

ROBERT VENTURI

Central to the accomplishment associated with Robert Venturi has been his idea of architecture as context--a context marked by a respect for the past, a clear-eyed view of human living patterns, and a predilection for the intellectually elegant. The result has been some of this century's most distinguished architectural achievements.

His professional career has centered in Philadelphia and its environs. Born there in 1925, he took both a bachelor's and master of fine arts degree at Princeton, and studied for two years in Rome as a fellow of the American Academy. After gaining experience as a designer for other firms, he formed his own partnership in 1958. Assuming in 1980 its present form as Venturi, Rauch & Scott Brown, it enjoys an international reputation in virtually all aspects of design. In accordance with Robert Venturi's belief that architecture is above all others a collaborative art, it is neither feasible nor desirable to single out one figure in a firm for sole honor. In this case in particular, Denise Scott Brown is recognized as an equal creative partner in the firm's achievement. Such buildings as the Guild House and Franklin Court, both in Philadelphia, and Gordon Wu Hall at Princeton have aroused widespread interest and admiration; and three years ago the partnership won a competition to design a major extension to the National Gallery in London.

Robert Venture has been a professor at both the University of Pennsylvania and Yale, and is no less prominent as an author (again, often jointly with Scott Brown) than as a designer. Most notably, his book Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture has from its first appearance in 1966 been regarded as among the most influential and powerfully-argued books ever written in the subject; recently described as "the revolutionary text in the overthrow of modernist supremacy," it has since gone through a second edition and been translated into nine languages, including Serbo-Croatian. Without contradiction, we rejoice today in recognizing such excellence in the theory as well as the practice of one of the most complex of the arts by conferring this degree of Doctor of Letters.