

**Robert George Reichert, Architect**

Jeffrey Scott Murdock

a thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science, Architecture

University of Washington  
2019

Committee:  
Brian McLaren  
Jeffrey Ochsner

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:  
Architecture

©2019  
Jeffrey Scott Murdock

University of Washington

ABSTRACT

**Robert George Reichert, Architect**

Jeffrey Scott Murdock

Supervisory Committee:  
Brian McLaren and Jeffrey Ochsner  
Department of Architecture

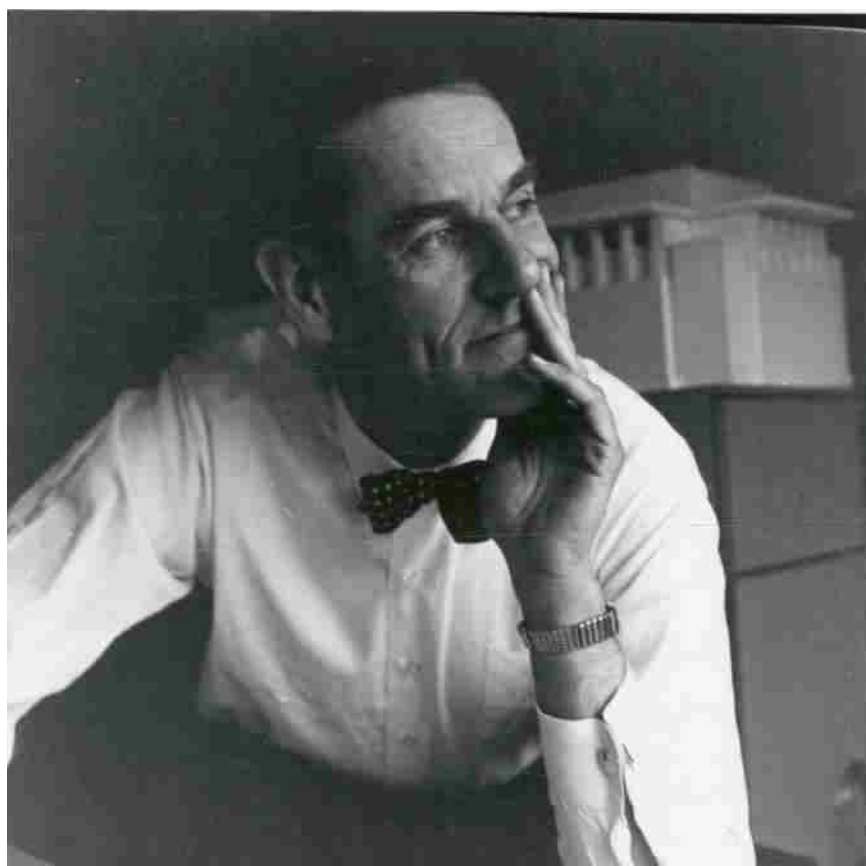
Robert George Reichert, Seattle architect, practiced as a sole proprietor in the city from 1952 until his death in 1996. He learned both to design and to play the organ at a very young age, and developed strong ideas about the meaning of architecture, notions that would guide his practice throughout his career. He studied under Walter Gropius at Harvard during a period of rationalist education and practice. Practicing in a vibrant architectural culture in post-World War II Seattle, Reichert chose a solitary path in which he believed the meaning of his work was romantic and spiritual, and his individual projects could be described in terms of their affective content rather than purely functionalist design. This thesis tells the story of Reichert's life and career, drawing primarily on original documents in the Reichert Collection at the University of Washington Libraries Special Collections. The thesis places this iconoclastic artist-architect in the context of his time and place and seeks to frame his architecture and thought in a wider context.



**TOC.1** Robert George Reichert. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39850).

# Contents

Preface	7
<b>1.</b> Introduction	19
<b>2.</b> An Architectural Education	25
<b>3.</b> Reichert House-Studio, 1953-1954	63
<b>4.</b> First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bellevue	85
<b>5.</b> A Diverse Residential Practice	105
<b>6.</b> Motorcycles, Burgers and Monuments	133
<b>7.</b> End of a Career	151
<b>8.</b> Conclusion	157
List of Projects	169
Endnotes	181
Bibliography	195
Acknowledgments	205



# Preface

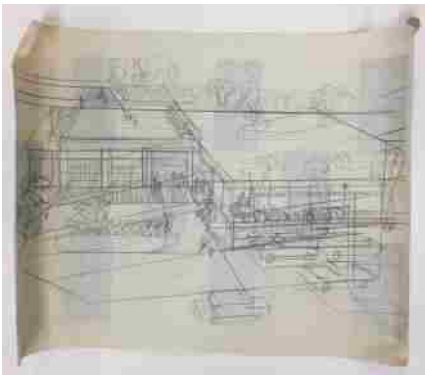
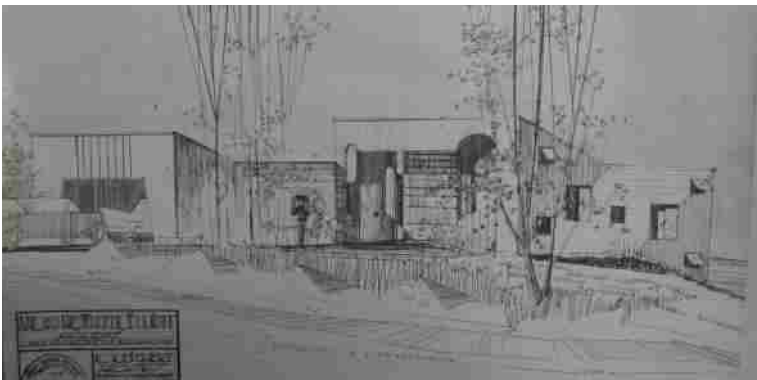
In 2000, as a Master of Architecture student at the University of Washington and as co-editor of our department's academic journal, *Column 5*, I had the opportunity to co-author an article on Robert Reichert, a local designer and occasional instructor in our department who had died four years earlier and whose nephew had subsequently donated his diverse collection of notes, sketches, records, drawings and photographs to the university (0.1). I visited University of Washington Libraries Special Collections and asked to examine a few of his project drawing sets. I knew of his Egan House in Seattle, which had recently been published during the City of Seattle process to designate the building as a landmark.<sup>1</sup> However, I was astonished to see the large volume of records, ranging from highly expressive drawings and sketches to extensive documentation of his life and practice, including which outfit he wore on a specific day and which coffee shops he visited on his Harley Davidson, at what times of day. I spent several days poring through some of this material, but ultimately decided to write a short paper focused on the unusual house-studio he built for himself, his mother, his design practice and his pipe organ. I drew upon a few photographs, renderings and a fascinating short document delineating camera directions and background music he had written for an interview with a local KIRO news crew, in which he painstakingly tried to manipulate the way his house would be perceived by its viewers.<sup>2</sup> The *Column 5* article prompted a few responses from people who knew Reichert as a colleague or a

**0.1** Robert George Reichert, ca. 1960. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39455).

teacher, and I began then to reassess the way that Reichert had been described to me. He seemed more than just a strange character whose penchant for unusually decorative designs led him to call for the rejection of functionalist modernism. While his work was certainly out of phase with Pacific Northwest regional modernism,<sup>3</sup> designs so often celebrated by the Seattle architectural community, Reichert's passionate call for a romantic modernism was backed up by the quality of his work and a strict devotion to his practice.

**0.2** The Reichert collection is a challenging archive made up of presentation drawings and sketches on materials as diverse as graphite on trace paper, ball point pen on the reverse sides of church programs or calendar sheets, and countless design sketches on restaurant napkins. (All items from Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections).

