

Scale, Volume, Material: Issues in an Exhibition

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From Sculpture through to Infrastructure

In the twentieth century, the relationship of artistic practices to architectural practice, and the forum of mounting an exhibition of architecture must be considered purely routine by the makers. In a parallel phenomenon, traditional borders separating academic, artistic and professional traditions have fluctuated over the decades. The radical questioning of academic tradition by avant-garde architects such as Le Corbusier shifted to a more rigid stratification by mid-century, and started to disappear again by the late 1960's. One line of example is the expansion of sculptural practice to encompass a great range of scale, technique, and disciplinary referencing. In his critique of studio based sculpture, Richard Serra clarified the reasoning behind his adopting of a scale and techniques that approach the architectural, and almost the infrastructural. Serra, in a lecture given at Yale in 1990, explained the architectural and engineering sources of his sculptural practice,

The studio has been replaced by urbanism and industry. I rely upon the industrial sector to build my work, upon structural and civil engineers, upon surveyors, laborers, transporters, riggers, construction workers, etc. Steel mills, shipyards and fabrication plants have become my on the road extended studios.[1]

Serra went on to identify the infrastructural scales and architectonic-, engineering-derived methods of his practice as a logical evolution of late 20th century sculpture:

Most traditional sculpture until the mid-century was based on the relationship of part to whole. That is the steel elements were collaged pictorially and compositionally together. Most of the welding was a way of gluing and adjusting parts which through their internal structure were not self supporting. This is clearly evidenced in most modernist sculpture, be it Gonzalez, Picasso, Smith or Calder. To work with steel not as a picture making element, but as a building material in terms of mass, weight, counterbalance, loadbearing capacity, point load, compression, friction and statics has been totally divorced from the history of sculpture, however, it has found direct association with the histories of architecture, technology and industrial building. It is the logic of towers, dams, silos, bridges, skyscrapers, tunnels, etc.Sculptors for the most part have ignored the result of the industrial revolution failing to investigate these fundamental processes and methods of steel making, engineering and construction. The builders I have looked to have therefore been those who explored the potential of steel as one of the most advanced materials for construction: Roebbling, Maillart, Mies van der Rohe.[2]

This passage of the text stakes a convincing claim to a fundamental relation among the series of domains that deal with the creating of three dimensional form: architecture, engineering, sculpture. The thrust of Serra's talk, on the subject of 'site specificity', is nevertheless debatable. The notion of an on-the-road studio is not to be taken literally, since Serra's studio practice is a matter of public knowledge. The *New York Times Magazine* [3] published photos of the ingenious sandbox in his studio in Inverness, Nova Scotia, where his formal proposals are mocked up in small-scale model form so as to study stability. The use of industrial processes are a further stage of development in a method of working that is typical for a productive artist's atelier. Still, the location of a sculptural work is the one decision where its permanence can only be intentional, rather than inevitable. Any steel sculpture is assembled in components that originated in a steel mill. As it is assembled, so a steel sculpture must be removable and thus, fundamentally portable. The only sculpture that can be essentially 'site specific' is work such as the super-scaled land art, made from, and at the scale of, the very landscape in question, such as the immense land art of Michael Heizer, or urban-scaled work of Gordon Matta-Clark in the seventies, which used existing built form as raw material. Even then, the latter work can be dismantled. In both cases, limits are defined primarily by the quantitative: the scale and resources available to allocate to the work: if the work is so large in scale that the concept of relocation is an absurdity, in terms of geography, topography, soil and water conditions, methods of transport, etc.

Architects, sculptors, engineers have maintained dialogue under various circumstances over the course of twentieth century building history. Strangely enough, often contemporary journalists discuss the relations between the concerns of architects and sculptors as if they were alien to each other. A profile in the *New Yorker*, by Calvin Tomkins, only scraped the surface of an analysis of the formal references in the practice of Frank Gehry. Quoting Claus Oldenburg, the following statement seems oblivious to the general rapprochement that exists between architecture and sculpture,

'I always have the feeling when I go to Frank's office that I'm in a sculpture studio, because of the way he works with three-dimensional models,' Oldenburg said recently. 'That sense of composing a building the way one might compose an art work is unique to Frank'.[4]

This representation of a generality as a singular condition does not allow for a more thorough understanding of the work of

Gehry, an architect well-known for his long term contact with contemporary artists, sculptors in particular. The text treats Gehry's work as original for all the wrong reasons, in reaction to, perhaps even compensation for the socially-grounded journalism, critical of Gehry's practice, by authors such as Mike Davis in his *City of Quartz*. Davis' tough scrutiny of the social ramifications of what he terms 'pop *noir*' architecture of Los Angeles cited Gehry's practice as exemplary. For Davis, the very formal basis and stylishness of the work underscored the lack of connection between regional social issues of the city of Los Angeles and architectural practice - a professionalism alienated from social needs of its particular place and time. Yet Gehry is highly representative of a Los Angelean architectural wave of the late mid-century. In a confusion of contexts, the compensatory appreciation, at an international level of discourse, of the expressive forms of recent buildings by Gehry would be more informative if oriented to relating the chaotic churning shapes to comparable examples from architectural history, rather than claiming their singularity. One reference would be the tradition of expressionist architects, particularly Hans Scharoun, another might be from Italian futurist sculpture, such as that of Boccioni or Giacomo Balla, or the curved forms of South American modern traditions.

The Exhibition as Architectural Practice

Architects are accustomed to the culture of the exhibition; Kenneth Hayes has written of the 'expository condition' of architecture. Beatriz Colominia has compiled extensive listings of key exhibitions. However, typically, experimental and innovative architectural or sculptural work is received with varying degrees of acceptance by the public, even an informed public. The functions of the architecture exhibition in varying formats are integral to the history of modernism in architecture. Typically the design decisions in an exhibition are reasonably scaled, within the sphere of control of the architect/curator/organizers. Thus the spaces proposed are constructed specifically for diffusing ideas about space and form, or to mount criticism and counter-proposals contesting the socio-political conventions of architecture and urbanism. Much as the villa or individual house has been identified as laboratory of modern space, so the exhibition has been such a site.

