

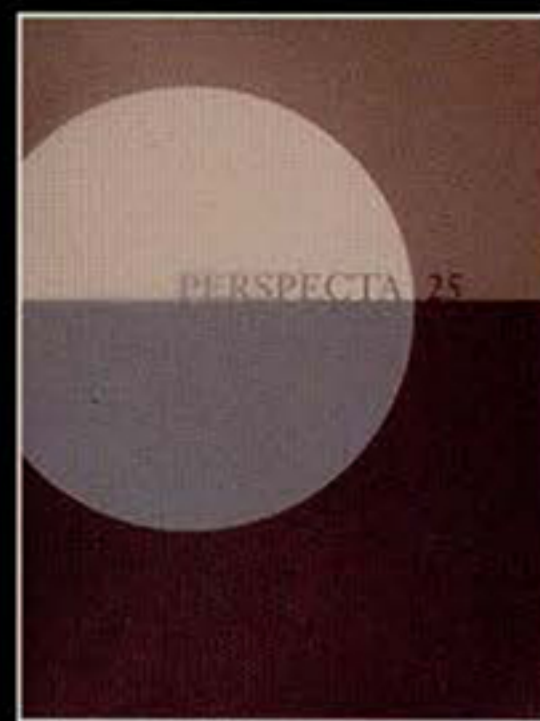
# Perspecta: the first twenty five



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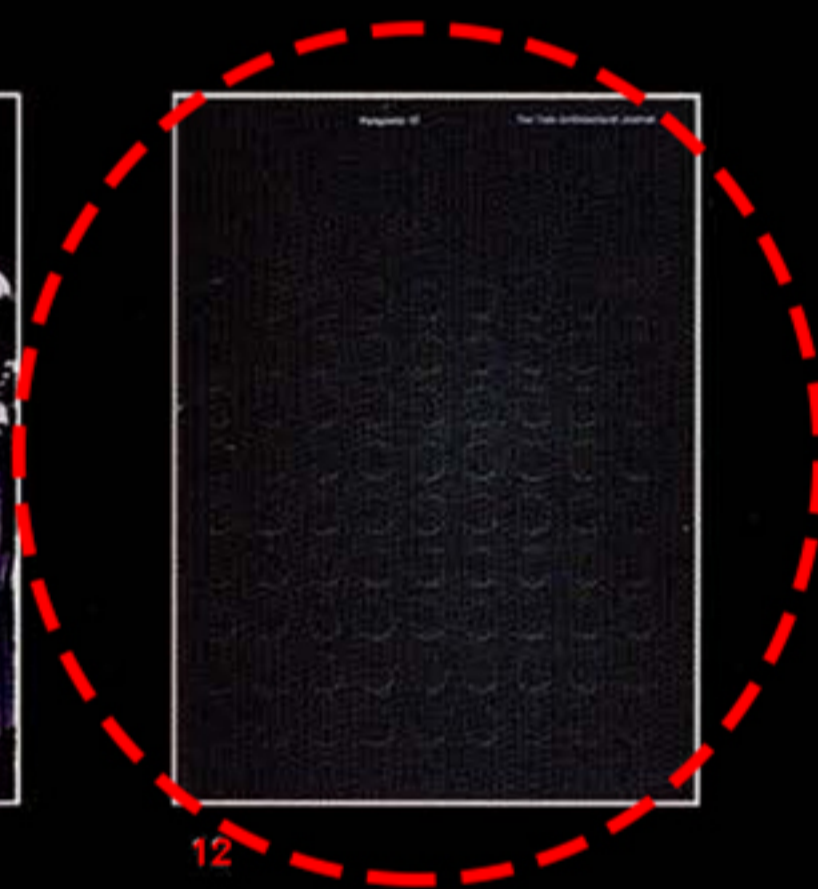
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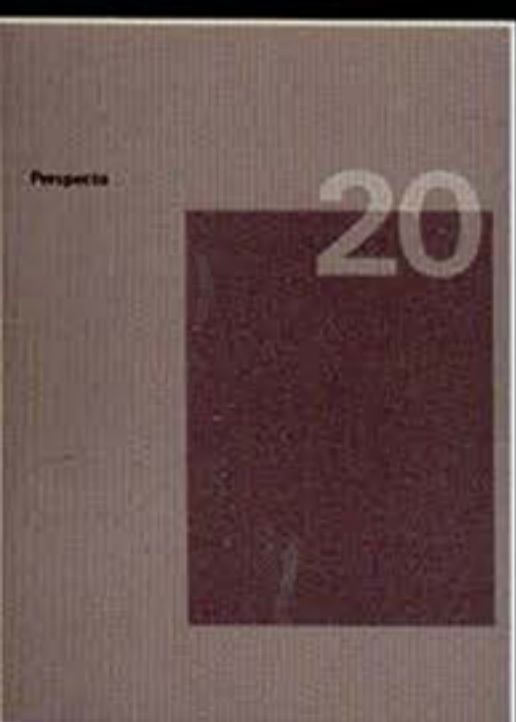
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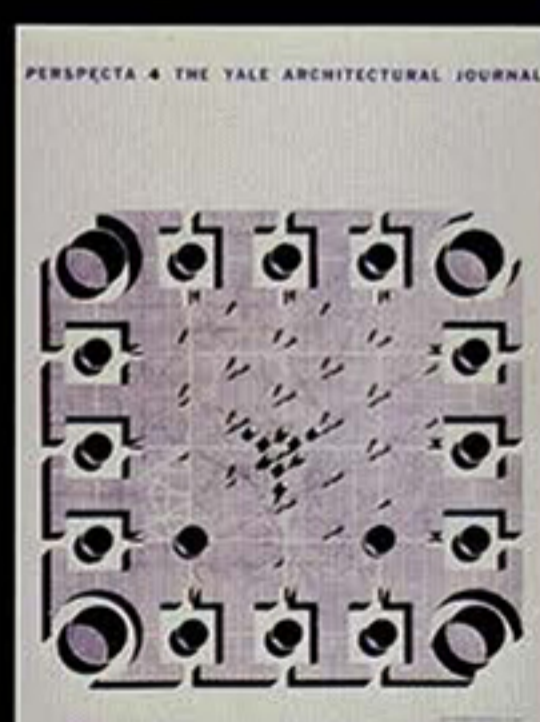
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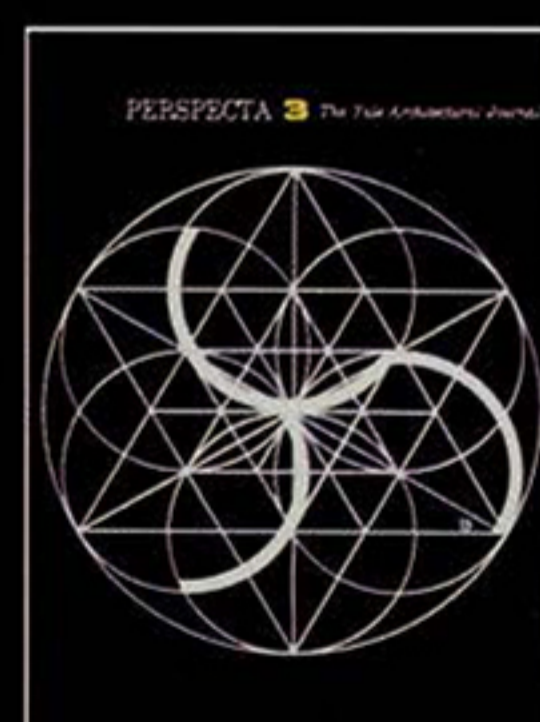
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**Exhibition**  
 50 Years of *Perspecta*  
 Sterling Memorial Library  
 Memorabilia Room  
 120 High Street  
 Friday 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM  
 Saturday 12:00 noon – 8:00 PM

