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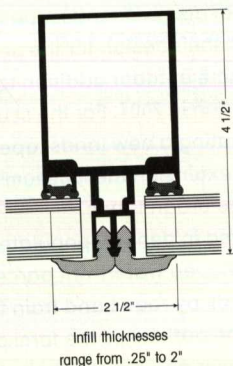
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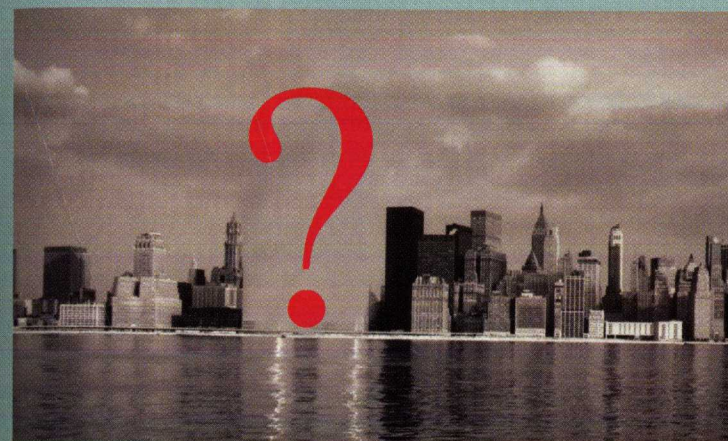
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## Competition Rules

BY RAYMOND W. GASTIL

For those who believe in the power and utility of design in making our public places, the first anniversary of the September 11 attacks offers a mixed menu of promise and frustration. Washington, D.C., has forged ahead with a competition for a memorial at the Pentagon, and in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, the memorial process is well underway. In mid-August, the World Trade Center site's chief planning organization, the New York State-chartered Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC), announced its timeline for a memorial in New York, with an international design competition beginning next spring, leading to a final design by the second anniversary of September 11.

The memorial schedule assumes that a master plan for the entire site will be in place by spring 2003. Here, too, the LMDC is moving ahead, although their datebook's clarity is clouded by talk of a land swap between the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey (PA) and the City of New York that could lead to the city taking title to the Ground Zero site, and the PA rising from leaser to

owner of La Guardia and Kennedy airports. Assuming the LMDC retains a leadership role, and putting aside timelines, what hopes can we have for the master plan's originality and vision? There is the positive sign that the LMDC has put out an RFQ for architects, landscape architects, and planners with a record of "innovative designs." After their public flogging following the release of six planning alternatives in mid-July, it is no surprise that the LMDC and the PA are seeking to open up the process. While the RFQ leads to a competitive selection, it is not a design competition. For eight weeks ending in early November, five teams, each paid \$40,000 (an honorarium significantly less than a firm's likely costs), will develop alternatives, with no guarantee of any future role in the project.

The good news is that design is being given a role early on, breaking with the false premise that design is the dessert, following the planning banquet of deal-making and stakeholder review. This illusion is held fast by many: in a talk given to the New York Building Congress early

last spring, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg said "now is a time for planners, not for architects." It was, is, and will be a time for urban designers, whatever their professional moniker. An urban design approach is the only "visionary" one possible—it recognizes that the way things look is part of the way things work. Millennia ago, Helen of Troy's face changed the course of civilization. A public space on the WTC site would be the city's new face. Badly designed, it could, like Helen, launch a thousand ships, but they'd be sailing away, leaving behind a diminished Lower Manhattan.

At its best, urban design is about strengthening, not weakening, the relationship between planning and design disciplines. We are entitled to hope that the LMDC's plans will make the connection, and for that reason volunteer groups like New York New Visions have assisted in developing the criteria for this process. But there will have to be more innovative urban design work than eight weeks can produce.

For all their inherent flaws, design competitions have an élan vital that RFQs and design services contracts don't. We've already seen what happens when urban designers try to present schemes generically. Equally problematic are the limited resources allocated to conceptual development of the site. Millions of dollars are being spent on planning in the initial phase of rebuilding, including essential baseline work. But \$200,000 for "innovative" design out of an LMDC budget of \$2.5 billion is simply not enough.

