Marcel Breuer

a submission in behalf

of his nomination

for the AIA/ACSA

Award of Excellence

in Architectural Education

submitted by Peter Blake

Marcel Breuer has been honored by the AIA with its Gold Medal for his own design achievements; his years of work as an educator also deserve recognition.

Breuer was a Master of the Bauhaus from 1924 to 1928 and Associate Professor of the Harvard Graduate School of Design from 1937 to 1946. In both schools, his teaching made an indelible impression.

In addition to those whose letters of support are enclosed here, his Harvard students included:

Ulrich Franzen, FAIA
John M. Johansen, FAIA
Paul Rudolph, FAIA
Sarah P. Harkness, FAIA
Philip Johnson, FAIA
I. M. Pei, FAIA

and many others.

information about Marcel Breuer

Breuer, Marcel Lajos, born in Pecs, Hungary, 1902, to Jacques and Franciska (Kan) Breuer. In 1920 he was graduated from the Magyar. Kir. Koreśliskola, in Pecs. Intending to become a painter and sculptor he went to Vienna in 1920 and studied for a short time at the Art Academy. Late in 1920 he went to Weimar, Germany, to the Bauhaus, becoming one of the youngest members of the first generation of Bauhaus students. He received his master's degree there in 1924, and was made a full-fledged master of the Bauhaus, in charge of the carpentry section. By the time he was 23 he had invented the first tubular-steel chair. His preoccupation with modular unit furniture led him to interior design and modular unit housing, and then to architecture. During the 1920's his most notable contributions in the field of design were in the area of furniture. In 1928 he invented the S shaped cantilever chair, "which remains the most commonly used modern commercial chair in the world today." When the Bauhaus moved from Weimar to Dessau in 1925, Breuer was commissioned to design all the furniture for the new buildings. In later years Breuer influenced the field of furniture design by developing the first bent and moulded plywood chairs and by designing some of the first chairs using aluminum as a supporting frame.

In 1928 Breuer left the Bauhaus to begin his practice as an architect and interior designer in Berlin. He entered a number of competitions abd prepared many theoretical projects for cities, theatres, factories, etc. From 1931 to 1935 with the advent of Hitler, Breuer was forced into a period of idleness. He used the time to travel extensively visiting architectural structures in Spain, Morocco, Switzerland, Hungary, Greene and England. Twice during this time he returned to execute commissions, once to design the Dolderthal Apartments (1934) in Zurich with Alfred and Emil Roth, and then to draw plans for his first modern house for the Harnischmacher family in Wiesbaden. In 1933 he realized he could not practice in Germany with Hitler in power, and he began to make his plans to leave Germany permanently. In 1935 he became associated with F. R. S. Yorke in London. Among his important

works at this time were an exhibition pavilion in Bristol and a design for the British Cement Concrete Association for a model project, the "Civic Center of the Future."

In 1937 when Gropius became associated with Harvard University, he asked Breuer to join him as a member of the Harvard faculty and as a partner in an architectural firm in Cambridge. Important among the commissions of this partnership were the Kensington, Pa. housing project for aluminum workers; planning projects for Wheaton College and for Black Mountain College; and various residential projects. In 1942 Breuer designed two prefabricated buildings : the "Yankee Portables" and the "Plas-2-Point" house, both dismountable and for the assembly line.

In 1946 Breuer moved to New York, and he has practiced architecture there ever since. For the first number of years his practice was largely devoted to houses and smaller, institutional buildings. The houses he has designed are too numerous to list, but critics agree that he has profoundly influenced domestic architecture in this country. In 1950 he designed a dormitory for Vassar College, and in 1952 an arts center for Sarah Lawrence College. In 1952 he was selected as one of the three architects to design the headquarters for UNESCO in Paris. This had a tremendous effect upon Breuer's practice. While working on UNESCO, he made nearly sixty Atlantic crossings, and after an absence of twenty years from Europe he received many commissions from Europeans, among them the Van Leer Office Building in Amstelveen, Holland, and the Bijenkorf Department Store, Rotterdam.

Since 1952 Breuer has designed many buildings in the United States as well as large urban complexes in South America and in Asia. His American work has

been diverse and includes St. John's Benedictine Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.; the Railroad Station, New Canaan, Conn.; Members' Housing, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton; the United States Embassy, The Hague; Litchfield Schools, Litchfield, Conn.; Torrington Manufacturing Co., Los Angeles and Oakville, Ontario; Temple B'Nai Jeshurun, Short Hills, New Jersey; New York University's University Heights campus; and his most recent work to receive architectural acclaim is the Whitney Museum in New York City.

Breuer is a Fellow of The American Institute of Architects. He was the recipient of the Medal of Honor, New York Chapter, AIA, in 1965. He is a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. He is author of Sun and Shadow; the Philosophy of An Architect (New York, 1955) and Buildings and Projects, 1921-1961 (New York, 1963). He has contributed a number of articles to various architectural journals. He has traveled extensively in Japan, Pakistan, South America, and Europe.

Home: 628 West Road, New Canaan, Conn.

Office: 635 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10022.

