



PHOTOGRAPHS YEARS
FIFTY 50
BRIAN SHAWCROFT

FIFTY50

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRIAN SHAWCROFT

WITH AN INTERVIEW AND ESSAY BY PAUL TESAR

Exhibition: August 17-September 3, 2004

Brooks Hall Gallery, NC State University College of Design, Raleigh, N.C.

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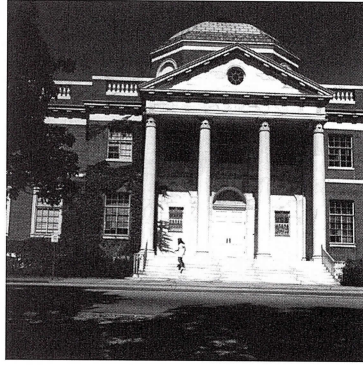
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INTRODUCTION

SHAWCROFT AS A TEACHER



BROOKS HALL, COLLEGE OF DESIGN PHOTO
BY BRIAN SHAWCROFT, 1970

FRAMING QUESTIONS AND GIVING
DISCIPLINE TO SIGHT: Understanding
Brian Shawcroft's contribution
through photography.

Creativity begins with the intense accumulation of images and lessons derived from direct experience. It is fueled by the discipline of focus demanded by a hyper awareness of the societal and environmental context of a designer's work. Teaching, on the other hand, demands a generous spirit drawing from the accumulated experiences of life. Brian Shawcroft's photographs provide an intimate insight into his ability to see. This is not a collection of photographs defined by technology. While skillful, his true talent lies in his ability to evoke emotions. Through his images we are provoked to look into the world through a window that clarifies the challenges and opportunities of life. Through these photographs it is possible to come to understand Brian's ability to guide reflection in the midst of a flood of feelings. Teaching is a natural extension of the life's work exhibited in the body of work included in this monograph. The connection between Brian's ability to derive meaning through his capture of images and his proclivity to give of himself is powerfully made by essays of individuals who remain inspired by his teaching after more than 30 years of distinguished careers in architecture. Clearly through photography Brian demanded the discipline necessary to frame the questions that inspire creativity. Through attention to the deeper meanings embedded in images he guided his students to seek the greater meaning in every design project presented to them. While it was photography he taught, it was the lesson of vision that was learned. There is no greater legacy.

This monograph and the accompanying exhibit are a demonstration of Brian Shawcroft's abundantly generous spirit. The College of Design community is grateful for such friends.

Marvin J. Malecha, FAIA
Dean

RICHARD GREEN, FAIA
[BARCH 1968]
Honolulu, Hawaii

Brian Shawcroft is a teacher, architect, photographer, and friend. During my five years in the School of Design at North Carolina State University, I was extremely fortunate to experience Brian as an instructor not once, but twice; first in a year-long fourth-year architectural design studio and again for a one-semester course in photography.

A practicing architect as well as an educator, Brian was able to bring the experience of real projects and actual clients into the design studio and combine this with a deep knowledge and understanding of the theory of architecture, thereby bridging the gap between the academy and the profession. Brian demanded nothing less than each students' total commitment and absolute best effort. In addition, he exhibited a sense of professionalism and an uncompromising adherence to a philosophy of design that permeated everything we did as students.

In a similar manner, Brian was an excellent photographer and brought the same demanding presence to his classes in photography. During our first session, Brian explained in clear, understandable terms, the concepts and inner workings of both the twin lens and single lens reflex cameras. To this day, I can recreate his diagrammatic sketches that helped each of us gain a fundamental understanding of the technical aspects of cameras, the varied possibilities of film, and the intricacies of development processes. In addition to teaching a basic understanding of light, form, texture, space and the emotional content in photography, Brian taught us to see the world differently

through more critical eyes. His assignments included photograms (photography without a camera), squares, furniture, and the North Carolina State Fair, the results of which are included in the School of Design publication *Photography for Designers*.

One afternoon while shooting the unsavory yet wonderfully interesting faces of the characters who ran various games and rides at the State Fair, it became apparent that simply responding to inquiries as to what I was doing with a simple "I'm a student at NC State in Brian Shawcroft's photography class" was not sufficient so I adopted the rather cryptic response that "I was with the FBI" which worked rather well to quell the suspicions.

For a generation of students, Brian served as an enormously talented and totally committed role model as an architect, an educator, and a photographer. His demanding nature has served me well in my 36 years of practice as an architect and his emphasis on critical thinking and critical seeing has served as the foundation for my work throughout the United States and in numerous foreign countries. I now split my time between practice and teaching and when I become frustrated with my students' inability to see things which are so patently obvious, I stop and remind myself that I haven't yet opened their eyes the way Brian did for me.

Brian Shawcroft has been a remarkable teacher, role model, and friend for over three decades. For this, I am extremely grateful and I am honored to participate in this exhibition of his photography.

CURTIS W. FENTRESS FAIA, RIBA
[BARCH 1972]
Denver, Colorado

I was first introduced to Professor Brian Shawcroft in 1970 as a second-year student at North Carolina State University School of Design. His instruction and guidance were enlightening and inspirational. I continue to be particularly taken with his dedication to and indefatigable energy for architecture both as an educator and practitioner.

Over the last 30 years, Brian has had a profound impact on the architecture, photography, and general business practices of many architects and architectural practices. Brian's thought-provoking classes and school publications helped students understand early on that in order to be accomplished architects, they also need to be good businessmen and women and managers of people.

In volume 17, number one of the School of Design's student publication, Brian's holistic approach to architecture is extraordinarily clear. *Building Skeletons: an investigation of ten buildings*, by Brian Shawcroft and 20 students speaks of Brian's deep devotion to elevating young architects' understanding and appreciation of all aspects that impact architecture. This edition has been used as a teaching tool since its inception in the winter of 1967, and continues to be a superb resource.

Many students were encouraged by Brian to meticulously maintain a comprehensive photographic library of their work. He emphasizes the tremendous value of composition, materials, and photographic skill. A light bulb went on after one of his classes: great photography accentuates great architecture. Great photography also reinforces a key message to clients: one's dedication to

producing great design and caring enough to professionally document it.

The challenging and introspective questions posed by Brian continue to influence project photo shoots at our office. Posing questions like "How could we make this better?," "What does this image say about the architect and the solution?," and "Is this the best composition?" to project architects, staff archivists and young architects allows Brian's legacy of excellence to affect an ever growing audience.

