
James S. Ackerman

REMEMBRANCES

Born: Nov. 8, 1919, San Francisco, CA. 4 children. B.A., Yale, 1941;
M.A. (1947), Ph. D. (1952), New York University



James Sloss Ackerman Memorial

Contemplation: Opening music by Tony Ackerman

WELCOME

Karl Severeid

REFLECTIONS

Joseph Connors

John Pinto

Cammy Brothers

Homa Farjadi

Guido Beltramini

Anne Ackerman

Jesse Ackerman

Kubi Ackerman

Tim Sawyer

Jill Slosburg-Ackerman

CLOSING

Karl Severeid

Celebration: Closing music by Tony Ackerman

Reception Following in the Lobby

Contributions in memory of James Ackerman can be made to

Friends of the Community Learning Center

5 Western Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139

The family would like to express their gratitude to the Department of History
of Art and Architecture for their assistance in organizing this gathering.



Memorial Speakers

James Sloss Ackerman

Memorial Service at Harvard University

2017 14 02

Joseph Connors

Jill has asked me to talk about Jim in the context of the Fine Arts department of his day. Jim, a Californian educated by French emigré scholars at Yale and German emigrés in New York, went to the American Academy in 1948 to write what became a famous thesis on Bramante and the Vatican palace. In the late 1950s Harvard had considered hiring the great Germans, Rudolf Wittkower and Richard Krautheimer, but decided not to, thus condemning New York to be the center of Baroque studies and medieval architecture for decades. Jim was ready, after less than a decade at Berkeley, with volume one of *Michelangelo* just out, when Harvard decided to redeem its mistakes and start off with a new generation. He arrived in 1961. Volume two of *Michelangelo* (the catalogue that still amazes architectural historians) came out in 1964 and *Palladio* in 1965. I came fresh off the boat (the liner *United States*, in fact) in 1969.

The Harvard professors of the sixties and seventies now seem ancient history but many had an unconventional side, sometimes a streak of rebellion. Most were self-taught. Frederick Deknatel, who was a professor before he was a classroom,

moved from Spanish Gothic to Munch and shaped a new generation in the nineteenth century (like Michael Fried). Benjamin Rowland journeyed from Gothic Catalonia through the Khyber Pass to Bamiyan, Gandhara and the arts of India laying the groundwork for John Rosenfield, one of Jim's closest colleagues and his consultant when writing on the Jain temple at Ranakpur. John Coolidge, scion of a New England dynasty going back to the time of Bulfinch, son of a Harvard house master, threw class consciousness overboard to study the mills of industrial New England before winding up as director of the Fogg. George Hanfmann brought Prussian order to the excavations of Sardis. Ernst Kitzinger delved deep into the mysteries of the icon. I thought of them as the old lions. There was a lioness too, just one, but majestic: Agnes Mongan, curator and eventually director of the Fogg, who told us, in her aristocratic voice, wearing the pin given her by her friend Calder, that we were joining the Fogg family, a clan with strict rules but also the potential of lasting affections.

Jim and two other youngsters taught early modern (though they would never have called it that). Jim alternated with Seymour Slive in teaching the Renaissance-to-modern half of Fine Arts 13, that phenomenal success in general education still remembered fondly by thousands of Harvard graduates. For Renaissance painting Harvard in its wisdom went Berensonian and called Sydney Freedberg from Wellesley. Jim and Sydney were studied opposites in method, values, and voice. It was not easy to navigate between these shifting tectonic plates.

My most vivid memory of the two of them in action together dates from the morning of my oral exams. I stood outside the little room on the second floor of the Fogg waiting nervously. Jim and Sydney arrived but the room was not yet unlocked. We passed the time looking down into the courtyard where a giant crane was removing the German rococo statues of the Four Seasons that had graced the space since its construction. The new director of the museum, the first called from outside the Fogg family, wanted to bring in a new broom and this was his first, highly controversial, move. It sparked a dialogue between my professors. "What do

you think of this?” they mutually asked. Jim said that since he was always in favor of the New he was all for it. Sydney said that since he systematically opposed innovation in all its forms he was quite against it. Then they turned to me and asked, “What do you think?” The orals went rapidly downhill from there.

Jim really did embrace the New. Categorically. He was the one who pushed for new appointments, new fields, new approaches, like Islamic art or the social history of nineteenth-century art. He welcomed the new in daily life. (I have the distinct memory of first having heard about recycling from Jim.) It was new for a professor to make a film on the Renaissance. New, really unheard of, for a professor to question the premises and values of a field that seemed to be going great guns, even if such questioning was destined to be painful. Jim welcomed the new in dissertations. Medieval urban planning, Quattrocento painting (Sydney only allowed Cinquecento), Baroque Rome, earthquake-wracked Sicily, Spain, modern architecture and many more. We were a motely lot but Jim took us on.

Italy then was much farther away than India or China is today and so the relation of advisor/advisee was stretched thinner. We did not meet up for most of the two years I was in Rome and never spoke on the phone, (You could not get a telephone in Italy without a contact high in the Communist Party.) The lifeline was something few of you have ever heard of: the aerogram. This wisp of thin blue paper let you type a few hundred words on your little Olivetti. You then folded it origami-like, licked and sealed it, and dropped off at the Vatican Post Office (unthinkable to use the Italian PO). The replies took a few weeks but you savored them. Jim was wonderful in aerograms. There was advice, there was gossip, there was the high class but warm informality that so defined him. They weighed a tenth of an ounce but kept you going for weeks.

The last few years were difficult for Jim – such an athletic man confined to a wheelchair – but I for one am very grateful that he had them. It was a chance to see at every visit the loving care that Jill lavished on him. The conversations we

had in my visits were the best we ever had. Sharper than ever, he could sense when colleagues were not faring well. He was gracious enough to say he enjoyed seeing my photographs of Italy or India. We turned over every page of his last book when the proofs came, and when he got to the end, he wanted to start over again. There's a void now where Jim was. A wise and caring person, but also what I think of as a moral force, is gone.

Joseph Connors

I first met Jim in the fall of 1966, when, following the disastrous flooding of the Arno in Florence, he was helping to organize The Committee to Rescue Italian Art. I was invited to a meeting by the postcard you see here. At the time, I was a freshman considering majoring in what was then called Fine Arts. Little did I realize that this encounter would lead to a relationship that would embrace my undergraduate and graduate study, and shape my academic career.

In due course, Jim became my undergraduate tutor. I recall writing a series of papers on local buildings, including the Swedenborgian church on the corner of Quincy and Kirkland streets, and the Palladian Gulf station many will remember standing at the intersection of Mass. Ave. and Harvard Street. These written exercises reflected Jim's view of architecture as an emphatically social art. He saw – and presented – architecture contextually, as a medium serving the practical needs of society as well as expressing its values and aspirations. Jim's concern to look beyond questions of style, connoisseurship, and attribution felt very fresh, particularly in the context of the Fogg in the mid-1960s. His interests encompassed aristocratic houses and New England barns, urbanism and military architecture, construction and process, as well as result.

As a writer, Jim had an extraordinary ability to satisfy the expectations of specialists while making his work accessible to a more general public. He wrote beautifully and provided a standard towards which we aimed as students and, indeed, towards which we continue to aim. He brought the same standards to bear on his students' work. No art historical jargon escaped his red pencil. In his own publications, Jim never mystified the language of architecture. His limpid prose has the clarity of Palladio's illustrations, which accounts in no small measure for his wide influence, especially in Italy.

Jim's belief that academic life should not be isolated from the larger world and that art historians should be engaged with the present spoke with particular force to us in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Thanks in large part to the influx of government funding, the history of art was no longer the preserve of a privileged

few. Jim welcomed these new graduate students in all their social and economic diversity, and shared our concerns for Civil Rights and opposition to the war in Vietnam.

Jim never assumed that his views were free from error and wasn't afraid to change his opinion— witness the postscripts to his essays in *Distance Points*. His message that articulating a clearly stated point of view or interpretation yielded more productive results than the fruitless attempt to construct a watertight positivist box resonated with us. Better to aim high and sometimes fall short, than to play it safe. For Jim, the subjective dimension of art history wasn't a weakness, but rather a strength. Instead of denying that our view of the past was somehow unaffected by concerns of the present, he argued forcefully that only by acknowledging our contemporary perspective could we find our true voices.

In 1973, I suspect due in large part to one of Jim's persuasive letters, I went off to the American Academy in Rome to pursue research on my dissertation. In his day, Jim had been the recipient of the first of the new Fellowships in Art History that the Academy began offering in 1950. In later years he returned repeatedly as a Resident, and also served a lengthy term — seventeen years — on the Academy's Board. His affection for the institution allowed him to offer incisive and constructive criticism that greatly strengthened it.

Our correspondence in this period took the form of periodic reports on my research followed by Jim's helpful advice on how to shape my topic. Jim avoided micro-managing his graduate students, encouraging in them, instead, a sense of his confidence in their ability to get the job done. I greatly appreciated that approach. He had no interest in training clones, as a survey of his students makes clear. I've tried to treat my own students with the same respect he modeled for me.

Jim's letters invariably passed from academic shop talk to the issues of the day. One of my favorites was written at the height of the 1973 oil crisis and offered a trenchant critique of collusion by the great petroleum companies, concluding, "Whatever happens, the poor will pay the real cost. Like the indulgences preached for the building of St. Peter's, it may generate a socialist Luther and

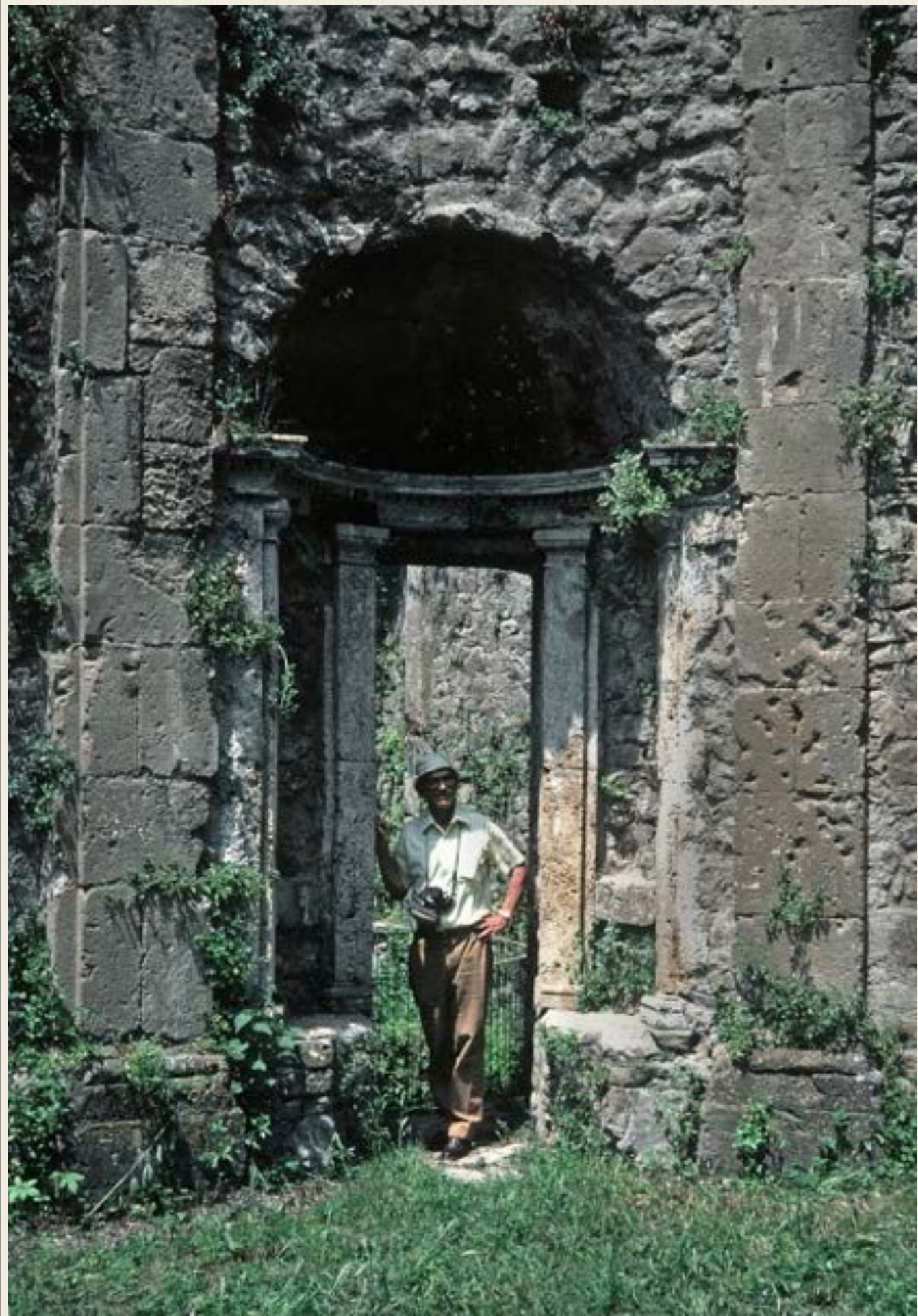
really stir things up” -- a perfect illustration of Jim’s Janus-like vision, linking past and present.

In 1975, Jim and Mildred stayed at the Academy while working on their film, *Looking for Renaissance Rome*, on which they collaborated with Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt and John Terry. Jim loved the challenges presented by the medium of film, as well as the opportunities it offered to engage new audiences. A decade later, when I was working on a short film on the Trevi Fountain, Jim provided sage advice and friendly encouragement.

While in Rome, Jim enjoyed expeditions to visit sites off the beaten path. On one occasion we sought out the ruins of the Renaissance city of Castro, spending the day wandering around the desolate landscape, taking photographs and measurements; here’s Jim’s hand on a Renaissance brick. On another memorable occasion, we were part of an Academy group that climbed the dome of the Pantheon. Unfortunately, Jim doesn’t appear in any of my photographs, but he was there, all the same. I vividly recall his expression of awe after leaning over the edge of the oculus to peer down into the void, as Peter Carl does in this image.

In the summer of 1982, when Jim was writing his article on the Tuscan Order, we drove out to the ruins of ancient Portus and then on to the hill town of Genazzano to inspect the remains of a Renaissance nymphaeum which had recently been attributed to Bramante. My favorite picture of Jim was taken on that day, framed by the architecture he loved, an image and a memory I treasure. It was a privilege to have studied with Jim, whose probing intellect and broad humanity remain a constant inspiration.

John Pinto



I was an undergraduate in the Fine Arts department when Jim retired, but as a Renaissance architectural historian, his mentorship has meant a great deal to me over the years. To speak of inspiring role models is a bit out of fashion, but I want to mention a few of the ways in which Jim has inspired me as a scholar and person.

Jim was taught by a generation of recent European émigrés who had reason to be suspicious of grand theories and aesthetics for itself. His most significant teachers at the Institute of Fine Arts were Richard Krautheimer and Erwin Panofsky, two of the twentieth century's most important art historians. Jim followed their model of scrupulous scholarship based on archival research and a close reading of buildings and objects, but he surpassed them in his ability to enliven his subjects and engage his readers. Jim succeeded in transforming historical sources into a vivid account of an architect's life, personality, and design decisions, as well as surrounding historical and economic circumstances. In this way, he made long dead architects relevant for living ones.

As a writer, Jim's essays and books reveal an ethical commitment to clarity. He never stated it in these terms, but it came through in everything he wrote. He was that rare thing among scholars: not a populist, but widely read. Art history may not move as quickly as scientific disciplines, but it is extremely unusual for a book to stay relevant as long as his have. His books on Palladio and Michelangelo, published in the 1960's, are still standard, required reading in architectural history courses across the U.S., the U.K., Italy, and Germany, the worldwide centers of Renaissance research. Architects who have discovered the Renaissance have done so through Jim's books, and to the extent that my work finds an audience among them, I know I have Jim to thank. Jim's books are as highly regarded by fellow scholars and specialists as they are by architects and general enthusiasts, as carefully footnoted and as scrupulously researched as the most arcane scholarly article.

In the course on Italian Renaissance Architecture that I taught for at the University of Virginia, many essays and chapters by Jim were featured on the syllabus. But I learned not ask students to turn in their paper topics the week after we'd

read Jim's chapter on villas, or every single one of them would come to my office telling me earnestly that they wanted to do a research paper on villas.

As accomplished as he was, Jim was always championing the work of younger scholars, telling me about some wonderful book that had won the Ackerman Prize he established with the Centro Palladio, or a remarkable new book by a friend or colleague I had to read. With some scholars of his stature, a conversation can be more like an opportunity to hear a bit more about their recent work. With Jim, it was never like that, he was always eager to hear what I was working on, wanted to read drafts of essays I was writing, and sent back detailed and encouraging comments. And he always wanted to talk about work. I remember running into him at Broadway Market in my first or second year of graduate school when he said, "I want to talk to you about Giuliano da Sangallo's use of shadow." It was his interest that led to an important discussion in Vicenza in the early 1990's, as I was mulling over whether to focus my studies on architecture or painting. "You should be an architectural historian," Jim advised, "with painting you have to deal with all that iconography."

Jim is widely known for his generosity to younger scholars, students and peers, but he could also be a sharp critic. His criticism was never in the least mean spirited, only a reflection of his high standards, which he also applied to himself. Last spring when I visited him, I saw his hand corrections on the proofs of his book, including one that read, "This is boring and long; cut" at the top of one of the chapters.

Related to his self-criticism was his capacity, even eagerness, to revise his ideas and rethink his assumptions. When I saw Jim at the College Art Association conference in Boston, 2006, over an impromptu lunch he described how his recent trips to India, Turkey and Egypt made him realize that the way he'd taught survey classes at Harvard for many years was all wrong. "I would do it completely differently," he said.

His interest in India led him to take several return trips and to write about it, demonstrating that his curiosity had no geographic boundaries. Doctoral departments as they are currently configured encourage a high level of specialization al-

most from the beginning. We train art historians to know their geographic and chronological corner extremely well, and most stay comfortably within it. Jim's curiosity encompassed not only Indian temples, but Frank Gehry's newest building in Paris, Leonardo da Vinci's optical theories and photography.

Beyond his scholarship, Jim was deeply engaged with advocacy for the arts at Harvard and beyond. I recently found an article from the *Crimson* from 1965 in which Jim, as chair of the department, takes issue with the way the University is commissioning new buildings. He was quoted saying, "though a building lasts longer, costs more, and can cause more discomfort than a professor, we often acquire it with less care and expert advice."

On another front, Jim told me about how when Yo Yo Ma was an undergraduate at Harvard, touring the world without any opportunity to earn course credit for performance or practice, he pushed the University to do more to support its musicians and artists. Jim's sympathy with artists had deep roots. He wrote to me in 2012, "A while back I was asked by the Yale ROTC to contribute to a collection of graduates' experience in the Army; I discovered a huge file of letters that my mother had saved from my service in Britain, Africa and Italy in WW 2, and, to my great surprise, about thirty drawings and watercolors I made in the huge amount of time I wasn't employed. I was amazed because 1, I didn't remember having done them, and 2, I didn't know I had the ability."

Once he rediscovered his drawings, he returned to the practice, and when I saw him last in November he brought out his recent pencil drawings to show me, subtle studies of light and shadow drawn from the window of his house in Westport.

Finally, I can't leave out one more important thing I admired about Jim: his bicycle. As some of you know, he worked with a local bike shop to design a three-wheel bicycle that he used after the point that the two wheel one was no longer feasible, well into his nineties. To me, in addition to being a feat of engineering and invention worthy of Leonardo da Vinci, this was a statement of who Jim was.

Cammy Brothers

JIM ACKERMAN- LIFE OF LINES

It is a privilege to be here today. Thank you Jill for your invitation and thank you to the organizers of this special day when we are here to celebrate Jim and his extraordinary life.

As an architect, it is hard to talk about someone whose writings and scholarship on architecture have already been recognized by so many peer scholars as ‘Pure nuggets of gold’. Writing we admired as students of architecture and later learned again as teachers. How lucky we felt, Mohsen and I, to have then had the chance to meet Jim and Jill soon after our arrival in Cambridge as young faculty members and then engage with them as our clients. The deep architectural knowledge of Jim and artistic eye of Jill provided us, as designers of their living and library spaces, with a delightful set of conditions, an inspiring sense of calm adventure. Over many years, our friendship developed beyond our original professional one. I am grateful for the invitation to say a few words on dear Jim and the personal inspirations his work and life have offered me as an architect.

In recounting his experience of London during the war, Jim once told us about his stay in a house in Bedford Square. There was not enough room for him to sleep, so he ended up passing the night crouching in a small bathtub in the attic. Some of you might know that, Bedford square in the Bloomsbury has always been and remains in fact an elegant piece of Georgian architecture in London. It also happens to be the location of the AA School of Architecture where I spent a lot of time as a graduate student and later as a faculty member. I had exciting memories of my experience in those Georgian buildings now transformed to house a school of architecture. However, imagining Jim in the attic bathtub in the same location during the war brought a new dimension, a new historical depth to my spatial memory of Bedford Square.

More importantly it was pure serendipity to hear the story of the attic from a scholar who had cast so much light and depth to the understanding of architectural history. For an architect remembering Jim's critical questions about processes of design thinking and imagined idealized bodies in Renaissance buildings made the story all the more poignant.

This unexpected story and its wondrous, funny juxtaposition remained in my memory as an exciting secret of Bedford square, an unimaginable fact. Later, it occurred to me that imagining Jim's long body and its awkward difficult fit in the small attic tub, was perhaps analogous to his critical readings of implicit conceptual figures and explicit geometries in buildings. Analogous to when he disclosed lines of thought relating building plans and sections; or when he analyzed outline or structure relative to the idealized human figure, or indeed analogous to the embodied lines of force in the body of the building.

In his questioning of the Milan Cathedral drawings Jim pointed to the plan of columns projected in geometric points and lines standing as abstract figures versus geometries found in material practice positioning columns and ribs instead of understanding them as lines of force as was assumed in the 19th century analysis of Gothic architecture. This essay which was written already in his early years as a PHD candidate caused us to face our unconscious rational biases as architects and to posit a more difficult relation between aesthetic values of an idealized form and those delineating practiced know how.

Jim's scholarship does not deny conflicting ideas. He articulated distinctions in the significance of lines as lines of force or delineations of physical outlines, ideal proportions or the imaginary projected and practiced geometries. He clarified ideas on the geometries in architecture relative to the human body. Yet examining the relation between material structure and the representational surface In Milan cathedral and later in scholarship on Michelangelo's architecture, he brought to

light operations in design which recognized a more conflictual conjunction of such distinctions at once discovering the implications and force of their coincidence.

The Bedford Square bath-tub image delineated such conflictual conditions. In the experience of war dictating the interior space and overriding comfort, Jim had accepted the awkward position wherein his elegant figure under pressure would literally fit into the building in tension. Could this coincidence also mark his fascination with the geometry of shifting focal points and orientations in space as a kind of socio ethical physics?

Ackerman's writings situate the consciousness of society and history and find their translations in the workings of architecture. Palladio's villas and landscapes for clients set the stage within their socioeconomic history. By situating the human body in more than its abstract lineament in the architecture, one could say he brought to life the dynamic diagram of these multi layered working relationships in buildings. In Jim himself, I suggest the relation was marked by an acceptance of the world in its conscious relearned dimensions alongside the unconscious joyful resonances in life conditions.

Getting to know Jim personally, I saw that he engaged serious scholarship with a deep sense of lively lightness. He took pleasure in play and the chance material conditions of everyday life. A few years ago I witnessed the pleasure he took in swimming in Walden pond when the water offered a certain playful levity to his aging body. I recall too, his hearty laughter as he read book in their garden on a warm summer afternoon.

For an architect these coincidences between the physics of the body and those of mental orientations are useful embodied diagrams. Jim's scholarship showed us the crisscrossing of mental orientations with the physical body of building. In his

person, Jim's awesome intellect crisscrossed his spirited life enriching it with his deep humanity.

It was a happy occasion to learn while working on their house, that in this important scholar's studio Jim read standing upright. A habit simply, but a position which he thought offered him focus and full attention. When writing however, he needed to type sitting down. In their home, he had found a spot which could give him the least bounded walls. A piece of conservatory-like space away from the interior. A space apart, you might say.

When designing these spatial marks of Jim's work patterns gave us a diagram of his library as a continuous wandering wall surface ascending and descending throughout the house overlapping with chance moments of daily life through the bedroom, the stairs and the study. The diagram also gave us the outline design of his desk: a rectangular horizontal surface at his sitting position, a datum which extended upwards to become a standing lectern, and whose shift in angle would create divergent orientation for his reading position. The object was designed as a metal plate; its bent edges compensated for its extreme thinness to create structure for the surface. The bent surface would extend down to the four legs, which in their folded planes and diminishing dimensions achieved a structural base.

In my mind this was a meandering structure, where a playful geometry would stand between its material structure and embodied figure. It was at once a table and a lectern- a diagram we thought Jim might enjoy. After all, he had pointed us to function of form as simultaneously an emotional response and an intended idea built in material form. In a crossing of the geometries of its reasoned diagram and material lightness, this form intended to catch the lively lines of Ackerman's body at work.

Homa Farjadi

Cambridge March 2017

The first time that Jim Ackerman saw Italy was in July 1944. And he saw it from the sea.

He had enlisted as a volunteer to fight the Nazis and his company had come up from Africa to the Naples area. This was the first of the many debts that we Italians have contracted with him over the next seventy-two years.

With the army, Jim made his way up Italy as far as Milan. In April 1945 he even liberated Mantua single handed. It was like some Neorealist film: in a jeep he drove into the city of Alberti, Mantegna and Giulio Romano, without realizing that he was the first Allied soldier to get there. He was surprised to be feted like a hero by a wildly jubilant crowd. They thought that he was in the advance guard of the whole army. But the army was actually still a long way off.

Three years earlier, in 1942, he had begun a thesis on ancient Greek sculpture with Karl Lehmann at the NYU Institute of Fine Arts. But the following year, he left for the front. In Spring 1945, after the liberation of Milan, he was sent to the Certosa di Pavia. In the Carthusian monastery he had to supervise the transfer of archives. Strolling through the courtyards was an experience that was to change his life. As he wrote: "This experience solidified my decision to make the art and architecture of Italy the focus of my work as a scholar and teacher". I must say that I'm very sorry about that great loss for Greek sculpture. And recently I made a pilgrimage to Pavia to offer thanks for having sent Ackerman on the road to the Renaissance!

From the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, Jim wrote three books on Italian Renaissance architecture. They dealt with the Belvedere in Rome, Michelangelo, and Palladio, respectively. His books were soon translated in Italian and their impact was far reaching. The Italians discovered a new approach to the history of architecture. Instead of the antiquated history of styles, they found a new humanistic discipline. In Ackerman's books the enquiries into the construction stages of buildings

were enriched with visual and archive sources, historical and social contexts, and all the functions. He thus broadened the vision beyond the constructed building to include the personality of the architect. With a few exceptions, there was a tremendous gulf between Jim's books and works published on the same subject in Italy around that time. Conceived by architects working halfway between the library and the drawing board, the Italian books interpreted architectural forms as if they were timeless and with no context. Today those books have been forgotten, but no one begins to study Michelangelo or Palladio, without having read Ackerman's monographs. They are simply unrivalled (believe you me, for twenty-five years I've been trying to write something even remotely as eloquent as Jim's book on Palladio, but he is always unreachable).