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Breuer, Marcel. Building and Projects, 1921-1961. New York, 1963.
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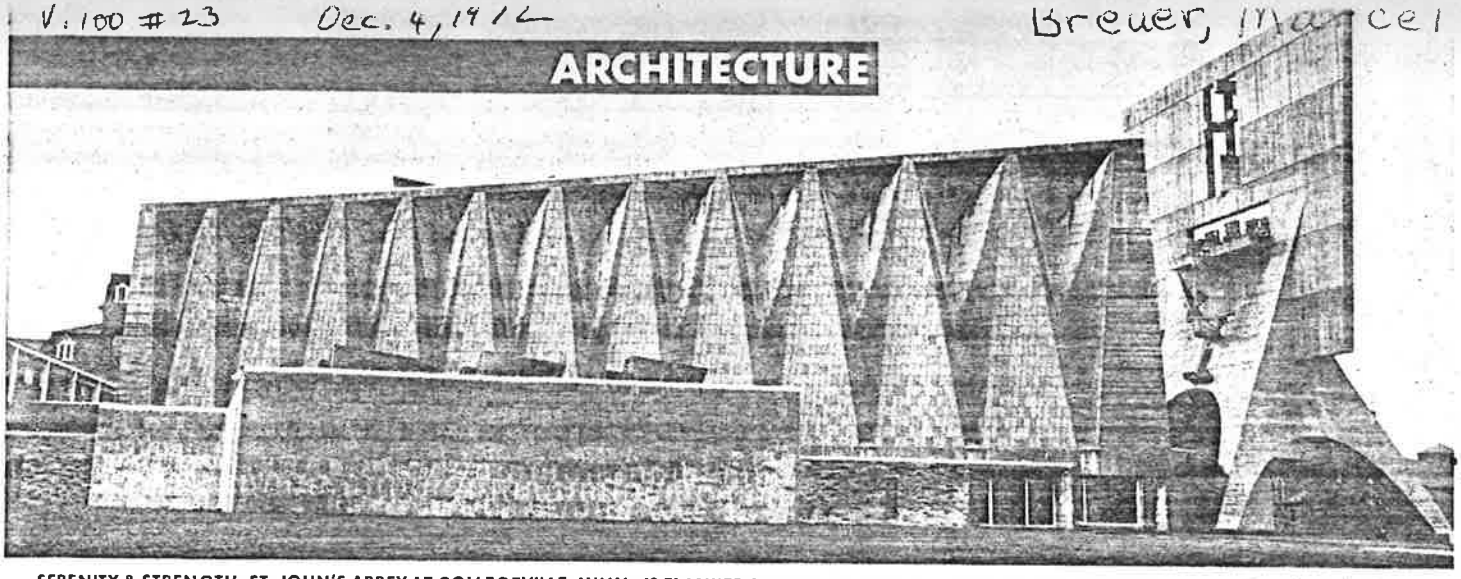


SERENITY & STRENGTH: ST. JOHN'S ABBEY AT COLLEGEVILLE, MINN., IS FLANKED BY MONASTIC QUARTERS (LEFT) & BELL TOWER

Breuer: The Compleat Designer

HIS life is a road map of modern architecture. The turns it took were his turns, the direction he pointed became the thruway. He is the compleat designer—of everything from kitchen cabinets to entire cities.

At 70, Marcel Lajos Breuer wears 50 years of achievement as easily as one of his old tweed jackets. Indeed, he seems almost cherubic, a stocky, gentle man with a merry twinkle in his blue eyes. The more celebrated Walter Gropius was a teacher; Ludwig Mies van der Rohe built crystalline monuments to a formula of his own devising. Unlike them, Breuer has touched and warmed contemporary American life by following a simple philosophy: "Architecture is a social art. It has an obligation to people."

"How do you say thank you to such a man?" asks Arthur Rosenblatt, a director of architecture and planning at Manhattan's Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Met's answer is visible this week. For the first time in its 102-year history, it is giving a one-man architectural show, devoting three central galleries to Breuer's projects.

The usual models and photographs of architectural projects are there, but also huge replicas of columns and wall details that convey the magnitude and impact of buildings. Regrettably, the effect is to emphasize Breuer's late work.

ALFRED EISENSTAEDT

BREUER IN CANTILEVERED CHAIR
A sensitivity to human need.

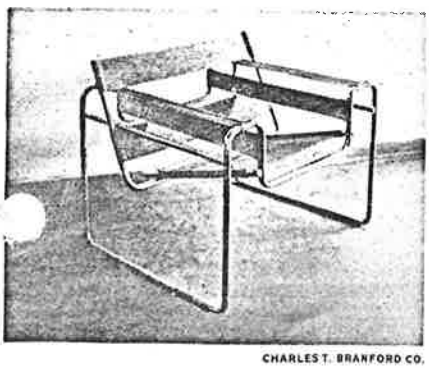
While structurally forthright and beautifully executed—he considers every detail down to how his materials will weather over the years—these immense, sculptural buildings tend to lack the grace, originality and controlled exuberance of his earlier projects.

Breuer was born in 1902, a doctor's son in the university town of Pecs in southern Hungary. Knowing precisely what he wanted, he turned up at the age of 18 at the most stimulating and revolutionary design school the world has ever seen—the Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany, founded by Walter Gropius. The Bauhaus recognized the force of industrialism, the beauty of the machine, the potential of designing a new man-made environment by cross-pollinating the arts.

From the first, Breuer showed an original spirit; he slept on top of a bathtub in an apartment he shared with two women. He quickly questioned the Bauhaus slogan of "Art and Technology—a new Unity." It implies, he said, that "art is wonderful, technology is wonderful, so the two together must be twice as wonderful. That is not so." As for the famous tag—"form follows function"—Breuer wryly added: "Not always." What he aimed at was "something simpler, more elemental, more generous and more human than a machine."

