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# Tribute to the New Architecture

Robert W. Benson

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## SALUTE TO THE NEW ARCHITECTURE OF LOYOLA LAW SCHOOL

The Board of Editors is pleased to salute in Volume 19 our school's new architecture in recognition of the new space and vitality it brings to the Loyola community. The photograph and explanation by Frank O. Gehry to the left will be followed by different scenes and explanations in subsequent issues of Volume 19.

### TRIBUTE TO THE NEW ARCHITECTURE

A creative architect working for a conservative client has made an international landmark out of a small plot of land in downtown Los Angeles. Faced with the encroachment of urban decay on the one hand and sterile modernist boxes on the other, architect Frank O. Gehry deftly side-stepped both and reclaimed the land for human beings. More than that, he created an academic village which honors the history of the law at the same time that it poses questions about its future. The Editors of the Loyola Law Review quite appropriately salute this minor miracle.

When Loyola decided to expand from its single three-story structure, the architect selection committee chose Gehry for his creativity and his importance to contemporary architecture. But instead of a single new building, as the committee proposed, Gehry suggested several smaller ones—a large building to house offices and classrooms, three free-standing lecture halls and a chapel. This miniature campus, Gehry suggested, would humanize the scale of the project and encourage interaction among faculty and students. Gehry was right.

The result, in the words of *Progressive Architecture* magazine, is “a project that is both architecture and urban design, as inwardly complex and powerful as it is outwardly respectful and unassuming.” Indeed, the members of the Loyola Law School community are delighted by the brightness of it all, by the shafts of sun and sky that reach into the deepest inner spaces, by the humane scale of the urban piazza around which our scholarly life now revolves.

Those who allow the aesthetic sense to tease the cerebrum will note the allusions to the past—minimal and sculptural—in the five new buildings: Are those pediments not from Greece, the columns not from Roman ruins? Is that not a Romanesque chapel? A ziggerat exiting South Hall onto Olympic Boulevard? Are the ghosts of Hammurabi, Socrates, Justinian and Aquinas not lurking here?

Those who turn to semiotics in an attempt to understand the rich and chaotic signs at work in the campus, ask further questions. What is signified when cheap twentieth century industrial materials like plywood and galvanized metal wrap ancient symbols like columns? When a tiny glass temple crashes violently into the roof of a neo-rationalist structure and causes the central staircase to explode out of the facade? When the symmetry of the Burns Building is subtly undermined by asymmetrical placement of windows, mullions and doors? When tricks of perspective and angles make stairways into kinetic sculptures?

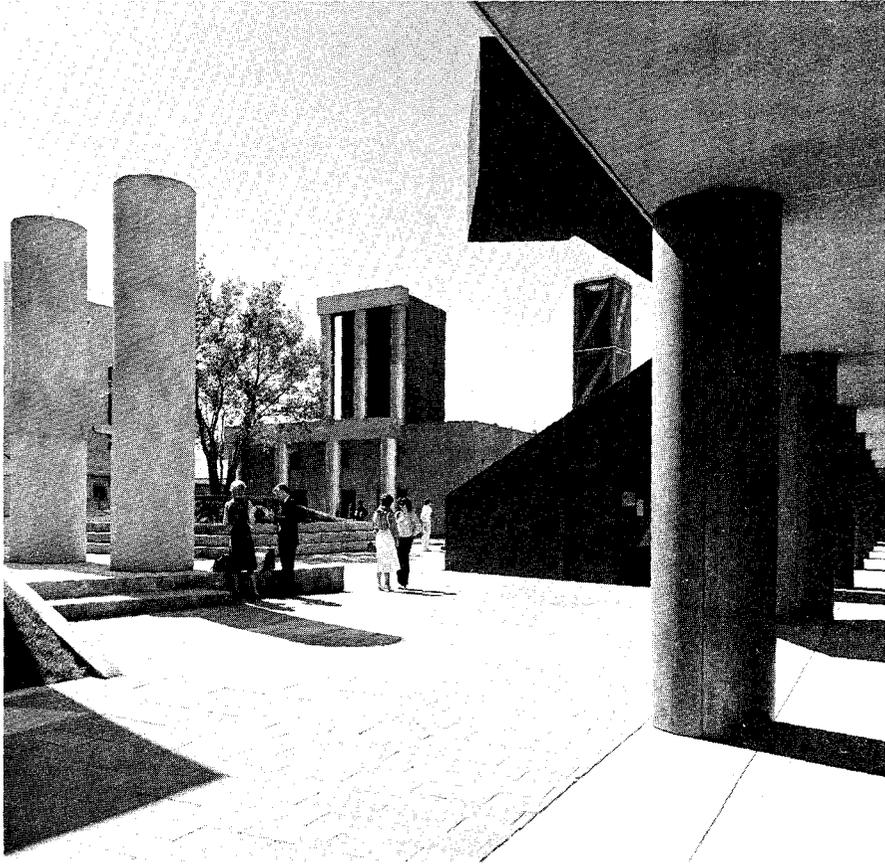
There is no court to hand down a final interpretation of these and the other signs at work, but there should be consensus on at least this much: We can read in the architecture signs of the same contradictions, ironies, rejection of formalism and search for values that we read in the literature of contemporary legal thought. Architecture and Law, it turns out, are in a similar kind of ferment these days. And Loyola Law School is in the thick of both.

