one has come up with a business plan to make it work. Harry, what's your business plan for the architect who is not a professional? No one is going to bring to the table architects who don't have legal responsibility.

Cohen The business plan is to gain the trust to work on important projects. The client has to trust the architect's vision. Who trusted twenty-six-year-old Michael McKinnell to design *Boston City Hall*?

Haney Our friends at AECOM already have the answer about a business plan: a comprehensive delivery system. They keep buying architecture firms, those low-profit businesses. How odd for an investor to do this! But they need architecture to go after design excellence proposals—it's part of a larger plan. They don't care if they have any

registered professionals because everyone is under the giant umbrella of project delivery, like the big Japanese conglomerate Nikken Sekkei doing turnkey work. It has 2,000 architects working for it. *That's* what the non-professional world of architecture looks like.

Weiss You may be right. If you look at the aerospace industry at its start, there were hundreds of firms, and bit by bit they consolidated until you had about three. Big pharmaceutical firms buy out small firms when the latter are at the edge of momentous discoveries. The difference is that there still is a desire for some architecture to provide an intangible extra that doesn't fit in the super scale.

Maltzan The film industry offers another model of content generation. Studios continue to consolidate managerially and financially, but there is greater dispersion in the making of the content. The production companies are small workshops that are brought in as needed.

Scogin To go back to newspapers—the problem is that they are dependent almost entirely on ads, *on somebody else's business*, as are television and architecture.

Maltzan Scott, the use of contingencies that you discussed has not always been cynical and opportunistic. It once came, for instance, from concern about a lack of urban design and planning. There was a recent moment in which architects were trying to operate in these much more complex fields embedded in politics, cities, and bureaucracies: large-scale projects with many clients. For you, that is not connected to a core idea of architecture, but it came from a cultural imperative. Think, for instance, about recent Dutch housing, which has a direct relationship with the urbanistic contingencies I am talking about—zoning, functional, budgetary issues. So I am trying to ask if what you are seeing among students, may have a more profound, less cynical outcome.

Saunders Students these days are very earnest.

Cohen That's right.

Weiss They are soulful, innocent, optimistic... wonderful.

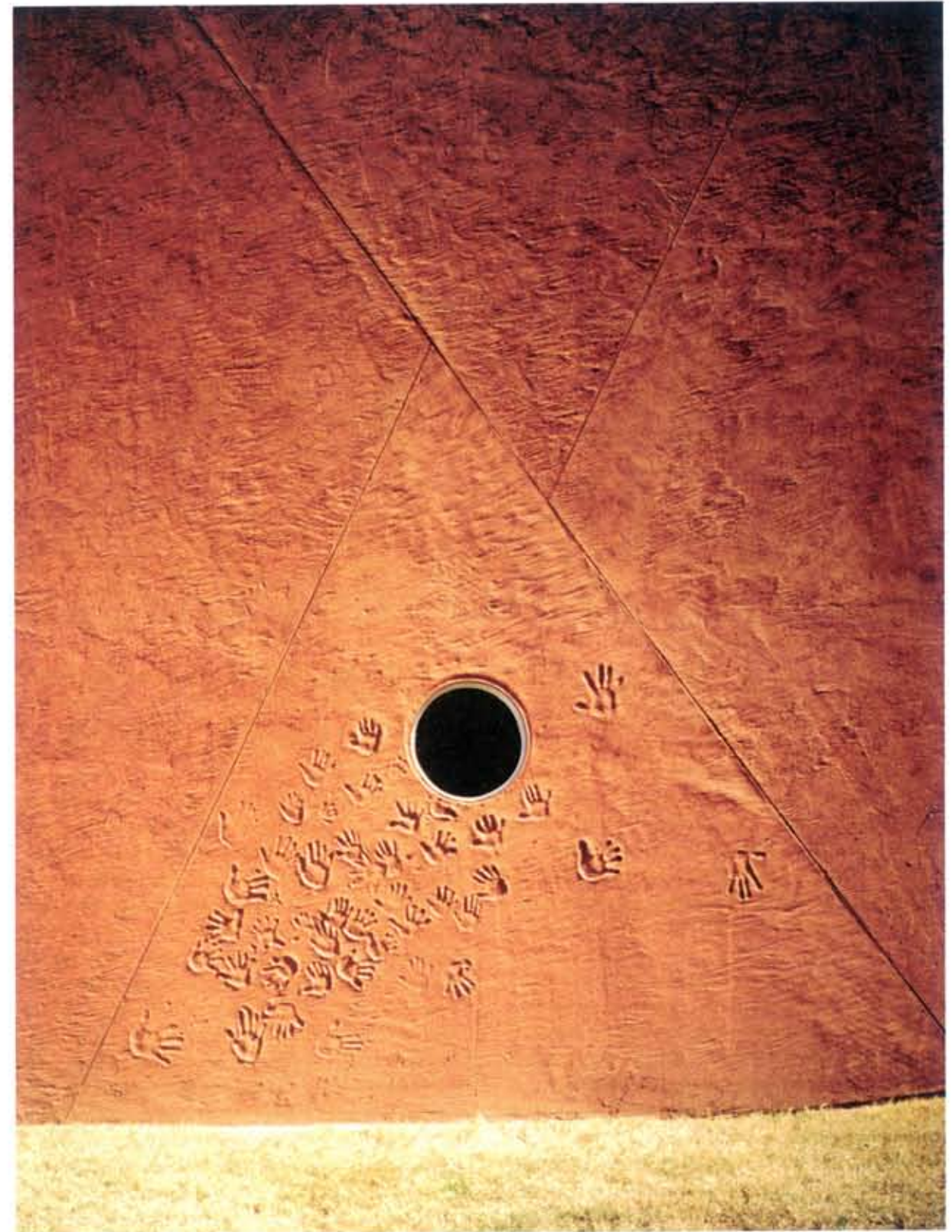
Haney Especially the young people in my studio: Architects are the least cynical people I know.

