

## **BERTRAND GOLDBERG**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Art Institute of Chicago acquired the Bertrand Goldberg archive in 2002 as a gift from the surviving members of the Goldberg family. Upon accepting the donation of more than 30,000 materials, the museum assessed the archive's contents and designated two departments to process the works and integrate them into their collections: the Department of Architecture and Design accepted the architectural drawings, sketches, presentation and detail designs, line prints and models, while the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries at The Art Institute of Chicago received Goldberg's photographs, slides, correspondence, specification materials, job records and other ephemera.

A grant awarded to the Art Institute of Chicago by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) in 2004 made possible the processing of the Bertrand Goldberg Collection now deposited in the museum's Department of Architecture and Design. At the time of the award, departmental archivists had already begun, with private support, the initial processing and inventory, but the NHPRC grant was crucial to the completion of the inventory and the cataloguing of all contents, the rehousing of records in archivally correct storage, the publication and dissemination of the finding aid, the creation of a bibliographic entry for the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN), and the establishment of a Web page dedicated to the architect on the museum's Web site.

### **THE BERTRAND GOLDBERG COLLECTION**

The work of architect Bertrand Goldberg (1913-1997) is recognizable by a number of trademark elements, and these can be witnessed in all his major Chicago projects, notably Marina City, River City, the Chicago Housing Authority's Hilliard Homes, and Northwestern's Prentice Women's Hospital. One characteristic that stands out is the large scale of his undertakings, whether these are multiple-building complexes or single buildings that contain mixed-use development. In this regard, he was as much a developer, urban designer, and city planner as architect -- in fact, he challenged existing lending policies and zoning laws to make these projects realizable.

Goldberg was also innovative in the engineering of his buildings, becoming so specialized in structural concrete technology that he was, indeed, a licensed engineer as well as a licensed architect. Mostly he liked structural concrete because it lent itself to curvilinear shapes that he felt were more humane than rectilinear ones. Goldberg also admired structural concrete for its efficiency, claiming it required a low ratio of building materials to the strength and stability of the overall design. Furthermore, concrete was a low-cost and therefore egalitarian material, something that made buildings affordable for the average person. And, as a minimalist, he was able to find beauty in the mundaneness of concrete, shunning more luxurious materials.

Goldberg is known for the way he repeated basic shapes and forms in his designs. River City, for instance, is reminiscent of Marina City, even though they were created two decades apart. Duplication was actually considered desirable to Goldberg, since standardizing his buildings meant taking advantage of streamlined production processes, in the true spirit of an industrialized society. Coincidentally, his repetition of signature elements served to raise the profile of his work: his buildings were -- and remain -- immediately identified by their circular plans, cylindrical towers, curvilinear windows, and other geometric and organic shapes. His architecture is appealing for its originality and playfulness, and his buildings have long been popular with the public, which finds his motifs accessible. In fact, his architecture has been described in wonderfully diverse ways: people have delighted in comparing his structures to shells, snakes, beanstalks, trees, flowers, petals, and of course, corncocks.

In general, Goldberg's architecture is highly sculptural, with an emphasis on its three-dimensional qualities. In other words, his work is meant to be seen in the round, from more than one direction. Because of the scale of his buildings, this free-standing quality makes them rather monumental, like the statue of a statesman or military figure in the middle of a plaza. The heroic nature of Goldberg's designs is no accident, for he himself was someone who broke the rules to pave the way for a new vision, creating an architecture that even today looks futuristic, if no longer extraterrestrial. Like many modernists, Goldberg sought a universal solution for different architectural problems. For him, that meant that a concrete cylinder was the answer to everything, rather than the glass-and-steel box favored by his mentor, Mies van der Rohe. In either case, whether a cylinder or a box, the end design served as an ideal, not only representing what was perceived as the single-most elegant architectural solution, but also contributing to the amelioration of human beings.

Thus, Bertrand Goldberg was more than an architect -- he was also a philosopher. In his utopian worldview, architecture had the power to create democratic communities by serving people from all levels of society while remaining sensitive to the needs of individuals. Architects were not just capable of bringing about a better future for everyone, they were morally obligated to do so. Furthermore, he believed that technology, like architecture, should be harnessed to improve the condition of humanity. In his own words, "Our technology for the first time in history permits us to build whatever we think."<sup>1</sup>

Given the significance of his architecture, one might be surprised to discover how little scholarship there is on Goldberg. In a typical bibliography of writings on his work, most entries date from the 1960s, with only a smattering of contributions from recent decades. This has partly to do with the nature of his work, of course, for projects like Goldberg's became large and complex in response to the desire to rebuild cities from the ground up during the postwar period, and academic architectural historians have yet to decide how to deal with such architecture when it crosses the line into urban design and city planning. Goldberg is a true case in point: is he best understood as an architect or should he also be

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<sup>1</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, "Rich is Right." *Inland Architect* 28 (March-April 1984), pp. 6-15.

considered an engineer and a developer? Another obstacle is the lack of scholarship on Goldberg's peers that would be necessary to provide the proper historical context for him. There are many architects to whom he has been compared: Walter Netsch, Harry Weese, Louis Kahn, Buckminster Fuller, Paul Rudolph, Eero Saarinen, and Minoru Yamasaki. More work on any of the above would shed light on Goldberg as well.

