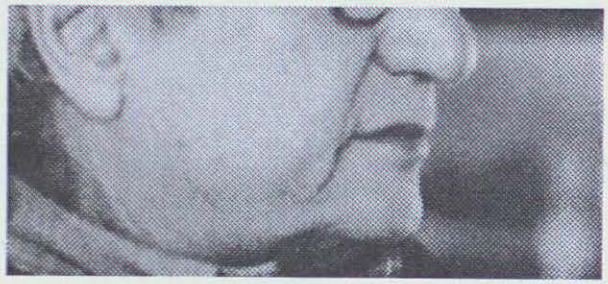


# [ FRANK O. GEHRY ]

*This interview was conducted by TFC editors Tom Balaban, Greg Dunn and Terrance Galvin on November 9th, 1993, during the 1993 Charrette with F.O.G. Associates at McGill University. The Charrette problem was to design and build a float for Montréal's St. Patrick's Day Parade, held in March 1994.*

*During the course of our discussion, Frank Gehry spoke about the effects of global media and technology as they relate to his own practice of architecture.*



I've always sort of

**TFC: Considering that this issue of THE FIFTH COLUMN is about architecture and travel, you must have insight into the travelling architect, since you're on the road incessantly these days?**

FG: Well, I travel a lot for work, not so much for pleasure. But wherever I am I go to museums and look at paintings. That's my favourite activity.

**TFC: Are there some striking museums that interest you, either for their architecture or for their collections?**

FG: Yes. The Kunsthistorisches in Vienna. And there's one in Frankfurt I like called the Stadelsches Kunstinstitut.

**TFC: Are you referring to good museums as in good buildings or great collections?**

FG: I'm referring to good collections - not to architecture. Although Venturi's extension to the National Gallery in London is good - it's not my kind of architecture, but when you come up to the top of those stairs and the shift off-axis isn't perpendicular, it's just slightly off, I love that move. He took very strong advantage of that. And even though the galleries are decorative, they really work and they're beautiful for showing the paintings.

**TFC: In your own practice, how many buildings do you have going on right now?**

FG: Well, we're doing a building in Bilbao, Spain that has just started construction. There's one in Germany near Hannover, which is under construction - the foundations are finished and they're just starting to frame. There's one in Basel, Switzerland that will be finished in January 1994, and a housing project for the masses in Frankfurt that we're just starting and should be under construction soon. There is also Walt Disney Concert Hall in L.A. that's under construction.

**TFC: It appears that much of your recent work has been public commissions, won abroad through competitions, etc. What part of your projects remain private houses for clients, and how do the two commissions vary?**

FG: Well, we're doing a house in Cleveland for a rich guy, who's driving me nuts. I can't do that. I have a hard time doing houses for really rich clients like him. It's hard to get excited about solving the guy's bathroom with saunas. It's a collaboration, I've got Philip Johnson and Claes Oldenburg involved, and we're getting Frank Stella, I hope.

**TFC: Stella is actually building something?**

FG: Stella has been designing buildings. Have you seen any of them?

I work hard to make it look spontaneous when it's highly contrived.

**TFC: No I've just seen his paintings.**

FG: He designed a museum in Groningen, Holland. It's not going to be built, but some of the shapes are familiar to my work. Although he has his own way of doing it. It's pretty interesting.

**TFC: Does it have the same sort of colour and movement to it as his paintings?**

FG: Yes, it's quite beautiful. Stella wants to be an architect. Judd wants to be an architect. Don Judd does architecture too, he even has his own architectural firm. He wants to make everything square, in four boxes or in three boxes. It's really nice, but the architecture is very uncomfortable, like his furniture. Judd is very pontifical - he'd be good for an interview.

**TFC: Has your practice changed significantly with being on the road so much; there must have been a time when you were in the office much more in Los Angeles than you are now?**

FG: Not really, I feel like it's about the same, but maybe I'm wrong. I mean I've always sort of been on the road. For years I never got any work in L.A. The Disney Concert Hall is really the first big project. They don't like you in your own city usually. I'm not like Aalto who got a big run in his own backyard - they liked him at home.