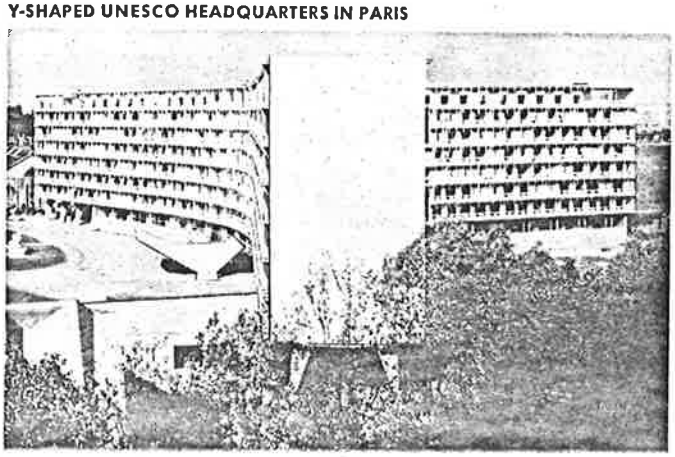
He had an unerring sense of material, texture, esthetics and practicality. These are all marks of good architecture, but they first surfaced in Breuer's furniture: tables, kitchen cabinets and, above all, chairs. Inspired by his bicycle's handlebars in 1925, he bent tubular steel into a frame, slung canvas in between and created the great "Wassily" chair. Handsome as it and later, cantilevered models were, Breuer was not concerned only with looks. "It has been argued that if a chair is beautiful, it is also comfortable," he has said. "This is as questionable as to say: if it is comfortable, it is also beautiful. No beauty can make us forget that man needs

THE "WASSILY" CHAIR

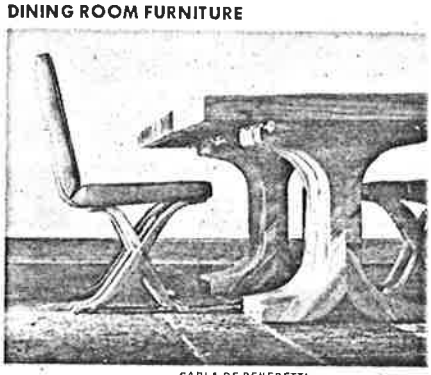


CHARLES T. BRANFORD CO.

Y-SHAPED UNESCO HEADQUARTERS IN PARIS



DINING ROOM FURNITURE



CARLA DE BENEDETTI

something to sit on, and that he needs to sit comfortably."

His second period, a sort of architect's odyssey, began in 1928, when he left the Bauhaus to set up his own practice in Berlin. The school had pioneered in what is now known as the "international style" of building—lean, elegant structures whose interior steel skeletons allowed architects to create airy and light façades of glass. Breuer took this cold idiom and domesticated it in his first building, a house in Wiesbaden. Flat-topped, generously windowed and raised on stilts above the ground, it used contrasted materials to give a feeling of warmth and porches to extend interior space outward.

But there were few jobs to be had in Depression-worn Berlin, so Breuer moved on to Zurich and then to England. There, he joined a pioneer modernist, London Architect F.R.S. Yorke, and designed in 1936 a small completely innovative pavilion at an exhibition in Bristol. Its taut glass juxtaposed with romantically rough walls of stone, it enclosed a beautifully proportioned space, and architects everywhere began to talk about Breuer. Even more striking was a project for the "Civic Center of the Future" that contained a lively assortment of innovative building shapes—Y-shaped, stepped-back and cantilevered structures, slabs, buildings on stilts. It was, in effect, Breuer's prediction of works that he would build more than 20 years later.

Meantime Walter Gropius had moved to the U.S. to head Harvard University's design school. In 1937 he asked Breuer to teach and practice with him in Cambridge, Mass. He was adored by his students, fine architects including I.M. Pei, John Johansen, Paul Rudolph, Ulrich Franzen. "Gropius was the establishment figure, stern and rational," recalls Franzen. "Breuer was the artist. He opened our minds to everything." Adds Johansen: "He was always accessible. We had lots of parties at his place. But in class, he goaded us. 'Why not do it?' he asked in his Hungarian accent. He made us find our own solutions."

Honest and Earthy. Breuer himself was finding new solutions in the intimate, beautiful houses he was designing with Gropius around Boston. His inspiration, he told TIME Reporter Leah Gordon, was the simple American frame house. "I liked the fact that anyone could construct these houses simply by nailing boards together. They are earthy, honest and dignified, like Huckleberry Finn and Abraham Lincoln."

Breuer kept those qualities—and brought them up to date. His glass walls brought the outdoors in and made views a part of ownership. His sure mastery of native materials—fieldstone and wood—gives the houses a feeling of security and protection. Architectural students still marvel at the details, studying how Breuer made the houses grow so naturally out of the sod, how he cantilevered staircases and, above all, how he met the needs of occupants. In some H-shaped houses, he separated the daytime areas—kitchen, dining and living rooms—from bedrooms by a central hall. In his rectangular "long" houses, a central kitchen and bathrooms divide living from sleeping quarters. Hardly a small modern house now exists in the U.S. that does not owe some debt to Breuer's sensitivity to human habit.

Architecture has been called an old man's profession because the big jobs come only after hard structural and spatial lessons have been learned. For Breuer, his most commercially successful period began in 1953, when he was barely into his 50s. Though he was practicing on his own in New York by that time, his breakthrough came with a major commission in France: the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. With it, he burst out of the Bauhaus box and turned to concrete, becoming more adventurous in its use than any other U.S. architect except perhaps I.M. Pei. He faceted façades with angled, deep-set windows, niches and geometrical shapes—all enlivened by the play of sunlight against shadow. At his IBM research center in La Gaude, near the Côte d'Azur, he elevated the entire building on Y-shaped sculptural columns that a less bold designer would have let stand straight. Indeed, the dominant theme in his design of other big buildings has been to create sculpture with a structural function.

