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## Marcel Breuer and Postwar America

Barry Bergdoll

Jonathan Massey

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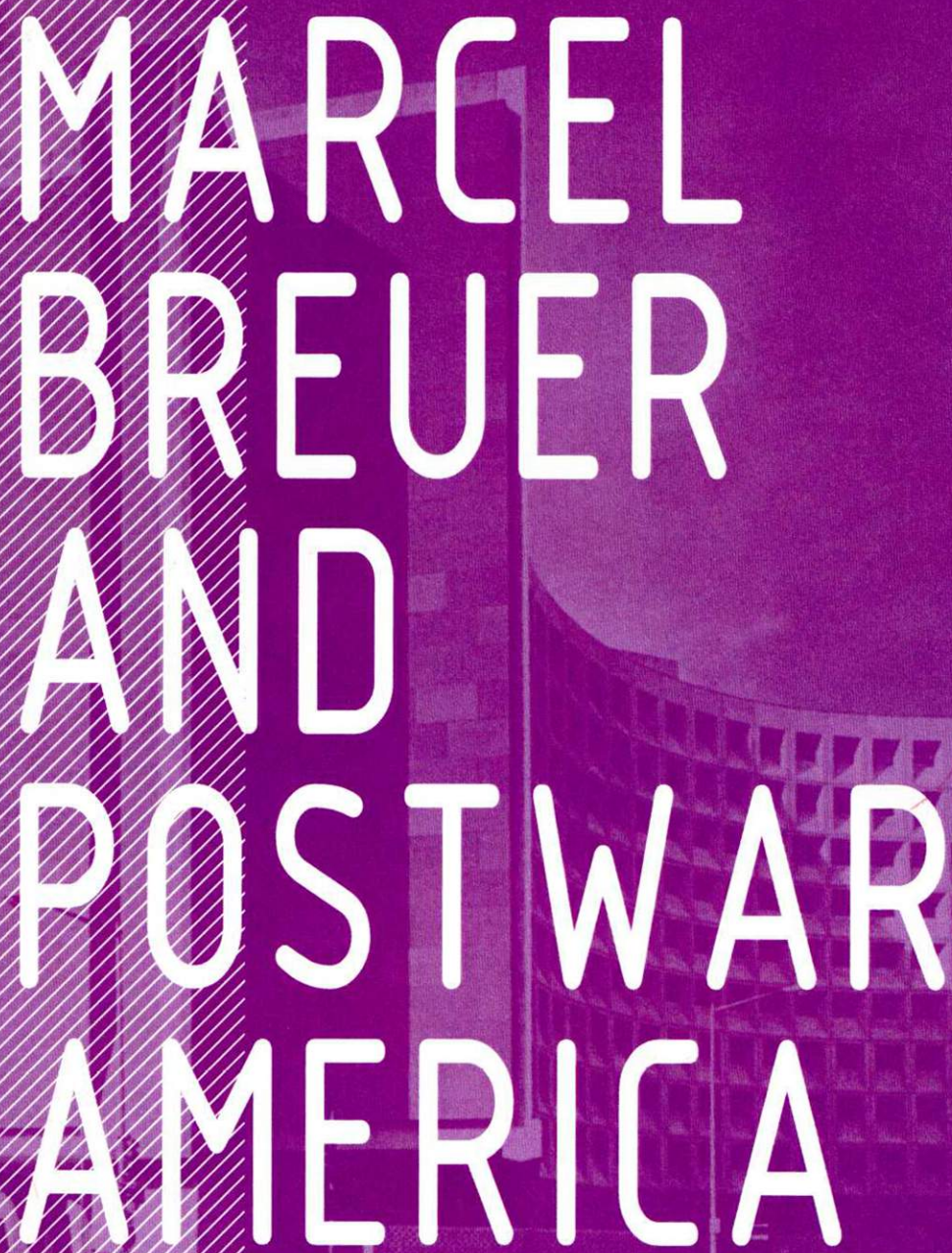
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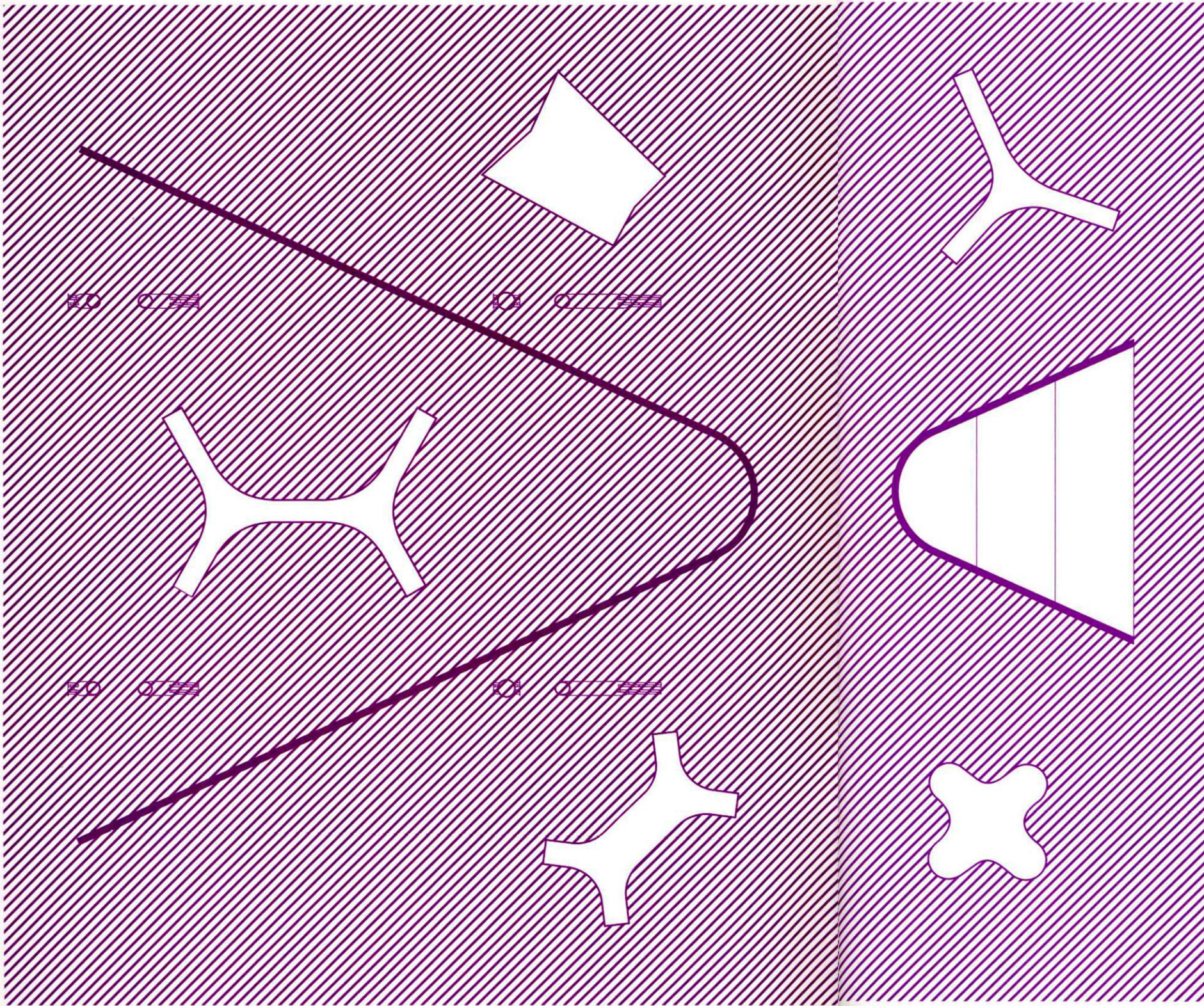
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MARCEL  
BREUER  
AND  
POSTWAR  
AMERICA



# MARCEL BREUER AND POSTWAR AMERICA

Drawings from the Marcel Breuer papers,  
curated by Syracuse Architecture students  
with Barry Bergdoll and Jonathan Massey

Syracuse University School of Architecture  
Slocum Gallery  
15 February – 29 March 2011



At the center of Slocum Hall, four stories below a large skylight, stands a big shaggy lens—a deep, fur-lined scoop framed by a broad rectangle eight feet high. Between stepped floor and slanted ceiling is a curved wall punctuated by a trapezoidal aperture through which you glimpse a purple-tinted fragment of face. Forehead and cheeks, a nose and two eyes: Marcel Breuer.

The lens, a pavilion encasing deep embrasures, marks an exhibition of material from the archive of this leading 20th-century architect. It points you toward the adjacent gallery, where more than 120 drawings and photographs reproduced at full scale document thirteen major buildings and projects by Breuer and his office. Image enlargements, wall texts, and diagonally striped fields of purple, pink, and blue integrate walls and artworks into a color-saturated ambience.

“Marcel Breuer and Postwar America” offers a new picture of postwar modernism, along with the pleasure of looking at compelling drawings and photographs culled from the archive. It results from an innovative collaboration mobilizing archives and special collections in research and teaching. The exhibition emerged from a seminar I taught with visiting professor Barry Bergdoll at the School of Architecture in fall 2010. Each of the case studies was selected, researched, and curated by one of the students in the course, supported by the Special Collections Research Center of Syracuse University Library, which holds the Marcel Breuer Papers. The installation was designed and built by faculty members Jon Lott and Brett Snyder with a team of students and staff.

This catalogue documents the outcome of these partnerships in researching, teaching, curating, designing, building, and learning from Breuer.

— Jonathan Massey

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Marcel Breuer (1902-1981) was a leader in the second generation of modernist architects. His striking designs for furniture, houses, institutions, commercial buildings, neighborhoods, and cities helped to establish the shape and style of modernity in Europe and the United States, leading Time Magazine to characterize Breuer as one of the “form givers of the 20th century.”