The LMDC has not announced how it will arrive at a master plan by spring 2003, beyond indicating that the work of the five RFQ finalists will be more grist for the mill. There needs to be more breadth—the kind that an open competition would pro-

vide—and more depth—the kind that integrated urban design teams would yield. Such a competition may be possible if, as planned, local civic organizations launch, with or without official sanction, an international ideas competition as early as this month. Done right, with some programmatic boundaries and the aid of forthcoming transportation and economic reports, their competition can be both grounded in reality and open to a diverse range of ideas that the LMDC's handpicked firms, however imaginative, cannot deliver.

Such an open ideas competition, together with the work of the RFQ finalists, will set the stage for an official urban design competition that goes beyond ideas to policy and implementation. This phase should be one of well-funded interdisciplinary teams—with everyone from economists, planners, architects, landscape architects, ecologists, and artists to community activists and entrepreneurs—to develop and defend genuinely alternative scenarios for the site. Such an in-depth approach would be expensive (at least \$2 million per team) and time-consuming in media and political time (but easily done before the end of 2003). In the real time of building cities, both the freedom and expansiveness of the open competition, and the focus and depth of the competitive urban design teams, are imperative if New York is to thrive and compete with the other great urban centers of the world.

RAYMOND W. GASTIL IS DIRECTOR OF VAN ALLEN INSTITUTE, WHOSE CATALOG OF ITS 2002 EXHIBITION, *RENEWING REBUILDING REMEMBERING*, WILL BE AVAILABLE THIS NOVEMBER. HE SERVED AS CO-CHAIR OF THE NEW YORK NEW VISIONS MEMORIALS PROCESS TEAM.

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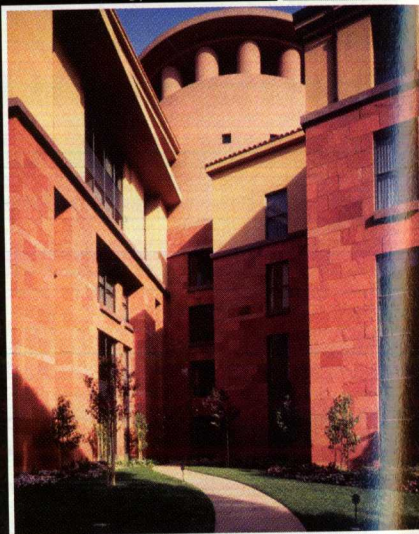
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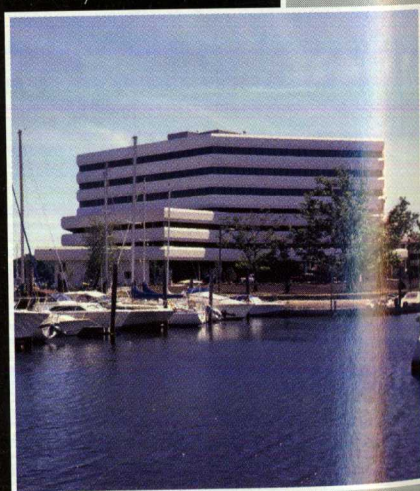
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Urban Rebirth  
Cities coping with disaster offer lessons for rebuilding New York's World Trade Center site

BY JOAN OCKMAN

**>HISTORY** Last spring, as the nation continued to reel from the events of the preceding September, and as the mountain of rubble and remains continued to be cleared at the World Trade Center site in Manhattan—widely referred to as “ground zero”—many New Yorkers found themselves torn between a sense of the tragedy’s ineffability and an increasingly clamorous debate (not least engaging the architectural community) about how to rebuild. It seemed useful to try to put the situation into a broader historical and cultural perspective. Presumably there were lessons to be derived from the example of other cities and the way they coped with similar cataclysms.

Indeed, while each of the instances of “urban reinvention” under examination in *Out of Ground Zero* is unique, it offers a suggestive way of thinking about the situation in New York. It may be cold comfort to realize that the magnitude of suffering in Manhattan is no greater than that endured in other places and times. Yet the spectrum of responses offers not just a set of

variations on the theme of urban destruction, but a sense of the manifold meanings of urban experience. For the most part, these responses confirm the perennial resilience of cities in the face of drastic events; a couple, however, also offer more cautionary tales.

