

4-1-1997

Magnificent Manifestation: The Symbolic Architecture of A.G. Rizzoli

Jo Farb Hernandez

San Jose State University, Jo.Hernandez@sjsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/artdesign_pub



Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

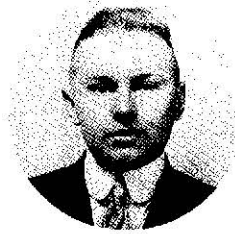
Jo Farb Hernandez. "Magnificent Manifestation: The Symbolic Architecture of A.G. Rizzoli" *Folk Art* (1997): 34-45.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Art and Art History & Design Departments at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

Magnificent
Manifestation
The Symbolic
Architecture

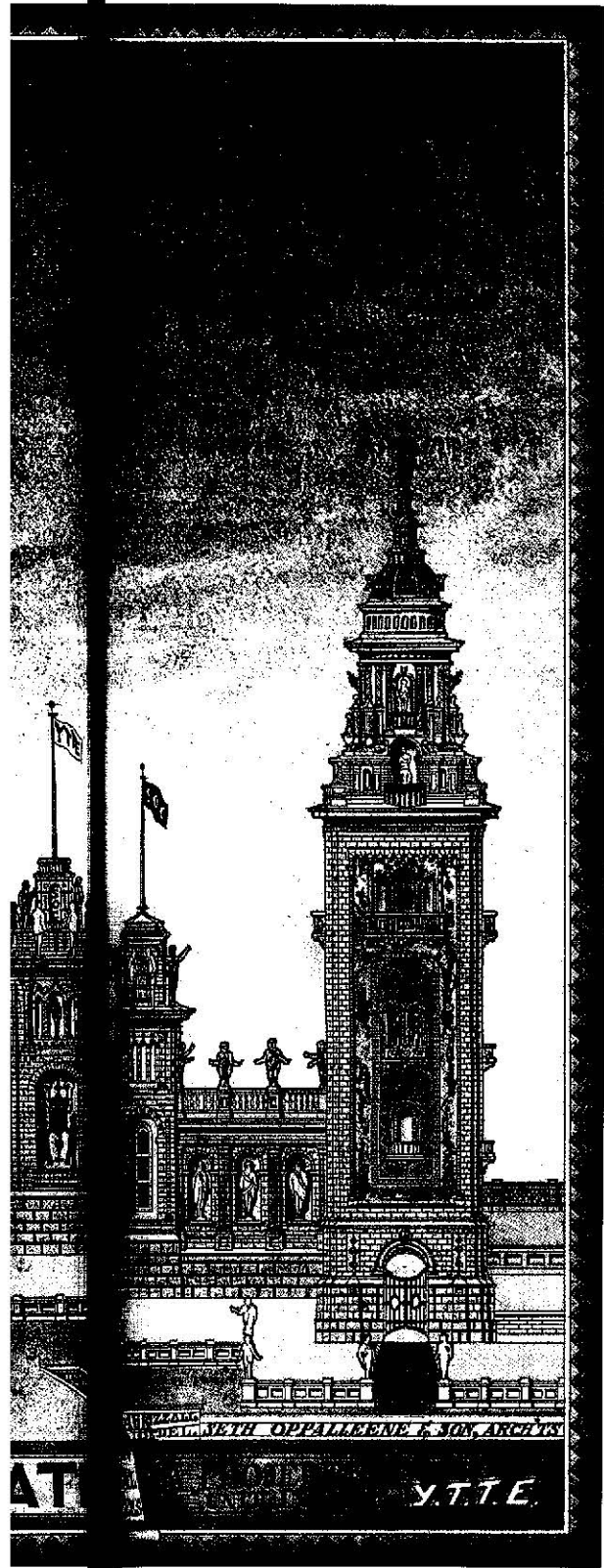
of A.G.
R i z z o l i

By Jo Farb Hernandez



A. G. Rizzoli,
c. 1918,
gelatin silver print,
photographer unknown,
collection of the
estate of the artist.

Consider: A shy immigrant's son. A father's disappearance and presumed death. A sister's illegitimate pregnancy and self-imposed relocation. An obsessive love for an ailing mother. **◆** Consider: A utopian world's fair—The Panama-Pacific International Exposition, the proof to the world that the great city of San Francisco had risen, phoenix-like, from the shards and ashes of the great earthquake less than ten years before. **◆** Consider: A teenage boy's belief in the power of architecture to reshape the world into something more closely approximating a heavenly paradise. **◆** The story of A.G. Rizzoli (1896–1981) unfolds like a gripping mystery novel crossed with an evocative human drama; his art is both engrossing and enigmatic. It draws the viewer into a realm that both acknowledges and transcends our commonplace reality, leading us into the heretofore uncharted regions of the “Y.T.T.E.”