Breuer’s career began in 1920s Germany, where he studied and taught at the Bauhaus before establishing a small office in Berlin. After leaving for London in 1935, he followed Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius to Massachusetts, practicing in partnership with Gropius and teaching at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design. From 1948 until the end of his career Breuer headed a firm in New York that grew to encompass several partners and numerous employees.

This exhibition features thirteen buildings and projects designed by Breuer and his associates during this postwar period, represented by full-scale reproductions of drawings and photographs from the office archive. It excludes the many single-family houses for which Breuer is famous, and it omits three major institutional commissions. The UNESCO headquarters in Paris and St. John’s Abbey Church in Minnesota, both commissioned in 1952, initiated a new phase of large-scale work. The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, completed in 1966, epitomized Breuer’s use of bold forms. Setting aside these well-known buildings, the exhibition focuses on some of the architect’s less familiar major works. These include educational buildings, churches, housing projects, civic institutions, infrastructure, and communities built or designed for locations primarily in the U.S., but also including Venezuela and France.

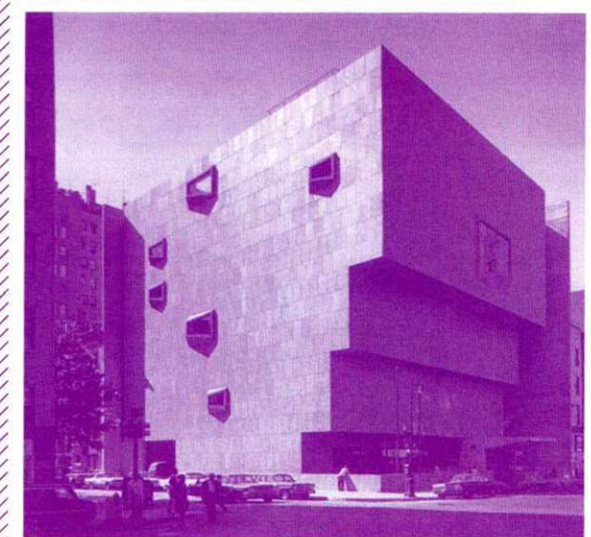
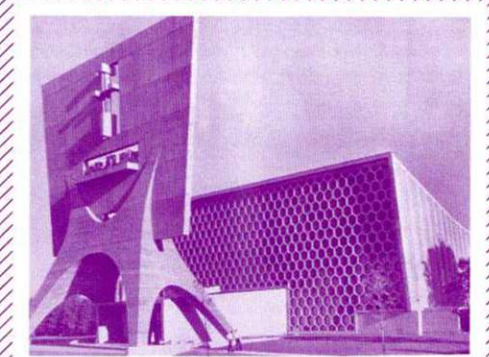
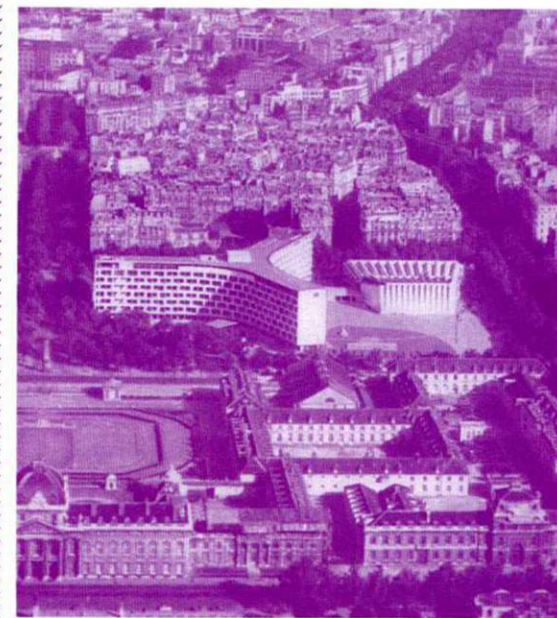
Each of the thirteen projects shown here stands on its own as a case study of Breuer’s method. By grouping them into three sections, this exhibition highlights themes that marked his work: Breuer’s characteristic use of MATERIALS, his role in giving new shape to the INSTITUTIONS of government and civil society, and his contribution to the emergence of distinctively modern COMMUNITIES. Together, they document Breuer’s singular responses to the needs and opportunities of American society during the postwar era.

photos, from top to bottom:

Headquarters of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), Paris, 1958, with Pier Luigi Nervi and Bernard Zehrfuss.

St. John’s Abbey and University, Collegeville MN, 1953.

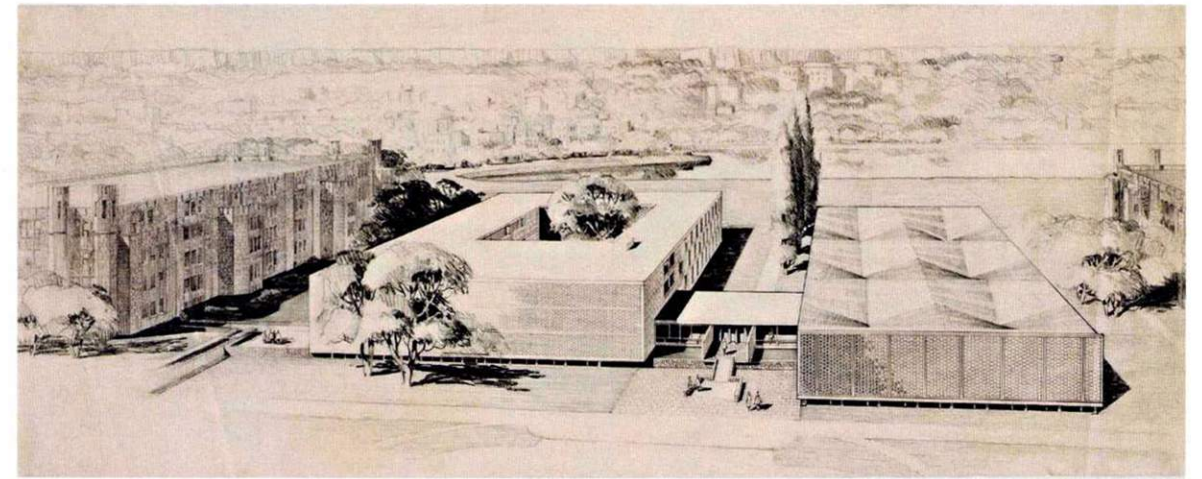
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York NY, 1966.



# MATERIALS

Like Breuer's celebrated tubular steel chairs and tables, his earliest buildings employed the smooth industrial materials of International Style modern architecture. Following his move to London, Breuer began to juxtapose these against fieldstone and other materials associated with vernacular building traditions, a practice he developed further in his American projects.

One of the primary materials of Breuer's postwar work was concrete, an ancient medium that acquired a renewed prominence in modern architecture. At Hunter College and the Convent of the Annunciation, Breuer exploited the plasticity of concrete to create thin-shell roofs made up of hyperbolic paraboloids. These forms, along with dramatic pleats and folds, animated the walls of UNESCO, St. Francis de Sales Church, and the Grand Coulee Dam, where Breuer's massive concrete walls evoked ancient Egyptian pylons and temples. Breuer complemented folded, pebbled, and striated concrete with fieldstone, wood, plate glass, embedded stained glass, and clay flue tile to imbue his buildings with contrasting textures and qualities: heavy and light, massive and delicate, rough and smooth, archaic and modern.

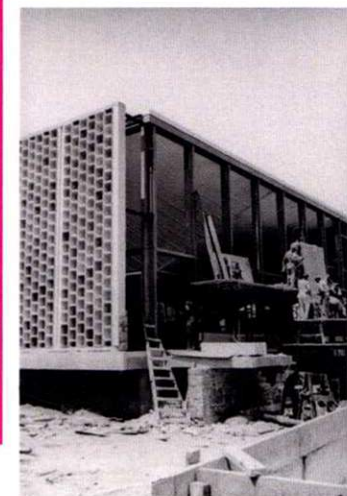
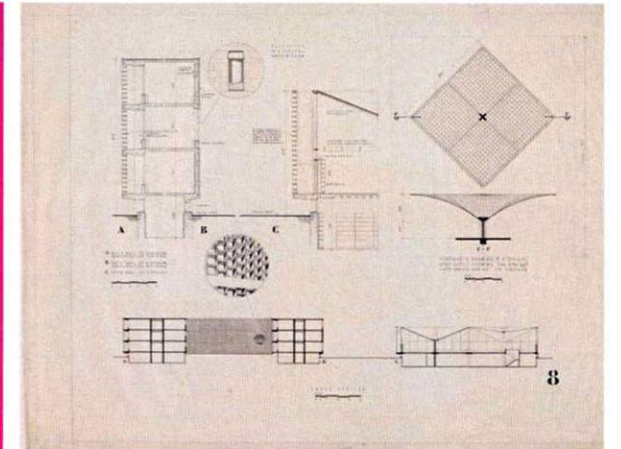