**LISBON**

The Lisbon earthquake of 1755 was a truly world-shaking event. As Kenneth Maxwell, a scholar of Portuguese history, relates, it is estimated to have registered 9.0 on the Richter scale. The quake and its aftershocks were felt as far east as Venice, where Casanova, imprisoned in the Ducal Palace in Piazza San Marco, seized the opportunity to escape from his cell. In Lisbon, the epicenter, as many as 15,000 people were killed and about one-third of the city was destroyed. But what is distinctive about the case of Lisbon is the emergence of what Hegel would call a “world-historical individual.” Stepping in for a weak and fearful monarch, the Marquês de Pombal lost no time in taking charge of the situation.

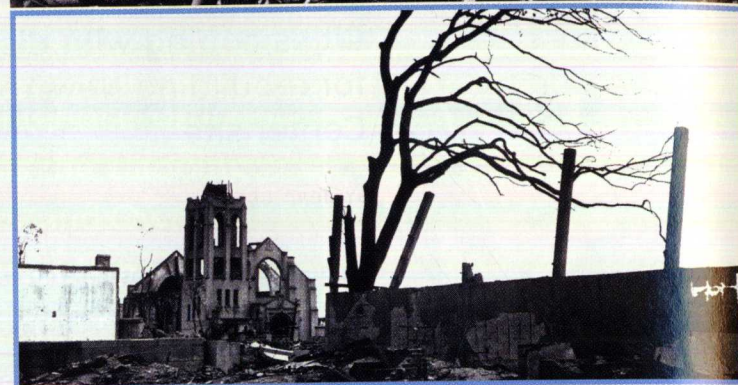
Pombal was one of those visionary—and ruthless—personalities through whose agency an entire urban fabric was transformed, a figure comparable to a Baron Haussmann or Robert Moses. Under his oversight, Lisbon went from being an aristocratic, Jesuit outpost with a jumbled medieval plan to become a modern bourgeois and commercial city embodying Enlightenment values and boasting functional planning and a fireproof, sanitary system of construction. Almost 250 years later—as a comparison between the drawings signed by Pombal and contemporary photographs reveals—his intervention remains legible in the neo-Palladian architecture of the city’s principal squares and streets.

**CHICAGO**

Chicago presents the opposite scenario. In the heartland of America, pragmatic opportunism reigned supreme after Mrs. O’Leary’s cow kicked over a lantern in 1871. Historian Ross Miller describes the enormous real-estate boom that followed the Great Fire and the frenzy of rebuilding, almost all of it shoddy and undistinguished. Meanwhile, a peculiarly American mix of doomsday prophecy and thinly veiled capitalist celebration combined to give the city a new founding myth as a dynamic, tabula rasa metrop-

Out of Ground Zero

The essays written for *Out of Ground Zero: Case Studies in Urban Reinvention*, published this month by Prestel Publishing ([www.prestel.com](http://www.prestel.com)), originated as lectures given in the spring of 2002 at the Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture at Columbia University, New York City. This essay is adapted from the introduction by Joan Ockman, editor of the volume.



In 1755, a major earthquake in Lisbon (above, left) led to its becoming a modern commercial city. Shoddy rebuilding after the Great Fire of 1871 (top right) later inspired Chicago's great period of modernism. Rebuilding in Hiroshima, Japan (above, right) would marry Western modernism with Eastern forms of commemoration.

olis. Just two years later, a national economic depression put a halt to the derricks and further conspired to keep Chicago from erecting any significant buildings.

Fascinatingly, however, it was this negative experience of post-fire rebuilding rather than the fire itself that, by the early 1880s, engendered the city's great period of architectural modernism. Architects like John Wellborn Root, Daniel Burnham, and Louis Sullivan witnessed the effects of speculation-driven design and construction at a formative moment in their careers, and they were inspired to design a different sort of building: high-rise frame structures in the solid, fireproof, and commercial but civic-minded style that would become Chicago's seminal contribution to world architecture.