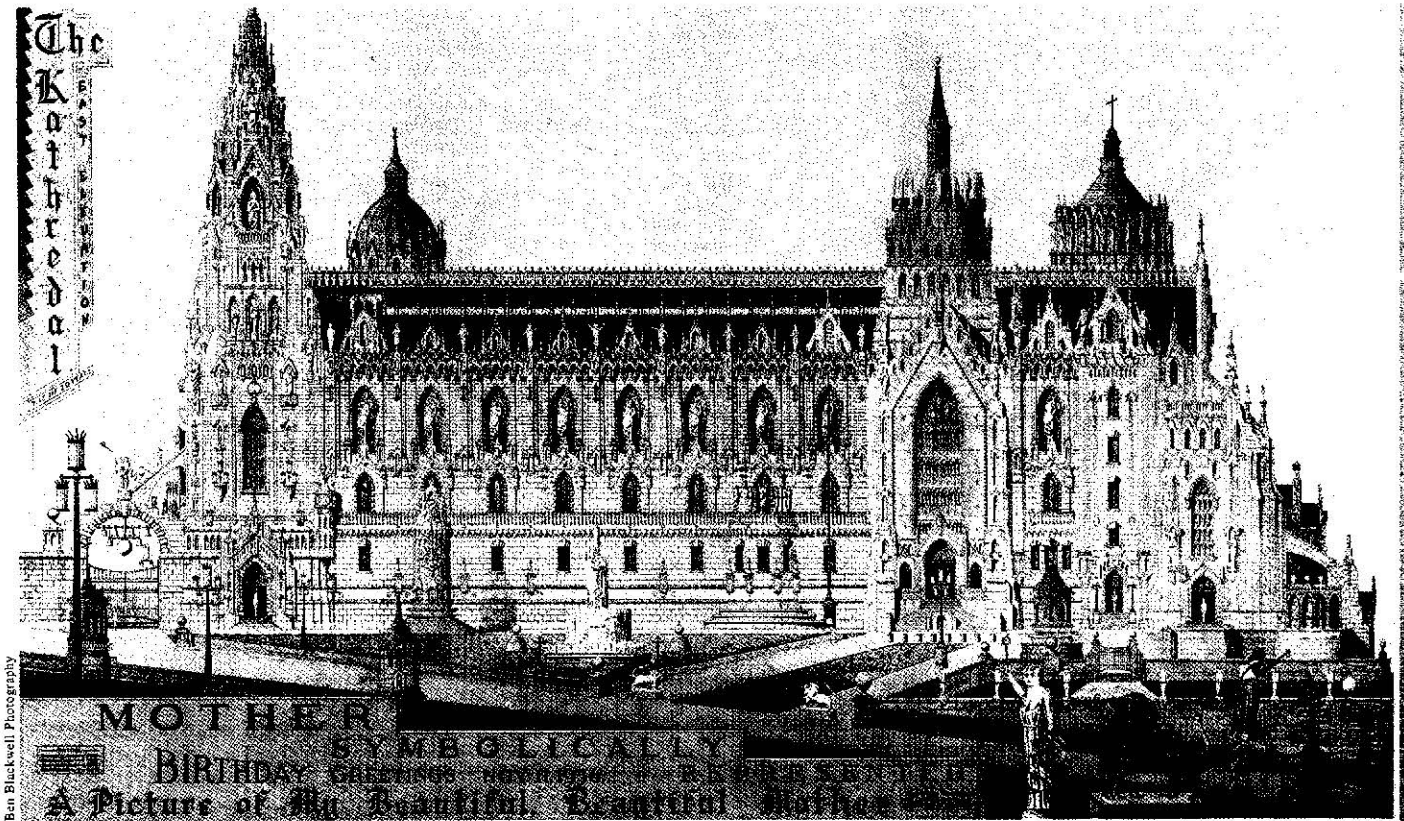
Quietly and loyally laboring on mundane drafting work during the day, Achilles Rizzoli spent his nights and weekends obsessively working on a monumental yet secret task: the delineation of a new world, for which he served as "High Prince" and "Master Architect." Undertaken at the command of spiritual guides, Rizzoli's drawings and writings document a life lived, in his words, "in an unbelievable hermetically sealed, spherical, inalienable maze of light and sound, seeing imagery expanding in every direction...."¹ Unprecedented in its richness and clarity, Rizzoli's art has been hailed as the "find of the century."

The fourth of five children of Swiss-Italian immigrants, Achilles had an apparently uneventful childhood growing up as the son of a ranch hand in Marin County. By 1915, however, a series of traumas—the illegitimate pregnancy of an older sister, the unexplained departure of an older brother, and the disappearance and presumed suicide of his father—had broken up the family and led Achilles, his mother, and two other siblings to move to San Fran-

drafting, rendering, and life-drawing. Rizzoli never completed a full course of studies there, nor was he ever certified as an architect.

A.G.'s brother and sister soon married and left home; Achilles, however, never did, choosing instead to remain with his beloved mother, whom he supported with odd jobs in those early years. By 1927 he began the first of his ambitious creative endeavors, a series of literary works featuring the utopian efforts of a fictional group of idealistic architects. Verbose, stiff, and boring, each manuscript was rejected in turn by the various magazine publishers to whom it was submitted. In the first year that Rizzoli turned to literature, his annual income dropped from over \$2,000 to just \$51.²

In 1935, frustrated by the lack of positive response to his literary works but still inspired by utopian fantasies, Rizzoli shifted to producing large pen-and-ink renderings of architectural designs. Utopian images are found throughout the history of visionary architecture, but Rizzoli's elab-



Ben Blackwell Photography

cisco. Standing in sharp contrast to the shock of these events—and perhaps partially alleviating them—were the optimism and excitement that the Panama-Pacific International Exposition inspired in Rizzoli, curiously enough, in that same portentous year. Shortly thereafter, the young A.G., as he by then preferred to be known, joined the San Francisco Architectural Club, taking classes in mechanical

orate buildings contrasted with these in that most were symbolic representations ("transfigurations," in his words) of people he knew, intended to glorify a heavenly world of his own creation. Many of his buildings are described on the drawings themselves as "heavenly homes" or "heavenly inheritances," meant to symbolize an actual metamorphosis of the person following death, as well as an architectural

► P-22 WAH
1937
Ink on rag
21 1/8 x 15 1/2
Collection
Leung

◀ S-6 MOTH
REPRESENTED
KATHREDA
1936
Ink on rag
27 3/4 x 47 1/2
The Ames

personification of their essential attributes. At times these terms referred to the physical being (“...blood, flesh and bone converted into an/inheritance of stone-hard elegance...”³); other times he wrote of “the conversion of the soul into objects of monumental character.”⁴ His first major drawing was *Mother Symbolically Represented/The Kathredal*, a birthday card/full-scale drawing honoring and symbolizing the strength, beauty, and spiritualism of his mother; it became the premiere structure in his Y.T.T.E. world exposition.

The meticulously crafted “Symbolization” drawings for this rapidly developing imaginary world combined Beaux-Arts architectural idioms with an eclectic borrowing of Roman, Renaissance, Baroque, Art Deco, and Art Nouveau styles. Spectacular lighting displays reminiscent of a Hollywood premiere (but probably more specifically referential to the lighting for the Panama-Pacific Exposition),⁵ as well as more populist elements recalling commercial advertising and P.T. Barnum’s shows, were also added.⁶ This fusion of styles, many of which Rizzoli had probably seen only in books, was a juxtaposition not many could have successfully presented without parody. Such satire would have been unthinkable to him, however, given Rizzoli’s self-assigned title of “earthly architectural assistant and transcriber” to God. Proud of the grand design of his work, Rizzoli described it as an “Expeau of Magnitude, Magnificence and Manifestation.”⁷

