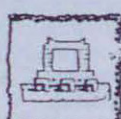
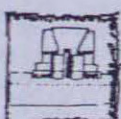
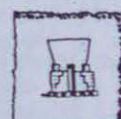
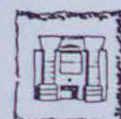
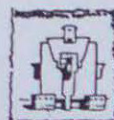
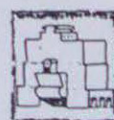
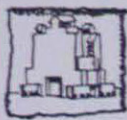
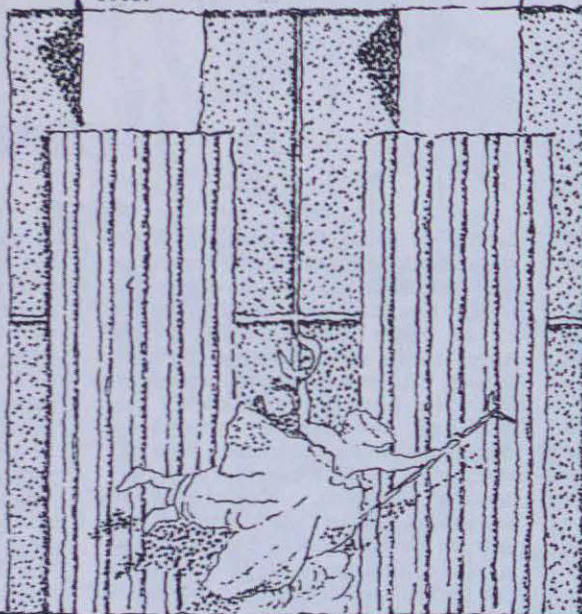


GRAVES' NEW WORLD

Architect Michael Graves was interviewed by William Mark Pimlott of *THE FIFTH COLUMN* in April 1981.



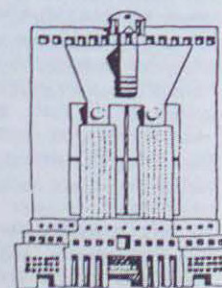
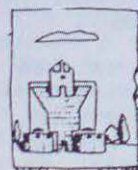
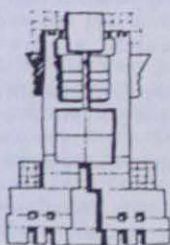
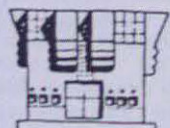
THE FIFTH COLUMN: You have been growing and evolving a style rather subtly over the last fifteen years and throughout that time your work seems to have anticipated or gone along with contemporary movements - from the Linear City thing of the mid-sixties that you wrote with Peter Eisenman, through the Late-Modern work like Hanselman House right to your present stage which started with your Warehouse or the Claghorn House. The words and their messages seem so completely different. What are your feelings about this as you look back over that rather short period of your evolution?

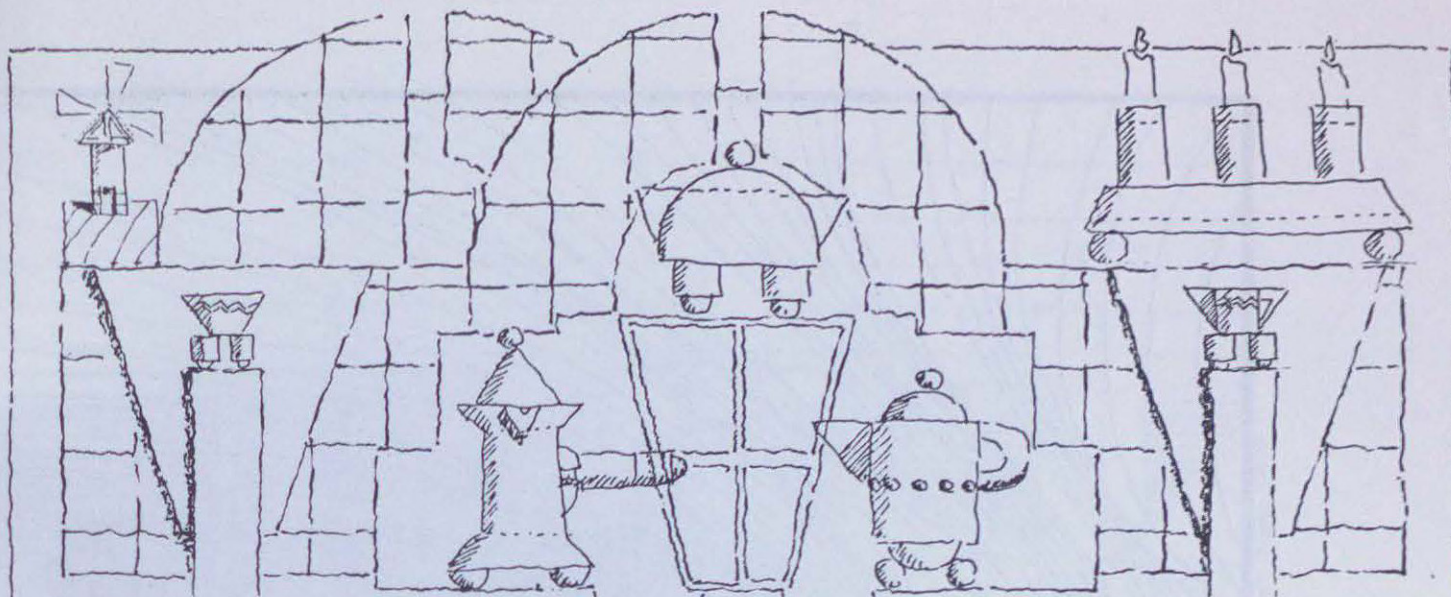
MICHAEL GRAVES: Yes, it does appear to be different. I find that over those fifteen years that there has been a very very slow, gradual change in the work. It's not something that happened overnight nor something that isn't very considered on my part. If Claghorn was the manifestation of that full blown, there are nevertheless those like Snydermann, Alexander, my Warehouse and even Hanselmann that included thematic references. What I had not done at that point is realize that the thematic thing that one was attempting to employ makes the work narrative or textual had to go to a more explicit configuration to be read, to be understood. Hanselmann and Benaceraff suffer a bit because their