**TFC: But the media has changed all that as well. In Aalto's days you couldn't be in six places within the same day whereas now you can. The other day, I heard a funny story about Safdie receiving a fax of a 1:1 wall section in the airport. He was telling a local architect that he spends half his time with airport fax machines, trying to edit design drawings. He wants to design it all, although he is always in different places with three offices on the go.**

**Since you're here in Montréal now, when you're away, how do you stay in contact with the office?**

FG: When I'm on the road, I don't contact the office very much. I'll go home now and work very intensively for a couple of weeks and get a lot of work done.



been on the road.

**TFC: That leads us to the next question, regarding how much on-site adjustment your buildings get. What role do supervising architects play in the production of the architecture after the working drawings are done?**

FG: Not very much in the way of design. When we're finished working drawings, we're finished. I don't change the design, although it may look like I do. I work hard to make it look spontaneous when it's highly contrived, so people think I change it. There are two or three buildings that are now finished that I've never seen, such as the Herman Miller project in Rocklin, California.

I've never seen the Sirmai-Peterson House either. Nor have I yet seen the American Center in Paris since it has been completed - it's been a year since I've been there. Once I receive a commission, I do it and it's done. I guess I'm more interested in the design process than in the final product. The reasons I didn't see the Herman Miller project was that the client changed from the time I started the design. The people I was working with by the time the job was complete were no longer there, so it wasn't interesting to go and visit. I realized then that the interaction with the people and the clients - the whole *Gestalt* of it - was the important thing. The building without that is sort of dead to me.

**TFC: That thought leads to a comment you made at your lecture at the Université de Montréal last week. You stated that you have a few clients who will push you, and you have to restrain them from giving you their wallet. Do you think that those are actually your best buildings, that those are the ones where you have been able to explore more, or is it a cliché to say that a tighter program can often produce better architecture?**

FG: I think that human nature is such that you've got to have something to work against. And so, when you're completely free, when you've got no constraints, nothing guides you.

> Architecture is not in the consciousness of the power structure.

If I made the rich client's house green, blue or indifferent, he wouldn't notice. He trusts me, he wants the thing to be idiosyncratic, he wants it off the wall, he's very anxious that it be the best thing I've ever done, you know. I tried to explain to him that there has to be something to push against. The problem with a rich client's house it that there is no social issue. There's nothing compelling to make you believe that you're spending your time in a meaningful way. I mean it's a 20 million dollar house. I said, why don't we spend 5 million and give 15 million to charity. He doesn't want it. I was raised with this Jewish liberal ethic that you have to do good. It's a do-gooder ethic. It's not necessarily a good one, but that's the one I inherited. And I think that most of us are in that state in some way or other.

**TFC: One issue that THE FIFTH COLUMN is dealing with is how the media explosion has changed both the practice of architecture and the perception of architecture by the public. I remember Steven Holl lecturing on a project in Japan where they worked all day and then faxed drawings out of the office at 6:00 p.m. It would be morning in Japan, where they would work all day and fax back the drawings. Holl's office would arrive in the office the next day and continue the design. They could fast track the project by working, in essence, twenty-four hours per day.**

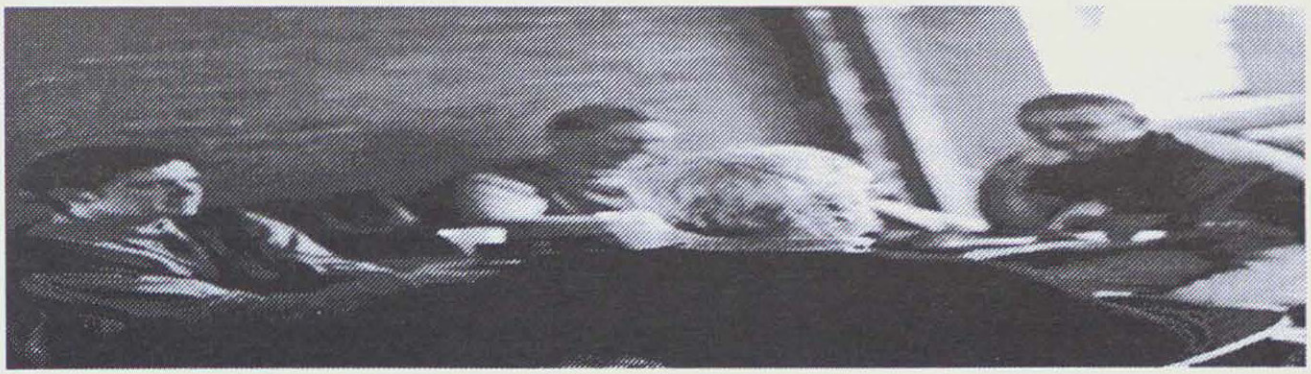
FG: Yes, I did a project where I experienced that too. They're very fast, the Japanese, and they build quickly. They build in six months what takes us a year and a half. I think Japan is unique though, it's not like anywhere else.