There is one case, however, when the relationship between Jim and Italy did become a two-way exchange. This was through his membership of the board of the Palladio Centre in Vicenza. He joined in 1974, and was actively involved right up to December 2016 – a whole forty-two years! In Vicenza Jim worked for years alongside Howard Burns and Joe Connors, who are here today, as well as with Christof Thoenes, Fernando Mariás, Arnaldo Bruschi and especially Manfredo Tafuri, to mention just those with whom he had a special relationship. In over forty years on the Palladio Center board, Jim never shied away from new challenges as he prepared courses and seminars. He even agreed to become the editor of our journal, *Annali di architettura*, and did a great job for five years. His authority was beyond discussion. One example is when he was awarded the prestigious Balzan Prize in 2001 for the history of architecture. At the urging of Fernando Marias and Howard Burns, Ackerman's name was unanimously put forward as a candidate by the board of the Palladio Centre despite the fact that other members were in with a good chance of winning. After receiving the award, Jim allocated a large part of the prize money for the publication of first books by young architectural historians. This year the eighth volume in the series will be published.

On a more personal note, Jim was always a very affectionate, steadfast friend to my family and myself. When our son Matteo was born, we wanted to publish an essay to celebrate his birth. It's actually a 19th-century Italian tradition. Jim pre-

sented us with an important essay written for the occasion: “Leonardo da Vinci’s Church Designs.” For several years this bibliographical rarity, privately printed in Vicenza, was a librarian’s nightmare.

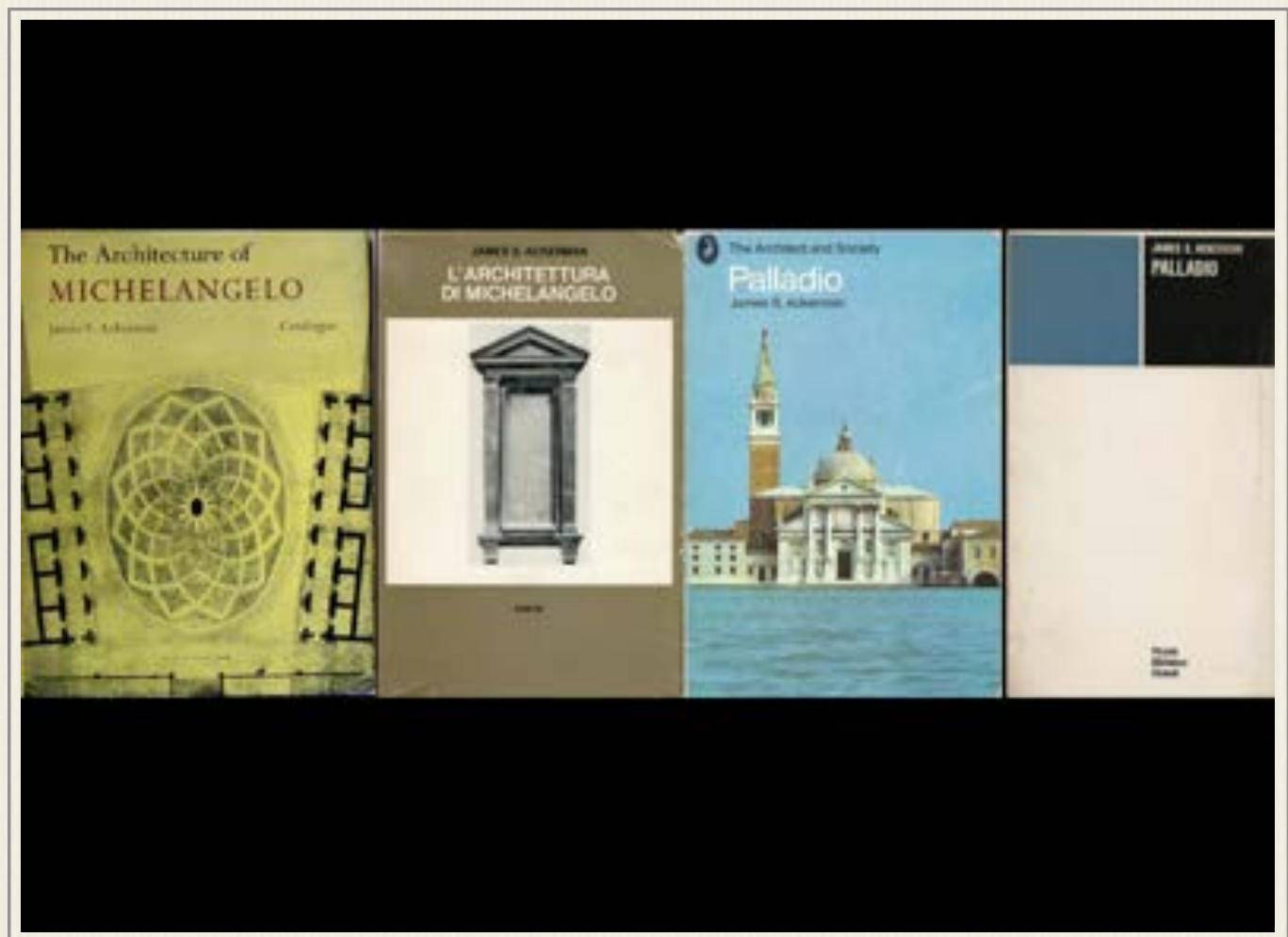
I have worked for over twenty years at the Palladio Centre, and Jim was always there for me with advice and support. He inspired me to adopt resolute stances, not to fear change, and he taught me that it was our duty to try and improve the world around us.

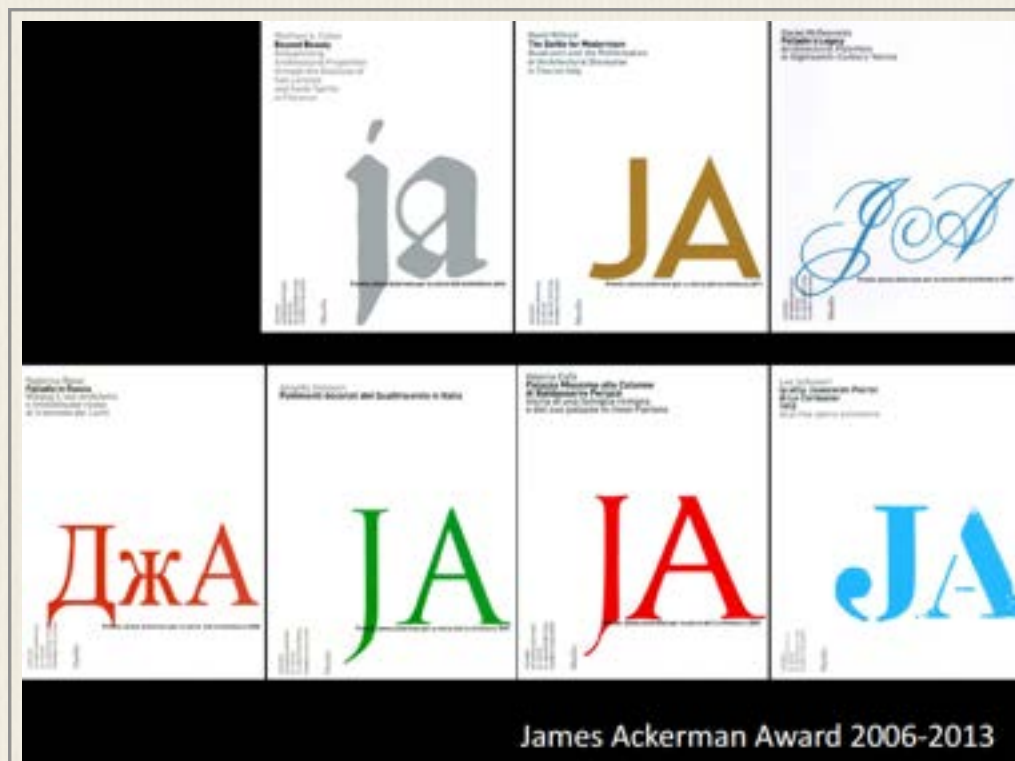
In 2012 we were designing our Palladio Museum, the place where we involve visitors in our research work at the Center. We wanted to create a kind of permanent workshop, where the contents of each room were described in first person by leading Palladian scholars. By using projectors, their scaled-down talking images were to magically appear on the walls, like little genies from some Aladdin’s lamp. Typically, Jim was the first to volunteer for filming. And today, his unmistakable deep voice still echoes in the first room of the museum. Every now and then, I stop to look at him and I listen to these words: “Today, Palladianism in most countries means going back to an earlier age and expressing the autocratic ideas of that age. But what Palladianism should be in our time is a respect for form as the basic principle of architecture, a transmission of his sense of warmth and light in buildings through the use of materials, and a respect also for the scale and character of the places in which he put his buildings, while in the countryside the interplay of the architect with the environment is foremost: and it’s a rare thing today to see that.”

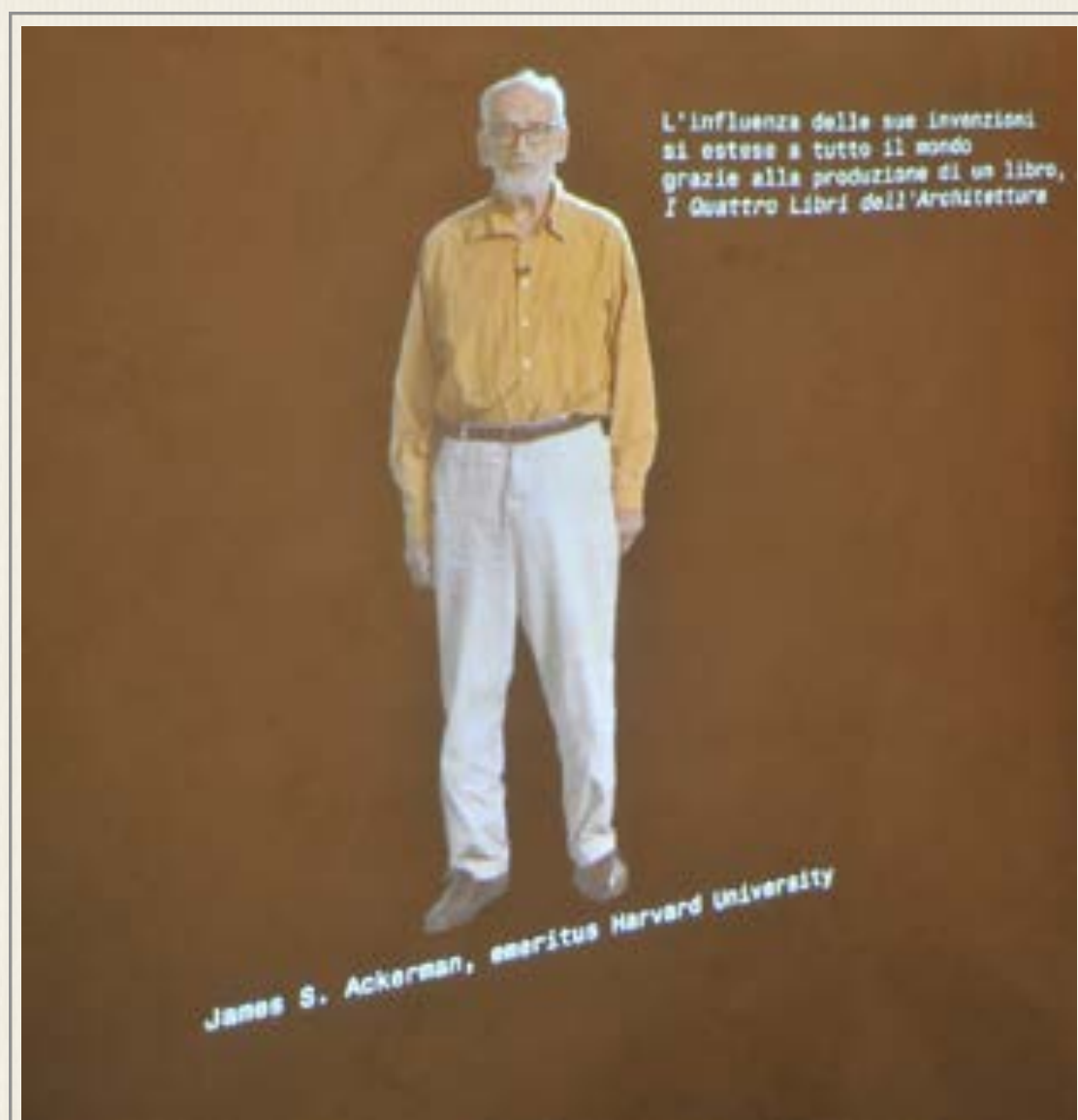
I would only add that these words were spoken by an exceptionally rare man.

Guido Beltramini









Over the years I've often met people who when they found out I was Jim's daughter would tell me what a great and generous teacher he was or equally how sorry they were that they had never studied with him. I was never a part of his academic world but I want to share some stories about what I learned from him .

In August in the early seventies I was in Vermont for a weekend, and He came out of his study wearing his dairy farmer outfit with a distressed look on his face. He was usually so optimistic and he had this plodding walk where he'd hunch over and hum to himself. We teased him when we saw him doing it and he'd laugh, a little embarrassed that we'd caught him in a purely joyful act. But this day he said to me "I'm done. They're finally going to figure out what a fraud I am. It's over" He was struggling over a new class that he was planning to teach in the fall. I said the things you're supposed to say in that situation, that he'd been teaching for 25 years and that he'd always loved it and been good at it, and I was sure everything would turn out all right, but he remained unconvinced . I left to go back to NY and worried. He was not one to pick up the phone so two months later when I called, he answered with his familiar upbeat "hi". I gingerly brought up the subject of the class and he said "Oh, oversubscribed, a total success. "

Another time when I was a teenager sitting at the white saranin tulip table in the kitchen where most of our connections took place, he was more than glum. There had been a show at the Fog where everyone brought in works from their own collections without their names attached and people guessed who had brought in what piece. He had a Klee pastel that he'd bought in Rome for two hundred dollars, he notoriously didn't spend money on art, and people thought it was a fake. He was devastated. He thought it proved that his colleagues didn't think he had a good eye. I said they don't even know its you, not understanding that he felt that his abilities were being unconsciously questioned.

When I was a kid I wanted to impress him by recognizing who had painted a particular canvas without looking at the signature or names on the plaques. I saw Starry Starry Night hanging on the walls of many friends bedrooms and excitedly pointed it out to him. "Poster art", he grumbled too loud so everyone heard. Years

later I'm living in New York and he calls to say he's coming to see the Van Gogh show at the Met will I join him. I said, "but dad, I thought we hated Van Gogh". He said, 'we changed our mind.' The show was great and I remember the joy he felt looking at an unusual large landscape. He wasn't afraid to change his mind, he was open to new things except when he wasn't. On his last trip to NYC on his own I took him to Moma to see the Gauguin show thinking he would make another discovery, but no, he lasted maybe ten minutes.

Another time we were at a show of works that were being auctioned by the estate of Helena Rubenstein. I found a painting I liked and was staring at it, a Cezanne or Monet I always tried to pick out the stuff worth looking at by myself. He came around and said "don't waste your time, it's a fake. "I argued a little of course because that was my job and he pointed out his reasons. Unbeknownst to either of us, a large crowd had gathered behind and one man started yelling that he was going to bid on the picture and what right did dad have to say it wasn't authentic. In these situations, he never said anything about who he was and I slowly had to pull him to safety. This happened a lot when we were looking at art and he would talk about what he was seeing. People would gather around and disagree with him or deliver their own opinions. He never pulled rank.

He hated dishonesty and the cheating that went on during exams at Harvard. He told me about the ways people had invented to cheat and he took it very personally. After seeing how upset he got, I never cheat on a test.

In the mid sixties, his best friend Jesse called to ask dad to go with him on the Selma to Montgomery march after several civil rights activists had been killed. He wanted to go, but my mother said no. She wouldn't allow him to put himself at risk given the fact that she was disabled. He made the wrenching decision not to go, but told me that if anything happened to his friend, he wouldn't be able to live with himself and I knew it was true. I learned that sometimes there is no right decision and we have to make one anyway.

At thirty he made the almost impossible decision to remove my mother from an iron lung against the advice of all but one progressive doctor and in so doing saved her life.

When we were little, he liked to torture us by letting the gas gage in the car go down to zero, by running out of gas and money on camping trips, and by driving to San Francisco for a tense visit with his parents without the twenty five cents needed to cross the bay bridge.

But he was also intrepid; taking three kids and a woman in a wheel chair to Greece after a major flood to places where nobody spoke English. Tony learned Greek in a few days which helped.

We also went to Czechoslovakia in the early sixties where the inside of the car was completely taken apart and some letters confiscated. We were the only people in a restaurant in Prague that had elaborate menus but no food and a guide who was recording us.

We drove across the country many times in cars that broke down in the desert or had to be abandoned at the end of the trip. He had a talent for buying lemons. That was his attempt at living dangerously

On a beach walk, He doubled over as if he was going to be sick. When I asked him what was wrong, he said that he saw a severed foot in an old boot that was lying in the sand. I said he was teasing but he convinced me that he'd really seen it. I obsessed about it for the hour long walk and on the way back I got up my courage to look in the boot. No foot. And it turns out he played this same trick on Sarah which I just recently learned.

In the sixties we argued about the value of education for women and their place in the world; a topic never entirely resolved for us. He took his responsibility to my mother, to work, and to his community, very seriously and overall he had a varied and exquisite life. But the things I will remember are the little things he taught me like keeping the mouthwash in the refrigerator and using Arm and Hammer toothpaste. A complicated man, but a giver of simple gifts.

Anne Ackerman

Whether friend, relative, colleague or student, I think a common reason we are all here is because of the beauty my father saw in the ordinary, the delight he got from his work, and the optimism he had for life. It's not easy to adjust to life without him. Recently, I found an email he wrote a couple years ago.

Subject: My condition

My latest news is that I suffered a life-changing fall that crushed two lower vertebrae of my spine, causing great pain. I spent five weeks of physical therapy at nearby Spalding Rehabilitation Center. The spine healed itself quickly, but I can no longer walk or stand without the support of a wheelchair or walker. Nonetheless I'm very optimistic; I have a book of essays on the phenomena of change in art and architecture coming out at Yale Press in London within weeks. I recently celebrated my 96th birthday at a party attended by over 30 family and friends. We have bought and rebuilt a house in Westport, MA, 1 1/2 hours south, where we can spend weekends and the whole summer and go to a nearby beach to sniff the ocean. My book which is in process at the Yale Press in London is going to be a blockbuster.

Three lines of life-changing bad news, and five lines of him full of life.

Jesse Ackerman

Since Jim's passing, I've been considering what of him lives on in us. And in so doing I turn to my own experience of him, and his legacy as it's reflected in my life and those of my children.

People often ask me if I chose my profession due to his influence, whether I was consciously trying to follow in his footsteps in some way. And the answer is no, at least not deliberately - growing up on another continent as a child, I saw Jim every summer in a more domestic role, in Cambridge, or in the house he and Mildred spent the summers in in Vermont, and never really got a good sense of what it was he did, other than having vague awareness that, whatever it was, he was very good at it and was well-respected in his field. It was only on the rare occasions that he came to Prague that I had a chance to glimpse the city through his eyes, which was a revelation to me and has no doubt contributed, at least subconsciously, to the direction that my life and career would take.

In this way, Jim unquestionably influenced me, but I think in retrospect that his life had an impact on mine in more subtle ways than him nudging me in one way or another. For one thing, having kids myself now and seeing their interests develop with some interesting cross-generational symmetry makes me think that there must be some hereditary forces at work. I would love to think that their obsessive and prolific creativity is part of Jim's legacy living on in them. For Jim's intellectual engagement with the arts wouldn't have been possible without his artistic sensibilities - he was a wonderful artist in his own right, something that I had no inkling of until only a few years ago when he showed me the watercolors he produced during his time in Italy in the war, and then again at the end of his life, when he found comfort in drawing at his drawing table in Westport.

But ultimately I think his legacy for me, is both more subtle and much more profound, and I'm not referring to the probably hereditary male Ackerman quirks

like absent-mindedness. What I always admired most about him was his way of looking at the world, his restless curiosity and openness to new ideas and experiences. Just one example, but one that really stood out for me, was when he returned from his trip to India with Jill in 2006 and confessed that the trip completely changed his perspective on authorship and the role of narrative in architecture and arts, and I remember being amazed and inspired that someone who already had achieved such prominence in his field, and staked his positions, as it were, was willing and open to have his positions completely change.

And this for me is Jim's legacy: his youthful curiosity, his flexibility of mind, that never diminished, even as his physical faculties did; his openness to new ideas and experiences, the fact that he listened to Nick Drake in his 90s and never faltered in his engagement with the world – finishing his last book just months before he died, reading the newspaper every day – and his urge to interpret the world and pull meaning from it; all of these characteristics influenced me as a child, before I had much sense of the exact fields he applied his gifts to. And it is this that I will remember of him, and take as much of it with me as I can, not only for my own sake, but for that of my children. In closing, I would like to say how incredibly grateful I am that they had the opportunity to know him in their own way, while they were already old enough to retain some memory of him. And for that opportunity I am grateful not only to Jim, for being who he was, and for so clearly showing his love for them, but also to Jill and Jesse for being there for him and supporting him in his final years. So thank you.

Kubi Ackerman

(bragging)

James S. Ackerman is ‘my’ uncle.

Yeah, I used that line on an art school co-ed in my early twenties.

It worked like an aphrodisiac. Who knew?

At the time, I had no idea of what he actually did - - outside of being the affable, dad of my closest cousins. I also knew that my mother believed that her little brother, ‘Jimmy’ ‘walked on water’.

Jim grew up in a splendid home, high on a hill in San Francisco, with panoramic views of the Bay, the Golden Gate Bridge and the Palace of Fine Arts.

He was the youngest of three. Usually, by the third child, a parent will give up on the idea that they can make over their children in their own image. Not Jim’s father, a corporate lawyer, whose stoic devotion to the almighty dollar was the guiding principal of the family. In his world, ‘you grow up, become a lawyer, marry an heiress!’

On the other hand, Jim’s mother, (an heiress), happened to also be a gifted artist and patron of the arts. She decorated their home with works by ‘up and coming’ artists and her son ‘Jimmy’ admired not only her work but the art world that gave meaning to her life.

In 1933, just as the Nazis were coming to power, the family embarked on a grand tour of Europe. My grandmother described how she had to write ahead to each hotel to make sure they accepted Jews. Brownshirts were already causing trouble in the streets.

Against this backdrop, our faded family photographs bear witness to

fourteen year old Jimmy's awe when he first beheld European art and architecture.

A few years later, Jim returned to Europe as a soldier. His brother Lloyd, Jr., ten years older, and, by all accounts, a quiet, sensitive man, was stationed in China. Lloyd Junior had been in love with a special girl back home but his father demanded he break off this romance and marry a 'suitable' woman.

In May, 1945, Germany surrendered. A month later, when most soldiers were looking forward to going home to their loved ones, Jim's older brother died by suicide. It seems he couldn't face returning to a life he hadn't chosen.

Jim was in Italy when he received the news and I can only imagine how it affected him. Clearly, he remained true to his own calling despite his father, who predicted that Jim was doomed to failure because 'academia is an insignificant profession.'

But Jim devoted himself, with laser focus, to his pursuits and he married for love - both times.

And he didn't 'walk on water' as my mother believed, he walked around, just like the rest of us, . . . triumphs in one hand, angst in the other.

Jim and I enjoyed mitigating some of our angst by attending the meditation center together. In one of the Dharma talks, not long ago, a respected guru from India was delivering a talk on death and dying. (We both happened to have a passing interest in that particular subject.)

The guru began his talk by proclaiming that 'all of us will die'! And then, he

went on and on saying the same thing over and over again. “no one escapes death” “you will die, I will die” “death is inevitable” Well, Jim quickly lost interest as he often did in these talks. He leaned over and whispered in my ear that he had to use the restroom. I helped him up, gave him his cane, and off he shuffled toward the door. The guru, surprised that someone would leave in the midst of his important talk, said, “Excuse me sir, where are you going?”

Jim replied, “I’m going to die.”

Well that was the end of that Dharma talk; seventy suffering souls erupted in hysterical laughter. A few minutes later as the hilarity began to subside, Jim re-entered the room with a sweet beatific smile, and another surge of laughter engulfed the room.

Yup, that’s my Uncle Jim. With one short sentence and characteristic humor, he provided what everyone had sought that evening; momentary relief from angst.

You’ve been a storybook uncle to me, Jim

You stepped up when my birth family was in crisis.

You honored my particular gifts.

You gave me a place to live when I moved to Boston to attend the college you recommended.

You showed me, by example, just how far to the political left I could lean without toppling over.

You introduced me to a lifestyle among writers, filmmakers, actors, and artists.

And it was through you that I met a young woman who became my wife of 43 years and the mother of my children. Greater influence, I cannot imagine.

Yep, James S. Ackerman is my uncle.

You are missed.

Timothy Sawyer



Thank you for coming today. Thank you for your profound notes of tribute and condolence. And thank you to Jim's department at Harvard and especially to Deanna Dalrymple for organizing and hosting our gathering.

The sketch you see is what I found myself doing as I thought about writing about Jim. In my cartoon, he is a core with radiating offshoots. There you have it.

Last weekend I traveled to Chicago to accept Jim's most recent award, the Henry Hope Reed Award for lifetime achievement in the fields of architecture and planning. When Jim thought that his health might prevent him from attending that event, he asked me to tell the attendees what was important to his practice as an art historian. "My approach to art history," he said "was first influenced by a one-page study of a villa by Palladio in *Architectural Review* by Georgina Masson (the nom-de-plume of Marion Johnson), and most importantly by the method of my Italian colleagues Michelangelo Muraro and Manfredo Tafuri, pioneers in the analysis of buildings in terms of their social, political, and economic impact." For Jim, it was impossible to understand anything without knowing its context.

So in knowing and appreciating Jim, here is some context.

Jim was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. His family was Jewish, but he had no religious training, and his father fretted over the anti-Semitic society which he aspired to join in San Francisco. Jim's father, Lloyd, was not pleased with his choice to become an art historian, but his mother, Louise, a patroness of the arts, supported him. She had his book, Palladio, bound in leather.

According to Jim, there wasn't much competition for jobs or grants in the early days. Also according to Jim, he was a mediocre art historian, but he worked hard. (He might have been trying to impress me.) Jim belonged to an era when a man got a job invitation after a few older, more established men in the field asked of each other, "Have you got a good man for us?" (His first teaching position, found in just this way, was a joint appointment in the art history and architecture departments at Berkeley.) Even before the moment of Feminism, Jim was never comfortable with institutional sexism, and later, when he was a professor at Harvard, he was annoyed with Radcliffe (then a women's college) for inviting him to speak at their commencement; he thought they should have invited a woman. Let me remind you about the bike riding-- everyone in Cambridge knew Jim because he rode his bicycle everywhere AND in full academic regalia to commencements.