*Robert W. Benson\**

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\* Professor of Law, Chairman of Art Committee, Loyola Law School, Los Angeles.





Michael Moran

## DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW ARCHITECTURE

I was interested in the symbolism of what this place is about. I was passing through the Acropolis and the Roman Forum with my sketchbook when I was thinking about the design, so the columns recall those places—certainly beginning places for the law—and imply courthouses and other places of your profession. The idea of creating a plaza space implies a center: a center of a community, of the universe, of your Law School, a public forum. I always envisioned somebody standing in the middle—between those columns—and spontaneously spouting forth great ideas. You lawyers talk so well. I hope it is used that way. I hope you do that.

*Frank O. Gehry\**

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\* Partner, Frank O. Gehry & Associates, Architects. B.Arch., 1954, University of Southern California; 1956-57, Harvard Graduate School of Design. Charolette Shepard Dav-  
enport Visiting Professor of Architectural Design, Yale University.



## THE NEW ARCHITECTURE OF LOYOLA LAW SCHOOL, PART TWO

### Explanation

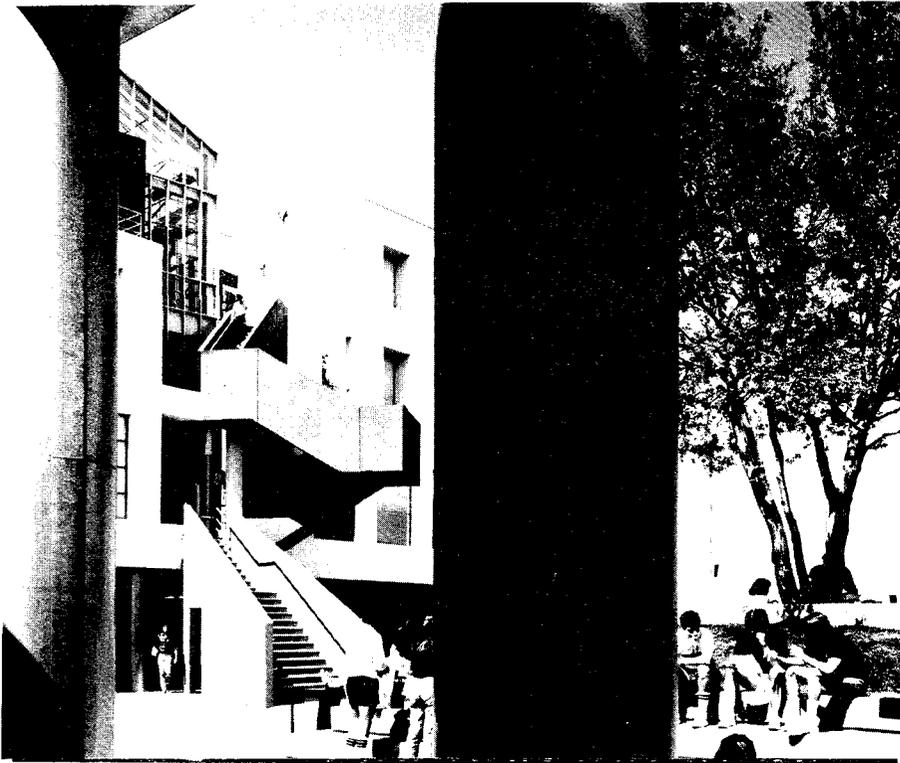
I wanted a scaled relationship between all of this and the human scale. So that you will see a hierarchy of sizes between the buildings; then, the introduction of the columns and the stairways brings the scale down closer to the people and starts to make connections. So in my view, all of these objects randomly and casually sitting around allow people, when they come into the space, to also become part of the composition.

