

Statement by Emilio Ambasz

The works selected by the jury were intended to represent different avenues of architectural activity by the younger generation. When I suggested "Dwelling in the Cracks" as the title for this series of presentations, my feeling was one of great concern. The domain for action left to young architects is quite small and one wonders whether while playing surrogate architect in those cracks, they might forget that it is their duty to propose alternative architectural situations. We are too aware now of the impossibility of bringing about social change through architectural gesture. But at the same time we are also quite aware of the risks to the architectural spirit if we do not remain faithful to our primordial task of creating new architectural images. This task may stagger the imagination and paralyze hope, but we cannot relinquish it.

Emilio Ambasz
President
The Architectural League

Statement by the Young Architects' Exhibition Committee

This series of presentations offers the work of several young architects as "Responses to the City." It brings together theoretical and executed projects, commenting on the kinds of opportunities available to the emerging generation. The work represented is diverse, even contradictory in scope, ethereal and pragmatic, uncompromising and accommodating. The projects manipulate limited resources with conviction and creativity.

Young architects have inherited design opportunities considerably scaled down in magnitude from their predecessors. Present economics favor conservation and creative re-use over new construction. Design tactics and aesthetics depend increasingly on attitudes which celebrate the small gesture, encourage subtle interventions, and reward "retrofitting." Most of the built work maximizes limited means and space.

Many projects illustrate just such modest manipulations: a small set of English row-houses combines abstract vernacular detailing with a program for a novel infill housing type. A small shrine to Bessie Smith inserts a monument into a typical 25 x 100 foot New York lot. Even the larger commissions, for example, a Government Relations office for Honda, deal carefully with issues of scale and context.

"Visionary" or theoretical design proposals have been included in this series, yet they bear little resemblance to the grandiose imaginings of a Boullée, Garnier, or Soleri. After the upheavals of urban renewal, and subsequent attempts to redress those imbalances, this generation's experiments deal with the re-evaluation of existing urban patterns, building

types and fragments. Visionary reformulations of the city depend on devices such as overlay and juxtaposition, which encourage invention, reference and historical allusion (presently sanctioned by the profession), to provide cohesion and continuity.

A design proposal for Venice postulates growth through extension and extrusion into the water rather than attempt integration with an existing fabric of medieval alleyways and waterways. A "Bridge of Houses" strings a series of dwellings atop an abandoned elevated railway in Manhattan, turning a liability into a habitable outcrop. Another project, "Alphabet City," a didactic pamphlet, accords our tenements and apartment houses the analytic attention once paid only to Italian villas and the French Hôtel de Ville. In a lighter mode, collaged fragments of architectural landmarks fashion a new line of garments—an "Architectural Costume Ball."

What emerges from the great divergence of style, scope and execution of these projects is hard to characterize. Yet for the group at large, today's limitations and restrictions seem hardly to have handicapped the imagination; rather a scattered wealth of response seems to emerge from the young architects' attempt to educate, to cajole, to build.