Exhibition Curator:  
 Ann Marie Brennan, M.E.D. '00



"This first number of *Perspecta* is but a beginning. It proposes to establish the arguments that revolve around the axis of contemporary architecture on a broader turntable, encompassing the past as well as the present and extendable to the future. To all architects, teachers, students *Perspecta* offers a place on the merry-go-round."

George Howe, *Perspecta*  
 issue no. 1, 1952

Funded in part by a grant from the  
 Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies  
 in the Fine Arts.

**Symposium**  
 Practice and Theory:  
*Perspecta*  
 and the Fate of  
 Architectural Discourse

**Friday Evening**  
 11 February 2000  
 6:30 PM

**Keynote Address**  
 Brendan Gill Lecture

Kenneth Frampton  
 Vilas Professor of Architecture,  
 Columbia University  
 "Perspecta in the Late  
 '60's: The End of the  
 Beginning"

**Afterword**

Alvin Eisenman  
 Professor Emeritus of Art and  
 former Chairman of the  
 Department of Design,  
 School of Art, Yale University  
 "The Founding of  
 Perspecta"

**Saturday Morning**  
 12 February 2000  
 9:30 AM

Joan Ockman  
 Director, Buell Center for the  
 Study of American Architecture,  
 Columbia University  
 "Perspecta's Early Years  
 in Context" (1950-1965)

K. Michael Hays  
 Professor of Architecture and  
 Director of Graduate Studies,  
 Harvard University  
 Graduate School of Design  
 "The Second Ten Issues,  
 1967-1986"

