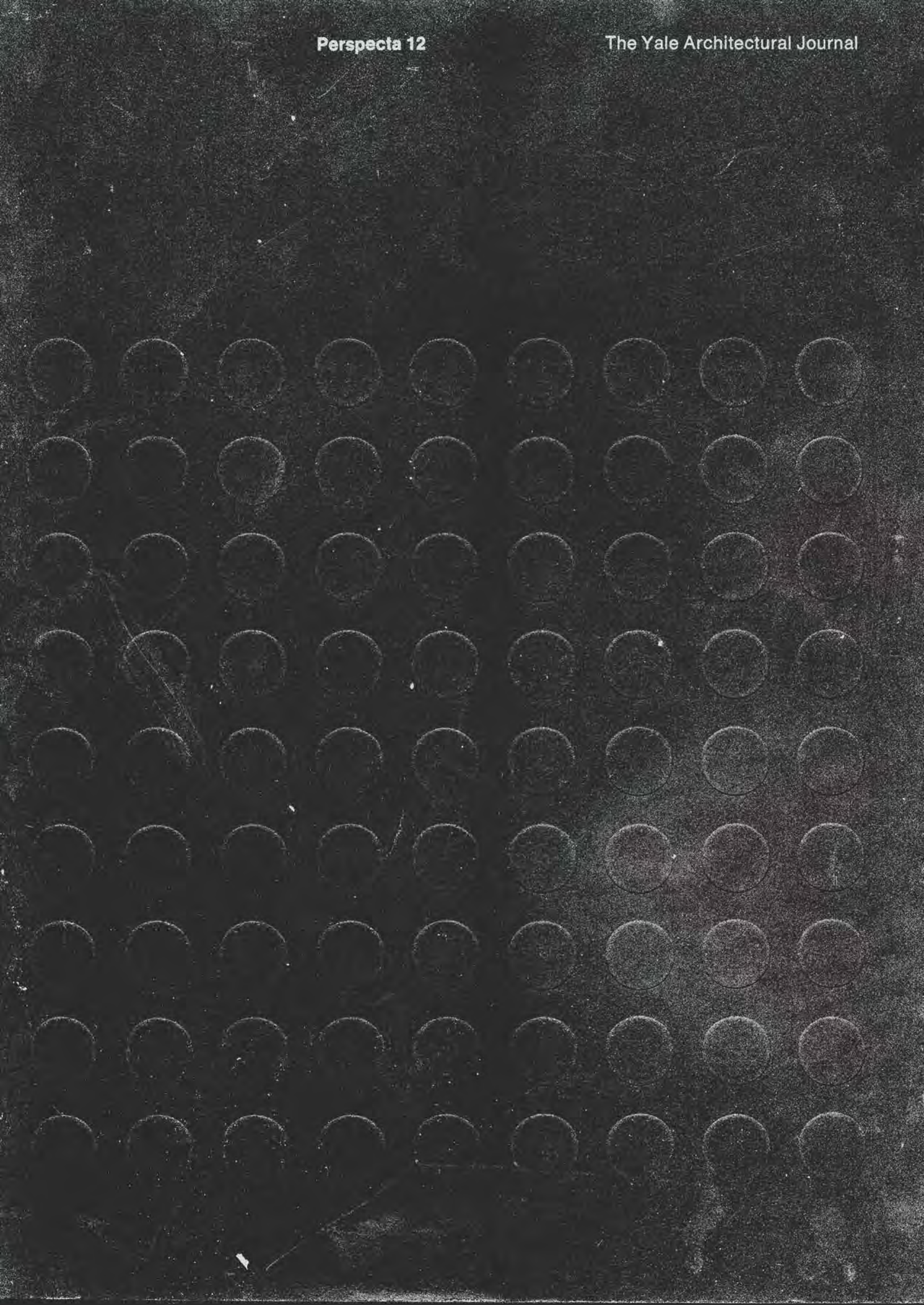


PERSPECTA 12's Cover was a deliberate juxtaposition with that of its predecessor; #11 (*in which I helped assemble and supply graphic illustrations*) was much about themes that by 1968 we felt was irrelevant, and our Journal was about the dialectic between

- Optimistic, “futuristic”, easy to digest
- Cover: shiny vinyl/chrome plated, floppy and soft