Jim's studies with the giants of his era were deeply influential—in particular with Richard Krautheimer and Erwin Panofsky—men who fled Nazi Germany. In response to the horrific political conditions in Europe, they privileged intellect and scholarship over personal expression when they came to America. Toward the end of his career, in reaction to what he saw as too much objectivity, Jim did the hard work of becoming an "expressive" more subjective art historian, but his commitment to social justice and civic engagement was constant throughout his endeavors as a scholar, writer, teacher, film producer, and volunteer. His moral sense emanated from observing his elders who suffered from persecution.

I am chagrined to tell you that when Jim received an honorary doctorate and delivered the commencement address to the 1984 Massachusetts College of Art and Design graduating class, (where I teach), I didn't know his work. What impressed me in his commencement address was the admonition to our graduates that they not succumb to George Orwell's **BIG BROTHER**. He equated that evil entity with corporate greed and exhorted young artists and designers to never "sell out", to stay committed to their dreams. This was in sharp contrast to the idea that in the real year of 1984, 35 years after the publication of the book, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, our society seemed to be thriving, having successfully avoided the terrors described in that book. Jim didn't agree; he perceived a threat. Jim was the

first humanistic art historian I had ever encountered. Who wouldn't have been inspired by his morality, his eloquence and that fabulous deep voice?

But Jim and I did not meet that day.

Several years later we were introduced when I was a fellow at Radcliffe's Bunting Institute. I attended a screening at Harvard of a Frank Stella film that Jim produced with Mildred, his wife. Months later, after Mildred's death, we became friends. Friends, of course, because of our age difference. It turned out that we had a lot to talk about—Donatello, Bramante, Leonardo, teaching, art—historic and contemporary— and especially drawing. I found in him the art historian I had wanted to become before I understood my calling as an artist, and Jim would say that his up-close observations of an artist's life informed his understanding of art history. We never stopped talking. We talked to each other for 31 years. He is in my work, and I am in his. The scale of my sculpture changed because, for example, it had to be taller than Jim. He gave me the title, *Natura Naturans; Natura Naturata* for a suite of works. I gave him Michael Pollan's *The Botany of Desire* to read, and I edited his work. We shared ideas about teaching, and certainly some of the projects I assigned to my students were similar to ones Jim assigned to his. We shared the goal of challenging our students to understand the differences between objectivity and subjectivity. My students read statements out-loud to their authors just as I read Jim's essays out-loud, over and over again (as many as ten times) to him so that he could hear their logic and how the language flowed.

Jim was obsessed by his projects. And he was thorough. After years of research and writing and finally the publication of his recent book, *Origins, Invention, Revision: Studying the History of Art and Architecture*, he began to draw again. He made remarkable pencil drawings of the same view outside of the window of our Westport house-- incessantly. That unremarkable view is of a house, stone walls, trees, shrubs, and a yard. I had to buy him calipers so that he could be exact. We made photographs of that view so that he could work from them when we weren't in Westport. If he was dissatisfied, he erased or scraped away the image and worked over the last one producing palimpsests. I worried he would rub away the paper in his effort to "get it right". He said that he was not making art, he was recording something, though he couldn't articulate what that was. In our family,

Jim, our son, Jesse, and I made drawings and shared them with each other. We loved Jesse's drawings, and recently, when they both sat at the kitchen table drawing, they were deeply bound together.

I want to tell you something else about Jim. His undergraduate professor at Yale University, Henri Focillon, recognized his immense potential and inscribed these words to him in a book, "Remain faithful to our studies for which you are so well suited." Jim's life's work was inspired by a teacher's recognition. On occasion he would "angst about" and tell me that he had never done any real work in his life. I think this is because for Jim, coming from the life of the silver spoon, "work" meant manual labor, but work is also effort, and for him, effort was the same as pleasure. Teaching, especially, was not work. He loved to lecture; he appreciated his many students. His keen scholarship and inventiveness as well as his high standards were models for students, many of whom remained "faithful to our studies".

Ah, context. Jim belongs to all of us. He lived so long that after numerous bicycle accidents and mortal health issues, I truly thought of him as a lion of a man because he outlived his 9 lives. There were probably 15 before he died on the last day of the year. He belongs to all of us--wives, children, family, friends, colleagues, university students and those he tutored at the Cambridge Learning Center, many doctors, nurses, and aids who cared for him, and a number of dogs. He was radiant.

Big Smile.

Sweetness.

Intellect.

Huge appetite for Food and Life.

And IMPORTANT TO HIM: exquisitely conceived and crafted books and essays where ideas, images, people, buildings, cities and times converge.

Jill Slosburg-Ackerman



Remembrances & Appreciation

From Tony Ackerman, Jim's elder son:

I couldn't be at the memorial service, so I recorded a couple of my guitar pieces to express my love and gratitude, both to Dad and all of you. The links for listening are on the previous page. It's hard to add to all that has been said about Dad, to the new things I learned about him from many of you after he died. The deepest value that Dad left with me was the trust that if I just follow my heart and passion, my life and that of those around me will be good. Thank you, Dad -- it worked.

I grieve for the loss of Jim Ackerman. He was my second thesis reader in 1982-3 though my topic had nothing to do with architecture. His willingness to take on such a task exemplified not just his wide range but also his generosity to those who might have fallen between the cracks for no good reason (for example, the lack of second reader).

The most memorable thing Jim told me was that he believed in letting graduate students find their own way. In a world of grad professors trying to force students into their own mold, he stood out in this regard. He was not alone in this but he was not typical either,

It took me seven years to see beyond his gruff exterior and his apparent belief in intellectual depth and originality as the sole measure of human beings. I mistook the culture of graduate school, where intellect generally reigns supreme, for Jim's spiritual universe. But over time, I realized I was mistaken. There was far more in Jim Ackerman, even if I could only catch glimpses past the guarded exterior of his academic persona.

Shortly before I graduated, I went to thank him for his support and faith in me, I was a late bloomer who did little to distinguish myself until my thesis. In his office, I showed him a Xerox of Otto van Veen's emblem of love from 1608 which depicted Pliny's legend of the bear cub, born a formless mass but licked into shape by its devoted mother. I told him that he and my principal adviser (Konrad Oberhuber) had helped form me intellectually with the same compassion and nurturing (attached). I did not expect such an emotionally direct response from him in response, It was sufficient that I had opened my heart.

James Ackerman help set the high internal standards I have tried to maintain in my own research and teaching. The impact of his light spread far and wide, reaching even those like me who orbited at considerable distance.. He asked larger questions which transcended artistic media, categories, and periods. He was one of the few pioneers of social art history at a school where formal analysis seemed to reign supreme in the 1970s and early 1980s. Like all great mentors, his impact runs too deep to be fully understood, though time has allowed me to comprehend far more than I understood at the Fogg.

Bless Jim Ackerman,

Love, Robert Baldwin



For a long time my relationship to Jim remained that of a student to his teacher. I was deferential, he was generous. Only in the last years, as the difference in our ages diminished, did we kibbitz. I loved the late Ackerman, more a friend than ever. But I've also been reading his occasional writings from early on, to remind myself of that powerful, searching intellect that dominated my student years: lectures where he chided the discipline for its lack of critical self awareness and essays where he examined his own historical method. Jim made it possible for me to imagine a life in art history. His was not the art history of the museum. He practiced a committed scholarship that was tied to the everyday, to political and social values, to personal judgment, and to the practical challenges that confronted the artists who work in architectural design or scientific inquiry. He not only wrote with a clarity and force that aimed to engage a non professional audience, he thought about art and architecture in ways that had meaning for those readers, and for me.

Nor can I imagine a career at the university unaffected by the example he set with his students. Whatever we may have felt, Jim wanted us to see him as a person, maybe not like any other but not one defined by his position. The outward signs gave a hint. Tall, handsome but distinctly idiosyncratic. His tweedy clothes in that period now seem like a straight jacket, partly mitigated by bicycle clips and one of those dorky white helmets of the sixties that he wore to get to work. Only with Jill did he find the beautiful, informal style that fit the personality of the young soldier that made watercolors of the landscapes he passed through in his war in Italy. He invited us to his house, introduced us to his children and, in my student days, to Mildred who drew us out and became our friend, and, sometimes, a surrogate mother. None of us can forget Jim carrying Mildred into the Fogg or fussing around the house to do the things that Mildred couldn't. Jim played tennis with us (we all played badly) and brought us to his farm in Vermont. I'd like to say we talked about art history, but that's not what I remember. The farm was not the Cape with its summertime society. I don't remember drinks, I don't remember dinner parties. Swimming was in a farm pond, and by rule everyone swam naked. Jim worked every day but he also collected mushrooms (which he tasted at breakfast

and served, if he hadn't gotten sick, later in the day), baked bread (famously dense), tended the kitchen garden, and helped his neighbors with seasonal jobs. He cut hay like a man born to the work. The farm was spare, like the Cambridge house, in defiance of family wealth. He rusticated, like the villa builders of his Palladio, with the books but without the salon. I got my most vivid lesson in Ackerman art history at the Vermont house. Driving through the countryside we visited his favorite sites, old farms in the luxurious August landscape. We'd pass a perfect cluster of agricultural buildings and Jim would begin to talk about settlement history, farm economies, machinery, the farmers and the abandonment. Plenty about the buildings, nothing about style.

I still have the letters that Jim wrote in response to the thesis I sent him, chapter by chapter, from Italy. Rereading his comments now, I see how closely the published version followed the structure he suggested. At his retirement party many of us spoke of those letters. His reaction: "I was astonished to hear the stories about studying under my iron fist; I always thought of myself as an indulgent paternal type, with only a few fidgets about the English language and about the capitalization of titles in different languages." Jim became attached to many of his students. He had a clear eyed view of their strengths but also their weaknesses and if called on to report he told the whole story, but always in a way that his affection came through and his conviction in their ultimate success predominated. If need be, he rose to their defense in print. In the Burlington Magazine he protested Leopold Ettlinger's attack on Rab Hatfield's Botticelli's Uffizi Adoration. His remarks were uncompromising but not unkind. "Unjust", he wrote, "if Professor Ettlinger were to apply the criteria in this review to his own work on the Sistene frescoes, he would find it less valuable" (than what?) "than I did." It was this affection for students that led him to establish the dissertation prize at the Palladio center with the Balzan money and to speak glowingly of each of the winners.

Jim's letters would often include remarks about his own work and life. "I'm bugged by the fact that that I don't want to be anything else when I grow up, and

am satisfied to learn about things without having to write them down...Also I am unable to stay away from the TV set. I find the Watergate hearings the most extraordinary human experience; the same sort of insight one gets from great theater, only its real!" There never was a moment when Jim was not political. At the end, he read the Trump section of the Times aloud to visitors.

David Hodes Friedman

After one visit, James Ackerman slipped a favorite poem in my hands - "something to read on the ride home." I am so grateful for my all-too-brief spell as his research assistant, the conversations about architecture, travel, books, dogs, and life, and much laughter. Grazie mille, Jim.

Victoria Addona, Ph.D. student

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/04/01/an-adventure-2>

An Adventure - Poem by Louise Gluck

It came to me one night as I was falling asleep
that I had finished with those amorous adventures
to which I had long been a slave. Finished with love?
my heart murmured. To which I responded that many profound discoveries
awaited us, hoping, at the same time, I would not be asked
to name them. For I could not name them. But the belief that they existed—
surely this counted for something?

2.

The next night brought the same thought,
this time concerning poetry, and in the nights that followed
various other passions and sensations were, in the same way,
set aside forever, and each night my heart
protested its future, like a small child being deprived of a favorite toy.
But these farewells, I said, are the way of things.

And once more I alluded to the vast territory
opening to us with each valediction. And with that phrase I became
a glorious knight riding into the setting sun, and my heart
became the steed underneath me.

3.

I was, you will understand, entering the kingdom of death,
though why this landscape was so conventional

I could not say. Here, too, the days were very long
while the years were very short. The sun sank over the far mountain.
The stars shone, the moon waxed and waned. Soon
faces from the past appeared to me:
my mother and father, my infant sister; they had not, it seemed,
finished what they had to say, though now
I could hear them because my heart was still.

4.

At this point, I attained the precipice
but the trail did not, I saw, descend on the other side;
rather, having flattened out, it continued at this altitude
as far as the eye could see, though gradually
the mountain that supported it completely dissolved
so that I found myself riding steadily through the air—
All around, the dead were cheering me on, the joy of finding them
obliterated by the task of responding to them—

5.

As we had all been flesh together,
now we were mist.
As we had been before objects with shadows,
now we were substance without form, like evaporated chemicals.
Neigh, neigh, said my heart,
or perhaps nay, nay—it was hard to know.

6.

Here the vision ended. I was in my bed, the morning sun
contentedly rising, the feather comforter
mounded in white drifts over my lower body.
You had been with me—
there was a dent in the second pillowcase.
We had escaped from death—
or was this the view from the precipice?

Myra Nan Rosenfeld, PhD 1972, Department of History of Art and Architecture, Harvard

An Appreciation of James S. Ackerman

I came to Harvard to study with Jim in 1966 after I had earned my MA in Renaissance and Baroque art at Columbia University. At the end of my second year at Columbia, I took Rudolf Wittkower's seminar on Bernini's sculpture (he was then revising his monograph). He wanted me to carry out my dissertation under his direction on Bernini's cultural milieu, the topic of my seminar report. Although I admired Rudolf Wittkower's work and had learned a lot from him, I really wanted to specialize in French Renaissance architecture. For Wittkower, French architecture of the Renaissance was much less worthy of study than Bernini's sculpture. Jim graciously took me on as a student although French Renaissance architecture was not his specialty. When I came to Cambridge speak to him about transferring to Harvard, Jim said to me "You should follow your own interests". I was just delighted and relieved that he accepted me as a student. Later in the fall, when Rudolf Wittkower came to Harvard to give a lecture, I hid in the corner of the Naumberg Room at the reception for him. Jim came up to me and said "Rudi wants to see you", and Wittkower told me I was in "good hands". I certainly was.

What I admired most about Jim as a teacher was his open mindedness and his desire to explore new ideas and new intellectual approaches to the history of art. I had the great opportunity to have weekly sessions with Jim where we would discuss various problems and methodologies related to the study of architecture. Every week, there was a different topic for which Jim would give me readings. On my general exam, he gave me the following question: "Why has there been so little research in your field, French Renaissance architecture?" At first, I found the question very surprising, but later on reflection, very perceptive. I answered that the traditions of medieval architecture were still strong and were a source of innovation during the French Renaissance. Thus, one could not study French Renaissance Architecture using Vasari's negative evaluation of Gothic architecture or his idea that

the Middle Ages disappeared at the advent of the Renaissance in the fifteenth century. My approach to the French Renaissance put me into conflict with John Cooolidge, the second reader of my dissertation, *The Hôtel de Cluny and the Origins of the French Renaissance Palace (1300-1500)*, who held the traditional conception of the Renaissance based on Vasari's theories. For him and many other scholars in the 1960's, the fifteenth century Hôtel de Cluny was not innovative enough to be considered a Renaissance building or to even warrant a thesis or a monograph. Jim supported my ideas which went against the grain, and found another second reader, Eric Carlson, then a visiting Professor at Harvard of medieval art and architecture. I wrote my publishable paper at Harvard on the manuscript by Sebastiano Serlio for his unpublished Book VI On Domestic Architecture at the Avery Library at Columbia University. It did not elicit much enthusiasm from John Cooolidge either. I had found that Serlio was one of the first Italian authors in the sixteenth century to appreciate Gothic architecture in contrast to Vasari's theories.

My Harvard publishable paper appeared in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* in 1969. It became the basis of the publication in 1978 by the Architectural History Foundation of the facsimile edition of the Avery Library's manuscript, Sebastiano Serlio *On Domestic Architecture*, for which Jim wrote the introduction. My dissertation and forthcoming book to be published by Brepols on the Hôtel de Cluny, *The Hôtel de Cluny in Paris, Tradition and Innovation in French Domestic Architecture in the Fifteenth Century* owe much in methodology and method to Jim's 1954 book *The Cortile del Belvedere* and to his 1949 articles on Milan Cathedral in the *Art Bulletin* and the Certosa di Pavia in *Marsyas*. Like the Belvedere courtyard, the Hôtel de Cluny had changed drastically over the centuries. It became an apartment house after the French Revolution and was turned into a museum in the nineteenth century. I had to do archival work to peel away the later additions to the Hôtel de Cluny as Jim had done for the Belvedere courtyard, to restore it to its original state.

The second aspect of Jim's teaching which I appreciated was the care with which he read his students' work. I learned to write clearly, precisely, and concisely from Jim. On all of my written work, there were comments in the margins, written in small letters, such as, "What do you mean here?", "Not the right word", and suggestions for further sources and bibliography. I rewrote my publishable paper and my two volume dissertation five times. At Jim's retirement party at Harvard, I gave a speech mentioning the fact that I was grateful to him for teaching me to write because of all the revisions he required. Suddenly, another student stood up, and said, "If I had known that he did that to other students, I never would have quit."

Finally, Jim took an interest in his students long after they left Harvard. I often asked Jim to read my work and give me suggestions. He supported me personally in the projects which I undertook during my peripatetic career. I did not stay in academia, like most of Jim's other students, but turned to museum work. It was not as easy for women in academia in the 1960's or 1970's as it is now. At my second teaching job at the University of Washington in Seattle in 1968-69, I was expected to give French lessons to the wife of the Chairman of the Art Department. I was also advised not to be as stringent in grading the students' work as the male members of the department. At McGill University, I was subjected to crude anti-Semitism by a colleague. Jim helped me find a position after that episode as a visiting professor at the College of Environmental Design at Berkeley to replace another student of his, Steven Tobriner who was to go on leave.

I became a curator of European Painting at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 1974 and Curator of architectural books, drawings, and prints at a new research institution in Montreal, the Canadian Centre for Architecture, in 1985. Jim approved of some of the exhibitions I undertook, like the project, From Model Book to Printed Book which was never brought to fruition at the CCA, much to his consternation. He wrote several letters of support for the project. On the other hand, when I told him that I was undertaking an exhibition on the French

eighteenth century portrait painter, Nicolas de Largillierre at the MMFA with other curators from the Louvre and the Hermitage, he declared “Once you’ve seen one, you’ve seen them all”. I quipped back, “Well, I’ll try to change that notion.” One could always be frank with Jim, and I appreciated his directness and sense of humour.

Jim came to the Canadian Centre for Architecture as a visiting scholar in 2001. We were then able to continue our dialogue in Montreal which was first started in 1966 at Harvard. I shall always cherish his mentoring and his friendship.

Remembering James Ackerman

In the 1970's, as an undergraduate in Jim Ackerman's celebrated course on Renaissance architecture, I could not begin to imagine the specialness of knowing him in later years. He followed my life as a composer not so much in the details - though he was an enthusiastic fan of my recordings and performances - but rather, as an approving presence. He offered me deep and gentle encouragement with the full gravitas of a mentor and with a twinkle in his eye. I am grateful, and I miss him!

Mark Pevsner

Harvard University A.B. 1976, A.M. 1979, Ph.D. 1984

Remembering James Ackerman

I first encountered Jim Ackerman in the spring semester of 1968, halfway through my first year as a “Cliffie.” After enduring the somewhat dry first half of Fine Arts 13, Harvard’s legendary art history survey course, I was enchanted by semester two, taught by Ackerman. I will never forget then graduate student Linda Seidel’s fascinating lecture decoding the iconography of “The Annunciation,” painted by the Master of Flémalle for the Mérode Altarpiece in the 15th century. While I was totally fascinated, numerous male students loudly hissed their disapproval/disagreement. Ackerman calmly rose above this rudeness and graciously encouraged Seidel to continue her commentary. Later that semester Ackerman gave us an assignment I will never forget. He asked us to go see Fellini’s “La Strada,” and then write about it. Watching this black and white masterpiece from 1954 opened my eyes to a magical world, as well as to the difference between a film and “the movies.” Giullietta Masina’s plaintive trumpet notes still echo in my heart. I did not become a medieval art historian or a filmmaker, but I did eventu-

ally become an artist, and am certain that this long ago semester with “Professor Ackerman” played a part in my evolution.

Many years later, through Jill Slosburg-Ackerman, an artist friend and colleague, I came to know Jim as a dear friend and presence in (and my husband Mark’s) life. We spoke of our mutual fascination with 19th century photographic processes – Jim as an art historian, and I as a practitioner.

Thank you, Jim, for introducing me to new ways of thinking, for your kind encouragement over many years, and for your friendship. You will be missed!

Jesseca Ferguson

Harvard University A.B. 1971 (magna cum laude)

Massachusetts College of Art BFA 1981

Tufts University MFA 1986

FOR JIM ACKERMAN

In the Second Book of The Divine Comedy,
Dante characterized Aristotle as ‘one of those who know’
--that is, ‘know’ in the fullest Renaissance sense of wisdom and understanding.

Because Jim explored an unparalleled range of subjects and strategies,
because he wrote in virtually every scale and every mode –
from hard-core historical monographs to jewel-like theoretical gedanken pieces,
because he argued for years that one should look to Aristotle over Plato for intellectual guidance,
and because he finally won me over to Aristotle,
I will toast him with a paraphrase of Dante.

And so

To a great historian,

to a great teacher,

to my toughest critic,

and to a precious friend

Jim was truly ‘fra I migliori di coloro che sanno.’

§

When Goya was 78,
enormously old for that time,
he escaped a vicious regime,
escaped the Inquisition,
escaped to France.

He was deaf,
he was sick,
sometimes suffering.

And he drew an old man,
with wild hair and a huge beard,
hunched over,
supported by two canes.

And defiantly below,
with huge, beautiful letters he wrote
'Aún aprendo'
I'm still learning.

He was rapturously open to his new world,
he marveled at bizarre modes of transportation,
learned an entirely new, cutting edge printmaking technique.

To the end, Jim was still creating.

This past November, on his 97th birthday,

just a month before he died,

he and Jill threw a party, to celebrate the beautiful book he'd just published.

Origins, Invention, Revision explores ever new subjects and questions --

from Gehry's latest in Paris,

to the photographic picturesque,

to the buildings in India he reveled in with Jill,

to remembered worlds of that decisive Italian Journey.

I've never known anyone who was more voraciously curious or ecstatically open --

to new ideas, to new approaches, to his life.

I've never known anyone who was more insistent (or more proselytizing) about exercising.

He was so optimistic. Remained so optimistic.

After the party, he continued to work,

still creating, with such purpose and gusto.

Now hooked up to an oxygen tank,

he drew detailed studies of the house at Westport.

He had a demon work ethic, that came from a place of joy.

Jim became very curious about the idea, and the reality, of death.

He sent me a poem by Louise Glück: 'An Adventure.'

She framed 'entering the kingdom of death' --

as the adventure of 'a glorious knight,' full of wondrous anticipation.

'Love,' 'poetry,' other 'passions and sensations' were gently 'set aside forever,'

as the knight said his 'farewells', and rode 'into the setting sun.'

'The sun sank,' 'the stars shone,' he saw 'faces from the past.'

He 'attained the precipice' --

only to see that 'the mountain that supported it completely dissolved,

so that I found myself riding steadily through the air' --

only to finally, joyously, himself, dissolve into 'mist,'

becoming one with an embracing universe,

cheered on by those who'd passed before him.

Abruptly: 'Here the vision ended.'

He realized he was still alive, still 'in my bed, the morning sun contentedly rising,'

still with one deeply loved.

Still, for Jim, of course, with Jill.

The poem's last words:

'We had escaped from death.

Or was this the view from the precipice?'

We spoke about it afterwards.
He wondered if, like the knight,
he would ever lose interest,
be divested, even freed, of worldly concerns and connections.
This never happened.
To the end, he was so engaged with the world around him,
so intensely engaged with politics, with ideas, with his friends,
with his students he'd inspired and supported for years.
With Jill, Anne, Tony, Sarah, and Jesse
--the family he so fiercely loved.
It was a great adventure to know him.
I will always be grateful.s

Natasha Staller

Picked-up pieces remembering James Ackerman . . .

I took a seminar with him, c. 1987. But his health was poor at this time; sometimes he nodded off during student presentations. I was also a research assistant as Jim finished his villa book, learning to be meticulous about citations and dogged about illustrations.

Jim was second reader on my dissertation. "The only good dissertation is a done dissertation," I recall he told me. I deeply internalized this aphorism and pass it on to others whenever I can. Now, I'm not certain those words were actually his. But still, I strongly associate them with Jim. Just get the work done. I'm astounded by Jim's ability and drive to work deep into his ninth decade of life. I admire, too, Jim's openness, willing in mid-life to be influenced by Tafuri, embracing Indian architecture in late-life. He never stood still.

I didn't know Jim before he was with Jill. I could see his continuing vitality owed so much to her. When I was in graduate school, my future wife, Penley Knipe, and I sometimes babysat their son Jesse (lots of Thomas the Tank Engine). I remember one time Jim striding downstairs, ready to go out, resplendent in a swirling-patterned, silk smoking jacket. A sight I'll never forget.

After graduation, I taught at Connecticut College, where Jill had an art show. They came and stayed with me. Upon departing Jim and I went to shake hands, but Jill insisted a hug was more appropriate now. That was awkward for both of us. We shared a certain formality over the years, punctuated by occasional lunches, coffees, and requests from me for recommendations, which I know Jim was glad when they ended.

In my opinion, James S. Ackerman is one of the two greatest architectural history writers in the English language, along with John Summerson. Both are lucid and concise, but Ackerman the more erudite. In truth, every architectural historian should want to write a book like Ackerman's *Palladio*.

James S. Ackerman was what the Japanese would call a national treasure, a living link to the European emigré founders of American art and architectural history, and without a doubt their equal, too. There are no more like him.

Daniel M. Abramson

PhD, Fine Arts, 1993

James Ackerman was a brilliant, influential, and open-minded scholar who also was generous, curious, and kind. For years, I admired the depth of his knowledge of architecture and art as well as the man who wore that achievement so lightly. It was this amazing individual who gave me one of the most memorable gifts of my life. One day, he asked if he could take one of my courses. I cannot even begin to describe what this meant and continues to mean to me, let alone to recall all the feelings and thoughts that were engendered and the discussions that his presence at my lectures each week provoked. It is imaginable but best left unsaid. At the end, on the day of my last lecture, he offered me a beautiful plant. I have planted it in my garden and cherish it as a lively, living reminder of Jim's life and legacy. Every spring, it flowers.

Giuliana Bruno

Emmet Blakeney Gleason Professor of Visual and Environmental Studies

Harvard University

As I write this brief statement for the Harvard community I think it is important to remember that James Ackerman was not only a great scholar but a good man.

I was a graduate student of James Ackerman's at the Fogg from 1965 to 1971. I regard it as an honor to have studied with him and to have known him. For me, Jim Ackerman exemplified not just a great scholar, but a developed human being, a good man. He was deeply committed to questioning his method and his assumptions about art history and about life itself. I was a Teaching Fellow during the Harvard strike of 1969. Jim asked us what we thought, and was as troubled as we were with what action to take. He was able to discuss his private life with us and listen compassionately as we told him about ours. When I was working on my dissertation on Noto, Sicily, I was confronted with challenges from elder scholars as well as the Sicilians themselves. Jim called and wrote to reassure me with compassion and great humor. "Forget the dissertation," he wrote, "you should start a novel." Later in life, after an emergency heart operation, he talked me through my recovery.