#### HIROSHIMA

If the havoc wreaked by natural and accidental disasters like earthquakes and fires ultimately tends to be received with a sense of apocalyptic acceptance, that caused by war and human instrumentality elicits a rather different range of emotions. These emotions are further inflected by the historical outcome: whether the city is on the side of the winners or losers. Not surprisingly, a myth of victimhood coalesced in Japan after World War II around the fact that Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the first cities on which an atomic bomb was dropped.

Hiroshima was not a very well known city prior to the attack in August 1945 by the American airplane Enola Gay, which was responsible for the deaths of upward of 180,000 people as the

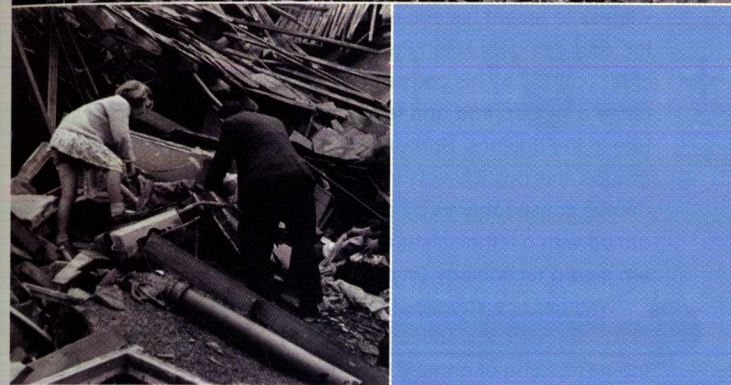
radiation continues to work its long-term effects even today. Afterward, however, the Japanese ground zero became a universal symbol of this horrific and unprecedented form of modern warfare and the focus, both nationally and internationally, of an important project of memorialization.

As architectural historian Carola Hein points out, Hiroshima's rebuilding and the role played by a visionary young architect, Kenzo Tange, were exceptional in the Japanese context. In a country that still has little tradition of monumental or comprehensive urban planning, typically resorting to pragmatic forms of "readjustment" in the wake of frequent fires, earthquakes, and floods, Tange's solution to the competition brief for a "peace city" melded Western concepts of modernism with Eastern

(specifically Shinto) forms of commemoration. While the full scope of his ambitious master plan went unrealized—and while the rest of Hiroshima has been developed in the intervening years like most other postwar Japanese cities—Tange's architectural centerpiece still resonates with poetic dignity.

#### ROTTERDAM

Rotterdam, which lost 11,000 buildings to Nazi bombs in 1940, offers another story, as urban planner Han Meyer recounts. Here, forward-looking planners, businessmen, and politicians soon welcomed the extensive damage as an opportunity to rebuild the antiquated and dense port city—in fact, this had been the objective of many well before the war. In 1944, the compact urbanism favored by Rotterdam's first reconstruction



After Nazi bombing raids, planners and civic leaders took the opportunity to rebuild Rotterdam (above, right), a goal that preceded World War II. In Plymouth, England (above, left), on the other hand, there was little public enthusiasm for any phase of the reconstruction. The case of Berlin (top left), was one of a long-postponed reinvention that started in 1989.

architect, W. G. Witteveen, was jettisoned in favor of the more modernist and "American" ideas of his successor, C. van Traa, who embraced the functionalist zoning of the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM) and the type of open, "democratic" space in the city center called for by Sigfried Giedion and others in the name of a "new monumentality."

Among the most innovative and celebrated projects to come out of the postwar building program was the Lijnbaan shopping center by the architects Van den Broek and Bakema, hailed as a model of progressive planning. In subsequent years, however, particularly as postmodernist revisionism set in during the 1960s, Rotterdam's citizens took a dimmer view of the new commercial development.

In recent decades, a succession

of strategies has been adopted to reconstruct the city along more traditional European or Dutch lines.