Perhaps even more than traditional academic methods, Brian taught by example. He is a self-made man and as such, a tremendous role model. His recipe for success — hard work, dedication, and talent — continues to encourage young architects to follow their dreams and realize their full potential. Brian inspires students to use their innate passion to rise to and overcome challenges and, in spite of little financial resources, ultimately find immense joy in architecture.

It is a great privilege to co-sponsor an exhibit and catalog of drawings and photography by my friend and professor, Brian Shawcroft. May we all find inspiration and encouragement in his gifted compositions.

RANDOLPH R. CROXTON, FAIA
[BARCH 1968]
New York City

How well I remember my first day in the class of Brian Shawcroft ...feeling both excited and apprehensive about the "advance intelligence" I had received from a combination of his past students and the Brooks Hall grapevine. "Talented," "Tough," "Cool," (in a good way) "High Expectations," "Demanding"...how were all these qualities going to come together in one person and what impact would it have on me? In short, I was totally in the dark about what lay ahead: experiencing the one-year architecture highlight of my years at the School of Design and seeing the transformational impact that one person can have on a group of young aspiring architects.

Design, of course, was the unrelenting subject of inquiry, critique and cajoling, but more than that, Brian called for a deep level of personal engagement in the pursuit of excellence. This unshakable expectation of excellence combined with the necessity of tangible outcomes (it wasn't okay just to try hard, or to have a great story about the design process), created a great "testbed," or precursor, to the demands of the most discerning architectural office. In addition, Brian's passionate and active engagement in his own architecture in parallel with his teaching served to reinforce these values by personal example and heightened the allure of pursuing this unique profession at many levels.

My own experience with Brian included not only the fourth-year design studio, but also serving as Editor of the Student Publication for *Building Skeletons* (an analysis project of our fourth-year studio) while taking his photography course and working in his office. Describing the full range of experiences encom-

passed within these various settings would take far more words than I have here, so I have chosen the simplest example, the photography class, as a metaphor for the whole. I have never learned more on any subject in a shorter time, nor has such a brief learning experience contributed greater long-term value to my professional life than that course: Photography, taught by Brian Shawcroft.

Starting with the most basic components of light source, chemicals, optics, and the transparency/translucency of objects and materials (none of which involved the use of a camera) we engaged photography at the "DNA" level. As always, this was not about the predictability of technique or memorization, this was about the creative process, and we always felt that we were "on the scene" for the first time. This was not a typical "Photography 101" course outline, simply because the serendipitous discoveries and even "accidents" provided in these darkroom explorations were critiqued as "archaeological finds," fragments that re-shaped the educational experience as we moved along.

My own darkroom experiments in the placement of transparent objects on top of photo paper, briefly exposing them to light, and then utilizing the resulting images as "paper" negatives created fascinating and unpredictable images. By projecting them onto photo paper and thereby "magnifying" the image greatly (as well as reversing the positive/negative state of the image), a second "paper" negative of a dramatically different nature was created. Even though initially interesting (am I done now?), Brian always pushed further, for the "full realization" image.

The accumulation of such images fed into the on-going collaborative discourse, led by Brian, pushing the further exploration of interpretation, content, composition, and underlying order. Brian was imparting that most rare and valuable of commodities: the discriminating eye. After constructing our own "pin-hole" cameras, we actually began (in the second half of the year) to use 35 mm cameras to shoot single images and develop more complex "photo essays." I had selected a local riding school for my essay and well remember the laborious effort to capture a rider at full speed with the horse in "full suspension" (all four hooves in the air). This complex process of central theme, or storyboard, field photography, custom processing for effect, editing, composing, cropping, and mounting to create a visually coherent statement was clearly another "lens" through which to grasp the fundamental processes of design.

Now, 36 years later, the cameras are digital and essentially all the visual output of our firm is digital. There are no darkrooms, chemicals or negatives to be found, and yet the full range of insights gained in that class are more intensely applied than ever. Through Photoshop®, Illustrator®, and PowerPoint® programs, we are rapidly and constantly composing presentation boards, powerpoint presentations, website images, brochure images, office displays, proposals, and competition entries. We have been complimented on the compelling visual quality of our presentations, our ability to "tell the story," and I know that this is one of the "bedrock" skills that has allowed our firm to remain successful in an extremely competitive environment.

As I mentioned earlier, the rigor and originality that I encountered in Brian's photography course is a metaphor for all the learning experiences up to and including the design studio. However, I still need to touch on a central value, a belief that took form during that year. Brian imparted in me a deep regard for the profession of architecture. This

may seem unusual for me to say, since, in the formal and technical sense, I would have to point to Professor Joseph Boaz (also a fourth-year studio professor), who later edited *Architectural Graphic Standards*, as the consummate "professional." However, here I am speaking about a personal and passionate belief imparted by word and deed. I often thought of Brian as a "gatekeeper," that, "By God, Brian isn't going to let you be an architect unless you achieve the standard." I left that class with a high (hopefully not overly high) sense of myself and an unshakable regard for the profession of architecture.

Since I graduated in the summer of 1968, there have been numerous encroachments on the traditional authority and standing of architects, including: the introduction of "construction manager," "design/build" and "owners representative." The architect is no longer the undisputed leader at the center of the building team. The profession, for many reasons, has been the subject of intense competitive assault and has in some ways been marginalized.

In response, my personal involvement with the profession (at local and national levels of the American Institute of Architects) has been heavily focused on the reassertion of the standing of architects and the projection of a value-centered design process (environmental-sustainable design) as a fundamental leadership opportunity for the profession as we enter the 21st Century.

Our firm's practice of architecture has had its accomplishments and yet has not followed general consensus, nor the style of the day. When I consider the design "confidence" we had to have to fully reconsider architecture in the context of sustainability and the assertiveness we have had to display in expanding the role of the architect, I always look back to the foundation of these intentions, recalling first of all: one time, one place, one person: 1968/ NCSU School of Design/Brian Shawcroft.

BY PAUL TESAR, NC STATE PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURE
SHAWCROFT'S GOOD EYE
Raleigh, N.C.

When Brian Shawcroft looks at the world around him through the lens of his camera, he seems to see things, places, faces, and events that many of us would not stop to notice. He also sees them in ways that reveal something about them, something beautiful, or unique, or unexpected, a dimension of reality that probably would remain hidden were it not for his pictures. He has what we like to call "a good eye" and through his photography he is kind enough to lend it to us, at least for as long as we look at one of his pictures.