I tend to do the buildings a little hard-edged only because people are in here and they give it the sweetness. So to make the buildings too cute was something I was trying to avoid. I use corrugated metal, stucco and plywood in a lot of my work. I have grown up with the idea that you take cheaper materials and make them more beautiful in the way you use them.

*Frank O. Gehry\**

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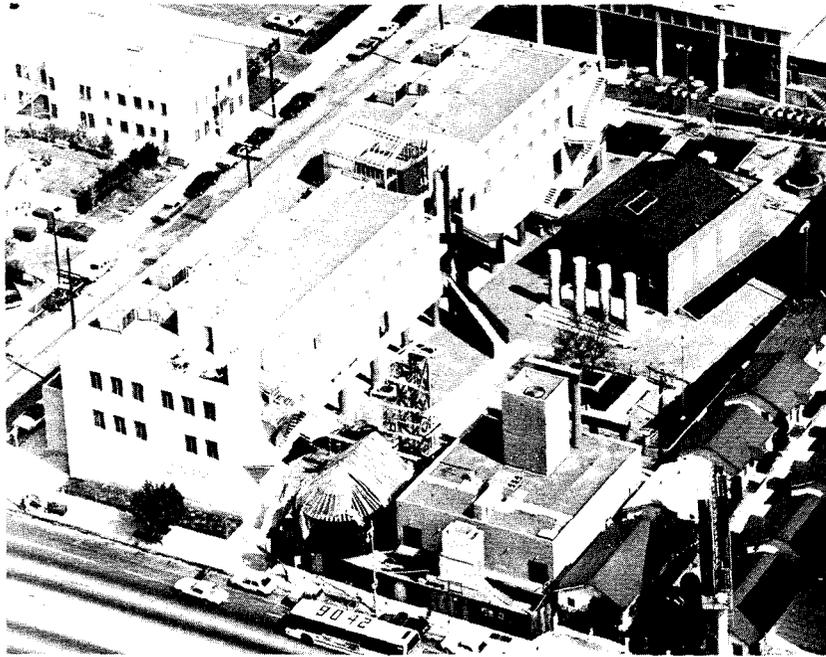
### THE NEW ARCHITECTURE OF LOYOLA LAW SCHOOL, PART THREE

In the large Burns Building I took the stairways that would normally have been inside and spilled them onto the outside of the building with the idea that it would animate the facade and bring people out onto the front of the building, animating the building with human beings. That does work. When classes break, you see the front of the building covered with people running up and down the stairs. That compliments the people walking around in the space below and gives it a lot more excitement. Keeping the stairs on the outside was cheaper than putting them inside because it was more like a fire escape. You weren't buying the enclosure of so much space. So it was a cost saving strategy, as well.

*Frank O. Gehry\**

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## THE NEW ARCHITECTURE OF LOYOLA LAW SCHOOL, PART FOUR

When I began work at Loyola I was working with a bunch of law students who seemed to be looking for a home. The school desperately needed a visual identity, but we were cautioned against upstaging the surrounding, predominantly Mexican, neighborhood. The solution turned everything inward to form an internal pedestrian campus joining all existing and new buildings. The street facades blend neutrally with the surroundings, and the colored campus facade is a backdrop for the courthouse, classrooms and chapel. Basically plain, the design is animated by pulling stair and elevator elements outside to add detail and interest.

The most important goal was to create a place that gives a better background for legal activity, that gives a feeling of dignity and is uplifting, that compliments the curriculum, that provides, as you walk from class to class, the feeling that you are in an environment of the law.

*Frank O. Gehry\**

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