

55th Ann Meeting SAH (9/2001)

Victoria M. Young

Following please find a call for papers for the 55th Annual Meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians to be held in Richmond, Virginia on April 17-22, 2002. Paper calls are due on September 1, 2001. For information on proposal format and other sessions in the conference please visit the Society's website at www.sah.org and click on Annual Meetings, then Future Meetings.

"The Rebirth of Solids": Redefining Mid-Century Modern Architecture

In his 1963 lecture, "Matter and Intrinsic Form," Marcel Breuer detailed his observations on the state of contemporary architecture. Architects, he recognized, had broken away from the spare formalism of the International Style and embraced building shapes and materials which set "solid elements next to transparency, and a new plasticity next to lineal purity." Breuer heralded this return of "vivid contrasts" and sculptural "three-dimensional architecture" as a resounding "rebirth of solids." In their quest for diversity of expression, architects of the 1950s and 1960s challenged the underlying principles of early Modernism and developed their own distinctive idiom. Yet modern architecture of this period-overshadowed by the towering legacy of the International Style and the flamboyant gestures of Post Modernism-remains subject to public dislike and political disdain born of misinterpretation and misunderstanding. Today, prominent battles to save and re-use buildings from the mid-century, including Edward Durrell Stone's 1964 Gallery of Modern Art on Columbus Circle in New York City and Richard Neutra's 1961

Gettysburg Cyclorama Building in Pennsylvania, have inspired academics to reexamine this distinct period of design, outlining the broad contours of what is often referred to as "Mid-Century Modern." As scholars prepare to celebrate the centenary anniversary of Breuer's birth in 2002, we invite papers that use his idea, "the rebirth of solids," as a springboard for revisiting modern architecture of the mid-twentieth century. The goal of this session is to uncover not what went wrong in mid-century design but what went right. The session chairs encourage papers that present new interpretations of world architecture designed and built (or unbuilt) in the mid-century. Presentations may focus on exemplary buildings, such as late-period works by master architects, as well as the designs of architects not frequently addressed in academic scholarship. An analysis of

technological advances and their effect on architectural expression would provide another useful component of this session. In revisiting the architecture and design philosophies of Mid-Century Modern, we seek to renew a scholarly discussion of the period with an eye toward educating the public, as well as shaping future preservation policy. Co-chaired by Prof. Victoria M. Young and Christine Madrid.

Send proposals to: Prof. Victoria M. Young, Department of Art History,
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Reference:

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