**TFC: Everyone that works in Japan says the same thing, that it's a very special place compared to North America.**

FG: It shows us back home what's possible. The problem with experiencing Japan is that you wonder why our guys can't do it. But we've got unions and a different work ethic.

I remember when I came out of school, the media didn't pay much attention to architecture and we were always feeling like nobody cared. I'm sure in Canada, architecture is not in the consciousness of the power structure. Brian Mulroney or Jean Chrétien never knew anything about architecture, whereas François Mitterand does. For better or for worse, Mitterand knows who I am and he knows who the architects are - he is close friends with Jean Nouvel.

It's different in America. Clinton probably doesn't know who we are or why architects are important. He'd probably never hire an architect. So I think that raising the consciousness of the general public about



the value of architecture and its potential is probably worth all the media attention, if they get it right. The trouble with current politics is that now the media is on a stream towards social consciousness in contrast to free-for-all pluralism. So you read the editors of magazines running editorials on how things have finally come back to social awareness, whereas it never left. I don't know of any architects who aren't socially aware.

**TFC: In terms of socially conscious design, what about the lead-coated copper used on some of your buildings? I read some material about it being illegal to specify the use of lead-coated copper in Canada.**

FG: It's now illegal in L.A. too.

**TFC: How are you dealing with that, considering that for a while a large part of your designs were using lead-coated copper.**

FG: We only used it in two buildings out of a hundred *(laughter)*...

**TFC: Wasn't it used in the Toledo Art Building and on Newbury Street, in Boston as well as in a couple of your private houses?**

FG: Yes, I used it in the Schnabel Residence. Well, lead-coated copper is used all over the world and has been for centuries. The word 'lead' is what bothers everybody, but you know it's a lead coating on the copper that washes off and goes into the groundwater that causes worry. The problem of using lead is apparently not founded on health reasons, but more on psychological grounds. And there's always a health risk, so why take it.

When we did the Boston project, the Boston building department did extensive research before they approved the use of lead-coated copper. They did all kinds of testing and came back and said it was safe. In Toledo, we asked the city to do the same, and they did and they approved it. In the Schnabel Residence we asked the city the same and they approved it. On the Disney Concert Hall we wanted to use it and the county of L.A. said we couldn't use it, so we used a tin-coated copper.

**TFC: Which doesn't have the same black patina finish?**

FG: No, it's not as nice, but we're finding that you can mix the coating, which we're doing now. You can put two percent lead into it, which is really negligible, and it becomes a pewter colour with a beautiful surface that has a patina of some sort. Now we're doing aging tests on it to see how it reacts.

**TFC: Throughout your practice, did you not initially work more in models than in working drawings? It appeared that you modelled first and drew afterwards. It always seemed to me that the design progressed from the sketch to the model to the drawing.**

FG: For every job we make program models. We build the site context at two scales and we make blocks that fit the program, so you can look at the blocks and you can look at the site. I can look at it all and get into my head the scale of the thing, so I know what size it is and what kind of problems it presents. Then I do sketches in my book, lots of them which all look like scribbles. Afterwards, when you look at them, they look strangely enough like the building. There's one on the Toledo project that looks exactly like the building - even I can't believe it. There's a lot of detail in that sketch, although it's just a scribble.