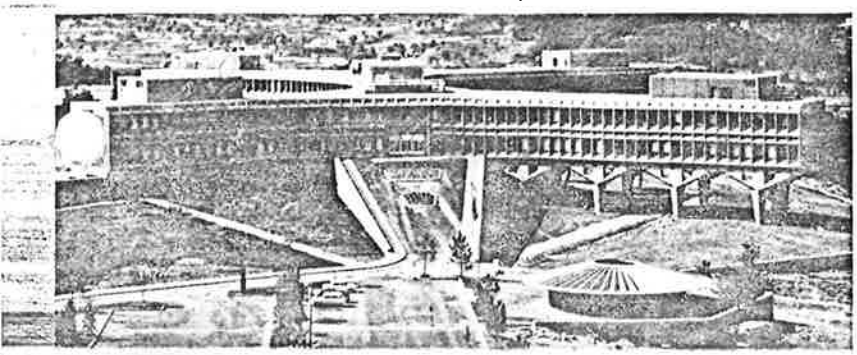
Strength and Spirit. Sometimes the results smite the eye and exalt the spirit. Majesty and strength shine in St. John's Abbey and University of Collegeville, Minn. The project's bell tower, a mighty raised slab of raw concrete, is among the best pieces of sculptural architecture this side of Le Corbusier's Ronchamp church. Manhattan's Whitney Museum, with upper gallery floors expressed in three cantilevers that extend further and further out from the building, has heft, urbanity and presence. But sometimes the effect is of too much strength, as in a muscle-bound cantilevered lecture hall at New York University. The Housing and Urban Development Department Building in Washington, despite its excellent detailing, looks ponderous. One problem, perhaps, is that such buildings are monumental in an age that is beginning to distrust monuments.

Not that Breuer minds; he has always been his own man. He lives in houses of his own design in New Canaan, Conn., and Wellfleet, Mass., with his wife and daughter, 18 (he also has a son, 29), and is known as a bon vivant, chess player and bawdy raconteur. As busy as ever, Breuer is constantly on the go. One project is a recreational town of 48,000 units along the dune-dotted Aquitaine coast in southwestern France. Another is the Koerfer House in Switzerland that just won a top architectural award. Back in the U.S. is a new hydro-power plant at Grand Coulee Dam that he describes as "Egyptian in its dimensions and cathedral in its feeling of emptiness, immensity and silence."

One always senses the old master's struggle for perfection, no matter what the problem. "Architecture is not the materialization of a mood," he says. "It should not be a mere self-portrait of the architect or the client, though it must contain personal elements of both. It should serve generations, and while man comes and goes, buildings and ideas endure." His varied work is thus unified by his humanism—an insistence that his buildings make life more pleasant for their users. It is a mark of greatness. ■ Philip Herrera

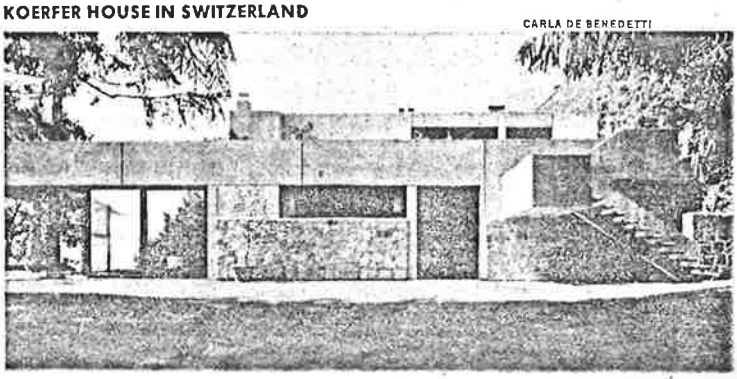
WHITNEY MUSEUM IN MANHATTAN

IBM RESEARCH CENTER IN LA GAUDE, FRANCE



KOERFER HOUSE IN SWITZERLAND

CARLA DE BENEDETTI



There can be no doubt that Marcel Breuer is the most important living architect. The extent and lasting validity of his contribution for well over half a century have no equal. And yet in contrast to other "form givers" of our time, Breuer defies classification: any attempt to label his contribution in simple terms is virtually impossible.

Breuer's unique and independently creative gifts came out early in his career, and much has been written on the subject of his origins in a provincial Hungarian town, his meteoric rise as one of the architectural "stars," the dynamic center of the Bauhaus image, his early work in Europe and England, to the period of his teaching at Harvard. My first encounter with him was when I was a student at Harvard in 1945. He gave the impression of being not that much older than his students. He exuded a warm spirit of comradeship, a yearning, searching spirit, a delight in finding satisfying solutions to design problems. We all knew his early work from books, but what made the greatest possible impression on us were the built images emanating from his Cambridge, Massachusetts office. The pilgrimages to his house at Lincoln, to the Haggerty House at Cohasset, the Chamberlain Cottage at Wayland, the Geller and Tompkins houses near New York, were absolutely shattering experiences to his students who, after all, had not seen or experienced any truly modern architecture in North America at that time, certainly none that had the air of authenticity, that generated such a sense of well-being and aesthetic joy.