**Hunter College Library  
and Administration Building  
Bronx NY, 1957-60**

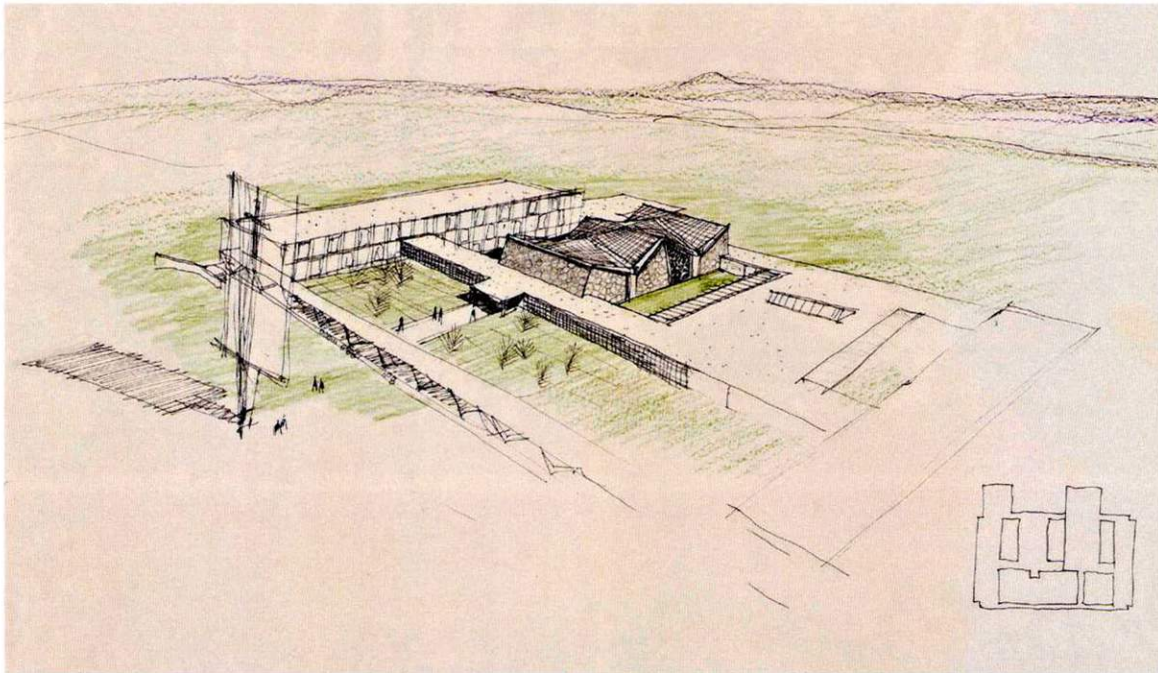
This complex, in which a low vestibule links administrative offices and a library, was Breuer's first executed commission in New York City. The Bauhaus practice of juxtaposing contrasting forms, textures, and materials here yielded a counterpoint between the three-story administration building, a square centering on a square courtyard, and the lower rectangular library offset by nearly one-third of its length. Stacked cellular administrative offices contrast with the open plan of the library reading room, which is covered by six concrete umbrellas in the form of hyperbolic paraboloids or "hypars." Breuer further elaborated the counterpoint by combining rough fieldstone, smooth limestone, plate glass, and terracotta flue tile in varying ways on the façades of both buildings.

These materials, and Breuer's way of handling them, gave the complex a distinctive character in which the International Style interacted with both the Gothic of adjacent campus buildings and contemporary modernism in Latin America, where concrete hypar roofs and flue-tile sunscreens were signature elements in the work of engineer Felix Candela.

—Simon Taveras Jr.



- 1 Aerial rendering of building, graphite on trace paper, 8.75" x 22"
- 2 Flue tile and umbrella-vault roof structural details, ink on vellum, 24" x 32"
- 3 Construction photograph showing flue tile and umbrella construction, photograph, 5" x 3.5"

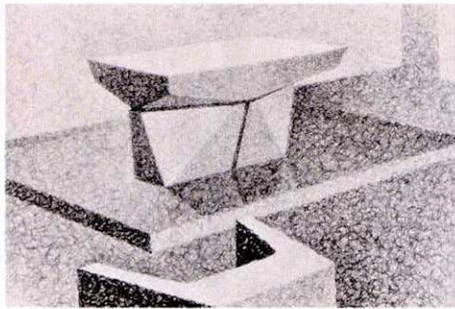
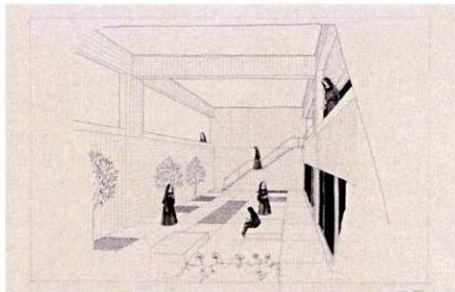


**Convent of the Annunciation  
Bismark ND, 1954-62**

Set on a rise in the expansive North Dakota prairie, the Convent of the Annunciation is a group of low rectangular buildings dominated by a tall concrete belfry or "banner." Dormitories for the sisters and for the students of a women's college enclose courtyards containing dining halls, communal facilities, and two chapels. Additional buildings shown in Breuer's site plan, including two Y-shaped extensions at either end of the rectangular complex, were not completed.

As at St. John's Abbey Church, Breuer used concrete to monumentalize the sacred spaces of the Convent, in particular its main chapel, where a roof of thin-shell hypars is supported by faceted buttresses. Walls of rubble, embedded colored glass, and flue tile enclose the chapel and recur elsewhere in the complex. Fixtures such as the main altar echo the architecture in their material palette and formal language.

—Michael Silberman



- 1 Aerial perspective study, colored pencil on trace paper, 15" x 32" (detail)
- 2 Interior courtyard perspective with nuns, ink on vellum, 18" x 28"
- 3 Main chapel altar and lectern, graphite on vellum, 19" x 32" (detail)

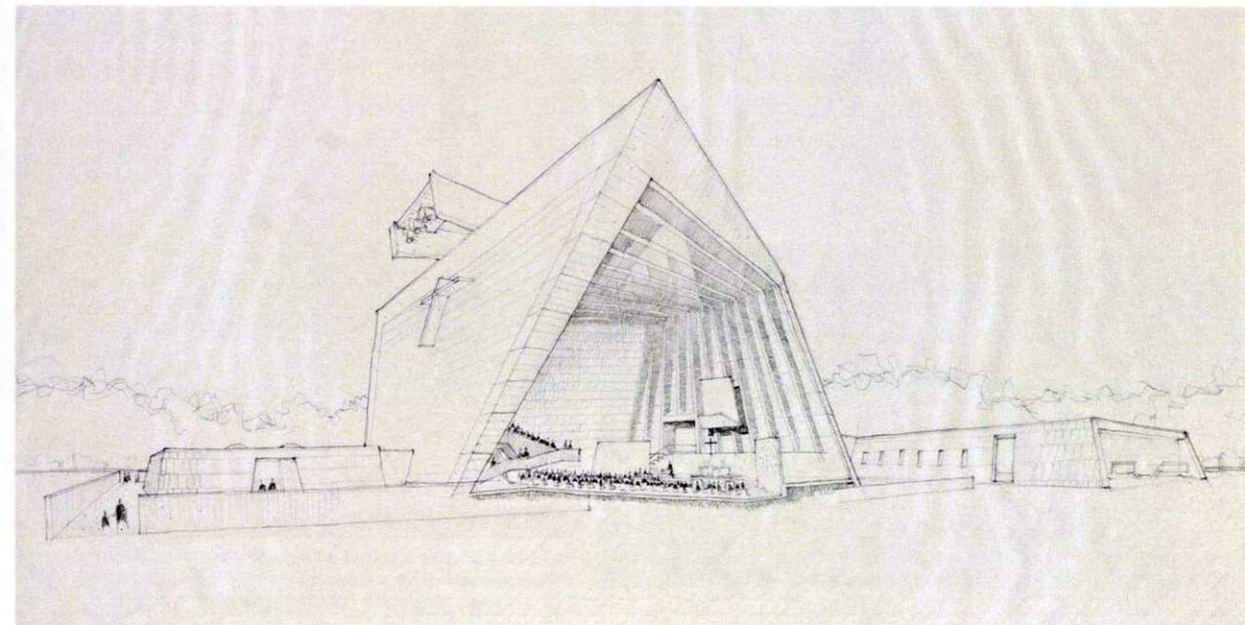
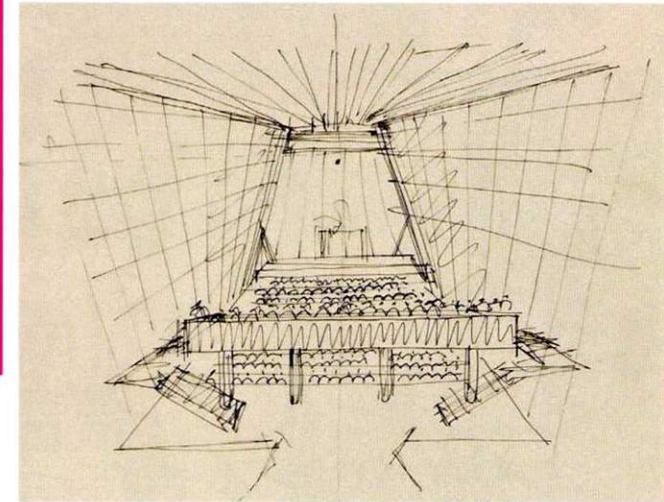
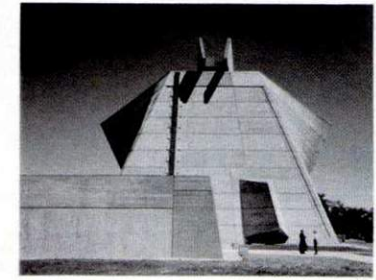
**Church and Rectory of St. Francis de Sales  
Muskegon MI, 1964-66**

