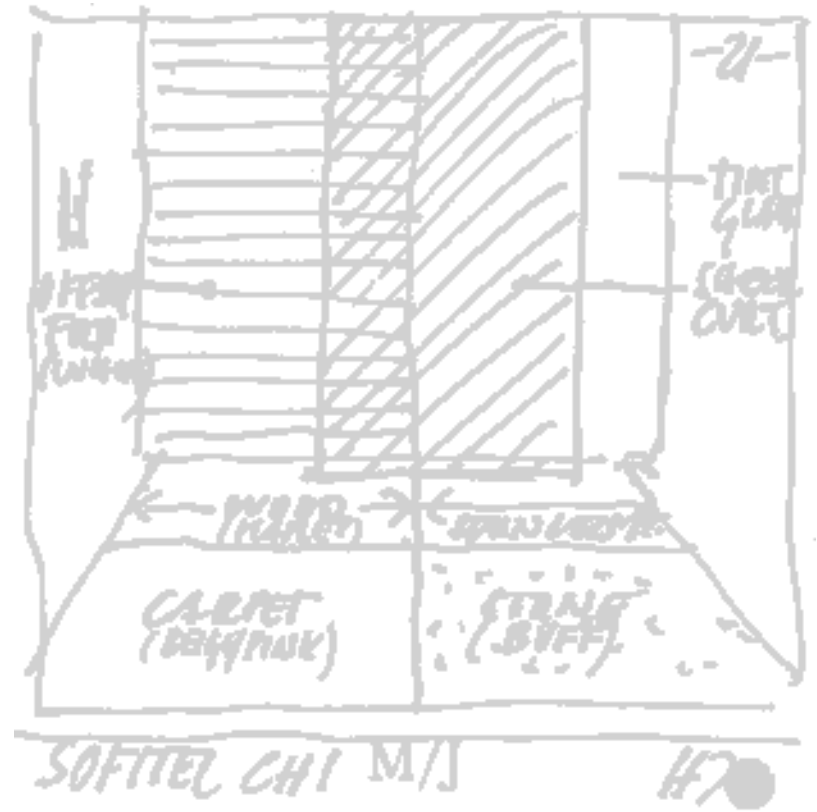
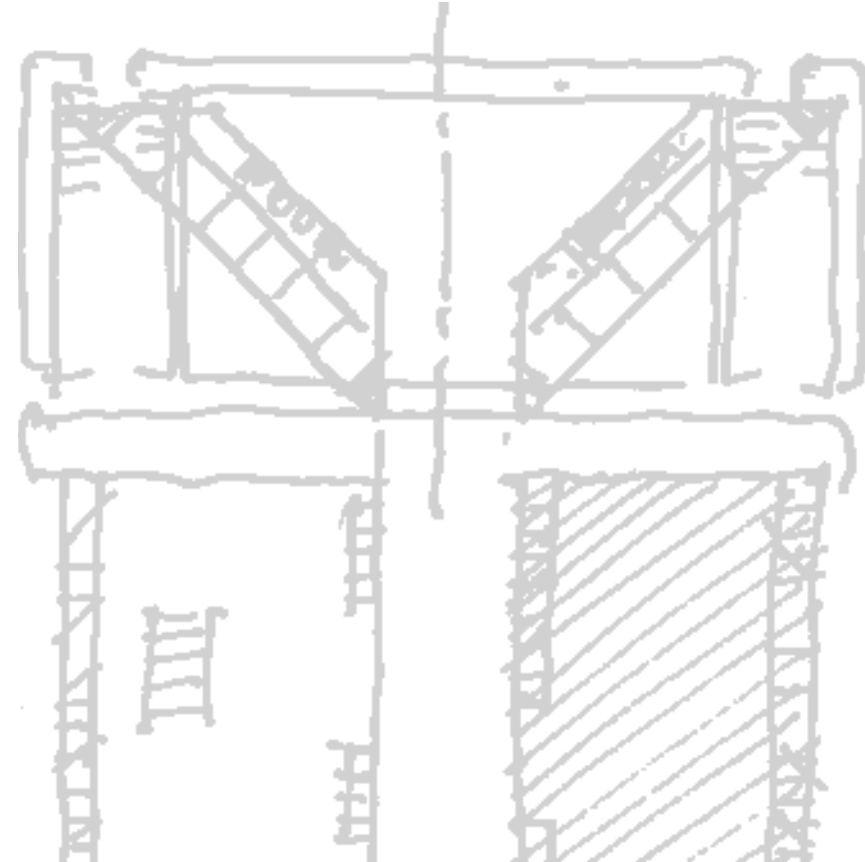
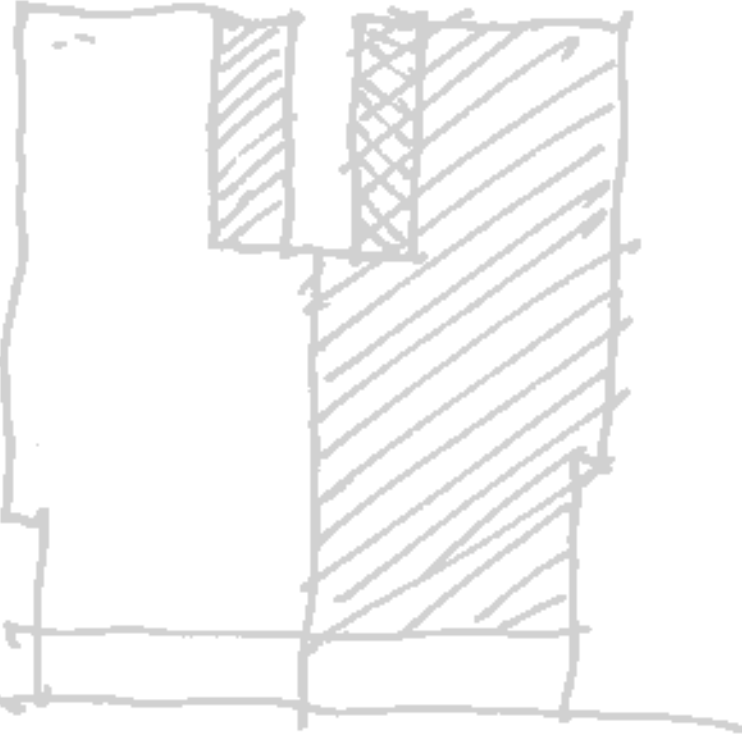