Mori I don't think students can afford to be cynical anymore about the life and work they do.

Williams Right, it's the adults who can.

Mori Younger people immersed in digital culture do thrive in complexity and confrontation with contingencies. They thrive in making projects more sophisticated, and we ought to embrace that. They also share and help each other a lot; they network and collaborate generously with each other across studios. They know that they have to be supportive during this crisis.

Scogin The students may be cynical about the profession.



Mack Scogin Merrill Elam Architects, *Carol Cobb Turner Branch Library*, Morrow, Georgia, 1991.
Courtesy Mack Scogin Merrill Elam Architects

Mori Yes, they are. They sense that they need to create an alternative mode of work for their survival in the future.

Saunders Wait, Scott. What maybe you are saying is that you are concerned about all the architectural possibilities and qualities that are being *neglected* because of the power of these contingencies. Fair enough. But architecture is a subset of life and maybe of politics; it is not the summum bonum. It certainly can do things that nothing else can do, and those are what you are saying are being forgotten as students embrace an earnest political and environmental mission.

Scogin What is it we do that places us so apart?

Weiss Ultimately, we shape the more-than-habitation element that is a part of civilization. Perhaps the "luxury" of design is indeed a human necessity.

Saunders I agree. So far you have said that we are in a post-digital era, with the digital integrated to an extent that it no longer requires much reflection. Do you think that? What are your pleasures, concerns, and reassurances about processes like Building Information Modeling and algorithmic and parametric design? Are you totally comfortable with this whole digital culture?

Cohen Yes.

INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Scogin I had a client tell me today that an architect's current ability to show him what architecture could be is driving him crazy. He cannot deal with the huge amount of information we can give clients to make design decisions. We give them 106 alternatives, and they don't know which one we believe in.

Weiss The digital allows for ease of variation, but its fundamental issue is communication—it has allowed indecision to such an incredible extent. Information is e-mailed ad infinitum; we now need twenty-seven people to make a decision.

Saunders Information is displacing thought?

Weiss The management of information requires so much time. We can't carve out the time to be slow and thoughtful.

Scogin We have debilitated ourselves by choosing to describe everything so thoroughly. This threatens imagination.

Maltzan With so much information, we put the burden of deciding on the client. We think we are being helpful, but the client thinks of us as stepping back from leadership.