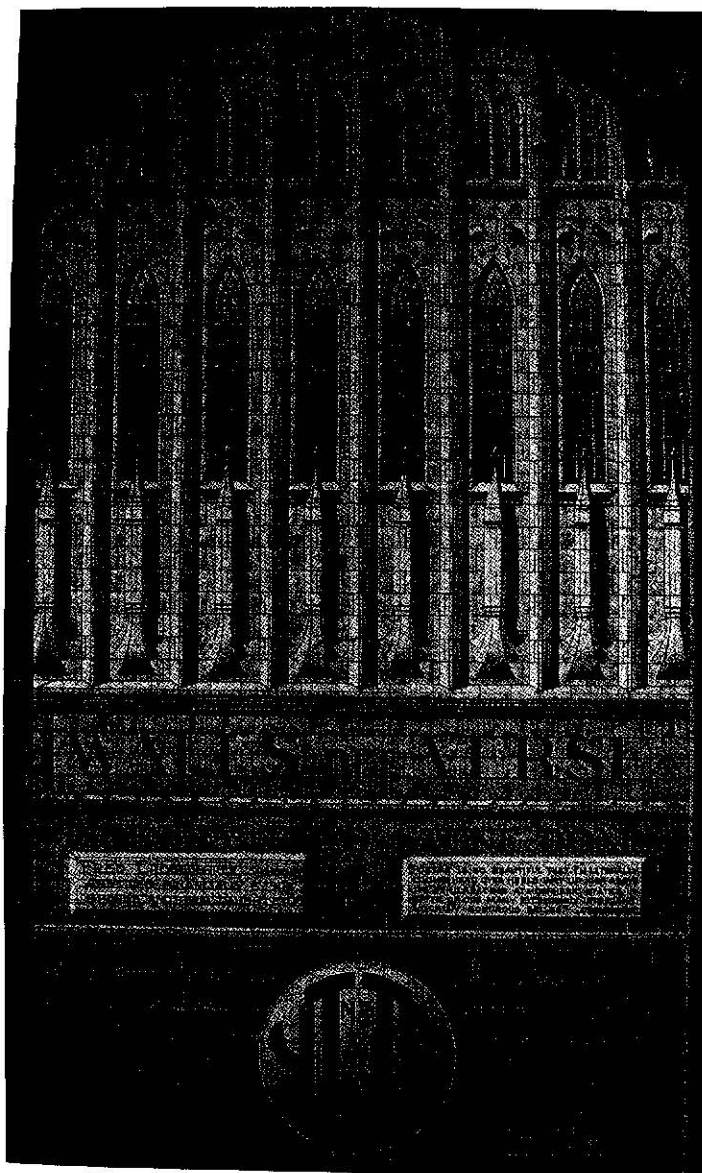
The year 1936 brought new traumas to young A.G. In late summer, twenty-one years after the disappearance of Rizzoli’s father, his deteriorated bodily remains were discovered by hikers; it was A.G.’s task to identify the body. In that same year, Rizzoli’s mother was hospitalized for gangrene, a complication from diabetes that resulted in the amputation of her leg. She never recovered, and died shortly thereafter.

These two shocks appear to have radically affected Rizzoli. Always a quiet man who spoke only when spoken to, he became even more withdrawn; a coworker at the architectural firm where he worked as a draftsman recalled that he “went to pieces.”⁸ From the time of his mother’s death, he left the house he had shared with her the way it had been when she died: he kept her nighttime chamber pot underneath her bed, her bonnet, boots, and corset in the closet and dresser.⁹ He slept on a cot at the

foot of her bed—as he had while she lived—and continued to do so for more than thirty years after her death.¹⁰ Perhaps in an attempt to find solace, he came to believe that his only chance at attaining serenity would come through a religious and conservative life in which he would remain a virgin. He took a grim pleasure in his asceticism; he spent little money on food and less on clothes, preferring instead

► P-22 WALLS DEL VERSE
1937
Ink on rag paper
21 7/8" x 12"
Collection of Kenneth W.K.
Leung

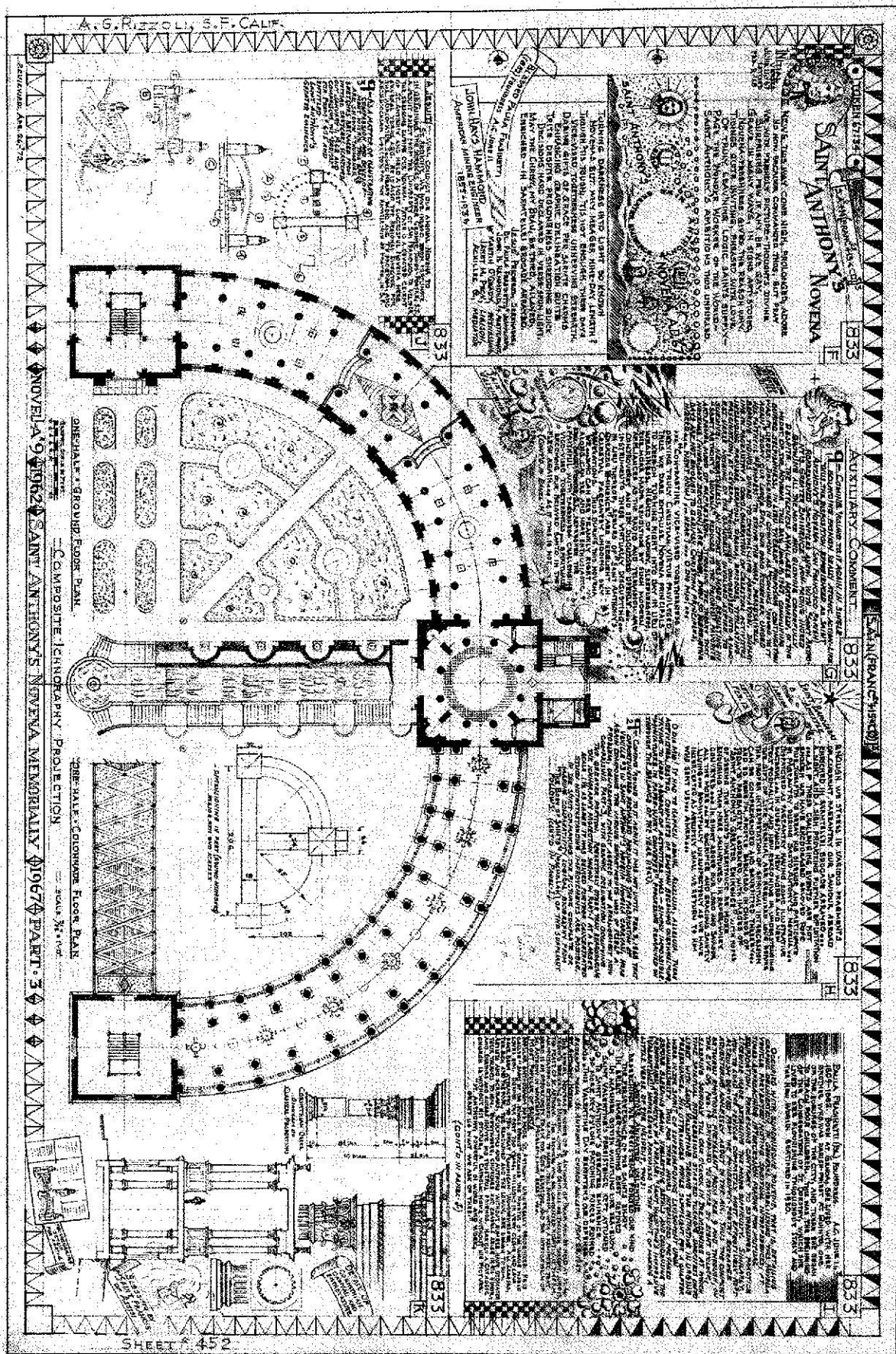
◀ S-6 MOTHER SYMBOLICALLY
REPRESENTED/THE
KATHREDAL
1936
Ink on rag paper
27 3/4" x 47 5/8"
The Ames Gallery, Berkeley