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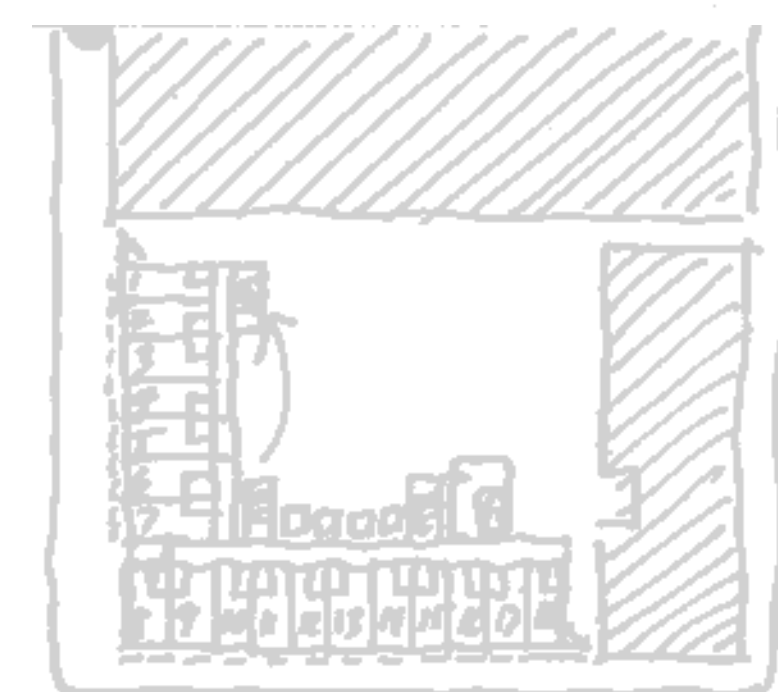
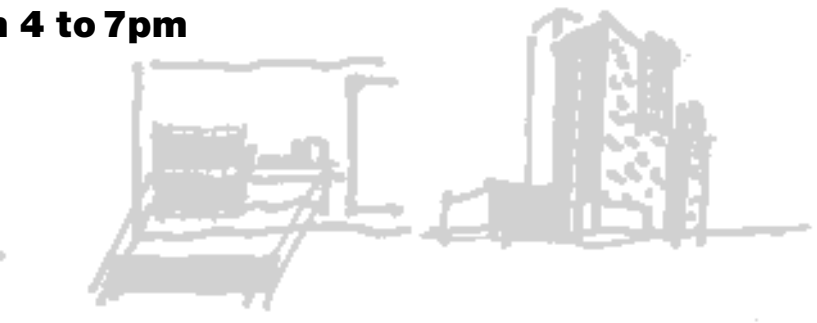