#### PLYMOUTH

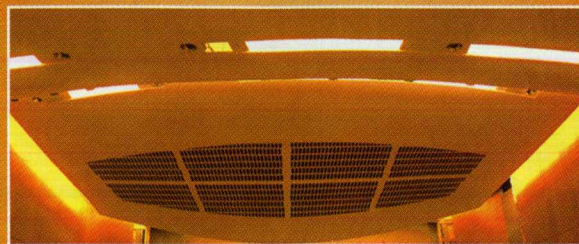
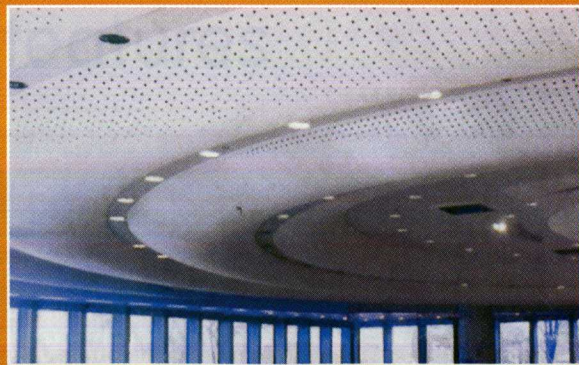
In Plymouth, England, the reconstruction undertaken after the air raids of 1941 was an object of disdain almost from the start. Here, under the engineer James Paton Watson, the mayor Waldorf Astor, and the elderly London planner Sir Patrick Abercrombie, an idealistic but neotraditionalist plan was adopted. Largely reflecting Abercrombie's thinking, as architectural historian Alan Powers relates, the plan was a loose amalgam of the regionalist ideas of Patrick Geddes, the formality of the American City Beautiful movement, and the Garden City philosophy of Lewis Mumford.

Implemented over the next two decades, the reconstruction suffered from poor-quality execution, compromises with respect to some of its basic features, and a general shift in British taste away from Abercrombie's penchant for the grand axial vista toward the picturesque English aesthetic of "townscape."

Despite efforts to remedy some of the scheme's defects in subsequent decades, the honorific city center has succumbed over the years to banal development. Abercrombie's emphasis on integrating the plan with the surrounding region finds an interesting echo, however, in some of the more audacious discussions that took place early on with respect to the World Trade Center site, and constitutes the plan's chief contribution to urban thought.

#### BERLIN

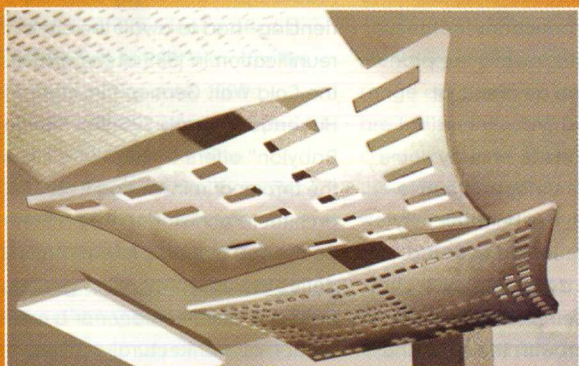
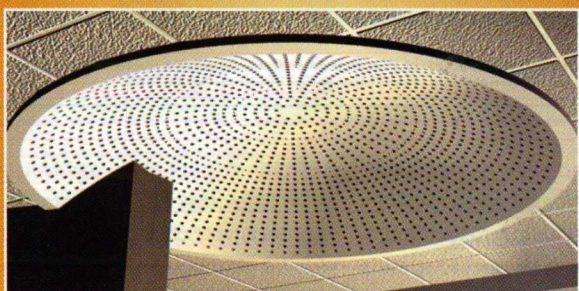
Berlin is another city whose fate was decisively changed by World War II, but whose full-blown transformation—the hyperaccelerated redevelopment it is currently experiencing—had to await the city's reunification in 1989 at the end of the Cold War. German filmmaker Hubertus Siegert's 2001 film "Berlin Babylon" offers a vision of a city in the throes of reinventing itself. As architectural historian Ralph Stern points out, Siegert's interpretation defies the usual "city film" genres. Neither a documentary nor a celebration of architectural achievement as such, it rather captures in vivid and poetic imagery the arbitrary, brutal, and frequently banal process of city building. In this process the urban construction worker figures at least as heroically as the municipal planner and



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architect (a role perhaps similar to that played by fire fighters and policemen in New York City). Siegert's view of urban processes and protagonists, more curious than cynical, is personified by Walter Benjamin's angel of history—evoked in a voice-over in the film—who is helplessly blown backward into the future. The film's central metaphor of Babel/Babylon further dramatizes the mythic dimensions of the city's reconstruction and its architectural hubris.