> I can hold the whole design suspended, like a hologram, completely in my head.

**TFC: Alvar Aalto used to describe this process as a kind of pre-knowledge of the site. In his initial sketch would be all the elements that would carry right through to the working drawings. He seemed to know so much about the design through his intuition of the site that it seemed uncanny.**

FG: But as you get older you get that way. It's like practising anything else. Now, I can design a building completely in my head. When I was younger, I used to hear that Frank Lloyd Wright could do that, but now I can also do it. I can hold the whole design suspended, like a hologram, completely in my head. And I can draw it, not so you would understand it but so that it's sort of transmitted to the drawings.

**TFC: And then your drawings are interpreted by the staff?**

FG: Yes, then we make models of those drawings and the models are very strange sometimes. The clients look at them and get really scared. But they know that there's a building going to be built and they know I get done on time and close to budget. We've got a good track record so there's a trust to begin with for most clients. When there isn't it doesn't move. I have a few clients I'd like to build for, but we aren't in sync, so why do it?

**TFC: That must have been another big change in your practice. Do many clients contact you now, because they have seen your work published in some magazine?**

FG: Not as much as you think. The way you're suggesting is that the floodgates are opened. That's not true. No Canadian company, competition or client, has ever called except the Montréal Museum of Decorative Arts (Château Dufresne). I was called to one competition last year in Toronto and they threw me out. They asked us to send in our stuff and then they wrote me a letter saying that we didn't make it through the first cut. It's a lot like that.

**TFC: Then, why do we have the impression that you are building in such a prolific manner?**

FG: Because you think I'm omnipresent and all over the place. I have a steady flow of work and I'm not complaining, but it's not that much different from how it's always been, except now the projects are a little better. In the case of private commissions, most good clients are so involved with the process, that they do relate as design participants and that's normal. I like that, but there are limits. In my own case, Ron Davis is sure he designed his own house. He even took credit for it in his own publication, excluding me, which was not fair.

**TFC: It appears that his paintings and the house were conceived in the same spirit.**

FG: Yes, we worked together, but he could never do that house alone.

He tried to make three-dimensional work. That's the way I got into it. I liked his paintings, and he used to come to my house and he was making shaped canvases, and he didn't know how to describe them, so I taught him how to do descriptive geometry. I taught him how to draw these shapes and that's when he asked me to design him a studio, and I said, "well, I'll use this studio as a way to teach you how to make three-dimensional objects." It was a waste of time - he had a blind spot for three-dimensions. It's amazing, because the paintings are very spatial and three-dimensional. He understands three-dimensional space in two dimensions, but he can't understand three-dimensional objects, so he could never have built that house on his own, his genius is not in that area.

**TFC: Although you don't perceive building in Canada, I want to know if you think the forms and construction techniques you work with in warmer climates could be pulled off in climates such as ours?**

FG: Well, I'm working in climates like Minneapolis. The Winton Guest House, a series of little boxes connected with joints like that, was built in snow country and it doesn't leak. Everybody said that it wouldn't work, but I took a shot at that. The client insisted that it had to be a sculpture in the garden, and I explained to him that if we put objects close to each other, we'd get these V-shaped cracks that would allow them to be sculptural objects. When I explained to him that was really important to do in order to get what we wanted, but was going to be terrible to solve technically, he opted out. We ended up making copper silos instead.

**TFC Would you please explain the process behind the Disney Concert Hall project in L.A.?**

FG I won the competition for the Disney Concert Hall. Before the competition, they asked me to be interviewed just because I was an L.A. architect and they wanted to look like they had asked an L.A. architect, so I subjected myself to the interview process. It was a funny process, they guaranteed me that if the jury picked my scheme they would make it public but I wouldn't necessarily get the job. The jury did pick my scheme but they reneged, saying they didn't want to make it public, because they didn't want to embarrass the Disney family. And then, Mrs. Disney assessed the models and picked mine, even though she didn't know who I was or which one was our project.

> A lot of architects are trying to recreate Rome in L.A.