Ben Blackwell Photography

to put his meager wages toward the purchase of art supplies. His life outside of his drafting job became absorbed more and more by mental visions of elaborate buildings and his efforts to translate them onto paper.

Neighbors rarely saw him, except for his punctual daily walks to and from work or mass, small and silent in his dated black suit. His home was slowly deteriorating



around
front of
of new
children
R
were co
low this
ever, wa
visions
the first
presenta
the from
Exhibit
the wall
he put u
but asid
coworker



Ben Blackwell Photography

X-2 ACHILLE
The Ames Ga
display. T
architect
jects neve
the publi
A.T.E.'s
ings on d
Ri
about bea
vent belie
dards of
school de
mony, sy
contempo
which bui
even emo
the perso
likely tha
ings beca
were ama
ally turgic

around him: a hole appeared in the roof, vines covered the front of the house and protruded through the walls, piles of newspaper and cat feces surrounded him. The local children thought the house was haunted.¹¹

Rizzoli seemed oblivious to all this: his energies were concentrated on the heavenly domain that would follow this earthly "saddening well of tears."¹² He did, however, want desperately to share his "gift" of architectural visions with the public, so beginning in 1935 he set aside the first Sunday in August as an open house for the presentation of his drawings. He arranged a "gallery" in the front room of his house for the "Achilles Tectonic Exhibit" (A.T.E.); a surviving floor plan and elevations of the walls indicate how he installed the work. To advertise, he put up hand-lettered signs around the neighborhood, but aside from some of the local children, only two coworkers and a few relatives ever attended this annual



X-2ACHILLES TECTONIC STUDIO, 1935, ink on rag paper, 8 1/8 x 10 1/2".
The Ames Gallery, Berkeley

display. Those who did were later honored with their own architectural symbolizations, although most of his subjects never knew about or saw them. Rizzoli discontinued the public exhibitions after 1940, but he honored the A.T.E.'s anniversary in later writings and left the drawings on display in his front room for the rest of his life.

Rizzoli's buildings illustrated his personal creed about beauty, stature, and importance, as well as his fervent belief that these were God-given ideals. Exact standards of proportion defined by what the Beaux-Arts school determined were universally correct "laws" of harmony, symmetry, and balance infused his works, while contemporary canons of architectural "character" (through which buildings could manifest human characteristics and even emotions¹³) inspired him to imbue his drawings with the personal attributes of his acquaintances. (It is also likely that Rizzoli portrayed his acquaintances as buildings because he possessed the talent to do so; his portraits were amateurish and clumsy, and his writings were generally turgid and at times incomprehensible.)

Despite the seriousness of his goal, Rizzoli had a wry sense of humor, which is revealed through the names of helpful imaginary "collaborators" (for example, Victor Betterlaugh and John McFrozen), public sculpture (such as *The Sungkenart*, "commemorating the lost art of remaining virgin lifelong"), buildings (the "P.P.P." and the "A.S.S." were the bathrooms), and the ancillary titles, acronyms, puns, and comments that were lettered around the borders of his works in illuminated characters. His humor is also demonstrated in works such as *Shirley's Temple*, an elaborate drawing that juxtaposed Rizzoli's classical "high art" objective with an obvious Hollywood reference, as he "symbolically sketched" six-year-old neighbor Shirley Jean Bersie. *Shirley's Temple*, like Rizzoli's other designs, is an ambitious mixture of excessive ornamentation with an almost fanatic, formal regard for the classicism and precision of the architectural line.

As he continued to design and render new buildings, Rizzoli concurrently developed a plot plan to situate the increasing number of structures constituting his utopian exposition, the Y.T.T.E.—an acronym for Yield To Total Elation. Beginning in 1935, he produced a half-dozen full revisions of this plan, which, although modeled after the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition, bears a striking resemblance to the floor plan of a cathedral. With each incarnation, the number of structures included in the Y.T.T.E. increased: by 1939 eighty separate building units were included, as well as twenty "Major Statuary Compositions." Despite his extensive work, however, Rizzoli was still "haunted by an unsatisfied sense of rapture, there being 'so much to do, so little done.'" ¹⁴

In contrast to the full-scale symbolization "portraits" of specific family and friends, the Y.T.T.E. monumentalized such abstractions as labor, life, poetry, happiness, matrimony, culture, and peace. The Y.T.T.E. included a formal entrance court organized into seasonal quadrants, which he named the Eagerray (spring), Nevermine (summer), Roomiroll (autumn), and Tootlewoo (winter)—a parody of the Court of the Four Seasons at the Panama-Pacific Exposition. Orienting structures such as the "Temple of Welcome" and the "Y.T.T.E. Information Bureau," centrally located along the main north-south axis, accentuated the symmetry and clarity of his overall plan as they directed visitors to their destinations.

The acronyms, anagrams, word games, and invented vocabularies that Rizzoli used to title or describe his buildings, while often inscrutable, are somehow enigmatically evocative. Rather than using his new words to clarify his creations—the fundamental communicative function of language—Rizzoli's words instead emphasized the mystery of his creations and served to distance himself from his viewers, because he understood his secret tongue and everyone else did not. His words, however, are not nonsensical; they are simply tied to a code that we cannot always break.

