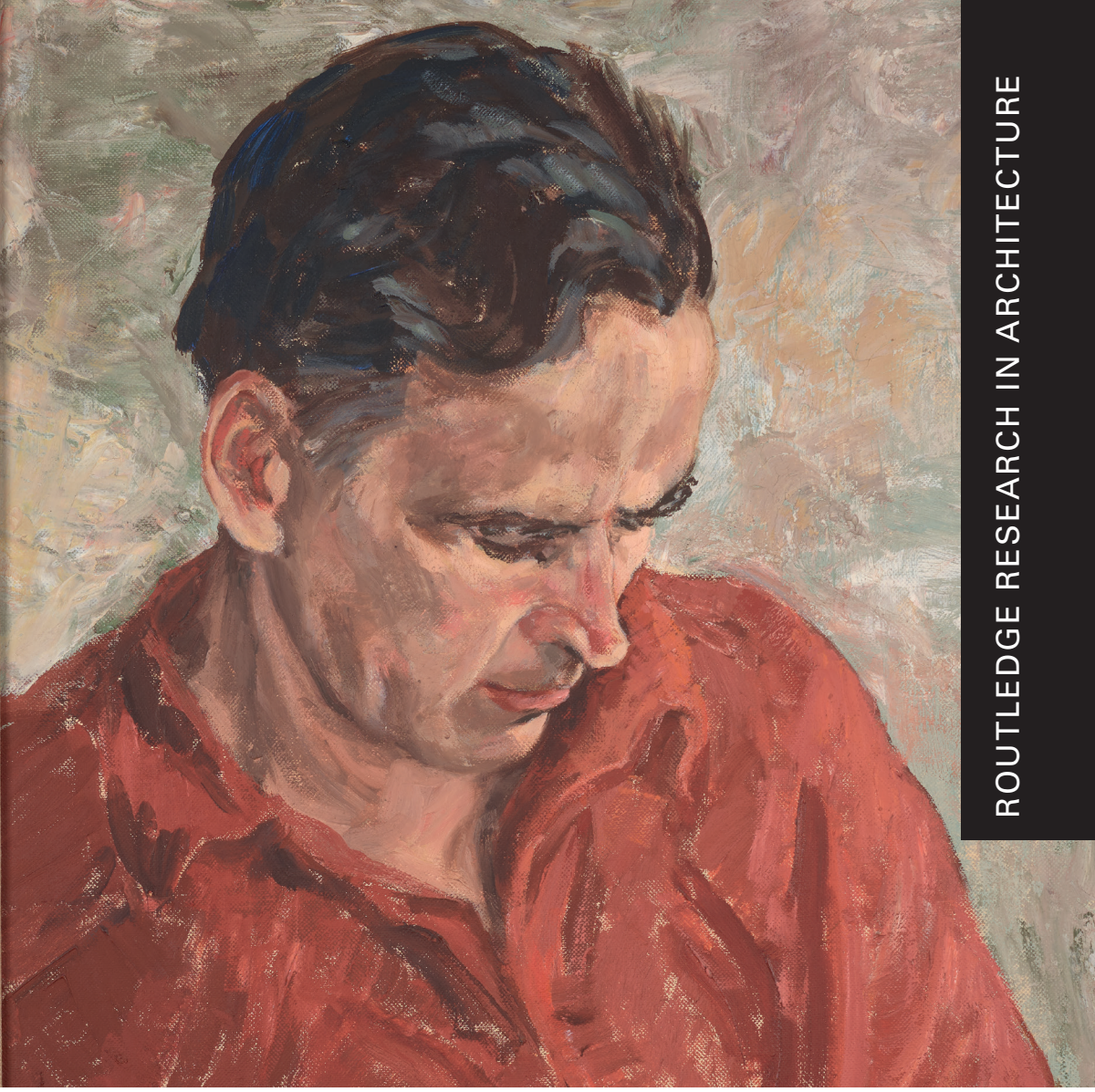

ROUTLEDGE RESEARCH IN ARCHITECTURE

THE PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL AND THE FUTURE OF ARCHITECTURE

JOHN LOBELL

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The Philadelphia School and the Future of Architecture By John Lobell

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The Philadelphia School and the Future of Architecture

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Cover image: Portrait of G. Holmes Perkins by Georgia Perkins, Holmes's wife/ G. Holmes Perkins Collection, The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania

First published 2023
by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

and by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-1-032-01523-1 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-01524-8 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-003-17895-8 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003178958

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This book is dedicated to:

G. Holmes Perkins, architect of the Philadelphia School, who allowed me to do the work on which I have built my career.

John Margolies, who got to New York first and welcomed me.