When we say that somebody has "a good eye" — why do we use that peculiar singular here? — we usually mean to say that a person has some innate visual sensibilities, in the case of photography a good intuitive sense for light (and shadows), for color, texture, framing, and composition, to name but a few. Shawcroft clearly possesses all of these and then some. Many of his pictures uncover unintended compositions, serendipitous patterns, and accidental geometries in the world around us, and he often likes to frame them almost like abstract paintings. But I think we would badly miss the essence of his photography were we to understand it primarily as a visual phenomenon and his "good eye" simply as a measure of his visual sophistication.

Take *Versailles 1963*, a picture of three women and a little girl walking across what seems like a vast open space. There is a minimalist starkness about this image, with the juxtaposition of the vertical figures, two of which happen to be inanimate, with the

long horizontal shadows they all equally cast in the sun of a late afternoon. The posture and gate of the women is formal, stiff, and measured — almost like the stones in the foreground — probably talking about something that has little to do with what is happening around them. But the little girl, walking a few steps ahead of them, seems to occupy a different reality. She lives in the moment, in the here and now. She notices the peculiar shadows the upright bodies cast on the ground plane, and mimics their rhythmic bobbing with a few dancing steps of her own. Her body is the only thing out of alignment here, the only element that does not conform to the geometric rigidity of the rest. This image is not just about objects and their shadows, a delightful play of verticality and horizontality. It is, perhaps more importantly, about the acute and unencumbered perceptiveness of children in contrast to the adults around them. It is also about the congruence of the little girl's fascination with the shadows with the interest of the photographer: innocent children and knowing artists live in the same world, their imaginations feed from the same source.

There is more to "a good eye" than a good eye. Shawcroft lives in the same world as we do, his body occupies the same spaces, touches the same things. The optical configuration and the physiology of his eyes are no different from ours and neither are the lenses in front of them. What is different is that other lens, not the one in front of the eyes but the one behind them. The uniqueness and peculiarity of his vision comes



ZUGSPITZE, ERWALD AUSTRIA 1949

from what he brings to the scene: moments lived and remembered, thoughts thought, feelings felt, intertwined with a keen awareness acquired from his active or passive engagement with other art forms: painting, film, opera, classical music, jazz, ballet, and — most of all — architecture. They enable him to comprehend and to exploit the pictorial, the dramatic, the comical, the lyrical, the graceful, the rhythmic, the improvised, the tectonic, and the sculptural dimension in something in the instant of a second when chance presents itself. Yet he never seems to impose an expectation or a preconception on a new situation with a heavy hand. His images radiate a freshness and sense of wonder as if he had encountered them for the first time: “Look what I just saw,” they seem to say.

Clearly Shawcroft’s images are not unself-conscious — they are much too knowing and skillful to qualify for that — but they almost seem that way in contrast to so much self-conscious, contrived, jaded, artificial, manipulated, and “clever” production in design and the arts in recent years, photography included. His images are engaging and approachable because they are honest and unpretentious, speaking a language we all can understand without sacrificing artistic integrity. They don’t drive an artificial wedge between those who are in the know and those who aren’t, like much of contemporary art, but rather seem to unify us on the level of our shared humanity.

Among professional and academic colleagues, as well as among his students, Brian Shawcroft tends to have the reputation of being a tough man to please: demanding, critical, judgmental, and sometimes shockingly blunt. He clearly is a man who knows what he wants and he knows how to get it — from himself and from others. But I believe that his photographic images tell a different and perhaps more accurate story about his true nature. There is gentleness,

kindness, and humor in his observations of human beings and animals, and a sense of excitement, optimism, and love for the hidden treasures of our beautiful world in all others. In Shawcroft’s case his “good eye” goes beyond the mind’s eye to which this singular usually refers. His photography reveals that he takes pictures with nothing less but his whole being. We owe him admiration and gratitude for that.