SO MUCH TO DO, SO LITTLE DONE: SOLVING THE MYSTERIES OF A.G. RIZZOLI

By Bonnie Grossman

It was not a significant birthday, no marriage or death occurred within our family, nor the birth of a child or grandchild. Nevertheless, July 12, 1990, became a major personal landmark. That is the date on which I first saw the images of A.G. Rizzoli. I could not have known then where this adventure would take me or what mysteries and magic lay ahead. I knew only that these drawings captivated me completely. Even now, the excitement, the thrill, the rush that comes with each new revelation about Achilles Rizzoli is as intense as it was almost seven years ago, and my quest has still not ended. Reconstructing the life of A.G., as he preferred to be called, and translating his language has become as much my obsession as his work was his.

There has been no pattern to my uncovering of information. Some of the discoveries have come in clusters, while in other cases frustrating weeks or months

SHIRLEY'S TEMPLE

5-16 SHIRLEY JEAN BERSIE
SYMBOLICALLY
SKETCHED/SHIRLEY'S TEMPLE
1939
Ink on rag paper
37 1/4 x 23 1/4"
The Ames Gallery, Berkeley

REQUESTED BY HIS PRINCE,
A SON OF HEAVEN
FIRST WITHIN
THE HEART
OF GOD

SHIRLEY BERSIE'S SONG

Oh sit already telling princes how
To please the maiden quantify fair
With zephyr winds and mind and sweet of brow
To us this seems divinely square:

Chorus:

Shirley Bersie is having a Temple made
In her bosom, delightful all—
High, reaching to almost the sun, well weighted
With greens and shade and shadows tall,
With love and there the earthy-floored spire,
And each a touching story tells
In praise of her been ways which we admire—
That subtle boughs be made of helix.

Oh fense shall tall beds adore to make
The best of time and strive the more
In manners virgin princes wide awake
And master super moldlets love:

A SWEETER SPIRIT IN
MARRIAGE UPLIFT SHIRLEY
BERSIE, AT G. INSTITUTED

URGED HERESY TO BE THE
FIRST LADY OF THE TEMPLE

ONE FORTY-SEVEN
COMMITTEE OF

LIKE AN ANGEL FROM HEAVEN

LOVES
LABORS

SHIRLEY JEAN BERSIE SYMBOLICALLY SKETCHED

IN DEEP APPRECIATION OF THE KINDLY INTEREST
SHE HAS SHOWN FOR THE DATE

ON ONE DAY SHE RANG THE BELL,
SIGHING TENDERLY: "CAN I COME IN AND
SEE YOUR PICTURES?" THIS TO GOD MEANT
HEEDING NOBLY THE CALL OF THE BEAUTIFUL,
THEREUPON OUR ALMIGHTY LORD, CREATOR
OF THE FIRST DEGREE MASTER ARCHITECT AND
MASTER BUILDER, SPOKE WITH GRATITUDE,
"A GODDESS IN THE MAKING SHIRLEY BERSIE
SHALL BE FROM NOW ON, ON FOREVERMORE"

VON DER MAENDSUNG
VICTOR BRANDICOTTI
CARL COPPINHAGEN
SAGE ANGELHART
AND A. RIZZOLI
DELINEATORS

UNIT A
TO BE BURNED
TO COMPLETE
AT PRICE
TEMPLE IS REARED AND FUNCTIONING TO THE COMPLETE
EXACTING SATISFACTION OF HIS HIGH PRINCE, THE VIRGIN

UNIT B
CONSTRUCTION
TO START WHEN
OUR HOLY MALL
ANGEL REACHED
THE BEAUTIFUL
AGE OF TEN

UNIT C
TO START WHEN THE
SWEET-LEAF SAGES
REACHED THE AGE OF
CHILDHOOD TO BE BY
THEIR OWN REALITY
AND EMPLOYED BY
THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH
LOVE GOD GRATEFULLY
REWARDED HAD HE
WANT TO BE MARRIED
BY HIS PRINCE

UNIT D
TO START WHEN THE
SWEET-LEAF SAGES
REACHED THE AGE OF
CHILDHOOD TO BE BY
THEIR OWN REALITY
AND EMPLOYED BY
THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH
LOVE GOD GRATEFULLY
REWARDED HAD HE
WANT TO BE MARRIED
BY HIS PRINCE

UPON OUR WEAR-ACING SHOULDERS
GOD GOD RESTED THE RESPONSIBILITY
COMMANDING BROTHERS: "LET THERE BE NO THOUGHTS
OF PLEASURE NOR OF REGRET, LET THERE BE NOT THE
SLIGHTEST MOMENT OF NEGLIGENCE UNTIL SHIRLEY'S
TEMPLE IS REARED AND FUNCTIONING TO THE COMPLETE
EXACTING SATISFACTION OF HIS HIGH PRINCE, THE VIRGIN"