He showed me as a young man, that he, as an accomplished scholar, could also be a full partner to his first wife, Mildred, stricken with polio since his early career teaching at the University of California, Berkeley. He gracefully incorporated her disability into his life. He took her with him to Italy and to their farm in Vermont and I distinctly remember her standing in braces for a reception in the courtyard of the Fogg. When we invited them to dinner in Cambridge, they gladly accepted, even though we had a three-story walkup. Jim carried her up to our apartment. They were a real couple, living together with a terrible disability, and yet they successfully raised a family. Later, Jim nursed Mildred as she fought cancer, addressing the anguish it caused with candor and empathy, which was an education for me.

When Mildred died late in his life Jim incredibly started life anew. He married Jill Slosburg and raised his son Jesse. I remember talking with him at length. It wasn't easy, particularly when his old friends drifted away, but he made his second marriage as successful as his first.

All the while he practiced his profession and published until the end of his life. The day before he died he was waiting for the reviews of his last book. Going through his old papers he was thrilled to find watercolors he painted when he was stationed in Italy during World War II. In the weeks before his death he sat by a window at his country house, drawing. James Ackerman created a full life for himself and it is the depth, duration, and richness of that life which is an inspiring memory.

Stephen Tobriner

Professor Emeritus of Architectural History

Architecture Department

University of California, Berkeley.

How did Jim's view of the picture field inform his perception of architectural draughtsmanship and his analysis of the life of forms and of buildings, set in a particular environment and context? And vice-versa? With an eye and mind ever open he delighted in his late-life discovery of Indian architecture which he characterized as 'hot' in contrast to the 'cold' of Palladian neo-classicism. It seems to me that he did not envision what was before him only dimensionally but more spatially, panoramically and socially. His imagination and empathy, more open and empirical than definitive and positivist, revealed the underpinnings and dynamics of the artist's own. Jim's early watercolours from his war years in Italy reflected Cézanne's geology and his illumination of the Montagne Sainte Victoire.

In the early 1960s Jim suggested I consider a thesis on early Raphael and the frescoes of the Piccolomini Library in Siena. When I returned to finish it thirty years later under John Shearman's direction, Jim resumed his role of advisor. His concern for context influenced my contribution to site selection and programme development for the first purpose-built National Gallery of Canada, designed by Moshe Safdie, overseen by Jean Sutherland Boggs and completed in 1988. Jim contributed to a Michelangelo lecture series I organized at the National Gallery here in the 1990s in the company of Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt, John Shearman and John O'Malley. In recent years my wife Rosemary and I enjoyed occasional lunches with Jim at Upstairs on the Square in Cambridge. Following one of these we returned with him to Coolidge Hill Road where he showed us with much pleasure his reclining bicycle and those war-time Italian watercolours published in his last book of essays. These he had just discovered in his basement, in a box of letters written home. I will always be grateful for Jim's mentorship and friendship over more than fifty years.

To Jill and Jesse and to all generations and members of Jim's family, we reach out du fond du coeur with sympathy and respect.

Gyde and Rosemary Shepherd, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Jim Ackerman: Notes on a Friendship.

Phyllis Lambert, 8 March, 2017

Jim Ackerman was a significant person in my life. I first knew of him through his great teacher Richard Krautheimer, with whom I also studied at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, in the mid-1950s. Especially memorable was Jim's recent work on Peruzzi's Cortile del Belvedere at the Vatican, discussed by Krautheimer in his magisterial course on Rome. Noteworthy in itself, this drawing highlighted my beginnings in collecting architectural drawings. Imagine my excitement when, a few years later, I was offered a drawing similar to one I had studied----the Cortile----viewed from the same cavalier perspective as the one published by Ackerman. The offered drawing was said to be by Peruzzi, although it was not, and I think of it as the first drawing that I acquired, which it is not, yet it remains for me a marker in a very great adventure that I associate with Jim.

I actually met Jim Ackerman at Marilyn and Irving Lavin's home in Princeton, when he and I attended a lecture given by Krautheimer at the Institute of Advanced Studies. Jesus he was a handsome man (acknowledgements to e.e. Cummings's Buffalo Bill). It was not just his measured way of talking, the intelligence in his eyes and his strong face and presence. Ackerman's Palladio changed the landscape for me in the early 1970s. At that time, architectural history, like art history, was mostly concerned with connoisseurship. Ackerman's book was revolutionary and exciting for me, in its consideration of the context of buildings and city. I was grateful for Jim's approach—he analyzed a building in relationship to the street and the urban environment, when everyone else was still looking at the object alone, mostly in terms of attribution and formal analysis. Ackerman's Palladio was a huge relief, confirming my own interest in architecture in the city, looking beyond buildings to the larger conditions of city, landscape, history and society. Jim reinforced (unknown to him—but maybe not) my engagement with architecture as

a public concern, a commitment founded on scholarship. This was the core concept in the creation of the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) in 1979.

Jim supported the CCA in various ways, including with advice on rare books and drawings, the donation of Bonfils's photograph *Balbeck: Temple circulaire / Syri* to the collection in 1983 and support for the acquisition of pastels and drawings by André Bruyère and Fernand Léger for the "Projet de Village Polychrome, Biot, France" (1952–1953) in 1997, in honour of Daniel Robbins. In March 2002, having encountered our miniature architecture models, Jim sent us a list of contemporary miniature architectural models which he discovered "in a fancy new design store in SoHo...including vernacular structures that have been sites of disasters such as the nuclear plants that melted down and the Oklahoma City Federal Building."

At the end of 2002, Jim sent me for the collection a miniature metal "Tour d'Or," accompanied by a Xerox of Louis De Clerc's photograph, *Seville: La tour d'Or* (1859–1860, from the sixth album of his *Voyages en Espagne, Monuments et vues pittoresques*).

Jim was especially interested in our photography holdings. In 1982, we published *Photography and Architecture, 1839–1939*, which brought these arts together, establishing a new field. Two years after we opened the CCA's purpose-built centre in 1989, Jim wrote to me, outlining an exhibition on Italian architectural and topographical photographs from the nineteenth century in the CCA collection. Of numerous possible categories, he suggested organizing the photographs by city, by location in the city, by photographer and by concept. He added, "We discussed the fixing of a formula of representation by the tradition by drawings and prints and by guidebooks"

Ten years later, Jim came to the CCA as the Mellon Senior Fellow to study prints in the photographs collection, in order to continue his long-term study of the origins of architectural photography. In his report on leaving, dated 3 July 2002, he wrote that his forthcoming *Origins, Imitations, Conventions* included a chapter “On the Origins of Architectural Photography,” in which he put forward a number of directions for such research to be pursued. But, he remarked, it had been written “with very limited experience of original photographs for which reason I was particularly gratified to have had the opportunity to work with the CCA Collection.” Ackerman systematically worked through the material of the period between 1840 and 1860, one photographer at a time, examining between 600 and 800 prints and taking notes on each one. He suggested in his chapter in *Origins* that “the photographers had adopted the conventions of representation of building that had been formed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century illustrated surveys of several regions of France and England,” but he became aware “that this was too restricted a definition of the visual sources.” Working with a major assemblage of photographs changed his interpretation of the origins of architectural photography:

I began to realize that the relevant images were not just those representing architecture, but also the entire span of illustration in the sphere of the Picturesque. Consequently, I began to study the phenomenon of the Picturesque, the image of nature and the environment adjusted to the tradition of landscape painting, which originated in theoretical writing by Gilpin, Price, Knight and Watelet, and had influenced landscape- and architectural design.... I discovered in library research that there was a vast literature of Picturesque travel books, illustrated by engraving and aquatint: indeed travel and the concept of the Picturesque were quite entwined... It became clear that the interpretation of the photographs would have to take up the development of middle class travel, a new phenomenon at the start of the nineteenth Century.

In concluding, Jim conceded the importance of this new focus, connecting photography to specific styles or to literature and the illustrated book:

The importance of the proposition that early photography was affected by the vogue of the Picturesque lies in the fact that it runs counter to the general assumption, both at the time of its inception and in much later criticism, that the new technique of photography made it possible to represent the world precisely as it is, in an admirably technological fashion that in some measure eliminated the personal intervention of the practitioner.

These brilliant perceptions were elaborated in Ackerman's lecture at the CCA—also titled “On the Origins of Architectural Photography”—where it is online. At the same time, his connection of photography to the development of middle-class travel seems to me to have a particular relevance to-day.

From time to time I met Jim in Rome or at colloquia elsewhere. Recently heightened by our mutual friendship with Guido Beltramini, the last time I “saw” Jim, he was projected onto a wall, a talking figure at the Centro Palladio. One thinks of his superb films on Rome and on Palladio. Scholarship was part of life for Jim in everyday language—just walking down the street—so it was accessible to everyone who was at all interested. Filming Palladio in the winter of 1978, with only five hours of sun in two weeks, Ackerman assumed that he would have the mysterious, misty footage he wanted, in contrast to bright sunlight. He said, wryly, “Palladio flattened is alright; he drew flattened elevations.” In the spring of 1979, thinking of doing a film on Jefferson after seeing the lovely footage he shot in Virginia, Jim decided against it, saying, “I think I’m going to be worked out on architecture.” His next project was to do a short story starring his daughter: “Actually we have done quite a lot in the line of family films as participants or producers. Mildred’s latest is a lovely film about the ceremony my son and his wife held in Boston... to make their respectful parents happy.” One wonders to what extent his architectural films were primed by family films.

Ackerman's perceptions on the Renaissance enriched my work on Mies van der Rohe. When thinking about writing "Mies Klassizismus: Some Notes" for Pierre du Prey's *Festschrift*, I turned to Jim Ackerman's *Distance Points: Essays in Theory and Renaissance Art and Architecture* of 1991. I was struck by an image he reproduced of the Palazzo dei Conservatori on Rome's Capitoline Hill, one of two lateral buildings flanking the Palazzo del Senatore. The ordering of major and minor supports, with emphasis placed on the giant order by the void of the open portico, and the play of horizontal and vertical beams and columns on the face of the building gave me a shock of recognition. I thought instantly of the "skin-and-bones" mullioned tall buildings of Mies in America. In explaining this palace, extraordinary in structure as well as form, Ackerman's text confirmed my immediate reaction: in preferring post-and-beam construction to spanning openings with columnar arcades (a strategy favoured during the Quattrocento), Michelangelo supported the cornice with pilaster-piers, and the lower entablature with columns. Ackerman writes:

Michelangelo's combination of column and pier provided sufficient bracing to allow expansion of the system to monumental scale.... Semicircular arches have a static effect uncongenial to Michelangelo's powerful interplay of horizontal and vertical forces.... In the Conservators' palace, this interplay recalls the effects of a framed structure; the façade construction is as close to a skeletal frame as it is possible to attain in stone.

Furthermore, Ackerman's perception of the space of the Campidoglio defined qualities present four centuries later in Mies's Seagram building and plaza in New York. In Ackerman's words, the visitor becomes "intensely involved in the architectural setting to a degree never demanded by earlier Renaissance [or American] planning... Michelangelo [and also Mies] endowed movement, which usually is just a way of getting from one place to another, with aesthetic overtones."

My last contact with Jim was on 10 November 2016, related to our birthdays:
“Congratulations Phyllis, you have almost made it to my 97 (a week ago).

P.S. you might be interested in my last book *Origins Invention, Revision
Icon, Studying Change in Art and Architecture*.

Phyllis Lambert

For James Ackerman

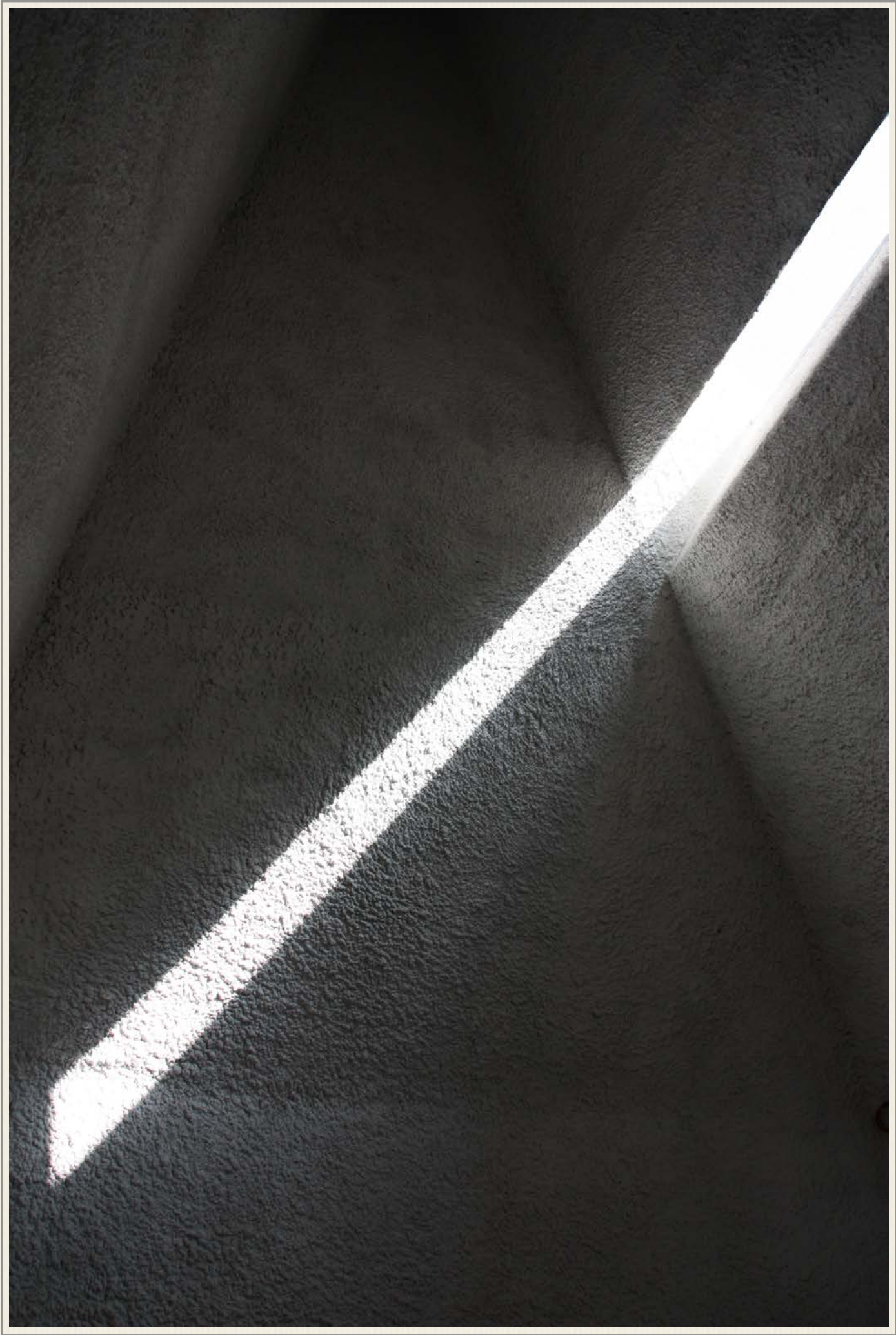
In the winter sky
the moon above the tall branches
my lifelong mentor
from Berkeley to Harvard and on
these sixty-odd years I owe him.

As a student of architecture, I had a course from James Ackerman in 1953; he was kind and generous to this young person from Japan and guided me into the field of art history, first at UC Berkeley and then at Harvard, where he supervised my doctorate and sent me to Rome to work on it, and ushered me into teaching, first at RISD while I was finishing my dissertation and then at Swarthmore College. In short, he made my life and career.

Of many of his gifts to me, intellectual, academic, personal, and spiritual, the greatest is the understanding of visual intelligence as it resides and waits to be uncovered in works of art and as it is central in studying them. He taught me to look at works closely and deeply, and through my teaching career, that was also the lesson I insisted on and was thanked for by my dear students.

A year ago, he wrote me: “I have just completed a Block-buster book that will change the future of Art History.” That was his *Origins, Invention, Revision*, which is truly the summation of his life-long work as well as a window to a new horizon. I miss him so.

T. Kaori Kitao, Professor Emerita of Art History, Swarthmore College



1 Divine Light, Le Corbusier, La Tourette, 1955. Photo WJR Curtis, 2011.

REMEMBERING JAMES ACKERMAN : RESONANCES AND REMINISCENCES OVER HALF A CENTURY

Copyright: William J. R. Curtis, April 18th, 2017

'Nothing makes the earth seem so spacious as to have friends at a distance; they make the latitudes and the longitudes.'

Henry David Thoreau

Memories and Reflections

There are some individuals who mark one's life in significant ways. Jim Ackerman was such a person and I am sure that over his very long life he had this effect on numerous other people through his teaching and his texts, as well as his generosity and probity as a human being. My first thoughts are for his family, friends and associates: my condolences and sympathy to all concerned: what a terrible loss for all of us. For my part I first got to know him almost half a century ago, initially through his books and articles, then in his role as a scholar and professor at Harvard, then as a colleague, then as a friend. As I look back over the years since I first encountered Ackerman's writings and first met the man himself, I realise that we exchanged views and texts upon subjects as varied as Palladio and Le Corbus-

ier, Michelangelo and architectural drawings, modern architecture and ancient ruins. Beyond individual interests and subjects there were some overlaps of ideas on history and theory; even on the nature of architecture itself. In addition there were exchanges of manuscripts, books and letters. These transactions chart a dialogue between two historians of different generations who shared a passionate interest in their respective subjects while also aspiring to fundamentals of the historian's art and craft.

Although I left Cambridge, Massachusetts thirty five years ago, moving eventually to a remote rural spot in southern France, Jim Ackerman and I maintained contact, principally by means of correspondence. Perhaps this is one of the values of physical distance: friends are more likely to express their thoughts and feelings with precision in writing. We rarely spoke by telephone. I have a collection of Ackerman's letters touching on subjects as varied as the feebleness of the British Palladians, the problems of aging and the pleasures of being in Rome. The early ones are typed on cream paper with the letter head '12, Coolidge Hill Road'. The more recent ones are in the form of emails. Happily most of these have been preserved. Perhaps my own early letters to him, mostly hand written, are in a box somewhere? If these are ever unearthed they will reveal the other side of the story: the intense enjoyment of the rocky landscape around the Ferme de Bournet in the Ardèche; the excitement at exploring ancient civilisations in India and Mexico; the writing of articles and books; the visits to the Villa Adriana and the houses in Pompei when I was revising a particular chapter on the transformation of the past in Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms ; the irritation at various forms of corruption in contemporary architecture and in architectural education.

When I learned about the passing away of Jim at the end of 2016, it was a shock especially as it came on top of several other recent losses of people important to me in earlier life. Over the weeks since then I have inevitably reflected upon the role that such individuals have played in my existence. I am at an age where I also look back more than forward but always with the hope of consolidat-

ing earlier work and opening up new intellectual territories. It is obvious to me that we are interlaced with others in numerous, sometimes hidden, ways; that certain key individuals help us to find our true direction just as we may do the same for them. Perhaps this is just another way of speaking about an important and evolving friendship? I was not a direct student of Jim Ackerman's in the usual sense, but I did nonetheless learn from him through his example, through our years of dialogue and of course through his texts and insights. Like Eduard Sekler and Denys Lasdun, Jim was one of my 'guides' during my formative years, a sounding board at times, and a reliable judge and critic. He recognised my written work at several key junctures in the early years and for that I am eternally grateful. Right up to the last we were sending our texts back and forth with comments.

We also enjoyed each other's company enormously and when I think back the memories flood in: of Jim and I discussing art historical methods in a muddy swimming hole in Vermont up to our chests in water; of Jim and I meeting on the ramp of Le Corbusier's Carpenter Center before heading off for a coffee and an intense discussion at the Café Pamplona; of Jim carrying Mildred up three flights of stairs at our place on Arcadia Street before helping her carefully into a wheel chair while Catherine prepared us all a sumptuous dinner of spaghetti ai frutti di mare on the basis of an Italian recipe but with robust Boston clams and scallops; of Jim and Jill meeting our daughter Louise for the first time at the age of five months at the Ferme de Bournet in the Ardèche and of Jim marvelling at the timeless forms of the farm's cubic pigeon tower and severe walls guiding the view to the slopes of the Massif du Tanargue in the distance; of Jim in his late years discussing his next book as we walked around the block near Coolidge Hill Road in a constant tug of war with the dog, a game which both clearly enjoyed. Isn't that what it is all about: shared worlds? The enjoyment together of things present, things past and future plans? Affection in the broadest sense of the word? And of course the love of ideas and of architecture.

So it is in this spirit that I have assembled these notes in memory of Jim: as a way of charting key points of contact, connexion and exchange over the years. He sometimes referred to 'distance points', but there may also be convergences, even coincidences or parallels in one's enthusiasms and investigations. Mental time is not linear, rather it involves layers of recollection, recall and return. Childhood experiences play a part in this. As it happens my earliest years were spent in a house in England built around 1950 on a Palladian plan: it was symmetrical with wings and was approached along an axis. It had elegant classical details such as scrolls executed with French curves, it was painted white and had noble proportions. In the back garden there was a cross axis that bisected a rectangular pool and a pergola. In a sacred book case that the children were not supposed to open there were treasured volumes such as an early edition of Banister Fletcher's *History of Architecture on a Comparative Method* (10th ed) with its incisive drawings of plans and details arranged so that one could compare numerous examples. When adults were absent I would slip this treasure out of the bookcase and spend hours absorbed in cathedral plans, church façades and classical mouldings, things which I already knew from direct experience. In later life there were 'resonances' - for example with the pools and cross axes of the Alhambra, or with the axial approaches, symmetrical façades, plans and geometry of Palladio's villas, which I have been 'rediscovering' ever since.

Renaissance Foundations: the Courtauld Institute of Art

I first got to know about James Ackerman through his books and articles when I was an undergraduate at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London between 1967 and 1970. Even in the first year before I chose to specialise in the art and architecture of the Renaissance, I came across his books on *The Architecture of Michelangelo* (1960) and *Palladio* (1966), enjoying their lucid exposition, their insight and their strict, unadorned prose. These accompanied other seminal books such as Rudolf Wittkower's *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (1949) and An-

thony Blunt's *Artistic Theory in Italy 1450-1600* (1940). Undergraduates were in a minority at the Courtauld but were treated almost as graduate students as they were expected to prepare well researched papers on the basis of learned articles, even primary documentary sources. The atmosphere was a bit hot house and precious, but there was a serious commitment to scholarship. In the first year John Shearman gave a memorable tutorial on Raphael. One day he came in with a plan of the Sistine Chapel and a collection of photos of Raphael's cartoons for the tapestries and asked us to place them correctly in the room and to supply reasons why. I thrived on this approach which among other things forced us to think of works of art in terms of function, site, context and meaning, and in a sense to reconstruct the artist's thought processes and intentions. In one corner of the upstairs library there were dusty stacks of the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* and it was while reading through these that I stumbled across two key early articles by James Ackerman: 'Ars Sine Scientia Nihil Est' (on the design process of Milan Cathedral) and a text on the Belvedere Palace in the Vatican, the germ of his later book: *The Cortile del Belvedere* (Vatican, 1954). Ackerman's writings rested in my mind as landmarks of rigour, insight and clarity.

During my second and third years at the Courtauld I buried myself further in the study of painting, sculpture and architecture of the Renaissance, though I also took a secondary direction in the study of modern art, principally painting. The history of modern architecture was scarcely taught apart from some lectures by visitors such as Reyner Banham and John Summerson. Deeply moved by Denys Lasdun's Royal College of Physicians building in Regent's Park (1961), I put together an exhibition about his work in the common room in summer 1969. Renaissance studies were bolstered by the pioneering work being carried on at the Warburg Institute by Ernst Gombrich, Frances Yates and Michael Baxandall. I was fascinated by questions of meaning so immersed myself in the writings of Gombrich and Panofsky in particular, sensing all along the need for a wider theoretical basis than that assumed by the rather pedantic methodologies current at the Courtauld. At the beginning of my final year Howard Burns arrived and taught an extraordinary seminar on the Renaissance city. Normally this was for

graduates alone but I managed to wangle my way in. The level of interventions was high: both Caroline Elam and Deborah Howard contributed papers. Burns emphasised the geographical, political, legal and economic forces which had influenced the shape of cities. All of this was a relief after the limited and stifling stylistic approaches that tended to dominate. There was even some risk of slipping into a facile social determinism and of down playing the role of individual invention and formal intention. I read out two papers : one on the life, theories and buildings of Leon Battista Alberti; another on three approaches to the Renaissance as embodied in the writings of Auguste Choisy, Geoffrey Scott and Rudolf Wittkower. I was already interested in the intellectual basis of different approaches to history.

As it happens Professor Ackerman was present for most of that academic year (1969-70) in England as he was the Slade Professor of Fine Art in Cambridge University (an honour that I was to have thirty four years later). Howard Burns invited him to sit in on one of the sessions of the Renaissance city seminar. Caroline Elam read out a well researched and penetrating paper on the forces and constraints that fashioned key urban spaces. Well beyond just monuments, our discussions took us into the pattern languages of vernacular structures, streets and squares. Afterwards our visitor told Howard that this was one of the most stimulating graduate seminars that he had attended in ages. He was extremely enthusiastic and felt that this was breaking new ground. Burns had been researching urban issues for several years in Italian archives and posed a wealth of interesting questions on everything from urban spaces to fortifications, from demographics to matters of ritual, and of course on the expression of wealth and power in the cityscape. Ackerman then inquired about 'an undergraduate called Curtis who has applied to Harvard' and Burns was able to reply that I had been one of the voices in the seminar that he had just enjoyed. So on the spot I was introduced and we had an agreeable discussion about my own aims which at the time included the idea of writing a very different kind of history of villas and palaces taking into account both the domestic rituals of the private sphere, and the symbolic presence of architecture in city and in landscape. My first impression of James Ackerman was of a

person who was slightly aloof but who would immediately light up if a subject or a person interested him. Our conversation was genial but I honestly thought that it was merely a matter of politeness. I felt that I stood no chance whatsoever of being admitted to Harvard University. As it happens I was wrong, because that spring I was admitted with a Graduate Prize Fellowship.

Towards Modern Architecture: Harvard and Le Corbusier at Work

In the spring vacation leading up to the Final exams several of us accompanied Howard around Italy in a sort of itinerant seminar which included memorable discussions and picnics in the Roman Forum or in front of Venetian church façades: there is no better way of learning architecture than experiencing it and analysing it directly. After leaving the Courtauld I spent the summer researching, visiting and photographing early modern buildings in England from the 1930s such as Lubetkin's High Point flats in Highgate, Mendelsohn's and Chermayeff's Bexhill Pavilion or Owen Williams' Boots Factory at Beeston; I also maintained my link with Denys Lasdun an architect whose work, while modern, nonetheless distilled certain essentials of classicism. When I arrived at Harvard on the 9th September 1970 I immediately spotted the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Le Corbusier's one building in North America, and was fascinated by it. To cut a long story short, my Renaissance plans gradually took second place and I was ever more drawn to modern architecture. In my first year at Harvard I sensed that Ackerman was deeply distracted by political events of the day and was doubting the value and relevance of erudite scholarship on the Renaissance. This was clearly not the moment for my project on palaces and villas. I took a course with Professor Eduard Sekler in the Carpenter Center (he was Director at the time as well as being the Professor of Architectural History at the Graduate School of Design) on 19th and 20th century architecture and wrote about the modern architecture of the 1930s in England. Sekler was interested in my work and we opened a dialogue. During the Christmas vacation at the end of 1970 I went to California and visited works by Wright,

Schindler and Neutra; the following spring vacation it was the turn of Chicago, where I was overwhelmed by the buildings of Sullivan, Burnham and Root, Wright and Mies van der Rohe.