Of all the teachers at Harvard at that time, it was Breuer who was the taste-setter. He combined diverse and normally irreconcilable tendencies: an almost lyrically romantic spatial aesthetic (and use of material) with disarmingly simple, uncanny "Gordian Knot" solutions to planning and structural problems. He stimulated in his students the development of designs that were at once essentially rational devices yet also deliberate, visually tantalizing compositions.

Later, when working with him in New York in 1946–48, I became intimately involved with his methodology. Every building design had as its theme a single strong idea. Plans were always basically direct in organization and resulted in beautifully related and sculptured masses. In house designs there was usually a spatially powerful living area with horizontal and often vertical interplay; sleeping areas were organized separately and were more compartmentalized. Detailing was direct and completely consequential: it was always universally applicable to the limited varieties of intersections that evolved from a design. The resulting technical systems were constantly refined and carried over from one project to another. Visual tension was generated in the juxtaposition of materials as much as in elevational compositions: synthetic smooth materials to natural rough stone, natural timber against manufactured white masonry blocks. This pulling of forces also existed strongly in his Mondrianesque glass wall subdivisions and in the relationship of solids to voids. Structural devices were exploited expressively: thin steel cable tension members held up visually heavy masses; walls, stair and ramp balustrades fulfilled their function but were also sculptural forms as well as logically shaped supporting elements. Breuer always had an instinctive concern with sun control—which also aided his aesthetic aims toward deeply textured exteriors.

In the great amount of his executed work from the 1950's to the 1970's, a continuing clear direction and logical development is evident. Each Breuer project consistently grew from the visual and technical experience of those preceding it (in contrast to the wild gyrations in form language of other celebrated—but now largely forgotten—practitioners of that time). The housing designs he developed have become the essence of prototypes throughout the world. The concrete technology he developed both in prefabricated and pour-in-place forms has been emulated everywhere—but none of the imitations have that instantly warm emotional appeal or rationally satisfying quality of his work.

The consistency of Breuer's work can best be illustrated by noting that themes developed in a seminal design concept of 1936, the Civic Centre of the Future, continue to recur—in the double Y-shaped office designs of Unesco in Paris, in the IBM Research Center, La Gaude, France, in the HUD Building in Washington, and in many other buildings.

No other modern architect's work has remained as valid visually and technically for 50 years and more as has Breuer's. His earliest, as much as his latest, buildings exude that unique and characteristic warmth and give the visitor a feeling of well-being. It took half a century for the world to rediscover the magnificent qualities of his "Wassily" and "Cesca" chairs. In our shallow era of short-lived thrills of appearance, it may take as long again for the world to fully appreciate and rediscover the great genius inherent in all the wealth of his architecture.

—Harry Seidler

Upon Receiving the Gold Medal

BY MARCEL BREUER, FAIA

I am grateful for the honor. It came as a complete surprise and it calls for some self-accounting, for some tangible contours of thought and work. There are questions to answer.

One of the most persistent questions to others and to myself concerns the line beyond which building and planning become more than just rational and the roof over our heads takes on the significance of architecture. This question concerns the demand that the building, the street, the square, the city, the road over the land—indeed, the whole man-made world, including low-cost housing—speak of a mental surplus, of an emotional plus, of a conceptional generosity; of a stance which is optimistic and as creative as a child's attention.

In this demand for a plus-surrounding (not plush surroundings, by any means!), the inanimate object gains an organic quality. That world of stone behind stone, of vistas, of weight and material, of large and small cubes, of long and short spans, of sunny and shady voids, of the whole horizon of buildings and cities: All that inanimate world is alive. It is as close to our affection as good friends, the family—right there in the center of emotional faith. It is important that we should not be disappointed in them, in our buildings and cities.

They are alive, like people. They have also their cycles of vigor, strength, beauty and perfection. They have also their struggle with age, with decline, with circulation troubles, with sagging muscles, with wrinkles. There is one difference though: They can be beautiful even in old age, even in ruins.

Here is where the eye may fool us, and let me say a few words about our visual perception. The eye is the most comprehensive of our senses: An image is received with the speed of light, with absolute speed. It is a most influential something, the eye. It may register notions before we can think; of all our senses, it is closest to our consciousness. In primitive languages, songs and proverbs, eyesight is the most precious possession of man. The split second of eye reception is, it seems, automatically linked with an appraisal of the object: not only whether it is big or small, black or white, curved or straight, but whether it is threatening or friendly, pleasant or not, beautiful or not. The eye is a powerful informer; it forms an esthetic judgment at a glance and, while buildings should be useful, well constructed and in harmony with our human-social world, the first impact—the eye impact—is perhaps a preconditioning of our sympathies.

Now, we know that, again, our esthetics are preconditioned by custom, by precedence, by preconceived opinion, by varied experiences of varying individuals.

I would like to think that if I have deserved this medal at all, it is at least half due to my efforts to check up on my eye. In a sense, I see the esthetic quality as a most abstract one, the most inner quality, although it is often adorned with glamor, with drabness, with rules of tradition, with excesses of wealth, with fashionable slogans, with moralizing, with pomposity. However, esthetics should be too good to be camouflaged.

Buildings should be not moody, but reflect a general, durable quality. Architecture should be anchored in usefulness; its attitude should be more direct, more directly responsible, more directly social, more technic-bound, more independent: symmetrical or nonsymmetrical. The builder should feel free to be similar and equally free to turn his back on precedence. He should be free to be scientific, free to be human, free to be nontraditional. The rapid esthetic of the eye should be in balance with the other aspects of architecture, with its living aspects, whether this balance is 50-50 or 10 to 90.