Ulrich Franzen, who gave me opportunities.

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The Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania, William Whitaker, Curator and Collections Manager; Heather Isbell Schumacher, Archivist; and Julia Moore Converse, former Director, keepers of our memories.

This book was made possible in part by a grant from the Pratt Institute Faculty Development Fund.

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Preface

In which we learn how this book came about

0.1. Historical Context

How do we approach something that happened over a half-century ago? With every decade, the past changes—the architectural education at Penn must have looked from the perspectives of each of the approaches to architecture we have seen since—design methodologies, close-fit functionalism, loose-fit functionalism, defensible space, systems building, user needs, environmental psychology, adhocism, contextualism, semiology, linguistics, historicism, structuralism, post structuralism, deep structures, Marxism, neo-early modernism, postmodernism, high tech, low tech, low tech high touch, deconstructionism, and deconstructivism.[1] And now computation, sustainability, diversity, inclusion, equity, social justice, and decolonization. And object-oriented ontology. AuQ1

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I am sure that I left out a few. In the introduction, I try to bring a bit of order to these by grouping them into a few major categories. The Philadelphia School would look different from the vantage of each of these, but perhaps I can present some of my experiences of it in a way that can be of use to architecture and architectural education today.

Besides suggesting that the past can look different from different perspectives, I have another motive for listing these movements. The Philadelphia School presented an integrated, coherent understanding of architecture, from regional ecology to city planning to urban design to institutions to meaning to buildings to construction to details. All within comprehensive philosophical, social, and cultural perspectives. As a student, I did not realize that I was experiencing something exceptional; it was on coming to New York after graduating and seeing the above-listed movements flailing about that the seeds of this book were planted.

0.2. How This Book Came About

I attended the University of Pennsylvania from 1959 to 1966, first as an architecture major in the College from 1959 to 1963 for a Bachelor of Arts,

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then for a professional Bachelor of Architecture (retroactively upgraded to a Master of Architecture) in the Graduate School of Fine Arts (GSFA) from 1963 to 1965 (it was a three-year program, but as an architecture honors major I took the first of the three years in my senior year of college), and finally for a post-professional Master of Architecture degree in 1966 in independent studies and a written thesis titled *Architecture and Structures of Consciousness* under Dean G. Holmes Perkins, also in the GSFA.

The architecture school at Penn was known as the Graduate School of Fine Arts. It later became the School of Design of the University of Pennsylvania (shortened to PennDesign), and in 2019 it was renamed the University of Pennsylvania Stuart Weitzman School of Design as a result of a donation, but it essentially comprised architecture, city and regional planning, and landscape architecture, with just a little painting and sculpture.

While at Penn, I met and married Mimi Lobell (1942–2001, born Miriam Comings, Bachelor of Arts from Penn's College for Women in 1963, Master of Architecture from the GSFA in 1966), and after graduating, we moved to New York. In New York, we plunged into the heady art and architecture worlds of the 1960s, worked in prominent offices, and got to know just about "everybody." I worked for Ulrich Franzen on an investigation of the future of urban form and technology under a Ford Foundation grant, mounted a major environmental art exhibit at the Architectural League, and then ran the League's programs from 1968 to 1970.[2] Mimi worked for Marcel Breuer, among others, became an officer of the League, and initiated programs on women in architecture. In 1969 I started teaching in the architecture school at Pratt Institute[3] in Brooklyn, New York, and in 1972 Mimi also began teaching there.

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The architectural scene in New York in the 1960s was becoming aware of the New York Five and John Hejduk's Cooper Union. Out of this energy, Peter Eisenman upped the level of discourse in architectural theory by creating the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS) in 1967 and its journal *Oppositions* in 1973. Architectural theory became focused on semiology (a philosophy of linguistics), which seemed remote from what Mimi and I had learned at Penn and from what we now refer to as the Philadelphia School, but it was all exciting.

In the early 1970s, Mimi and I attended a series of talks at the Institute on Louis Kahn at Yale and Penn organized by Robert A. M. (Bob) Stern, who referred to a "Yale-Penn axis." We did not feel the series adequately represented Penn. Mimi wrote a letter to that effect which was published in 1974 in *Oppositions 4* ("Appendix 5: Mimi Lobell's Letter"), but we realized that her letter had not "made the case" and that the Philadelphia School had much to offer. While we appreciated New York, we felt that its culture of self-promotion was superficial compared with what we knew of Louis Kahn, Romaldo Giurgola, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Ian McHarg, Edmund Bacon, and others with whom we had studied at Penn. We realized that there was a story to be told and that we might be well suited to tell it.