The Graduate School system was well designed for students studying art history for the first time but I was beyond that stage and needed to get my teeth into a major research project of some kind. Eduard Sekler explained that he had collected a few letters by and to Le Corbusier from the period when Carpenter Center was being designed and constructed. Would I look at these and consider writing a text on the history and design of Le Corbusier's building for a monograph? This was a golden opportunity. The Fine Arts Department had let me off course work on condition that I teach a Sophomore Tutorial which I did under the title 'The Modern Movement from Seven Points of View'. That spring I interviewed Josep Luis Sert, who had collaborated on the Carpenter Center project, and delved further into archives in his office and at Harvard. That summer I went to Paris and spent days and nights examining and photographing all the design process sketches and drawings. Bit by bit I was able to reconstruct the process of invention and design in a text, starting with the background to the programme, the programme itself, the selection of a site, the role of the donor, the selection of the architect, the architect's reactions to the problem, the emergence of the first ideas in sketches, the evolution of the project in drawings and models, the role of collaborators, the emergence of the first project, the underlying images and meanings, the feedback from the client, the discovery of internal conflicts, the emergence of the final project, the definition of Le Corbusier's language in concrete, the detailing of the building, the construction, and the significance of the final work. By analysing one building in depth I hoped to reveal principles and ideas at work, and to penetrate to levels of meaning. Drawings, if interpreted correctly, may allow one to come closer to an architect's imagination and processes of thought. In a sense this text allowed me to resolve a question which had already concerned me when studying the Renaissance: how to bridge the gap between a commission and an artistic solution to given problems? How to make a link between society and symbolic form?

On my return to Cambridge in the fall of 1971 I presented this text to the editor of the proposed monograph, Eduard Sekler. He supplied valuable criticisms and then encouraged me to fill out the text in more detail and above all to stick to the evidence. He rarely challenged my interpretations but he was very exacting. Rather he would say: 'If you wish to make that point be sure to make a clear distinction between fact and opinion'. Sekler was a rare combination of architect and historian whose interests spanned many periods including the modern. He had studied at the Warburg Institute with Wittkower in the later 1940s and remembered 'Rudy' inviting him after dinner to share the emerging manuscript of *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*. He had then written a very good book about Wren and his place in European architecture. There were very few historiographical models to which I could turn in my endeavour but when it came to literature on Le Corbusier the holdings of the GSD library were valuable. I pushed on with a second draft of the text and in December 1971 revisited to Paris to complete a catalogue raisonné of all of the drawings using eleven categories for definition. I treated this work as if I were dealing with a building by say Michelangelo where every jot and line constituted valuable evidence. In the spring of 1972 I was able to expand the study to include materials from interviews with a former collaborator of Sert's, with a structural engineer, and with the owner of the company that constructed the formwork for the concrete. I remember saying to Professor Sekler at the time: 'Imagine if we could talk to the stone masons who cut the travertine selected for Michelangelo's apses in St Peter's.'

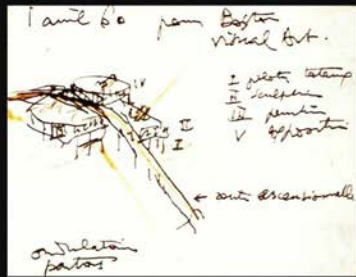
During all this period of over a year I had been virtually absent from the Fine Arts Department. I did not even know where my carrel was in the uninviting subterranean library at the Fogg, preferring to work elsewhere. But I had genial relations with most of my fellow graduate students and had some close friends at the Graduate School of Design. In May I was hauled in by John Rosenfield, then Chairman, who wanted to know what on earth I was up to. Why had I not been to see my advisor James Ackerman, for example? I replied that he should not worry that I was acquiring a good education at Harvard but in my own way. To which he

answered: 'Yes, but what do you have to show for it?' I was ready for this and so pulled out of my bag a hefty 350 page typescript in a yellow binder and put it on the table. I explained to the harrassed Chairman that I had written a book and that the editor was Eduard Sekler. I pointed through the window at the Le Corbusier building next door and explained that my study was a detailed reconstruction of the design process and probable meaning of the building. Needless to say Rosenfield was astonished but also annoyed, pointing out that I had by now succeeded in failing the German requirement three times. I tried to put a case for not taking the exam at all by saying 'Suppose I can write in depth art history without German'. This did not fly as the German art historical heritage was considered somehow sacrosanct and we terminated the discussion with him saying that he would hand my text over to Ackerman who would read it during the summer vacation. The 'verdict' would be given the following September.

When I returned to Cambridge after the summer I bumped into Professor Ackerman by accident and thought: 'Well this is the end of the road'. He asked if I had enjoyed my summer and I replied in kind. Then he said (in so many words): 'Well I read that manuscript that Rosenfield gave me and I wish to tell you that that is one of the most original and most penetrating historical texts that I have read in some years. Congratulations! As far as I am concerned you have your Doctoral Thesis right there. And what are you doing for Thanksgiving?' Needless to say I was astounded by this response but it was typical of Jim: sound and measured intellectual judgement combined with extraordinary civility and generosity. From that moment on we became friends. I reported back to Sekler who said: 'Well you know William, a PhD from Harvard is worth gold'. To be honest I had not been too concerned about this: I just wanted to write a marvellous book, and then write even more marvellous books! So the discussion widened and the manuscript was handed over to John Coolidge who gave it a thorough and insightful reading (I still have the eleven pages of notes that he scrawled on yellow lined paper). Meanwhile the book continued to evolve with the addition of a long 'Description of the Building' and my Conclusion on 'The Image and Idea of the Building'. Eventually Eduard Sekler wrote his Introduction and, in addition, a penetrating

text placing the Carpenter Center in the context of Le Corbusier's oeuvre and generic themes. In turn he invited Rudolph Arnheim to contribute a text on invention and Josep Luis Sert to write a Preface. In essence this was the structure of the final book published (after many delays) in 1978 by Harvard University Press: *Le Corbusier at Work. The Genesis of the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts*. In 2014 I retraced this entire process and recalled these formative years in a long article 'The History of a History' published in *Massilia* 13, Ed Imbernon, Marseille, 2014. Meanwhile in 1975 the text, in combination with the catalogue raisonné and a new Introduction, served as my doctoral thesis.

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William J. R. Curtis

Le Corbusier at Work

The Genesis of the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts

To mark the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University, Le Corbusier's only building in North America, William J.R. Curtis will discuss the architect's creative process from the initial sketches, through design and elaboration, to the actual construction. Deciphering drawings, he will suggest how Le Corbusier structured ideas and multiple levels of meaning in form. This lecture is a personal testimony as Curtis first researched and wrote about the design process of the Carpenter Center in 1971-3 when a student at Harvard. His text was accepted as a PhD in Fine Arts (1975) and published as *Le Corbusier at Work* (Harvard, 1978). Between 1976 and 1982 Curtis taught at the Carpenter Center in the Department of Visual and Environmental Studies (courses on the history and theory of architecture and design). In 2004 he held an exhibition of his own paintings and drawings in the Carpenter Center entitled 'Mental Landscapes'. Both the building, and his researches on it, played key roles in Curtis's formation as historian and artist.

William J. R. Curtis (1948) is a historian, critic, painter and photographer. Educated at the Courtauld Institute and Harvard, he has taught world-wide and was Slade Professor of Fine Art at Cambridge University (2003). Among his numerous books: *Le Corbusier at Work, The Genesis of the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts* (ed. E.F. Sekler, Harvard, 1978); the classic *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (Phaidon, 3rd ed., 1988) and *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms* (Phaidon, 1988). *Balkrishna Doshi: an Architecture for India* (Rizzoli, 1988); *Danya Ladun: Architecture, City, Landscape* (Phaidon, 1994); *Abstractions in Space* (Pulitzer, 2001); *The Structure of Shadows* (Bunka, 2008); and *Tóodoro Gonzalez de Leon* (Alquino 2010). Curtis contributes to critical journals such as *Architectural Review* and *El Croquis* (numbers on Siza, Monzó, Ando etc). He also exhibits and publishes his own paintings (*Mental Landscapes*, Circolo, Madrid 2002) and photographs (*Structures of Light*, Aalto Museum, 2007). Among his awards: the JSAH Founder's Award (1982); a National Honors Society Gold Medal, USA (1999); Medal 50th, Museum of Finnish Architecture (2008).

2 Le Corbusier at Work. The Genesis of the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts. Poster of commemorative event, Boston Society of Architects, April, 2013



3 Pat and Eduard Sekler, William Curtis and Jim Ackerman, at BSA event, 2013

Dialogues on Method: Architecture as Symbolic Form

With the acceptance of my text in the autumn of 1972, everything changed. Professor Ackerman now became just 'Jim' and we had cordial discussions on many subjects. He avoided any form of superior behaviour and never pulled rank. I sensed that he had experienced a crisis in which old definitions had fallen away. This corresponded to a midlife transition in which he was reassessing his own work and early achievements. He was very open about his doubts and about the need for new directions. In the spring 1973 I was commissioned by the Open University in England to write a book containing two Units, one on Le Corbusier's work in the twenties, one on English architecture of the 1930s. This work was published in 1975 under the simple title *Le Corbusier / English Architecture 1930s*. The first part bore the title 'Le Corbusier, The evolution of his architectural language and its crystallization in the the Villa Savoye at Poissy'. The second part bore the title: 'The Modern Movement in England 1930-39; thoughts on the political content and associations of the International Style'. In effect these texts were concerned with the entire question of modern architecture as symbolic form. The one on the Villa Savoye suggested multiple levels of meaning including that of a machine à habiter, an idealized villa, a demonstration of architectural language, a utopian urban metaphor, even a Machine Age temple; that on English architecture explored the utopian content of modernism and the fate of modern forms in the diaspora. During the summer of 1973 I immersed myself in seminal texts by Focillon, Kubler, Collingwood, Baldwin Smith, Yates, Scott, Frankl, Panofsky, Jung, Popper, Peirce, Whorf, Schapiro and by numerous others which helped me to attain a level of generalisation on the basis of my particular researches and to formulate what eventually became an 'Integrated Theory of Form'.

In political matters Jim was liberal. He was appalled by the Vietnam war. Confronted by the student upheavals of the late 60s and early 70s part of him felt that the pursuit of elitist studies in Renaissance art history smacked of irrelevance. Critics of the military industrial complex also questioned the very function of the

university. In September 1973 Jim and Mildred invited me to stay in their country place in Barnet, Vermont. The house was rather spartan and the daily routine quite disciplined. We had breakfast together and then each went to her or to his corner to do intellectual work: Mildred for example was quite involved in film. Jim was preparing articles. I worked in the wood shed with the marvelous smell of chopped logs and began to sketch the outline of a theoretical text on the relationship between social forms, ideology and architecture. At lunch and dinner we ate very simply: usually some steamed squash with brown rice and absolutely no salt. Everyone who knew Jim will recall that he stayed extremely fit through physical exercise and work outs in the gym. In the afternoons he and I would go down to a muddy swimming hole that he had created by constructing a dam. It was the early 70s and the rules of the time required that one swim naked. I was very amused by this but to be naked with another person is in fact a form of trust. In retrospect I tried to imagine a much younger Jim swimming naked in the Tiber and discussing methodology with one of his German Professors ! In the evenings Jim and Mildred and I had several memorable conversations about their time in Rome soon after the war and about the originality of Meyer Schapiro, whose seminal essay on style I had just read.

That Fall I taught a Junior Tutorial in the Fine Arts Department with the title 'Architecture: Social History and Metaphor'. The course description stated: 'Architecture is the physical framework for social relationships and use. Usually Architecture embodies, at some level or another, aesthetic qualities and intentions, and it is nearly always a vehicle of conscious meaning. As Architecture comes into being when an institution has enough power and wealth to put it up, it may be said to occupy, specifically, a place in the social history of the upper strata of society: frequently it has been employed as an explicit instrument of power. Architecture may be regarded as a chapter in institutional history.... there is a pre-requisite process without which the building of Architecture is impossible...This process begins with the history of ideas, then the history of social forms.' The same outline reflected upon the manifestation of preexisting ideologies in both the building programme and the beliefs of the architect ('conscious and unconscious influences'), and the

ways that social aspirations might be expressed in symbolic form. In addition it suggested the need to consider 'ensuing uses and shifts of meaning'. One of the juniors called Daniel Bluestone delivered a brilliant paper on H.H. Richardson's Ames Gate Lodge, the values it exemplified, and a convergence with F.L. Olmsted's landscape ideas, linking both to the notion of a 'middle landscape'. All of this was right up Jim's alley and he sat in on many of the sessions. A year or so later he published a piece entitled 'Transactions in Architectural Design' in *Critical Inquiry* which possibly echoed some ideas of the seminar. I should add that I had no need of 'Marxist art history' to explore these dimensions. One subject on which Jim and I eventually disagreed was that of Manfredo Tafuri. Jim thought well of Tafuri's writings on the Renaissance while admitting that his texts such as *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* were obscurantist. I went much further and in a book review in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* in 1980 condemned Tafuri's and Dal Co's book on modern architecture for its muddled thinking, its western bias, its lack of critical judgement (Aalto was described as a 'distraction') and its simplistic notions of 'ideological criticism'.

As I still had a Graduate Prize Fellowship I profited from the last two years as a student at Harvard to publish several articles and book reviews. My text on Le Corbusier needed an Introduction for its reincarnation as a PhD Thesis and I wrote about the process of design as one of the keys to a building's meaning. On a June morning in 1975 we assembled in Harvard Yard and were annointed as Doctors of Philosophy in 'Artes Elegantes' (a Latin approximation to 'Fine Arts').

Although Jim had not been my teacher in the usual sense, and although as an advisor he had been presented with a text as a *fait accompli*, he had played a crucial role in supporting my endeavours. Years later, I was staying with Jim and Jill at 12, Coolidge Hill Road and came across a red bound volume containing an auto biographical interview with Jim undertaken in the early 1990s. This went back to the Yale days and the influence of Focillon, to the war experiences in Italy, to the Institute of Fine Arts and the German art historical heritage, to Rome after the war, to the books on Michelangelo and Palladio, to the arrival at Harvard and to the wide range of his students. It was an impressive list of people in all branches of the arts

and Jim had obviously done a lot to advance the cause of women in academia. I was amused as well to read the following: 'The most prolific person that worked with me, or I should say worked alongside, because I don't claim that I influenced him very much--he just was around, and not too evident at that--was William [J. R.] Curtis, who writes on contemporary architecture and has been a freelancer and has made a living out of writing books. He wrote a textbook on contemporary architecture [Modern Architecture since 1900] which is excellent, a book on Le Corbusier [Le Corbusier's Ideas and Forms], and a book on a contemporary Indian architect [Balkrishna Doshi: An Architecture for India]...'. Many years later, in April 2013, I gave a talk at the Boston Society of Architects to mark the 50th anniversary of the opening of Le Corbusier's Carpenter Center. I chose as the title: 'The History of a History: Le Corbusier at Work. The Genesis of the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts'. Both Jim Ackerman and Eduard Sekler were in the front row and I thanked them both publicly for the interest they had shown in me as a young and rather wayward student in the early 1970s when I had written my first book and established my identity as a historian.

Towards an Integrated Theory of Design

Jim Ackerman possessed the sort of intelligence that liked to get to the bottom of things. The word 'origins' cropped up in conversation and in his book titles. In the mid 1970s we sometimes discussed the philosophical roots of art history as a discipline. He was acutely aware that his principal teachers had been Europeans who imported their versions of high culture to a North American society which tended to be pragmatic. While he admired the achievements of Panofsky, Krautheimer and the rest, he was suspicious of the degree to which their view of art reflected a German Idealist tradition. In fact he had himself been influenced by several strands of ideas including those transmitted via his former teacher Henri Focillon (*Vie des Formes*, 1934) and Geoffrey Scott, whose *Architecture of Humanism* (1914) stressed the role of empathy and the human body in the experi-

ence of space and form, and the perception of movement in and through buildings. This framework of ideas (descending possibly from the psychologism and 'Einfühlung' of Theodor Lipps) can be sensed in Jim's book on Michelangelo with its emphasis upon physical energies and sculptural forces. The book on Palladio went further into the social and economic context, especially when dealing with the villas. On the whole Jim seemed less interested in architectural symbolism: his essay on 'Style' (1960) was a classic of the genre but he never wrote an equivalent one on meaning in architecture. When he got off on Tafuri I would point out that there had been earlier attempts at writing social and ideological histories of art (for example Hauser, Antal, Drew Egbert) which had also run into difficulties when attempting to link ideology to artistic imagery and expression. Much as one could learn from Gombrich and Baxandall, they tended to stay at the level of representation via conventions in their discussions of the social function of images. But meaning works on other levels too. At the time, in the early 1970s, I was drawn to then recent writings of Frances Yates (viz *Theatre of the World* (1969)) or those more distant classics by E Baldwin Smith, *Egyptian Architecture as Cultural Expression* (1938) and *The Dome: a Study in the History of Ideas* (1952) precisely because these dug deeper into the substructures and complexities of meaning, particularly symbolic spaces and forms..

At the time Jim was one of the few art historians to be interested in philosophical speculations concerning the impact of the history of ideas upon historical thinking and writing. In this period we had several discussions about such questions and the need to reformulate approaches but without losing contact with works of art themselves. It seemed to me important to go back and forth from the particular to the general but in the end a historical text had to prove its own worth. In September 1975 I took up a one year appointment at Boston University in the Art History Department with the agreement that I should teach courses on art and architecture in North America in the 20th century. This was an opportunity to assemble my thoughts on modern painting and sculpture in the USA, subjects that were usually dogged by a limited formalist approach. In addition I gave a seminar on politics and the arts and then several courses on architecture. The sec-

ond semester I added a course at Wellesley on modern architecture. All of this supplied essential building blocks for future syntheses. I remember discussing the course on painting and sculpture with Jim explaining that for me abstraction was a form of distillation allowing for several levels of ambiguous even hermetic content. I devoted a lot of time to the 1920s and 1930s and to the complex formations of individual artists such as Pollock, Gorky and David Smith. All of this stayed with me when almost forty years later I began to exhibit my own paintings and drawings ('Mental Landscapes') and photographs relying heavily upon abstraction. Among the graduate students at BU were two outstanding individuals: Alicia Azuela, who did a fine presentation on Diego Ribera and Pan Americanism (and who has since become a world expert on the Mexican muralists) and Elisabeth Sussman who presented on Pollock and Primitivism (and who has since become a curator at the Whitney Museum). As for the courses on architecture, these worked from the basis of the recurrent types of the American industrial city (urban grids, landscape parks, railways, skyscrapers, suburban houses, palaces of culture etc) and the ways in which individual architects interpreted these.

In 1976 I moved back to Harvard and taught for six years in the Visual and Environmental Department at Carpenter Center in fall semesters only; the rest of each year I used to write, give lectures, or travel. I organised several expeditions to places as diverse as Greece, Turkey, Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and India, with a particular interest in Islamic architecture. The photographs made during these trips became integral to my teaching. In effect my main courses at Carpenter Center were devoted to visual education, to the art of seeing, and with this in mind I explored basic concepts such as form, function, meaning, expression, style, typology, invention, process, structure, technique, medium etc. From Arnheim I inherited VES 100, a core course, and gave it a new title as well as an amplified range (he had tended to revolve around gestalt psychology), renaming it 'Towards an Integrated Theory of Form in the Visual Arts'. I was interested in investigating all the forces which influence form and I cast the net wide to include cultures far and wide, ancient and modern. I also extended the range well beyond limited definitions of 'art' to include objects and tools, photography and film, cities and land-

scapes. These investigations took various forms including exhibitions. In 1981 for example I organised an exhibit about Le Corbusier's sketchbooks in collaboration with Victoria Newhouse and the Architectural History Foundation: this bore the title 'Fragments of Invention: the Sketchbooks of Le Corbusier'. In 1982 I put together another show also with a fine catalogue: 'Forms and Functions of the Australian Aboriginal Spearthrower'.

The beauty of Carpenter Center was that it was a sort of raft independent of both the Fine Arts Department and the Graduate School of Design and that it allowed a free space for speculations of a very broad kind without being distracted by the collective neuroses of this or that 'field'. My interventions involved a perpetual oscillation between particular subjects and general theories, between objects and ideas. Students were encouraged to observe, analyse, draw, internalise, transform. I was concerned with the what, the why, and the how of things. For this purpose the lectures supplied a grid of concepts accompanied by basic texts of diverse periods on this or that particular subject: for example, a lecture on 'Function' might be illustrated with images of Viking ships, Antique Roman brooches and airplane propellers. Where accompanying readings were concerned it could include a text from Horatio Greenough, an article by the evolutionary biologist Richard Lewontin, a chapter on transformations from D'Arcy Thompson's *On Growth and Form* and a Carpenter Center exhibition catalogue on the design and fabrication of Thonet chairs. The juxtaposition of natural and man made design was deliberate.

The student papers returned in kind with subjects such as the history and symbolism of the umbrella throughout the ages, or the design of torpedoes based upon the forms and behaviour of tuna fish (inevitably referred to as the 'tuna sub'). In fact the students referred to the course VES 105 as 'around the world in eighty ways'. Behind these speculations was a belief that it is through the eyes and the mind together that much knowledge is acquired (I was much intrigued at the time by Leonardo da Vinci's notion of 'esperienza'). There was also a vision of a uni-

verse of forms in perpetual flux. To focus in more detail upon problems of form and meaning, and upon processes of creation, I invented a graduate seminar with the title 'From Idea to Form'. I recall a fine intervention on the meaning of spirals in architecture by a student from MIT called Doreve Nicholaeff who focussed on Guarini's Church of San Lorenzo in Turin. I was well aware of debates in the field of art history at the time but was not interested in engaging with camp skirmishes or caricatural confrontations between 'connoisseurship' and 'context'. I insisted on treating theories as structures to guide hypotheses rather than as substitutes for historical thinking or replacements for the analysis of works of art.



4 The dome of St Peter's Rome, 16th C AD, from the Aventine Hill. Photo WJR Curtis, 1999

Back to the Renaissance : Experiencing and Reading Architecture

That said I did also teach some courses in the history of architecture, principally to architecture students, which is an art of its own since it may be used to supply students with direct architectural lessons through experience and analysis. Eduard Sekler taught a vast survey in four sections from Antiquity to the recent past and asked me if I could cover the Renaissance. This I was delighted to do as it permitted me to return to my first love but with the conceptual tools and insights that I had acquired in the interim. To refresh myself I spent two weeks in the summer of 1977 travelling around Italy with Howard Burns and Lynda Fairbairn (who had curated the excellent exhibition on Palladio in London in 1975: *Andrea Palladio 1508-1580. The Portico and the Farmyard*). In Rome we stayed in the dusty Albergo Homs which offered a view over the roof tops towards the spiralling tower of Borromini's Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza surrounded by flitting swallows against the backdrop of a deep blue sky. Through his contacts, Howard was able to get us into the gardens of the Vatican behind St Peter's and into the Belvedere Palace. The light was perfect, mouldings leapt into life and shadows were black as ink. Michelangelo's apses and giant pilasters in travertine were transformed into eruptive surfaces, heaving masses and animated profiles. Stone pocked with holes seemed to vibrate. 'Here is something to arouse emotion' wrote Le Corbusier in *Vers une architecture* with reference to Michelangelo's heroic forms. I was able to spend hours studying the giant pillasters and mouldings in detail through a telephoto lens.

Bramante's Belvedere, even in its incomplete state, was an inspiration, with its vast airy perspectives in real space echoing the illusionistic space and ideal world of Raphael's 'School of Athens'. Tucked away at the far end of the Belvedere was a spiral stair that rose floor by floor and as it did so changed from one classical Order to the next starting with Doric at the base. Bramante was a master of geometrical transformations and harmonies played out on the basis of cylinders and cubes,

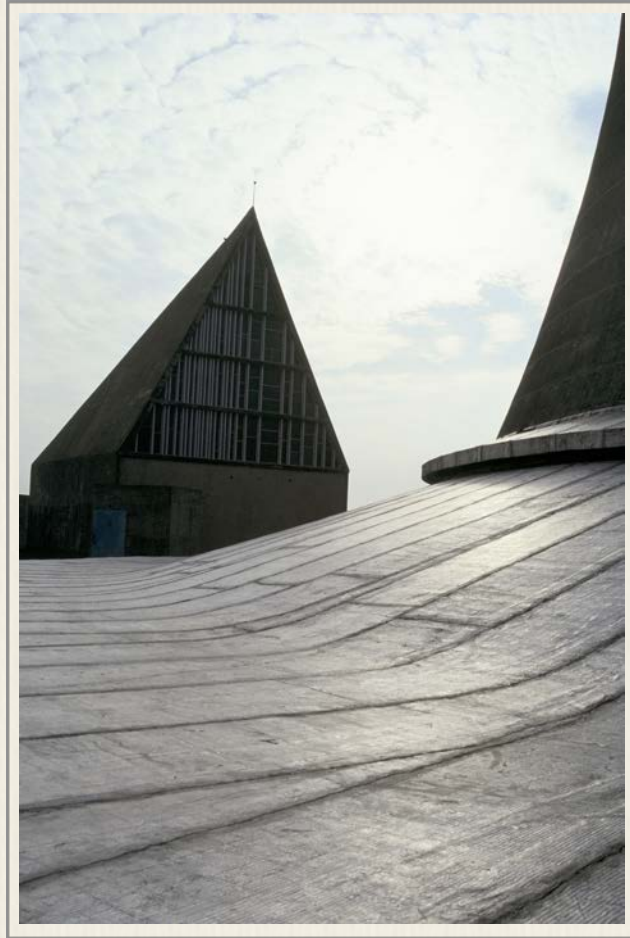
circles and squares, convex and concave theatres, hemicycles, niches and spiralling ascents. Our wanderings took us through Antiquity to the Villa Adriana and to the great stepped temple ruin at Praeneste (which influenced both the Belvedere and Palladio's grandest villas). Then it was Florence, Venice, Verona and Vicenza. The Redentore never looked more noble and serene, and on the terra firma we did a round of the various villas, being invited to lunch at the Villa Pisani at Bagnolo. During the course of these Roman reveries and Palladian wanderings I inevitably thought of Jim's writings while reflecting all the while upon the types and variations of villas, just as I had done with Le Corbusier's houses of the 1920's or Wright's Prairie Houses at the turn of the 20th century. My course involved twelve lectures and charted the shape of an unfolding Renaissance tradition. The last version was taught in the Fall of 1981 by which time the virus of post-modernism had caught on at the GSD and the last lecture bore the title: 'Renaissance and Resuscitations: the Difference between Pastiche and Authentic Form (a cautionary tale contrasting the intellectual froth of the poché-and-capuccino-culture, with the tougher but more sustaining diet of classical principle).'

