selves increasingly self-conscious of current and future directions of philosophy, especially with no rigid and commonly accepted dogma to influence design. In this new-found freedom the dangers are there and the risk of failure is high. This "radical eclecticism," as Jencks refers to it, could easily degenerate into a new superficial play with forms, the striving for meaning becoming lost, as the sign itself becomes the content.

At best we might well be moving into an exciting and challenging new area.

Behind the current "puns," "metaphors," "ironic references," and "jokes" is a serious body of thought, re-examining the age-old conflict between art and technology in architecture, giving today's architects once again the chance to leave their mark on history.

John W. Hartray: 'After filling a few shelves at Rizzoli, the movement looks as if it may pass into history without having made any.'

Postmodernism is one of those annoying labels that seem to have a meaning until they are scrutinized. I suspect that the term was invented by writers who had nothing more to say about an equally vague concept that they had previously named modernism. They may have believed that the modern style could be frightened into retirement by naming the next chapter in the history book. This kind of literary voodoo seems to be taken quite seriously by architectural theorists.

There was very little to add to the new chapter after the title. Some architects might suggest that the work of others was postmodern, but few volunteered for the revolution themselves. After filling a few shelves at Rizzoli, the movement looks as if it may pass into history without having made any.

Veterans of the modern movement came away from the campaign having learned that it is impossible to improve society by housing it in a new architecture. But we also had the satisfaction of having tried, and while failing, we produced some good buildings. Given this experience, it seems strange that anyone could have had much hope for a new style based on the boredom of critics.

In spite of the architectural press's heroic efforts to provoke novelty, most American architects seem to be building on the experience of the last 50 years. This allows them great scope, because the period has been richly diverse, particularly if one includes unpublished work.

There is no unpublished postmodern work. The quality that distinguishes the style is that it is designed solely for publication. It cannot exist in separation from the printing press. It employs architectural form to transmit ideas. It must convey its meaning rapidly; often in two dimensions. It fails if it is not talked about.

It is hard to object to this if one thinks of it as a separate art form, concerned with the meanings we attach to buildings, rather than with the buildings. The books and magazines are lovely to look at and the gallery openings are great fun. But, unfortunately, after the critics have decoded the messages we are left with the structures in which they were delivered.

Every city seems destined to have a complete collection of nationally advertised forms. Since Pennzoil and Citicorp, we must have lopped off the tops of a hundred buildings. A visitor from a land where architects worked from programs might conclude that there was a tax break for providing office space for very short executives.

The Boston John Hancock Building is beautiful in the late afternoon, but as the forms of reflective curtain walls become more arbitrary and as they proliferate in our central cities, they take on the banality of inflated bowling trophies.

The current academic style has rejected technology with the same fervor that characterized modernist ideologues, in their reaction against history. History, however, has not replaced dogma at the center of the new curriculum. Unlike the Beaux-Arts, which drew its inspiration from the measured ruins of ancient buildings, the current revival seems to be based on faded post cards. This view of the past is detached and ironical, making it impossible to distinguish between ignorance and sophistication without checking grade point averages.

The confusion between symbols and reality has become so great that buildings are almost invisible to us except as imperfect representations of drawings we remember having admired. At least that's how it's supposed to work. I'm not sure the public is equally enthralled.

But in spite of what we read in the papers all is not egocentric frivolity and the mindless cloning of tax shelters. The most positive development in current American architecture is the expanding interest and skill in the preservation of individual buildings, the restoration of the urban fabric, and the revival of regional traditions. The assumption underlying this is that we have inherited the best environment that we are likely to have in the

Below and across page, an addition to a nursing facility in New Britain, Conn., by Pierz Associates.

Photographs © Ken W. Sasso

forseeable future. This attitude, conservative in the only true sense of the word, is a realistic response to an historic period characterized by institutional upheaval and the prospect of unprecedented global catastrophy.

I don't expect American architecture to end here, but I doubt that we will really start a new chapter in architectural history until we have invented the institutions that we need to control our technology. The making of architecture requires both the past and a future.

In the meantime we should try to be useful and avoid doing anything that might be interpreted as an act of desperation.

Hugh Hardy: 'What is missing...is a sure sense of how we want to live in the approaching century.'

Traditional architecture was replaced by modern architecture, which has been replaced by postmodern architecture.

But if those who rail at modernism are correct, why hasn't its "aberration" been simply replaced by a return to the traditional way of doing things? Why have painted icons in the place of the real thing?

In part because several things have radically changed since the beginning of modern architecture.

1. The myth that science (and its handmaiden, technology) could lead to utopia has been discovered faulty.
2. Consumerism's throw-away culture, based on infinite growth, has discovered its own poisoned limits.
3. The public has found the beauty of the machine esthetic unappealing and alienating.
4. The complementary reuse and renovation of old buildings has again become professionally acceptable.
5. High energy costs have distorted earlier assumptions about the purity of abstract shapes, making natural materials more competitive with machine-made materials.
6. The context (historical, cultural, or natural) in which buildings are built is again recognized as a valid influence upon design.

Etc.

Some things, of course, have not changed. Novelty and a society premised on change rather than renewal is still very modern. The star system, with its ability to popularize and glamorize, still creates instant heroes. And architecture still takes a long time to make.

It seems only natural that such shifts of opinion and theory would create new forms of architecture. (There is also a heavy burden of nostalgia threaded through contemporary work, and idealized memory of lost years.)

What is missing, however, is a sure sense of how we want to live in the approaching century. What is our common purpose beyond survival? Since we can't *all* go dwell in outer space, we must instead find ways to sustain and renew life here. The built environment is a great legacy that can teach many lessons about a responsible use of resources. If its influence—all 20 centuries of it—leads to more postmodern buildings instead of a new rejection of all that has gone before, America will finally have an architecture worthy of its cultural wealth.

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Gerald Horn: 'Freedom to explore and not take ourselves too seriously.'

Postmodernism has given us all freedom to explore options we never would have tried 20, 10, or five years ago. My design options today are completely different than they were five years ago.

Twenty years ago, I was wrapped up in the "purity of architecture." Architecture was 100 percent serious. There were "bibles" that we followed and strict rules that really weren't questioned. Everything had to be 100 percent "pure," and that was hard—hard to do and hard for a client to accept. But things have changed, gradually.

Over the years, I have learned that you should never have set rules, and I do not think good architects do. However, you cannot constantly be trying out every new or current idea. That is the fallacy. You are setting vogue and being fashionable; you are a set designer then, and that is not architecture.

Architecture, in all its parts, is nothing more than about quality. Our hangup today is that people mistakenly believe that quality is based on the amount of ornament, the color or the use of details from another architectural period. But quality refers to "excellence"—in proportion, scale, and details. Modern architecture had quality. The acknowledged great works of modern architecture like Mies' Seagram Building in New York City or Jacque Bronson's Civic Center in Chicago were designs of the highest quality and are distinguished by their beautiful proportion and details. They do not look like a premodernist piece of architecture, but they are still works of quality.

People are turning to postmodernism