**TFC: Mrs. Disney is still alive?**

FG: Yes, she's in her nineties now. She picked my model and they said "thank God, that's the one the jury picked." It worked, although politically it was a fluke. I had the best scheme for L.A. because I know the place. Stirling and Hollein and Böhm - more Hollein and Böhm in the competition - had a predilection to think that L.A. was goofy and that Disney Hall had something to do with Mickey Mouse and theatre. Stirling took it more seriously, but he didn't understand the L.A. context, so his normal contextual games didn't work. I was the only one who understood Los Angeles; I tried to explain it to them all, but they didn't hear me.

**TFC: Did you do much of your research for the Disney Concert Hall before you got the commission?**

FG: No, because prior to the competition there was an acoustician from France acting as a consultant. He had met with Stirling, Hollein, and Böhm and concluded that all four schemes had problems, but by the time we got there, he was gone. Disney loved our design, but they knew it wouldn't work because of what the consultant had told them previously, so we had to find a new acoustician. Disney had heard about Dr. Nagata in Japan and they liked him, so it was pretty much determined before we got there. They said that they wouldn't put me in a situation with somebody I didn't like or respect, so they let me have time with him. I had worked a lot with acousticians before, mainly doing outdoor music facilities, and it was something I was interested in. I asked the L.A. Philharmonic to take me to Berlin to meet with Hans Scharoun's acoustician who was still alive. And I asked Dr. Nagata to meet me in Berlin to have dinner with Dr. Kramer and I told him, "You know, since acoustics is not an exact science and this cranky 82 year old German knows everything there is to know about it, I think we owe it to ourselves to hear him out." So we went to Berlin, and Kramer took us to several concert halls and talked about what was crucial to him. He said that the wide hall had to be a certain shape, with the orchestra at the wide point, like the Berlin Philharmonie, and Nagata said the opposite. And they sat there bowing and scraping, respecting each other but they were saying very different things.

**TFC: So how did you finally decide on who to work with?**

FG: Well, we had already picked Nagata, so we didn't choose Kramer, who subsequently died. You know, I may have outsmarted myself in building all those concert hall prototypes. We'll know when the building is complete. I believe that in a concert hall, museum, or any institution, you should make a comfortable room where people are happy and become engaged. Scharoun certainly created that kind of mystical space in his architecture. I don't like the architecture of his interiors, and yet when you're there it's just an incredible people-place. It remains a mystery how he did it, I can't put a finger on it, but when you go to his library or philharmonic in Berlin, one feels that on the tips of Mr. Scharoun's fingers there was a profound humanism that he had the ability to communicate through architecture.

**TFC: But Scharoun's scale and spatial sense are fantastic, although the buildings are so large.**

FG: I was just there a few weeks ago and I still couldn't figure it out. Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright, nobody could do it quite like this. And yet his architecture is felt, it doesn't make rational sense, does it?

I then made models of the original scheme for the Disney Concert Hall that they liked; I made models of Nagata's and of Kramer's ideal hall and I made models of all the halls they liked, such as the Boston Conservatory, the Berlin Philharmonie, and so on. There were some consistencies among the schemes; I made models of them all at the same scale so that conductors and musicians could sit around the table and tell me how they felt about the spaces. It was a way of doing research and communicating with them as to what was important.

We made thirty different schemes, from the ridiculous to the sublime, testing seating arrangements, acoustics and so on. The L.A. Philharmonic wanted 2500 seats, although it was clear that concert halls with over 2200 had more acoustical problems. People responsible for the finances insisted that we needed those extra 300 seats. I made models showing 2200 and 2500 seats where you could feel the difference in intimacy even in the model. We tried to take a 2200 seat hall and squeeze in extra seats and got up to 2380. Then, I went to the board and showed them these models. We now have a 1:10 model which is very compressed - you feel the compression - it might be a tad claustrophobic, but it'll feel like an old-fashioned hall in a sense, because modern halls have wider seats and are more plush than this one.

One thing I realized in Berlin is that half of the typical audience is below thirty, and that makes a big difference in the ambience. I'm worried that the Disney Concert Hall may be too compressed, too focused on the music for the American audience. Whether this intimacy will create an audience is difficult to know in advance; we'll see when it's done.