The course on the Renaissance deliberately used multiple lenses, sometimes dealing with broad themes, sometimes zooming in on particular works and submitting them to a close reading. Here are some of the lecture titles as they give an idea : 'Leon Battista Alberti and the Transformation of Antique Prototypes: Theory and Practice' ; The Roman « High Renaissance » and the Principles of Bramante's Architecture' ; 'Architecture, Decorum and Power: Villas and Palaces of the First Half of the Sixteenth Century' ; ' « Intelligence and Passion »: the Architecture of Michelangelo and some Pseudo-problems of « Mannerism »' ; 'Types and Variations : Palladio's Villas as the Idealization of a Way of Life'. Architecture itself is a form of knowledge and it is important to teach students how to 'read' buildings, penetrating to the structure of intentions and the central, generating ideas. Twenty nine years later I was in Milan to give the inaugural lecture of the Polytechnic and I stayed on for a few days to revisit favourite places and discover new ones. On November 1st, All Saint's Day, I was accompanied around Milan by Damiano Jacobone, a delightful member of the faculty. The streets were closed to

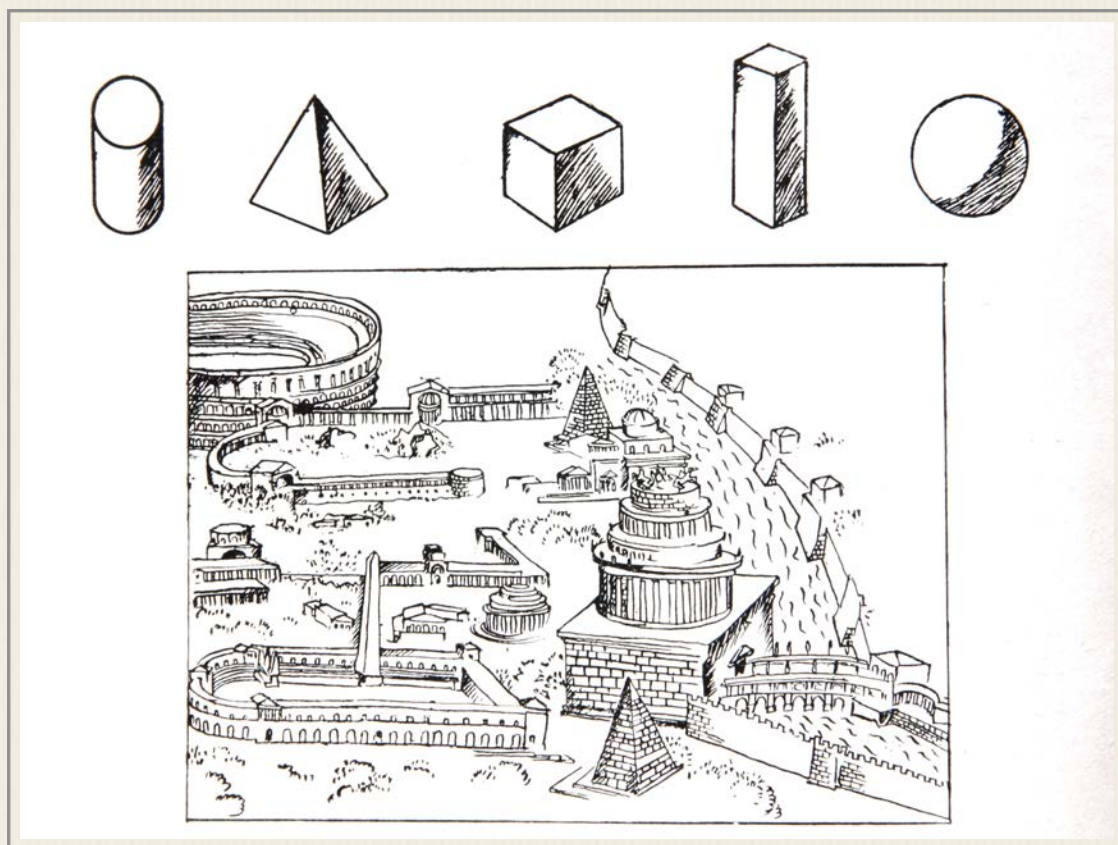
traffic so one could get around easily and contemplate buildings at leisure. We revisited Bramante's S. Maria S. Satiro, the first time I was seeing it in decades, and I was struck by the number of formal ideas, lighting devices and details of articulation that would be developed on a much larger scale in Rome. S. Maria delle Grazie seemed cluttered inside but coherent outside, and the canonical demonstration at S. Ambrogio seemed quite dry compared with the medieval atrium, a space of great power and presence. I told Damiano about my earlier studies of Renaissance architecture and he later wrote about our discussions in the review *Territorios*, reiterating my belief that 'in the end the real subject is architecture and not just all the chronological details'. After this I set off on a cross country train ride to Mantova where there was an exhibition on Alberti and to Vicenza where there was another one on Michelangelo's drawings organised by Caroline Elam with a catalogue devoted to James Ackerman.

This jaunt across the Po valley with chill winter light jolted many memories and later in mid November 2006 I wrote to Jim about the journey: 'Dear Jim Thanks so much for your letter of a couple of weeks back. Yes these computers do not always work right. We have had several demonstrable cases of emails coming or going astray. It is rather a busy time with several short but fascinating trips, the most recent to Milan where I gave the Inaugural Lecture at the Politecnico. My book on *Mod Arch* is very present in Italy in paperback... Anyway this was a great chance to revisit Milan after many years...not just Bramante but also the ancient things...in fact the Atrium of St Ambrogio (12th century) made the strongest impression. Then a little circuit by train to Mantova and Vicenza. In Mantegna's strange house quite a nice little show about Alberti covering some of the usual moves but with some original manuscripts and books...In Vicenza an exhibition about Michelangelo's drawings put together by Caroline Elam. It was a real thrill to see the smudgy drawing for Porta Pia and a paper profile cut out for the New Sacristy... Anyway the catalogue is dedicated to you !! Palladio Basilica looks marvelous in low autumn light... Anyway this is just a short note to send you and J and J warmest regards and to say that I shall write to you properly soon. Best wishes from Catherine too, William.' Memories upon memories backwards and fore-

wards in time : resonances and reminiscences. While in the Michelangelo exhibition I did a sketch of the cartoon of one of Michelangelo's mouldings, but sent it to Jim years later in the context of abstraction. As for the situation of great works in time and the perennial lessons to be learned from them, Focillon supplies a relevant reflection in the chapter on 'The Life of Forms in Time' in *Vie des Formes* (1934) : "The principle which gives support to a work of art is not necessarily contemporary with it...it is quite capable of slipping back into the past or forward into the future...The artist inhabits a time which is not necessarily the history of his own time'.



5 Le Corbusier, pyramidal roof scape, Parliament Building, Chandigarh, India, 1952-65. Photo WJR Curtis, 1999



6 Le Corbusier, sketch of primary solids and ruins of Ancient Rome, Vers une architecture, 1923

Modern Architecture Since 1900: Jim Ackerman's Assessment

In the Fall semester of 1978 I was at last able to get back to the subject of modern architecture when I gave a lecture course on 'Architecture of the Twentieth Century'. This was an opportunity to pull together nearly a decade of research and reflection on the subject in a coherent and measured synthesis. Soon after the course was completed I received a letter from Phaidon Press asking me if I might be interested in writing a general book on the history of modern architecture. This was too good to be true and I accepted. The first draft of the book was completed by summer 1980; the second and almost final one, by spring 1981. This was a period during which I travelled a good deal and as is explained in the Preface I nearly lost a third of the manuscript in the River Hawkesbury in Australia and nearly lost my life in an armed attack in Beirut while the book was being written. Except for Catherine, I said not a word about this project to anyone at Harvard: it was a top secret operation. Without going into detail, I basically cut the subject into three sections: the emergence of the idea of a modern architecture in the 19th century and developments pre world war I; the crystallisation of seminal works in the so called heroic years of the 1920s; and the world wide dissemination and transformation of these founding principles over ensuing decades. In other words I was concerned with the structure of a tradition, the modern tradition, and in this respect I was certainly influenced indirectly by Henri Focillon (*Vie des Formes*, 1932) and by George Kubler (*The Shape of Time*, 1962) but also by Gombrich's idea of 'schemata' and 'style'. Possibly too my structure reflected subliminally that of Vasari's *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, (1550). After all, Vasari also worked with three 'ages', each heralded by a key set of breakthroughs or new paradigms which shifted the game for followers. This view of an unfolding tradition deliberately side stepped the crude zeitgeist determinism of writers like Giedion (*Space, Time and Architecture*) while also exploring the debts of modern architects to the past. Throughout the book I kept in mind my 'integrated theory of design', attempting to hold multiple factors in balance. The book terminated with Jorn Utzon's extraordinary church at Bags-

vaerd which I had 'discovered' by accident that summer of 1978 when visiting Copenhagen, a work that was firmly in a modern tradition but which succeeded in doing all the things that post-modernists claimed to do but in authentic and timeless forms.

In 1981 Catherine Dean and I got married, first in a civil ceremony at Cambridge City Hall (a presentable imitation of Richardson), then in a religious ceremony near Tournai in Belgium. The reception was a splendid affair and took place in a cubic neo-classical villa with a piano nobile and a pediment in a park belonging to relatives. There was even a processional driveway between alleyways of trees and a surrounding bucolic park with lakes, glades and vegetable gardens to one side. The Palladian echoes were evident. Denys Lasdun gave us a copy of Alberti's *De Re Aedificatoria* in a bilingual Latin and Italian edition as a wedding present. I woke up early and translated into French the parts where Alberti discusses the ideal pastoral and landscape conditions for a country house. To an extraordinary extent these conditions were fulfilled by the house where we had the reception, so these passages went over very well when I read them out to thank our hosts, especially after several glasses of champagne. But as mentioned earlier, the house I grew up in was also on a symmetrical Palladian plan with extending wings. Situated in Birchington-on-Sea in Kent this fine residence was called Ingoldsby Court and was designed for my parents by Robert Paine in 1947. It also incorporated primary and secondary axes in the gardens and classical scrolls in the gable ends that were otherwise inspired by typical Flemish weaver's houses found in south east England in the 15th century. I have the feeling that I experienced a lot that was 'classical' and 'Palladian' in childhood long before learning about Palladio himself in later life. As usual for me, architectural experience preceded texts. Unfortunately the house was demolished fifteen years ago but it lives on in old photographs, in architectural drawings, and in memory. After the wedding we headed south to Italy, first to Vicenza, then to Pienza, Siena and Rome. One of the high points was a night time concert on the Campidoglio lit by flaming torches on top of the Capitoline Palaces.

Before leaving Cambridge I had decided to give my manuscript to a single reader for an honest assessment, and I deliberately chose an individual whose primary activities were not in the field of modern architecture, but whose ability to judge the intellectual worth and longevity of a text was beyond doubt. Needless to say all this pointed to Jim, so a day or so before we left for Europe in late June I turned up at 12, Coolidge Hill Road with two large supermarket bags carrying a total of 780 pages of typescript. I explained what this about and asked him how he felt about reading through the entire book in Barnet, Vermont that summer. He said that he would be delighted to do so. I insisted that he be as critical as he liked: no holds barred. Anyway after our sojourn in Italy, Catherine and I went to England. I phoned Phaidon Press in Oxford and arranged a meeting with the director Simon Haviland. When I arrived he stated outright: 'We think that this book is a winner and that it needs very little more work'. I disagreed insisting that it probably needed another year's work. Simon replied: 'But didn't you give a copy of the manuscript to a well known historian at Harvard?' 'Yes, to James Ackerman.' 'Do you have a number for him? Here is the phone'. So I called the number in Barnet, Vermont. In those days rural numbers in the USA made a sort of grumbling sound. After several grumbles Jim answered 'Ackerman'. When I said who I was, he asked all about the wedding and then we got to the subject of the book. He said that he thought it was a marvelous piece of work, liable to have a long life and that it needed very little extra work. When I put the phone down I recounted what I had just heard to Simon who replied: 'We told you so'.

Jim followed up with an extraordinary letter dated August 28th 1981 and addressed to Simon Haviland. It started out as follows: 'William Curtis has asked me to put down my reactions to his ms. entitled *Modern Architecture 1900-1975*, which I do willingly because I have benefited greatly from our association over the years and because I am enormously enthusiastic about the achievement. I think it is not only immeasurably the finest work covering this field in existence but may very well be the best survey of any field in the history of architecture written since the prime of Niklaus Pevsner and Siegfried Giedion...' The letter then continued to discuss the scholarly underpinnings and the wide geographical range: 'Its histori-

cal method is irreproachable; there is no evasion of documentary responsibility...I doubt whether any other publishing historian in his field has encountered such a wide spectrum of buildings at first hand: Curtis has ranged through Africa, the Near East, Asia and Australia, as well as Europe, with an adventurousness quite untypical of his profession.'

The letter then focussed upon the literary quality of the text and its ethical and critical stance: 'A truly distinctive virtue of the text is that it is admirably written without wasted or obfuscating verbiage and with an assured and easy style. The most distinctive aspect of the book is its critical posture which is exceptionally open yet absolutely firm in its priorities. He conveys a concept of the symbolic message of architecture, its role as the carrier of culture that elevates the historical account to a humanistic plane. Yet he is not a fashionable semiologist/structuralist. He perceives architecture as an art; in the genesis of architectural works, he draws attention repeatedly to the significance of structural technology in design. He is the model of the committed humanist in that he combines scientific precision with ethical responsibility and with critical sensibility.'. The letter expanded upon this aspect of a critical stance towards contemporary architecture then stated: 'In presenting architecture as a culminating achievement of a culture and of the human imagination, Curtis has chosen to maintain much of the traditional idealist critical stance, and in this respect I would have written a different kind of book on the subject. But I say this to demonstrate that one doesn't have to share all the premisses of his work in order to admire and learn from it.' Needless to say this letter is one of the most treasured documents in my possession. *Modern Architecture Since 1900* was published in September 1982 only weeks after I had left Harvard (of my own accord). It became my international passport and opened the way to 'wider latitudes': a much larger world than that of the university.

Villas, Farms and Classical Ruins

In late 1982 Catherine and I left behind our Boston existence and set off on a grand adventure involving several years of repeated travels through India and south east Asia. While there were several visits to the United States to earn our living, we eventually set up base in a remote rural spot in southern France: an ancient farm which became our retreat. I had visited India the first time in spring 1980 and had been transfixed by the experience of sites such as the Tomb of Humayum, Fatehpur Sikri and of course Le Corbusier's Capitol in Chandigarh. For some time I had been thinking that it was time to go beyond western, north African and middle eastern traditions in order to experience and understand some of the primary examples of Buddhist, Hindu and Indo-Islamic architecture. Initially we had a base in Bangkok and from there we set off on several expeditions in Thailand, India and Indonesia travelling very light with only the minimal clothing, sketchbooks, cameras and precious rolls of film. I can say that this was one of the high points of our lives as we covered vast territories and periods in India, all the way from the Buddhist stupa at Sanchi to the Sun Temple at Modhera, from the Elephanta Cave to Le Corbusier's Assembly Building in Chandigarh, from the stepped wells of Gujarat to the Jain temple at Ranakpur.

In eastern Thailand we explored tropical wooden vernaculars and discovered Khmer architecture at Phimai as Cambodia itself was still inaccessible and under the rule of Pol Pot. In Java we visited Borobadour and in Jogjakarta immersed ourselves in then active renaissance of traditional dance. It was a question of learning and absorbing new visual languages of architecture and design at all scales from that of Balinese canoes, to that of Thai temple roofs, to that of Indian lotas (brass water pots). In this visual research, sketching was indispensable as a tool. Beyond individual examples one gradually absorbed the 'sub structures' of diverse traditions, the characteristic types and forms. When we arrived in Ahmedabad in western India it was above all to visit Le Corbusier's and Kahn's masterpieces there but also to meet Balkrishna Doshi who opened his doors to us. Along with Charles

Correa, Raj Rewal and Anant Raje, he was involved in a search for a modern Indian architecture attuned to climate, tradition and culture. Eventually I wrote several texts on architectures of the Indian sub continent including ones about Kahn's magisterial Capitol in Dhaka and a monograph summing up Doshi's philosophy and architecture: *Balkrishna Doshi: an Architecture for India* (1988). This stay in India was the first of many: the following year we explored southern temple cities and masterpieces in Sri Lanka, and in 1985 I assisted Charles Correa and Raj Rewal in putting together exhibitions on traditional Indian architecture.

Meanwhile we set up our primary residence in a remote rural spot in southern France, the Ardèche, an ancient landscape of deep limestone ravines, dolmens and pre-historic cave paintings. We installed ourselves in an old farm that was to one side of an estate belonging to childhood friends: the Domaine de Bournet. The building itself was powerful and severe: at its heart was a pigeon tower dating from probably the 12th century. There were courtyards on each side and the architecture suggested a timeless Mediterranean tradition stretching back to Roman times. In fact it was half in ruins and initially we shared the building with six wild cats and a barn owl. I had visited the de Bournet family as a child and they still lived on their château in the centre of an overgrown park. This was the ideal place for me to set out on my next literary project, a book on Le Corbusier, published eventually in 1986 by Phaidon Press with the title: *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms*. This summed up years of researches and observations and insisted on treating Le Corbusier's modernity in a long historical perspective by, among other things, exploring his debts to classical Antiquity and his concepts of 'nature'. As the title suggests, the book was also concerned with the ideas, intentions, and structures of thought behind Le Corbusier's buildings. Of course an inscribed copy was sent to Jim who did after all know quite a bit about the task of writing succinct monographs on individual architects. He may have noticed that the Conclusion bore the title 'Principles and Transformations'. I wrote to him at length evoking the Ferme de Bournet and the atmosphere of the place. He replied with unbounded enthusiasm saying that it must be hard to imagine living anywhere else. There was always a part of him that yearned for a rural existence, hence his fasci-

nation with villas. Jim and his new wife Jill visited us in the Ardèche in autumn 1987 when our daughter Louise was only a few months old. They were captivated by the farm and by the way of life we had established there.



7 Ferme de Bournet, Ardèche, view towards courtyard and pigeonier tower.
Photo WJR Curtis, 1984

Jim inevitably compared the Ferme de Bournet to similar structures in Medieval Italy which were semi fortified in appearance and endowed with courtyards and towers. He came back to a question raised in several of his texts: a subterranean continuity of vernacular forms stretching back over centuries. The farm was within easy reach of the Pont du Gard, the Roman theatre at Orange and the amphitheatres at Arles and Nimes. These sombre sentinels of Antiquity were silent critics of the frivolity of contemporary superficial and ironical references to the past which reduced history to skin deep signs rather than transforming deeper levels. In August 1984 I had published a polemical article in the *Architectural Review* attacking head on both post-modern classicism and academic classical revivalism. The article bore the title 'Principle versus Pastiche : Perspectives on Some Recent Classicisms' and it was accompanied by a second piece 'Modern Transformations of Classicism'. My critique focussed upon both the visual and symbolic limitations of recent fashions and their trivialisation of the past. It targeted directly recent works by the likes of Philip Johnson, Michael Graves, Ricardo Bofill and Charles Moore. It also accused the post modernists of caricaturing modern architecture as a rootless functionalism. In fact my texts suggested that the 'modern masters' such as Le Corbusier, Wright, Mies van der Rohe, Aalto and Kahn had a far deeper understanding of the past than these recent poseurs. These articles caused an international uproar but also received a major critic's award. Jim wrote a fabulous letter in which he stated that I had 'given them the works'. He went on to discuss the entire problem of distinguishing between an effective use and a devalued abuse of an element in the past history of architecture. In the same letter he described a recent trip through England when he had revisited several Palladian houses and been rather disappointed by them. At my prompting he had also been to Hawksmoor's Easton Neston which he much preferred for its noble strength and haunting presence.

In 1985 we seemed to be on parallel tracks. Jim delivered the Mellon Lectures in Washington on the theme of villas throughout history, talks that were eventually transformed into the book: *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses* (1990). For my part, I published an article with the title 'On Transforming

Palladio' which appeared only in Swedish. In effect this unravelled various readings and transformations of Palladio's prototypes all the way from Jefferson's University of Virginia, to Ledoux's Saltworks at Chaux, to Kahn and Le Corbusier. But the article also explored the fusion of Palladian schemes with diverse rural types and vernaculars around the world from tropical homesteads in Queensland Australia to Chinese courtyard houses in Quemoy. When Jim's book on the villa arrived in the post I could not put it down because it evoked with great learning a recurrent set of themes running from Antiquity to the immediate past. It was also very well written. The villa, he pointed out, was effectively a rural building for urban people who wanted to enjoy the panoramas of nature and the inspiration of the arts. It was not the same as a working farm although there were examples of buildings which combined leisure with agricultural production. In Jim's sense 'ideology' took on the character of an unshakeable myth capable of multiple formal and symbolic manifestations throughout history.

In short, he was working in the *longue durée* and defining a type in conceptual rather than just formal terms. He took the reader from ancient Rome through the Middle Ages up to the Renaissance and beyond to the modern period and to works such as Wright's 'Natural House', Fallingwater; or to Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye. He might have added Alvar Aalto's Villa Mairea to the list as more than ever this rehearsed the core themes of the villa as a type: adulation of the 'good life' with framed views of nature; a social stage for convivial entertaining of sophisticated urban guests; the enjoyment of fresh air and beautiful works of art; the evocation of origins in the vernacular and in a lost Golden Age; in fact the building itself is an abstract work of art inspired by Cubist collage and the interaction of natural and artificial worlds. Much later when I wrote the Introduction to a monograph on Aalto's Maison Carré in France, I returned to some of the ideas so well outlined by Jim. In my opinion *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses* is one of Jim's best books: a consolidation of his earlier work but with far greater subtlety in its treatment of meaning and social representation. In this work he achieved a renewed synthesis after the hesitations of the crisis of his middle years. This is one of those books which is truly seminal in the sense that it is likely

to go on opening up new intellectual territories for others for a long time to come.

In 1997 I was honoured to give the Annual Soane Lecture in London and chose as my subject 'Modern Architecture, Mythical Landscapes and Ancient Ruins'. This considered the ways in which various 'modern masters' had experienced, interiorised and transformed the past after the direct experience of ancient ruins. Of course this included Le Corbusier's obsessions with the Parthenon and the Pantheon but it also dealt with Kahn's transformations of Roman baths, Aalto's metamorphoses of Greek theatres, Utzon's interest in the platforms of Monte Alban and Wright's engagement with the geometrical ornaments, stratifications and abstracted landscape forms of sites such as Mitla. The Soane Museum produced a beautiful understated booklet of the lecture and of course I sent this to Jim immediately who loved it and wrote back that I had succeeded in 'placing the moderns in an Enlightenment tradition'. I am not so sure about that but I had wanted to say once again that the best of modern architecture was radical in a full sense: revolutionary while returning to roots. A phrase from Jim's book on Michelangelo had haunted me over the years, the notion that each architect 'creates his own version of Antiquity' - as true of Le Corbusier and Kahn as it had been of Michelangelo and Palladio.

In 2003 I received the invitation to deliver the Slade Lectures in Cambridge University and here again I tended towards the long historical perspective. The series was entitled 'Modern Architecture and Monumentality' and the lectures provided close analyses of works such as Le Corbusier's monuments in Chandigarh or Kahn's Assembly in Bangladesh. At the same time it considered the role of monuments in fabricating national histories and in generating collective memories. Jim was quite touched that I was given the honour of the Slade Professorship and it brought back memories of our first meeting at the Courtauld in early 1970. In fact, Deborah Howard, who had been present then, had since become Professor of Art History in the University of Cambridge and introduced my lectures. She

also attended all of them. In the lecture on Edvard Ravnikar's extraordinary War Cemetery on the island of Rab (1953) I was discussing the fact that the vaulted memorial chamber was constructed out of stone but without the use of mortar and Deborah was able to explain to us that the same was true of the vaulted roof of the 15th century Cathedral in Sibenice further down the Adriatic coast. I later learned that Ravnikar intended to evoke this precedent. It was a reminder that many of the best lessons one had learned all along were from friends and fellow students. Deborah Howard's book *Venice and the East, The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture 1100-1500* (2000) must be counted as yet one more key addition to the historiography of architecture of the period..



8 The inspiration of ruins. The Small Baths, Villa Adriana, Tivoli, 2nd C AD.
Photo WJR Curtis 1996

The Art of Writing Essays

Recently I re-read most of Jim's main books. The monographs on Michelangelo and Palladio hold up well and deserve their reputation as 'classics' although Jim himself was the first to say that the former was still too much in the thrall of formal and spatial analysis at the expense of other types of treatment including institutional representation. The Palladio book does a fine job on the churches and the villas whereas the treatment of the palaces is patchy and uneven. Both books make long term contributions when they sum up the work and principles of each architect, although it is interesting that the Michelangelo book does this at the beginning, and the Palladio does it at the end. The first chapter of the former bears the title 'Michelangelo's "Theory" of Architecture' but what follows is in effect a characterisation of the underlying formal and expressive traits of the architectural oeuvre but with relatively little reference to Michelangelo's visual language in other media such as painting and sculpture. Would Jim today say more about Michelangelo's poetry and his interest in neo Platonic ideas so as to give greater weight to the assertion of 'theory'? The fifth and final chapter of the latter work carries the title 'Principles of Palladio's Architecture'. In this case Jim concentrates upon recurrent organisational strategies such as hierarchy and axuality, the role of harmonic proportions in three dimensions and the general concept of 'Nature' as a model for a higher architectural order. One wonders if Jim would add anything today, for example concerning Palladio's use of the Orders in relation to the hierarchy of building types and in relation to the communication of meaning in urban and public space? More could also be said about the interior uses of Palladio's buildings. That said, both books still maintain their position as essential reference points in their respective subjects and are exemplary in their clarity of literary expression though not in their visual design as books. Perhaps they will one day be reissued with new images and a layout up to the level of their subjects and their lucid texts ?

It puzzled me somewhat that Jim never wrote an overall text on the history of Renaissance architecture so as to replace the somewhat dreary existing 'surveys'. Evidently he preferred the vehicle of the well researched article on a particular subject which nonetheless evoked general themes. Renaissance studies have tended towards extreme specialisation with very few attempts at overall syntheses. In my view this is a pity and a weakness. This was a period of retrospection for Jim in which he looked back over his life's work and attempted to reassess it in a long term perspective. One result of this state of mind was the book *Distance Points. Essays in Theory and Renaissance Art and Architecture*, published by MIT Press in 1991. This anthology collected together sixteen essays, all of them I think published elsewhere before. Some of these were classics of the genre, for example the pieces on style, on Milan Cathedral and on the Belvedere; others were possibly lesser known such as the one on the 'Tuscan / Rustic Order, a Study in the Metaphorical Language of Architecture' (which I found particularly enlightening). There might have been the temptation to bring these texts up to date but Jim adopted another approach which was to supply in each case a post-script placing the contribution in context, considering its strengths and limitations in retrospect, and explaining how the contributions of other authors had altered perspective on the subject. Thus Jim supplied a sort of 'voice over' to put each piece in a historical, even autobiographical setting. Jim was a natural essayist, able to render complex issues in lucid prose and to maintain the attention of the reader with succinct observations and analogies. Moreover he worked with several 'modes': on the one hand the scholarly article backed up by detailed footnotes and references; on the other hand the general essay on a broad subject such as the one on style. According to George Orwell: 'Good prose is like a window pane: transparent'. On this score Jim's writing passes the test, avoiding pointless jargon and getting straight to the point.

