he great metropolitan facelift is underway. Not since the late 1940s has New York City seen such a dizzying pace of urban renewal. Glass-and-chrome towers of commerce are rising in Times Square, ritzy condos bloom in the West and East villages. The wrecker’s ball—New York’s version of the hand of fate—is irrevocably changing the character of Manhattan neighborhoods. Towers of Babel gobble up airspace and attract more traffic to every part of town. The Big Apple seems on the verge of bursting its skin.

The city now courts developers with an irresistible array of tax abatements and zoning rule-benders (tax breaks between 1979 and 1986, for example, returned roughly $390 million to developers’ pockets). Critics charge that the great municipal giveaway is not an even trade-off and has allowed a handful of real estate magnates to tuck New York neatly into their investment portfolios. Aesthetics of city planning, they say, have been edged out by the Almighty Dollar.

But a number of community groups, intent on preserving the character of the city, have begun to fight back. At the forefront is the Municipal Art Society (MAS). Formed by private citizens in 1892 to maintain the quality of urban design, MAS once limited its concerns to park statues and streetlights. But as the city has swelled, so has the purview of MAS. In 1978, for example, MAS succeeded in blocking the construction of an office building atop Grand Central Terminal. These days, MAS shows increasing muscle as a tireless, if somewhat diplomatic, critic of Mayor Koch’s city planning program.

“The city has completely forsaken its responsibilities as the principal initiator of planning,” charges Kent L. Barwick, MAS president and a 1962 SU graduate in American Studies. “It needs to have a more thoughtful policy other than seeing what we have to sell and selling it as quickly as possible.”

The latest skirmish between MAS and City Hall involves the proposed Columbus Center, a formidable twin-tower structure planned for Columbus Circle. When MAS learned of Columbus Center plans, it mounted a media offensive that captured the imaginations of city
dwellers. A shrewd study indicated that the proposed edifice would cast
a massive shadow across Central Park during spring and winter after­
noons, chilling senior citizens as they sat on benches and children as
they frolicked on the playground. Project opponents staged a demonstra­
tion, lining up along the path of the building shadow. In cue, they opened
umbrellas to symbolize the effect of the 58- and 68-story complex. In
June 1987, after the city-based Board of Estimate approved the project,
MAS sued to halt sale of the site.

Kent Barwick is no newcomer to the arena of city planning battles.
At the time of the celebrated Grand Central effort, he was executive director
of MAS. Later, he served as chairman of the Landmarks Preservation
Commission, founded in 1965 after the demolition of
Pennsylvania Station. Softspoken but earnest, Barwick stresses the importanc e
of this battle, which he sees as a test of the citizens' power to preserve a city
built for people, not just buildings.

"Everybody knows there's going to be a big building on the [Columbus
Circle] site; it's not going to be a playground," Barwick says. "But the
fact that it was so big and so arrogantly pursued caused people to have
a reaction. The idea that it would cast a shadow all the way across the
park was just a metaphor, but it gave people a sense of 'What the hell
is going on?' People knew in their guts that some line had been crossed.'"

In mid-December a Supreme Court of Manhattan judge handed down
the decision. The Columbus Center project was stopped cold, a coup
for MAS. The city scrambled for an appeal.

C auted amid the planning battle is the architect. Hired by the
developer, an architect sees his original blueprint altered repeatedly
to conform to zoning and safety specifications, which may account
for the preponderance of metal boxes that crowd the city—projects that
ook an easy way out.

One exception is Bruce S. Fowle, a 1960 graduate of SU's School of
Architecture. Fowle is a partner in Fox & Fowle Architects, a 10-year­
old firm committed to freshness combined with classical flair. Fox &
Fowle first distinguished itself with the soft, organic curves of the 767
Third Avenue building. Projects that include the American Craft Museum
and the National Westminster Bank USA have established the firm as
a proponent of urban planning with a respect for the past.

Their next major project reflects the commitment of Barwick and MAS.
South Ferry Plaza is a full-scale renovation of the Battery waterfront.
Once again, public land has been offered to private developers in ex­
change for the refurbishing of municipal structures, but this time the
results are favorable. The aesthetic has been preserved.

The project involves remodeling the dilapidated Staten Island Ferry
Terminal, restoration of the adjoining subways and the Battery Maritime
Building, construction of The Children's Museum of New York, and
an extension of Battery Park for pedestrians. Fox & Fowle's winning
proposal is a 60-story office tower resembling a lighthouse, which will
sit atop the Ferry Terminal.

The design, Fowle says, hearkens back to a time when the tip of Manhat­
tan Island was "a romantic, beautiful seascape, an assemblage of beautiful
buildings that evolved into a peak in the center. The objective of this
design is to bring a little of that back to the waterfront and give the
tip of Manhattan a focus again." The project is scheduled for completion

E ven the most positive of projects must run the city-planning gauntlet,
whether they have the blessings of MAS or not. One such project
is Bridgemarket, brainchild of Harley Baldwin, a 1967 SU graduate
in international relations and economics.

