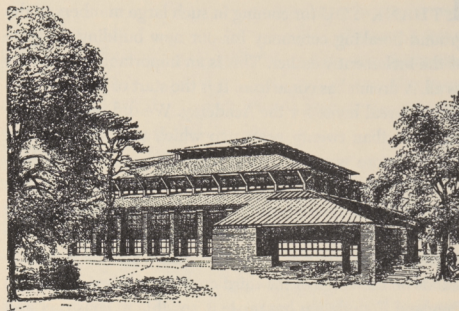


A HOUSE FOR THE
AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

THE GROUNDBREAKING
APRIL 2, 1979



A DEDICATION



IN THE AFTERNOON of the second day of April 1979 a group of Fellows and friends of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences gathered at Shady Hill in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Victor Weisskopf, President of the Academy; Edwin Land, past president of the Academy and founder of the Polaroid Corporation; Derek Bok, President of Harvard University; and James Sullivan, Cambridge City Manager, each turned a shovel full of earth in symbolic expression of their friendly interest in the construction of a House for the Academy.

I THANK YOU for coming in such large numbers to the ground breaking ceremony for our new building, in spite of the inclement weather. This is an important moment for us all. A dream has come true. It is the start of the construction of a real home for the Academy. We did own a building more than twenty years ago which was not adequate and therefore was sold. Since then we have lived in borrowed quarters graciously loaned to us by the Brandegee Foundation; they are beautiful, but too far away from the centers of intellectual activity in this area and not really appropriate for our purposes. Now, just when the Academy stands on the verge of the third century of its existence, the Rowland Foundation has made it possible to construct and maintain a house worthy of the Academy.

We are building on hallowed ground. The Norton Woods, or the Sachs Estate as it is called today, was the abode of Charles Eliot Norton and then of Paul Sachs. Both were scholars of the highest rank who devoted their lives to the study, the understanding and the appreciation of art. We owe them not only the existence and many of the treasures of the Fogg Museum in Cambridge, but also a greater public awareness of the significance of art in our culture. It is this tradition that we must take upon ourselves to continue when we move to these grounds.

The Academy has always tried to bring together creative spirits from all fields of human thought and action, the natural and social sciences, the practical arts, the humanities,

and the fine arts. Through these contacts, ideas are formed, and old and new problems are solved. Today, such interrelations are of utmost importance, because our civilization is threatened from many sides and in many ways. We know more than ever, but we lack the wisdom to decide what to do with our knowledge.

This new house will be devoted to creating new wisdom by bringing together the best minds from all the different fields of human endeavor in informal gatherings, in conferences, and in meetings, to counteract contemporary tendencies toward specialization and separation. We will build a house that is dignified and intimate, so that it can fulfill its tasks. An intimate, informal atmosphere is best suited for the synthesis of human activities, a synthesis that may help to relieve some of the excruciating difficulties of our time.

Let me express our thanks to all those who helped bring about this new home for the Academy:

The Rowland Foundation; the city of Cambridge; the neighbors of the Sachs Estate for their strong support; Harvard University for leasing us the grounds upon which we build; the architects who so well understand the aims and ambiance of the Academy and produced a marvelous design; the staff of the Academy who took up the task of negotiating and preparing for the building in addition to the heavy load of our regular activities.

EACH STAGE of human civilization is defined by our mental structures: the concepts we create and then project upon the universe. They not only redescribe the universe but also in so doing modify it, both for our own time and for subsequent generations. This process — the revision of old cortical structures and the formulation of new cortical structures whereby the universe is defined — is carried on in science and art by the most creative and talented minds in each generation. For individuals to contribute to this constantly evolving projection of mental structures upon the universe, it is necessary for them to concentrate on one area of knowledge or experience, and thus they limit themselves by excluding many other areas. This Academy's function is to associate many specialized lines of concentration by gathering the individuals in whom they are embodied. Thus, while each person is narrowed by his own specialization, the group as a whole is enriched.

The transfer of concepts as models from one field to another requires intimacy, informality and friendliness because the transfer usually is not a conscious process. Models for physics may come from music, for chemistry from physics, for art from cosmology. It is the infusion of models originally extraneous to a field into the established structures of that field that is the likely cause of the regeneration and transformation of the field. It may be that this infusion and the concomitant revolution can occur in relatively few minds. It also may be that the process of infusion is violent enough

to redirect cortical evolution within the particular mind in which the infusion occurs.

The contemplation of this process invites the notion that it is regenerative and exponentially interactive so that the great historic periods of spectacular human advance, within time spans of relatively few generations, may have been periods in which society made possible such concentrated interplay of the separate contribution of creative individuals. There is no way in which we can tell whether we are entering such a period of history, but whether or not we are, the role of the Academy seems clear.

AEDES ACADEMIAE



THE FIRST HOUSE of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences was in the mind of John Adams. He communicated the idea to the Reverend Samuel Cooper at a Harvard Corporation dinner in 1779 in the Philosophy Chamber of the University. It was then and there proposed that the future society should meet in the same room. Thereafter it did, for the next sixty years, with alternate meetings in Boston at any convenient place, from a room in the State House to the house of a Fellow. After 1852 it rented space from the Boston Athenæum and later the Massachusetts Historical Society. It owned a House for the first time in 1904, purchasing number 28 Newbury Street. By gift of Alexander Agassiz and his heirs additional land was purchased and a new House for the Academy erected on the larger lot. There the Academy lived till 1955, when changing conditions in the Back Bay made it inconvenient. For a few years the Academy was again peripatetic, borrowing meeting places from neighbors. Then a generous arrangement was worked out with the Brandegee Charitable Foundation and the Academy moved to Faulkner Farm in Brookline where it will remain till the House at Shady Hill is completed.



Colophon

Four thousand copies were printed in November, 1979, at the Cambria Press in Lincoln, Massachusetts. The text paper is Curtis Rag and the cover Strathmore Grandee. The type is Caledonia, designed by W. A. Dwiggins. The linecut of the Academy was made from an original drawing provided by the architects Kallmann, McKinnell and Wood.

