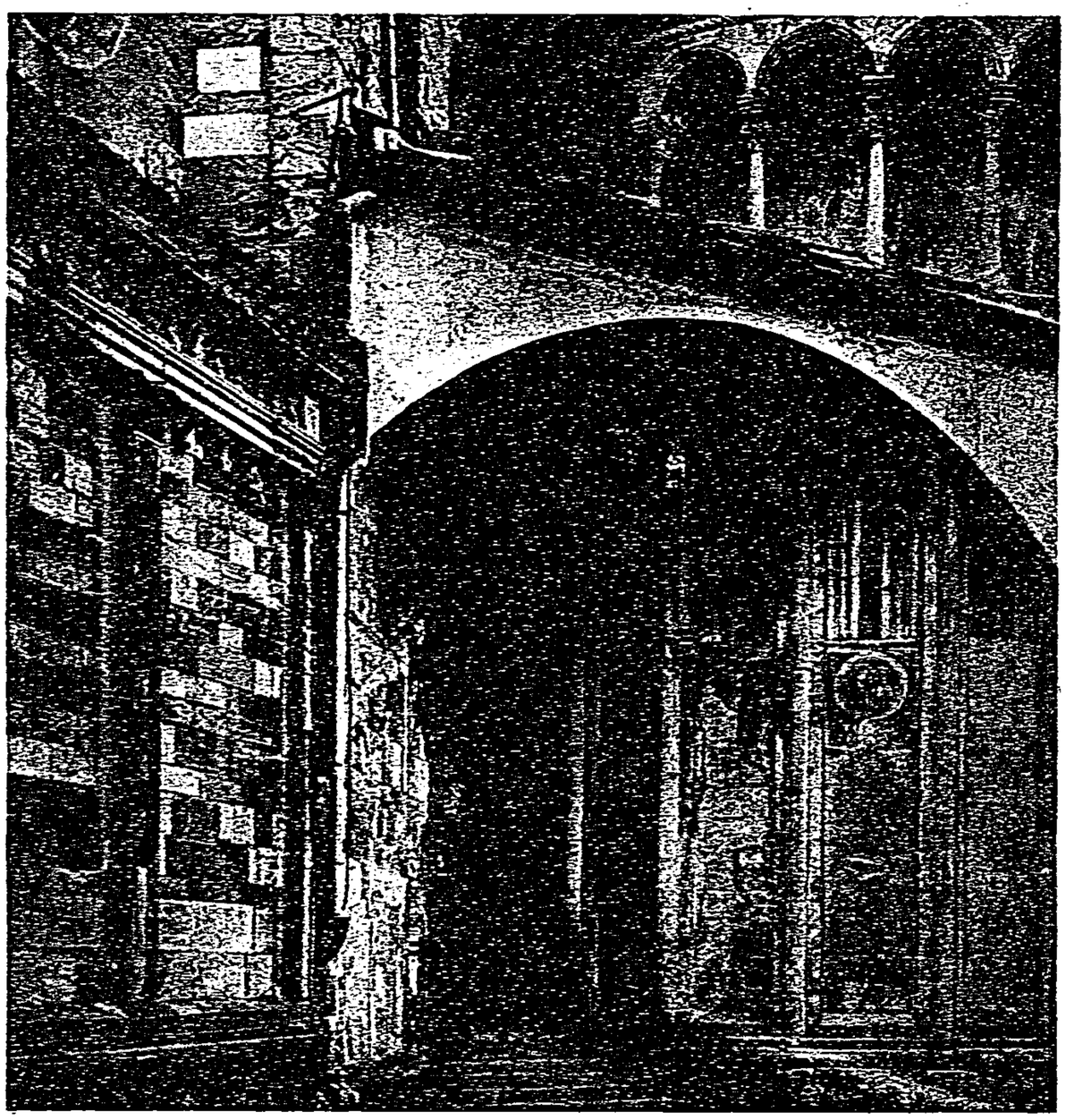