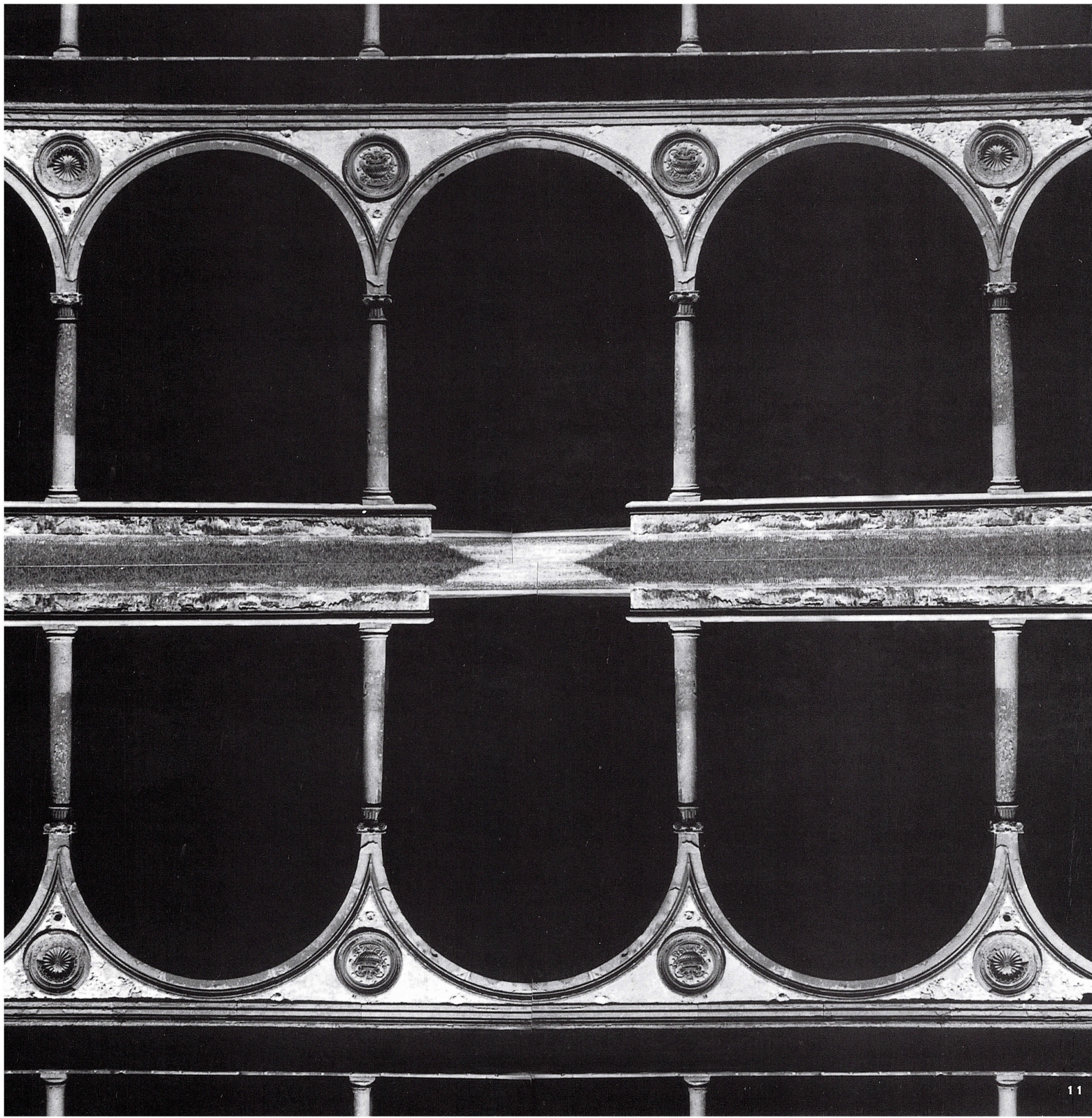


VERSAILLES, 1963

PUBLICATION CREDITS: Some of these photographs have been previously published in the following publications: *Canadian Architect*, *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*, *Popular Photography*, *Art Directors Club of Toronto*, *Baumeister*, *North Carolina Architect*, *Photography for Designers*, and *AIA Calendar*.