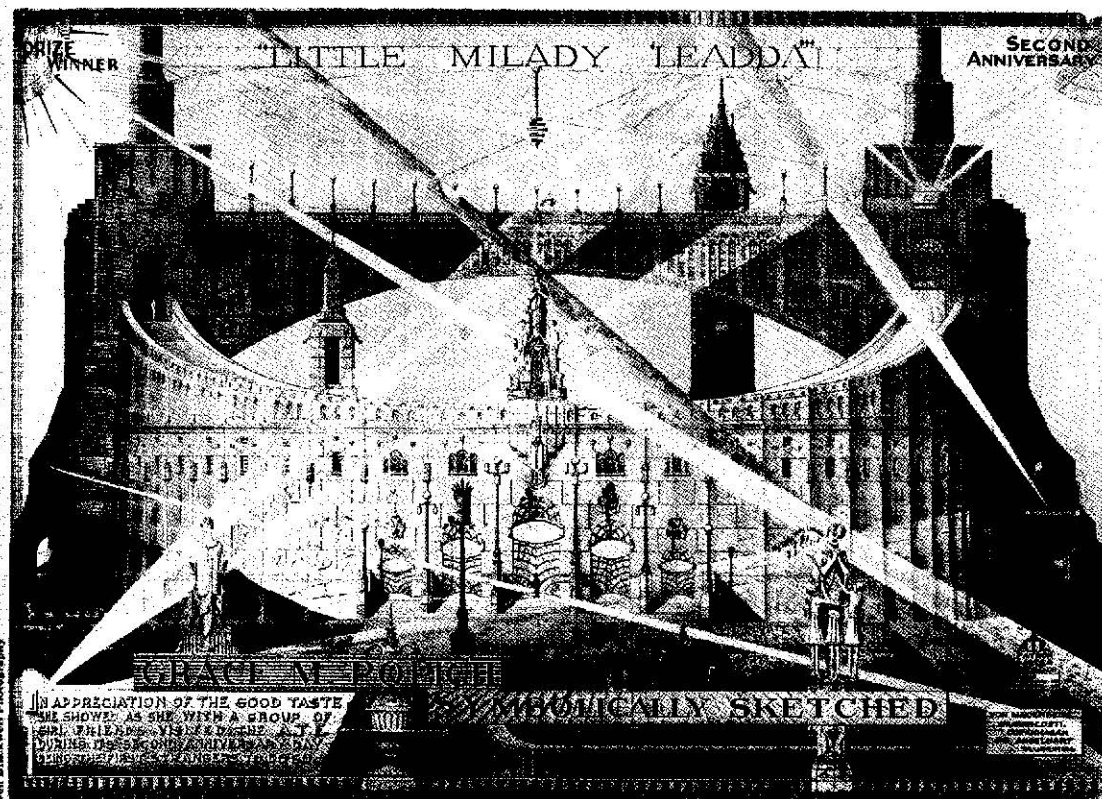
Ben Blackwell Photography

objectivi
distingu
"earthly
held grea
him. Thi
he felt h

buildings,
morality, a
of alienati
measure o
cally using
poems and
salvation th
The
pered with
he reminds
transcribe
the "High
Master B
nificant...n
But his prie
incomplete
ideals in re
he beheld.
sented pub

objectivity about this contradiction, as well as an ability to distinguish between the two. It is clear that his role as "earthly architectural assistant and transcriber" to God held greater interest—and, in a sense, greater reality—for him. This divinely inspired reality was a world to which he felt he was more properly suited: a world with grand

symbolic sanctuaries. He used historical idioms to dignify and validate his work, but there is no evidence that Rizzoli ever really expected that his projects would be executed, although apparently they could have been; Rizzoli seemed content to have them function as works on paper, their main intent being artistic, symbolic, and religious.



buildings, poetry, stellar masters of art and literature, morality, and culture. His work helped reduce his feeling of alienation from the real world and brought him a new measure of self-esteem, protection, and control. Periodically using the metaphor of the ship, with a "cargo" of poems and drawings, he sought satisfaction, serenity, and salvation through his spiritual voyage.

The rich iconography of Rizzoli's drawings is tempered with self-consciousness and self-aggrandizement as he reminds us that he and he alone was the one chosen to transcribe these heavenly visions. He described himself as the "High Prince," the "First degree, Master Architect and Master Builder" and his work as "the most magnificent...neo-architecture mankind can ever hope to see."²³ But his pride in his work alternated with intense feelings of incompetence as he regularly fell short of his personal ideals in recording the spiritual imagery and verses that he beheld. Although Rizzoli's drawings superficially presented public spaces, in reality they depicted private,

Expressing both his vulnerability and a sense of personal power, Rizzoli's "labors" are at once passive and assertive, urgent and lyrical, Edenic and absurd. They are humorous and pathetic, evocative and mysterious, and they stand out as a phenomenal achievement. His raw strength of vision and purpose was articulated through meticulous craftsmanship; his personal faith was offered up as public structure. A.G. Rizzoli has finally found his audience. ★

Editor's Note: This article is adapted from Jo Farb Hernandez, "Divine Design Delights: The Life and Works of A.G. Rizzoli," from the book *A.G. Rizzoli: Architect of Magnificent Visions*, (Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997). The exhibition of the same name is on view at the San Diego Museum of Art from March 22 through May 18, 1997, and will be presented at the Museum of American Folk Art in January, 1998.

Identified By Rusty Gun." In the summer of 1915, a few years after his family had moved to Oakland, without him, Innocente stole a gun from his employer, left a suicide note citing his ill health, and went into the woods. Twenty-one years later, his bones, boot, and rusted gun were discovered by a hiker. The family, then living in San Francisco, was located and told of the finding. A.G. Rizzoli was listed as the informant on the death certificate. And so my adventure began!

I set about trying to find people who might have known this reclusive man, people who could help me to know him. I made innumerable phone calls to strangers, some of whom were so shocked—both by my questions and by the information that A.G. had provided me about them—that they gasped audibly. I could almost hear their jaws drop in astonishment. My persistence has paid off. I've located almost two dozen people from Rizzoli's life, most significantly his neighbors—the children who became part of his images, including Shirley Bersie, Grace Popich, and Virginia Entwistle.

Along with the amazing "symbolic" buildings Rizzoli created, there was a series of works delineating an exposition—the Y.T.T.E. (pronounced "itty")—made up of some seventy-five buildings. Not only are there plot plans desig-

Jo Farb Hernandez, curator of the exhibition "A.G. Rizzoli: Architect of Magnificent Visions," has worked in the museum field for more than twenty years, recently serving as Director of the Monterey Peninsula Museum of Art and President of the California Association of Museums. Academically trained as a folklorist, she is now a freelance curator working with a variety of international clients. She continues to write and lecture widely.

