

THREE NEW SKYSCRAPERS ARE SUBJECT OF EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Three tall buildings, each presenting a sharply contrasting vision of what the contemporary skyscraper should be, are the subject of The Museum of Modern Art's upcoming exhibition THREE NEW SKYSCRAPERS. The buildings--the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation in Hong Kong by Foster Associates, the National Commercial Bank in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, Gordon Bunshaft, and International Place at Fort Hill Square, Boston, Massachusetts, by Johnson/Burgee--will be represented in the exhibition by architectural models, photomontages, and architectural drawings. Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, has organized the exhibition, which will be on view in the West Wing galleries of The Museum of Modern Art from January 27 through March 29.

The skyscraper is a commercial venture that frequently relies on the sumptuous appearance of its public areas or the memorable character of its external form to attract renters. The building's internal spaces--offices, corridors, and elevators--receive minimal attention however, and are typically doomed to a standardized regularity devoid of architectural interest. "Since we want and love skyscrapers, and spend so much time in them," comments Arthur Drexler, "their design ought to involve other issues besides external styling."

more/

The structures included in THREE NEW SKYSCRAPERS dramatically illustrate three very different responses to the questions of structure and organization of space. Arthur Drexler notes that the buildings "illustrate with singular force the interaction of these related factors: innovation in structural design; in spatial arrangement; in the scale of abstract form; and in the manipulation of architecture as urban scenography." Each clearly reveals the architect's interest in a particular architectural concern: technological aspects in the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, interdependent space and form in the National Commercial Bank, and an eclectic mixture of architectural motifs in International Place at Fort Hill Square.

The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation by the English architectural firm of Foster Associates is, in its treatment of the building's structural and technical requirements, an extremely ambitious project. Composed of three bays of differing heights, the tower has a complex structural system that does not rely on a conventional, hidden, steel-frame skeleton but instead exposes structural elements. Suspension rods carry some of the floors, while 144 prefabricated modules clamped onto the building's east and west sides incorporate services, utilities, and stairs so that the floor areas remain unobstructed. Inside, internal halls or atriums several stories high, and an elaborate system of elevators and escalators organize the tower into blocks of localized floors that resemble "neighborhoods." "It is characteristic of Norman Foster's architecture that with each building something new is learned about the nature of materials and techniques. His work advances the craft of architecture," according to Arthur Drexler. "In this building an unrelenting externalization of detail particularizes every surface," he continues. "Its ultimate purpose is to make the technologies of our era familiar, beautiful, and exhilarating."

more/

The form of the 28-story National Commercial Bank in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, designed by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, represents a radical departure from the plan of conventional skyscrapers. The tower, in the form of an equilateral triangle for its entire height, appears as a massive, solid shaft, pierced by three gigantic openings: two 7-story-high recessed loggias on one elevation and one 9-story-high loggia on another. Glass-walled offices line the recessed walls of the loggias, which shield the glass from direct sun and provide a quiet setting for mid-air gardens. The clustering of elevators and services in a separate rectangular structure abutting the tower results in a maximum utilization of interior space, and the aligning of offices beside the loggias creates a humane environment of manageable scale. At 28 stories, the National Commercial Bank is the smallest of the projects in the exhibition, and yet the building appears colossal. "It is also the only one of the three buildings whose abstract form is independent of structure," comments Arthur Drexler.

Johnson/Burgee's International Place at Fort Hill Square, Boston, Massachusetts, to be built by The Chiofaro Company, presents an eclectic, post-modernist solution to the problems of integrating a new tall building on an irregular site with an existing urban environment of older, smaller structures. The two towers composing International Place have been designed to look like six independently constructed buildings. Differing heights, shapes, window and wall treatments have been deliberately employed to vary the scale and suggest that the six parts might have been added at different times. A glass-roofed concourse creates an all-weather common for this eclectic village. "What makes this project more than an anthology of eccentricities," observes Arthur Drexler, "is that it achieves its goals: it does modulate urban scale; it does solve its site problems; it does

more/

provide variety and interest; and it most certainly demonstrates that there is more to eclecticism than the average eclectic dreams of."

The exhibition will feature a large model of each of the three buildings. In addition, there will be a number of small models of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, including a detail model of the banking hall area; close-up and panorama photographs showing the construction of the National Commercial Bank, which will be completed in 1983; and four models of preliminary studies for International Place at Fort Hill Square. The evolution of each building will also be traced in the exhibition through a selection of drawings and plans.

The Museum will publish a catalog in conjunction with the exhibition. "Three New Skyscrapers" features drawings, plans, and photographs of models and construction, with a commentary by Arthur Drexler on the buildings and their significance. The 48-page, paperbound volume, which contains 20 black-and-white and 4 color illustrations, costs \$7.50.

January 1983

For further information, please contact Luisa Kreisberg, Director, or Tamara Real, The Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 (212)708-9750.