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With that in mind, we set out in 1976 to interview some key Philadelphia School figures. Kahn had died two years earlier, but we spoke with Dean G. Holmes Perkins, Edmund Bacon, Denise Scott Brown, Robert Geddes, Romaldo Giurgola, George Qualls, Robert Venturi, and a classmate, Steve Goldberg. That resulted in a 1980 article that was never published and that forms the foundation for this book.

0.3. What This Book Is and Is Not

One of the strengths of the school Perkins put together was that it integrated architecture, city and regional planning, and landscape architecture. However, this book focuses on architecture. For some time, that was a limitation of our approach, but in 1990 the GSFA organized an exhibit presenting the history of the school and published *The Book of the School: 100 Years, The Graduate School of Fine Arts, The University of Pennsylvania*. Rich with illustrations and thorough in its coverage, it lays out the entire history of the school and is filled with material about the programs I do not cover. And in 2017, there was an exhibit, *What Was the Philadelphia School? An Architectural Exhibit* curated by Jason Tang and Izzy Kornblatt and held on the Penn campus.[4]

In addition, the past forty years have seen numerous books on Kahn, including two by me: In 1979, I published *Between Silence and Light: Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Kahn*. Kahn had given one of his last talks at Pratt, and, with additional material from others of his talks, I edited it to create the archetypal Kahn talk. My background in Eastern thought helped me understand, organize, and comment on the material. Then in 2020, I published *Louis Kahn: Architecture as Philosophy* on how Kahn's buildings express his philosophy. In 2015 James Williamson published *Kahn at Penn,* which looks at his Master's Class. There have been quite a few books on Venturi and Scott Brown, including David Brownlee's and David G. De Long's 2001 *Out of the Ordinary: Architecture, Urbanism, Design*, the comprehensive catalog of an exhibition of the same name at the Philadelphia Museum of Art; Jeremy Eric Tenenbaum's 2019 *Your Guide to Downtown Denise Scott Brown*; Robert Geddes's 2012 *Fit*; and Gregory L. Heller's 2016 *Ed Bacon*. And of course, Ian McHarg's 1969 *Design with Nature* and Edmund Bacon's 1976 *Design of Cities*.

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As I am doing the research for this book, I realize more and more what my teachers and others associated with the Philadelphia School put their lives and careers into this great period, and I realize how inadequate my efforts are. So I will try to cover as much as I can, apologize for what I have left out or not gotten quite right, and state that this effort should be seen as the Philadelphia School through the experience of one student. I hope it has something to offer for today.

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Notes

1. Observing these movements, I had the occasion in the late 1970s to write in an unpublished article, "Contextualism has something to do with using Renaissance moldings on weekend houses in Long Island potato fields. This is also referred to as 'historical allusion,' which is a part of 'historicism.' In philosophy, historicism refers to the inner meaning in history, but in architecture it refers to rummaging around in the past for decorative forms."
2. During my time at the Architectural League in the late 1960s, it was a much smaller world. "Everybody" was familiar with "everybody." The League provided a home away from home with lectures, exhibitions, parties—it was almost like a continuation of school. Many of its exhibitions were challenging, and for a while they seemed to be rivaling MoMA's.
3. Before 1968, the architecture school at Pratt was known for preparing draftspersons for the New York offices. After 1968 it was chaotic, freewheeling, creative, and experimental. In the past twenty years its reputation has soared, it has become highly selective, and its tuition is higher than that of Harvard. But it remains open to adventurous ideas.
4. An online search will link to descriptions and reviews of the exhibit.

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1 Introduction

In which we get an overview of how the Philadelphia School was a confluence of city, practice, and education, each undergoing renewal

1.1. First Recognition

In the April 1961 issue of *Progressive Architecture*, Jan Rowan presented "Wanting to Be The Philadelphia School."[1] "Wanting to be," of course, came from Louis Kahn's "What does this building want to be?"[2] "The Philadelphia School" was the first outside identification of what was to become a fertile source of subsequent architecture. The Philadelphia School is today primarily identified with Louis Kahn (1901–1974) and Robert Venturi (1925–2018), but while both are important, overemphasizing them misses the point of a unique convergence of city, practice, and education, each undergoing renewal, all serving as a backdrop for the growth of maturing personalities and the evolution of a comprehensive approach to architecture from regional ecology to city planning to urban design to understanding institutions to meaning to buildings to construction to details. All within philosophical, social, and cultural perspectives, and all having something to offer us today.