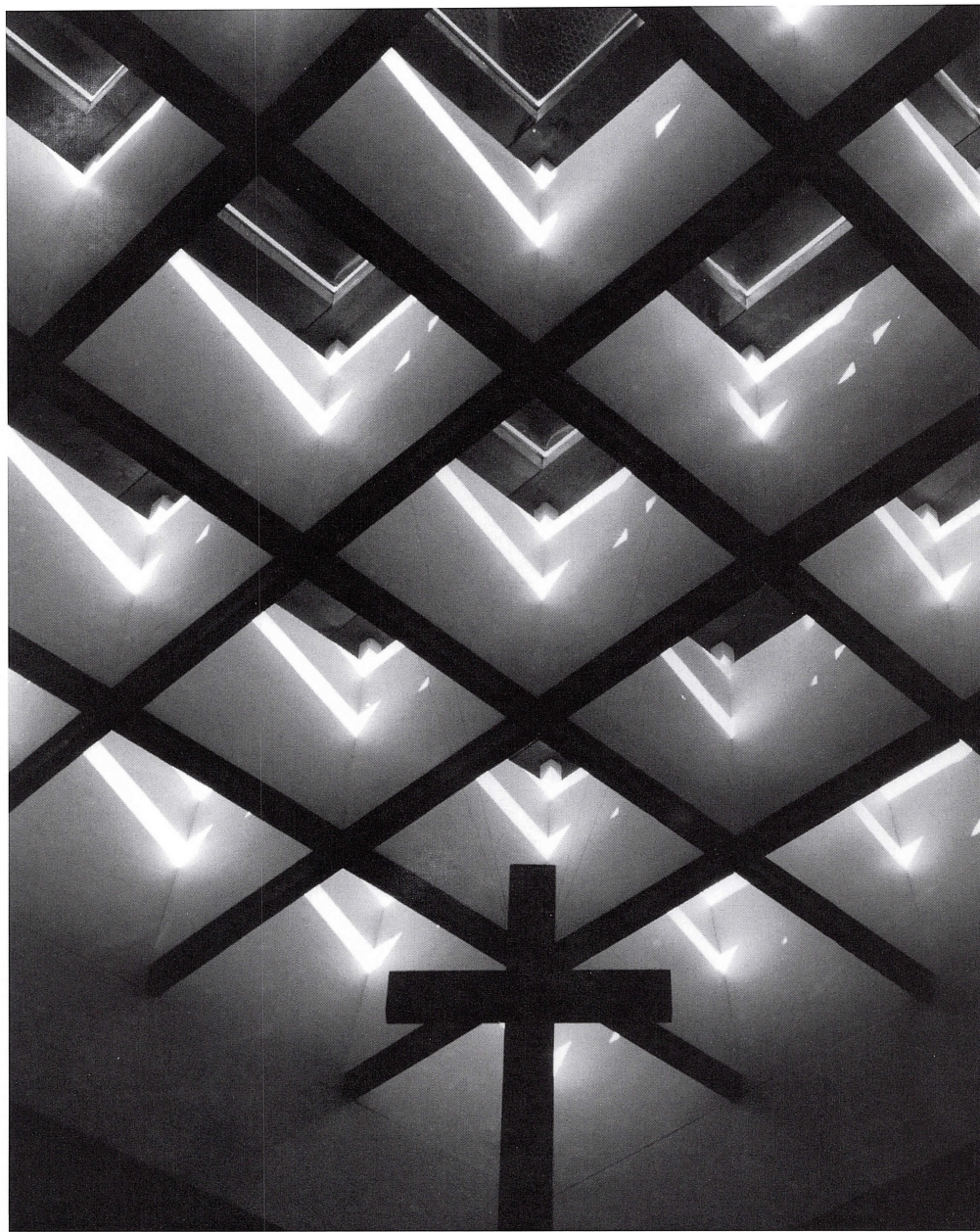


PHOTOGRAPHS





TORONTO, 1957



FISHERMAN'S CHAPEL, CAPE COD, 1957



TORONTO LOBBY, 1999



METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK, 1981



MONTMATRE, 1955



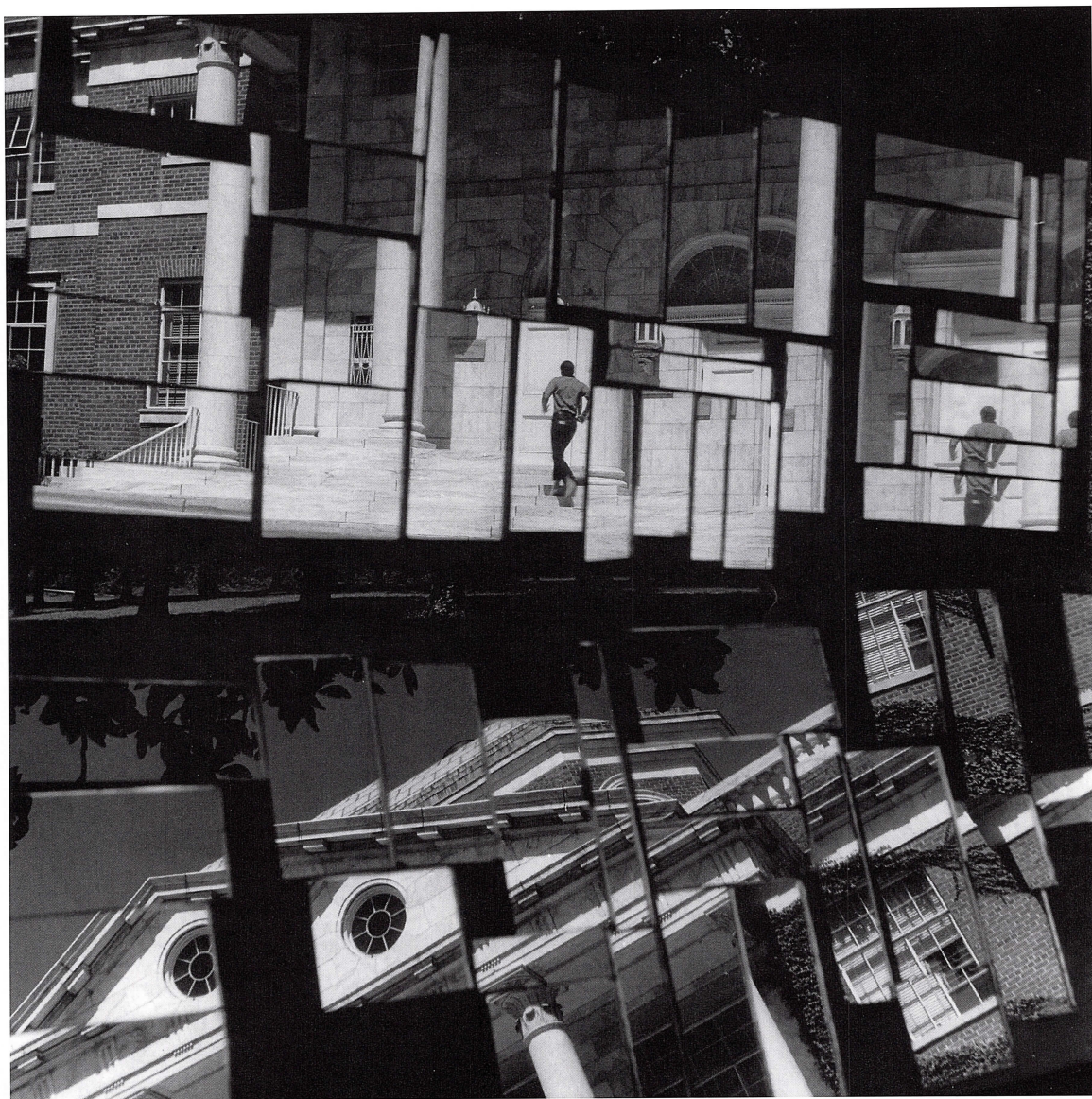
TORONTO, 1957



KREMLIN, 1982



SEATTLE, 1980



BROOKS HALL, RALEIGH, 1970



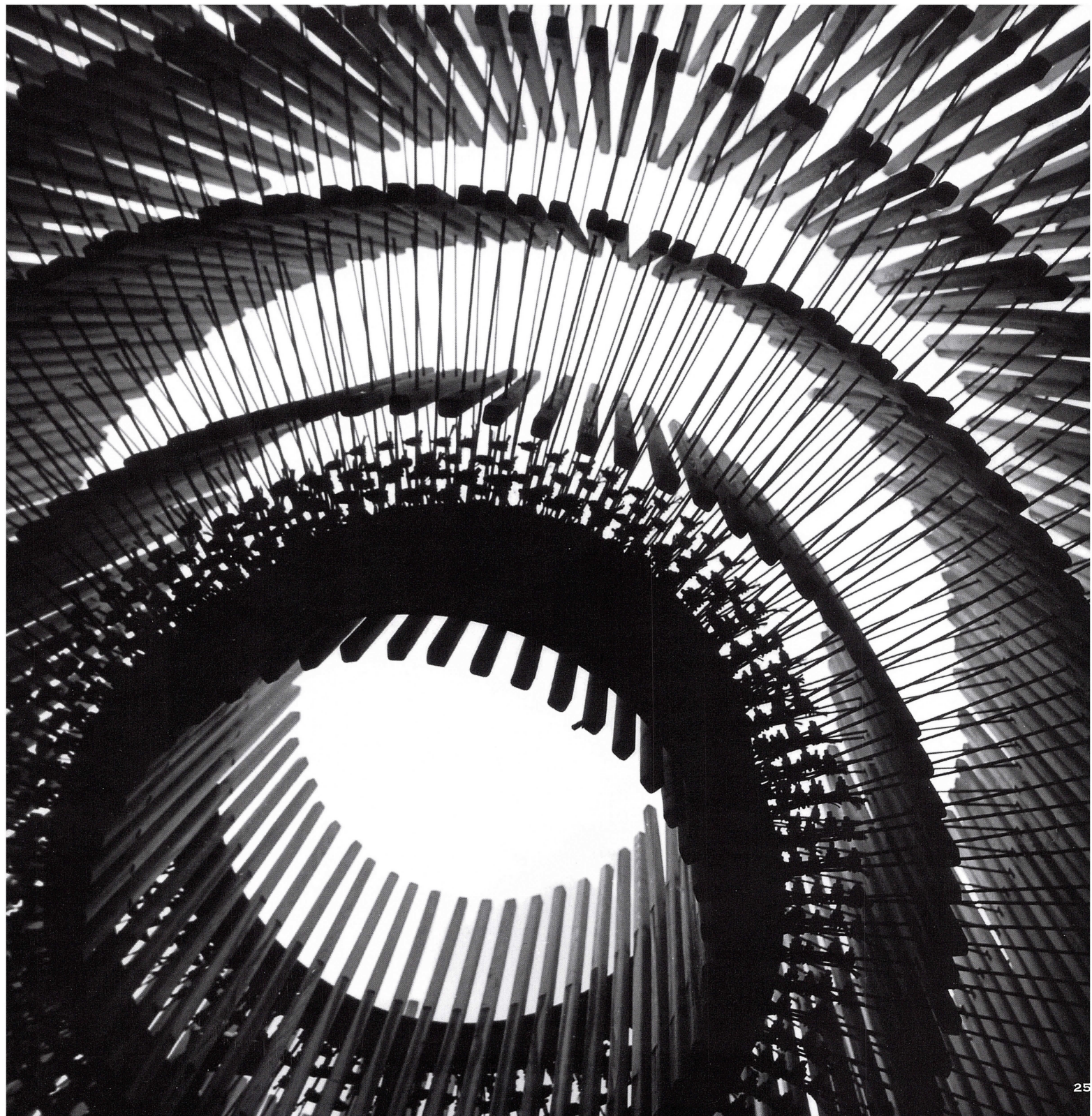
MYRTLE BEACH, 1974



SEATTLE, 2003



PARIS, 1955





PARKING DECK, CHICAGO, 1957



TORONTO, 1957

PEOPLE & ANIMALS



NEW YORK, 1957



GOOSE FAIR, NOTTINGHAM, 1954



HOLLYWOOD, 1967



LONDON, 1955



PARIS, 1955



GOOSE FAIR, NOTTINGHAM, 1954



SOHO FAIR, LONDON, 1956

YOUR NAME WRITTEN IN JAPANESE
ALSO
YOUR WORK OR PROFESSION
ONLY \$1.
BY JAPANESE ARTIST
ROY KADOWAKI

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と



SPOTORNO, ITALY 1956



TORONTO, 1957



PISA, 1963



TORONTO, 1957



SPOTORNO, ITALY, 1956

BY PAUL TESAR, NC STATE PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURE
INTERVIEW WITH BRIAN SHAWCROFT

Brian Shawcroft and Paul Tesar first met in the fall of 1970 when they both were teaching at the then School of Design. Beyond their European heritage they share interests in architecture, art, and music — both classical and jazz — and particularly the piano, an instrument they both have been trying to play for many years. The conversation documented below took place on Sunday, March 21, 2004, in the library of Paul Tesar's residence in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Tesar: Brian, first of all I want to thank you for taking this time to come here to talk about your work in your multiple-identity as an architect, an artist, and a photographer, and perhaps also about the relationships they have for you. Why don't you start out by telling us how you first came in contact with these fields, the paths they took through your life and some of the main "stations" on this journey...

Shawcroft: Growing up as a child, drawing was always my main interest and I had some good teachers when I was in the Royal Liberty Grammar School in England during the war. Science was of no interest to me. Chemistry was probably my worst subject in school and I blew up the kitchen one time trying to make oxygen, nearly blinding my mother and me.

Archibald Meo, who was employed by the government to record what was going on in London with the bombing, was a great water-colorist and he took me under his wing when I was about 15 years old. He literally "pushed" me to watercolor and for my age I did some fairly good watercolors.

I went into the Army at 18 and ended up in Germany. When I arrived in Germany, being in a new country, I bought a camera, which was an old-fashioned bellows-type folding camera. The only other type of camera I had ever known about was my parents' "Box Brownie."

And then, traveling in Germany with this camera, I just used to record what I was

“... they told you not to be timid, not to hold back, to experiment as much as you could in the dark room with the medium itself. And that became the basis for what I taught later at the School of Design.”

seeing, in that case a lot of destruction. In Hanover and Hamburg, at the time I arrived, there wasn't a single whole building standing, wherever you looked, in any direction. I did record that and I still have those photographs as small prints.

It was the end of 1948 when the very first cameras to be produced after the war were finally released. They were so much in demand and in very short supply. There was a drawing. I put my name in the hat, and was the first one to be drawn giving me first choice of all these cameras. I didn't know which was the best, but there was someone in the mess with me who did know, and he wanted the Rolleiflex. There was also a Rolleicord, but I did not know the difference. It was that it had an automatic shutter wind and more expensive, better lenses. So he talked me out of taking the Rolleiflex and into taking the Rolleicord. Upon returning to England I had to pay duty on it as a new camera. It was quite expensive, but it was certainly well worth it.