NOTES

- 1 A.G. Rizzoli, A.C.E. (2,600 pages of poetry, prose, and graphic images, created by Rizzoli between 1958 and 1977) 407, Auxiliary Comment 855-C, March 17, 1966. All A.C.E. citations herein are direct quotes from Rizzoli's writings.
- 2 A.G. Rizzoli, tax return for the calendar year 1928. Unpublished papers, The Arnes Gallery, Berkeley.
- 3 A.C.E. 342, Poem 879-3-0, November 29, 1964.
- 4 A.C.E. 337, Auxiliary Comment 752-B, November 11, 1963.
- 5 Rizzoli's use of light rays is a thematic idiom throughout his works. Beyond the obvious connection to spectacular secular events, they also recall the auras emanating from heroic or heavenly figures—found throughout art history—that indicate divine grace or genius, and reference heavenly visions and dialogue with God. Rizzoli specifically mentioned rays of light as part of the visions he experienced, and interpreted them in the same way.
- 6 Kevin Michael Day, in his unpublished thesis *Allegorical Architecture: Interpreting the Visions of A.G. Rizzoli* (Berkeley: University of California Department of Architecture, 1995), astutely noted Rizzoli's innovative juxtapositions of distinct iconographic elements: "Rizzoli's drawings present an ingenious interface between the high art of the Beaux-Arts rendering, and the popular mode of the commercial advertisement. Unlike the more democratic perspectives proposed by current social theories of art, the hierarchical division between the high and the popular was the accepted convention in the 1930s. This fact makes Rizzoli's art all the more unique from our present understanding." p. 26.
- 7 Rizzoli, *The Y.T.T.E. Plot Plan, Fourth Preliminary Study*, 1938.
- 8 Margaret E. Griffin, interview with Bonnie Grossman and John MacGregor, June 18, 1991.
- 9 Gary Grauberger, Rizzoli's grandnephew, telephone interview with author, March 1, 1996. Grauberger and his family cleared out Rizzoli's home after his stroke in 1977.
- 10 A.C.F. 492, Auxiliary Comment 889-C, July 29, 1970.
- 11 Donna and Marty D'India, former neighbors, interview with Bonnie Grossman and John MacGregor, September 2, 1991.
- 12 A.C.E. 373, 823-R, August 22, 1965.
- 13 Day, op. cit., pp. 2-3.
- 14 A.C.E. 328, Auxiliary Comment 710-C, n.d. [May 1963].
- 15 A.C.E. 443, Auxiliary Comment 858-L, August 27, 1967.
- 16 A.C.E. 359, Supplementary 809-G, September 27, 1964.
- 17 A.C.E. 479, Implementing 806-2-K, January 9, 1970.
- 18 It may be assumed that Rizzoli had no preconception that the A.C.E. would become as massive as it did; periodically he wrote of finishing, but the end of this opus did not come until his health prohibited further work almost twenty years after its inception.
- 19 As the A.C.E. developed, Rizzoli distinguished less and less between biblical figures, historical eminences, saints, and neighbors.
- 20 A.C.E. 212, Poem 30, March 21, 1958.
- 21 A.C.E. 499, Auxiliary Comment 875-K, n.d. [c. May 19, 1971].
- 22 A.C.E. 454, "Molten E. Allegheny" 251-M, n.d. [May 1968].
- 23 Rizzoli, *Mr. O. A. Deichmann's Mother—Touree D'Longevity*, 1938.

nating the placement, shape, and name of each of these buildings, but there are a number of drawings showing what are described as "major units" of this grand exposition, which had clearly been influenced by San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition (P.P.I.E.).

The one question I asked everyone I contacted was, "Can you tell me what Y.T.T.E. means? What do the letters stand for?" Their meaning continued to elude me, and no one seemed to have the answer. When the subject came up, they said, A.G.'s response had been, "You'll find out someday." Some of the best guesses were, "Young Till The Eighties" and "Your Trip To Eternity."

Finally, after more than a year and a half, the riddle was solved. The words just fell out of the mouth of a woman who had worked with A.G. in the late 1930s. Our conversation was quite brief. I called her and said, "I have a drawing here that was dedicated to a woman with the same name as yours, and I wondered if it might be you?"

"I doubt it," was her immediate response.

"But," I said, "this was done more than fifty years ago by a man named Rizzoli."

"Oh," she said, "I always wondered what happened to him. He ate such a strange diet—flour and water pancakes without any eggs, some nuts and berries from his garden; that's all."

When I asked if she remembered his drawings of buildings, she did, and she tossed off her recollections of that thing he'd called "Yield To Total Elation." There it was! I scrambled for something to write with, grasped a pencil no paper. So in the corner of the day's newspaper I hastily recorded those elusive words.

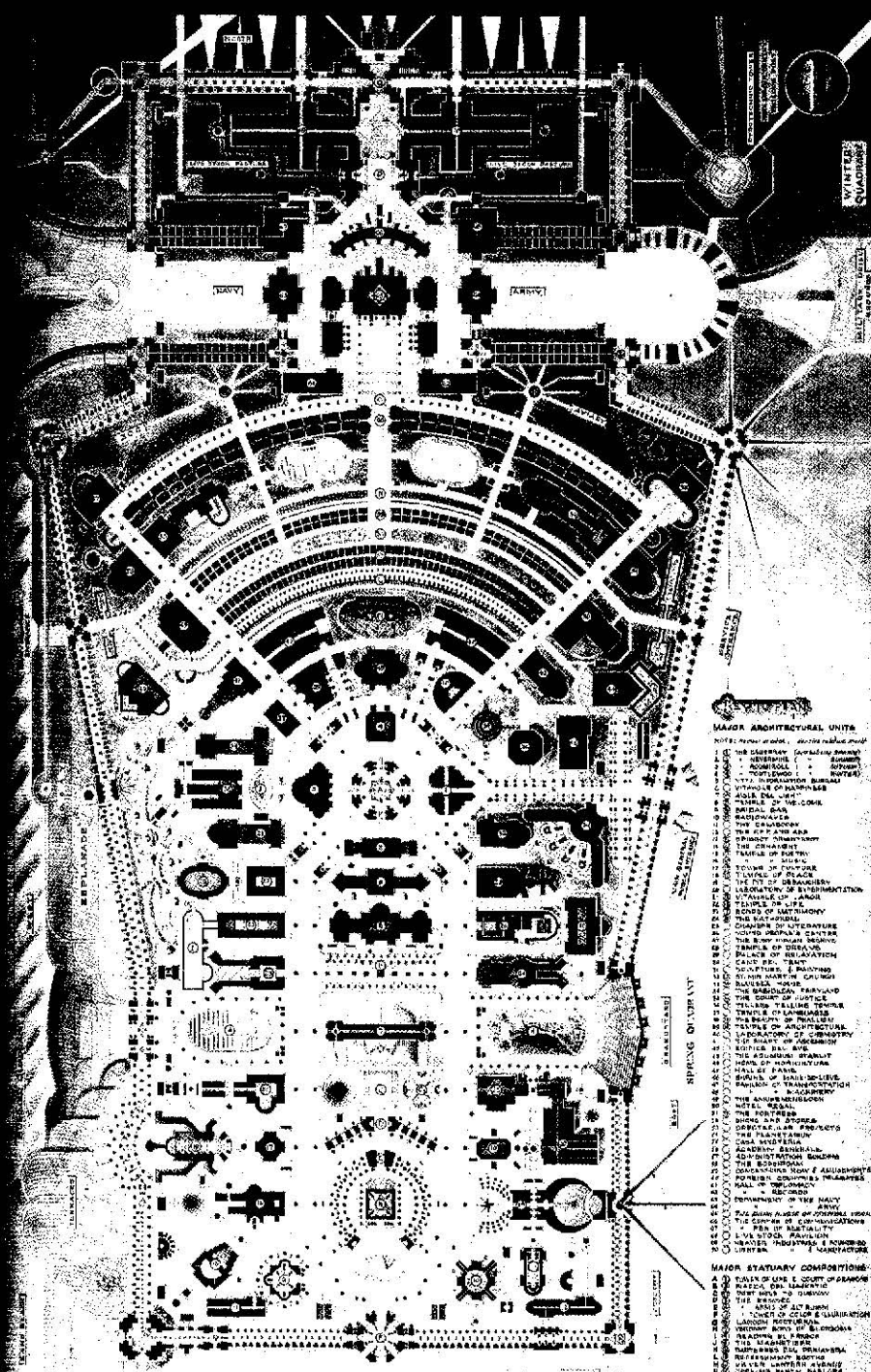
Y-I-E-L-D
T-O T-O-T-A-L
E-L-A-T-I-O-N.