Just over a decade later, in 2002, Jim followed up with another anthology, this time of twelve essays, covering a wide range from the origins of art history in texts of the Renaissance, to the role of conventions in architectural drawings, to the origins of architectural photography, to a reconsideration of Palladio's villas. In this

case the title was *Origins, Imitation, Conventions. Representation in the Visual Arts*. In his introduction Jim claimed that 'these studies reflect my - not always conscious - absorption of post-structuralist criticism of the traditional historical-critical *métier*'. Actually this struck me at the time as unnecessary posing for the theory conscious academic audience. The very qualities that distinguish Jim's essays (I prefer that word to 'articles') are precisely their intellectual rigour, their respect for facts and sources, and their lucid literary expression - all features one might think of the 'traditional historical critical *métier*'. There are larger questions here concerning the qualities which lend longevity to historical writing. If several of these essays continue to prove valuable in the long term it will be because they combine scholarly understanding, deep insight and literary quality, even if other researchers may have supplanted some of the factual details. Moreover there are cycles of opinion in which texts which have gone out of sight temporarily, may return because later generations ask analogous questions. A phrase of Karl Popper's comes to mind concerning the advance of knowledge through 'structured areas of problems.' One enters a field at a particular moment and there are issues 'in the air' which one can address or ignore, but the deepest works of history transcend these passing matters and penetrate to questions of greater import in a manner that may guarantee them a longer life and relevance.

In 1989 some of Jim's ex students organised a form of festschrift to honour his 70th birthday. Instead of producing a publication they suggested collecting texts and off prints and putting them together in a box. The vast range of offerings was testimony to the wide impact of Jim's teaching and writing. I contributed an article that had just come out in France for the rentrée of September 1989 on Mitterand's Grands Projets marking the Bicentennial of the French Revolution. Entitled 'Machines d'Etat: les Grands Projets Parisiens' this reviewed the individual monuments, such as the Arche de la Défense and the Pyramide du Louvre, and considered these in relation not only to contemporary architecture but also in relationship to the French imaginaire: to myths of extreme centralisation, mechanised progress, militarism and underlying classicism. The essay also questioned the appropriation of avant gardist rhetoric by a centralised state power and the risk of sym-

bolic devaluation. It examined the theme of a 'royal presidency', not to say 'a pharaonic' one, for there was something about the Grands Projets that suggested Mitterrand's desire to leave his mark on Paris through the device of monumental interventions in pure geometrical forms such as the pyramid and the cube. There may have been echoes of the sublime monumentality of Boulée's Monument to Newton in the Arche de La Défense while the Pyramid of the Louvre suggested other possible readings. There are after all Egyptian subtexts in the Parisian cityscape such as the obelisk at the Place de la Concorde, and pyramids have been invoked in French history in both republican and imperial frameworks of iconography, not to mention the imagery of Free Masonry. In short, this article was a piece of ideological criticism unmasking certain manoeuvres of power but one which did not shirk the responsibility of judging individual buildings on architectural terms.

My own writings have often been linked to direct architectural experiences. For example, in 1978 I travelled to the oases south of the Atlas in Morocco and lived for some time in a mud fortified village known as a ksar. For several years I studied and investigated this type then when in the early 1980s Oleg Grabar set up a journal for the study of Islamic culture with the title *Muqarnas* he suggested that I make a contribution. The result was the study 'Type and Variation: Berber Collective Dwellings of the North West Sahara' which considered an urban type through various conceptual lenses including climate, geography, economy, social structure, political representation, religion, construction, materials and diverse theories of origins (grass roots Berber, pan Arab, Saharien, Roman etc). In the 1990s I applied a similar approach to the analysis, criticism and evaluation of modern and contemporary architecture, for example in a monograph on the Mexican architect Teodor Gonzalez de Leon published in its 1st edition in 1993 (and just republished posthumously in 2016 in a 3rd edition as *The Collective Works of Teodoro Gonzalez de Leon*). In the same period I published numerous texts and introductions on figures as diverse as Alvaro Siza, Tadao Ando, Alejandro de la Sota, Rafael Moneo, Juan Navarro Baldeweg and others. I often collaborated with the Spanish journal *El Croquis* which produce exquisite monographs, sometimes also including interviews (and there is an art to conducting significant interviews). But what-

ever the subject, whatever the context and the intentions, I wished in the end to bring the discussion back to the experience and analysis of the work of architecture itself.

It was in this spirit that I published a long essay on Leon Battista Alberti in the Times Literary Supplement in early 1999. The editors gave it the title 'Saying and Doing' and it was in effect a detailed review of Robert Tavernor's book *On Alberti and the Art of Building*. The review pinpointed several qualities of the book such as its detailed research into patronage and the use of materials but questioned its tendency to treat Alberti's built works as if they could be understood as expressions of his theories. It also questioned the computer aided 'reconstructions' suggesting that they ended up turning Alberti into a third rate post modern classicist. In effect this article was a plea for a more direct assessment of Alberti's extraordinary skill as an architect, for his mastery of form, material, idea and tradition. In addition it was a chance to reflect upon the range of Alberti's philosophical writings and the ways in which these might, or might not, be linked to his creative processes as an artist. I insisted upon a distinction between theoretical ideas and architectural ideas, the latter involving imagination, visual thinking and symbolisation in spatial concepts. In the 1990s (and since, apparently) there has been a danger that dry theorising replace intelligent and learned insight into the visual and spatial qualities of buildings and urban spaces. Great architecture communicates before it is understood and the relationship between forms and theories is never straightforward.

In the same period, broadly speaking the 1990s, I was hard at work on literary projects. In 1994 I published a major monograph which again drew upon decades of reflection: *Denys Lasdun: Architecture, City, Landscape*. In addition to charting the development of Lasdun's architecture from the 1930s to the present, this attempted to explain the basic principles, generating ideas and architectural language of this outstanding British architect who was also a close friend and who had also been a mentor. In fact part of the problem here was to create a sufficient

distance from the subject. In 1996 Phaidon also published the 3rd edition of *Modern Architecture Since 1900* in a thoroughly revised, extended and redesigned version. This gave the book a new life and allowed me to incorporate my own and other people's discoveries over the years since the first edition of 1982. Needless to say an inscribed copy was sent to Jim who later told me that he had been intrigued to identify ways in which the book had evolved since he read the first edition manuscript in 1981. Such an operation is risky: one needs to alter the body while holding onto the essential spirit of the original work. On occasion I discussed this issue with Jim even wondering why he had not updated his books on Michelangelo and Palladio in a similar fashion. Between 2011 and 2014 I undertook a major revision of *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms* in an extended and totally redesigned 2nd edition. Here again it was a delicate balancing act which also involved the insertion of much new material, the addition of five chapters and the inclusion of 150 of my own photographs for I was ever more active as a photographer. The book came out in early 2015 and of course Jim was one of the first people to receive a copy. At the end is an entirely new section entitled 'Principles and Transformations' containing four of the new chapters: 'The Realm of Architectural Ideas'; 'The Genesis of Forms'; 'The Unique and the Typical'; and finally 'On Transforming Le Corbusier'.



9 William J.R. Curtis, Mental Landscape, Abstraction and Light, 2007

Painting, Drawing and Photography

Over the last fifteen years of Jim's life we continued to send each other texts back and forth. I think that he rather enjoyed the opportunities for computer transfer offered by Dropbox and Wetransfer. Again he set to, organising and reorganising texts with a view to eventual publication. Occasionally I would pass through Cambridge, Mass. and whenever possible we would get together with Jill and with our shared friends such as Margaret Carroll who lived just across the road or Natasha Staller for whom he had a high regard. Often we would walk the dog together and this was an opportunity for reflections and recollections. I once asked Jim why he never revealed anything in print about his life before going to Yale and he replied unconvincingly that nothing of note had happened to him before that date. We also came back to his war experiences in Italy and to his unplanned 'liberation' of Mantova that allowed him to visit Alberti's churches of Sant'Andrea and San Sebastiano which he had known only through photographs. The fact is that Jim was squeamish about discussing his own life although I am happy to say that he changed his mind enough to publish a piece about his wartime experiences in his last book *Origins, Invention, Revision*. Studying the History of Art and Architecture, put out by Yale Press only months before he died. The same book contains his homage to the extraordinary 15th century Jain temple at Ranakpur in India, some of his own sketches undertaken during the Italian campaign, and a eulogy to Frank Gehry's Vuitton Foundation in Paris. I remember when Jim sent me the individual text on this building more or less claiming it as one of the 7 wonders of the world. I replied that it might be one of the 7,777 wonders of the world which is still not too bad.

Jim had always been interested in the role of architectural drawings and in the functions and modes of architectural photography and here again we had shared ground. I had often used my own photographs in my books but in 2004 I exhib-

ited a selection of them on their own account at the Centre Méridional de l'Architecture et de la Ville in Toulouse under the title 'Architectures du Monde'. As the title suggests the geographical selection was very wide including images from my worldwide travels but the real point of the exhibition is that it conveyed a way of seeing, one which involved a degree of abstraction as a means for concentrating vision and even for distilling the perception of architecture and expressing visual ideas. Another version took place in the Alvar Aalto Museum in Jyväskylä in 2007 under the title 'Structures of Light' and this time was accompanied by an elegant catalogue with the same title in which I included a reflection upon my conception of photography as an introduction: 'The Shadows of Time'. In parallel there were several exhibitions of my paintings and drawings referred to as 'Mental Landscapes', first in the Museum of Finnish Architecture in 2000, then in the Circulo de Bellas Artes in Madrid in 2002, then in the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard in 2004. The last named was extremely moving for me for this is where it all began. At the opening my dear friend Eduard Sekler made a warm speech in which he said quite simply 'Welcome home!' Many old faces reemerged, some of them of former students who I had not seen for over a quarter of a century. Alas Jim could not make it to the opening but he did visit the exhibition later and wrote to me with his impressions stating that these lyrical abstractions were in his opinion 'distillations of an entire life time'.

In May 2009 I was invited to give the opening talk at the Hay Literary Festival in the Palace of Carlos V in the Alhambra. I read out a short text entitled 'Una Meditacion sobre la Alhambra: a Meditation on the Alhambra'. This caught the imagination of the Director Maria del Mar Villafranca as did some photos I had published over the years of the Alhambra. One thing led to another and I was invited to stage a retrospective exhibition of my artistic production in the Renaissance Palace of Carlos V which took place eventually between September and November 2015 with the title 'Abstraccion y Luz / Abstraction and Light. Paintings, Drawings and Photographs by William J.R. Curtis'. The exhibition was installed in the octagonal chapel directly off the round courtyard and in the two rooms to either side. The installation was designed in concert with Juan Domingo Santos.

Paintings were attached to the walls without frames and set at a short distance from the background and so seemed to hover. Smaller pieces were displayed in horizontal vitrines and seemed to float in space. Inevitably these glass surfaces suggested subliminally the water surfaces of the Nasrid palaces next door.

In a darkened room to one side there were projections and moving montages of my photographs around three main themes: light as a universal material of architecture; cosmologies of the natural world; and mirrors of the imagination, meaning in this case the evocation of atmospheres of the Alhambra. In addition there were touch screens of travel sketches, abstract miniatures, and a video concerning ruins and gardens. The exhibition was accompanied by a book with the same title as the exhibit designed by Carmen Moreno Alvarez and produced by TF Editores, Madrid. In turn this contained diverse texts by the author such as 'Abstraction and Light: a Vision of the Alhambra' and 'Horizons of the Mind' as well as an Introduction by Alvaro Siza. I could not have asked for more as this was in effect a summation of my sensibility and way of looking at the world. By concentrating upon the sensual features of the architecture and gardens the abstract photographs explored the role of light and water in the experience and meaning of the Alhambra and the Generalife. Meanwhile, my 'mental landscape' paintings and drawings suggested the hidden forces and spiritual order in nature by evoking light, shade, water, gravity, clouds, the sea, the forest, geological strata etc, but without direct reference and through a metaphysical abstraction : in effect these are pieces for meditation. I am happy to say that Jim was thrilled when he received the catalogue and regretted that he had not been there in person. But long distance journeys were by then out of the question for him.

Divine Light

Does one's life proceed forward in a sequential straight line? Or does it involve constant loops back then reinventions forward? Is the personal past always there in the deeper strata of the mind, waiting at any moment to metamorphose into some-

thing new and unexpected? The last time I saw Jim in April 2013 at the aforementioned event at the Boston Society of Architects organised to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the opening of Carpenter Center when I delivered the talk 'The History of a History: the Genesis of the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts' and he sat in the front row alongside Eduard and Pat Sekler. He was as alert and fit as ever although he did complain of occasional fits of dizziness and of his fear of falling. Thankfully a photo of the four of us was taken at the reception after the talk: Pat, Eduard, myself and Jim. What luck to have this souvenir of another moving event involving the recollection of past times. I have not been back to the United States since then so in a sense that event constitutes my official farewell and thankyou to Jim although we did of course remain in contact over the intervening years when his health began to decline.

Occasionally we spoke by phone but more often communicated by email. He was very courageous and frank about his failing health and spoke several times with great affection about Jill's art work and about their son Jesse's graduation and emergence as a graphic designer. It was obvious that his last book was a priority and it was a huge relief to him that this came out in time for him to see it. During this period we continued to exchange texts and images. Jim requested a photo of Ronchamp to accompany his piece on Gehry and I sent it over right away. Jim and Jill wrote to me about their ambition to acquire a property next to the sea and they achieved this by buying a place on the southern Massachusetts shore. I wrote to Jim in late July 2016 asking him how he was enjoying the ocean view and the horizon. With the letter I enclosed a poem that I had been working on for many years called 'City of the Mind' (see below). In effect it is an evocation of the hidden presences of Rome. He wrote back the next day to say that he appreciated it very much. This was the last written communication that I had from him.

Last November I was in Venice again for an event linked to the Biennale. I chose a hotel on the Lido with a corner room which offered a long view across the water to Venice in one direction and towards the hills of the terra firma in the

other. One morning I revisited the Giudecca and Palladio's churches in the mist. I had the same probably pointless internal debate as always: which is the better of the two? San Giorgio Maggiore or the Redentore? As I was weighing up the question I recalled one of the most beautiful passages in Jim's book on Palladio where he discusses light and its special character in Venice: 'The transcendent feature of Palladio's churches is a light that penetrates every corner with its warmth - light as unique and as Venetian as that created on canvass by his contemporaries Titian and Veronese. It is produced by the large number and size of windows, by the orientation of the plan toward the path of the sun and by the dominance of the church over surrounding buildings; but above all, it is in the nature of the reflecting surfaces that endows it with a special cast of humanity, even of sensuality, and differentiates it from the austere effects of equally well-lit late Gothic interiors..'

The passage continues by linking the effects of light to the main spaces and divisions of the church: 'The light does more than illumine; in the Redentore, its different quality in each of the three major spaces underlines the individuality so distinctly established in the plan; it separates the diffusedly lit nave from the amply lit tribune from the brilliantly lit monk's choir; but in so doing, it really unifies, because the white blaze of the choir, against which the columns in the hemicycle are silhouetted and become immaterial, attracts one as if to a supernal goal. The spiritual implication is reinforced by a physical rise in the level of the crossing and choir, as the nave is above the ground level of the exterior. Stairs are used to similar psychological effect in giving eminence to some of the villas'. Another passage focuses upon San Giorgio: 'The cerebral theoretician evaporates from the consciousness of the visitor who steps through the door of San Giorgio Maggiore to be greeted by an engagingly illogical and complex surrounding transformed by a warm and varied light into an environment in its own way as supernatural as that of a Gothic cathedral dissolved in the hues of its stained glass. Palladio was as sensual, as skilled in visual alchemy, as any Venetian painter of his time. It is the fusion of the intellectual and the sensuous in Palladio that has made him the favourite of so many generations....'

After Jim Ackerman's passing away there was a period during which I communicated back and forth with friends who had also known him for the same length of time. This process of mirroring was important because it helped to put things in perspective and to deal with the loss. Of course Jim meant different things to different people and I am sure that over time different accounts will emerge. My own relationship with him went on often at a distance but was no less significant for that. Moreover it had a lot to do with reactions back and forth to texts, starting of course with his positive assessments and valuable criticisms of my manuscripts for books: *Le Corbusier at Work* and *Modern Architecture Since 1900*. Over the years there were many other exchanges of books, articles and ideas. On another level there was a communication via the buildings that we both loved, whether modern, Renaissance, Roman or Indian. We were attracted to creations that transformed fundamentals from the past while being engaged with their own time. Works of architecture can function as echo chambers, recalling earlier experiences and interpretations, even releasing memories and feelings from early life.

My own relationship to Jim was special because we shared so many interests and because our quests overlapped in several important ways. We helped each other discover what was important at crucial times. As said earlier - and here many others concur - Jim was a generous person who had high standards but who also wanted to help others find their way. In the broadest sense of the word he was a teacher: a person who could illuminate the path, who cared and who had a sense of human solidarity. About eight weeks after Jim left us I had a curious dream. I was telephoning him at the usual 617 number at 12, Coolidge Hill Road. The phone rang several times and then he answered in his customary way with the single word: 'Ackerman'. The sound was quite extraordinarily clear, as if I was there in the same room as him, and I remarked on this to Jim. He answered that yes he had a new system and that the sound was much improved. More than that, I pointed out to him that I could also see him clearly: I was quite certain in the dream that Jim had left this earth but nonetheless I could see him as if he and I were present in the same space. He was sitting to one side of a small but luminous room lined with white shelves full of books. He seemed very content. In fact I

asked him 'Is everything going well?' He replied in so many words that yes everything was excellent. He had a marvelous smile on his face when he said this. The room was radiant, filled with light. Then the line went 'click' and we lost contact. I woke up immediately and felt an overwhelming sense of calm.

END



10

Cosmic light and the realm of shadows, the Pantheon, Rome, 2nd C AD. Photo
WJR Curtis, 1996.

CITY OF THE MIND

Copyright: William J. R. Curtis

In Rome one day
I looked down a long
and narrow street
towards
a distant obelisk
shimmering in the heat
flattened
against
a stretched white sky.

Tense,
the afternoon
converged
along parallel lines
towards

a vague sense of infinity -
a dark speck
fading into the atmosphere
beyond the city limit.

Across the axis
left to right
people moved
from dark to light
like actors on a stage
or spectators
in a painted scene
with palaces along
the lines of sight

A frame
of kinds
around the past
with triumphal arches
and church façades
marking time
down receding streets -

a theatre of memory
in the space of a dream.

water
splashed
in
hidden
spots
heard
but
unseen

Rays invisible
crossed the air
as vectors in
a visual cone
or pyramid with angled sides,
its apex embedded

in the eye
its grid drawn lightly
on the sky.

Visitors keen
to find a place
were quick to see
that points in space
had been fixed
and determined
long before
by papal edict
or mathematical law.

Past, perspective,
dust and glare,
the epochs
of the world
conspired
to share a ring
of radial views
for looking at history

through a lens

in reverse

or upside down -

a rounding,

universal aim

shattered by

the klaxon

of a taxi and

the clattering

of a tram.

Imperial and coffered

the sobre dome

gathered shadows

in its sphere

offering whispers

to the ear

and opening

an oculus

to the sky

a singular eye,
through which
a solar disk
fell silently
from heaven to earth
as a cosmic beam
upon the floor
or replica of the planetary pole -
a world within a world.

Water wrinkled
in the wind,
dribbling from the curling lip
of a fountain rimmed
with leering fawns,
their devilish faces and furry loins
lusting after
pert-breasted nymphs
in crisp white Roman stone.

Temples tired

from centuries of heat
their pleated columns
hanging limp
(wilted acanthus at their feet)
stood stone still
in spent light,
their silhouettes fading
into the August night.

water
splashed
in
hidden
spots
heard
but
unseen

Expiring
City

Dying in stone.

Veins corroded
In travertine.
Pitted with shadows
Pocked by wars
Spliced together
With metal bars.
Marble mouldings
Smooth as bone
Offering rest to
Priests and lovers.

Eternal
City

Lost in fragments.

Living now
From moment to moment.
Antique memories
Trapped in dust.
Perennial ruin

Palimpsest.

Invisible City

Outside time.

Axis Mundi.

City of the Mind.

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END 19/04/2017

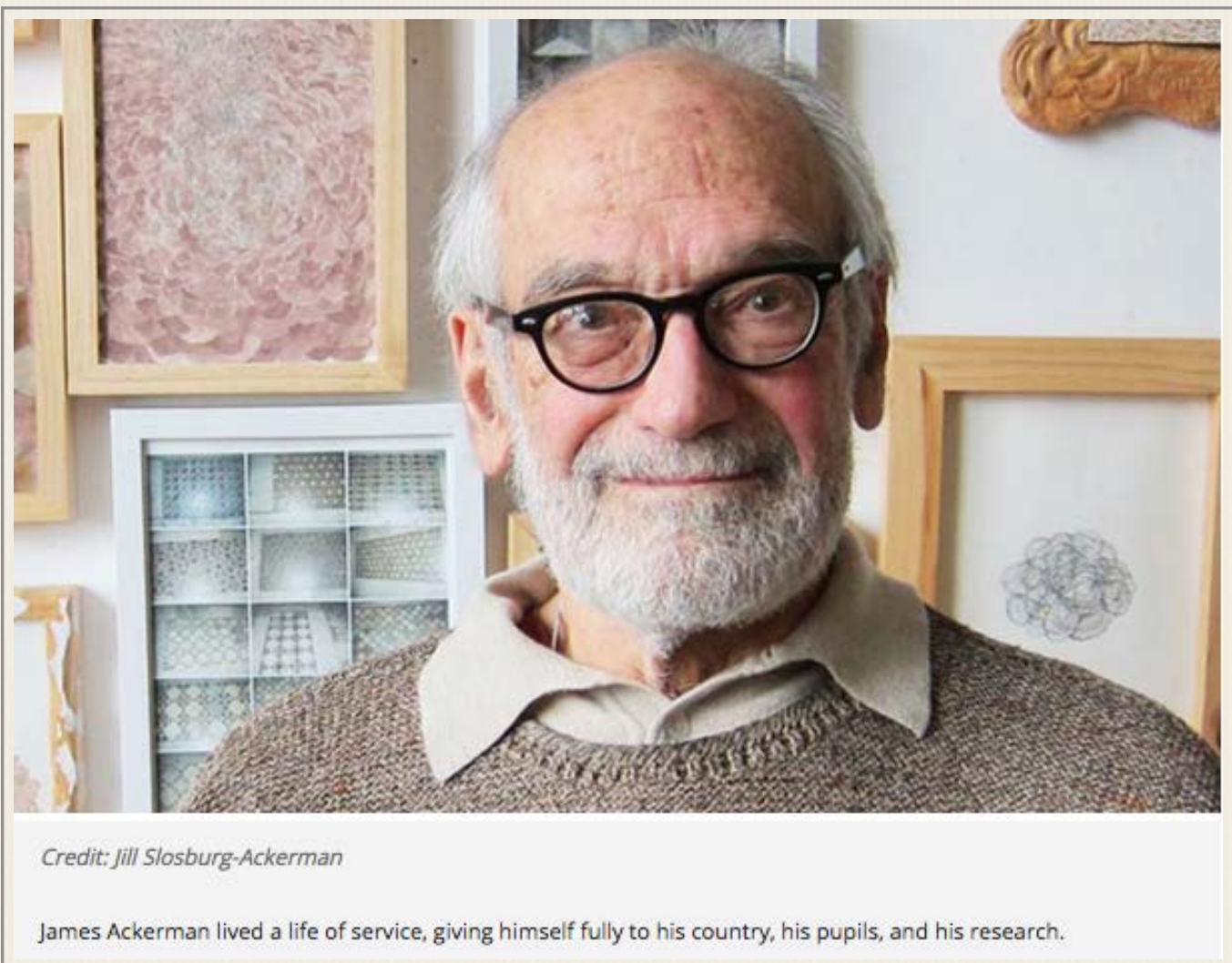


Press

James Ackerman, historian on Renaissance architecture, dies at 97

Legendary teacher 'who wore his awesome learning lightly' is remembered

January 6, 2017 | Editor's Pick



By Jill Radsken, Harvard Staff Writer

Harvard Gazette

Architectural historian James Ackerman, the Arthur Kingsley Porter Professor of Fine Arts Emeritus, died Saturday in Cambridge. He was 97.

A World War II veteran who discovered a lifelong passion for Renaissance architecture while stationed in Italy, Ackerman was an acclaimed scholar of Renaissance history and the theory of architecture.

“His books were all milestones in the field — books that seem as perfectly balanced as the buildings they interpreted,” said Joseph Koerner, the Victor S. Thomas Professor of the History of Art and Architecture, adding that Ackerman’s mastery as a teacher matched his intellectual genius. “He inspired generations of undergraduates and trained many of America’s leading scholars and museum professionals.”

Born in San Francisco, Ackerman studied the history of art and architecture at Yale University before serving as part of the Intelligence Corps for the U.S. Army, translating German command messages in Italy. After the war, he was assigned to secure archives at Certosa di Pavia, a monastery in northern Italy.

Back on American soil, Ackerman received his Ph.D. at New York University’s Institute of Fine Arts, then had a fellowship at the American Academy in Rome. He returned to the United States to teach at the University of California, Berkeley, and joined Harvard’s faculty in 1960, becoming chair of the Department of Fine Arts three years later.

Alina Payne, the Paul E. Geier Director of Villa I Tatti, one of many in the department who cherished her friendship with Ackerman, described the bespectacled academic as “extraordinarily generous.”

“Throughout his long career, he was always curious, and open to new ideas and trends in research,” she said. “His mark has been felt around the world for at least half a century.”

He was a prolific author, publishing many influential books and essays over a career spanning more than six decades. Among them: “The Cortile del Belvedere,” about Bramante’s work at the Vatican; “The Architecture of Michelangelo”; “Palladio”; “The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses”; and “Distance Points: Essays in Theory and Renaissance Art and Architecture.”

In 2001, he was awarded the International Balzan Prize in the field of the history of architecture, a prize he shared with young architectural historians at the Palladio Center in Vicenza and the American Academy in Rome. He received the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement from La Biennale di Venezia in 2008 and was appointed grand officer in the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic. He was also proud to have been honored with volunteer of the year award from the Community Learning Center in Cambridge.

David J. Roxburgh, chair of the Department of History of Art and Architecture, recalled reading Ackerman's books on Andrea Palladio, Venetian architecture, and Rome as an undergraduate in Edinburgh, Scotland, "never thinking that one day I might meet him." "His books then, as now, offered an innovative vision and model for historical research. Though Jim had retired by the time I joined Harvard's faculty, he was kind and generous to me," he said.

Equally inspired was Koerner, who remembered a man "who wore his awesome learning lightly." He shared a conversation he observed between Ackerman and a group of department undergraduates.

"A last question was posed to him: 'What advice would you give aspiring art historians?' Without missing a beat, he said, 'Voice lessons!' and began a mesmerizing story about his own formation, his struggle with public speaking, and the difficulty of projecting a compelling persona," he said. "I regret terribly that we didn't film the event."

Ackerman is survived by his wife, Jill Slosburg-Ackerman, and their son, Jesse, and his children from his first marriage to Mildred Rosenbaum Ackerman (who predeceased him), Anne, Tony, and Sarah; three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Friends of the Community Learning Center in Cambridge. A memorial service will be held at Harvard in the spring.