**TFC: I have a question about the L.A. context. It seems most architects try to see the city as a downtown with everything branching off it, whereas L.A. developed as a strip.**
**Do you find a lot of architects in L.A. trying to do that or vice versa?**

> They tore down the Paris that I was relating to and they built back Danish social housing.

FG: Well, L.A. grew as a car city and the suburbs of every city in the world are growing as car cities so that's why they look alike. But whereas L.A. was a premonition of the future, it has done a strange thing in the last twenty years. It's trying to find a downtown in the spirit of the European cities. It doesn't work. It looks weird and they don't use it properly. A lot of architects, like Robert Mangurian and others, are trying to recreate Rome in L.A. which I don't understand. It doesn't make sense.

**TFC: Do you believe there's an L.A. school of architects?**

FG: Well, I know I'm called the father of something, although I don't relate to the work of Thom Mayne, Eric Owen Moss, or Franklin Israel as architecture that looks like mine. I think they come from the world of Scarpa and detail. Perhaps I made a

breakthrough in the relationship with the east-coast American press that has helped them. Because there is a context like this, their work is a lot freer, the expression looks easier and stranger.

I like Scarpa, but I don't think that kind of detail has much to do with the world we're living in now. Our world is faster. Personally, I think there are more important things to do in architecture than to fuss about detail.

**TFC: But again, Scarpa embodied a different ethos. The pop-art movement celebrated the fastness that you refer to. That's why the question arises about site supervision during the building process, following the working drawing stage. Because there are so many forms, how do you get the contractors to know what to build? I always thought that you would have tight site control. Do they simply work from the working drawings or is there someone from the office on site day and night?**

FG: We get control a lot through the drawings and through the supervising architects. I believe Marc Salette goes once a month to Paris to supervise the American Center.

**TFC: How have recent technologies changed the ways in which you practice architecture? I was asking one of your design team about your use of the CATIA software, and he confessed that most of the working drawings are still done manually.**

FG: I don't know how to turn the damn thing on (*laughter*)... I'm not like Eisenman, I don't like the computer drawings. Computer drawings appear in publications because the editor has acquired them through somebody in the office without my knowing it. *Architectural Design* published a thing on this house with computer drawings and I was furious. I never use the computer for presentations - I don't get into it except as a tool for construction. We use a computer to digitize the models and they're not perfect, you know. I work really hard to get things visually the way I want them and to make sure the shapes are exactly the way I want.

Lately, we've been making these wooden blocks, solid block mock-ups of the shape of the outside, in order to have a block to make plastic casts from or just to verify the shapes. Now we use the CATIA computer software to get it really perfect, it's like a shop drawing to test the shapes. At the same time, we also make interior models, big ones that you can get your head in, and we have a little camera that goes in. We have a TV set, and that little camera even has a machine that makes a little polaroid. You can push a button when you get a view you want to keep, and we record the working session with the models in those pictures. And we keep them in little packets which are dated. During the design process, you sometimes go off on a tangent that you discover you don't like, so we can go back to the model pictures and find out what went wrong, pull ourselves back to that point and go forward again.

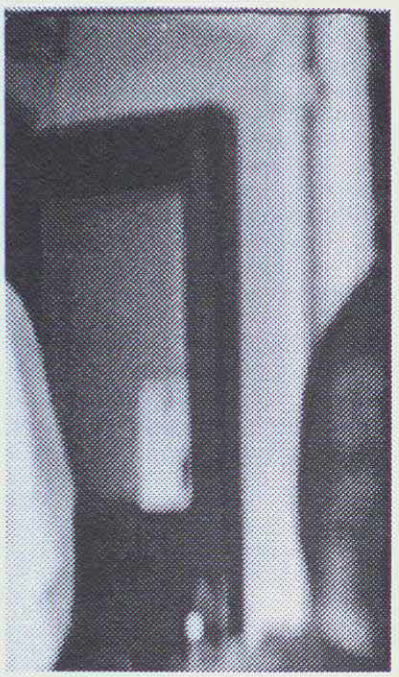
The only difficulty in modelling with the computer is that it takes too long. When you push a button to make a shape it takes 12 to 14 hours to cut the shape. The only good thing we're finding is that we can input the shapes in the evening and go to bed and get up in the morning and they are ready. We're learning how to finesse that process but it's just the beginning. For Disney Concert Hall, we undertook the laborious task of making a new model from the computer data, which took a long time.