### THE BALKANS

The violence carried out in cities in the Balkans has different implications for New York, from the perspective of another eyewitness to recent historic events, the Belgrade architect, educator, and dissident Milan Prodanovic, who uses the term "urbicide" (coined by his compatriot Bogdan Bogdanovic) to characterize a widespread and festering hostility to cities and civic culture in the Balkans. Harbored by the region's multifarious ethnic groups, this hostility was stoked over the last decade with murderous consequences by corrupt "postmodern dictatorships" armed with a lethal mixture of conventional weapons and modern media technology (in particular, television).

Whether one speaks of the assault on the cosmopolitan life of Sarajevo by local warlords goaded by Serbian commanders, or the destruction of architectural patrimony (including a renowned sixteenth-century bridge) in the former Herzogovinan capital of Mostar by Croats, the perpetrators shared a hatred of urban and democratic values and a fundamentalist belief in the primacy of ethnic heritage. In Prodanovic's view, the only chance of overcoming these entrenched prejudices and constructing an open, civil society in the Balkans lies in basic educational reform and a rapprochement between local culture and the new forces of globalism.

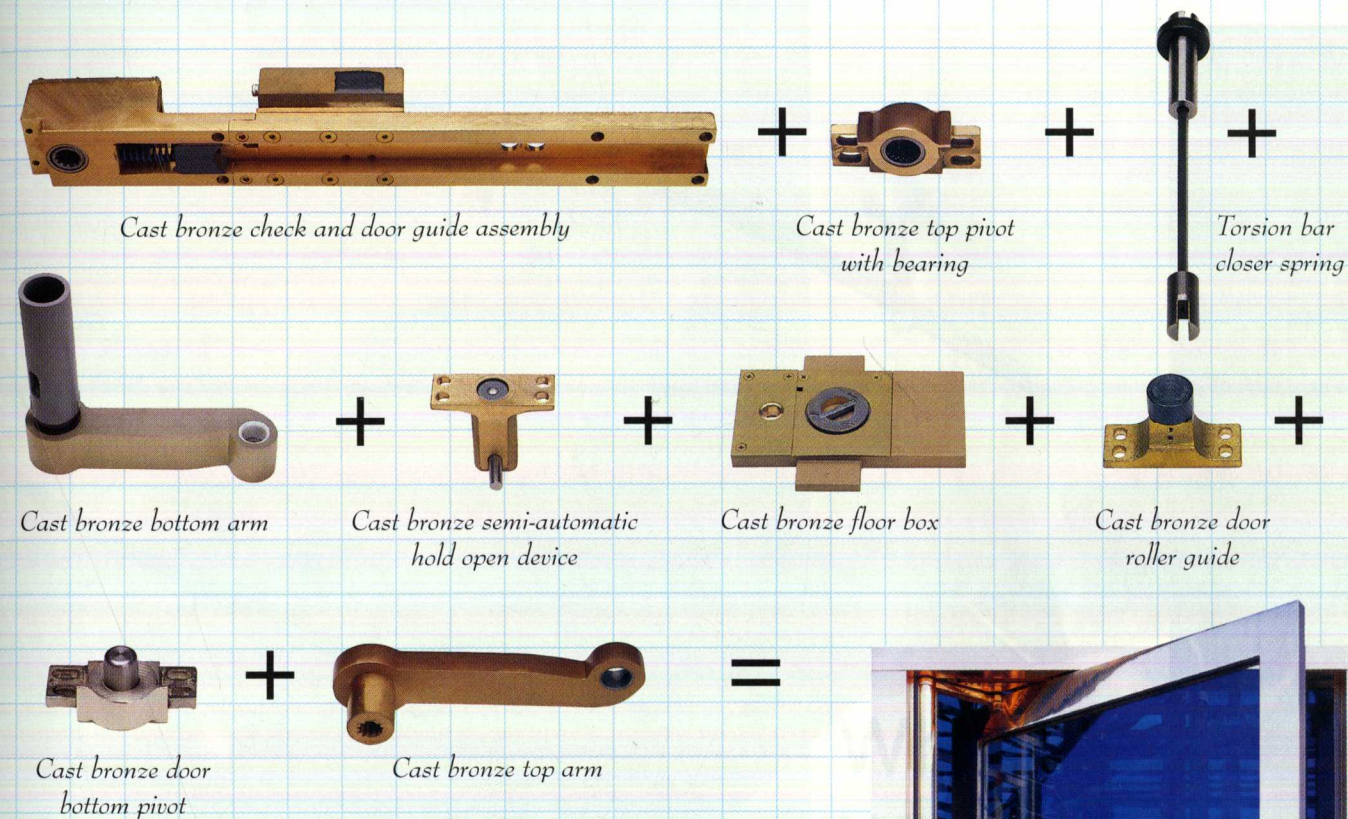
### JERUSALEM

Another desperate urban situation today is contemporary Jerusalem, an intensely symbolic and just as intensely contested place where the potential for tragedy remains ever present. Iraqi-born political writer and former architect Kanan Makiya offers a rather different form of response to the question of urban reinvention in his recent novel, *The Rock*, a historical fiction about the building of the Dome of the Rock. Makiya views this monument, located on a site in Jerusalem sacred to three religions since ancient times, as "a lightning rod for complete and total disaster in the Middle East"—and as such, a place comparable to the World Trade Center.

In Makiya's telling, the monument's construction reveals a complicity and connectedness between ancient Islam and Judaism as it also refutes the absolute claims of either side to ownership. In the face of intransigence and despair, Makiya thereby gives expression to a hope for coexistence and conciliation as if, through an act of utopian imagination, it might be possible to anticipate and avert historical destiny.

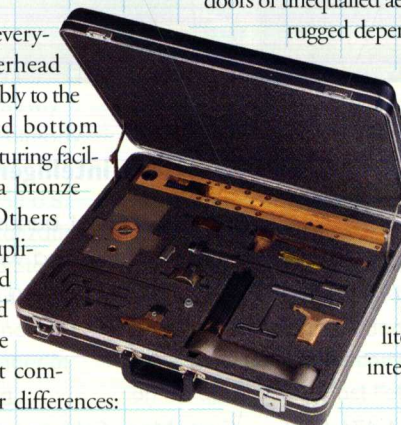
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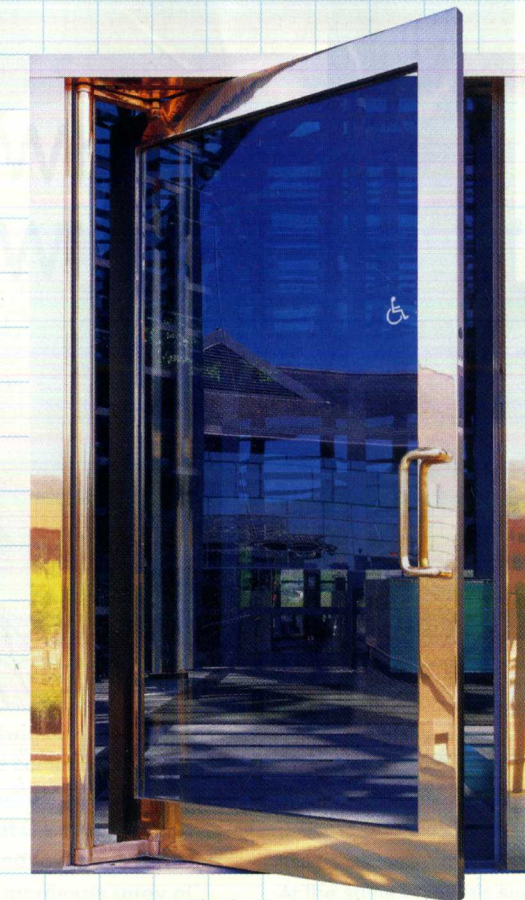
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