And there are buildings in the midst of an unfamiliar surrounding, serving foreign conditions. Also, there are buildings of a past historic period. They communicate to us to a greater and greater degree through the eye, less and less by rational and other qualities. Functions, usefulness, the details long past human demands cannot be reconstructed and fade into the unknown, whereas the eye is still active. Esthetics become independent of everything else. The photograph of a miserable slum may be so beautiful that, unconsciously, we forget slum conditions. The slow-motion film of an atomic explosion is one of the greatest visual impressions. It may make us forget what we actually face. The eye is playing its tricks with us.

Mesa Verde's cubistic cave towns are great sculptural compositions; they have been also the most inhuman fortifications ever conceived by man.

The esthetic quality of architecture is of the first order but not sufficient for a total justification.

Perhaps these few words will explain why the limitless domination of the eye should be balanced; why living architecture should have its usefulness, its structure, its social aspect—and its undiminished architectural eye-quality: its dimensions, its proportions, its material and surfaces, its structural composition and its textures, its spaces and proportions, its logic and justification. Only this combination of polar qualities can assure an architecture which is alive and of our time. □

BREUER, Marcel

letters supporting the award

JOHN CARL WARNECKE & ASSOCIATES

ARCHITECTS AND PLANNING CONSULTANTS, 417 MONTGOMERY STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94104 (415) 397-4200

October 15, 1980

Ms. Maria Murray
Director, Awards Programs
The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Subject: Nomination, 1981 AIA/ACSA Awards of Excellence in Architectural Education

Dear Ms. Murray:

It is with great pleasure that I have the opportunity to recommend Marcel Breuer for an award for his contribution to architectural education.

Marcel Breuer had just arrived in the United States when I had the opportunity to study under him at Harvard just before World War II. Besides the great contributions he has made to architecture, he was a great teacher, and I was privileged to have had this unique experience of being one of his students.

I am pleased to recommend Lajko for this honor.

Sincerely,

John C. Warnecke

John C. Warnecke, F.A.I.A.

JCW/rh

Landis Gores
Architect, F.A.I.A.

October 8, 1980

Maria Murray, Hon. AIA
Director, Awards Programs
American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Ms. Murray:

The annual call for nominations for the AIA/ACSA Award for Architectural Education has this year particularly stimulated, among several of my contemporaries and other colleagues, consideration of the propriety of conferring the 1981 Award on our longtime friend and/or teacher, Mr. Marcel Breuer. Our agreement is complete as to his preeminent qualifications, a living educator who had made outstanding contributions to architecture. On the latter count, his status as recipient of the AIA Gold Medal some years ago, as the first and to my knowledge only architect honored with a one-man show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and indeed as the last survivor of the epochal wave of historically memorable architects of the Twentieth Century, surely removes any doubt as to his position at the apex of our calling. At the same time, his advancing years and somewhat less than robust health combine to lend urgency to our raising of voices on behalf of his nomination to this educational honor without any hesitation or postponement.

In writing to support this nomination, I am well aware I may be suspect of prejudice from personal proximity because of my singular good fortune in having been both an early disciple and a nearby resident friend of Marcel Breuer over more than four decades now; but my devoted respect is, in my earnest conviction, entirely deserved in every aspect. On being graduated from a literary arts curriculum at Princeton in 1939, I chose without hesitation the Harvard Graduate School of Design for my professional training, against all comers including several architectural schools financially more accomodating in those lean years, having been quite galvanized by the atmosphere encountered there under Gropius and Breuer. Nor was my confidence in any way unsatisfied, aware as I soon became of the subtly stimulating and ever thought-provoking influence Breuer cast across the whole school; and when, fortunately in my final year, he was my immediate critic and mentor for the entire year, this period was truly one of full fruition for me - not to mention his personal warmth and encouragement, his communal good humour in times of constructive progress, and his revitalizing sympathy when matters became a bit more difficult.

Cross Ridge Road, New Canaan, Connecticut 06840 (203) 966-3089

In the past thirty years and more until very recently, Marcel Breuer has been neighbor and friend to me and to my family, indeed his selection of New Canaan as domicile was a powerful simultaneous correlative to our own settlement here; but, beyond our personal rapport, I have ever relished the occasions for continuing education my ostensibly social sharings of his company have afforded me. Truly, with Marcel Breuer, every hour betokens and brings new outlooks and new insights, new directions and new inspirations, no matter where or when it transpires. As Breuer's formal student I can vouch for only a few short years of intensely valuable pedagogical education; but ever since those now distant days I have honored him more than ever as a true guide and companion, showing me the highest essences of our calling both in his words and in his works.

I refrain from adding here, or even alluding to, the long roll of my fellow students profiting from comparable tutelage by Marcel Breuer during those Harvard days: their names are in many cases far better known and their accomplishments on a far wider scale than mine; but I am confident their testimony of gratitude for growth will run in every way parallel to mine.

Sincerely yours,

Landis Gores

Landis Gores

1735 New York Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006
Stanley Abercrombie, AIA, Senior Editor, Architecture
(202) 626-7426

AIA JOURNAL

Although architectural education is generally construed to take place in the studio or classroom, Marcel Breuer's enthusiasm for teaching has known no such limits.

As a young draftsman in his New York office for almost four years, I was privileged to have contact with Breuer almost daily during that time; like everyone else in his office then, I was his student. He never gave orders or even made suggestions without accompanying explanations. He never said simply, "Do it this way," but always, "Do it this way, because..."