In contrast #12 was

- Proposing Radical scenarios: 1968 was a year of revolution in schools of Architecture
- Looking to the Past, documenting alternative educational agendas, challenging the ‘substance’ of what imagery constitutes ‘Architecture’, formulating modes of analysis
- Cover: dull/matte, Black, stiff (*the cover was folded over on itself*), ‘rough’ texture (*the circles are a replication of the Perelli tiles used in the Maison de Verre*)
- Rhetorical: the interior first sheet was **red**; the Black of Chaos, Red of Revolution



This issue of Perspecta is dedicated to Serge Chermayeff, who is retiring this year, after seven years on the faculty of the Department of Architecture at Yale. Alex Tzonis, a former student of his, now a friend and associate, has provided this short account of Professor Chermayeff's career.

our Dedication choice was made as Serge Chermayeff's career had many of the Values which we felt a clear affinity with



The generation of Serge Chermayeff will be characterized as the generation between two revolutions. The situation that Chermayeff found himself in as a young student has striking similarities with the one his students find themselves in at this moment, the time of his retirement from university teaching. As Chermayeff has pointed out, they are both revolutionary times because both challenged established priorities within the socio-economic structure and the cultural superstructure.

His individual contribution to the Modern Movement is already part of a well documented history.

Chermayeff joined the architectural profession when the revolutionary movement (known as the "Modern Movement") had succeeded in demolishing several of architecture's stylistic fetishes, opening the way for a more meaningful approach towards structuring of the human habitat. However, the war of unprecedented destructiveness and monstrosity that followed intercepted the processes of change. In the strange peace that followed it gradually became clear that the destruction of the human community and the ecological balance which was taking place, was as formidable and as total as the war that preceded it.

After the war part of the architectural profession began the piece-meal implementation of the ideas of the Modern Movement. It was the zeal of transforming the revolutionary ideas into an established authority rather than the continued search for a better quality of environment, relevant to the majority of the people. It was a hasty race without hesitation of the risk of banality and simplicism.

The rest of the profession went back to the good old pre-revolutionary times, the times of the private jokes concerning questions of style and puzzles of ornament. In the academies the students were assured that the revolutionary times were over. They were urged to be sitting on their professional affairs laying a "good design" as a hen waiting for an egg.

It was at that moment that Chermayeff decided to drop out of the profession and to stop designing. He resigned from the AIA and concentrated his energies on teaching and research. He tried to lead his students out of this prevalent pseudo professional approach where concern over monumentality was combined with intellectual superficiality and human irresponsibility.

That the designer of "the most elegant house of the thirties in England" decided to stop designing was a surprise. Neither his contemporaries nor the students could comprehend why. Some claimed it was the change in "style" that was taking place (against the "international") which caused him to do it; a change that Chermayeff didn't like and "could not cope with in his design". Others suspected that his involvement with academia had diminished his design abilities. Chermayeff's own indifference about stylistic matters proved how irrelevant these interpretations were.

It took almost a generation and the escalation of the environmental crisis, especially the urban crisis with all its traumatic events, to make clear what the concern and the commitment of Chermayeff was all about.

The new generation of student pre-professionals has become aware that it is trapped in the futile game of perpetuating and perfecting arbitrary, irrelevant and obsolete *hows* without questioning the *whys* of their discipline. They have come to realize that it is the structuring of activities which is important, not the forms.

In order to evolve a new role for the profession, an enormous amount of work has to be done, in most cases starting from scratch as we are facing an academic and professional void. The artificial barriers between disciplines must break down to make way for new approaches and methodologies.

Chermayeff tried, in vain, to start such studies at several universities. It is a common secret that no administration was ready or willing to implement such a program. The academic and professional institutions were once again obscuring reality by tailoring it to their abilities and to the assurances that those abilities gave them. Chermayeff's main contribution was that he pointed the way, proposing new professional attitudes and priorities of commitment; committing his whole life to them without hesitating to sacrifice the comfort of a very unprofessional professionalism.

Contents

1 *	7	Waiting for Printout Shadrach Woods
	11	Transformations of the Initial Structure Alex Tzonis
	21	Experimental Strategies: Notes for Environmental Design Melvin Charney
	33	On the Environmental Game and Taking Part Julian Beinart
	37	Advocacy as a Strategy of Political Management Frances Piven
	39	Black Commune in Focus Harry Quintana and Charles Jones
	43	Planning for Change C. Richard Hatch
	45	The Patrician Hangup Pat Goeters
	49	Mass Communication on the People Freeway Robert Venturi, Bruce Adams, and Denise Scott Brown
	57	The Formulation of a Design Discourse Emilio Ambasz
	71	Typology and Design Method Alan Colquhoun
2 **	77	Maison de Verre Kenneth Frampton
3 ***	129	Lutyen's Architecture Restudied Allan Greenberg
	153	J.N.L. Durand's Architectural Theory Antonio Hernandez
	161	Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project Ben Brewster
4 ****	165	Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century Walter Benjamin