A piece of the puzzle was now solved, but there was still so much to do. What was the Y.T.T.E. intended to be, and where was it meant to be built? The answers were yet to come.

Throughout my investigation, it was evident that Rizzoli's devotion to his mother was quite remarkable. He revered her in life and after her death in poetry, prose, and with the most extraordinary drawings of magnificent "Kathredals." But what of his father? Innocente Rizzoli was rarely mentioned and certainly had no overt tributes paid to him. Or did he? My curiosity now focused on a central building of the Y.T.T.E., which in all the many versions of this grand "expean" continued to be singled out, highlighted in a script and color different from the other units. It was called "The Dark Horse of the Festival Year." I repeated the phrase over and over, giving emphasis to each part of it in turn. Which was the "Festival Year?" And who, or what, was the "Dark Horse?" And then—ah!—of course!

A.G.'s Festival Year 1915, the year of the P.P.I.E. And the dark happening was his father's suicide that same year. (Coincidentally, when Innocente's remains were found twenty-one years later was within days of the ground breaking for the Bay Area's second fair or festival, the Golden Gate International Exposition—the Treasure Island World's Fair.) The Y.T.T.E. was the tribute to A.G.'s father and with the Kathreda also a part of that landscape, the whole family could again, one day, be together in this place of "magnificence, magnitude and manifestation." Was it meant to be Heaven? I didn't think so—how could it be? A.G.'s father had committed suicide and Achilles himself was unbaptized Catholic. Neither of them would be welcomed in that celestial place. But probably the most telling support for my theory was another of the buildings described as part of the fantasy world: "The Shaft of Ascension, in which euthanasia is available to those desiring and meriting a pleasant, painless bon voyage from this land." If the Y.T.T.E. had been Heaven, where would one ascend to? But it was Limbo, it would happily accommodate these troubled souls, such time as they were able to take that final

Then one evening almost by chance, I glanced at the local weather report on television, which sent me thinking to my map draw



Y-T-T-E THE Y.T.T.E.
 PLOT PLAN
 FOURTH PRELIMINARY
 STUDY
 1938
 Ink on rag paper
 38 1/2 x 24 1/4"
 The Ames Gallery,
 Berkeley

- MAJOR ARCHITECTURAL UNITS**
- 1. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 2. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 3. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 4. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 5. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 6. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 7. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 8. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 9. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 10. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 11. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 12. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 13. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 14. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 15. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 16. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 17. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 18. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 19. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 20. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 21. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 22. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 23. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 24. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 25. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 26. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 27. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 28. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 29. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 30. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 31. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 32. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 33. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 34. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 35. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 36. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 37. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 38. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 39. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 40. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 41. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 42. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 43. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 44. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 45. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 46. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 47. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 48. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 49. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 50. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 51. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 52. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 53. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 54. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 55. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 56. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 57. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 58. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 59. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 60. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 61. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 62. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 63. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 64. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 65. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 66. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 67. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 68. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 69. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 70. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 71. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 72. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 73. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 74. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 75. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 76. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 77. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 78. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 79. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 80. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 81. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 82. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 83. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 84. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 85. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 86. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 87. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 88. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 89. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 90. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 91. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 92. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 93. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 94. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 95. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 96. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 97. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 98. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 99. THE CHURCH (including the tower)
 - 100. THE CHURCH (including the tower)

THE Y.T.T.E. PLOT PLAN
 FOURTH PRELIMINARY STUDY
 CALLED THE EXPEAU OF MAGNITUDE, MAGNIFICENCE AND MANIFESTATION

TO BE FINANCED AND ERECTED BY THE
 EXPEAU PIONEERING CORPORATION

approach A.G. Rizzoli's work with enthusiasm. I have never before tackled a project that was so immersed in riddle and allusion, a puzzle so compelling that it could not be set aside.

In preparation for the San Diego Museum of Art's traveling exhibition and the accompanying catalog, I have shared my many years of research on the life and work of A.G. Rizzoli with Jo Hernandez, John Beardsley, and Roger Cardinal. Their further study of his work and their scholarly and imaginative interpretation of it have been both impressive and exciting. My dialogues with them have been energizing and often inspiring.

"So much to do, so little done," is a phrase that recurred frequently in Rizzoli's later work, a phrase with which I identify. That's the way I feel when I contemplate the many unsolved mysteries still awaiting solution. ★

Bonnie Grossman is the primary researcher on the life and work of A.G. Rizzoli. She has been lecturing and writing about Rizzoli since she first discovered his work in 1990. Grossman is owner-director of The Ames Gallery, established in Berkeley in 1970. She serves on museum boards and advisory committees, curates public exhibitions, and lectures widely. In addition to Rizzoli, her lecture topics include early utilitarian American folk art, self-taught, visionary and outsider art, and artists' rights. A co-director and producer of eight television programs on California artists and a founding member of Bay Area (now California) Lawyers for the Arts, Grossman has lived in Berkeley since 1965.

...years I had
 ...regional maps
 ...world atlases to locate
 ...land or land mass that
 ...Rizzoli's "Isle
 ...Sans Vaile," the
 ...where the Y.T.T.E.

...was to be built. And there
 ...it was, right in my own
 ...back yard and before my
 ...very eyes. Rizzoli's "Isle"
 ...was a mirror image of the
 ...southern tip of Marin
 ...County, not far from the

...place where his family first
 ...lived. A.G.'s fantasy expo
 ...sition was sited in an inlet
 ...called "Paradise Cove."
 ...In this brief essay I
 ...have touched on only a
 ...few of Rizzoli's many rid-

...dles and shared only those
 ...solutions that dealt with
 ...the Y.T.T.E. I've always
 ...enjoyed word games,
 ...crossword puzzles, double
 ...acrostics, puns, and ana-
 ...grams, so I was able to