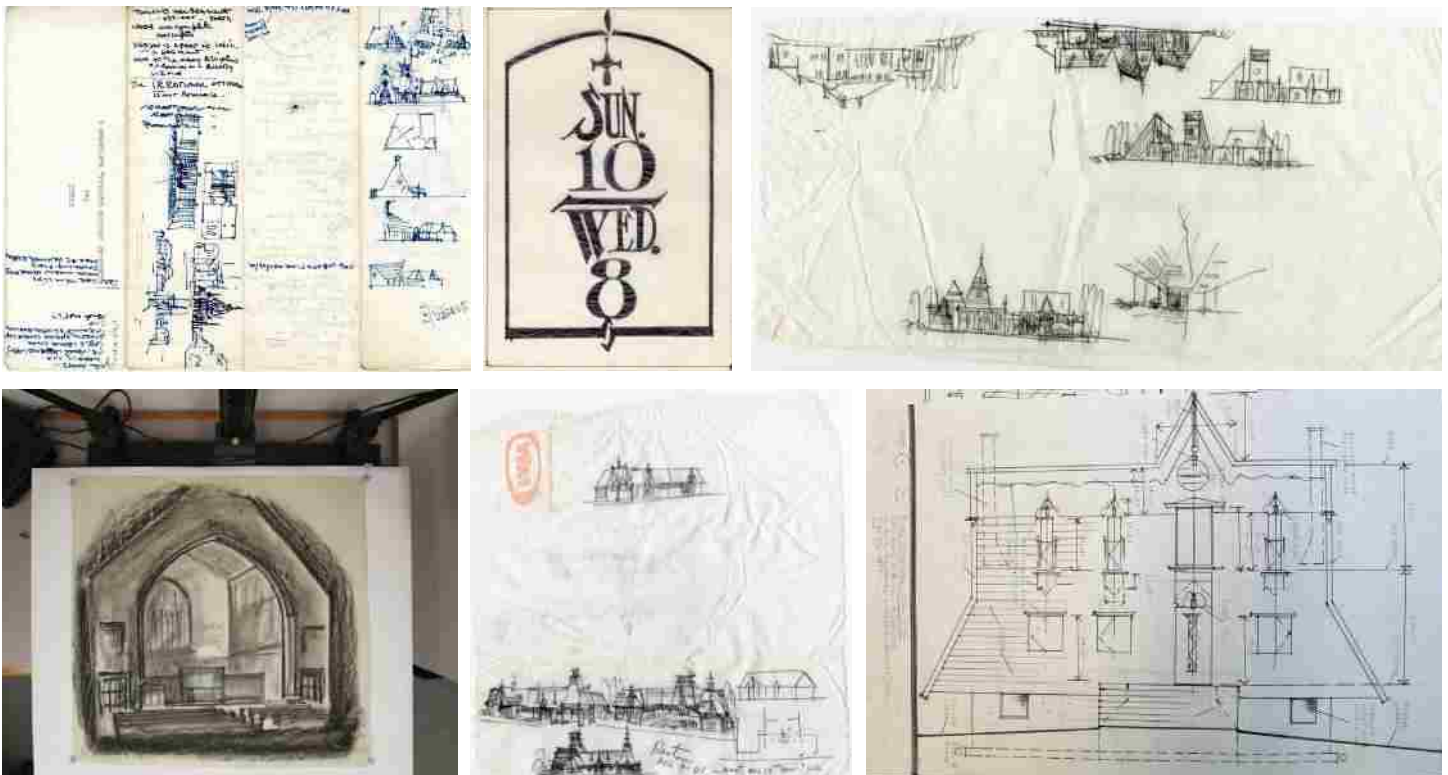
About ten years later, when I re-entered the academic realm as a student in the Master of Science in Architecture degree program, studying architectural history and theory, I was curious to revisit the Reichert archive. It was seemingly untouched since my last visit and I volunteered to work in Special Collections to process the Reichert materials, hoping to make an assessment of his work as the topic of this thesis project. I received training in the process of





handling, describing and organizing what I learned was a uniquely complicated collection. Most of Reichert's graphic work was produced on a variety of humble materials: presentation drawings of graphite on tracing paper, ballpoint ink drawings on the backs of calendar pages or mimeographed church service programs, and many boxes of ink sketches on folding napkins from the local Hasty Tasty, Coffee Corral, or any number of other burgeoning fast food restaurants frequented by the architect (0.2).

My investigation began by un-rolling, separating and flattening hundreds of often unrelated drawings and organizing them by project. Many of the fragile drawings and photographic images were digitized and will be entered into the library's digital archive to allow future scholars to study and appreciate the work from outside the library basement. Finally, I was trained to enter each item into a finding aid so that all of the original works can be located and



WED JAN 8-69 10:15 AM  
...  
THUR JAN 9-69  
...  
FRI JAN 10-69  
...  
SAT JAN 11-69  
...  
SUN JAN 12-69  
...  
MON JAN 13-69  
...  
TUE JAN 14-69  
...  
WED JAN 15-69  
...  
THUR JAN 16-69  
...  
FRI JAN 17-69  
...  
SAT JAN 18-69  
...  
SUN JAN 19-69  
...  
MON JAN 20-69  
...  
TUE JAN 21-69  
...  
WED JAN 22-69  
...  
THUR JAN 23-69  
...  
FRI JAN 24-69  
...  
SAT JAN 25-69  
...  
SUN JAN 26-69  
...  
MON JAN 27-69  
...  
TUE JAN 28-69  
...  
WED JAN 29-69  
...  
THUR JAN 30-69  
...  
FRI JAN 31-69

		CHART OF BRIEF FORMS																				
		October 1968 for the Drug Building Division M-D-W-F-S-S-S-S-S-S-S-S-S-S																				
MORPHOLOGY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20		
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

0.3 Reichert's journals, ink on steno pads, c. 1961-1975. (All items from Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections).



accessed. While this exacting work is still ongoing in 2019, most of Reichert's projects have been recorded.

After reviewing all of Reichert's project records, letters and notes, I was still unable to come to an understanding of his intense commitment to his unconventional ideas, designs and routines. I next turned to the journals he kept, starting from the pivotal day of his mother's death on January 18, 1961, until the mid-1970s. The extent of his personal and professional self-reflection was fascinating.

It proved important to transcribe the eleven volumes of journals into digital documents that would be searchable and much more legible than the tiny double lines of handwritten text filling each line of the pages, front and back, through all the stenographic notebook volumes (0.3). During his frequent motorcycle travels, and sometimes while on site visits, Reichert would inscribe notes and tiny sketches on 8 ½ x 11 inch sheets folded to fit in his vest pocket (0.4). On these he not only recorded his thoughts on design, but also daily activities, what he wore, what he ate, who he met with, his expenses, mileage, and reflections of what he saw on his road trips. The level of detail was meticulous and exhausting!