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The Philadelphia School began in 1951 when G. Holmes Perkins assumed the deanship of the Graduate School of Fine Arts (GSFA) at the University of Pennsylvania.[3] However, it had roots in the political, architectural, and planning efforts to renew Philadelphia, which were signaled by the nationally reported *Better Philadelphia Exhibition* of 1947 in Gimbels department store. It ended in . . . it's hard to say. Robert Geddes, a key Philadelphia School figure and later dean of architecture at Princeton, says it ended in 1965 (Geddes, Romaldo Giurgola, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and others left Penn around then), but some say 1974, when Kahn died.

It was a "golden age" when students chose between Robert Geddes, Romaldo Giurgola, George Qualls, and Robert Venturi for their studio critics (the choice varied a bit from year to year and each taught with a colleague); Kahn and Venturi were transforming architecture; Robert Le Ricolais was building experimental structures; Karl Linn was applying Zen

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DOI: 10.4324/9781003178958-1

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Buddhism to architecture and pioneering vest pocket parks; Paul Davidoff was raising the issue of poverty and developing advocacy planning; David Crane was working on the capital web; Ian McHarg was questioning progress in Western civilization and advancing urban and regional ecology; Herbert Gans was moving into Levittown; Denise Scott Brown was forging a syncretism of European and American planning and discovering popular culture; and Edmund Bacon was directing the most active planning commission in the country.

But while the architecture program is central to this book, we need to keep in mind that during this time at Penn, McHarg was leading the strongest landscape architecture program in the country, and Robert Mitchell was leading the strongest city planning program in the country.

1.2. Synergy and Convergence

Philadelphia has several strong architectural traditions, including William Penn's five squares; Frank Furness's personal muscular Victorian mannerism, a gentile style of country house of the 1920s; the diagonal Benjamin Franklin Parkway; the PSFS Building (the first International Style skyscraper); and bricks. However, by the late 1930s, it had experienced decades of single-party machine rule (mostly corrupt), which had left it in both physical and spiritual decay: "Second prize, two weeks in Philadelphia."

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When Joseph Clark was elected reform mayor in 1952, Edmund Bacon (who had begun to meet with energetic young citizens to plot reform starting in 1939) was Director of the City Planning Commission. Bacon's approach led to Philadelphia's vital and continually developing Center City,[4] where each project provided impetus for the eventual implementation of neighboring projects. This comprehensiveness contrasts with such monster renewal projects isolated from their surroundings as Detroit's Renaissance Center and Albany's Empire State Plaza, and with the scattered and chaotic processes in New York that we have seen since Robert Moses exited the scene.

The Philadelphia School saw multiple levels of relationships between city, school, and profession. Bacon, the Director of the City Planning Commission, was on the GSFA faculty; the dean of the school, G. Holmes Perkins, was the chairman of the City Planning Commission; several young architects, establishing practices in the city and teaching at the school, were doing research and design projects for the Planning Commission; and most of the projects in studio at the school were sited in the city. And all of these, the city, the profession, and the school, were in a state of renewal. Like the city, the school had also experienced a decline, and its revitalization was undertaken by Perkins. Many of the people we interviewed for this book began with, "Of course, it was Perkins's School."

During the 1910s and 20s, Penn was widely considered the best school in the country under the deanship of Warren Laird and his lead critic, the Beaux-Arts master, Paul Philippe Cret. Later, George Koyl became Dean and

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remained until 1951, by which time there was pressure, including student unrest, for a change from the Beaux-Arts tradition Koyl had maintained. While other schools had long since shifted to modern architecture, Penn had tried to build on the old. It was a dead end. In 1951, Perkins, who was brought from Harvard, became the new dean with a clear idea of what he wanted to accomplish.

During the period under discussion, Philadelphia also saw a renewal in the architectural profession. The city had had figures of architectural importance in the past: Frank Furness, Paul Philippe Cret, George Howe, Oscar Stonorov, and Vincent Kling, among many others. But in the 1960s, the city blossomed with new offices, some of which were to become major forces in American architecture: Kahn; Geddes, Brecher, Qualls, and Cunningham; Mitchell/Giurgola; Venturi and various partners; Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, and Todd; etc. These offices put into practice the ideas being developed at the school, and most faculty members were also practitioners. (My apologies to the many I have left out.)