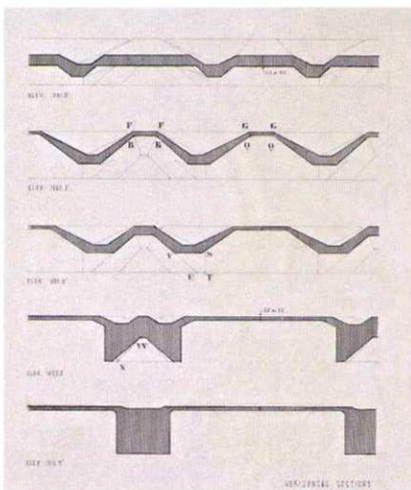
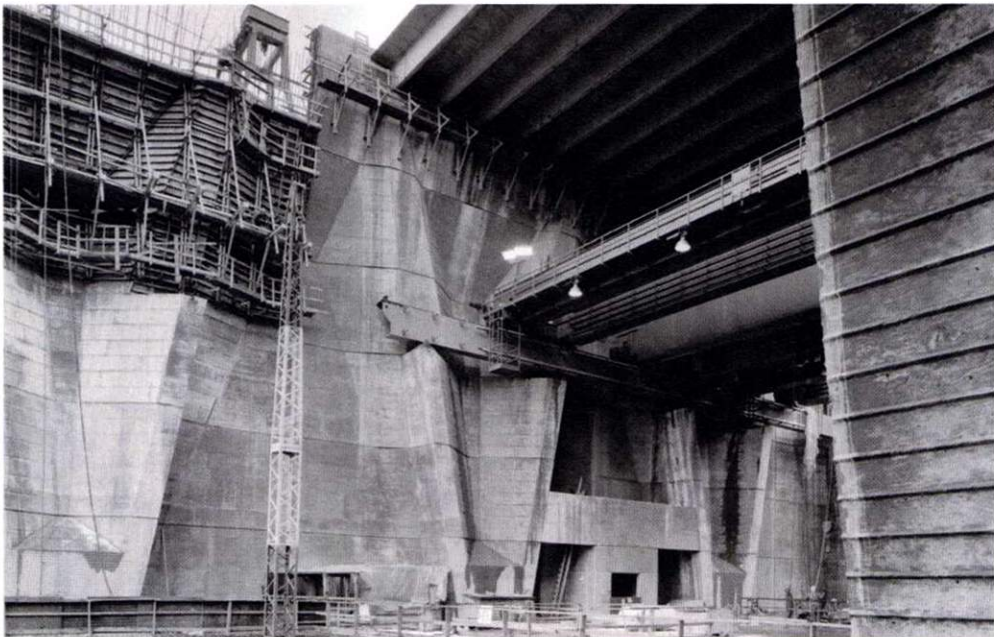
Like Breuer's other buildings for Catholic congregations, this church reflected the shift toward greater participation and inclusion in liturgical practices that culminated in the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The planning, form, and materiality of St. Francis supported the institution's updating of its traditions, protocols, and symbolism.

A low and dark narthex containing a baptismal font initiates an axial procession, culminating at the altar, that symbolizes life's progress from beginning to end. Twelve trapezoidal concrete frames enclose the sanctuary, where a wide and shallow nave encourages more equal participation while lofty space and clear light represent God's divine influence. Rising behind the altar, these frames evoke the twelve apostles who founded the church. They support the curving side walls and sloped faces of this monumental building in which form, structure, and space convey spiritual principles.

—Douglas Kahl

- 1 Altar wall and roof, photograph, 8" x 10"
- 2 Interior sketch perspective, ink on trace paper, 12" x 14" (detail)
- 3 Sectional perspective sketch, graphite on bond paper, 29" x 36" (detail)



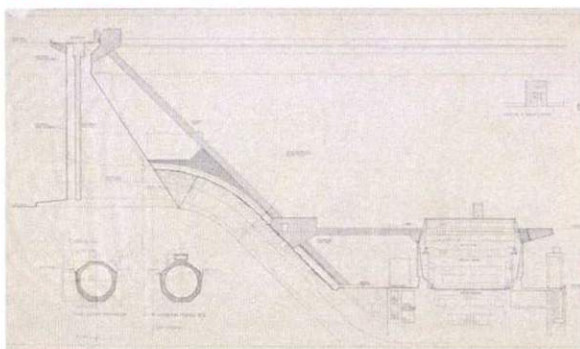


**Grand Coulee Dam Third Power Plant and Forebay Dam Grand Coulee WA, 1972-78**

The Bureau of Reclamation selected Breuer to design this addition to the Grand Coulee Dam as part of a larger initiative to employ leading contemporary architects in federal building commissions. Breuer drew on ancient Egyptian models to monumentalize the new dam and turbine hall, which gave Grand Coulee the highest generating capacity of any hydroelectric powerplant in the world.

Concrete provided the mass and strength needed for the dam. It also allowed Breuer to endow the turbine hall with rhythm and scale. The folding in the turbine hall walls stabilizes them when the gantry crane they support lifts a turbine for installation or servicing. At other times, it breaks the long façade into repetitive facets that measure and modulate the building's vast scale. On the exterior, these forms are animated by the changing play of sun and shadow. Inside, they carry observation bridges from which visitors take in the sublime spectacle of industrial infrastructure.

—Marcus Johnson



- 1 Folded-plate construction, photograph, 8" x 10"
- 2 Powerplant wall details, ink on vellum, 26" x 54" (detail)
- 3 Cross section, ink on vellum, 26" x 54" (detail)

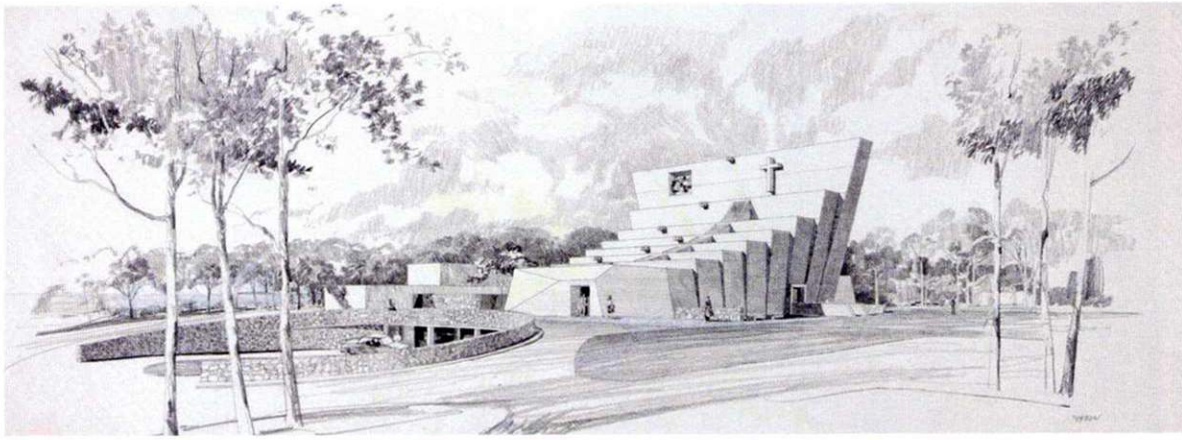
# INSTITUTIONS

The prosperity of the postwar period combined with expanding automobile ownership and government policy to spur rapid growth in the suburbs. These changes also affected American cities, which responded to declining population and business activity by redesigning streets for vehicular traffic, constructing modern buildings, and transforming whole neighborhoods through urban renewal.

Many of Breuer's commissions gave new architectural identity to urban and suburban institutions. In the unbuilt competition entry for St. Paul's Cathedral, Breuer drew on archaic Egyptian forms to generate a stepped concrete building integrated into the city's urban renewal scheme by superblock planning and automobile drop-offs. The design Breuer prepared for a sports park in Flushing Meadows, Queens, projected a new conception of the urban park densely programmed with commercial and recreational facilities expressed heroically in concrete and steel cable.

The trapezoids, hexagons, y-shapes, and faceted window bays that mark many of Breuer's buildings distinguished the institutions they housed. In the headquarters building for the newly-created federal department of Housing and Urban Development, which supervised urban renewal activity, as well as in the Atlanta Central Library, Breuer helped these institutions signal their modernity.



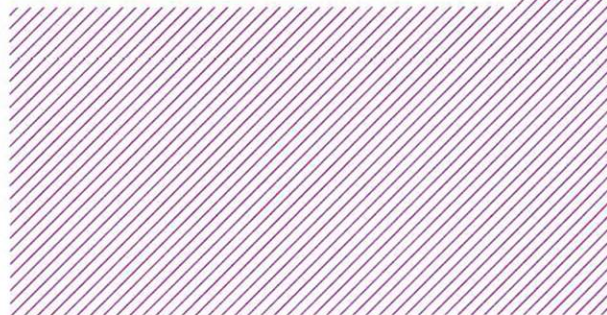
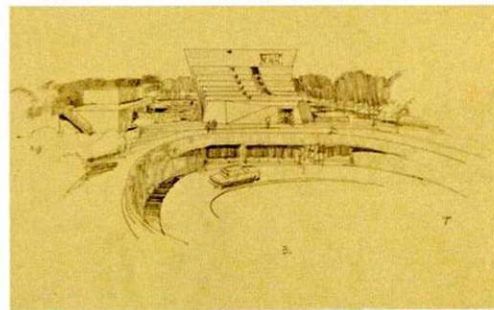
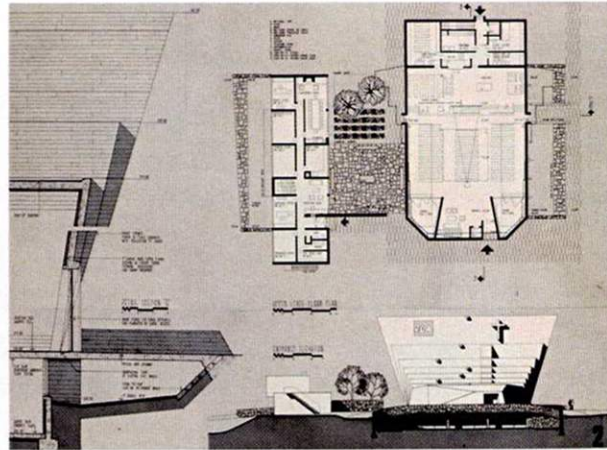


### Cathedral Church of St. Paul Project Burlington VT, 1972

Breuer's unbuilt church project, recently rediscovered in the archives, was one of six entries in an international competition to design a new Episcopal cathedral for Burlington, Vermont, where the congregation of St. Paul's had lost its building to fire. The large corner site a few blocks from the previous cathedral location was integrated into the Champlain Street Urban Renewal Project, a controversial initiative that demolished residential blocks to create a new lakefront district with pedestrian shopping plazas, expanded commercial areas, and wider streets. The cathedral superblock would have accommodated additional buildings, car drop-offs, and parking for an increasingly dispersed congregation.