> Bad architecture uses context as a crutch, as a way of creating constraints.

**TFC: One advantage of being on the road is that you see things afresh when you're not from a place. Can you read Prague differently than an architect who is local because it is unfamiliar to you?**

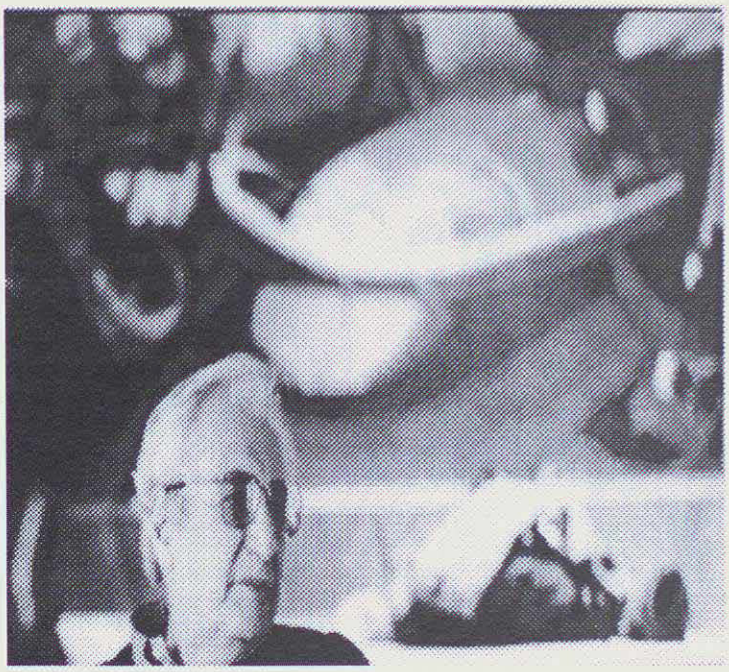
FG: Yes, but I don't know that I've read it; we'll see when it's finished. I think I have this feeling for the building in Paris, because I spent a lot of time there - I have a feeling that I did all right there. If you went to the second Vitra project in Basel, I think I integrated the building into that community the best I've ever done. I feel good about it. However, a year from now they're going to tear down half the buildings around it and it's going to change. And other architects aren't going to do the respectful thing, so it's going to change.

That's what happened in Paris. They tore down the Paris that I was relating to and they built back Danish social housing, and so my building looks like a relic of the past, and Jean-Louis Cohen will probably write an article saying "why didn't they tear this one down too?" Reading the context of a place is an ephemeral thing.



**TFC: Well, that's what the site/design challenge presents.**

FG: And it can become a crutch, you know. Bad architecture uses context as a crutch, as a way of creating the constraints that we say are good for us because they're givens. But they're not real, they're fantasies although they sound real.



**TFC: If you respect the context literally, you end up with superficial context by trivializing it - a common design problem. From my point of view, contextual reading is seldom formal, it's more a question of capturing the essence.**

FG: Yes, it's a subtle thing. You see it very much in Kahn buildings, where those guys mutilate Kahn because they love him so much. You can't grab Kahn, you see. I think Jonas Salk really wanted to do the right thing. I've talked with him and he loved Kahn. He thinks he and Kahn designed the Salk institute together.

**TFC: What about the travelling architect and architecture? We make assumptions about people in different countries, different mixes of people, different age groups, different mentalities, etc. One has these expectations of a particular culture before we spend a certain time there, and sometimes we're really surprised by our preconceptions.**

FG: Well, basically, I think one has to be very careful. Take for example, our experience in Prague. My normal process is to work with a model and explain to them the exact design with a diagram. I showed them a little model of what I was trying to do. Prague was a bunch of facades with a corner piece in the middle of the facade that creates an implied tower. From a distance you really see towers, but when you get up close to the buildings, they have a fairly flat facade with a bay window. It's really that image and the texture of Prague that was important - the windows, the scale and the plaster. The ever-present 19th century texture of the place was what I wanted to draw from.