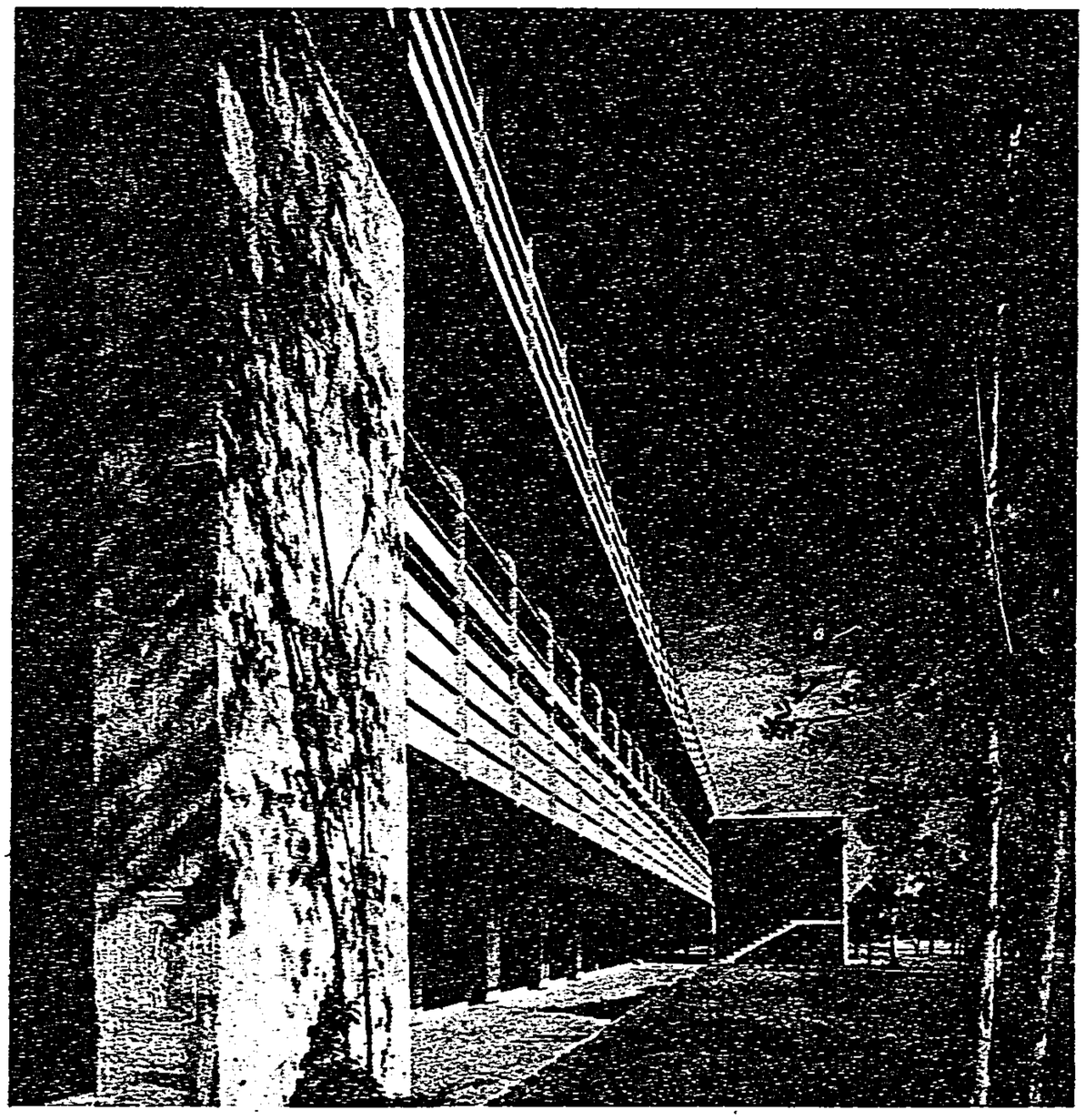