1.3. Today's Golden Age

We are today in a golden age of architecture, as announced by Frank Gehry's "Let the experience begin!" The curving titanium of Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, Tom Wright's billowing sail of his Burj Al Arab hotel in Dubai, Zaha Hadid's sharp angles of her Phæno Science Center in Wolfsburg, Herzog & de Meuron's woven steel of their "Bird's Nest" for the Beijing National Olympic Stadium, and Santiago Calatrava's soaring structure of his World Trade Center Transportation Hub in New York all attest to this new age. But what happened to the visions for a new understanding of the human place in the world, for a new society, central to the pioneers of modern architecture, including Mies, Corbu, and Gropius?[5] At the end of this book, we will look at what the Philadelphia School might have to offer for a larger vision of architecture today.

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1.4. The Philadelphia School in Context

In the preface, I listed some of the movements in architecture of the 1960s and '70s, but seven came to dominate: design methods, the social sciences, radical technology, historicism, semiology, postmodernism, and formalism. Note that these categories are somewhat arbitrary, as we are dealing with tangles of hairballs, and these very brief overviews are probably unfair to each.

1.4.1. Design Methods

The Beaux-Arts provided a comprehensive and learnable approach to architecture. One mastered the elements (the classical orders, formal layouts,

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etc.) and studied precedents (if one were doing a library, one might look at Boullée's Projet pour la Bibliothèque du Roi), applying them to one's own project.

But how to proceed in modern architecture? Should one follow Gropius and design from a program? Corbu and use his five points? Mies and create a universal space? Facing a blank sheet of paper can be disconcerting, and many got lost, so when Christopher Alexander published *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* in 1964, the field of design methodologies was born, and the Design Methods Group (DMG) and other organizations were founded. Alexander eventually regretted the impact of *Notes* and followed it with *A Pattern Language* in 1977. Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) conferences would hold Pattern Language sessions, drawing legions of devout followers clutching their copies of the book. The design methods movement had many variants but basically promised a series of "algorithmic" steps which would produce a building. School after school added design methods to their curricula until it was realized that design methods had failed to produce any buildings, and the movement fizzled.

1.4.2. The Social Sciences

We need to recall that modern architecture included strong commitments to social reforms—attacks on capitalism and individualism and promises of a new person and a new world. Much of that social agenda was lost when modern architecture came to the US and got caught up in the postwar boom, but in 1962, Michael Harrington published *The Other America,* and awareness of social ills spread in various disciplines, including architecture. In 1961 we saw the publication of Jane Jacobs's *Death and Life of Great American Cities* with its questioning of public housing projects. Once heralded as slum clearance, the projects began to be perceived as architectural horrors and socially destructive. Some architects looked to psychology and sociology for guides to more humane spaces, and psychologists and sociologists began to encroach on architecture. The Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) and other organizations were formed.

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In response to this, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) commissioned Robert Geddes (who had left Penn to become dean of architecture at Princeton) and Bernard Spring to make a proposal for how architectural education might respond. In 1967 they produced *A Study of Education for Environmental Design*. In its introduction, we read, "Emerging from the study was a process for planning and evaluating the unprecedented diversity of new programs that are needed if teams of well-educated individuals are to develop who can work together and effectively design a more humane environment."[6]

The architecture world was abuzz with the observation that the title and much of the report referred to environment design rather than to architecture. The modernists had called on architects to throw themselves into the

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hands of the engineers. Now they were being called on to throw themselves into the hands of the social scientists.

1.4.3. Historicism

For much of history, architecture and the other arts, indeed all of life, had been built on the past. The Enlightenment sought to replace the past with science and reason as means for understanding and acting on our world and ourselves. We might see modern architecture as bringing the Enlightenment to architecture. The design of a building would come not from precedent, but from its use, its structure, and its materials. The limitations of this approach eventually became apparent; thus, the Philadelphia School and the movements briefly described here. One response was to return to looking to the past. We see this in Kahn who would reference Corbu in saying that we should learn from the principles of the past, not imitate its forms, and we also see it in Venturi as filtered through his mannerist lens. There are many other examples, and more on Kahn and Venturi later.

1.4.4. Radical Technology

Launched in the early 1960s by a group of students at the Architectural Association in London, Archigram asked, what if we see buildings as temporary attachments to urban infrastructure, and what if we take that infrastructure into three dimensions? The result was spectacular drawings, some of which were shown at the GSFA around 1964. In the late 1960s, Bucky Fuller's geodetic domes provided inspiration for domes and zomes at communes. In 1977, Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano used imagery reminiscent of Archigram's in their Pompidou Centre (which shares the organization, or "Form," of Kahn's Salk Institute); and in 1971, Disney implemented Archigram's plug-in technology in the Contemporary Resort at Disney World (extensively reported on to the architectural community by Peter Blake).