Williams We produce a lot of defensive rather than proactive documents. We are more concerned with feeling safe than with succeeding.

Weiss Are you also referring to the new level of verisimilitude we can provide in our representations?

Williams No, but they both come out of the same machine and the same desire to tell more to protect ourselves more.

LIABILITY AND RISK

Scogin Bill and I sat through a conference on integrated project delivery, which pushes everyone into collaboration from day one. Near the end, a nonarchitect asked, "If you have a problem, after all this collective action, what does this imply about the architect's insurance?" The answer was: "Oh, they are still liable; that's not changed." [Laughter.]

CLIENTS CANNOT DEAL WITH THE HUGE AMOUNT OF INFORMATION WE CAN HAND THEM TO MAKE DESIGN DECISIONS. WE GIVE 106 ALTERNATIVES, AND THEY DON'T KNOW WHICH WE BELIEVE IN.

Haney We (especially our attorneys) have been looking at IPD for several months. One problem with an intelligent BIM model that contains specs, details, and a 3-D model is that it can go straight from the designer to fabrication, skipping the shop drawing phase. This creates additional liability for the designer. For example, in a project under construction in Kuwait, some very complex formwork went straight from our machines to the formwork fabricators.

Scogin Clients use BIM as way to do away with shop drawings.

Haney As a stop gap measure, our attorneys are telling us to stamp the drawings and say, "We are only responsible for what is printed on this piece of paper." I have the answer, but it may not work: If you have the ability to create a smart model that skips steps and saves everyone time and money, you should get a higher fee to cover your extra liability. You now know more about construction details than the contractor does. My guys can itemize every pound of steel. I know more than the quantity surveyors, but I have not been paid for that knowledge.



Tod Williams, handrail, Williams/Tsien apartment, New York City, 2009.
Photo: Shengning Zhang. Courtesy Tod Williams and Billie Tsien

IPD is meant to create more shared responsibility, but the insurance industry hasn't caught up. The owner has the biggest chunk of risk here, but owners try to shed risk. The AIA has a new contract for IPD, but it would only be attractive to an institution or a government, not to a private developer or owner.

Mori The IPD model is supposed to reduce risk and liability.

Williams Why should we reduce risk? Creativity requires risk.

Mori That's metaphorical risk, very different from real physical risk.

Williams In the past, I could just be a design architect and draw facades and turn the drawings over to another firm to figure out how to build. I didn't have real power.

Mori You now can be the informed architect and the leader of the entire project.

Weiss Toshiko is saying that there is a whole series of points of accountability that have to do with minimizing physical risk, fire hazards, structural failures—things that we are obliged to deliver. As our ability to minimize these

risks grows, we can indeed have more opportunities to be creative.

Williams I don't think you can lasso risk. If you limit risk, you are dead architecturally.

Mori You need to separate creative risk from the risk of letting the building fall down. The ideal is to take creative risks and design what you believe in without letting the building leak.

Cohen I identify with Tod here. In our *Tel Aviv Museum of Art* project, we had to find a means of insulating a concrete facade made of precast units—a situation without precedent. We had serious problems with many liability issues. We had to take risks to get the facade we believed in, to move beyond precedents.

Scogin A lot of clients now understand that an architect's insurance, now required, can be a part of their balance sheets. They can tell themselves from day one that there is \$3 or \$4 million available to them.

Haney It's like clockwork: A week before the insurance policy expires, we get a threatening letter because the client treats the insurance policy like a bank account.

INTEGRATED PROJECT DELIVERY

Mori The integrated practice model is supposed to make more innovative construction solutions closer to your vision *and* to reduce your liability.

Scogin Everyone coming together to reduce risk is *not* going to produce innovation. In IPD there is no leader. The foundation of this approach is compromise.

Cobb IPD is being structured to be dependent on the quality of individuals involved. Architects give up leadership in the hope that the team is as interested in innovation as they are.

Cohen Why *would* they be interested?

Haney Your influence is proportional, *and* you are usually giving ground.

Saunders It's still a situation in which you could inspire the rest of the room; you can make others excited by your ideas.