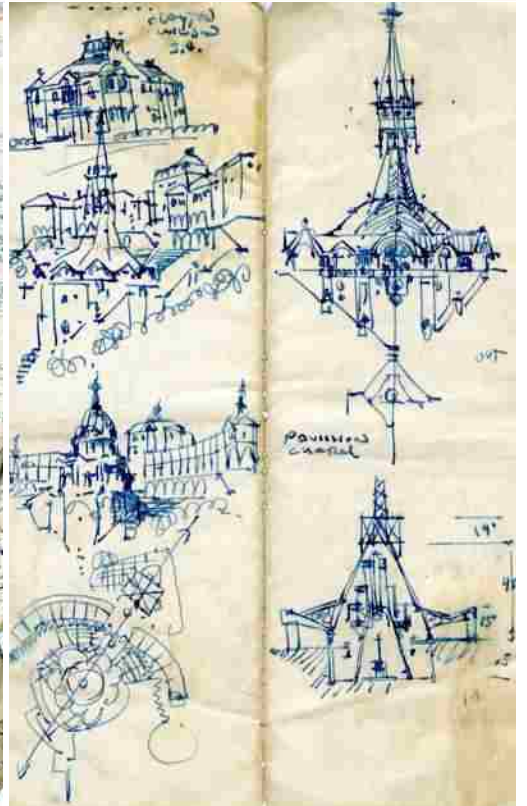
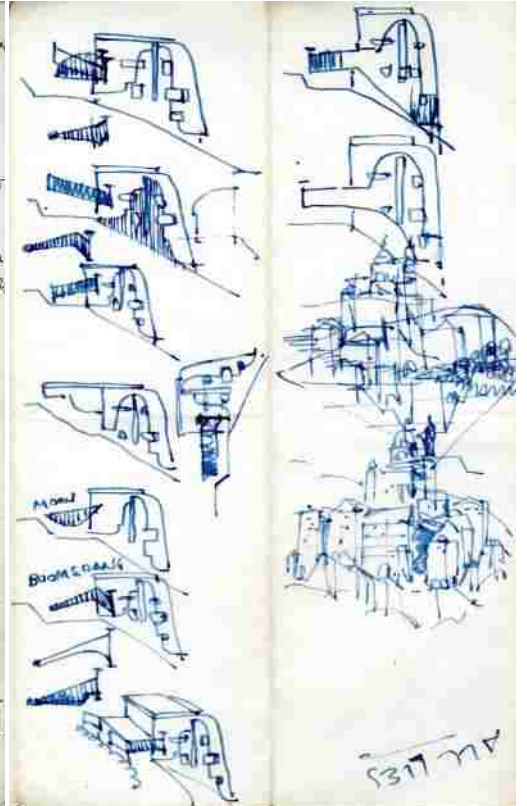
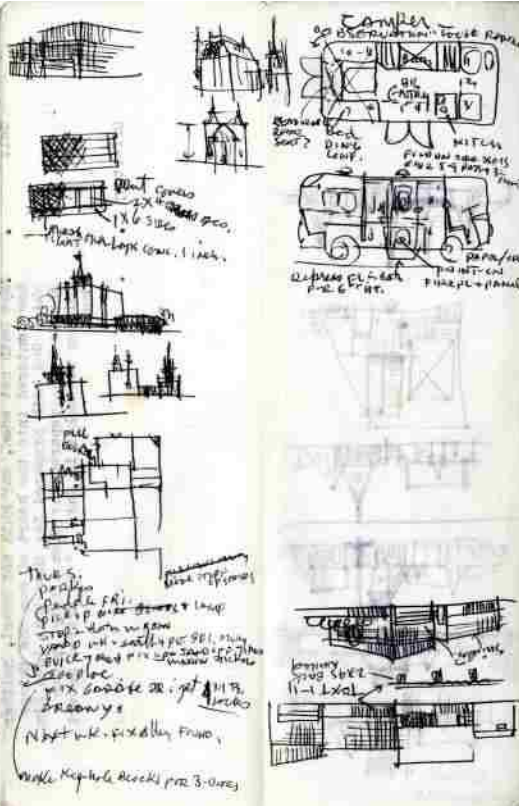
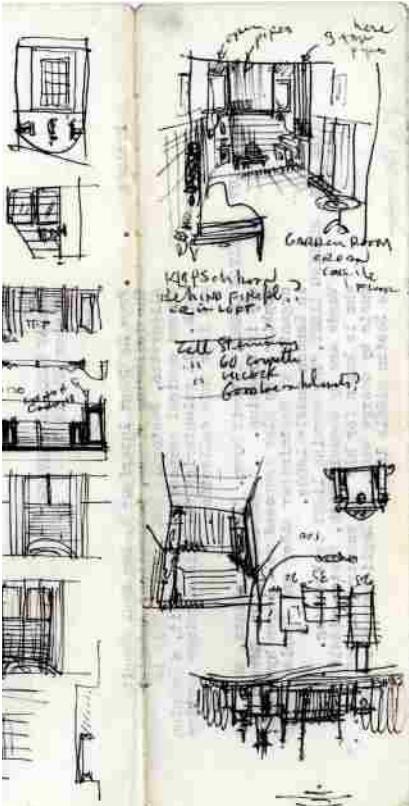
He also engaged in a long discourse with Italian architect, theorist and publisher of the journal *L'Architettura*, Bruno Zevi. The two traded numerous letters delving into prevailing theories of architectural theory and trying to define the meaning of the iconoclastic Seattle architect's work.<sup>4</sup>

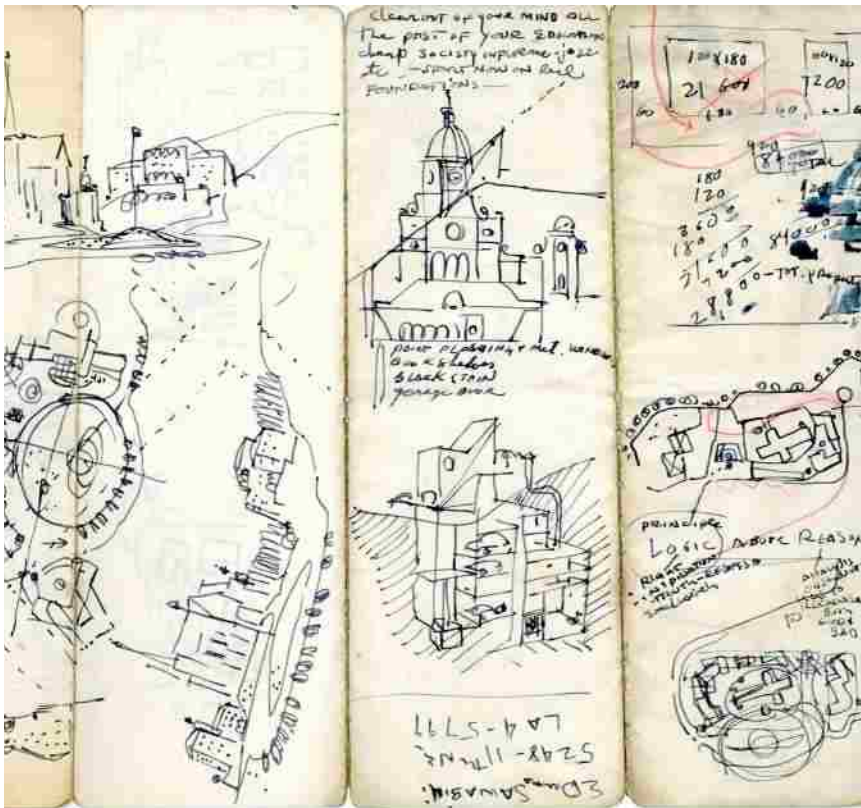
While continuing my research in my attempt to interpret the meaning of Reichert's work, I wrote and presented papers on his architecture on two very different topics, at two annual conferences. In April 2014, I presented research on his very expressive but mostly un-built commercial buildings in a paper titled, "Roadside Romance: The Architecture of Robert Reichert" to the Society

of Commercial Archaeology (an organization focused on the study and preservation of the roadside built environment) at their conference in St. Petersburg, Florida. In October 2014, I presented a paper titled “Spiritual Sculpture: The Church Designs of Robert George Reichert,” which focused on Reichert’s ecclesiastic designs, to the Marion Dean Ross Pacific Northwest Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians, in Seattle, Washington. Another article discussing Reichert’s very early design education and the subsequent early formation of a life-long design philosophy, counterposed with his formal education at Minnesota and Harvard, has been submitted for a forthcoming volume of *Column 5*. These presentations and articles have provided an opportunity to bring

0.5 Robert Reichert on his Harley Davidson motorcycle.







0.4 Reichert's vest pocket sketches, ink on bond, 1961-1976. (All items from Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections).