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We see structural adventurism in Kahn's work, including his 1944 drawing for a reinterpretation of a Gothic cathedral as a community center in welded steel and plastic, the tetrahedron ceiling of his 1951 Yale Art Gallery, his City Tower Project of 1952–57 done with Anne Tyng, and his Vierendeels of 1957 for Richards and 1962 for Salk. And we also see it in Robert Le Ricolais's elegant structural experiments.

1.4.5. Semiology

Semiology is an approach to language based on the work of the Swiss linguist, semiotician, and philosopher Ferdinand de Saussure. A linguistic approach to architecture should make sense—as we will discuss later, architecture has to communicate. Countless papers and articles were written, typically, in two parts: the first part explaining semiological theory, and the second part

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applying that theory to an example, such as if windows on a Renaissance palazzo alternated rounded and pointed lintels, they exhibited an A, B, A, B pattern. And there was a lot about a semiological triangle. Semiology had a longer run than did some other French intellectual fashions, but eventually, it was realized that it could not tell us anything that we could not see through common sense, and it fizzled.

While we are on the topic of semiology, we might look at the role of theory in the Philadelphia School. Certainly, the Philadelphia School worked with a wide range of theories about what architecture should be, but for the most part, those theories were tied directly to helping us understand buildings. A theory might be thought of as a tool, something useful, like a crowbar that can open a crate that contains something we want and that would otherwise remain closed to us. Since semiology addresses the conveyance of meaning, and Robert Venturi's and Denise Scott Brown's architecture uses signs, symbols, and archetypes to convey meaning, one would think semiology would be useful in understanding their architecture. The fact that it is not useful in doing so might tell us something. We hardly need a semiological triangle to observe that with a sign that says "Fire Station 4," Venturi tells us that his building is a fire station. All we need is common sense. However, for several decades, theories were spun out for their own sakes.

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1.4.6. Postmodernism

There is more to postmodernism and postmodern architecture than can be sorted out in this book, but here is a very simple overview. Modernism is the notion that reason and science should replace tradition as the means to understanding nature, humans, and individual human beings. Postmodernism is a loss of confidence that this is possible and a fall into obscure theory, cynicism, and nihilism.

Modern architecture was a replacing of tradition with functionalism decorated with abstract geometric forms and the belief that this would improve the environment and the human condition. Postmodern architecture was based on a belief that modern architecture had failed in improving the environment and the human condition and, in its attempt to do so, had abandoned its cultural responsibilities as an art.

From there, it gets complicated. Postmodern architecture clearly begins with Venturi, specifically with his Mother's House of 1964 and his book, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, of 1966. However, the term does not come into wide use until 1977 with Charles Jencks's *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*. Jencks used the term for the neo-neoclassicism of Venturi, Bob Stern, Philip Johnson, Charles Moore, and Michael Graves. This excluded, for example, Peter Eisenman and John Hejduk, who were clearly postmodern in the sense of rejecting orthodox modernism and its social agenda.

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So how should we regard the Philadelphia School? Yes, both modernism and modern architecture had limitations, even failures. We might say that the Philadelphia School sought to improve and advance culture, society, and architecture within a further development of Enlightenment and modernist optimism, rather than pursue a postmodern cynical and nihilist rejection of the Enlightenment.

1.4.7. Formalism

By the mid-1960s, the energy in New York architecture had moved on from Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) and other purveyors of glass office buildings to the more complex architecture of a group of Harvard graduates, including Edward Laraby Barns, Henry Cobb, Philip Johnson, Ulrich Franzen (for whom I worked), John Johansen (for whom Mimi Lobell worked), I. M. Pei, and Paul Rudolph.

But while these architects were designing buildings that were being built, a yet newer architectural scene emerged dominated by the Five (Peter Eisenman, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk, Richard Meier, and Michael Graves), Cooper Union (under Hejduk's leadership, with poetic designs, beautiful models and drawings, and end-of-the-year exhibits attended by "everybody"), and then waves of French intellectual fashions—Marxism, semiology, structuralism, post structuralism, deconstruction, etc. Architectural theory had arrived. It is a vast oversimplification to lump all of this together, but for the sake of convenience, let's do so, and, since we have a Philadelphia School, let's call all of this the "New York School."[7]

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The Five arranged lectures for themselves at the Architectural League and elsewhere, attended each other's presentations, and vociferously defended each other. When they could not get a publisher for their book, *Five Architects*, they published it themselves. Peter Eisenman started the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS), which mounted exhibitions, hosted lectures, and published a journal (*Oppositions*) and a news magazine (*Skyline*, edited by Andrew McNair and read by "everybody."[8]). It also started an architecture school and brought leading Italian and Japanese architects to the US, and arranged for them to lecture at architecture schools around the country.