**X Break**

Sandy Izenstadt  
 Assistant Professor of  
 Architecture,  
 University of Kentucky  
 "Cultural Foreshortening in  
 Perspecta Since 1987"

**Discussion**

Robert A.M. Stern  
 Dean,  
 Yale School of Architecture

**Saturday Afternoon**  
 12 February 2000  
 2:00 PM

Sheila Levrant de  
 Bretteville  
 Professor of Graphic Design and  
 Chair of the Department of  
 Design, School of Art,  
 Yale University  
 "Perspecta's Graphic  
 Design and Graphic  
 Design's Perspective"

**Panel Discussion**

Suzanne Stephens,  
 Moderator  
 Adjunct Assistant Professor,  
 Barnard College

Cynthia Davidson  
 editor, *ANY*

Reinhold Martin  
 Assistant Professor of  
 Architecture, Columbia  
 University and founding editor,  
 The Grey Room

Mario Gandelsonas  
 Professor of Architecture and  
 Director of Graduate Studies,  
 Princeton University  
 and founding co-editor,  
 Oppositions

Charles Jencks  
 "AD and the Small Magazines  
 with a Word About Connection"

**Respondents**

Alan Plattus  
 Professor of Architecture,  
 Yale University

Peggy Deamer  
 Associate Professor of  
 Architecture, Yale University  
 and Chair of the *Perspecta*  
 Board 1997-1999

**X Break**

**Saturday Afternoon**  
 12 February 2000  
 5:00 PM

**Myriam Bellazoug Memorial  
 Lecture**

Mark Wigley  
 Professor of Architecture,  
 Princeton University  
 "Network Craft: The  
 Settlement Pattern of a  
 Magazine"

**Reception**

Sterling Memorial Library  
 Memorabilia Room  
 130 Wall Street  
 (across from Law School,  
 between York and High Streets)





editors." Thus "theming" and "choice" became his own chosen theme, a metatheme, if you will, that proposed to understand the most recent issues of *Perspecta* as operating according to the basic logic of consumer capitalism. Drawing upon David Harvey's discussion of "flexible accumulation" in *Perspecta* 26, Isenstadt argued that "choosing is the user's-eye view of postmodern society. And making good choices about architecture has been a special concern in recent issues of *Perspecta*." Faced with this world where choosing is all, it has been the special "worry" of recent editors "to build imperatives" as bulwarks against the openness of contemporary architectural discourse. He found five major imperatives in recent issues, which he termed "social, design agency, historical, material, and a last category I haven't been able to name yet."

The roundtable that followed, moderated by Stern, turned into an opportunity for former editors to intervene from the audience. Most simply rebutted or clarified the formulations that had been offered, but soon enough broader issues were raised.

Peter Papademetriou recalled his own difficult circumstance as editor of 12. Number 11 had been a huge financial loss, in part because a great deal of material was lost in a fire that swept through the A&A building in June 1969. In response, a board was formed to oversee the bookkeeping, but this moment also marked the incipient "institutionalization" of *Perspecta*, ultimately raising concerns about more significant modes of accounting: First Amendment issues, credit for the initiative of the students (as opposed to figures such as Howe, Rudolph, or Moore). Then Ann Marie Brennan, a current MED student and the curator of the exhibition *Fifty Years of Perspecta*, held at Sterling Library concurrently with the conference, read a letter from the editors of numbers 1 and 2, who wished to clarify the "true origins" of the journal.

Among their most forceful points were the claims that the idea of a journal was initially opposed by the faculty, that the intention was to publicize the discourse of the school, and that the first issue was made possible only by selling advertising space on the back cover. As the exchanges continued, one thing became entirely clear: this roundtable was itself a kind of merry-go-round, and there would be no free rides. In fact, not only was there vigorous competition to get on board, but there seemed to be limited space. The question was not who would get the brass ring, but who would find a seat. As Ockman remarked, "the metaphor of the merry-go-round strikes one as not just naive but a little bit cynical." Whether as history or as an ongoing project, *Perspecta* will never be "a still point in the turning world"; rather, it remains a contested territory with as many claims on its legacy as on its future.

The former, current, and future editors of other journals represented some of those claims. Although all agreed that *Perspecta* was the fountainhead (so to speak) of the academic journals of architecture, each editor also insisted that subsequent publications (such as theirs) offered alternative models. Yet however interesting their anecdotes, images, and explanations, this segment of the conference strayed from the themes that had emerged earlier.