**0.6** Kodachrome slide of Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 1st Avenue, taken by Reichert, c. 1955, with the annotation, “I did 3rd floor add’n.” The brick color of the new addition is clearly differentiated from the lower floors. The original building dates from 1942 and 1946, designed by McClelland and Jones; the addition is credited to Harmon, Pray and Dietrich, 1955. (UW College of Built Environments Visual Resources Collection).

Reichert’s work and ideas to public attention, to describe Reichert’s work, and, most importantly, to gain the benefit of observations and input from experts in architectural history.

Finally, I reached out to people who, from his notes, seemed important to Reichert and who could possibly offer recollections of their times with him. Of those who were still alive, not many people responded; but those who did were very interested in discussing Reichert’s work and his significance, and in sharing stories of his unique personality. Most (especially those who knew Reichert from his sporadic teaching gigs at the university) began by recalling his tall, dramatic, leather-clad countenance appearing



late at night on a massive, shiny Harley Davidson, riding noisily up and down the commercial strip near the College of Architecture and Urban Planning commonly known as “the Ave.” (0.5). I met with or heard from his colleagues from University of Washington, one of whom was in Reichert’s cohort at Harvard. I corresponded with former students, a fellow motorcycle enthusiast, and several clients. Others who knew him and offered feedback were the curators of the Reichert exhibits, Lawrence Kreisman at Seattle’s Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI, 1994) and Glenn Weiss at the Seattle Art Museum (1990). These contacts led to the happy discovery of a box of slides in the University of Washington Built Environments Library. The Kodachrome slides taken by Reichert, Weiss, artist Chuck Close and landscape architect Rich Haag had been compiled to represent Reichert’s residential design work for a presentation at the MOHAI exhibit, and offered a fresh infusion of color and composition into the previously monochromatic story told through Reichert’s mostly black and white photographs and pencil drawings (0.6). I am grateful to those who offered these stories about their interactions with Reichert as it helped to provide a richer and more objective understanding of a character who throughout his life felt so misunderstood and had tried to editorialize the way he would be perceived by the work he left behind.

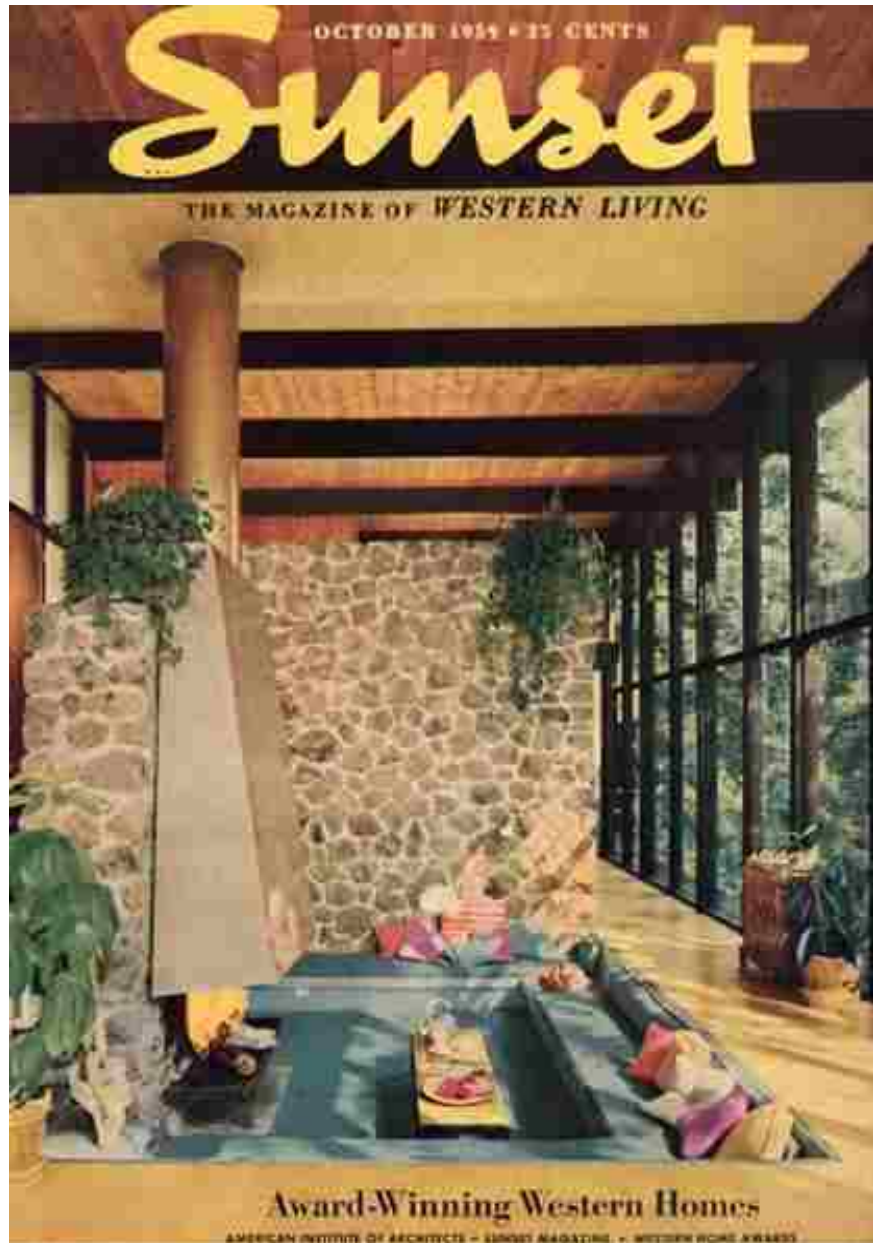


# 1. Introduction

It is difficult to convey the significance of the remarkable Seattle architect, Robert George Reichert (1921-1996) (1.1). Reichert was a figure of dramatic dichotomies: He was religious, but also a vocal proponent of personal liberties; he studied under Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, but eschewed modernist design theories of functionalism and rationalism; he described his designs as romantic and spiritual, yet they were at their heart modern architectural expressions. Even his choice of attire—trim dark suits for organ concerts, teaching and client meetings contrasted with his favored studded motorcycle leathers—reveal a multi-faceted personality. He has been described as Seattle’s “least conventional architect,”<sup>5</sup> as its “most outspoken architect,” and as “an undiscovered, extraordinary mind in architecture, and the inventor of an architectural pop movement.”<sup>6</sup> Reichert is also known for creating works prefiguring the origins of postmodernism with his very early use of “super-graphics.”<sup>7</sup> Given the multiple, apparently contradictory aspects of his life, it may be easier to describe what he was not, rather than who he was.

Post World War II-era Seattle was an exciting place in which to practice architecture. The nationwide sense of exuberance and optimism was a new feeling for a generation whose aspirations had been limited by economic depression and war. The post-war resurgence led to a massive building boom and a corresponding need for educated building designers.<sup>8</sup> Many newly designated

**1.1** Portrait of Reichert taken for his architectural license, July 1948. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39845).



1.2 October 1959 cover of *Sunset Magazine*, featuring a house by Seattle architect Wendell Lovett, from Reichert's own collection. (UW Libraries Special Collection).

architects settled in Seattle, the largest city in a region with a rich supply of native timber building materials, a mild climate fostering outdoor living, and a location on the Pacific Rim with a growing link to Japan and other Asian countries. Technological advances in materials (plywood, plate glass, glue laminated beams, and so forth), first developed during the war, were quickly applied in the building industry in response to a rapidly growing demand for building materials.