YESTERDAY AND TODAY—Adding new styles to old is traditional; this view of the Cathedral at Bergamo, Italy, shows Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance in one grouping. In like manner, argues Dr. Gropius, modern can effectively be employed in today's academic architecture. Below is an example of modern college design used at the University of Miami, Fla.



Not Gothic But Modern For Our Colleges

A noted architect says we cling too blindly to the past, though we build for tomorrow.

By WALTER A. GROPIUS

ARCHITECTURE is said to be a true mirror of the life and social behavior of a period. If that is true, we should be able to read from its present features the driving forces of our own time. There is conflicting evidence, however. If we compare current public buildings—for example, the "classical" character of the National Gallery in Washington—with the contemporary character of the new group of buildings for the United Nations, a deep-seated controversy becomes apparent.

We will find an even more puzzling discrepancy if we observe the state of collegiate architecture in this country, which is bound, of course, to influence the next generation growing up in and around it.

Should it follow the Gothic tradition of a "Cathedral of Learning" as in Pittsburgh or the Georgian tradition of Harvard's School of Business Administration, or should it venture to fulfill the requirements of new college buildings, using "modern" means of expression unprejudiced by any period design? And, if this last trend seems to have become more prevalent in recent years, why is that so? What is happening to tradition? What stand will finally be taken by responsible educators? These questions seem to touch the very roots of our civilization, laying open both its weaknesses and its virtues.

It is difficult to contribute any relevant observations on collegiate architecture without first considering the current trend of education in the arts. For good original architecture depends just as much on an understanding public as on its creators.

Vasari tells the revealing story of Brunelleschi's cathedral in Florence and how the entire population participated in its development. People get the kind of architecture they are ready for, and tendencies in education which foster either creative habits or imitative habits are decisive in forming their attitude.

DURING the industrial transformation of our society an over-emphasis on facts, on intellectual reasoning, left the imagination high and dry; intuitive qualities—the source of all creative action—were underrated. The belief that the sciences are of greater importance than the arts impoverished our culture. A trade mentality exploiting the achievements of the sciences superseded the desires for a balanced life and helped to choke off the creative components of education.

As this highly analytical, intellectual approach supplanted the development of intuitive faculties, youth came to mistrust its own instinctive emotions, denying everything which could not be conclusively reasoned. Instead of learning to control these emotions, it felt compelled to subdue them.

But the emotional faculties are the very means with which to create as well as to understand art and architecture. They cannot be served by analytical methods, but only by participation in the practice of music, poetry and the visual arts.

It is characteristic of the current trend that most influential educational plans published in recent years treat the visual arts rather casually—not as disciplines belonging to the inner core of education. We are too confident of the benefits of intellectual training; thus the visual arts are taught by historical and critical methods of "appreciation" and "information" instead of through taking part in the processes and techniques of making things. Esthetic connoisseurship has generally displaced a creative conception of art.

BUT art is a field of interest common to everyone, as beauty is a basic requirement for civilized life. If education neglects the disciplines which form emotional habits, it breeds split personalities whose head, as Shakespeare said, "is not more native to the heart."

Prevailing methods of education are reflected in the general indolence of people toward art and architecture. If we consider the vague feelings of the average contemporary toward the arts, we find that he has developed a humble belief that art is something which has been decided long ago and that all we can do about it is to study what has come down to us and apply it.

The student emerges from school filled with historical knowledge, but he has rarely been engaged in trying his own ingenuity in art and in attempting to give form to his own conceptions. By the time he has grown up, he has developed fixed ideas of what art and architecture are, and he has ceased to think of them as something to be freely approached and shaped by himself.

Here, then, we find the very reason for the timid attitude so often shown when the architectural character of new college buildings has to be decided upon. We seem to have forgotten that there is an opportunity to make architectural history for ourselves and to have buildings designed in unmistakable terms of our own period.

What we need is a new code of visual values. So long as we flounder about in a limitless welter of borrowed artistic expression, we shall not succeed in giving form and substance to our own culture, for this implies selective choice of those artistic means which best express the ideas and spiritual directions of our time.

THE impact of environment on a young man during his college years is certainly decisive. If the college is to be the cultural breeding ground for the coming generation, its attitude should be creative, not imitative. Stimulative environment is just as important to free the student's creative talent as vigorous teaching.

Accordingly, the student needs the *real* thing, not buildings in disguise. So long as we do not ask him to go about in period clothes, it seems absurd to build college buildings in pseudo-period design. How can we expect our students to become bold and fearless in *(Continued on Page 18)*