For example, at the time of the collaboration between Mies van der Rohe and Lily Reich during the between-war period, Reich used her position with the German *Werkbund* advantageously, designing, with Mies, ambitious, spatially large scaled exhibitions where architecture in an industrially productive culture, approached sculpturally, was the primary theme. Reich's installation of raw materials used in industrial production presaged the formal 'emptiness' and strong spatial presence of minimal sculptural practice, strikingly in exemplary photographs documenting the 'Material Show', part of the exhibition 'The Dwelling in our Time', held in Berlin in 1931. Reich and van der Rohe designed, purely for display, propositions for 'modern

space': the *Glasraum* or 'Glass Room', also referred to as the 'Plate -Glass Hall,' in the exhibition 'The Dwelling', held in Stuttgart in 1927, the 'Velvet and Silk Café' in 'Die Mode der Dame' exhibition in Berlin in 1931.[5]

Collaborating with Ozenfant, Le Corbusier launched the heroic phase of his career with the exhibition '*Après le cubisme*', in 1918. Accompanied by the manifesto, the exhibition was calculated to found an art movement, *Le Purisme*, and all or many of the paintings were created especially for the opening event, the *vernissage*; some works were not quite dry for the opening. Le Corbusier painted in such haste that he damaged an eye with a brush and became monocular as a result. Later Le Corbusier, working with his cousin and partner Pierre Jeanneret and by 1927 with Charlotte Perriand, set up his identity as a modern designer with a series of exhibition pavilions and interior installations, most notably the *Pavilion de l'Esprit Nouveau* for the *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs* in Paris in 1925. When Charlotte Perriand joined the firm, she contributed proposals for furniture design and interior installations, in such exhibits as *L'Équipement de l'habitation: des casiers, des sièges, des tables*', an interior space fitted with custom furniture, manufactured and funded by Thonet, assembled for the *Salon d'Automne* in 1929. Perriand continued putting together interior design exhibitions with Le Corbusier in, for example, an exhibition in Cologne in 1931, which used a polemical 'popular' lion-print carpet, and the more elaborate '*La Maison du jeune homme*' in 1935 for the International Exhibition in Brussels.[6]

The Sao Paulo Museum of Art, designed by Lina Bo Bardi, founded and directed by her husband, Pietro Maria Bardi, and built during the 1960's could be seen as a prime example of a building designed sculpturally and in urban, infrastructural, and engineering terms, by an architect who understood the relation between architecture and the exhibition. The urban scale, history of the site, and position of the museum determined the landscape-scaled 'belvedere' concept which drove the subsequent design decisions. Lina Bo Bardi worked with consulting engineer, J.C. Figueiredo Ferraz, who designed the remarkable prestressed concrete beams, clear-spanning 70 metres, and soaring across a heroically spanned public outdoor space in a permanent display of structural exhibitionism. As for the work displayed inside the museum: the architect devised a method of mounting the work that was fundamentally sculptural in its modernity, placing paintings on concrete cubes, set between glass panels.[7]

A Late-Century, Mid-Continental Collective Exhibition

This range of examples, from the sculptor, Serra, consulting with and using architectural technique, to the architectural exhibition in the tradition of the trade or interior show, to the building as exhibition and public space in itself, demonstrate the broad range of strategies that connect the related domains of sculpture, architecture, engineering, and urbanism. The collective of

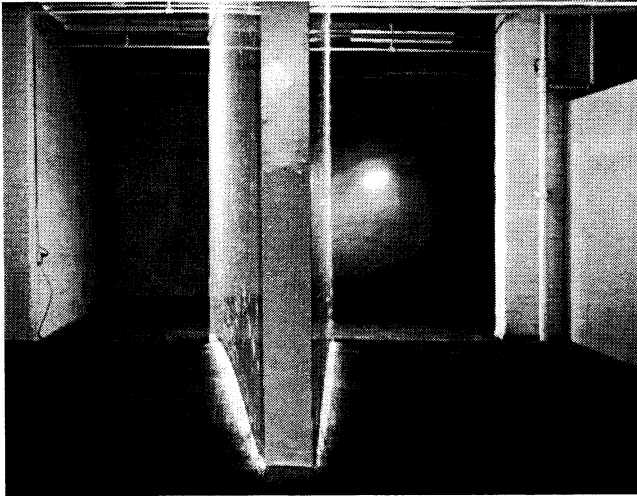


Fig. 1. Barry Isenor, *Shrunken room - Inflated room*, 7 mm polyethelene film, gum rubber weather balloon, cable and anchors. photographs by M.-P. Macdonald

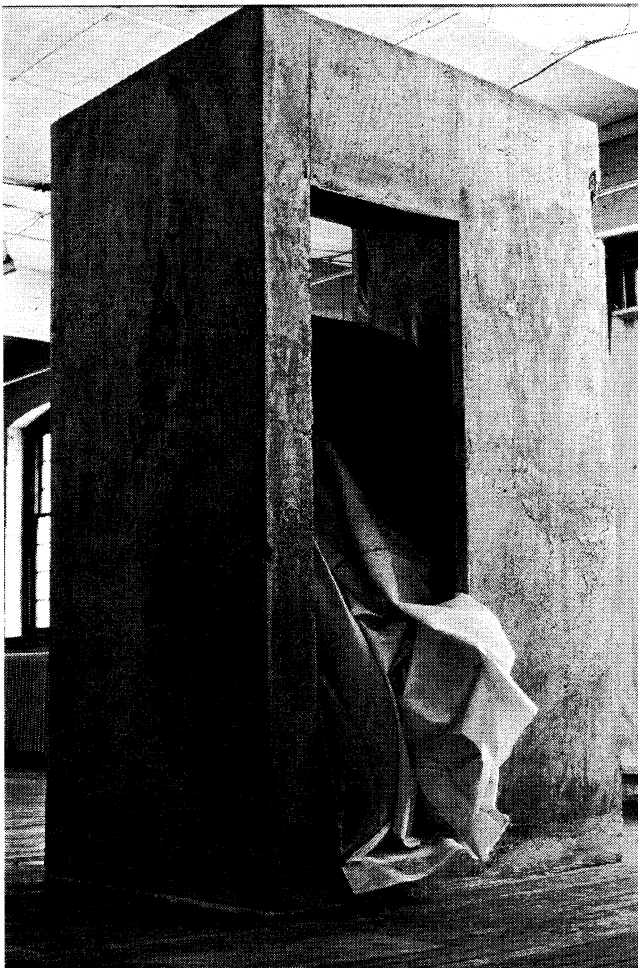


Fig. 2. Adrian Blackwell, *Concrete Shower*, cast lightweight concrete, 8' x 6' x 8'-6", photograph by M.-P. Macdonald