Reichert graduated from the Graduate School of Design at Harvard in 1951, while its architecture department was under the influential control of Walter Gropius. Setting up his practice in Seattle, Reichert had the company of several fellow Harvard alumni practicing in the area during the 1950s and 1960s, among them Keith Kolb (graduated in 1950), Fred Bassetti (1946) and Rich Haag (1952). Each was searching for an appropriate, personal interpretation of the functionalist architectural pedagogy of Harvard. Similar investigations were illustrated in national popular housing magazines such as *Sunset*, *House Beautiful* and *Life*, as well as professional journals such as *Architectural Record*, *Progressive Architecture* and *Architectural Forum*. This publicity and broad interest helped to solidify local designers' careers during the postwar building boom and many in the Pacific Northwest turned to a regional version of modernism for residences and small institutional buildings (1.2).

Robert Reichert, who maintained a solitary practice in Seattle from 1952 until his death in 1996, was a maverick in this trend toward structurally expressive and materially rich regionalist architecture. He practiced a unique, highly individual type of design, contrasting with what was popularized in the press and was being investigated by other Seattle architects who were seeking a modern approach to building design that was uniquely appropriate to the material, climatic and technological context of the Puget Sound region.<sup>9</sup>

While there has been much recent discussion about the meaning of regionalist modern architecture in the Pacific Northwest during the middle twentieth century, the work of Robert Reichert does not fit into any regionalist interpretation of Northwest Modern design.<sup>10</sup> His works are rarely constructional expressions of local materials. They do not incorporate large picture windows to take in distant views or to integrate contained landscapes. Nor do they have expansive overhangs to protect the user from the rainy climate. Daylighting and materiality take a secondary position in Reichert's works relative to other architectural considerations. Robert Reichert's buildings were a personal expression of his understanding of the individual and spiritual requirements of their users, expressed physically as introverted shelters that exhibited bold sculptural forms and highly graphic exterior surface expressions. How, then should one understand the works of such a non-conformist iconoclast?

This thesis documents, analyzes and interprets the architecture of Robert Reichert through the study of his life experience, education and professional practice, as evidenced in his archive at the University of Washington. Exploring the largely unknown career and work of Robert Reichert is important to expanding our knowledge of Northwest architecture and to understanding the variety of work produced here, including work that stands in contrast to the dominant tendency. Reichert was a nonconformist in his day and the passing of time has not made his work easier to categorize or understand. He does not fit within the regional modernism movements growing in some parts of the United States. He does not fit the alternate schools of design later emerging, such as postmodernism or post-structuralism. Nor is he a revivalist, despite his appreciation of historical designs, ornament and the revival styles he studied during his Midwestern youth. Through the study of Reichert's archive, including his self-proclaimed philosophies, journals, notes, photographic studies, sketches,

drawings, records and correspondence, it is possible to frame a narrative about a lonely but confident professional seeking to express a personal architectural ideology to a largely unsympathetic audience. This thesis, then, is an attempt to piece together the puzzle that Robert Reichert presents, by describing his unusual education, his early professional experience and by describing key works that help to convey the meaning of his architectural practice.





## 2. An Architectural Education, 1921-1953

Robert George Reichert was born in Fargo, North Dakota, on March 25, 1921.<sup>11</sup> He was the only child of George Bernard and Matilda Marie Reichert. Robert's father had been born December 16, 1879, in Wisconsin, to Canadian parents David and Mary Jane Reichert. Matilda "Tilly" Reichert had been born in 1885, and emigrated from Sweden to the United States in 1890.<sup>12</sup> The elder Reichert's 1917-1918 draft registration card dated September 12, 1918, lists his occupation as "farming," his wife as "Mrs. Tillie M. Reichert," and describes him as being of medium height and slender build with dark hair. According to the 1920 federal census, Robert Reichert's parents were "truck farmers" living at St. Dominic's Monastery in La Crosse, Wisconsin. It is not clear how the couple ended up in North Dakota for the brief period when their son, Robert was born, but the small family moved to Minneapolis early in his life. Reichert spent all of his early life in Minneapolis, including his first undergraduate years at the University of Minnesota. By the 1930 census, Bernard Reichert was self-employed and working as a grocer. The family owned their own home at 806 E. 36th Street in Minneapolis (2.1). It appears that they suffered financially during the Great Depression; in the 1940 census, although they were still living at the modest house on E. 36th Street, Bernard listed his occupation as "cement worker," employed by the Works Projects Administration (W.P.A.), the federal agency established to provide jobs and training while building public works during the Depression. Bernard Reichert's

**2.1** Portrait of Robert with his parents, Bernard and Tillie, on the front steps of their house on E. 36th Street in Minneapolis, c. 1938. (UW39846, Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections).

length of employment was noted as eight years, so it would seem likely that he lost his business in 1932. In 1942, Bernard Reichert's draft registration card listed his age as 63 and his job status as "unemployed at present." The card indicates that the family had moved to Seattle and was living in a rental house at 2528 Queen Anne Avenue.<sup>13</sup>

Robert Reichert's personal recollections do not suggest a warm or close relationship with his father; however, Robert was always very close to his mother. While he was growing up, Tillie Reichert worked in the Reichert home as a piano teacher and she would later provide support to her son's architectural practice. Robert Reichert later described a solitary childhood in which his older parents (Tillie was 35 and Bernard was 41 when Robert was born) maintained a serious and quiet household. Robert recalled riding along on his father's business routes as a grocery salesman through rural Minnesota, sometimes making side visits to the revival style churches that contained massive pipe organs:

The churches would be so quiet and vacant, being weekdays, and dimly lighted, only a few beautiful sun rays and an occasional person sitting in the cloisters and ambulatories. It all seemed like another world, beautiful, wonderful, and perfect, like heaven on earth. Then, best of all would be the time when the sounds of strange wonderfulness, from within the whole cavern of the building itself would whisper, or come and go, or float from here and then fade away there, something that could not be seen or touched or caught. At times it would roll and increasingly roll and grind like incomprehensibly vast machinery, or what? Like the whole building in motion, like the voice of the building, it was all so wonderful. I remember that there my thoughts were that I wanted to always be a part of this.<sup>14</sup>

Robert was deeply affected by his experience of these liturgical spaces. As a very young person, he initiated his career-long investigation into the connections between architecture, music and spirituality. The feeling of being inside such a place, the emotional

responses brought about by the patterns and contrasts of space, light and sound would inspire Reichert's practice as a designer.

In a 1960 letter to Bruno Zevi, Reichert reflected on his childhood and the events which he felt were formative in his development as an architect. He described having hobbies that neither his mother nor his teachers understood. During his free time he practiced music and drew pictures of buildings and motorcycles instead of "playing games and ball like the other 'normal' children."<sup>15</sup> Tillie started Reichert's piano lessons at age four. Reichert commented that his mother, a musician and piano teacher herself, thought "a piano teacher and a whip surely made a concert pianist."<sup>16</sup> Reichert claimed to have quickly mastered the instrument and asked for permission to begin organ lessons. His mother reluctantly agreed and he began organ study at age twelve.<sup>17</sup> Throughout his life, Reichert would play the pipe organ professionally for many

2.2 6th Church of Christ, Scientist, (Gerard Field, Office of Bebb & Mendel, 1929) in West Seattle, photograph by Robert Reichert, 1942. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39847).