New buildings pop up like
weeds, but wherever the battle
between old and new begins to
threaten innocent bystanders,
Kent Barwick steps in.

Baldwin has spent the last decade jumping bureaucratic hurdles on
behalf of the three-tiered food market and restaurant complex that would
operate under the ornate arches of the Queensborough Bridge. In black
and white figures alone, the market is a lucrative venture for all
concerned. The city stands to receive $300,000 annually in taxes from its
operation, while Baldwin estimates revenue from the 50 tenants should
top $5 million the first year.

Although he achieved success as a restaurateur and developer in Aspen,
Colorado, Baldwin has found the machinations of New York City plan­
ing far more formidable. Once it was decided that the city had jurisdic­
tion over the site, Baldwin found a fearsome opponent in the 1600-member
Sutton Area Community, a group intent on protecting the affluent,
exclusive neighborhood that borders the project. Baldwin has been able
to break the stalemate on all levels and, at long last, workers are laying
a foundation under the bridge.

Baldwin has reason to be bitter. Since 1976, when the project was ap­
proved by the city, he has seen the price tag swell from $4 million to
a projected $28 million upon the completion of Bridgemarket in November
of 1988. He comments wryly, "I'm the Mahatma Gandhi of the East
Side. They got tired of beating me up, so they approved Bridgemarket."

M any disagree with the preservationist view, of course; impressive
and vital structures have resulted from the city's land-marketing
strategies.

It's certain is that the issue won't soon disappear. Another $800 million
in tax breaks has been shaved from future development projects, in
agreements affecting only 15 buildings.

Barwick is hopeful. "The strength of MAS is our reputation for fairness
and objectivity," he says. "All our efforts are designed to get people to
pay more attention to the city and to understand that they can shape it."

In the past year, he says, a new awareness of city planning has emerged,
sparking efforts towards moderation and preservation. It is a voice that
grows strong with political clout—one that will be heard when a dubious
project threatens to blot out the sun over Manhattan.

https://surface.syr.edu/sumagazine/vol4/iss2/6
ENGLISH STYLE

On a street accustomed to exquisite objects, the windows at the Florian Papp antique gallery accomplish the ultimate feat—they turn heads.

Located in the “museum mile” of Madison Avenue, Florian Papp is devoted to the acquisition and sale of fine English period furniture. The gallery’s eye-catching, elaborate window displays are the brainchild of the gallery’s current management, siblings Mindy ’72 and William Papp ’81, grandchildren of the gallery’s founder.

“We occasionally do window vignettes, a room setting as if someone had just left the scene,” Mindy says. “It may be a man’s office complete with his Financial Times and computer on a beautiful antique desk or party invitations on a ladies bureau. We also had a suicide window once.”

The merchandise inside is entertaining, too. Connoisseurs of English furniture can find authentic 18th century pieces ranging from a $700 porcelain gravy boat to a $25,000 set of gothic dining room chairs. “Every single one of these pieces has been special since the day it was made,” says Mindy. “We feel everything in this gallery is a 10, combining all of the features that the most fashionable person, the most scholarly, cultured art patron, the most demanding person in the 18th century would have ordered.”

—RGL

DESIGNING WOMAN

PHYLLIS SCHEFER ’70 has learned that when you’re the art director of a style magazine you’re right on the firing line. If you’re not up-to-the-minute, your magazine is not reflecting what you’re all about.

“Elle is a magazine about style and how style manifests itself in your clothes, your lifestyle, and the objects that surround you,” Schefer explains. “It’s a very visual magazine and, as you can imagine, its design is integral to its success. We must exemplify style.”

Schefer fell in love with type and the graphic arts while at SU. She moved to New York, worked on several magazines, and was art director of Ms. before joining Elle.

“The greatest challenge is just getting the magazine out,” she admits. “Of course, it’s not easy to keep it looking as it should: clean and straightforward and... well, stylish. But I keep trying.”—CNS

Dressing Up Downtown

What does the New York clothing customer want? Service, quality, appropriateness... and then a little more service, please.

That according to Gene Pressman ’72, executive vice president of merchandising and marketing for Barney’s, the largest and most successful men’s clothing store in New York.

“Men insist on the appropriate style for their business lives,” Pressman says. “Women are more interested in fashion. But both demand exceptional service.”

Pressman, a grandson of the store’s founder, was the impetus behind the $25-million women’s store Barney’s added last year. It’s found its niche in the New York market. “We’re very a forward-looking fashion store, very young and modern. Some men’s stores make women’s clothing an outgrowth of men’s styling; instead, we carry a full range of women’s styles and prices.”

The women’s store, housed in six adjacent brownstones, is elegant and airy with an Art Deco spiral staircase that climbs to a skylit atrium. Merchandise is displayed in separate boutiques and shops, and the higher you climb, the more expensive the goods. “Good value is the key at any price,” Pressman emphasizes.

What’s in the future for Barney’s? First, a men’s store on Wall Street specializing in better clothing and made-to-measure goods. After that? “A major expansion is on the horizon, possibly in other cities.” Details, Gene? “Not yet. But we’re planning now.” —CNS

MENTOR AND MASTER

If those that can, do, and those that can’t, teach, what of architect James Wines ’55?