Recommendations and Suppositions

October 13

Steven Forman

1. Project for Venice's Cannaregio Sector*

Steven Holl

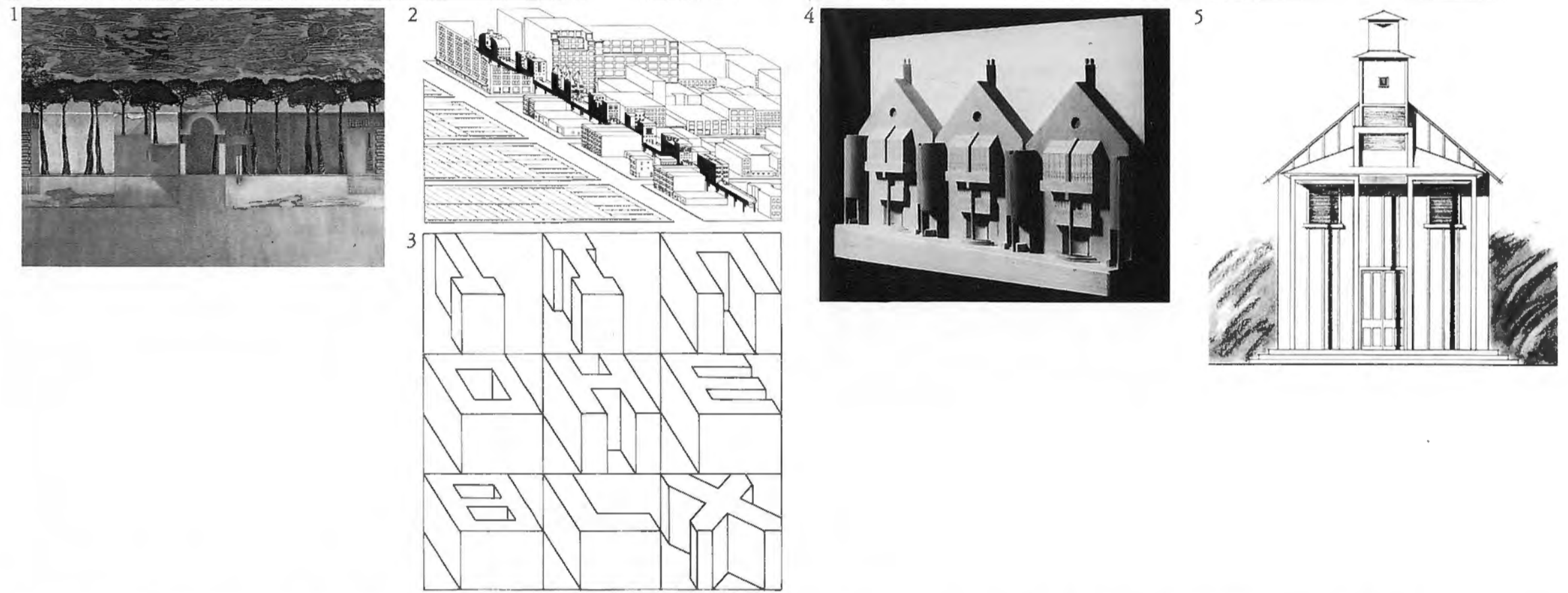
2. Bridge of Houses*
3. Alphabet City*

Ralph Lerner

4. Artists and Writers Housing, Rye, England*
(Project by Ralph Lerner and Richard Reid)

Donna Robertson

5. Bessie Smith Memorial Dance Hall*



Constructions

October 20

Robert Gryzwacz

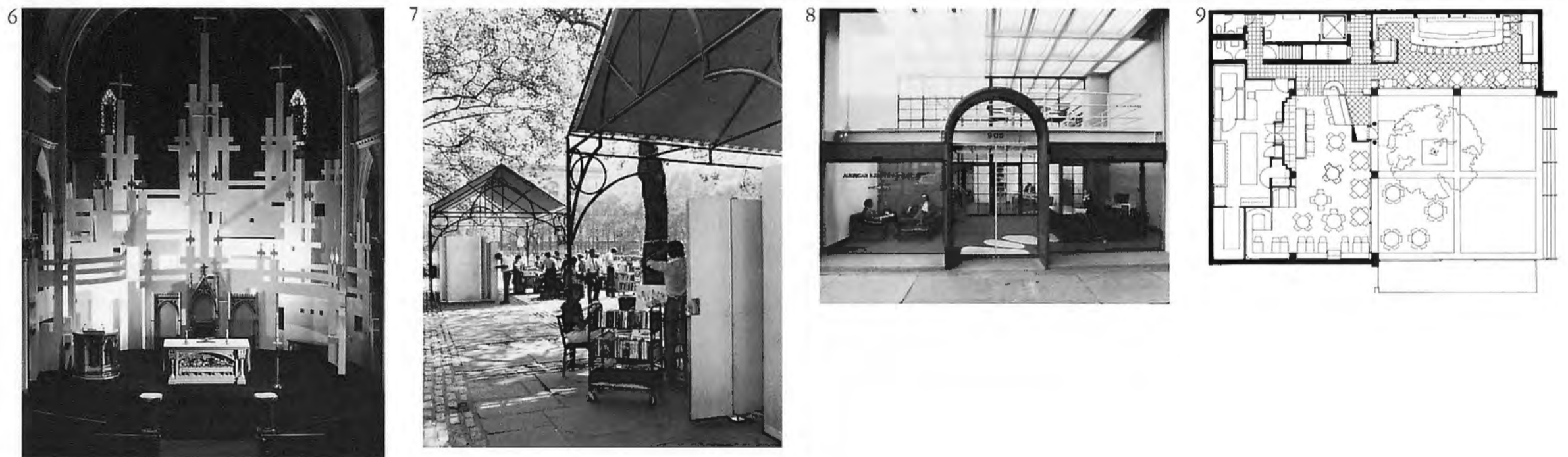
6. St. Mary of Czestechowa Church

James Sanders and Roy Strickland

7. Bryant Park Project

David Spiker

8. American Honda Government Relations Office, Washington, D.C.*
9. West of Eleven Restaurant



Fragments and Figments

October 27

Dodie Acklie

10. An Architectural Costume Ball*

David Cagle

11. Soccer Court