The clients, Nationale-Nederlanden, asked me specifically not to copy the language of Czech Cubism. They didn't want another architect from America to come there and make these sort of pseudo Czech-Cubist buildings. So, in the making of the model, I had designed two towers, one glass and one solid with capes around them. I could go up so high, and then I had to pinch it in, because of the view of the next-door neighbour up to Prague Castle at that point. This in turn influenced the windows, although it didn't have to, but we felt that it was important for everybody to have a good view of the castle. It would have been impolite to take the view away. So that pinch on the first model made it look like a mannequin - a woman with a flared skirt.

I got a lot of flak from the Czechs, who told me how they were intellectually predisposed toward abstraction.

**TFC: Did you call the project Fred & Ginger?**

FG: No, I didn't. We worked with a local architect named Vlado Milunic, one of those great people you'd be friends with because he'd save your life. An incredible human being who is also very funny, he spent four years in prison with Vaclav Havel, where they became friends. President Havel very much wanted Vlado to do the building, but the committee didn't want his design proposal, so they married us together. We took pictures of these models that looked like the female figure, which I sent to the local architect, and he started calling it Ginger, so I said then the other must be Fred. Some of the press

picked up on it.
Because the thing looked literal, I got a lot of flak from the Czechs, who told me how they were intellectually predisposed towards abstraction. I got these lectures, it was great - somebody would take me aside and whisper in my ear, "you know, we don't like really literal metaphors," and I answered, "you know, I'm not doing it really," but I could never explain it. I got these wonderful critiques from the chief librarian of the university, who took me aside and said, "Mr. Gehry, you're making a big mistake, we do like abstraction you know," and from Havel who said, "I hope this becomes more abstract." He was polite. Every time I tried to explain, I would get deeper in the hole, until finally I said, "just wait and I'll show you, please give me a break." Anyway, in the end, they realized what I meant to do.

So those are the nuances of a local culture, but it's all over the place. Mrs. Havel likes Prince Charles and she hates what I'm doing. The head of the architecture school has come out publicly against what I'm doing, because he thinks it should look like American or European Modernism - Gordon Bunshaft or Walter Gropius style buildings. Even the architecture critic for the newspaper has come out against our design. The mayor finally put it to a public referendum, which is unheard of, because there was so much controversy. We received 65 percent of the vote so we got through.

The sickening part of it is that they built two or three really horrible buildings in Prague in similar locations and nobody said a word. The critic didn't say a word; Mrs. Havel didn't say anything; President Havel never said anything; the university architect never said anything and they've been built. They're sort of blank boxes, bigger than mine, totally out of context, terrible things trashing the 19th century city. No respect for Prague. But because they're dumb and ordinary, nobody says anything. That's human nature wherever you are, you know. You could be anywhere and human nature is the same.

**TFC** **Thank you, Mr. Gehry.**

**Sketch of the Winton Guest House, 1985**

**GEHRY PROJECTS (cited chronologically according to construction completion):**

**For a full list of works (1962-93), please see GA Architect 10: Frank O. Gehry, 1993.**

Prague Office Building (Nationale-Nederlanden), Prague, Czech Republic, under construction, 1994
Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, Ca., 1992-96
Vitra International Headquarters, Basel, Switzerland, 1993
The American Center, Paris, France, 1993
University of Toledo Art Building, Toledo, Ohio, 1992
Schnabel Residence, Brentwood, Ca., 1989
Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany, 1989
360 Newbury Street, Boston, Ma., 1988
Sirmai-Peterson House, Thousand Oaks, Ca., 1988
Herman Miller Inc., Rockland, Ca., 1987
Winton Guest House, Wayzata, Minnesota, 1987
Ron Davis House, Malibu, Ca., 1972