Helmut Jahn

Drawings

September 14 - October 31, 1999

Reception: Sunday, October 3 from 4 to 7pm



REINVENT THE TYPE OF CITY-HOTEL! URBANE, CIVILIZED FEELING. CONTEMPORARY + COMFORTABLE
 'MONUMENT' OUTSIDE + IN THE
 RELATED EVENTS
 Artist Talk
HELMUT JAHN AND EDWARD ROBBINS
 Sunday, October 3
 5:00 to 6:00 pm

REFERENCE:
 GLAZ / WAVE
 VIKKO SUGAWARA
 WALTER GROPIUS
 LEONARDO / LAURIN
 VIKO JAHNSEN / HOG.
 APLIN / BERLIN

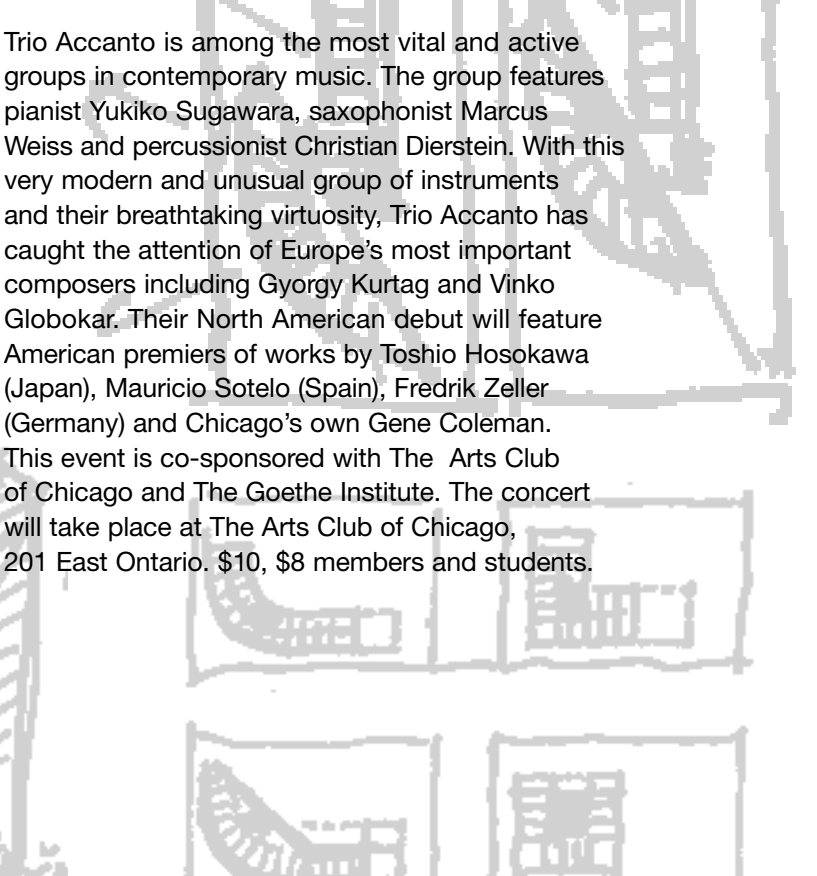
Concert
TRIO ACCANTO
 Monday, November 1, 6:30 pm
 The Arts Club of Chicago
 201 E. Ontario



Jahn will be interviewed by Edward Robbins, Lecturer in the department of Urban Design at the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University. Robbins, initially trained as an anthropologist, is the author of *Why Architects Draw*, a series of interviews with nine of today's leading architects. This event is free and will take place in Cobb Hall, Room 307, directly below the gallery.

Lecture
MARTHA THORNE
 Architectural Curator and Historian
 Sunday, October 31
 3:00 pm

Since 1995, Thorne has been Associate Curator of Architecture at The Art Institute of Chicago where she has organized numerous exhibitions, most recently *The Pritzker Architecture Prize, 1979-1999* and *At Home in Chicago*. She will deliver a lecture on Jahn's work. This event is free and will take place in Cobb Hall Room 402.