That Rolleicord had a lens in it that was somehow far superior to its normal resolution. I did all my best work with that one camera for many years. Eventually, I bought a Rolleiflex here in Raleigh years later that I still use today. That Rolleicord from 1948 still works. It is the camera with which most of these photographs were taken.

Tesar: You said that you returned to England. Where were you living and what were you doing at that time?

Shawcroft: When I got back to England and I was working in London in historic records where photography was used as well as drawing, but my main concern in the office was drawing. They had other people taking care of the photography. There was also a water-colorist in that office who did renderings for big architectural competitions. His watercolors were absolutely wonderful.

So I asked him to teach me, and he said he would, but he said he didn't think I should do it. I asked him "why" and he said you will develop a style as I have and that is all that people will want you to do and you will never be able to change. So I didn't. I did many for myself, but I've only done one other person's building for that reason. I gave up architectural photography later as well, not wanting to photograph bad buildings to try to make them look good.

I went to architecture school in London and I was all the way through to the fifth year when I decided to pick up the camera again — in fact, to the point where I joined a camera club that had monthly competitions. I found their approach very stilted and a leftover from the 19th-century approach to photography, which was an imitation of painting, basically. I rebelled against it, but I did well in the club. I spent a lot of time traveling around, especially in London, and had set up a dark room in my bedroom, which was a nuisance because you had to blacken the whole room to use it.

While I was working in London, I attended a course in creative photography at the Central School of Arts and Crafts. It was a very interesting course with a small number of students. They supplied all the materials — film, paper, and everything — and they told you not to be timid, not to hold back, to experiment as much as you could in the dark room and with the medium itself. That became the basis for what I taught later at the School of Design.

Architecture became more important at that point. While working in London I got involved with a group of people who were producing an exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery called "This is Tomorrow," which was considered one of the forerunners of the Pop Art movement. The group was comprised of architects, sculptors, and painters to produce what they thought would be the future through a series of exhibition stands. One of

the persons in the office where I worked, Geoffrey Holroyd, asked me to work with him. He had been to Harvard for a year and had come back to London. He asked me to photograph what we were doing for the catalog. When the exhibition opened in 1956, I photographed the whole show and got my first picture published in a national architecture magazine. That was exciting!

That was also at the point when I was leaving England to go to Toronto, Canada. When I got to Toronto I was again working in an architect's office, and—being in a new country—the camera automatically became a natural tool to record it. There was a competition for architectural photography. I entered a photograph of my apartment and I won a national award. I was invited to join the Professional Photographer's Association of Canada and started working with other architects doing architectural photography.