Momentum was regained in both Deamer's response (explicitly) and Wigley's closing lecture (implicitly). Deamer made a plea for theoretical engagement, asserting the need to operate within what has become a pervasive, if not the dominant mode of contemporary academic architectural discourse. Wigley picked up where Deamer's staunch advocacy ended, beginning his lecture with a measured yet passionate effort to dismantle the presumed opposition of the conference title. It is futile and absurd, he argued, to even pretend to distinguish

"serious substance" from "arcane theory," if only because so often, especially today, new and promising practices emerge from the most academic and arcane discourses. Our demand upon architectural discourse should not be that it produce serious, relevant, or even meaningful work, but that it "simply produce hesitation." By the end of his talk, Wigley clarified his understanding of the potential of a journal such as *Perspecta*: to construct a network of readers, writers, and institutions through which "radicals" are linked to "reactionaries" and the primary task is not "newness" or "flow," but "maintenance." And what is maintained is not the stability of the discipline—the desire to keep things in their place—but the viability of a space—"a web of eyes"—that counters "the relentless, passionate, almost absurd attempt to pin architecture down: to locate it in a network." In other words, what goes around comes around. *Perspecta* remains interesting and vital, not as history but as a self-consciously constructed and admittedly artificial network of contributors (both financial and intellectual), editors, and readers.

—Mark Linder

Linder (M.Arch. '86, MED '88) is associate professor at the School of Architecture, Syracuse University.

**From left to right:**  
**Page 6**

**1** *Fifty Years of Perspecta*, exhibition at Sterling Library Memorabilia Room, Spring 2000

**2** Sheila Levrant de Bretteville

**3** Mario Gandelsonas

**4** Peter Millard ('51), Warren Cox ('61), and Alvin Eisenman

**Page 7**

**5** Peggy Deamer and Dean Robert A. M. Stern

**6** *Perspecta's* 25th Anniversary publication and photo of Alvin Eisenman circa 1960.

**7** Joan Ockman

**8** Mark Wigley

**9** *Under the Sea* by Warren Chalk, 1964

**10** Kenneth Frampton

**This page:**

**11** General view of *Fifty Years of Perspecta*, exhibition at Sterling Library Memorabilia Room, Spring 2000

**12** Sandy Isenstadt, Joan Ockman, Robert A. M. Stern, and Michael Hays

**13** Cover of *Perspecta 2*

Photographs of the symposium by John Jacobson

Photographs of the exhibition by Harold Shapiro





**[RE]**  
**READING**  
**PERSPECTA**

**THE FIRST 50 YEARS  
OF THE YALE  
ARCHITECTURAL  
JOURNAL**

Edited by

**ROBERT A.M. STERN  
ALAN PLATTUS  
PEGGY DEAMER**



Either by the standard of the significance of its individual articles or the extent to which the overall mix of articles reflects, precociously, a critical moment in contemporary architectural culture, this is a landmark issue of *Perspecta*. At least half the articles (and now we do get real “articles,” footnotes included) have become minor, and, in several cases, major classics, and several have already been anthologized elsewhere.

Given the chronological moment of its appearance in the midst of a time of maximum upheaval at Yale, and more broadly, around the world, but especially on university campuses, it is no surprise to find the sheer quantity of articles with explicitly political content at an all time high for *Perspecta*. The continuing interest, and general sophistication, of those pieces is perhaps more of surprise at over three decades remove, while the particular sophistication of the editors in hosting the first American publication of Walter Benjamin's “Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century,” which would quickly become a de rigeur reference for any politically and intellectually engaged architect or urbanist—and remains the single most challenging ideological critique of architecture and urbanism—is surely remarkable. However, most surprising at the time—although thoroughly symptomatic in retrospect—were the truly eye-opening historical and analytic contributions, not only by already recognized critics, such as Colquhoun, Venturi and Scott-Brown, Frampton and Ambasz, who would be crucial figures for an emergent generation of architects and theorists, but also by Alan Greenberg, whose tour de force of revisionist analysis on Lutyens is still impressive, and Antonio Hernandez, with a sneak preview of another figure whose rediscovery would prove to be seminal for the coming decade, J. N. L. Durand. All of these, and perhaps especially Frampton's exquisite documentation of the Maison de Verre, make this an issue of *Perspecta* that one continues to consult and use.

Both editors have gone on to distinguished careers, largely outside of conventional practice: Papademetriou as an academic and scholar, pursuing, significantly, the work of a transitional figure of enormous importance in the sixties and also in retrospect, Eero Saarinen; and Wrede, as a curator and scholar, organizing important shows and events at the Museum of Modern Art in New

York, and publishing a ground-breaking monograph on another crucial transitional figure, Gunnar Asplund. Thus both may be seen to have contributed to an ongoing discussion galvanized, if not actually begun, by their production of *Perspecta 12*. Finally, after a succession of rather gaudy covers and more flamboyant designs, the design of *Perspecta 12*, and especially its laconic and elegant embossed black cover based on the floor covering of the featured Maison de Verre, signaled at least a partial return to an outward restraint that serves as a frame and foil for the real power of the contents.

—Alan Plattus