- 1 this collaboration led to **WHAT U CAN DO**
- 2 the Frampton article was 27 pages, the most definitive document on Pierre Chareau
- 3 Greenberg's piece became a book, **LUTYENS AND THE MODERN MOVEMENT** 38 years later
- 4 both essays are related: Ben Brewster was an important Editor for the **NEW LEFT REVIEW**
the Benjamin piece is **not** included in Hannah Ahrend's anthology

our Manifesto

"No architect worth his salt would accept the *vox populi* as his client."^{*}

Kingman Brewster Jr.
President, Yale University

The architectural profession's social polemic has become a *politesse*. The Modern Movement has attained social acceptability with the institutional establishment and thereby lost its revolutionary purpose. It has become another style. In this society, an architect who wants to build remains the dutiful servant of his client institution.

Accepted implicitly by this role is the essential validity and viability of the *status quo*. But the practicing architect who believes that a high level of design will mitigate against the social vacuity of the program is himself the blissful victim of a Pollyannaic denial. Of course, during this boom period of building, the success of currently accepted professional *modi operandi* and architect-client relationships tends to obscure such doubts. Yet it would seem that architects and their client-institutions, through an all pervasive sense of security, have distorted their own understanding of the realities in which they operate.

The *populus* have little or no control over our society's self-perpetuating institutions, which are responsible for the rapid deterioration of our environment. As users of the environment they may be consulted, but this formality merely institutionalizes their powerlessness. The institutional elite portrays the *populus* to be a chaotic mass of competing individuals incapable of rational action. It refuses to consider them as a group bound by common interests different from those of their institution. Because unorganized groups are slow to demand rights not clearly defined as theirs the elite assumes that such rights should remain its own prerogative.

The profession must re-examine its role in our society. Professional neutrality is a chimera. Only by accepting the *vox populi* as their client can architects shed their traditional role and cease being the unwitting pawns of the institutional elite.

In order to effectively question the social implications of building programs and the nature of our institutions, we must formulate a theory of the environment as a manifestation of society, but from the point of view of the *vox populi*, which would necessarily mean from a vantage point

^{*}From the 1968 Report of the President concerning Yale's governance and its role in solving social problems.

outside of our present society's ideology. Such a theory should not only encompass our present "reality" but also explain its contradictions, thereby enabling us to develop the means for transcending it.

The schools of architecture are still wallowing in the backwaters of a traditional professionalism. Rather than perpetuate the present impasse, they should take the lead in formulating such a theory and in suggesting strategies for its implementation.

our Intentions

In this issue, rather than pursuing new directions, we have tried to bring to bear a new set of viewpoints and attitudes to the existing scene. However, we did not begin our search with a generalized theme which would achieve broad unity, and *Perspecta 12* came together as much by accident as by intention.

This issue organizes itself essentially into two parts. The articles in the first part deal both with ways of looking at the present and with a commitment to finding new avenues for social effectiveness.

The second part consists of contributions to design method, both theoretical and analytical in nature. The three historical articles are not meant to place the architects they deal with into a sharper stylistic perspective, but rather to lift the presented *oeuvre* out of context and analyse it for what it can contribute to an understanding of the design process.

The last article might be termed an *expose'* of nineteenth century urbanism through an analysis of Paris, one of its principal manifestations. Although the work was never finished and cannot be said to be based on a strict, methodical approach, it has strange parallels with the present and suggests a context within which to examine not only its own subject matter, but also that of today's patterns.

In short, *Perspecta 12* proposes that architecture cannot afford to move blindly onward, but should pause to challenge both its method and its content.

Peter C. Papademetriou
Stuart Wrede



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This remarkable journal, edited and designed by students, has displayed consistently high quality over many issues, critical perception, and a format reflecting meticulous attention to detail.

It is distinguished by its balance, with content which is both historical and contemporary. Its editors also seek to look ahead, to anticipate future directions in architecture. In so doing they are providing important and provocative reading for present and future professionals.

**proving again that a "Beautiful Package" can be a Wolf in Sheep's Clothing
the AIA actually got behind our Manifesto and Intent**

R. F. Hastings
President

PM Solton
Secretary

June 21, 1971