architects, sculptors and filmmakers who organized the month-long show, *Man-size and Headquarters*, held in Toronto in 1997 intended to use the exhibition as a strategic vehicle for expressing ideas about modern space. Critical of the perception of the architect as a singular hero, prevailing since the trend to 'signature' architecture of the 1980's, one impetus behind the 'Man-size' exhibition was the setting of individual into collective work, acknowledging common influences without inducing an artificially-packaged pseudo-collaboration. The collective defined its interests in working together spatially. The project used 'found space', an unoccupied urban industrial warehouse, temporarily rented, in Toronto, a typical North American city in the sense that it has been continuously suburbanized and technologized. The exhibition created and explored a kind of temporary 'urban public space', out of what was normally private, enclosed and under-used. Further, the large-scale sculpture and small-scale architecture that made up the exhibition was seen as 'enclosure': it was configured as space that could be entered literally, or in a few cases, figuratively.

The exhibition took place on one floor level of the building, the ground floor of a four storey brick structure from the turn of the century. The 20,00 square foot floor area was about the same scale of a typical office tower footprint, but more elongated and irregular in shape. There was a 1940's style office area along the sidewalk, and the warehouse and loading dock in the heart of the block. The front-back relation corresponded to the two-part show: the large scale work of *Man-Size* at the rear, production space, the conceptual and text-oriented work, *Headquarters*, in the front office.

The preoccupation with scale took as its point of reference a celebrated quote from Tony Smith:

Q. Why didn't you make it larger so that it would loom over the observer?

A. I was not making a monument.

Q. Then why didn't you make it smaller, so that the observer could see over the top?

A. I was not making an object.[8]

The exhibition *Man-Size* addressed the issues of scale, volume, space, materials, monumentality and sculpture that were present in the work of such architecture- and engineering-oriented artists as Tony Smith, Richard Serra, Dan Graham, and Gordon Matta-Clark, but there was intent to lay less emphasis on the 'heroic individuality' that has characterized the presentation of these artists. An example of the spatially-conceived aspects of Tony Smith's larger scaled environmental work, generated from complex tetrahedral geometries, is the 'interior sculpture', 'Batcave', created in 1969, exhibited in Osaka for Expo '70 and then for the 1971 Los Angeles 'Art and Technology' project. 'Batcave' proposed an angular, monumental space defined using 2500 assembled tetrahedral modules [9]. Smith is a pivotal example of an architect whose work evolved from house or studio building, to expressing monumental architectonics in

sculptural terms. Smith used models extensively, relying on assistants to fabricate plywood mock-ups of proposed monumental sculpture, which were sometimes ultimately fabricated in traditional noble sculptural materials such as bronze or steel.

Unpretentious in its outlook, the *Man-Size* exhibition followed Tony Smith's practice of amusing, popular titling, and took its name from the song-title by pop music artist P. J. Harvey. The song pokes fun masculine stereotypes, with lyrics such as '...I'm coming on handsome, got my leather boots on, got my girl and she's wow...' The comic references to pumped-up machismo traditions in architecture and sculpture were most strongly echoed in Barry Isenor's quasi-sculpture, 'Inflated-' and 'Shrunken Room'. Isenor contributed an inflatable, found object paired with a wrapped work, both using the lightness and elasticity of plastics and polymers. The wrapped work used material normally heat-shrunk for packaging to enclose a triangular space defined by three existing columns. Adjacent, a rubber weather balloon posed in a smaller corner volume of the warehouse constituted a 'spatial occupation' with an intriguing, ambiguously sensual quality, almost as if were an enormous sexual organ, which seemed to fascinate visitors. The balloon, incessantly poked, popped twice. [fig. 1]

The temporary quality of these works contrasted with 'Concrete Shower', the work by Adrian Blackwell, which took up the theme of the fluidity and solidification of concrete. He specified a light-weight concrete, about one-half the weight per cubic foot of concrete, using styrofoam pellets as aggregate. The concrete was pumped from a truck parked at the loading door into the site at the beginning of the month-long exhibition. The setting time of the concrete became an issue in the plastic quality of the work itself. Its considerable weight required a certain amount of structural consulting, as it was estimated at some 7,000 pounds, testing the loading capacity of the existing floor. [fig. 2]

Eduardo Aquino assembled a container-scaled work composed of fully demountable welded aluminum frame and mirror panels. The interior, entirely mirrored on the floor, ceiling and wall surfaces, visually constructed the paradox of a space extending to infinity within a precisely defined volume. The work 'reversed' the container that is the principle method of transport for industrial production today: it could be taken apart in a few hours and fit into a small truck. [fig. 3] Adjacent, the 'photo-sculpture' by Alain Paiement unfolded the flattened panorama of a construction site, depicting the building of a contemporary art museum in Montréal, into a two-dimensional, deconstructed carton, using mapping conventions to present a cartographic manipulation of photographic space.

Tony Smith's remark, 'All monumental architecture is an objectification of the death instinct.' [10] resounded in the one work made entirely of glass, assembled with silicone jointing. Kenneth Hayes constructed two monoliths, monuments to Lenin and Houdini. The pair of simple glass volumes, each intended as symbolic mausoleum, also presented interesting kaleidoscopic possibilities. The glass surface reflected the celebratory wheel