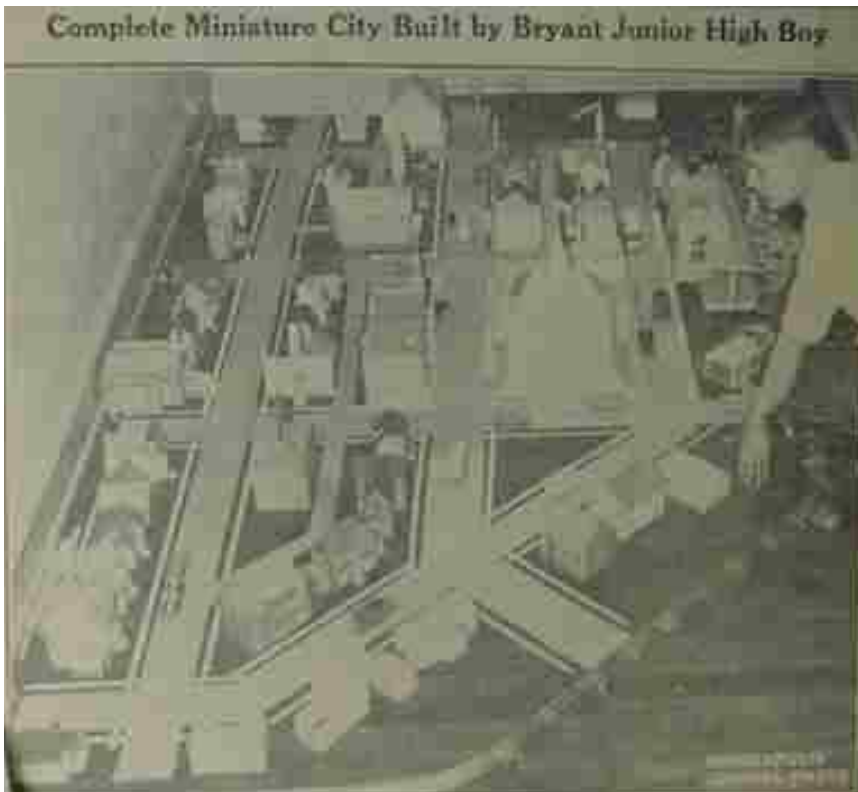
different churches, performing throughout college and graduate school and spending many years as the official organist for the Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, in West Seattle (2.2).

Unlike music, Reichert discovered that there was not such a straightforward path for a young person to pursue the study of building design. He later described an astonishing self-directed study of architecture, engaging in many projects he felt would be valuable preparation for becoming an architect. He studied the built environment around him and practiced drawing buildings from architectural history books that described important buildings throughout the world, borrowed from the local branch of the Minneapolis library (2.3). Some of Reichert's earliest drawings depict different historic building styles, house plans and other studies.

2.3 High school drawing by Reichert of chapel space. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW400057).

2.4 Photograph of Reichert's design class students and their large scale models at University of Washington, photograph by Robert Reichert, 1963. Reichert inscribed the names of the students on the back: Gunnar Gunnarson, Anne MacFarlane, Dave Lewis.





2.5 Newspaper article published in the *Minneapolis Journal* on Robert Reichert's construction of a scale model city, April 1936. (Clipping from Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections).

Remarkably, Reichert's early school years were seminal to his education in both music and architecture. In the third grade at Horace Mann grade school, Reichert obtained permission to spend his recess periods constructing a scale model of Rheims Cathedral, working from photographs and taking about a year to build a seven foot tall representation of the building.<sup>18</sup> Decades later, as a design instructor at the University of Washington, Reichert would require his students to build similar large scale models of historic buildings, hoping to initiate a similar appreciation for history in their modernist design education (2.4).<sup>19</sup> His organ studies began a few years later, as a seventh grade student at the MacPhail School of Music in Minneapolis.<sup>20</sup>

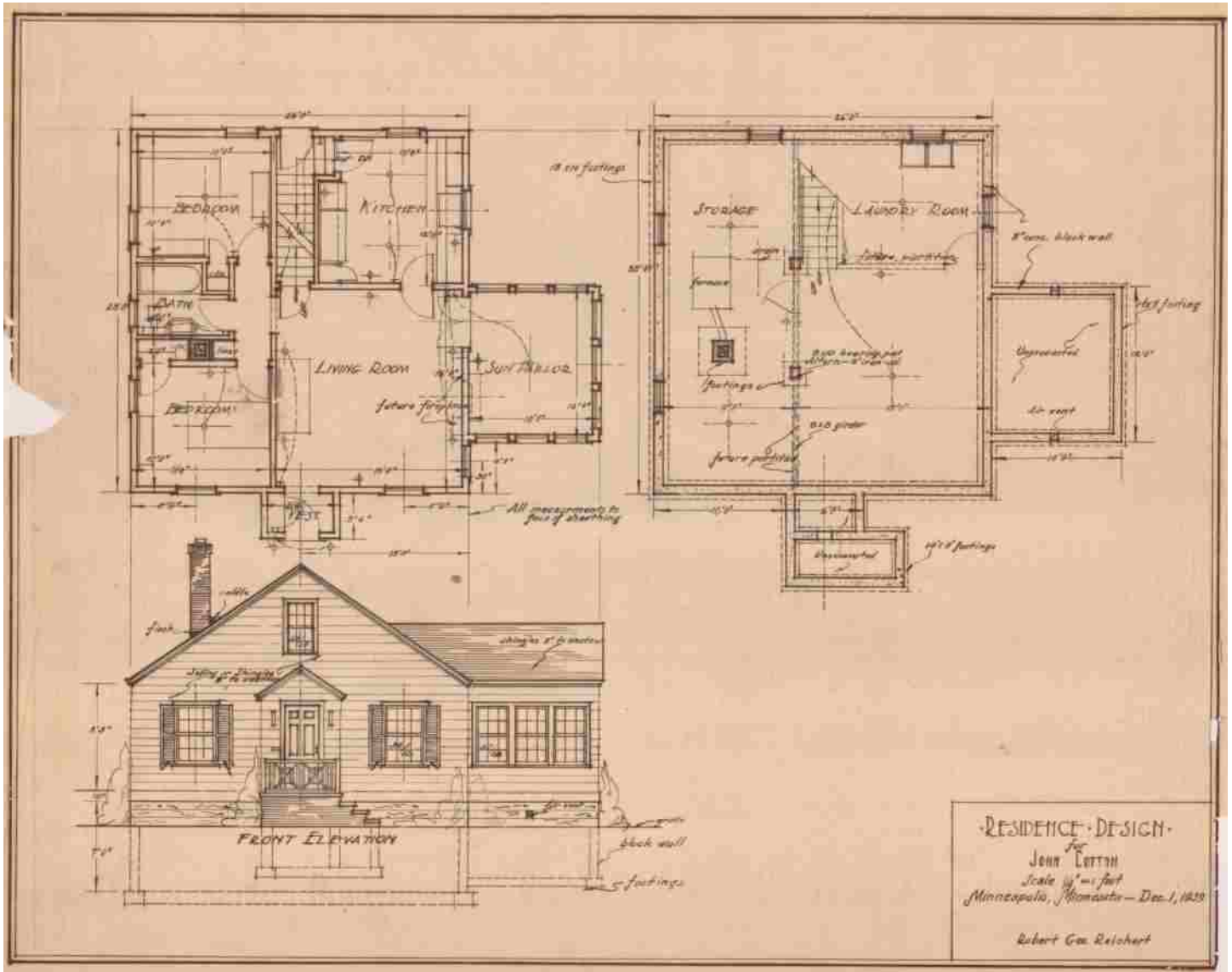
While a student at Bryant Middle School, Reichert began creating quarter inch scale models of the houses published in "house of the month" sections of newspapers and popular magazines. He learned from the study of architectural images and began creating buildings

of his own, eventually accumulating more than one hundred models. He laid the models out on a board in an imaginary city plan, a model twelve feet by sixteen feet, which was exhibited at his school. The project was published in his school paper, *The Bryant Times*, on April 15, 1936, in which Reichert was described as “an exceptional architect besides being a great musician,” and also in a *Minneapolis Journal* newspaper photograph, in which Reichert described the “city” as having all services but no jail as “no vice would occur in this city” (2.5).<sup>21</sup>