Like the Convent of the Annunciation and St. Francis de Sales, the Burlington cathedral project employed modernist planning and design strategies to reflect the liturgical modernization transforming many Christian denominations. The rectangular sanctuary rises toward the altar in a series of stepped concrete forms that culminate in a large trapezoidal banner characteristic of Breuer's ecclesiastical designs. As in some of the architect's other church designs from the era, these features draw on ancient Egyptian mastabas and temple pylons in order to project a strikingly modern vision of the church.

—Hilary Barlow



- 1 Perspective rendering, graphite on illustration board, 17" x 36" (detail)
- 2 Presentation drawing showing detail section C, upper level plan, and entrance elevation, silver halide print on plastic film, 30" x 40"
- 3 Exterior perspective sketch, graphite on trace paper, 13.75" x 21" (detail)

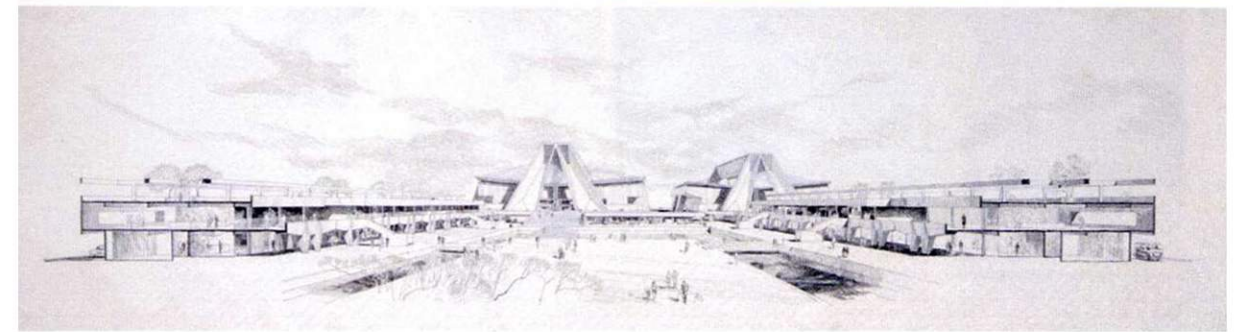
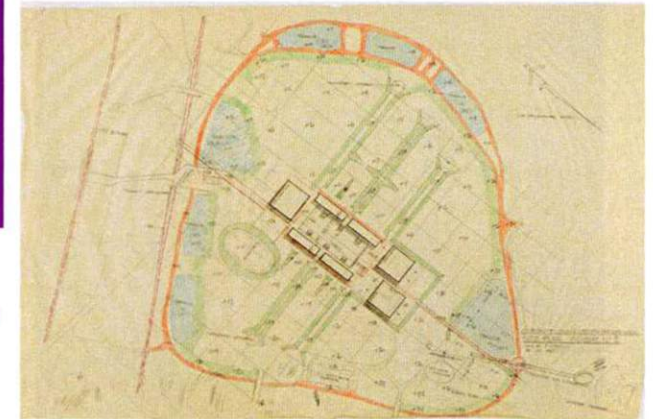
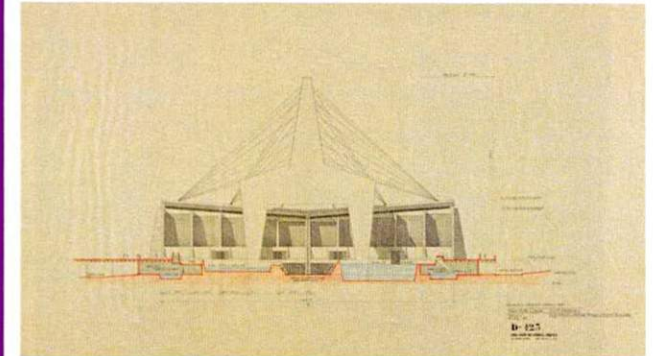
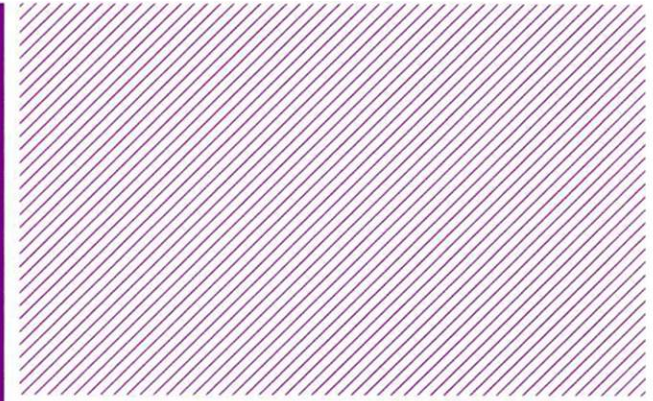
### Flushing Meadows Sports Park Project Queens NY, 1967

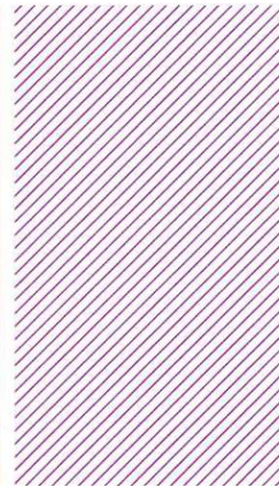
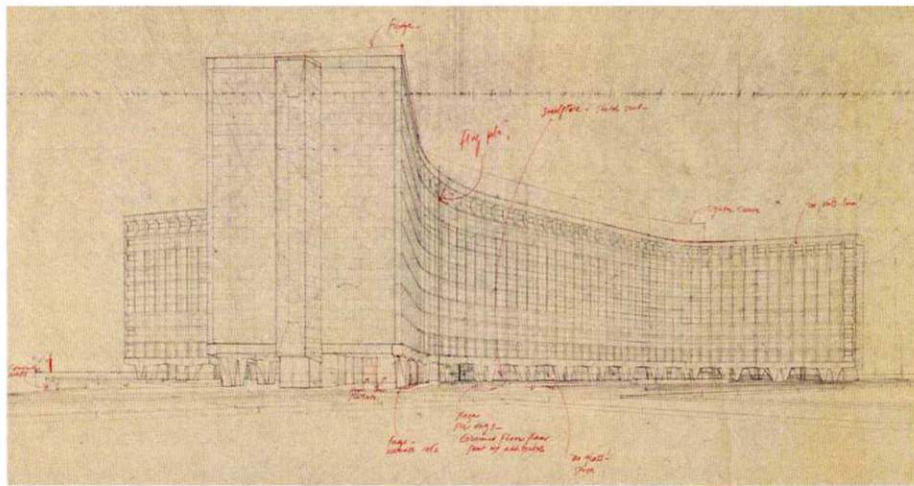
Commissioned by the City of New York for a site that had accommodated a trash dump, United Nations headquarters, and two world's fairs (in 1939 and 1964), this project was never constructed due to contractual and payment disagreements. The site plan, by Lawrence Halprin & Associates, called for two building groups: an arts complex to the north by architects Kenzo Tange and URTEC, and a sports complex to the south by Breuer's firm. The sports complex consists of a plinth supporting a sports arena and swim-bathhouse that both employ heroic concrete arches and steel cabling to create large unobstructed interior spaces. Long two-story folded-concrete "spine buildings," also by Breuer, flank the central mall connecting the sports buildings to the arts complex.

Initiated by recently-elected mayor John V. Lindsay and his parks commissioner Thomas P. F. Hoving, the project would have endowed the city with up-to-date recreational facilities capable of competing with those in newly-built suburbs. The larger scheme even included a drag-racing track and toboggan runs with artificial snow machines, reimagining the urban park as a terrain densely packed with fun activities attractive to people of all ages and interests. In keeping with this ethos, Breuer's design juxtaposes monumental forms in concrete with playful elements such as children's splash pools with water slides and a restaurant with windows looking into the swimming pool.

—Aimee Hultquist

- 1 South elevation and section of swim-bath complex, graphite and colored pencil on trace paper, 21" x 42" (detail)
- 2 Site plan of scheme, colored pencil on trace paper, 21" x 31"
- 3 Sectional perspective through mall showing final trusses, pencil on gessoed illustration board, 13.5" x 48"



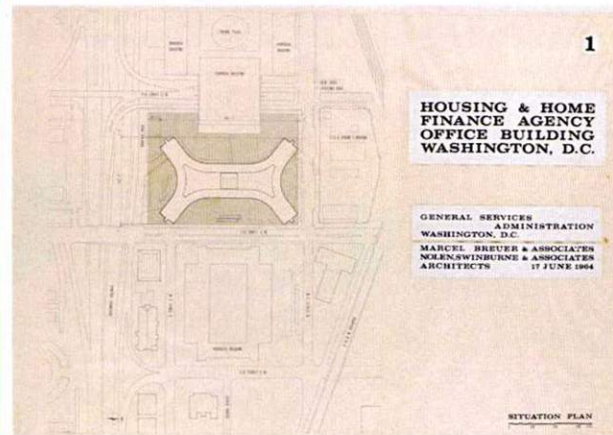
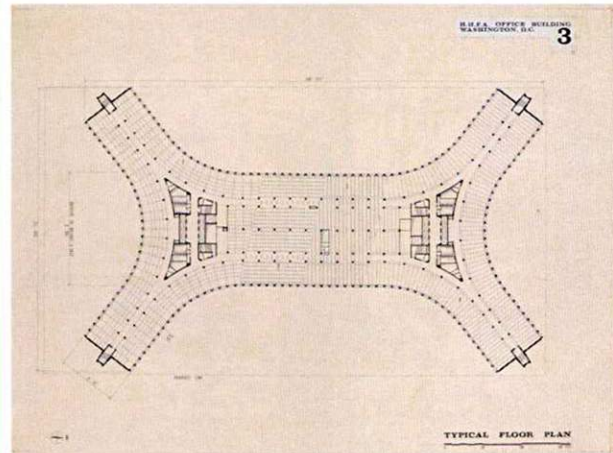