At a party one night a man named John Kettle said he was the managing editor of the *Canadian Architect* magazine. We got talking and he said he would like to see my work, so I invited him over and showed him the work I had done up to that point. The next thing I knew, I was the photographer for the magazine. For the next three years I worked with people writing on the city, a planning series, and architectural studies. I would have deadlines and assignments just like a newspaper or magazine photographer normally does, and I was also working full time as an architect. I was being published every month somewhere by that point, not just by

the *Canadian Architect*. Ronald King, a friend who was an artist, was art editor for one of the national magazines, *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, and he used my photographs.

I was really very busy and it was very productive time in my life during those three years in Toronto. I was designing buildings and seeing them built, which is something I didn't do in England. Things took forever in England, somehow. And, of course, there was very little architecture under construction in England when I was right out of school. The war had not been over that long and buildings were still being torn down, war-damage repairs and clearing of sites, and very few new buildings were being built. Toronto was a very stimulating and a very exciting place to be at that time, at my age—I was in my mid-to late 20s—it was also my intent to leave England to go to graduate school somewhere. There were no graduate schools in England.

On leaving Toronto in 1959 I went to graduate school at MIT and Harvard. In the meantime I had put together an architectural photography show for the Ontario Association of Architects with the other professional architectural photographers in Toronto. It was very successful, and I also was able to have it on display at MIT whilst there.

Tesar: That was about the time when they got interested in you down here in Raleigh...

Shawcroft: Yes, I came to Raleigh in 1960 to teach at the School of Design. At that

“I compare it to playing tennis or baseball, as opposed to playing golf, where the ball is standing still and you decide when you are going to hit it, but in tennis or baseball it's coming toward you fast and you must strike at the exact moment.”

point drawing was important at the school, and students were required to take drawing courses all the way through the third year. Then, in the fourth year, they could take an elective in painting or sculpture which was being offered. I proposed to the faculty that we add photography. I was questioned fairly heavily by some of the artist-faculty as to whether it could be a legitimate teaching tool. I was able to defend myself. For six years I taught that class and got some good work from the students.

The concentration was on black and white photography because of the limitation of cost at that time — color had not gotten to the point where it is today. I did add in color as a final exercise as part of the course. Since then I continue to use the camera both as an architect and as a photographer. I've photographed all my own buildings, which was a big savings in terms of office costs. I used a 4x5 studio camera with all the adjustments as well as a 35mm slide camera. This continued for quite a number of years until I stopped large-office practice. Since then I've been traveling as much as possible into different parts of the

world. My cameras have been my constant companions. I spent one whole summer in Europe generating a collection of negatives and slides.

Of late, I've been either judging photography shows or teaching a course in creative photography for the City of Raleigh at the Sertoma Arts Center. The intent is to break away from the "camera club approach" to photography, which seems to be even more stilted today than it was back then. In 40 years I saw the same pictures year in and year out, same subjects, same everything. There are four of my students here in Raleigh who have actually gone from whatever they were doing before to becoming successful professional photographers.

Tesar: Do you have any heroes in photography, photographers whose work has inspired and influenced you?

Shawcroft: The one photographer above all others that I have admired in his approach is Henri Cartier-Bresson. His definition of photography as "the decisive moment" is what I have tried to do in my work, where the camera captures that one fraction of a



HENRY L. KAMPHOEFNER, BRIAN SHAWCROFT,
PHOTO BY TAYLOR B. LEWIS, 1963

second in time for all time. Another fraction of a second sooner or later it would not have given the desired result of action or expression. So timing is the most important thing and that ability to see and know when to release the shutter is the key to what I consider good photography. There are also many other types of photography where time is in your hands. I compare it to playing tennis or baseball, as opposed to playing golf, where the ball is standing still and you decide when you are going to hit it. But in tennis or base-

ball it's coming toward you fast and you must strike at the exact moment.

It's the same when you see something happening with people or something moving — just that correct timing to capture that very moment. Photography is based on a mechanical and a chemical process, obviously, but the timing is the essence of photography, compared with other graphic arts. It wasn't until the invention of the 35mm camera, that that was able to be, because with early cameras and slow film most photography was literally set up. People posed and were actually held in braces to keep them still for the long exposures necessary. That breakthrough came only at the turn of the 20th century.

Tesar: So Brian, it strikes me that you deal with the world around you, that you relate to the world around you, through a number of media. The most important one is architecture of course, because you are a professional architect, but also through photography and art. I would be curious to know whether in your mind these three are connected and how they influence each other. Specifically, I wonder whether you feel that an architect uses the camera, looks through the

camera, in a specific way that is different from people who are not architects. Or maybe inversely, whether photography has made you look at architecture in a different way.

Shawcroft: Yes, I think very much it has influenced me, because partly it is due to the medium we are dealing with in photography — light — and we are also dealing with that medium in architecture. Architecture is a manipulation of light because climate and location are very important. Architecture has responded to certain light qualities that are common in some parts of the world, and so has art. Photography can follow that same rule.

In England and Japan, which have similar light conditions, the translucent quality of watercolor has excelled and I think when you are designing and recognizing those conditions, then you design to maximize the effect. They say that in England the architecture is designed for wet weather so it has a lot of detail. So even if the sun isn't shining the details are revealed. In many parts of the world the sun is so strong that detail will be lost due to glare and high shadow contrast. By contrast, where the skies are brighter — say in

Italy and Mediterranean countries — painting in oils has been the predominate medium.

I think photography has helped me a great deal to know what I'm trying to do in architecture, and what's going to be important. Whether it is the mass or the detail, and which is the more critical. Certainly here in North Carolina we have a really good set of light conditions year-round and you can design for them. I believe very strongly in regionalism as an approach to design.

Tesar: Well, you are not just an architect, but I think it is fair to say that you are a dyed-in-the-wool modernist and I wonder whether the modernist point of view carries over into your photography. For instance, issues such as abstraction, simplicity, economy of means, that seem to be important in modernism, can they transfer into photography, or have they?

Shawcroft: Very directly I would say. I've done a series of photographs in which I've tried to reduce it almost to a two-dimensional, painting-like simplicity, where color perhaps may be the key, or line, and the simple elements that are in good modern design and are the strength of that design. So yes, I find that connection very strong.

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Abstraction is the other thing that I’ve learned from painting — lack of realism. I saw a very interesting article on the use of the computer graphics in architectural renderings of non-existent buildings. They had architectural forms and appeared to be buildings, but they in fact weren’t. They seemed very exciting and the compositions were very dynamic. I thought that was a great use of the new medium, which could be applied to digital photography.