Alexander Gorlin

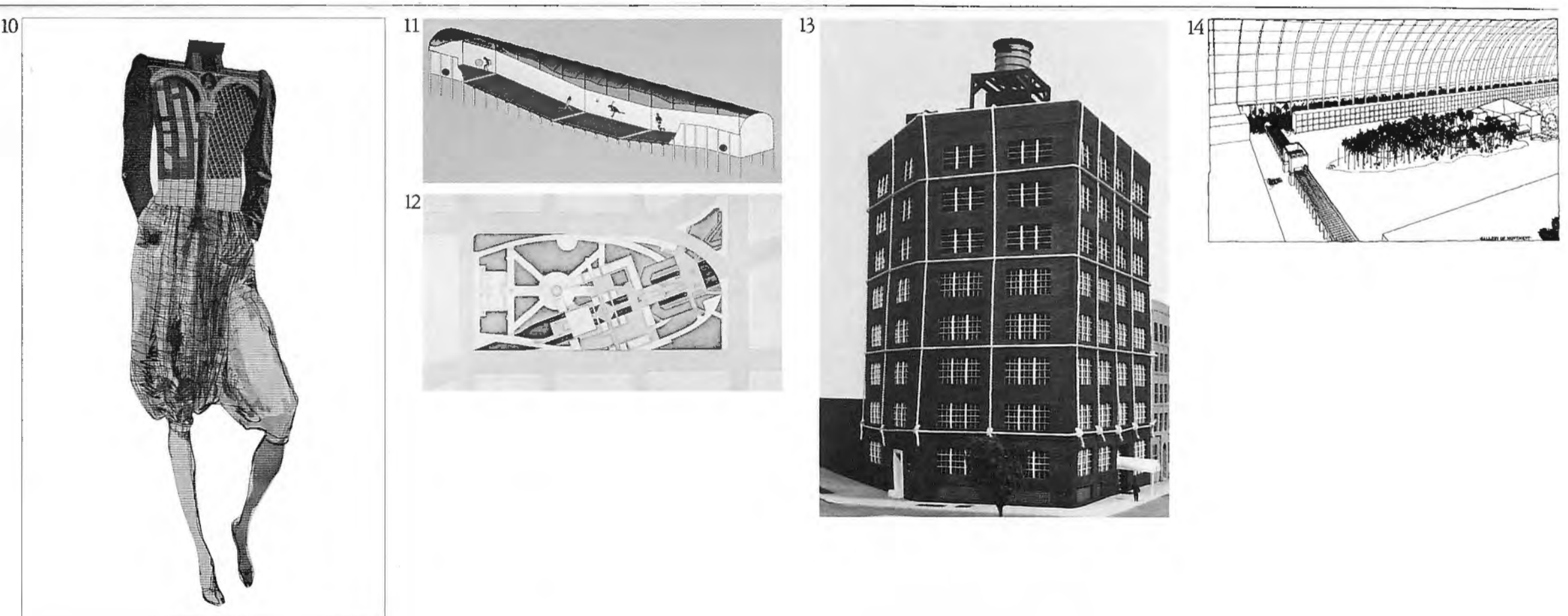
12. Ezekiel's Vision of the City and its Transformation:
by Site and Program: Jerusalem and Union Square

Michael McDonough

13. Rope Building

Mark Schimmenti

14. The Florida Building



*Projects marked with an asterisk were chosen for special recognition by the Selection Committee.

Selection Committee

Emilio Ambasz
Max Bond
Lewis Davis
Malcolm Holziman
Thomas Markunas
Nory Miller
Kim Weller

Young Architects' Exhibition Committee

Hilary Brown
Thomas Markunas
Robert Seitz
Roy Strickland
Kim Weller

Founded in 1881, The Architectural League is a non-profit membership organization that sponsors public programs about architecture and the arts.

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