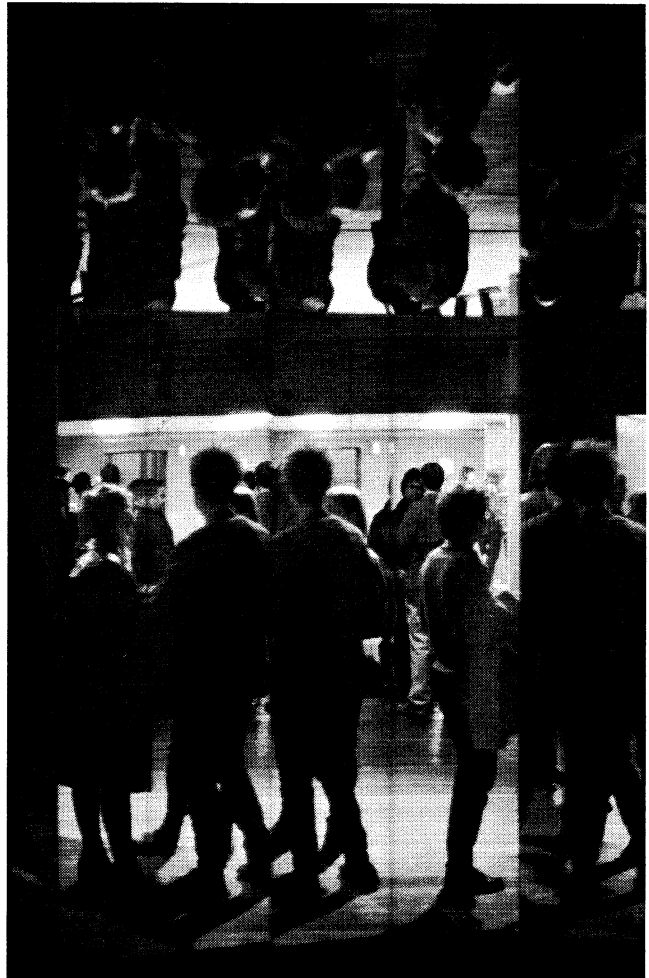


Fig. 3. Eduardo Aquino, *Kinematic Cell*, aluminum, MDF, mirror, 18' x 6' x 8'.

of chairs by sculptor Lauren Schaffer. Schaffer's maze, constructed of acoustic office landscape panels, was also the first part of a sculptural diptych. The horizontal labyrinth juxtaposed with the vertical, ferris-wheel-like assemblage of office chairs. A serially produced, custom-designed metal joint transformed the ordinary office chairs into an office-landscape-scaled festive cipher. [fig. 4]

Marie-Paule Macdonald made use of the scale changes of the architectural model, assembled at a larger scale of one-half inch, to explore the material qualities of one programmatic component of an architectural project, an underground rock music performance space proposed as a series of transparent balconies spiraling around and over a central stage. The model was suspended in the volume of the exhibition space to invert its proposed underground condition. [fig. 5]

In the front office space, the four conceptual works were located in open cubicles that had once contained office secretarial desks. In the 'Perfect Work Sites', Lucy Pullen explored pure geometrical, volumetric possibilities - embedded, as cut-outs, in the form of the book. Fundamental forms such as the tetrahe-



Fig. 4. foreground: Kenneth Hayes, *Lenin/Houdini*, amnealed plate glass, silicone, 42" x 168" x 84". background: Lauren Schaffer, *Part 2*: 14 chrome/vinyl chairs, chroled steel clips, 12' diameter.

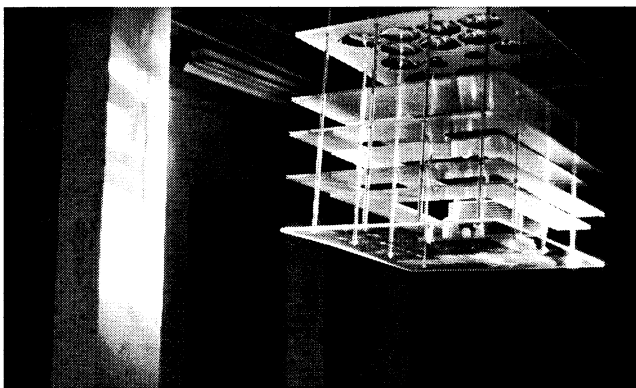


Fig. 5. Marie-Paule Macdonald, *rockspace*, lexan, steel rod, 90 x 90 x 110 cm.

dron, cube, octohedron, etc., were 'carved' into voids within pages and bound. Kika Thorne's videotape, 'October 25', documented the work of a collective, including several of the participants in 'Man-Size', in an event which used temporary, inflatable architecture as a means to participate in a political protest. Steve Toppings' cinematic work, 'Reading Canada Backwards', transposed to video, addressed issues of geographic vastness - the scale of a nation. Topping travelled across the nation by freight train, condensing the trip into 12,000 cinematic frames to present the 4,000 mile ride in 12 minutes. Mark Pimlott's textual work, '2025', used short declarative statements to propose a melancholic utopia.

The works - objects, accumulations of objects, enclosures - in the warehouse space were positioned spatially so that they opened onto each other. One work was constantly visually inflected and related to another. Conscious of issues of reception, the participants also remained present during opening hours of the event, explaining and welcoming discussion of their work as well as that of their colleagues. A newspaper reviewer confessed that on her own, before discussing the show with a participant, she did not recognize anything in the show as 'art or architecture', but was able to acknowledge and appreciate the work after a tour.

The exhibition placed less emphasis on the conventional objectives of an architectural show which presents work to potential clients or collectors, with sales and promotion as a primary aim. In this case the exhibition was conceived as essentially discursive, a dialogue with form. It posed an opportunity for the participants to present individual works in relation to one other. This reliance on spatial relation could be seen as an analogue for a condition that is fundamentally underdeveloped in the context of late twentieth century architecture in North America: rather than just staking out a signature practice, architects and sculptors can use a common formal language to explore shared ideas. Without producing a textual manifesto, form-makers chose to evolve collective, temporarily collaborative practices that acknowledged cumulative influences. This reaffirmed a key convention of modernism, the history of collective movements which informed and pushed individuals to work in sophisticated dialogue. In its local context this exhibition carried on as one of series, from the installation 'Demo Home' of 1995, that treated an idealized single dwelling, to the commercial gallery show 'See-Through Cities' of 1998, which compiled varied aesthetic approaches to the experience of the city. *Man-Size and Headquarters* opened a discourse on relations of sculpture and architecture in terms of spatiality, monumentality, material specificity and scale, in which questions about the temporary nature of contemporary urban public space were raised. The range of work exploring lines of formal continuity from large scale sculptural space to small scale, carefully engineered architectonic space pursued, at a formal and theoretical level, a discussion of the shaping of three-dimensional space engaging the makers and an urban public.