Tesar: Maybe as a counterpoint to that, a good part of your œuvre as a photographer consists of people or animals — they seem to be not at all abstract, but very real. What makes them interesting to you and what types of conditions and situations attract you as a photographer when you look at people?

Shawcroft: It’s a personal viewpoint on life. I can see perhaps amusing things people are doing and I try to catch them at it, at that very precise moment, and record it as an almost tongue-in-cheek approach to life that I think I have — not too serious. I like to have a little fun every so often. I still think that the timing aspect of the whole thing is the key to it and

I think my most successful pictures of people have been based on that.

When I was in Toronto doing assignments on the city itself, I was trying to illustrate what people do in their daily lives in their work and in their play. The camera was the obvious natural tool to record it in a way so that other people can feel what is happening also — to feel that pain or joy, or whatever, at the time. There is one of my photographs published in *Popular Photography* — the challenge was “excitement” — it is a picture of a woman dancing on a float in London, in Spanish costume, while it was moving down the street. It was a parade and I caught it at the right moment. It won an award for that particular subject.

So these emotional aspects, that are so important to us all, can be captured more successfully with a camera than with any other art medium. There are two opposite philosophies that lead to the way that I try to do things. One is the Platonic philosophy of perfection being what man is trying to achieve. In architecture there is the example of how a building can be so carefully proportioned to achieve a unity of design over which you have aesthetic control. The opposite

extreme, which is Renoir’s philosophy, that accident is what creates great art — spontaneity — and literally the accident involved in putting the paintbrush on the canvas. To me this is akin to the process in photography.

Tesar: You are a photographer, but you also are a teacher. I still remember the student publication *Photography for Designers* — it certainly captured my attention at the time. I wonder if you could summarize what your pedagogical goals are when you teach photography to designers. What is it beyond learning how to take pictures? What is it that you want students to take away from this experience?

Shawcroft: I think it is to get control of a medium by experimentation, whether it is a pencil, a brush or a camera, or in the darkroom with the printing process, or developing the film, or various techniques you can apply. To experiment and to transfer that into what you are creating as a designer, whether you are designing a building, a landscape, or products. To open your mind to more possibilities coming out of the medium itself. That you discover something by manipulating it and playing with it, and sometimes having

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Tesar: But I'm sure you also wanted to teach them how to see the world in a different way...

Shawcroft: Yes. One of the interesting things that I noticed about how my own photography changed was due to the car. Before I owned a car, I got my best photographs walking and having the camera there constantly. It allows you to see things. More recently on a trip to New Zealand, where I went consciously to do black and white photography as well as color, I was driving along the road and I saw something, but by the time I found a place to turn around and go back, all was lost. The spontaneity was gone. Once you start moving faster, your chances of seeing things and getting that decisive moment are greatly reduced. However, I do have one photograph where I was driving across the Mohave Desert. I saw a storm coming and I bailed out of the car as fast as I could and got a picture and then two seconds later the sky went solid black, the sun had gone completely. I didn't miss that one, but there have been many others that I have. Sometimes you can be driving around and see something and come back another time. By noting the time of day and light conditions, you might be able to capture the wanted image.

Tesar: I just came back from 10 days in Mexico with my graduate architecture students. They all were avid

photographers and most of them used digital cameras. They bring the images home and develop them on the computer screen with the help of software. The kind of photography you were doing could be best described as a combination of craft and alchemy—as you said, it is a mechanical process and it is a chemical process. Now it is an electronic process. How do you see this new development? Do you think we are gaining something for photography, or do you think we are losing something, or some of both?

Shawcroft: I see that as a great opportunity, to manipulate images and be more creative with the medium itself as it has changed, which I essentially was trying to do with the black and white in the dark room. We now are adding another dimension and can produce what I consider more abstract images, images that will be more related perhaps to painting or other graphic media, and being less formal, more expressive. This is to me the next move when I can get to the point of mastering the computer (laughs) and the latest software that goes with these new techniques, so I've got lots to look forward to in that case.

I think we are losing something in that people will not value it because it is so easy to reproduce. I think that has always been an issue for photography — until Ansel Adams produced his photographs, and he had to be persuaded that they were worth more than just being records of the wilderness. The public has devalued photography as an art form and they will not pay because they think you can easily make another reproduc-

tion in the dark room, now even more so on the computer. But I also see it as a great potential as we go on further in photography and are producing much more interesting results and images that we cannot do with conventional techniques. I'm all excited and very much looking forward to doing some of it myself.

Tesar: Any final words?

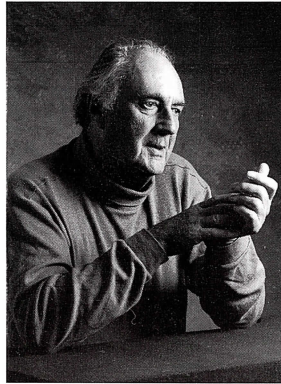
Shawcroft: Photography has been a very important part of my life, both as an architect and as a person. Like in architecture, I've tried to judge myself against the best and I tend to edit out in the viewfinder if I think it has been done before. The photographs that are exhibited represent 50 years. If I can continue to add a few a year, I will be satisfied.

Brian Shawcroft, AIA, was born in Nottingham, England, in 1929. After completing a five-year course study in architecture at the South West Essex Technical College & School of Art in 1953, he was engaged in the design of schools and studied photography at the Central School of Arts & Crafts in London.

In 1956 he joined the office of Page & Steele, Architects in Toronto, Canada. At this time he was a free-lance photographer working mainly for the *Canadian Architect* magazine. A number of books and journals in Canada and the United States published both his photographic and written commentary. He served as a design critic at the Boston Architectural Center while completing a degree of Master in Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University in 1960. From that date until 1968 he was an associate professor of architecture at the (then) School of Design, NCSU, teaching both architectural design and photography.

He was a co-winner of the 1962 AIA & House & Home, Homes for Better Living Award of Merit and in 1968 received an Award of Merit for the Addition to Davie Hall on the UNC campus as a consulting architect to Holloway-Reeves, Architects, Raleigh.

After establishing a practice in Raleigh, North Carolina, he joined as partner with MacMillan & MacMillan & Thames before establishing the office of Shawcroft-Taylor in 1971. This office was responsible for a large number of buildings in institutional, airport, commercial, and educational categories. In 1991, as a result of this body of work, Shawcroft was awarded the Kamphoefner Prize in Architecture for his integrity and devotion to the Modern Movement in Architecture.



DIANE HENRY, RALEIGH