Reichert attended Central High School in Minneapolis and, as a freshman, obtained his first real jobs. The young musician performed as a church organist and at the same time obtained a draftsman job in the office of Clyde W. Smith, a Minneapolis architect and himself a member of the Christian Science religion.<sup>22</sup> Smith’s growing practice was awarded increasingly large revival style projects, most significantly the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Mason City, Iowa (2.6).<sup>23</sup> When clients arrived with small residential projects, Smith gave Reichert the opportunity to complete these jobs with a high degree of independence.<sup>24</sup> As a high school senior in 1939, Reichert designed the Roy Wallin and John Cotton houses in Minneapolis (2.7). These were certainly extraordinary opportunities for a teenage designer with no



**2.6** Photograph of 1st Church of Christ, Scientist, in Mason City, Iowa. Designed by Clyde W. Smith and constructed in 1928. Photograph by Robert Reichert, 1942. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39849).



formal architectural education. Robert graduated from Central High School in June 1939, the caption for his yearbook portrait proclaiming, “Boy, can he ever tickle the ivories.”<sup>25</sup>

Reichert enrolled at the University of Minnesota in 1939 to study architecture, and continued to work in the Smith office. Reichert described his experience at Minnesota with his typically intense focus:

2.7 Design by Robert Reichert for the John Cotton residence, drawing dated December 1, 1939. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW37575).

It was an impressive surrounding of Cass Gilbert classical buildings, one of which was Northrop Auditorium and its 4,500 plush seats and 110 stop magnificent organ which I was looking forward to playing (students not allowed), a university comfortably crowded, 30,000 students, the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra with Dmitri Mitropoulos conductor, all mixed up with the bitter, cold winters and hot, humid summers of Minneapolis. As to the school of architecture, I managed to do well in spite of my natural feelings against modern architecture, mostly because of a willingness to listen and absorb the knowledge and opinions of those superior in background and position. How well I remember Professor Huchthausen and others telling us not to try to make beautiful buildings but to organize the function and other requirements only, and that whatever would be left is OK, nothing for beauty or art's sake. All difficult to swallow.<sup>26</sup>

During his undergraduate years, Reichert continued to play organ professionally at several churches, and noted his initial uncertainty playing at denominations different “from his own upbringing” in the Church of Christ, Scientist. He played in the North Methodist Church,<sup>27</sup> Sacred Heart Church, St. Matthew’s Episcopalian and in



2.8 Design by Robert Reichert for the J. Lundstrom residence, drawing dated June 28, 1941. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW38901).



the Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, in Minneapolis.<sup>28</sup>

In 1941, Reichert completed the design for a single family house for his own client, J. Lundstrom. Simply signed, “Robert Reichert-Designer,” the drawings do not credit the Smith office (2.8). The design is for a traditional, two story, single gabled house with two upstairs bedrooms located over the entry and kitchen, and a larger ground floor plan with public spaces.

The economic stagnation in the United States following the Great Depression took its toll on the Reichert family and consequently, Robert was forced to withdraw from the university on June 13, 1941, after completing the spring term.<sup>29</sup> Not interested in military service, he interviewed with a traveling representative of the Boeing Company for a drafting position in Seattle, supporting the massive war manufacturing effort. In need of funds, Reichert accepted the job, resigned his organist position, and boarded a train for the Pacific Northwest, armed with letters of recommendation to obtain similar work playing the organ in Seattle. Reichert’s parents followed him to Seattle, moving the household to a rental house in the Queen Anne neighborhood.

Robert Reichert went to work at Boeing in 1941, also playing organ for various churches including the Third Church of Christ, Scientist, in the University District (1943) and finally obtaining a permanent position at the new Eleventh Church near the Greenlake neighborhood (1944-1945) (2.9). Reichert was passionate about his hobbies, and taking part in them provided a social network. Through his organ practice, church involvement and activities such as working on and riding his Harley Davidson motorcycle in the Seattle area, Reichert formed relationships that would eventually provide the clientele and the building types for his design practice.

Reichert found Seattle to be a city of natural beauty and mild climate, but lacking the historical built environment and cultural



life he appreciated:

Absent were and still are the things I love so much to see through my day, inspiring buildings and monuments, almost no churches (only 18% of the county population being affiliated with a church) and no civic need or appreciation of cultural activities. I longed for the end of the war and an opportunity to return to school.<sup>30</sup>

There is a gap in Reichert's archive of architectural projects for the period between 1941 and 1945. During this time, Reichert met Royal McClure, a Seattle architect also working as a draftsman at Boeing during the war years and who would have had similar academic and practical training to Reichert's. McClure would graduate from the Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1946 and, like Reichert, later, would also work for Samuel Glaser in Boston (1945-1946).<sup>31</sup>

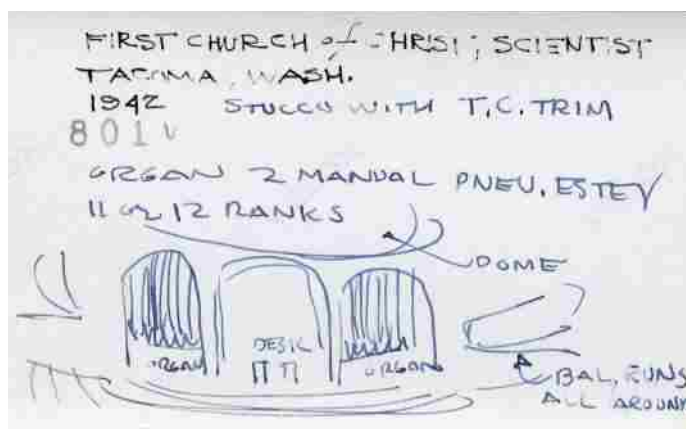
**2.9** 11th Church of Christ, Scientist, Greenlake neighborhood, Seattle (Tennys Bellamy, architect, 1942). Photograph by Robert Reichert, 1942. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39856).

In 1945, Reichert made preparations to move back to Minneapolis

to complete his undergraduate degree in architecture. He resigned his organist position and received a letter from Eleventh Church in Seattle dated July 30, 1945, thanking him and noting that “there has been healing in your work.”

The entire Reichert family returned to Minnesota in October 1945. During their drive back across the country, the Reicherts visited many buildings, and Robert began documenting Christian Scientist churches, an activity he would continue throughout his life.<sup>32</sup> He carefully annotated his own photographs, describing each building’s architectural features as well as the type and style of organ housed inside, revealing a strong motivation and preparation to become a church designer (2.10). Through the late 1940s, Reichert’s notes and photographic records show his continuing architectural reconnaissance, riding his Harley Davidson thousands of miles each year, documenting important buildings, often churches and particularly churches with organs. His visits focused on emerging modern architecture in the West, where the growth of the Church of Christ, Scientist, had followed the western population boom; these examples tended to be less traditional in style and less compact in plan than the earlier, urban examples in the eastern and midwestern American cities. Most of Reichert’s photographs, like

2.10 1st Church of Christ, Scientist, Tacoma (Fredrick Heath, architect, 1908-1911). Photograph and annotations on reverse by Robert Reichert, 1942. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39857).



**2.11** Self-portrait by Reichert with his Oldsmobile in front of a factory building at Lake Minnetonka, Minneapolis, Minnesota, October 1947. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39453).

**2.12** Facade of Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, Minneapolis (Rollin Chapin, architect). Photograph by Robert Reichert, December 1947.



his drawings, also feature automobiles. (2.11).

