

The Museum of Modern Art

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ECOLE DES BEAUX ARTS

A re-examination of the dominant 19th-century architectural theory and teaching principles against which the 20th century rebelled is the concern of The Museum of Modern Art's major fall exhibition of more than 150 original drawings by students from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris.

"Although the modern movement succeeded in creating individual masterpieces, it has failed disastrously in urban planning. In this area Beaux Arts principles functioned most effectively by sustaining the character of the urban environment while simultaneously handling the design of individual buildings at any scale," according to Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design. Mr. Drexler is directing the show in collaboration with David Van Zanten of the University of Pennsylvania, Neil Levine of Harvard University and Richard Chafee of the Courtauld Institute, London.

Many of the drawings in the show -- some as large as 18 feet and astonishingly beautiful -- had not been unrolled since they were submitted by students to their professors 80 or 100 years ago and more than two-thirds have never been published. Henri Labrouste, architect of the Bibliothèque Nationale, and Charles Garnier, architect of the Paris Opera, are among the students represented who later became preeminent in their field. The selection, made primarily in the storerooms of the Ecole in Paris, is intended to illustrate the nature of architectural instruction and the debates which influenced the evolution of 19th-century French architecture, and to indicate sources of much pioneering American work by such architects as H. H. Richardson and Louis Sullivan.

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A recurring assignment for students at the Beaux Arts was to draw reconstructions of ancient ruins: temples, coliseums, houses. Other assignments reflected the particular social and political concerns of the day: public granaries, palaces of justice, churches, railroad stations, casinos. Most of the drawings in the exhibition are being lent by the library of the Ecole des Beaux Arts.

Major buildings executed in France and in the United States, such as the Paris Opera, the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C. and the Public Library and Grand Central Station in New York City, will also be shown in photographs made at the time of the buildings' completion.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a profusely illustrated book with texts by each of the four collaborators. The show and the book are made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Color transparencies, black-and-white photographs, text and additional information will be available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, New York, NY 10019. Phone: (212) 956-7501; 956-7504.