New appreciation of the work of Bertrand Goldberg will be possible through study of the vast quantity of materials acquired by the Art Institute of Chicago in 2002. Donated by his family after his death, the collection is remarkable for its comprehensiveness, covering almost the entire professional history of Bertrand Goldberg as well as the work performed by his firm, Bertrand Goldberg Associates. Two departments of the museum are curating this massive collection, the Department of Architecture and Design and the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries. Original drawings and models were directed to the former, while the Libraries received all supporting materials: business correspondence, calculations, publications, manuscripts, promotional materials, photographs, architectural reprints, maps, scrapbooks, films, and audio recordings. The Libraries also make available the architect's oral history and memoir.

The Bertrand Goldberg Collection is now the largest single collection within the holdings of the Department of Architecture and Design. There are 157 projects represented, comprising over 30,000 items and running a total of 226 linear feet. The impressive size of the collection is owed to a curatorial decision to include as many drawings and models for a given project as possible, with the goal of documenting the design process from start to finish. Of the projects in the collection, 42 originated in the 1950s, the largest number for any single decade. Thereafter, 35 projects date from the 1960s, 24 from the 1970s, 17 from the 1980s, and 13 from the 1990s. Only 16 projects date from the 1940s, the earliest decade represented in the collection, and 10 projects have indeterminate dates. Despite the large scope of the collection, the Art Institute's Department of Architecture and Design holds nothing from the first five years of Goldberg's career (1937-41), the majority of these items having been lost long ago in a flooded basement. Nonetheless, this vast and valuable collection which is bound to attract many scholars. Twelve projects are particularly well represented in the collection, each with a minimum of 500 drawings. In order of rank by number of drawings, these are: Health Sciences Center, River City (including River City I, IA, II, and III), Marina City, Affiliated Hospitals Center, Wright College, Metro Plaza, Providence Hospital, Good Samaritan Hospital, St. Joseph Hospital (Chicago), Prentice Women's Hospital, Astor Tower and Charles A. Dana Cancer Center. Almost equally exciting are items in the collection representing projects that were not built and about which much less is known: for instance, proposals for a hospital in Turkey, an opera house in Madrid, an amusement park in Gary, Indiana, and even early variations on plans for Marina City. In addition, the rich variety of projects makes the collection a very special one: jewelry and furniture designs, private residences, churches, small offices, restaurants, clubs, theaters, housing complexes, and fast food chains; industrial designs and prefabricated work for freight cars, trucks, gun crates, bathrooms and a penicillin lab; medical centers and hospitals; schools, colleges and universities; warehouses, hotels, libraries, garages, marinas, and labor union halls.

We hope that the information and images contained herein and the availability of this guide in print and electronic form will assist and indeed stimulate future explorations into the remarkable career of Bertrand Goldberg.

#### SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection of architectural drawings includes original and reproduction drawings for 157 projects, comprising over 30,000 items and a total of 226 linear feet.

#### USE OF THE FINDING AID

The following pages present a concentrated record of each of the 157 projects in the Bertrand Goldberg Collection. The guide is organized alphabetically by project name. Within each entry, there are three categories of information. The first is the location of the project. For projects where the location is not known, it is listed as "unknown"; for those that were conceptual and not developed fully, the location is listed as "not applicable". Projects in the United States are listed by city, then state; international projects by city, then country. The second category provides the date of a project. Note that these dates represent only ones recorded on drawings; they do not necessarily reflect construction dates. In cases where no date was recorded, a project is listed as "n.d." The third category supplies the range of reference numbers assigned for the drawings of each project. For example, the drawings for 46 East Walton, Chicago, were assigned a unique project number, "104". Thus "104.1--66" indicates there are sixty-six works of art in total associated with this project. Additional information is noted, when available.

#### ACCESS

The architectural drawings and compositions in the Bertrand Goldberg Collection are available to qualified researchers by appointment only. For more information about using the collection, please contact the Department of Architecture and Design at (312) 443-3949, extension 5.

Some of the drawings in the Bertrand Goldberg Collection have been photographed by the Department of Imaging at the Art Institute of Chicago. Copies of these existing negatives may be ordered and requests for new photography may be placed through the Department of Imaging at [www.artic.edu/aic/aboutus/imageorder\\_form.html](http://www.artic.edu/aic/aboutus/imageorder_form.html).

If additional information is needed, please contact Lori Boyer, the Collection Manager in the Department of Architecture and Design at the number provided above.

#### PREFERRED CITATION

Bertrand Goldberg Collection, Department of Architecture and Design, The Art Institute of Chicago.

#### PROCESSING INFORMATION

This collection was processed by Lori Boyer and Heather Barrow from 2002 through 2006.

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