**Department of Housing and Urban Development Headquarters  
Washington DC, 1965-68**

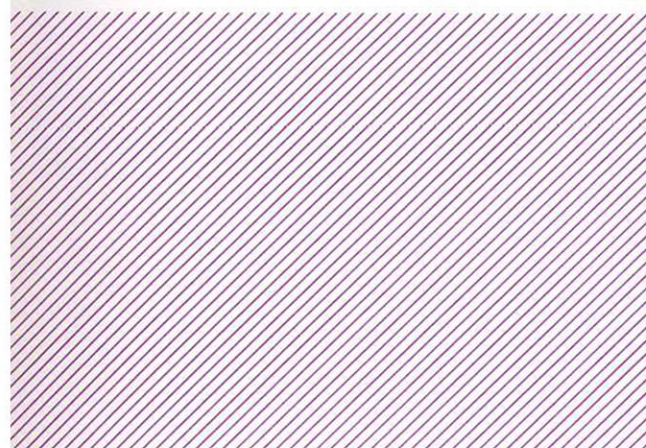
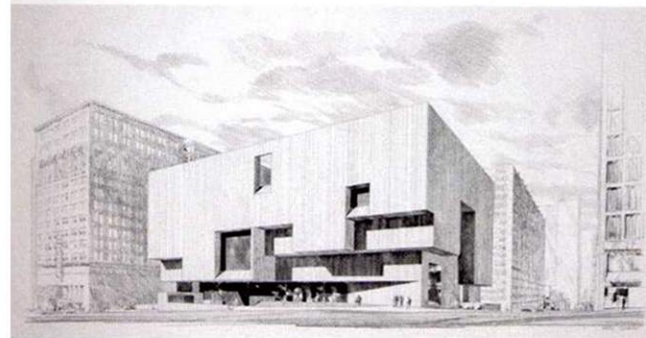
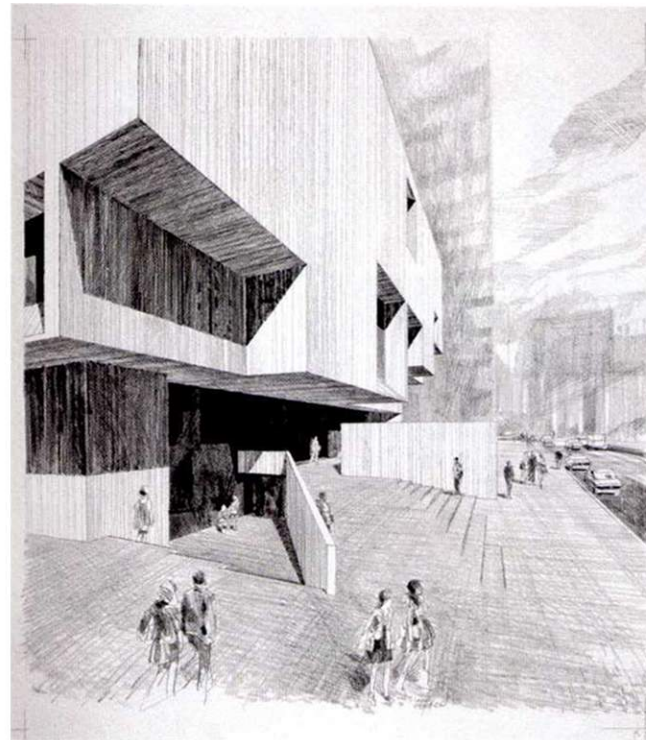
Breuer's commission to design a headquarters building for the newly created Department of Housing and Urban Development, like those for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and the Grand Coulee Dam, followed President John F. Kennedy's 1962 call for new federal buildings to "embody the finest contemporary American architectural thought." Located in an urban renewal district south of the national mall, the building eschews the columns and pediments of neoclassical architecture typical of previous federal buildings. Instead, it offers curving "eggcrate" facades composed of precast concrete window modules as symbols of government modernized through technocratic rationality.

Breuer organized the office floors of the HUD headquarters into a double-Y configuration similar to Y-, V-, and hexagon-shaped plans he had used since the 1930s in offices and housing. He adjusted the form, angle, curvature, and thickness of building elements to adapt the Y-type to both internal requirements and site conditions, which here include both the baroque geometry of L'Enfant's street plan and the superbloc planning of the surrounding urban renewal zone.

-Daley Wilson



- 1 Exterior perspective sketch with instructions for revision, blueprint with ink annotations, 28" x 45" (detail)
- 2 Typical floor plan, ink on paper, 36" x 48"
- 3 Situation plan, ink on paper, 36" x 54"

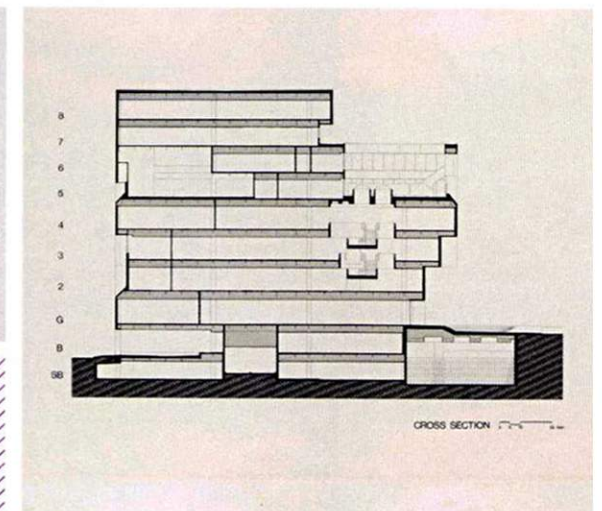


**Atlanta Central Library  
Atlanta GA, 1977-80**

Asked by the client to design a building similar to the Whitney Museum for this downtown site, Breuer stacked the library floors into a blocky mass clad in diagonally textured concrete panels. Stairs and skylights connect low open floors bordered by offices, while diagonal walls and ramps at street level activate a shallow entry plaza. The library had outgrown its previous building, a neoclassical Carnegie Library, and Atlanta was growing in population, economic activity, and prominence. The abstract geometries, stepped cantilevers, and cyclopean windows of Breuer's building (completed posthumously) symbolized the modernization not only of the library but also of the city and county it served.

-Patrick Clare

- 1 Exterior perspective from the south showing entrance area, transfer from graphite drawing, 16" x 13.5"
- 2 Exterior perspective from the east showing the main façade on Forsyth Street, transfer from graphite drawing, 17" x 24"
- 3 Cross section, print on mylar, 34" x 42" (detail)



# COMMUNITIES

As a student and teacher at the Bauhaus, Breuer participated in a new kind of educational community. In an unbuilt design for faculty houses, he tested his ideas of how architecture might support and represent that social world. At the Institute for Advanced Study, the Fairview Apartments, and other postwar housing commissions, Breuer laid out row houses, two-story apartment blocks, and high-rises to create courtyards with lawns, play areas, and parking. By separating unit types intended for bachelors, couples, and families, he created distinct yet related zones of social interaction for each of these groups.

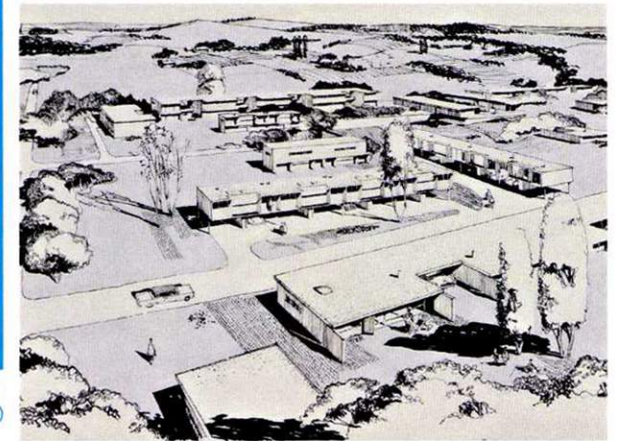
As urban renewal activity peaked during the 1960s, Breuer designed large complexes that adapted strategies he had explored in earlier urban plans that set housing and civic buildings amid automotive streets and open plazas. His unrealized plans for the El Recreo development in Caracas and the Bristol Center in Syracuse integrated automotive access and parking but also pedestrian zones that provided spaces for community interaction adjacent to office towers, theaters, shops, and other amenities. In Breuer's later design for the French ski resort of Flaine, ski lodges, multistory hotels, and housing spread out along the contours of a steep alpine valley so that roads and parking lots support a walkable modernist resort town.

## Institute for Advanced Study Members' Housing Princeton NJ, 1956

Breuer was commissioned by J. Robert Oppenheimer to design apartment housing for this prestigious research institute adjacent to Princeton University. Set a short walk away from the research buildings, the residential complex provides 107 living units for both short- and long-term scholars.

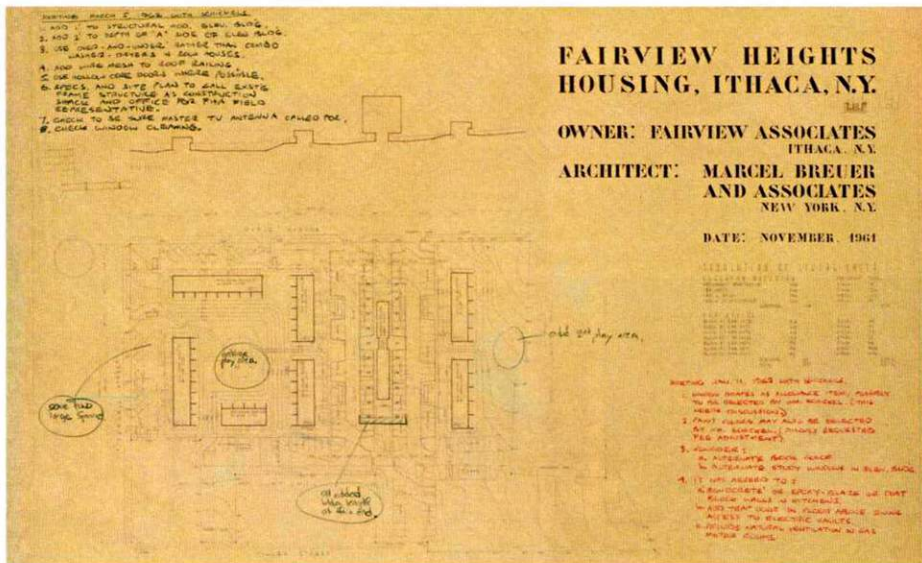
Breuer aggregated six unit types to create rectilinear bars of varying length that are mixed and arranged along topographical contours to create informal courtyards. Rather than grouping scholars of similar academic concentrations into concentrated communes, Breuer and Oppenheimer grouped residents into the bars according to their living situation: single, married, or married with children. Patios and shallow back yards connect individual units to the courtyards, setting up the potential for communal interactions such as those envisioned in renderings.