NOTES

1. Richard Serra, 'The Yale Lecture 1990', *Kunst & Museumjournal*, vol.1, no. 6, Amsterdam (1990) pp 22-23, reprinted in *Art in Theory 1900-1990*, edited by Charles Harris and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1992) p 1124.
2. *Ibid.*, p 1125.
3. Deborah Solomon, 'Richard Serra, our most notorious sculptor', *New York Times Magazine* (Oct. 8, 1989) pp 38-41.
4. Calvin Tomkins, 'The Maverick', *New Yorker* (July 7, 1997) p 38-45; p 44
5. Matilda McQuaid, *Lily Reich, Designer and Architect* (New York: Museum of Modern Art 1996) pp 8, 20, 24.
6. Charlotte Perriand, *Un Art de Vivre* (Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs/Flammarion 1985) pp 18-27
7. *Lina Bo Bardi*, (Milan: Edizioni Charta, Sao Paulo: Instituto Lina Bo e P.M. Bardi 1994) pp 100-115
8. Tony Smith, quoted as epigraph by Robert Morris, 'Notes on Sculpture, Part 2', in Gregory Battcock, *Minimal Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc. 1968) p 228-30
9. Jack Burnham, 'Art and Technology, a pictorial essay', p 344-359, *Encyclopedia Yearbook of Science and the Future, 1973* (Chicago: William Benton Publisher 1973) p 353
10. Robert Storr, *Tony Smith, architect, painter, sculptor* (New York: Museum of Modern Art 1998) p 188

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Man-size and Headquarters, exhibition catalogue (Toronto 1997)

the neighborhood in which they settled. But the relationship was not equal. The “settlers” called themselves “residents” of Hull House. The inhabitants of Chicago’s nineteenth ward were their “neighbors.” As the *Woman’s Journal* described the proposed enterprise: “[These] “young ladies” ... propose to live [in Chicago’s nineteenth ward], to know the most wretched phases of poverty from actual contact; to study the needs of these people, and then to devise means for their elevation.”⁵ Yet, even as the settlement grew to an ensemble of thirteen buildings occupying a full city block Addams refused to see it as an institution, arguing for a sustained “flexibility” to adapt as the environment demanded.

Numerous residents’s writings attest to the need to reside in the neighborhood in order to accomplish the settlement’s work. The house itself was an object within the space of the city. Addams began her article “The Objective Value of a Social Settlement” with a physical description of the house and its context which spoke directly to the urban-industrial conditions which she hoped the settlement would ameliorate. Built in 1856 by Charles J. Hull and eventually deeded to the settlement by his heir Helen Culver, Hull House sat in what was once a suburb of Chicago. By the time the architect Allen B. Pond brought Addams to see the house, Hull and his family had long abandoned it and a tenement district teeming with European immigrants—the foreign colonies—had grown up around it. Addams was taken by the provisional character⁶ of the tenements and the life of their residents, who would become the objects of the settlements’ work: “The site for a settlement was selected in the first instance because of its diversity, and the variety of activity for which it presented an opportunity. It has been the aim of the residents to respond to ... the neighborhood as a whole.”⁷ The objective space was the neighborhood and the city. By 1889 the house was already a relic of an agricultural past eclipsed by industry and tenements. Addams’s own writings speak to the house’s anomalous position within the tenement district, and it is probably the case that had Addams not come to occupy the house, it too would have fallen prey to the industrialization around it.

Hull House served as both residence and institution. Although the objective value of the settlement—its institutional purpose—was to work for the improvement of its neighborhood and its neighbors, the settlement also met important subjective needs for Addams and the residents, for the most part college-educated women, in need of a space in which to put thought into action. Addams’s text “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements” addresses the purposes that the house served for its residents.⁸ The “settlers” used the house as both a site for collective living and as a means of forming a community that gave them access to public life.⁹ Hull House offered its female residents a way to occupy the public space of the city. They created a place that did not yet exist—both physically, by building Hull House, and institutionally, by creating an alternative to the separate spheres of gendered life in late-nineteenth-century society. To do this the settlement had to remain flexible, engage in reciprocal relations with its neighborhood, and be willing to

act provisionally¹⁰: the settlement for all its domestic comforts was a very unsettling place. It was a space that had not yet been invented; it was both pragmatic and contingent.

Although initially modeled on Toynbee Hall in London, it did not take Addams and the early residents long to realize that the problems of industrial relations and industrialization in *American* cities hinged less on class than on immigration and migration, ethnicity and race. The arrival of Florence Kelley, whose work focused on the problems of urban labor, helped to expand the work of the house from domestic concerns to the larger context of urban reform. No project illustrated this better than the *Hull House Maps and Papers*, published in 1895. This document was created by the residents of Hull House out of data collected in relation to Florence Kelley’s work for the United States Department of Labor. A rich and diverse document, *Hull House Maps and Papers* allows us to see Hull House, its neighborhood (Chicago’s nineteenth ward), and its neighbors at a critical moment, around the years of the World’s Fair of 1893: a celebration of “the coming of age of American industry.”¹¹ The maps offered an image of the geographical distribution of the “foreign colonies,” revealing physical and social interactions in this densely and diversely populated ward. They were an attempt at “a photographic reproduction of Chicago’s poorest quarters...and ... an illustration of a method of research.”¹² They reinforced the transitional quality of the neighborhood, of buildings and residents on the move: “... and almost any day in walking through a half-dozen blocks one will see a frame building, perhaps two or three, being carried away on rollers....”¹³ Concerned that the documents be taken seriously as social science, resident Agnes Holbrook, who wrote the notes that accompanied the maps stated apologetically: “Families also move about constantly, going from tenement to tenement.... ...form[ing] a floating population of some magnitude, and a kodak view of such a shifting scene must necessarily be blurred and imperfect here or there.”¹⁴

While “...the aim of both maps and notes is to present conditions rather than to advance theories....”¹⁵ they proved indispensable as documents to support the residents’s social activism, particularly on behalf of women and children. Using, as Katherine Kish Sklar notes, the strengths of the nineteenth-century notion of a “women’s sphere” the residents developed a paradigm for women’s participation in progressive reform.¹⁶ Working first on behalf of women and children residents were able to address a series of larger urban and social issues. As Kelley herself pointed out, “detail work” led to social action.¹⁷ *Hull-House Maps and Papers* uncovered a feminine aspect of the city that had previously gone unexplored.¹⁸ *Hull-House Maps and Papers* signifies a change in the idea of the settlement from a form of model home through which to bring culture and civilization to the city wilderness to an organization working to advance urban and industrial change.¹⁹ Speaking of the interaction of radical reform and female relationships Smith-Rosenberg wrote: “Through their efforts to re-form urban America, they created a position of power and legitimacy for themselves”²⁰