His own brilliant career is proof that he had much to teach. Throughout that long career, he has also demonstrated the interest in young people, the patience, kindness and the generosity that distinguish the most exceptional teachers.

Stanley Abercrombie, AIA

13 October 1980

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Architects & Planners
2 Glen Street
Milsons Point NSW 2061
Telephone 922 1388 Australia

Ms Maria Murray
Director
Awards Programs
The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue
NW WASHINGTON DC 20006
USA

Dear Ms Murray,

As a former student of MARCEL BREUER at Harvard in the mid 1940's, I would like to nominate him for the 1981 AIA Award of Excellence in Architectural Education.

Breuer is not only a recognized world figure in architecture and design, but the role he played in architectural education is immensely important to the development of modern architecture.

Some of the most renowned architects in the USA and elsewhere were his students. The debt they and the architectural profession generally owes to this man, I suggest should be appropriately recognized.

Yours sincerely,

Harry Seidler

HARRY SEIDLER.

The Stein Partnership Architects 588 Fifth Avenue New York 10036 212 Plaza 7-0284

October 27, 1980

Ms. Maria Murray
Director of Awards Program
The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Cabin
North West Washington, DC 22006

Dear Maria:

I understand that Marcel Breuer's name has been nominated for the award for excellence in architectural education. This strikes me as a wonderful idea. In fact I can't, for the life of me, understand why it hasn't been awarded to him many years ago. I had the exceptional good fortune to be one of his students in the first class he taught when he came to America to work with Walter Gropius at Harvard. He came to be the model of what an architectural educator ought to be - concerned with the basic theory of architecture, with an understanding of students' needs and with optimism about their potentialities, able to demonstrate in his own work the things he was projecting for the students, and personifying in himself those qualities of greatness in architecture that are inspiring to students. With all this, he was unfailingly warm, humurous and sympathetic.

I know his influence has been felt not only by students studying directly with him but by others who know him and his work. He is such an obvious choice for the award that I am sure that all I am doing is adding one more note of confirmation to what must already be a foregone conclusion.

Kindest regards,

Dick

Richard G. Stein, FAIA

RGS:nr

Richard G. Stein FAIA Carl Stein AIA

Associate Mary Buckley AIA

CARL KOCH & ASSOCIATES, INC. ARCHITECTS

54 LEWIS WHARF BOSTON, MASS. 02110 523-7611

26 September 1980

Ms. Maria Murray, Director
Awards Programs
The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Ms. Murray:

I have just learned from Peter Blake that Marcel Breuer has not received an award for excellence in architectural education. I agree with him that he is certainly entitled to it and would like to add my name in support of those making this suggestion.

Although I never had him as a teacher, I worked in his office for a short while and learned a great deal. I found him an inspiring mentor.

Yours sincerely,

Carl Koch

Carl Koch

EDWARD LARRABEE BARNES, ARCHITECT, FAIA *410 East 62nd Street, New York City 10021 tel: TEmpleton 8-8500*

Armand P. Avakian, AIA
Hildegarde Bergeim, AIA
Alistair Bevington, ARIBA
Edward Z. Jacobson, AIA
Percy K. Keck, AIA
John M. Y. Lee

28 August 1980

Maria Murray, Hon. AIA
Director, Awards Programs
The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20006

Dear Miss Murray:

I enthusiastically second Peter Blake's nomination of Marcel Breuer for an AIA/ACSA Award for excellence in Architectural Education.

Sincerely,

Edward L. Barnes/lc

Edward L. Barnes

cc: Peter Blake

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news

ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE SCHOOLS OF ARCHITECTURE INC

1735 NEW YORK AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20006 (202) 785-2324

Richard McCommons
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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people

Marcel Jajos Breuer is the recipient of the 6th AIA/ACSA Award for Excellence in Architectural Education. The award will be presented by AIA President R Randall Vosbeck and ACSA President Richard C Peters at the Awards Banquet held during the ACSA Annual Meeting.

The ACSA/AIA award is presented each year to a living educator who has taught at least 10 years and who has made outstanding contributions to the field of architectural education. Previous winners include Jean Labatut, Henry L Kamphoefner, Lawrence B Anderson, G Holmes Perkins and Serge Ivan Chermayeff.

Breuer was born in 1902 in Pecs, Hungary. At the age of 18, he began his design and architectural studies at the Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany under Walter Gropius. He received his master's degree and was a Master of the Bauhaus in charge of the carpentry section from 1924 to 1928. During this time he began exploring tubular furniture and invented the "Wassily" chair. Breuer left Weimar to begin his practice as an architect and interior designer in Berlin. His first commission was a modern house in Weisbaden.

With Hitler in power, Breuer decided to leave Germany. He eventually settled in London, where he became associated with FRS Yorke. Among his important works at the time were an exhibition pavilion in Bristol and a design for a model project for the "Civic Center of the Future."

In 1937, Gropius asked Breuer to move to Cambridge, Massachusetts. to join him as a member of the Harvard faculty and as his partner in an architectural firm. As an associate professor, Breuer was greatly respected. His students included such noted architects as IM Pei, John M Johansen, Paul Rudolph, Sarah P Harkness and Philip Johnson. One of his first students at Harvard described him as ". . . the model of what an architectural educator ought to be--concerned with the basic theory of architecture, with an understanding of student's needs and with optimism about their potentialities, able to demonstrate in his own work the things he was projecting for the students and personifying in himself those qualities of greatness in architecture that are inspiring to students."

