

# The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

No. 106  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
July 31, 1969

PRESS PREVIEW: July 31, 1969  
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

The pioneering work of Eugène Hénard, official architect for the City of Paris between 1900 and 1913, is surprisingly relevant to today's modern city planning.

Ten reproductions of Hénard's drawings and a selection of designs by other prophetic urban planners, which provide background to Hénard's ideas, will go on view at The Museum of Modern Art in the Philip L. Goodwin Galleries from July 31 through September 30.

URBAN ANTICIPATIONS: EUGENE HENARD (1849-1923), based on research by Peter M. Wolf at New York University, illustrates the remarkably advanced proposals of Hénard, today largely a forgotten figure in the history of modern city planning. The designs included as background material are not proposals for the development of totally new urban systems, according to Emilio Ambasz, Associate Curator of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, who directed and installed the exhibition, "...but rather, the implementation of remarkable piece-meal solutions which preserved most aspects of the existing city structure. They deserve, therefore, the recognition of those who, today, despairing of the arrival of the city of the imagination, but reluctant to reconstruct the cities of the memory, hope for small scale urban improvements."

An acknowledged leader of the first generation of modern urbanists, Hénard was working at a critical time in the development of the urban concept. The exhibition wall label explains the new approach to city planning taking shape at the end of the nineteenth century: "Previously the planning of cities had been undertaken by princes, popes and kings to order streets, vistas, monuments and buildings for the most effective visual impact. Now it began to reflect political, social and economic exigencies. Practical land use, efficient circulation, adequate living conditions as well as a handsome environment became underlying concerns..."

Hénard's ideas for modernizing Paris, though many were never realized at the time, were extraordinarily farsighted:

Before the automobile was mass-produced, he foresaw the inevitable impact of the car on the city and tried to soften the confrontation between the two.

(more)

Within years of the invention of the airplane, he began to plan for the accomodation of commercial air flight to the city, and before the profession of city planner existed, he developed analytical and documented studies of Paris' physical planning problems....

Designs proposed by Hénard include multi-level street schemes, the first double-level overpass ever designed, and an electrically powered moving pedestrian platform. Hénard demonstrated the advantages of single direction circulation in a rotary intersection. To further reduce collisions in the multiple branch étoile intersection, in which vehicles were allowed to cross even diagonally, he suggested a central rond-point in the form of a light court with fountains and plants. He designed an open shopping area below street level at the center of a pedestrian underpass network.

Two new street types, the boulevard à redans and the boulevard à redans triangulaires, were proposed by Hénard as an alternative to the monotony of interminably linked building façades. Vest pocket spaces to include small playgrounds, parks, cafes, and gardens were provided to alternate with the protruding building mass, in an attempt to create and suggest new urban spaces.

The first comprehensive long-term transportation and land use plan for Paris was developed by Hénard in 1904. Designed to be a general guide for 75 to 100 years, the plan provided an integrated road network system for Paris and its environs, parks, and landing fields for light aircraft. In 1913, Hénard helped form the first professional organization Société Française des Architectes Urbanistes in which sociologists, economists, politicians, financiers, engineers and architects could collaborate on city planning problems.

Other designs in the exhibition include Theodor Fritsch's Street of the Future (1896), Antonia Sant'Elia's Citta Nuova (1914), Henri Jules Borie's high-rise dwelling units (1862), William Moseley's The Crystal Way (1862), and Randolph Speer's elevated pedestrian belt planned for Lower Broadway in New York (1874).

\*\*\*\*\*

Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Joan Wiggins, Associate, Press Services, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 956-7501, 7297

\*\*\*\*\*

A recently published book Eugène Hénard and the Beginning of Urbanism in Paris 1900-1914 by Peter M. Wolf will be on sale in the Museum Bookstore in connection with the exhibition. (Paperback \$3.50; Published by the International Federation for Housing and Planning, The IFHP)