To put all historic significance upon city walls and triumphal arches is to teach history from the political and governmental side, which too often presents solely the records of wars and restrictive legislation, emphasizing that which destroys life and property rather than the processes of labor, which really create and conserve civilization.²⁸

Addams is calling for a rethinking of the term “history” and how it is represented in public space. Advanced for its time, this component of the Labor Museum predates the development of the discipline of women’s history with its emphasis of what has been left out of official history, daily life. The Labor Museum can also be measured against the development of “culture” in Chicago at this time, the building of museums, libraries, and new universities, typically in neo-historical styles.²⁹ Addams is trying to get at another definition of culture, that which is present in the neighborhood in which she lived and worked. The Museum was a new way to bring neighbors into the house through their own history, connecting them with the activities of the settlement as well as attempting to connect the settlement to the factories of the neighborhood. Clearly there are several problematic aspects of this project, not least of which is turning the inhabitants of the neighborhood into the “exhibits” of their own history, as if this alone would change their relationship to their work in sweatshops and factories. Addams and the Hull House residents struggled along with their neighbors with the concept of “naturalization.” As Anderson writes: “The son of an Italian immigrant to New York will find ancestors in the Pilgrim Fathers. If nationalness has about it an aura of fatality, it is nonetheless a fatality embedded in *history*.”³⁰ The question remained, as it does today, what place do the actual ancestors of the immigrant’s son have in this history?

In very different ways, the residents of Hull House were trying to find their own way in this new urban context. Individuals who resided at Hull House were consciously choosing to live a very public life; their house was a very public space—the kitchen, dining room, parlor, and upper hall were all used by the neighborhood at various times of the day. As the settlement grew more discrete spaces were created, distinguishing living quarters from public spaces, although there were permeable and interdependent spaces. Except for the living quarters themselves most spaces were used for multiple purposes over the course of a day or week, and many buildings changed function over time. Speaking of the growth of the settlement over the years, Addams wrote: “They [the architects] clothed in brick and mortar and made visible to the world that which we were trying to do....”³¹ Over the years Hull House grew both in relation to the “demands” of the neighborhood, but also as a response to the activities and programs various residents wanted to pursue. The mission and program of the settlement shifted and congealed through accumulation. Like a city or an educational institution experiments were tried out in temporary quarters; often those deemed successful would require a new facility. Addams’s nephew James Weber Linn quoted his aunt as saying toward the

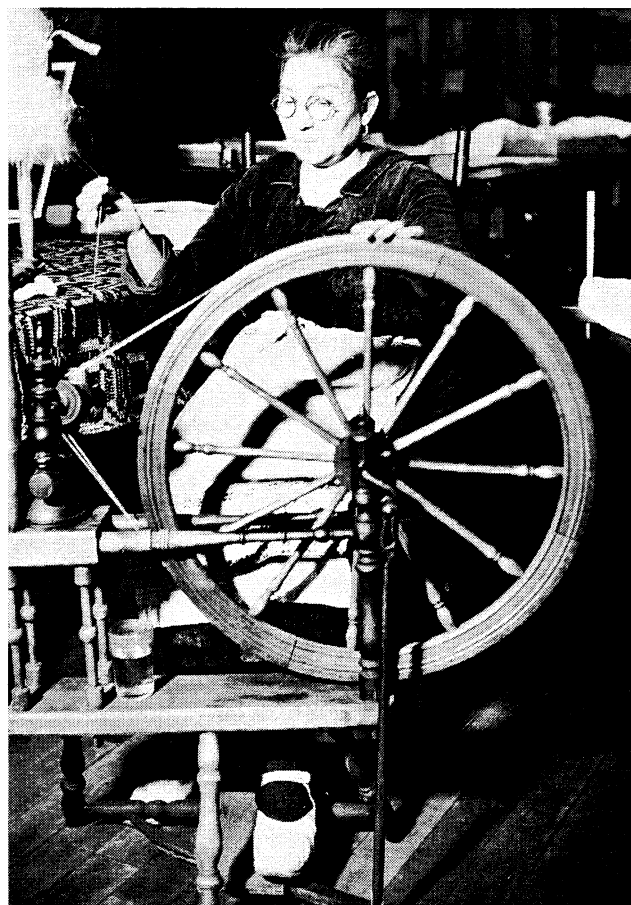


Fig. 4. Spinning in the Labor Museum (University of Illinois at Chicago, The University Library, Jane Addams Memorial Collection, Wallace Kirkland Papers, neg 1324)

end of her life: “We used to think nothing of moving a building twenty-seven feet west, nine feet south, and fourteen feet up.” The Pond brothers did it all, harmonized everything.”³² Addams was probably speaking specifically of the move of the “original” coffee house, one of the early outreach programs for the neighborhood, a space intended as a substitute for the saloon and an opportunity for the intermingling of residents and neighbors. When the original building, located adjacent to the north side of the house, was deemed inadequate for its tasks, it was moved across the alley to the west and reoriented in a north south direction. On its new site it acquired an extension and a third floor and became home to the crafts shops, labor museum, and gymnasium. A new, enlarged coffee house and auditorium was built on the original site. The residential components of the house grew as well to provide housing for the swelling population of women residents and to provide residences for men.

The best source on the architecture of the Hull House settlement and of settlements themselves was provided by Pond, a



Fig. 5. Hull-House and Halsted Street ca. 1928 (University of Illinois at Chicago, The University Library, Jane Addams Memorial Collection, Wallace Kirkland Papers, neg 152)

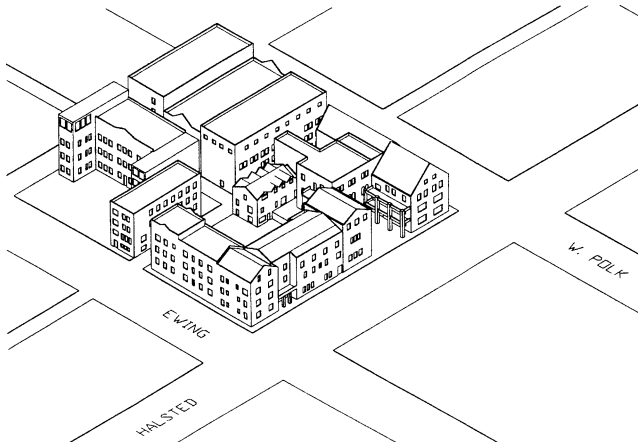


Fig. 6. Hull House in 1909

Hull House trustee and architect of all but its original building, in a three part series in the *Brickbuilder* in 1902. In these articles he described the program of a settlement: recreation, social spaces, artistic spaces, public needs, civic needs, and finally residential spaces. Since the settlement movement grew quickly and through experimentation it should not be surprising that these elements are precisely those that were found at Hull House in its final form, as it served as a model for many later settlements. Pond noted that it was not uncommon for a settlement to first utilize an existing building, before adding new facilities or building a new building, adapting to the contingencies of a site and a particular neighborhood.³³ The final article in the series was devoted almost exclusively to Hull House. Providing a narrative of the physical development of Hull House, Pond describes the house compared to examples of settlement houses built de novo: "...Hull House is plainly rather an aggregation of partially related units than a logical organism."³⁴ Hull