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**The Renaissance Society
at The University of Chicago**
5811 South Ellis Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60637
Phone: (773) 702-8670
<http://www.renaissancesociety.org>

Museum Hours:
Tuesday - Friday: 10 am - 5 pm
Saturday, Sunday: 12 - 5 pm
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The Renaissance Society

An Active Imagination

Architecture. It's everywhere, in a variety of forms. There is architecture as a profession, a practice, a field of activity; architecture as object, as form, as space and finally, the most transparent of these, architecture as metaphor, as a way of thinking as thought. Although he was not an architect, the mathematician and philosopher René Descartes began an introductory section of his famous treatise, *Meditations* (1637), with an architectural metaphor. In order to facilitate a more rigorous scrutiny of mind, body, soul, and their relation to a supreme being, Descartes needed to tear down his existing belief system. Before proceeding with demolition, however, Descartes needed another metaphorical dwelling, a mental structure that while consisting of only a few maxims would be sound enough to support the weight of empirical thinking. In other words, as his house of reason underwent inspection and reconstruction, reason itself would need to take refuge in its second residence, the imagination. Descartes' explorations in logic, Euclidean geometry, particularly his use of the grid, not to mention his famous dictum, Cogito Ergo Sum (I think, therefore I am) were an unprecedented celebration of human reason. He directed his contemplation towards experiences in this world as opposed to a theological reasoning aimed at the next. This made him a seminal precursor to the Enlightenment, and by default, led to the emergence of a modern secular subject whose faith in reason rivaled, if not superseded, any religious bearings. Descartes' understanding of the imagination as a space devoted to the interrogation and reconfiguration of reason has remained a constant throughout the four hundred year saga of Modernity. But Modernity does not take as much pride in the space of the secular imagination as it does the pace of the secular imagination.

German-born, Chicago-based architect Helmut Jahn is a modernist of the Cartesian variety. His gleaming and translucent futuristic structures, often supported by a minimal, girded, metal frame, definitely qualify as reason's second residence. Jahn's buildings fuel our romance with a cosmopolitan glass and steel empire in which the sky is the limit. The reflections in his mirrored edifices or the view through one of his spectacular glass curtain-wall grids represents an ordered Cartesian existence superimposed on both the urban and natural worlds. For Jahn, however, the rate of technological advances in building materials and their application is outpacing the imagination. In fact, he considers himself lucky to be practicing architecture at a moment when impatience qualifies as a virtue. Under these circumstances reality's relationship to the imagination is not that of a constraint but a catalyst. Whereas Jahn's skyscrapers and his open, light-filled atriums represent the

imagination on a metaphorical level, it is in his drawings that an extremely restless and inquisitive imagination becomes visible.

Given the sleek, high-tech look of his buildings, few would think of Jahn as an obsessive draftsman. The State of Illinois Center, the United Terminal at O'Hare and the Northwest Atrium Center look as if they somehow precipitated straight from the realm of digital design. But Jahn's personal office is without a computer, a conspicuous absence for someone highly suspect of nostalgia. For architects of his generation mark-making is second nature and an activity he considers indispensable. But unlike others of his generation for whom drawing is an extension of theory, Jahn's drawing is fueled through building and his is a practical imagination, one that preys on a particular project's constraints. His flights of fancy are rarely an end in themselves but are almost always related to solving the immediate and unrelenting problems posed by any one of his projects around the globe.

The scope and trajectory of Jahn's career, from early projects such as McCormick Place (1971) to recent projects such as Sony Center Berlin (1999) indicates that his interests have shifted from aesthetic to structural concerns. Maintaining an integrity to Mies van der Rohe's modernist credo that "form follows function" is the only way Jahn feels the field of architecture can truly advance. The exhibition consists of a few thousand of Jahn's drawings done throughout his career, from projects built and unbuilt, from initial sketches to detail drawings of technical specifications. These will be displayed in a highly innovative labyrinthine layout designed by this internationally acclaimed architect whose buildings have inspired awe throughout the world. Needless to say, Descartes would marvel at the fantastic age of secular cathedrals devoted to commerce and the affairs of state. But more impressive than their existence would be the fact that they were the product of pen, paper and an active imagination such as Jahn's.

This exhibition, which inaugurates The Society's 84th season and its 20th in the Bergman Gallery, is dedicated to the memory of Edwin Bergman. Through his commitment to new and provocative art, Ed championed all The Society stands for. We remain grateful for his outstanding example, friendship, service and support.

HELMUT JAHN: DRAWINGS has been made possible through generous support from The Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts. Additional support has been received from the Chicago Community Trust; The CityArts Program of The Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, a municipal agency; The Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; The Pritzker Foundation; The Sara Lee Foundation; The Siragusa Foundation; Regents Park by The Clinton Company; WPWR-TV Channel 50 Foundation and our membership. Indirect support has been received from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency offering general operating support to the nation's museums.

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