It is not easy to briefly characterize this architecture—even the Five soon diverged—but let's try with the term "formalism." We might define formalism as an approach in which architectural elements within a building or between buildings conform to sets of rules. That is to say, they refer to themselves and other works of architecture, and not to such "outside" issues as the use of the building, its structure, its materials, or its relationship to its site. Thus if we say that language has meaning (semantics) and structure (syntax), Eisenman would say that he is interested only in syntax. In House X, he claims that he sets up a series of rules and follows them rigorously. If a given form needs an opposite, and there is a stair going up, he has another

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coming down from the ceiling that has no functional use. If a datum line is set up throughout the house at a certain height, that means that the shelf for the dishes will be at that height, even if it can't be reached. Thus contrasting quotes from Eisenman and Giurgola: Eisenman says, "When the client moves into one of my houses, I consider it destroyed."[9] Giurgola says, "People are born in, live in, and die in our buildings."[10]

The New York School was certainly a palliative against the design methodologies, environmental psychologies, and the architecture as sociology movements of the 1960s and '70s in that it asserted that architecture is a cultural discipline, indeed an art. The New York School held that architecture is an art of formal rules. The Philadelphia School held that architecture is an art of human lives lived in cultural institutions. (The term "institutions" sounds ominous, but we will see its humanistic depth later in this book.)

1.4.8. Starchitecture

While listing these movements, we should add one more, for which I will use the awkward term, "starchitecture." This is the stand-alone building that is spectacular in itself but probably does not relate to its neighbors, and which does not grow out of an ideology but rather just seeks to amaze, dazzle, and entertain. As examples, I would refer to the buildings I presented above as part of our golden age, beginning in our era with Frank Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim. This is a new phenomenon and pretty much did not exist in the period under discussion in this book (an exception perhaps being Eero Saarinen's 1962 TWA Terminal, which we admired), but later we will look at what the Philadelphia School might contribute to it.

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1.5. Recognition Today

Surveying the architecture of the past half-century, we see the presence of the movements listed above and those of Kahn and of Venturi, but little presence of the rest of the Philadelphia School. Given the breadth and depth of its approach, one might ask why that is. In part, it is perhaps due to that breadth and depth; it is far easier to comprehend, emulate, and build on a one-word movement such as semiology. But there is also the issue of promotion.

As we described above, Eisenman is a relentless promoter of himself and his colleagues. He formed an alliance with Philip Johnson. He got the Museum of Modern Art to host meetings. And his Institute had a journal, a newsmagazine, exhibitions, lecture series, and an architecture school. And it is said that he spends hours a day on the phone. Contrast this with an anecdote about Penn. In the late 1960s, *Progressive Architecture* was doing an issue on schools of architecture. When they called Penn, the new chair said to his secretary, "*PA*? No we don't talk to magazines." The issue did not mention Penn.

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Finally, Penn was not in New York. It is hard in today's internet-connected world to recall the extent to which the world outside of New York was once slighted. Chicago, which played a key role in launching American modernism, had to struggle for attention by declaring itself "The Third Coast," after Los Angeles was finally admitted to the pantheon, by "reopening" the Chicago Tribune Tower competition (a brilliant move by Stanley Tigerman). Magazine and book publishing were centered in New York (including the key architecture magazines). Most of the large architectural firms and most of the prominent smaller firms were in New York. Maybe Chicago, maybe Los Angeles, but "Second prize, two weeks in Philadelphia."

1.6. The Approach of the Philadelphia School

I seek to describe the approach of the Philadelphia School throughout this book and in-depth in the section, "Philosophies of the Philadelphia School." Here I will provide a very brief summary. In 2017 at the opening of an exhibit on the Philadelphia School,[11] Robert Geddes gave a talk (a transcript of which is in "Appendix 6: Robert Geddes on the Philadelphia School") in which he described Philadelphia School architecture as "civic design," which is related to what we usually call urban design, but it also means an urban architecture in the broadest sense. Your building will be in a physical, cultural, and historical urban context, and as Perkins maintained, it should be a good citizen, respectful of its neighbors.

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Then, working from outside in, like the layers of an onion, and just addressing a sliver of each layer, we begin with culture as seen in every figure in the Philadelphia School, but perhaps best evinced by Lewis Mumford's presence on the GSFA faculty. Then, history was seen richly in Kahn's and Venturi's architecture (in very different ways) and in Edmund Bacon's use of historical examples as sources for his approach to the renewal of Philadelphia. Then the expression of construction. Kahn's Medical Towers, Geddes's Pender Labs, and Giurgola's Walnut Street Parking Garage, all on the Penn campus, fulfill an ambition of modern architecture that a building's aesthetic should derive from an honest expression of its spaces, its structure, and its materials.