In 1946, Breuer moved to New York and established his firm Marcel Breuer & Associates. For the first several years, his practice was largely devoted to houses and smaller institutional buildings. According to his award nomination, "critics agree that he profoundly influenced domestic architecture in this country." His diverse American and European works have included St John's Benedictine Abbey, Collegeville, Minn; UNESCO headquarters, Paris; Whitney Museum, New York City; HUD, Washington, DC; New York University's University Heights Campus and the US Embassy in The Hague. Breuer was honored with the AIA's Gold Medal in 1968, and was the first architect to have a one-man show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He also received France's highest award in architecture--the French Academie d'Architecture gold medal--in 1978.

Breuer is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the National Institute of Arts and Letters and the Ordre des Architects. In addition to articles in various architectural journals, he is the author of Sun and Shadow: the Philosophy of an Architect and Buildings and Projects, 1921-1961.

At the age of 79, Marcel Breuer has made outstanding contributions to architecture and design, but the role he has played in architectural education is equally monumental. As one colleague wrote, "Throughout his long career, he has demonstrated the interest in young people, the patience, kindness and the generosity that distinguish the most exceptional teachers."

Pietro Belluschi, FAIA, will deliver the presentation remarks at the ACSA Annual Meeting Awards Banquet.

Edward Larabee Barnes, FAIA, will accept the award for Marcel Breuer.

THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS NEWS

MARCEL L. BREUER WINS

SIXTH ACSA/AIA AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

IN ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

Contact: Pete McCall
(202) 626-7465

For Immediate Release

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 1, 1981--Marcel Lajos Breuer, FAIA, a former master of the Bauhaus and former associate professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, has been selected by The American Institute of Architects and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture to receive their sixth annual Award for Excellence in Architectural Education.

AIA President R. Randall Vosbeck, FAIA, and ACSA President Richard C. Peters will make the presentation to Breuer at the awards banquet on Tuesday, March 24, during the ACSA annual meeting in Monterey, Calif.

The AIA/ACSA Award is presented annually to a living educator who has taught at least 10 years and who has made outstanding contributions to the field of architectural education. Previous award winners include Jean Labatut, FAIA, Princeton University; Henry L. Kamphoefner, FAIA, North Carolina State University; Lawrence B. Anderson, FAIA, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; G. Holmes Perkins, FAIA, University of Pennsylvania, and Serge Ivan Chermayeff, who taught at both Harvard and Yale.

(more)

1735 NEW YORK AVE. N.W.
WASH. D.C. 20006
(202) 626-7300

Breuer was born in 1902 in Pecs, Hungary. At the age of 18, he began his design and architectural studies at the Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany, under Walter Gropius. He received his master's degree and was a master of the Bauhaus in charge of the carpentry section from 1924-28. During this time, he began exploring tubular furniture and invented the "Wassily" chair. Breuer left Weimar to begin his practice as an architect and interior designer in Berlin. His first commission was a modern house in Weisbaden.

With Hitler in power, Breuer decided to leave Germany. He eventually settled in London, where he became associated with F.R.S. Yorke. Among his important works at the time, were an exhibition pavillion in Bristol and a design for a model project for "The Civic Center of the Future."

In 1937, Gropius asked Breuer to move to Cambridge, Mass., to join him as a member of the Harvard faculty and as his partner in an architectural firm. As an associate professor, Breuer was greatly respected. His students included such noted architects as I.M. Pei, FAIA; John M. Johansen, FAIA; Paul Rudolph, FAIA; Sarah P. Harkness, FAIA, and Philip Johnson, FAIA. One of his first students at Harvard described him as " . . . the model of what an architectural educator ought to be--concerned with the basic theory of architecture, with an understanding of students' needs and with optimism about their potential, able to demonstrate in his own work the things he was projecting for the students, and personifying in himself those qualities of greatness in architecture that are inspiring to students."

In 1946, Breuer moved to New York and established his firm, Marcel Breuer & Associates. For the first number of years his practice was largely devoted to houses and smaller, institutional buildings, according to his nomination.

Breuer designed numerous houses and "critics agree that he profoundly influenced domestic architecture in this country." His diverse American and European works have included St. John's Benedictine Abbey at St. John's University, Collegeville, Minn.; UNESCO headquarters, Paris; Whitney Museum New York City U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development building, Washington, D.C.; New York University's University Heights campus, and the U.S. Embassy, The Hague, among others.

Breuer was honored with the AIA's Gold Medal in 1968, and was the first architect to have a one-man show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He also received France's highest award in architecture--the French Academie d'Architecture's gold medal--in 1978.

Breuer received AIA Honor Awards for the Whitney Museum, New York City, in 1970; the Koerfer House in Lago Maggiore, Switzerland, in 1972, and the St. Francis de Salles Church in Muskegon, Mich., in 1973. He also received an award from the AIA and the American Library Association for the St. John's University Library in Collegeville, Minn., in 1968. Breuer was the recipient of the New York Chapter/AIA's 1965 Medal of Honor and the winner of two international aluminum competititons for furniture designs.

Breuer is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and the Ordre des Architects. In addition to articles in various architectural journals, he is the author of Sun and Shadow: the Philosophy of an Architect and Buildings and Projects, 1921-61.

At the age of 79, Marcel Breuer has made outstanding contributions to architecture and design, but the role he has played in architectural education is equally monumental. As one colleague wrote, "Throughout his long career, he has demonstrated the interest in young people, the patience, kindness and the generosity that distinguish the most exceptional teachers."

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