House underwent an urbanization. From a singular object in the prairie to an object in a dense urban fabric it then grew in a manner that articulated a series of changing relationships to its urban context, ultimately becoming part of the physical fabric of the neighborhood. In 1893 many activities were sited in buildings within the neighborhood. By the turn of the century the original building was surrounded by new constructions and as a whole they formed a small courtyard addressing the street. After the turn of the century with the addition of an apartment building, a music school, and the dining room the complex became a quad. By this time the settlement was sorted into functional units that nonetheless retained a great deal of interdependency. While public functions retained their entrances on the street, residences were entered from the interior courtyard. Hull House challenged the way in which the house—the domestic sphere—was sited within the city. The interior spaces and the exterior form of the container were literally and figuratively porous and permeable. The architecture and urbanity of Hull House reconfigured the relationship between the public and private spheres, allowing them to cohabitate, yet protecting their distinctions.

The last building to be built in the Hull House complex, the Dining Hall, was completed in 1907. Jane Addams died in 1935, but the work of the Hull House Association continued at the settlement until the early 1960s when much of the land to the west of the buildings was cleared to make way for the new University of Illinois at Chicago campus.³⁵ Conscious of the value of their buildings as a historic monument, the Hull House Trustees, nonetheless, sold their land to the city for the building of the campus stating: "About 1959 we realized that, when the slums around us were cleared and rebuilt, there would be only one slum left and that would be Hull-House."³⁶ The Association then dispersed its programs to several regional facilities "following" the dispersal of the communities they served. The question remained, what to do with the buildings themselves? As the vast majority of the buildings were in the way of the already designed student center, the decision was made to destroy eleven of the original thirteen buildings, retaining both the original building and the dining hall.³⁷ As the new Dean of the College of Architecture and the Arts, Leonard Currie, wrote to the Chicago Landmarks Commission: "The old house will stand out in all its architectural splendor, seemingly as though freshly emerged from its chrysalis. A symbol of tradition in a university dedicated to the future, Hull House may well be regarded as the soul of the new campus." Unsure as to how to treat the fragments that had become imbedded in the complex, the decision was made to return the house "to approximately the state in which Miss Addams discovered it in 1889" to serve as a Jane Addams Memorial.³⁸

What is Hull House today? According to the Historic American Building Survey:

"The house operates as a museum, a library and a monument to Jane Addams and the settlement movement."

It continues:

The Charles J. Hull mansion, an architecturally interesting example of Italianate Victorian architecture constructed in 1856, did not actually take on significance until 1889, when Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr began using it as a settlement house. Here they established one of the earliest and certainly the best known of all social settlements. The house is a National Historic Landmark.

As a “museum” it houses artifacts of the settlement: pictures, texts, various exhibits of “daily life” as lived at the settlement. As a “house-museum” it is a monument to the pre-fire era, before the “settlers” inhabited it. The Chicago Landmarks Commission considers it “the best remaining example of Chicago of the fine residential architecture of its period.”³⁹ But Hull-House is also a woman’s monument. A prominent feature of *Walking with Women Through Chicago History*, we are asked to imagine, through the remaining artifacts, Jane Addams, the radical work and community of the settlement residents, and the lives of the women of the immigrant communities that surrounded the house.⁴⁰ A vastly overdetermined building, “Jane Addams’ Hull-House”—as it is known today—has been reduced to the image that many want to retain of Addams and colleagues’s work: a community of Victorian women who set about to domesticate Chicago’s immigrant masses. Anderson writes of colonial monuments:

...reconstructed monuments [of old sacred sites] often had smartly laid-out lawns around them, and always explanatory tablets, complete with datings, planted here and there. Moreover, they were to be kept empty of people, except for perambulatory tourists (no religious ceremonies or pilgrimages, so far as possible). Museumized this way, they were repositioned as regalia for a secular colonial state.⁴¹

Ironically, Hull House, a secular working community has become a museum and in the process a sacred site within the context of a secular culture that has not yet discovered how to celebrate diversity and change.

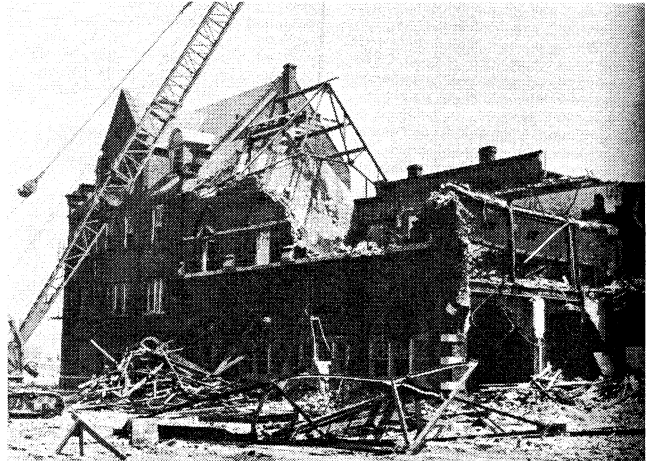


Fig. 7. Hull House Demolition (University of Illinois at Chicago, The University Library, Jane Addams Memorial Collection, Wallace Kirkland Papers, neg 1012)