The next layer of our onion is social responsibility. In the late 1960s and early '70s, college campuses and cities were in turmoil with demands for social change. But a recognition of social responsibility did not begin in the '60s. It is inherent in modern architecture, as we see in such examples as 1933 Athens Charter of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), Le Corbusier's city planning proposals, the 1927 Weissenhof Estate in Stuttgart directed by Mies and incorporating the work of leading European architects, and many other examples. Edmund Bacon spent the first decade of his directorship of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission attempting to get racially and economically integrated housing built. And the city planning department at the GSFA was deeply immersed in social

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concerns. Philadelphia did not do well in its attempts, but it did no worse than other American cities.

Next, the physical layers of our onion, starting with regional ecology. We associate the interest in regional ecology at the GSFA with the landscape architect Ian McHarg, but there are deeper roots. An inspiring figure for the Philadelphia School's approach to ecology was Patrick Geddes (1854–1932), a Scottish biologist, geographer, and town planner. Patrick Geddes was influential on Lewis Mumford, and Mumford, in turn, on Ian McHarg. Then urbanism, which we see everywhere in the Philadelphia School, particularly Robert Geddes's civic design and in Ed Bacon. (Again, in our awkward analogy, we are mentioning only a sliver of each layer of our onion.) Next, context. Again we see context throughout the Philadelphia School, but let's just take Venturi's Mother's House, which he places in the historical context of the Shingle Style (thus in an American rather than a European modernist tradition), the locational context of America's northeastern suburbs, and the psychological context of "the house as any child would draw it" (A phrase used by Kahn). Then, construction and details, as we see in Kahn's Medical Towers with its precast, prestressed, post-tensioned concrete, which he shows us every time we enter the building, and its joints, which Kahn tells us are modern architecture's ornament.

Then spirituality. When Kandinsky, Mondrian, and Brancusi, among other modern artists, produced "abstract" art, they stated that one of their intentions was to embody archetypal spirituality in forms free of outdated cloaks. In a similar vein, Kahn sought an archetypal spirituality which he called Order, on which he elaborated with his metaphor of Silence and Light.

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And finally, a lived experience, which is embodied in Giurgola's statement that "People are born in, live their lives in, and die in our buildings."

Notes

1. Jan Rowan, "Wanting to Be the Philadelphia School," *Progressive Architecture*, April 1961, pp. 130–163.
2. Kahn would famously begin a project with the question, "What does this building want to be?" Compacted into that question is an entire philosophy, including the notions that a building has an "existence will," and that before it is built it is in some realm even if not in our material realm.
3. I will occasionally use "Penn" for the University of Pennsylvania, a private Ivy League research university in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. "Penn" is also used for Penn State, short for the Pennsylvania State University, a public, state-related, land-grant research university with campuses and facilities throughout the state of Pennsylvania. Penn State also has an architecture school. The abbreviation "UPenn" is sometimes used for the University of Pennsylvania to avoid confusion, but no reference is made to Penn State in this book, so I will use Penn rather than UPenn.
4. The city of Philadelphia is 142 square miles, sprawling north, south, and west. (East is bounded by the Delaware River.) Much of our focus in this book is on Center City, an area bounded by the Delaware River on the east, the Schuylkill River on the west, South Street on the south, and Vine Street to the north, and

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encompassing William Penn's five squares, which we will discuss in detail. The University of Pennsylvania is located in West Philadelphia.

5. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, and Walter Gropius.
6. Robert Geddes and Bernard Spring, "A Study of Education for Environmental Design," p. 1.
7. The full story of the New York school would involve going into depth on the roles of Colin Rowe, the Texas Rangers, CASE and other interesting threads. There is pretty good coverage on Wikipedia (which, as of this writing, does not have an entry for the Philadelphia School).
8. I mentioned that the newsmagazine, *Skyline*, was read by "everybody." I was publishing book reviews regularly in *AIA Journal*, but despite the magazine going to every AIA member, no one ever commented when one came out. But when I published something in *Skyline*, for the next week "everybody" I encountered would say, "I saw your piece in Skyline." Skyline had a circulation of about 2,000, but it was the 2,000 you wanted to reach.
9. Spoken at IAUS, 1974.
10. Spoken in conversation with the author, 1974.
11. *What Was the Philadelphia School? An Architectural Exhibit*, curated by Jason Tang and Izzy Kronblatt, and held on the Penn campus in 2017.

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