—Kristopher Menos



- 1 Perspective of rowhouse patio, black and white lantern slide, 2" x 3" (detail)
- 2 Perspective aerial view of complex in context, ink on vellum, 20" x 29" (detail)
- 3 Perspective of courtyard, ink and graphite on vellum, 18" x 23" (detail)





**FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS HOUSING, ITHACA, N.Y.**

OWNER: FAIRVIEW ASSOCIATES ITHACA, N.Y.  
 ARCHITECT: MARCEL BREUER AND ASSOCIATES NEW YORK, N.Y.

DATE: NOVEMBER, 1961

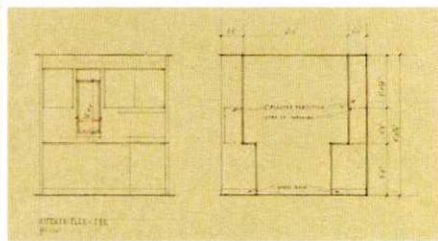
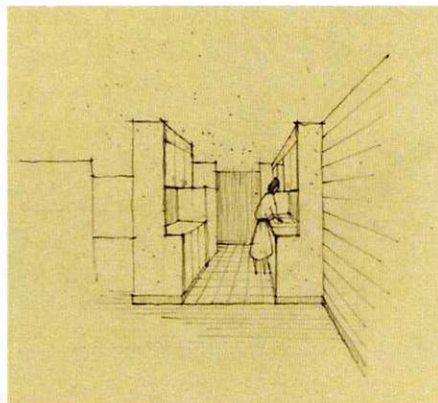
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**Fairview Heights Apartments Ithaca NY, 1963-64**

Commissioned by the prominent Schickel family, this apartment complex was a collaboration between Breuer and architect Hamilton Smith. The large site is organized into three main zones: thirty-two two-story two-bedroom row houses grouped into bars surrounding a courtyard; a six-story high-rise building, raised above the ground plane to allow parking below, containing 108 efficiency apartments; and a line of ten two-story three-bedroom row houses grouped into two bars.

Play areas in the courtyard and behind the three-bedroom row house blocks were designed to attract interaction among the children and parents residing there. As in the Institute for Advanced Studies member housing, terraces behind the rowhouses linked individual units to these communal areas. The high-rise, meanwhile, constituted a separate community disconnected from the play areas. Pathways and axes connect these disparate elements, integrating the three micro-communities into a cohesive complex.

-Scott Schwartzwalder



1 Annotated site plan for play areas, graphite on sepia diazo print, 29" x 42" (detail)  
 2, 3 Interior perspective, elevation, and section of kitchen, graphite on trace paper, 17.5" x 21" (detail)

**Bristol Center Project Syracuse NY, 1969-71**

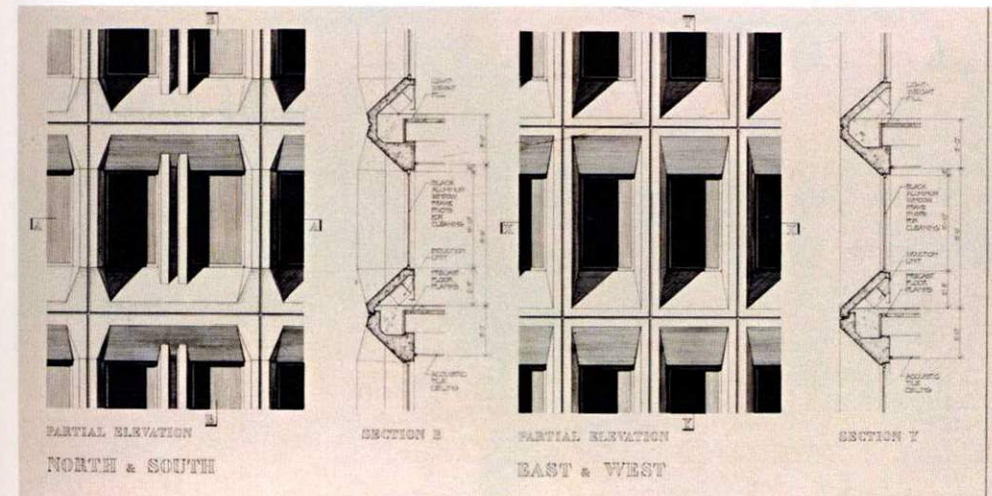
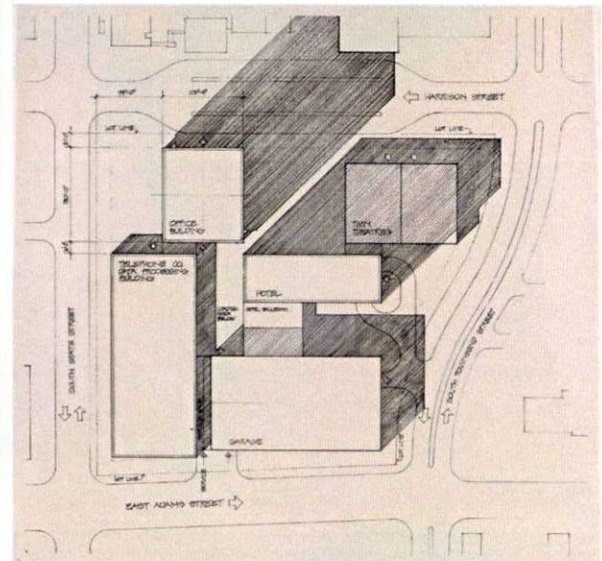
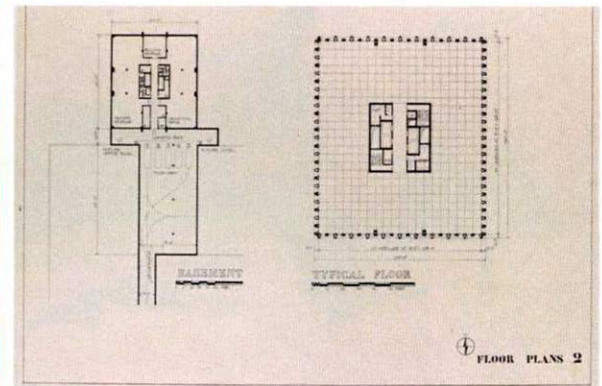
In the late 1950s, as urban renewal activity peaked across the nation, Syracuse mayor William F. Walsh commissioned the city's Urban Renewal Agency to produce a neighborhood renewal action plan for downtown. The objective was to spur economic activity by increasing automotive access from the new interstate highways while redeveloping downtown to consolidate office, retail, civic, and cultural zones.

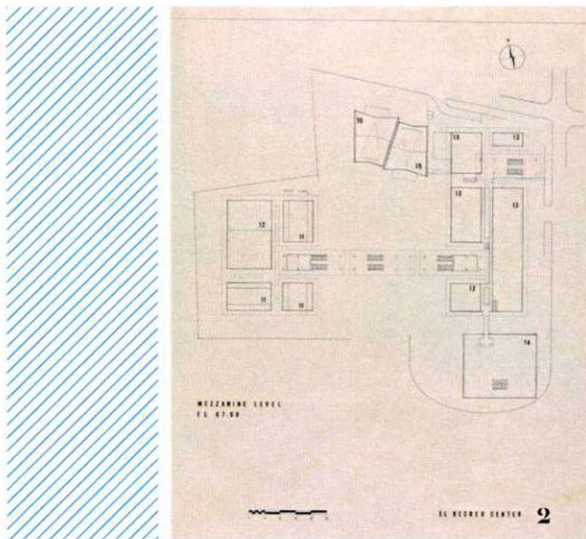
As part of this initiative, pioneering shopping mall developer Victor Gruen laid out the "Community Plaza," a new civic center and office district southeast of Columbus Circle. Breuer was commissioned to design a group of buildings at the southern end of this area, opposite the new Everson Museum of Art. The complex included a hotel, shopping center, and twin-theater cinema, along with a parking garage and a data processing facility. The most prominent element was a tall office tower enclosed by concrete eggcrate facades supported by muscular piers.

The project was canceled in 1971 by Pyramid Corporation's Robert Congel, in protest of new city taxes on urban renewal parcels.