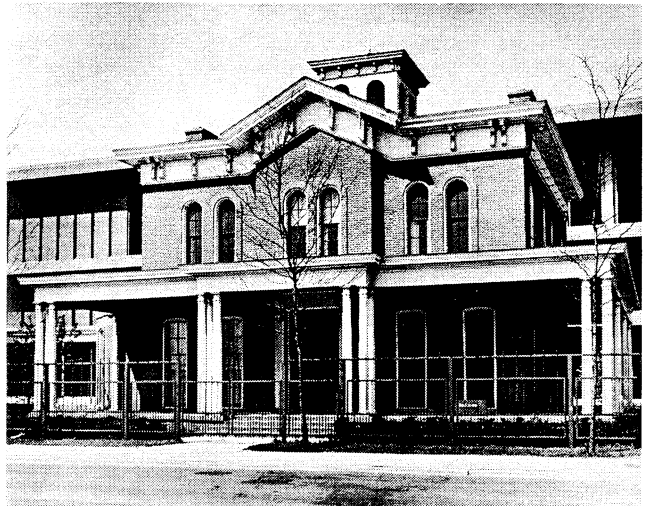


Fig. 8. “Restored” Jane Addams’ Hull-House (University of Illinois at Chicago, The University Library, Jane Addams Memorial Collection, neg. 190)

ENDNOTES

- ¹ There is little written about the architecture of Hull House. The two best known texts are Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, "Hull-House as Women's Space," *Chicago History XII* (Winter 1983-1984):40-55 and Guy Szuberla, "Three Chicago Settlements: Their Architectural Form and Social Meaning," *Journal of the Illinois Historical Society LXX*(May 1977):114-129. The most complete discussion of the architecture of the house through 1902 was provided by its architect, Allen B. Pond. His articles will be considered further later in this essay.
- ² Jane Addams, "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements," in *Philanthropy and Social Progress* (Maryland: McGrath Publishing Company, 1969 [1893]), p. 1.
- ³ Addams, "Subjective Necessity," p. 11.
- ⁴ The concept of the city as a "frontier," a "wilderness," a place of "disorder," is crucial to the rhetoric of urban growth at the end of the nineteenth century and had a significant impact on both how settlements developed and were perceived by the American public. See for example Sam Bass Warner, *The Urban Wilderness: A History of the American City*, Robert A. Woods, ed. *The City Wilderness: A Settlement Study by Residents and Associates of the South End House*, and Carl Smith, *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief: The Great Chicago Fire, The Haymarket Bomb, and the Model Town of Pullman*.
- ⁵ Leila G. Bedell, "A Chicago Toynbee Hall," *The Woman's Journal* (Boston, May 25, 1889):162.
- ⁶ Jane Addams, "The Objective Value of a Social Settlement," in *Philanthropy and Social Progress* (Maryland: McGrath Publishing Company, 1969 [1893]), p. 30.
- ⁷ Addams, "Objective Value," p. 32.
- ⁸ Addams, "The Subjective Necessity," pp. 6, 22-23.
- ⁹ Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981), p. 174.
- ¹⁰ Addams, "The Subjective Necessity," pp. 22-26.
- ¹¹ Katherine Kish Sklar, "Hull-House Maps and Papers: Social Science as Women's Work in the 1890s," in Martin Bulmer et. al., *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- ¹² Agnes Sinclair Holbrook, "Map Notes and Comments," in Residents of Hull-House, *Hull-House Maps and Papers* (NY: Arno Press, Inc., 1970 [1895]), p. 11.
- ¹³ Holbrook, "Map Notes," p. 12.
- ¹⁴ Holbrook, "Map Notes," p. 13.
- ¹⁵ Holbrook, "Map Notes," p. 14.
- ¹⁶ Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Hull House in the 1890s: A Community of Women Reformers," *Signs* 10 (Summer 1985), p. 677.
- ¹⁷ Florence Kelley, "Hull House," *New England Magazine XVII*(July 1898), p. 559.
- ¹⁸ As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has written, in a different context: "Women's discussions of the normal events of every day permitted us to endow census data with the warmth of emotional reality. Now we could test the accuracy of prescriptive materials against the reality of what people actually did." Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 29.
- ¹⁹ Indeed, the tone of their writings is considerably different than that in *The City Wilderness*, a similar document produced out of the South End House settlement in Boston in 1898.
- ²⁰ Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, p. 256.
- ²¹ "Settlers in the City Wilderness," *Atlantic Monthly* 77(January 1896), p. 120
- ²² Katherine Kish Sklar, "Hull-House Maps and Papers," p. 123.
- ²³ Sklar, "Hull-House Maps and Papers," p. 123.
- ²⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (NY: Verso, 1991 [1983]), pp. 163-4.
- ²⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 165-6.
- ²⁶ Jane Addams, *First Report of a Labor Museum at Hull-House* (1901-1902?).
- ²⁷ Jane Addams, *First Outline of a Labor Museum at Hull-House*, Chicago (1900?).
- ²⁸ Jane Addams, *First Outline*.
- ²⁹ Examples include: the Art Institute of Chicago, the Chicago Public Library, the University of Chicago, as well, and the displays at the Worlds' Columbian Exposition.
- ³⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 145.
- ³¹ Addams, *Twenty Years*, p. 114.
- ³² James Weber Linn, *Jane Addams: A Biography* (NY: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1935), p. 209.
- ³³ Allen B. Pond, "The Settlement House I," *Brickbuilder* 11(July 1902), p. 142.
- ³⁴ Allen B. Pond, "The Settlement House III," *Brickbuilder* 11(Sept. 1902), p. 183.
- ³⁵ The history of the struggles over the land and the Hull House Association's role in that struggle are lengthy to elaborate upon here.
- ³⁶ "The Future of Hull-House: Proceedings of a Board Meeting," *Social Science Review* 36(June 1962), p. 125. The symposium to discuss the future of the Hull House Association in light of the changing conditions in their neighborhood took place in June 1961. The meeting went beyond the discussion of what to do with the buildings, which was accepted as a fait accompli, to address the role of the social settlement in changing urban and global environments.
- ³⁷ The decision to in any way "save" the buildings of the Settlement was made only after extensive local and national protests.
- ³⁸ Leonard J. Currie, Dean "Some Notes on the Restoration of Hull House," Letter dated 7 August 1963 to Mr. Harry J. Scharres, Commissioner, Commission on Chicago Architectural Landmarks (Art Institute Chicago, P-25793).
- ³⁹ Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks, *Jane Addams' Hull-House and Dining Hall*.
- ⁴⁰ Mary Ann Johnson, "The Near West Side and Hull-House," in Babette Inglehart, ed. *Walking With Women Through Chicago History* (Chicago: Chicago Area Women's History Conference, 1981), pp. 22-39.
- ⁴¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 181.