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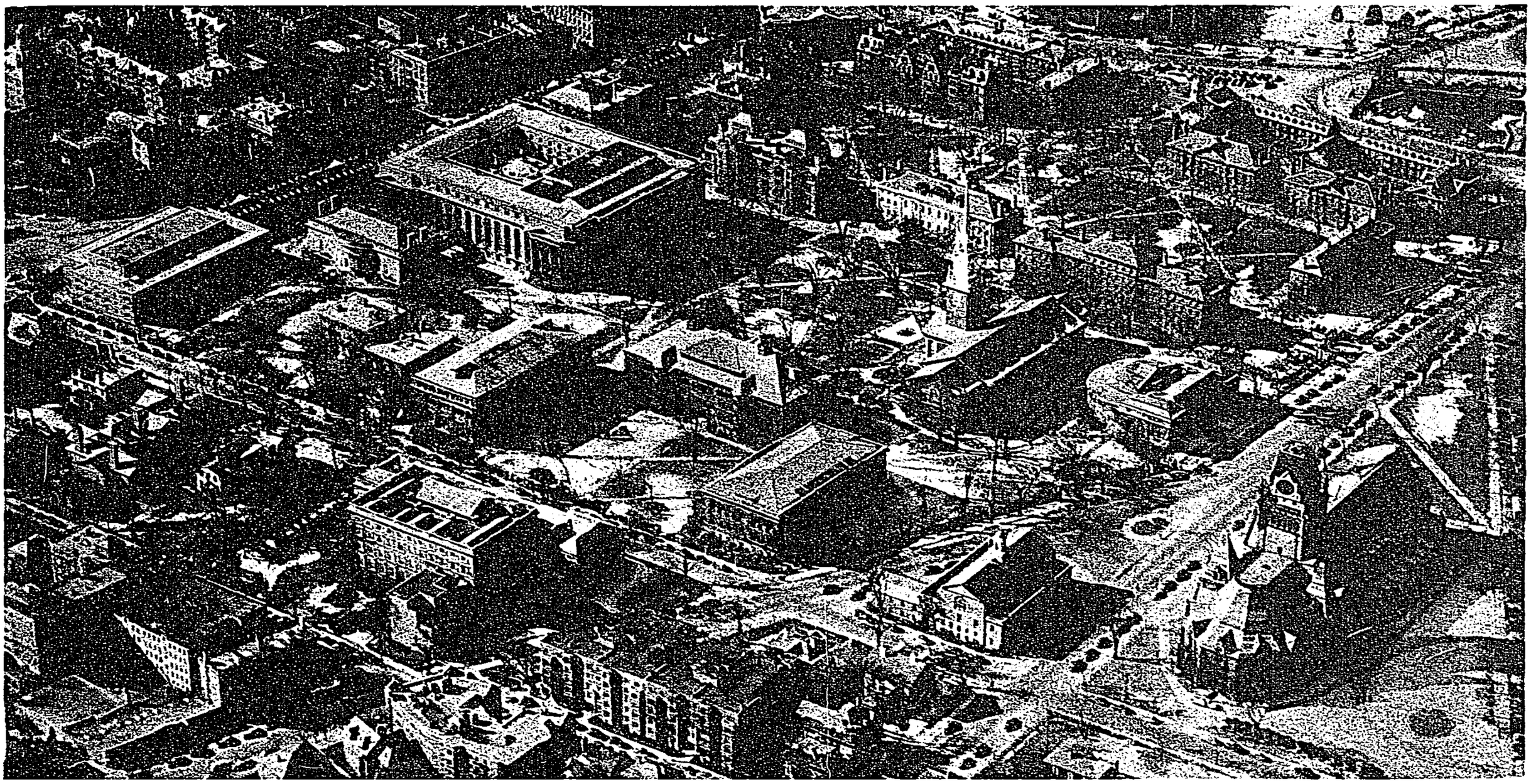
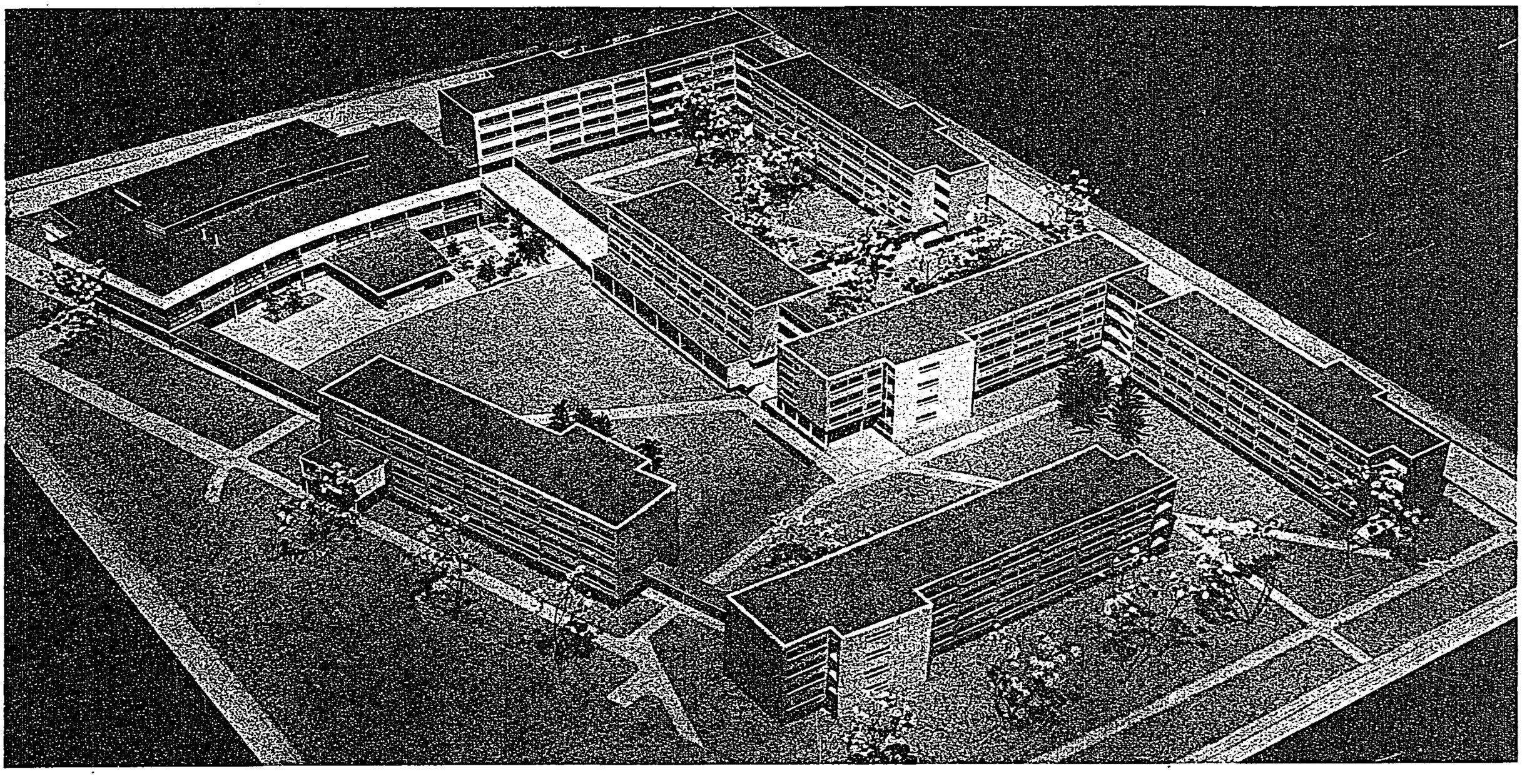


YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW—Many styles of architecture, from Colonial to modern, mark the buildings of the Harvard Yard, but because the quadrangles dominate the scheme, the buildings "hang together," says Dr. Gropius. For that reason the design for the new Graduate Center (shown below in a model), designed by him and the Architects Collaborative and now under construction, will fit well into the whole, even though the new buildings are all in modern styles. The $3,000,000 addition, located on Jarvis Field, consists of seven dormitories, with quarters for 600 students, and (upper left) a Commons Hall with four lounges and a cafeteria. The courts between the buildings give the center an effect of spaciousness.



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Not Gothic But Modern

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thought and action if we encase them timidly in sentimental shrines feigning a culture which has long since disappeared?

Genuine architecture of organic growth implies continuous renewal. The physical and spiritual functions determining the design of a building are interdependent. They are both part of our present life.

It is an anachronism to express the physical functions with the newest technical means but to express the spiritual functions by borrowing a historical shell from the past. Such an attempt confuses the art of architecture with applied archaeology.

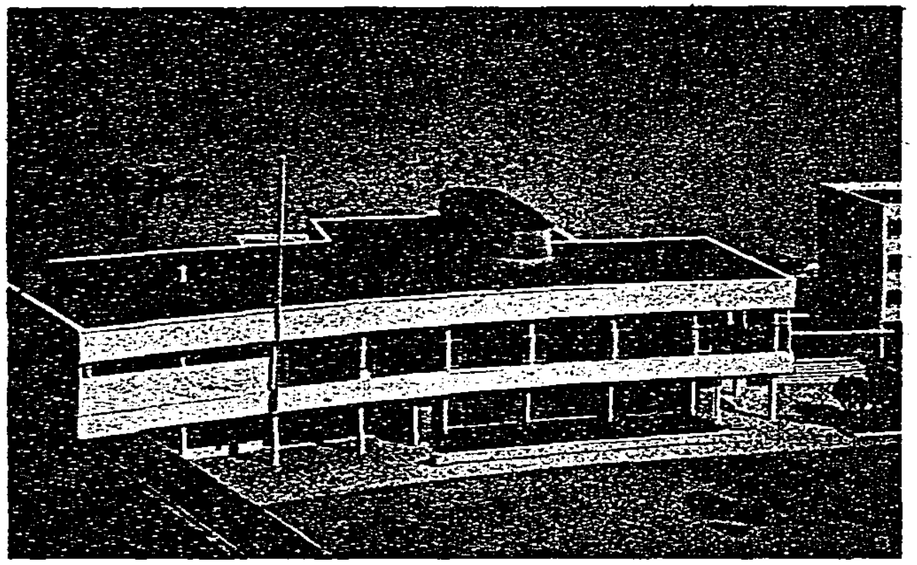
AS history shows, the conception of "beauty" has changed along with progress in thought and technique. Whenever man imagined he had found "eternal beauty," he fell back into imitation and stagnation. True tradition is the result of constant growth. Its quality must be dynamic, not static, to serve as an inexhaustible stimulus to man.

If, from this vantage point, I now look at my own immediate problem in hand—the design of the new Harvard Graduate Center—and contemplate the way in which these structures can be made into a vital link between the historic mission of a great educational institution and the restless, inquisitive minds of the young men and women of today, I know that it cannot be done without enlisting the student's whole-hearted emotional response as well as by paying due respect to the specific architectural tradition of Harvard University.

WHAT now is this tradition? Harvard's "Yard," so familiar to many sons of this country, shows a sound basic theme of architectural design which has been reverently kept throughout the centuries by almost all the architects who have contributed individual buildings; a composition of quadrangles, varying in size and confined by individually different buildings, offers a sequence of arresting surprises in space.

This spatial theme fulfills an ancient requirement of the art of architecture—namely, to balance artfully the building masses and open spaces in conformity with the human capacity to experience and sense harmonious space and scale.

The buildings themselves, however, though each is an integral part of the whole, do not "match." Harvard's most famous architectural bequests —Massachusetts Hall, of brick



Lounging and dining building of the Harvard Graduate Center.

with white trim (1718); Bulfinch's University Hall, of whitish granite (1813), and Richardson's Sever Hall (1878), of dark red brick—could hardly differ more strikingly in their enriching contrasts of forms and colors. Yet they all conform to the noble spatial pattern of the Harvard Yard.

Careful study of this existing pattern of open spaces and structures has therefore become the starting point for the design of the new Harvard Graduate Center. For here lies the inherent tradition of the Yard; its timeless pattern may well be interpreted again today in new terms of architecture, valid for present-day life.

There is no need to emulate the "atmosphere" of this or that period. New buildings must be invented, not copied.

The great periods of architecture in the past have never imitated the periods of their forefathers. In one and the same famous building we can find, side by side, the characteristic shapes of the Romanesque, the Gothic, and the Renaissance.

There is no copying to be found in order to preserve an external "cosmetic" uniformity. Unity was expressed by adherence to the given spatial order of existing buildings, not by imitating their veneers; exterior conformity was never mandatory in the past. Only our esthetic preoccupation with bygone periods has forced the "classical" facade on hundreds of college buildings built in the industrial age.

A fresh approach is needed which seeks to express the rapidly changing relations in our life by an architectural interpretation derived from our civilization.

For instance, our contemporary architectural conception of an intensified outdoor-indoor relation through wide window openings and large, undivided window panes has ousted the small, cage-like "Georgian" window.

The latter of course was a necessity in its own time for reasons of lesser structural freedom and limitations in the manufacturing of glass. But is it not foolish, in view of our present technical achievements, to copy such building elements of the past which we know are technically and economically inferior to present-day solutions?

BUILDING with elements of the handicraft periods in an age of industrialization is becoming more and more a hopeless task, which either bogs down in financial difficulties because of the paucity of skillful labor needed or ends in a lifeless fake-product of industrial origin.

We cannot go on indefinitely reviving revivals. Architecture must move on or die. Its new life must come from the tremendous changes in the social and technical fields during the last two generations.

Neither medievalism nor colonialism can express the life of the twentieth-century man. There is no finality in architecture — only continuous change.

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