-Nilus Klingel

1 Floor plans, ink on mylar, 36" x 46" (detail)  
 2 Context plan, ink on mylar, 24" x 24"  
 3 Typical wall details, ink on mylar, 36" x 46" (detail)





### El Recreo Urban Center Project Caracas, Venezuela, 1958

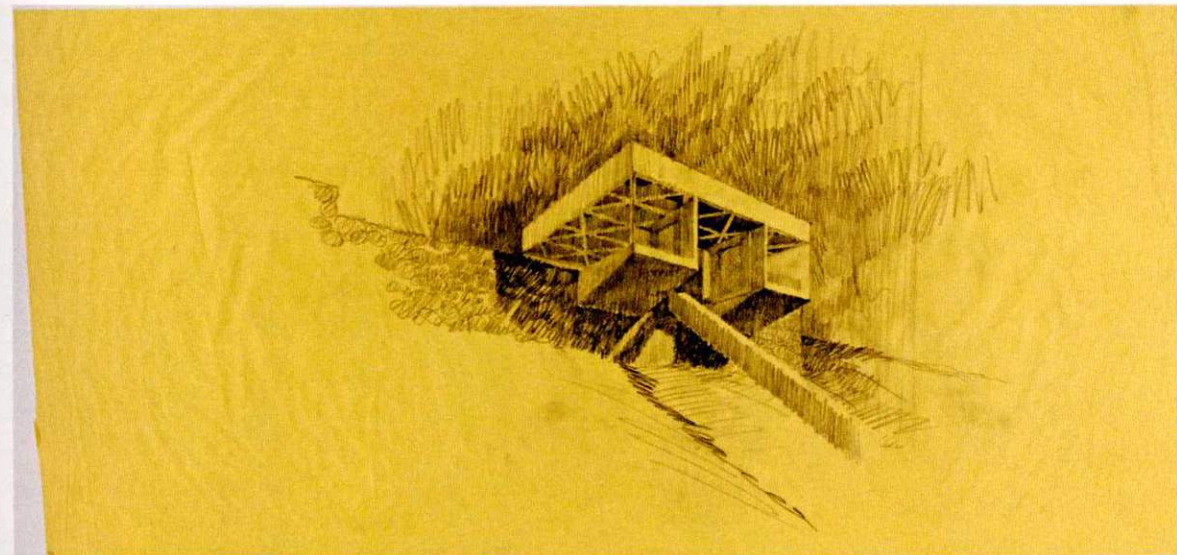
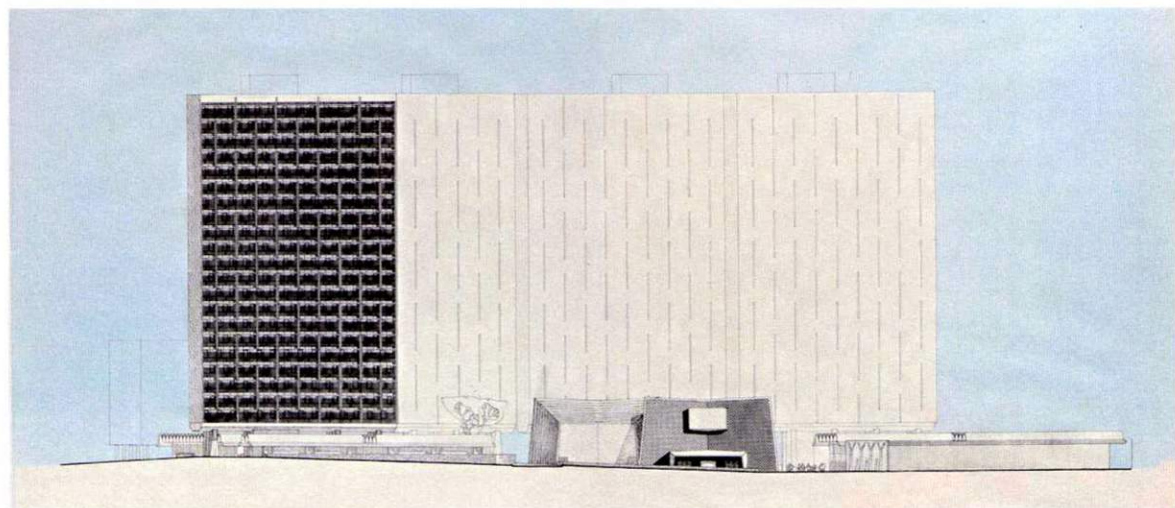
In parallel with his U.S. urban renewal activity, Breuer worked on large-scale redevelopment projects elsewhere. Collaborating in the late 1950s with Venezuelan architects Ernesto Fuenmayor Nava and Manuel Sayago, Breuer designed an ambitious urban planning project for downtown Caracas. On a large plinth containing parking accessed from major arterial roads, the architects grouped four high-rise tower-slabs around a wide pedestrian plaza. Low retail buildings took the form of covered markets with corrugated roofplates, complemented by a pair of trapezoidal theaters in folded-plate concrete construction like that of the UNESCO auditorium.

In the decades following World War I, Caracas had been modernized with residential developments such as the El Silencio complex and office buildings such as the Polar Building. Had it been built, El Recreo would have introduced a new vision of urban community based on mixed-use superblock planning, automotive planning, and pedestrianization.

—Paloma del Mar Riego



- 1 Piazza and mezzanine level plans, ink on vellum, 31" x 48" (detail)
- 2 Rendering of complex in context, paint on illustration board, 13" x 20.5"
- 3 Casanova Avenue elevation, ink on vellum with mylar montage, 31" x 48" (detail)

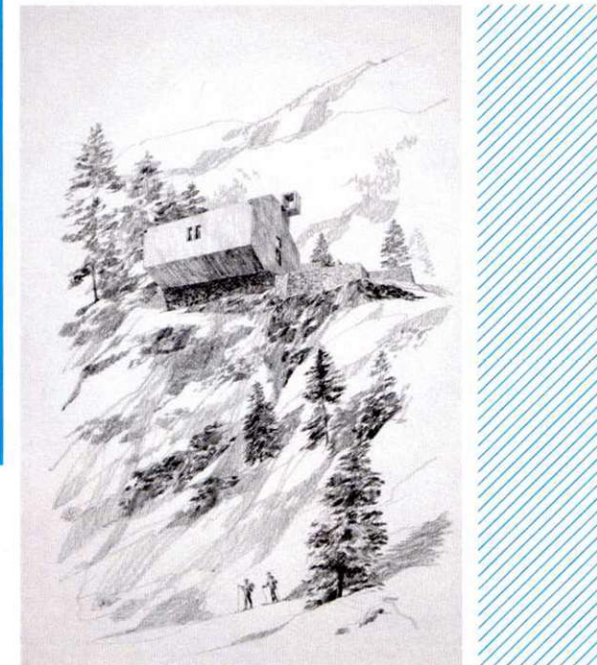
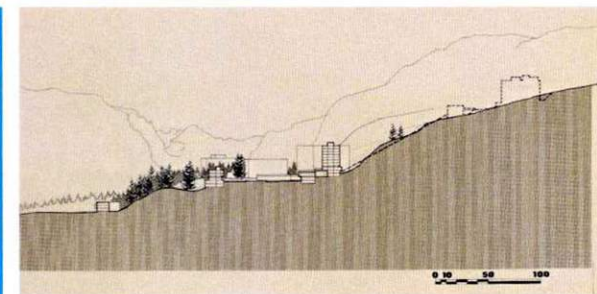


### Flaine Ski Resort Chamonix, France, 1961-76

As part of a French national initiative to encourage ski tourism, Breuer was commissioned to design the layout and buildings for a new ski resort in the Alps. Adapting strategies he had used at other housing complexes, Breuer laid out hotels, apartments, shops, civic amenities, and sports facilities along the topographical lines of the steeply sloping valley so as to manage automobile traffic while creating a walkable community for visitors. "The goal was a clean town with white snow where children could run anywhere and friends would pass each other at central meeting places rather than wave from within cars," explained Breuer's partner Robert F. Gatje.

Rather than evoke the pitched roofs of traditional Alpine architecture, the buildings at Flaine employ a modernist vocabulary of flat-roofed bars and high-rises. Concrete, complemented by wood and stone, is the primary material for both expressive modular facades and structures that cantilever dramatically over plunging slopes.

—Melissa Santana



- 1 Sketch of building seen from below, graphite on trace paper, 18" x 37"
- 2 Section through hillside site, ink on mylar, 25" x 49" (detail)
- 3 Perspective of chapel from below, pencil on gessoed illustration board, 30" x 20"



The case studies in "Marcel Breuer and Postwar America" highlight the architect's distinctive formal vocabulary. Breuer's buildings take the shape of rectangles and squares, trapezoids and hexagons along with Vs, Ys, and double-Ys. Their surfaces are patterned with deep embrasures, projecting sunshades, folds and facets, pebbled aggregates, diagonal stripes and corrugations. In designing the installation, Jon Lott and Brett Snyder worked with Jonathan Massey and four of the seminar students to activate these features in contemporary terms.

New walls and benches use Breuer's plan geometries to transform perception of both the projects exhibited and the architecture of Slocum Hall. A bent wall in the form of a deep V slides under the faceted auditorium that occupies the upper half of the gallery. Its angles are echoed, on the other side of a glass wall, by those of a small pavilion that is simultaneously solid and void, pavilion and window, seating area and viewing mechanism, smooth object and shaggy cave. (Its interior was sloped and mirrored at first, then stepped and fur-lined.) Together, wall and pavilion form a double-Y that extends the exhibition into the Slocum atrium and pulls passersby through the show.

Artifacts occupy the gallery according to a logic extrapolated from Breuer's practice of offsetting juxtaposed forms and textures. Drawings and photographs jostle one another on the walls, gravitating up and to the left while avoiding switches, thermostats, and smoke detectors. Diagonal bands of tape form color-fields that infill between case studies to mark thematic sections. Supergraphics explicate the show and reproduce enlarged drawing details as well as four portraits addressing one another and the visitor.

By integrating architecture and furniture with supergraphics and wall layouts, "Marcel Breuer and Postwar America" creates a geometric and perceptual armature directing attention to the material on display: plans and sections but also perspectives and photographs that show how we might encounter the architect and his buildings. Spectators in a turbine hall. Toddlers in a sandbox. Nuns on a belfry. Construction workers striking the Iwo Jima pose. Breuer sitting backwards on a chair, meeting our gaze.







"Marcel Breuer and Postwar America" is produced and supported by the School of Architecture, led by Dean Mark Robbins, as part of a collaboration with the Library, led by Dean Suzanne Thorin, and its Special Collections Research Center, directed by Sean Quimby.

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To support further research into Breuer's work, the Syracuse University Library is currently creating a digital edition of the archive. With funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, archivists are digitizing the Breuer materials and building a website to present them online. This project will allow interested students, architects, and scholars around the world to continue the research initiated here.



**Drawings from the Marcel Breuer papers,  
curated by Syracuse Architecture students  
with Barry Bergdoll and Jonathan Massey**

Syracuse University School of Architecture  
Slocum Gallery  
15 February – 29 March 2011

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