Wines is chairman of Environmental Design at Parsons School of Design. He is also president and co-founder of SITE Projects Inc., an avant-garde design and architecture firm based in the Village. Current SITE projects include a Brooklyn College art museum and the redesign of Pershing Square in downtown Los Angeles.

Wines is concerned with architecture as public art, a theme expressed in his recent book, De-Architecture. At Parsons, he developed the nation’s first graduate degree program in architectural criticism, and structured the under-graduate environmental design program with a strong emphasis on architecture as art.

—RGL

GOWNING AROUND

There is no such thing as being a day late in this business,” says Vivian Dessey Diamond ’78, vice president and designer of Dessey Creations. Her business is bridal gowns.

An expert on deadlines, Diamond is involved in all aspects of her family-owned manufacturing company—administration, marketing, and design. Many of the company’s gowns are inspired by formalwear Diamond designed first for herself.

Diamond has never bought a dress to go to an affair; she designs it, and sometimes makes it, herself. If response is good, odds are the design will show up in one of her bridal lines.

“We cater to a more sophisticated, older, upper-end customer, not looking for the typical bridesmaid dress, but something they could possibly wear again,” she says. “Nobody ever does, but they like to think they will when they buy it.”

—RGL
**Shaping New York**

ICHARD HAYDEN '60 and his architecture firm Swanke Hayden Connell are best known for restoring the Statue of Liberty, but saving the Lady is just one of hundreds of impressive projects the firm has headed. Others include the Seaport Plaza, the Continental Center, and Trump Tower, to name a few.

Although the largest concentration of the firm's work is in New York City, Swanke Hayden Connell has branch offices in Washington, Chicago, Miami, and London. Hayden, managing principal in the 350-employee outfit, says the firm usually has 70 or 80 projects going at once. New high-rise buildings, restorations, and interiors are the firm's specialties, says Hayden. His direct role is in new market development, long range planning and, as if that isn't enough, the overall character of the firm's designs.

---

**DOES SHE OR DOESN'T SHE?**

If it weren't for Louis Licari '73, Christie Brinkley and scores of others wouldn't be the beautiful blondes, brunettes, and redheads they are today.

Licari is a painter turned hair colorist, and owner of a Madison Avenue salon that caters to some big celebrities. Kim Basinger, Mariel Hemingway, Jerry Hall, Matt Dillon, Cheryl Tiegs, Robert De Niro, and Joel and Jennifer Grey are among Licari's clients.

Formerly color director of New York's Le Coupe salon, Licari opened up his own, called The Color Works, in November. He'd like to open other salons and start his own product line. Says Licari, "Vidal Sassoon watch out!"

---

**MINI, MIDI, MAXI, MINI**

Rising skirt lengths have been attributed to stock market fluctuations and to the supposed greed of clothing designers who change styles to increase profit. Fashion designer Mario Forte '53 says the main reason styles change is that women get tired of wearing the same things. "They're always looking for something new," he says.

New York women are demanding because they have more exposure to international fashion, says Forte, design director for the Wilroy and Mario Forte labels and the Brownstone Studio catalog. "Everything that's going on in the world is represented here. You walk up Madison Avenue and every shop from London, Paris, Rome, Florence, Milan, Tokyo, is on that street or Fifth or Columbus Avenue."

"The New York woman is more willing to try a new fashion quicker," he says. "To wit, it's hard to find somebody in New York today with a long skirt on. They've all run to the tailors to have everything shortened."

Forte is not alone in his quest to clothe the fashion conscious. Others with Syracuse connections include shirtdmaker Henry Grethel '54 and avant-garde women's wear designer Betsey Johnson '64.

---

**COSMETIC APPEAL**

In four years, Robin Burns '74, president of Calvin Klein Cosmetics, turned a 60-employee company that lost $6 million into a 300-employee company clearing $100 million.

The mainspring was Obsession perfume, and Burns' secret was her determination to make the product an overnight success. "That year, 40 other perfumes also came out," Burns recalls. "We studied past successes and decided to create awareness and demand by creating controversy."

She succeeded. Obsession's frankly erotic advertising caused a storm of controversy, and the resulting free publicity only increased sales.

---

**MAKING SPACE**

If people loathe going to work, Joan Edelson Ehrlich '64 and Martin Hertz '56 hope it's not because of the office environment. Ehrlich and Hertz are partners in one of the nation's top-100 commercial-space planning and interior design firms, Office Design Associates/Shepard Martin.

They say that designing an office involves more than just placing desks in a room. "You can paint the walls pretty colors and buy pretty furniture but if it doesn't fit it doesn't work," Ehrlich says.

"We take into consideration the specific needs of each client," she adds. "The image they want to project to their visitors and clients, how the space will be used, and how cost effective it will be. You try to have a blend of function, aesthetics and budget."

---

https://surface.syr.edu/sumagazine/vol4/iss2/6