«Monument man» di Michelangelo

di Guido Beltramini

All'alba dell'ultimo giorno del 2016 è morto James Ackerman, nel suo cottage di Cambridge nel Massachusetts. Aveva novantasette anni e con l'italiano Manfredo Tafuri è riconosciuto come il più influente studioso dell'architettura del Rinascimento nel secondo Novecento.

Allievo di Focillon a Yale negli anni Trenta, nel decennio successivo Ackerman incontra nell'ambiente dell'Institute of Fine Arts di New York un gruppo di storici dell'arte fuggiti dal Nazismo, da Richard Krautheimer a Erwin Panofsky. È con il loro insegnamento, filtrato da inevitabili differenze di formazione e di generazione, che Ackerman getta le basi di una nuova storia dell'architettura. Ma non prima di essere partito come volontario nei ranghi dell'OSS (precursore della CIA), partecipando dal 1942 al 1945 alla lunga campagna di liberazione dell'Europa cominciata dal Nord Africa e giunta fino al Po. Memorabile il suo ingresso in jeep a Mantova, informato del ritiro tedesco, per vedere le chiese di Alberti e palazzo Tè. Inconsapevoli di essere i primi militari alleati ad entrare in città, Ackerman e un suo compagno vengono acclamati dalla popolazione dapprima in festa poi perplessa nel scoprirli liberatori solitari. Sarà successivamente "monument man" nella Lombardia liberata e la Certosa di Pavia, conosciuta in quella occasione, diventerà il soggetto del suo primo saggio pubblicato sulla rivista *Marsyas* nel 1949.

È però la monografia sul Cortile del Belvedere vaticano (1954) a segnare un punto di svolta, mettendo insieme il meglio di tradizioni diverse. Lo studio dell'architettura è trasformato da storia degli stili a disciplina umanistica, intrecciando indagini delle trasformazioni dell'edificio nel suo farsi, fonti visive e d'archivio, contesti, funzioni come nessuno prima di lui. In particolare il disegno assume un ruolo cruciale non tanto come immagine del progetto, ma come strumento con cui l'architetto riflette e comunica: in altre parole la leva in grado di ampliare lo sguardo dello storico dall'edificio costruito alla personalità del creatore.

Una decina di anni più tardi Ackerman pubblica due monografie sui dioscuri dell'architettura del Cinquecento, *The Architecture of Michelangelo* (1961) e *Palladio* (1966), ancora oggi fondamentali. Nel 1990 è la volta dello studio di una tipologia architettonica con *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses*, analizzata dal mondo romano a Frank Lloyd Wright. I volumi sono paralleli ad una messe di saggi, dal Duomo di Milano (1949) alla chiesa del Gesù di Vignola (1972), dalla pratica del progetto rinascimentale (1954) alle convenzioni nel disegno (2000). In essi Ackerman affianca la lettura sapiente dell'oggetto all'analisi dei "programmi" che conducono alla costruzione degli edifici, come campo di forze anche divergenti di progettisti, committenti e fruitori. Una indagine frutto della spinta civile a rompere l'isolamento della ricerca accademica, e riportare al presente i frutti della ricerca sul passato: non attualizzandolo ma ritrovandovi le radici di temi e problemi significativi per il dibattito



SCOMPARSO | James Ackerman, lo storico dell'architettura italiana scomparso il 31 dicembre 2016. Foto di Pino Guidolotti

contemporaneo. Negli anni Ottanta i suoi studi sugli ordini architettonici nel Rinascimento all'interno della prospettiva storica della cultura rinascimentale, erano di fatto una risposta polemica all'uso ludico e decorativo che ne facevano gli architetti del nascente Postmodern.

Alla stessa necessità intima di ampliare i confini della storia dell'arte assorbendo il pensiero scientifico rispondono una serie di pionieristici contributi dedicati ai meccanismi della visione, dalla teoria e pratica dei colori (1980) all'ottica - con al centro Leon Battista Alberti (1978) e soprattutto "l'occhio" di Leonardo (1978) - e all'illustrazione sui primi libri di scienza (1985). Una terza linea di ricerca indaga i fondamenti etici e intellettuali della storia dell'arte, alla ricerca di una disciplina capace di giudicare l'arte senza assoluti (come titola un suo contributo del 1979) rifiutando ogni concetto teleologico di stile, fondato su modelli biologici, ciclici o dialettici (1963) e capace di tenere insieme storia e critica d'arte, interpretazione e personale esperienza soggettiva del fruitore (1984). A uno sguardo d'insieme, la lunga carriera di Ackerman lo pone come una delle figure cruciali nella evoluzione della storia dell'arte americana da campo di positivisti e conoscitori a disciplina interpretativa e fondata su modelli teorici. Una visione che comunque mantiene al centro l'opera d'arte, la sua originalità e l'immaginazione che l'ha prodotta.

Un profondo senso di responsabilità e di impegno civile hanno sempre vincolato Ackerman alla disciplina di una cristallina chiarezza del discorso, anche sui temi più complessi, fuggendo i modi di chi «dice messa in latino dando le spalle ai fedeli», come commentò la fumosa conferenza di un palladianista. Una limpida capacità di racconto che dichiarava ricercata sin dagli inizi della sua carriera, per condividere ciò che studiava con la figlia adolescente.

The New York Times

[James S. Ackerman](#), a Harvard art historian whose studies of the architecture of Michelangelo and Palladio remain classics in the field, died on Dec. 31 at his home in Cambridge, Mass. He was 97.

The death was confirmed by his wife, [Jill Slosburg-Ackerman](#).

Mr. Ackerman plunged into the study of architecture while serving in Italy with the Army at the end of World War II. While awaiting a transfer back to the United States, he volunteered to work for the Monuments and Fine Arts Commission in Milan. He was given the assignment of retrieving archives that had been stored for safety in Pavia, in the monastery complex known as the Certosa.

A flame was kindled. His immersion in the Certosa di Pavia generated a master's thesis at the Institute of Fine Arts in New York, where he earned a doctorate in 1952. While teaching art history at the University of California, Berkeley, he was approached by the art historians [Anthony Blunt](#) and [Rudolf Wittkower](#) to write a survey of Michelangelo's architecture for a series of architectural monographs they were editing.

"The Architecture of Michelangelo," published in two volumes in 1961, was greeted as an indispensable work on an overlooked subject. In the first volume, a dozen essays aimed at the educated general reader discussed the artist's major building projects, which included the Laurentian Library and the Medici Chapel in Florence and the Farnese Palace and St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. In the second volume, each project was discussed with full scholarly apparatus appended.

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Among other insights, Professor Ackerman showed that many of the more puzzling features in the Laurentian Library were solutions to specific structural problems. He shed new light on the dome of St. Peter's by scrutinizing contemporaneous projects by Michelangelo as he altered the design from a pointed to a hemispherical dome.

Photo

One of Mr. Ackerman's works.

"Probably no other architect reveals in his total oeuvre such a continuous strain of fertility and felicity of design, and the greatness of Mr. Ackerman's book is that he constantly makes the reader aware of this," the art historian David R. Coffin wrote in [The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians](#) in 1962. The [Society](#) honored the book with its Hitchcock Award in 1961.

Professor Ackerman's study of the late-Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio, published in 1966, was written at the behest of the English art historians [Hugh Honour](#) and John Fleming for Penguin's "Architect and Society" series. In limpid prose, Professor Ackerman summed up his subject's life and career, arguing against the neoclassical view of Palladio as a cold logician.

"Palladio was as sensual, as skilled in visual alchemy, as any Venetian painter of his time," he wrote.

The Harvard art historian Joseph Koerner told [Harvard Gazette](#) that Professor Ackerman's books "were all milestones in the field — books that seem as perfectly balanced as the buildings they interpreted." He added, "He inspired generations of undergraduates and trained many of America's leading scholars and museum professionals."

James Sloss Ackerman was born in San Francisco on Nov. 8, 1919. His father, Lloyd, was a prosperous lawyer. His mother, the former Louise Sloss, was a patron of the arts.

After attending the Cate School in Carpinteria, Calif., he studied art and architecture at Yale, earning a bachelor's degree in 1941. His studies at the Institute of Fine Arts in New York were interrupted when he was drafted into the Army in 1942. He served with the Intelligence Corps,

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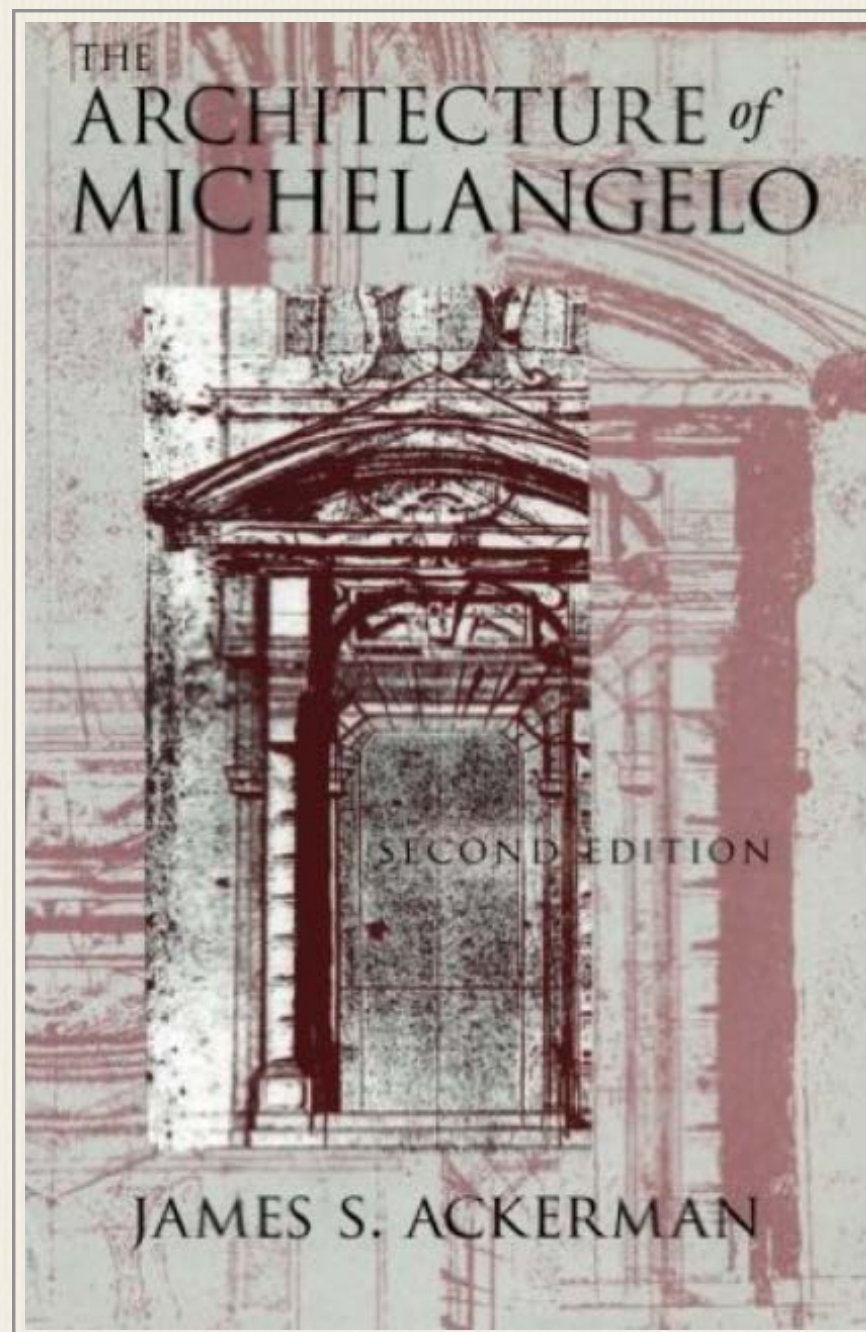
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James S. Ackerman in an
undated photograph.
Photographic Archive of the American
Academy in Rome

On returning to the United States, he earned his master's degree at the Institute of Fine Arts in 1947. That year he married Mildred Rosenbaum, a dancer. She died in 1986. In addition to his wife and their son, Jesse, he is survived by three children from his first marriage, Anne, Tony and Sarah Ackerman; three grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Three years in Rome provided the material for Professor Ackerman's doctoral dissertation, on the work of the Renaissance architect Donato Bramante at the Vatican. It was published in 1954 as "The Cortile del Belvedere."

"I discovered material in the Uffizi drawing collection that dealt with the Court of the Belvedere in the Vatican, and the prefect of the Vatican library offered to publish my dissertation in a series on the history of the palace," he told [College Art Association News](#) in 2010. "I was 29 and had nothing to prove that I was competent to take this on, but then everyone in the Vatican is into faith."

He joined the art department at Harvard in 1960 and remained there until retiring in 1990. In 1969 he accepted a one-year appointment as the Slade professor of fine art at Cambridge University in England.

Professor Ackerman followed his study of Palladio with the pamphlet-size "Palladio's Villas" (1967), an expanded version of Chapter 2 of "Palladio," and "The Villa: Form & Ideology of Country Houses" (1990), a study of country houses from Roman times to the era of Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright.

"Distance Points: Studies in Theory and Renaissance Art and Architecture" (1991) collected seven of his essays on Renaissance critical theory and the relationship between architecture and science, as well as studies of Leon Battista Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci. It included his earliest published work, the celebrated essay "'Ars Sine Scientia Nihil Est': Gothic Theory of Architecture at the Cathedral of Milan," published in *The Art Bulletin* in 1949.

He was the editor, with Wolfgang Jung, of "Conventions of Architectural Drawing: Representation and Misrepresentation" (2000) and the author of the essay collection "Origins, Imitation, Conventions" (2002). In October, Yale University Press published the essay collection "Origins, Invention, Revision: Studying the History of Art and Architecture."

Architectural historian and professor of Fine Arts, Harvard University, 1960-. Ackerman's father, Lloyd Stuart Ackerman (1882-1968), was a prosperous San Francisco attorney and his mother, Louise Sloss (Ackerman) (1888-1983), was later a librarian at the San Francisco Museum of Art (today the SF Museum of Modern Art). Art as a child, he was exposed to art when his family toured European museums in 1932. At age 15, he read Vision and Design by [Roger Fry](#), which opened him to the formal interpretation of art. Ackerman attended Yale University, where the courses of [Henri Focillon](#) "mesmerized" him. He received his A. B. in 1941. During World War II he served in the U.S. Army Signal Intelligence Service in Italy from 1942 until 1945 "Monuments Division." There he was assigned to retrieve an archive, hidden for safety, in the renaissance Carthusian monastery of Certosa of Pavia near Milan. He became fascinated with Italy and renaissance art. When his brother, Lloyd Stuart Ackerman, Jr., was killed in the War, Ackerman's parents established a library at the SF Museum in his memory in 1945. After discharge from the service, Ackerman entered New York University earning his M.A. in 1947 with a thesis written under [Richard Krautheimer](#). He married Mildred Rosenbaum (d. 1986), a dancer, the same year, and joined Yale University as an instructor in 1948. Ackerman was a research fellow at the American Academy in Rome between 1949 and 1952 and a Fulbright fellow for the 1950-1951 year. His Ph.D. from NYU was awarded in 1952, writing a dissertation also supervised Krautheimer on the Cortile del Belvedere, the courtyard between the Vatican Villa and the palace. He joined the University of California, Berkeley, as an assistant professor in 1952. He rose to associate professor in 1956 and ultimately professor of architecture and art in 1959. During the same years he acted as editor-in-chief of the Art Bulletin (1956-1960). After a visiting lectureship at Harvard University during the 1958-1959, year, he was appointed professor of fine arts at Harvard University in 1960. Ackermann won the Hitchcock Medal from the College Art Association in 1961 for his book, The Architecture of Michelangelo, a topic urged on him by [Anthony Blunt](#) and [Rudolf Wittkower](#). During this time he was a member of the board of directors of the Renaissance Society of America. Together with [Rhys Carpenter](#), Ackerman wrote Art and Archaeology, 1962, a handbook for practitioners of the discipline of art history. He was named chairman of department of Fine Arts at Harvard in 1963. He was a visiting fellow at the Council of the Humanities, Princeton University for the 1960-1961 year. Ackerman turned his attention to the Venetian architect Andrea Palladio, writing two books, Palladio and Palladio's Villas in 1966 and 1967, respectively. He taught as Slade Professor of Fine Art, Cambridge University, for the 1969-1970 year. In 1976 he produced a film with [Kathleen Weil-Garris](#), Looking for Renaissance Rome. In 1983 Ackerman was named Arthur Kingsley Porter Professor of Fine Arts. He delivered the Mellon lectures at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, in 1985, published in 1990 as The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses. In 1986 his wife died and he remarried Jill Rose Slosburg (b. 1948), a sculptor/jeweler, in 1987. In 1990 he was named professor emeritus from Harvard. His students include Daniel Abramson, John Archer, David Friedman, Alice Friedman, Thomas Da Costa Kaufmann, Elizabeth MacDougall, Loren Partridge, Stephen Tobriner, Franklin Toker and Rochelle Ziskin.

Ackerman's dissertation signaled his methodological approach as an architectural historian: the determining of design responsibility of an architectural monument. His most important book the 1961 Architecture of Michelangelo reframed notions of the genesis of Michelangelo's buildings. Building on the work of [Karl Frey](#), [Henry Thode](#) and the more recent research of [Charles de Tolnay](#), Ackerman brought out Michelangelo as a significant and thoughtful architect (Lein). His book on Palladio remains his most well-known work. A documentary historian, he explained architecture as solved problems rather than through stylistic analysis. His book Art and Archaeology is still a useful primer for the discipline of art history, defining the methodologies of connoisseurship, criticism, iconography, etc.

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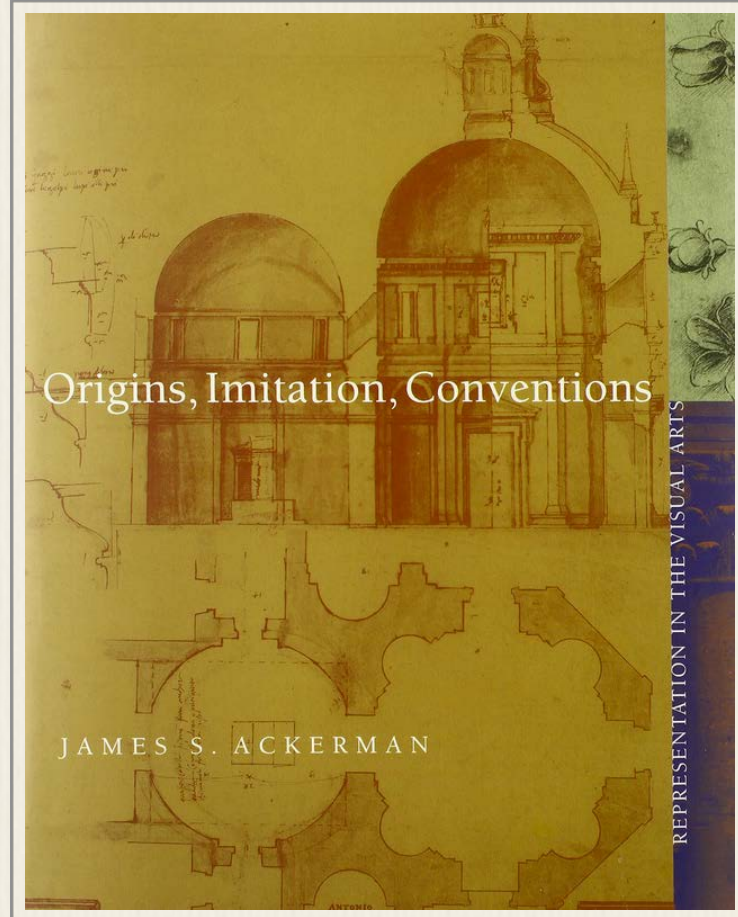
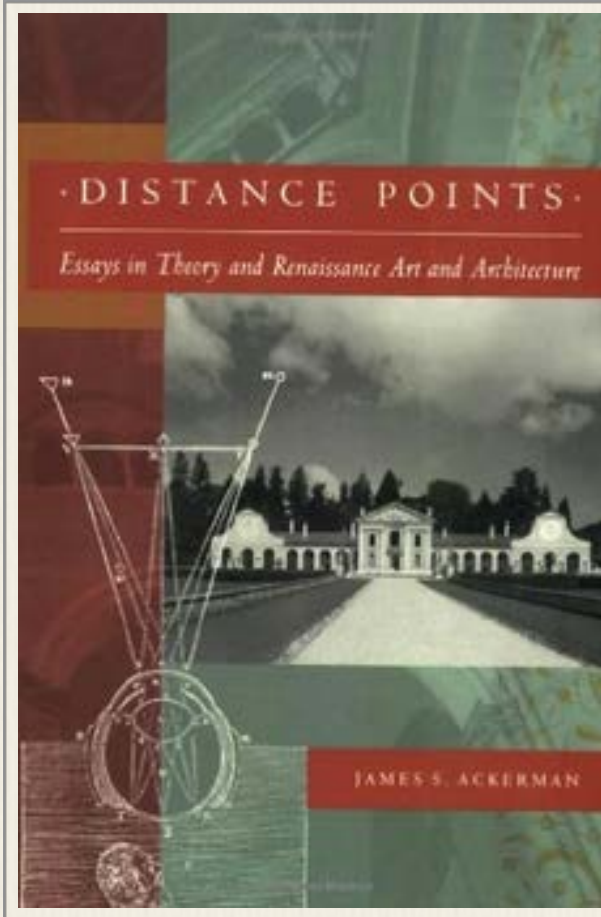
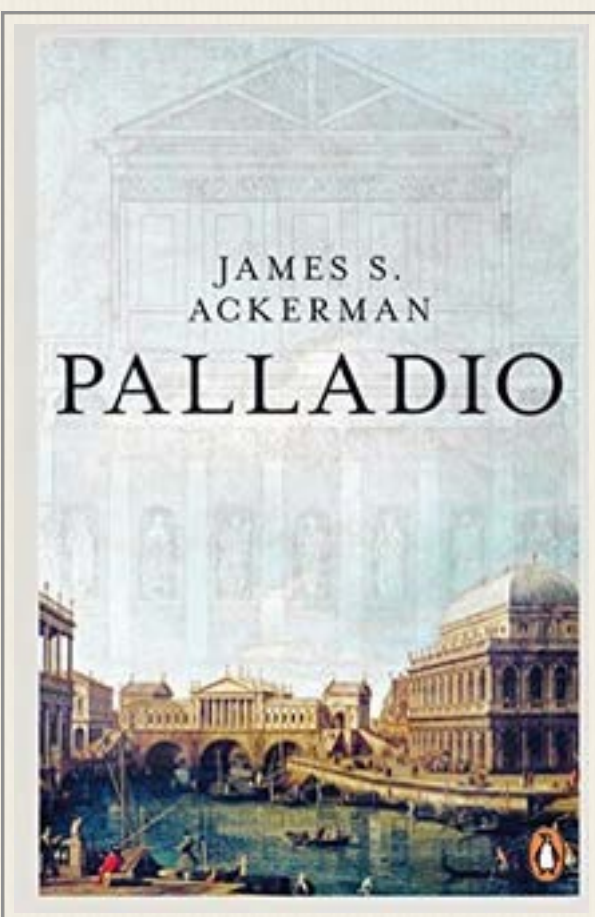
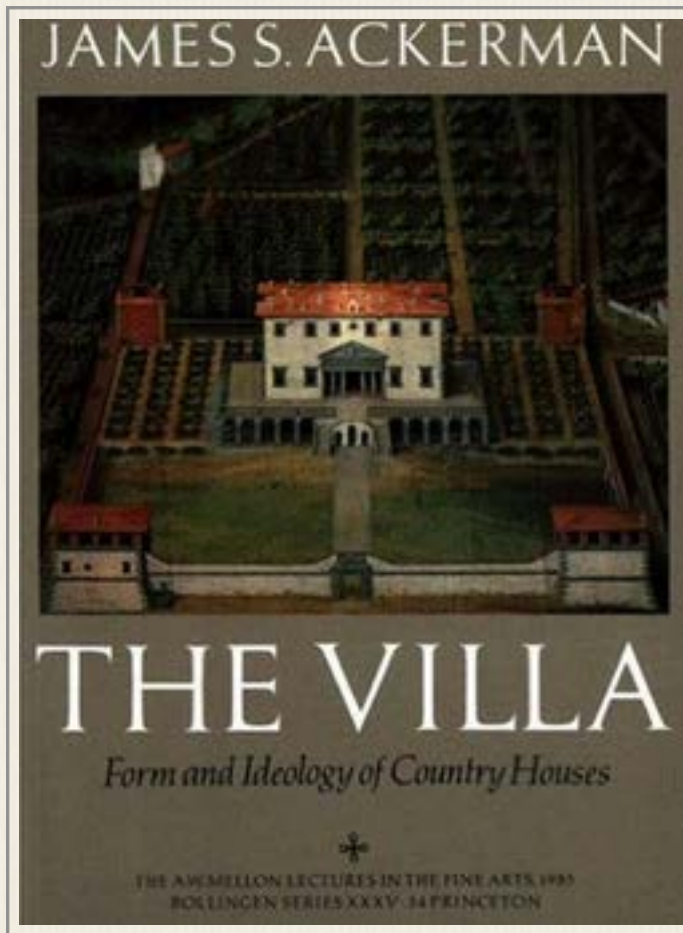
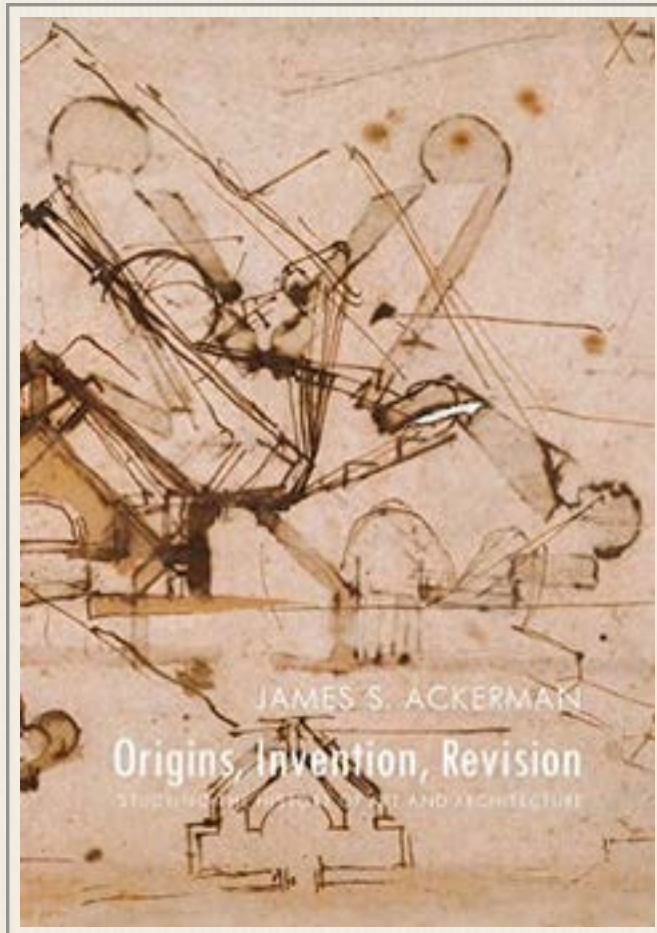
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Subject's name: James Ackerman



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