language is primarily geometric and abstract, and later works like Portland and Fargo-Moorhead are more figurative. And if you look at the first work and the last work, yes, you see almost two different hands, but the architectural concerns were the same. I simply didn't have the ability or the means or... I didn't have the practice to make the connection between the figurative and the theme, and the theme and the geometry in the early work, as a mis-connect, which I think I do in the later work.

TFC: Drawing seems to be an important design tool for you. Could you expound a bit on the 'levels of drawing' as you seem to have defined them and maybe on the drawing-design process?

GRAVES: The thing that I've realized lately - very strange that it comes so late - is that you really can't make an architecture if you don't draw. There are a number of good architects who don't draw. We know that they work in their offices as hard as I work, they are as serious about their work as I am about mine and they might offer alternatives to some sort of diagrammatic proposition or parti to people in the office to work out - and they might act as critics, and their work comes out splendidly well. I think one can think of lots of





instances where that's true, but I don't think you can really fine-tune the building, fine-tune the object and the ideas simultaneously if you don't draw. Drawing or modelling, or any way of describing for yourself the compositional relationships, the pieces of the puzzle, and if you look at the history of architecture, you see that great architecture is only made by the relationship of building and drawing, and not one or the other; not paper architecture on the one hand or just building on the other.

TFC: What do you think about your drawings and how they are doing at the Max Protech Gallery - the prices they are fetching, it must be quite heady.

GRAVES: Quite what?

TFC: Heady.

GRAVES: I don't know. It might surprise you, but I'm really sorry to see the drawings go. I would like to have them. I would like to own them. I could of course, but it would make life in the office very difficult, in that the sale of drawings over the last few years has helped support the office. Projects like Portland are now picking up the slack, but I also have some faith that tomorrow there will be another drawing, and that it's a matter of public record now and I don't have to have the object (drawing) in a drawer somewhere - but in my heart of hearts I'd just love to own all of them. But, in a way, we must sell them in order to continue

exploring other projects to the degree that we do. I mean, we have a kind of losing proposition in our office in a monetary sense, so we need all the support that one can muster from royalties on furniture and fabrics and things like rugs and other objects that we make, to the sale of drawings. All of that goes to supporting people who are fine-tuning those other issues in the larger scheme of things in our office. So, I don't know where all of that will end, I don't know why architects' drawings have not always been for sale. Maybe one should explore that for a while, why its only been the province of the painters and the sculptors. I also think that one of the reasons that there is an interest in architectural drawings today is that in the painter's world, which is primarily non-figurative, there is very little to love. People are looking at architects' works as something that has both content and identity to it, in a way that other elements of the art world do not.

TFC: The translation of drawing to building, in your case, seems to leave a lot of people dissatisfied. They complain about your buildings' flimsiness, about the notion of cardboard architecture, about the lasting quality of your architecture. How do you regard yourself as a builder?

GRAVES: I don't know quite how to answer that... I guess it's their problem and not necessarily mine. There are... I mean, Peter Eisenman talks about cardboard architecture in positive terms, because Peter wants it very clear that the idea of architecture dwells primarily in the mind. That's Peter Eisenman's interest. Mine would be not only that, but also in the tactile sense. I've always been interested in making things. I wouldn't be practising today if my buildings were leaking... or falling down, or any other thing that anyone would want to criticize me or others for. Even 'Johnny Technocrat' has troubles with his buildings, because it's such a medieval process of putting something like that together. If your Chevrolet leaks, and they put together millions and millions and millions of them, surely you'd think they would be dry by now, but they aren't, and they are fancy machines. Building is by comparison, as I said before, medieval. And maybe it shouldn't be, but each time out, it's a new ballgame. We share experiences with the thing before, and there are good principles of pragmatic practice. But, the chances of failure are pretty great. This doesn't mean that when one tries something conceptually, that you can't also keep the building dry. There's always somebody out there who will say, "If you do one you can't do the other". I'm pretty impatient with that and I don't think it's worth discussing much.

The above drawings have been reprinted from Michael Graves' sketch books from the last few years.