THE DIGITAL HAS ALLOWED INDECISION TO AN INCREDIBLE EXTENT. WE NEED TWENTY-SEVEN PEOPLE TO MAKE A DECISION.

Cobb The architect can still lead, but the system allows the architect to be cut out.

Saunders If, near the beginning of design, the contractor says that's not buildable, and you convince the contractor it *is*, isn't that supportive of innovation and a better situation than letting the contractor say that much further along in the process, when change orders would be required?

Cobb The new world order all reads well on the AIA website, and one would like to believe that this collaboration will be wonderful, but.... I was just involved in a design-build project, and in the field I discovered that the contractor felt empowered, without consulting me, to leave one brick course out on every floor. Even the client didn't know about it. He's also a part of this "great team." Because it's design-build, what can we do about it? In the end, for architecture to survive, the architect has to be an authority in whom everyone has to place responsibility and trust.

Scogin You have a big problem, Scott, because academia is moving away from the model of this authoritative architecture.

Cohen That's true.

Weiss I don't want anyone manipulating anything I am working on until maybe mid-design development. I want input but not to have others equal at the table. I don't want the obligation for specificity of solutions too early.

Saunders You never feel you learn from a contractor?

Weiss No, we always learn from good contractors. Our contractor for the sculpture park in Seattle was extraordinary and worked with our team to develop an alternative wall system that saved \$45 million, but as architects, we want to decide on our own about whether a wall should be there in the first place.

Scogin Bill asked Thom Mayne what he thought was the single biggest current problem for practitioners. His reply was that clients in this country try to take over design.

Saunders Which is not really an issue, as Thom sees it, in France.

Williams Does client involvement make the design better or worse? Some people are more comfortable with it. Some Europeans are acting more like Americans and vice versa. It's healthy that there are lots of possibilities.

Scogin I have always enjoyed the challenge of the clients' ideas.

Haney For my *Al Hama Tower* project in Kuwait, I have been shocked by how much respect they gave me.

Scogin Walk around with Moneo in Spain: People stand up when he enters the room. I went to lunch with Ando in Tokyo, and everyone in the restaurant stood up. I would love that!

Are we stifled by nonarchitectural business concerns? If we don't get the legal system of our practice worked out, we are not going to have the time to dream. It's right to take on full risk and responsibility; however, as presently evolved, those threaten to consume us. We have so much that is nonarchitectural to think about that our architecture is suffering.

Mori We should do fewer projects and be compensated more. The value of our profession needs to be reconsidered.

Scogin That's the essential answer. We are being worn out, our lives ruined. There has to be some adjustment in the assignment of legal responsibility for projects, re-balanced toward clients and contractors.

Haney Are you talking about tort reform? What medical practitioners have been pursuing so they don't have to be scared to make decisions? In my first year as an SOM partner, I paid in a lawsuit for a building that Bruce Graham had designed when I was three years old!

Cobb Mack, I don't know about all this "ruining your life." These things happen, but they don't have any impact on how I live my life.



Skidmore Owings & Merrill. *Al Hamra Tower*, under construction, Kuwait, 2010. Courtesy Skidmore Owings & Merrill

Scogin Lawsuits, money, being accused of not being a responsible professional, and all the rest *can* ruin your life. When I am accused of misreading the client's intentions or misdirecting the contractor, I take it personally.

Haney You can't take it personally. It's all about money.

Williams It's good you take it personally. It's a positive thing when people try to turn you to dust; dust is what we are supposed to be willing to become.

Cohen We should be romantic heroes?

Haney In England, if you sue someone and lose, you pay all the legal fees of the person you have sued. This reduces frivolous lawsuits.

Williams That the best idea I have heard tonight.

Scogin I have seen young people leave the profession because they were demoralized by lawsuits.

Cobb Being sued is always unpleasant and distracting, but somehow I have never found it seriously disabling.

Haney You can stand it because you know in your heart that what you did was right and that these suits are just attempts to get in your pocket.

Saunders On that late-hour note, I must raise my empty glass to Tod for letting us mess up his fabulous apartment. It's encouraging to see how hard you are all working to wrestle with the new world you practice in.

Thank you very much. ♦