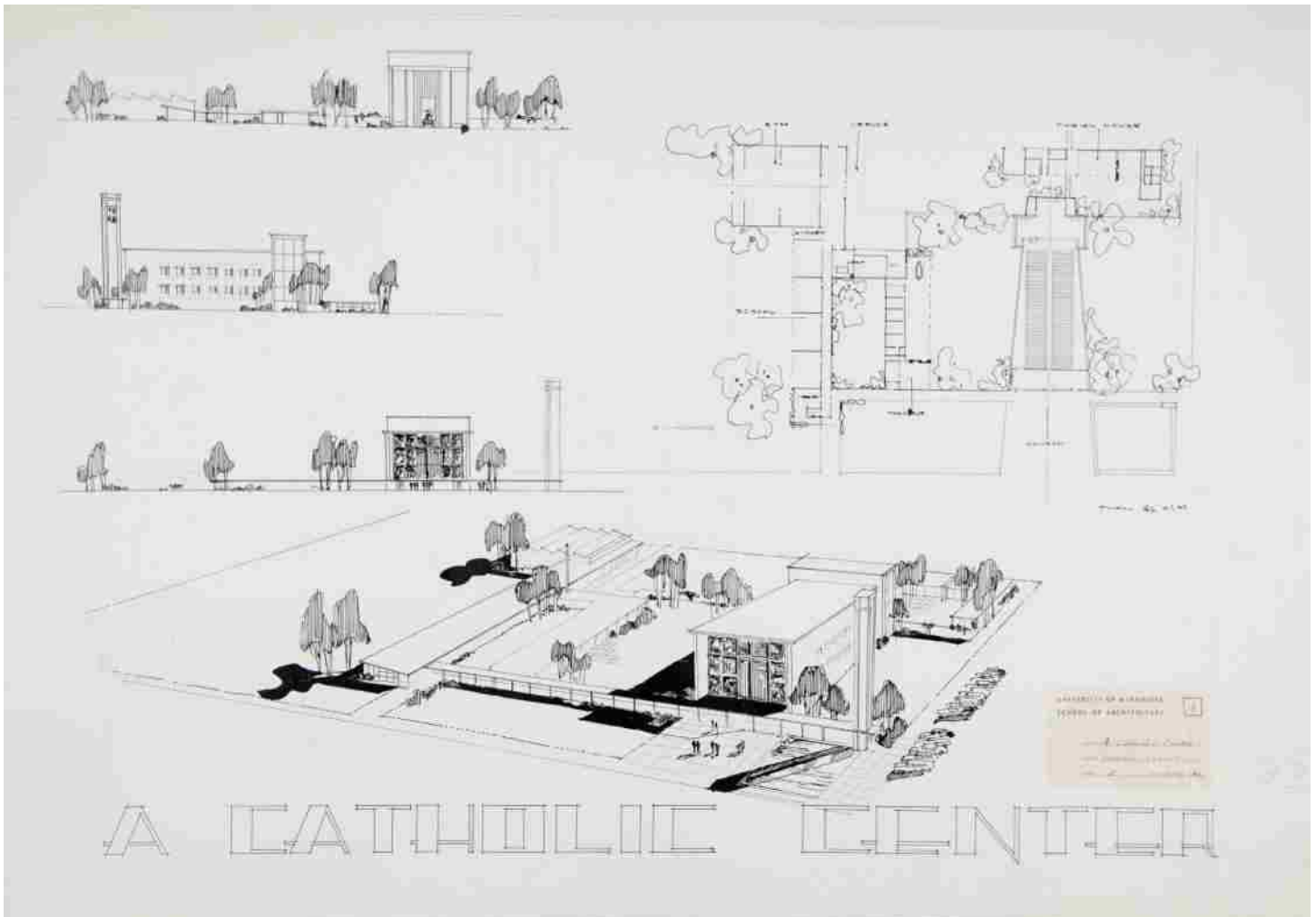
Upon his return to Minnesota, Reichert continued his organ study with Arthur Bates Jennings, an individual he rarely mentioned in his notes, but who must have been inspirational to him because Jennings was an organist who had also had a prior career as an architect.<sup>33</sup> Reichert continued to earn funds for university tuition by playing organ at several churches, including Second Church of Christ, Scientist, in St. Paul in 1946 and Fifth Church of Christ, Scientist, in Minneapolis in 1947 (2.12).<sup>34</sup> Reichert received credits in the Music Department for his organ practice.<sup>35</sup>

Reichert's undergraduate projects from Minnesota exhibit a facility with both design and presentation. Several projects reveal themes that would be revisited later in his career as a sole practitioner. In winter term 1945-1946, Reichert designed a "Catholic Center," a suburban complex of structures linked by a u-shaped, shed roof-covered walkway that included a church, gymnasium, school and parish house (2.13). The double-height sanctuary with a trapezoidal plan and a shed roof that sloped toward the chancel provided a dominant focus and an anchor for the smaller volumes of the other elements of the complex. He received a score of 230 on the project.<sup>36</sup> A watercolor rendering of the interior of "A Student

Union Lounge” in 1945-1946 depicts an attractive, colorful room enclosed by terra cotta walls and featuring modern furnishings with an elevated performance space with a piano. The lounge opens to a south-facing patio with large plate glass windows in metal frames (2.14). Reichert’s experimentation with color is noteworthy in this project. During his career, he limited himself to a palette of black, white and gray, with the occasional accent of Chinese red. Reichert received a score of 200 on this project.

A third student project was more recently published in the University of Minnesota School of Architecture’s 2013 volume, *100 Years of Student Drawings*. Reichert’s 1947 project was for a Forest

2.13 Reichert’s student work at University of Minnesota, “A Catholic Center,” 1945-1946 (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39863).



2.14 Reichert's student work at University of Minnesota, "A Student Union Lounge," 1945-1946 (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39864).



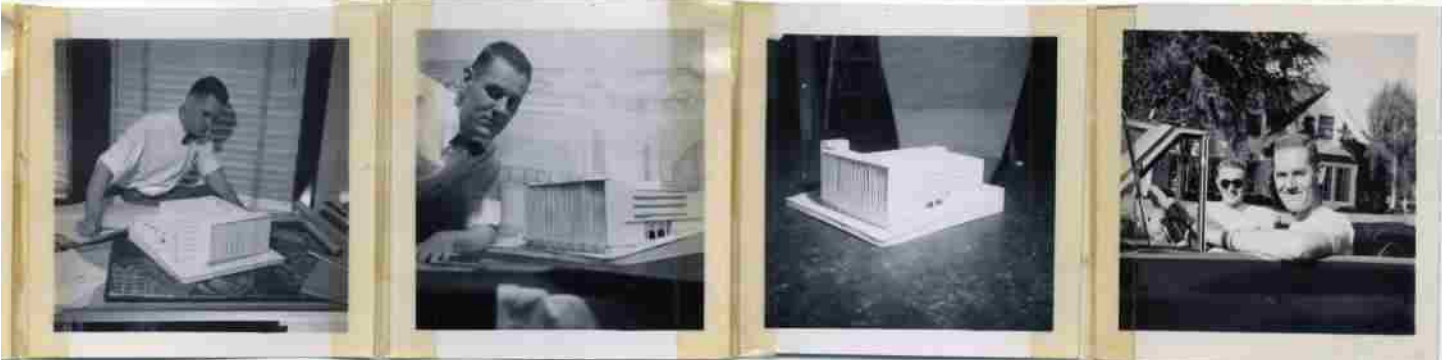
Ranger's Camp (2.15).<sup>37</sup> The fanciful watercolor drawing features an aerial perspective with an observation tower seemingly perched high above the ground on a ladder, structurally in compression, stabilized by three guy wires fastening it to the ground. In the drawing, a helicopter approaches a clearing in the forest below, bordered by the widened, shallow V-shaped form of the building. The drawing's futuristic themes prefigure popular design ideas of the 1950s, which celebrated technology, transportation, flight and other ideas of the period: Flat roof, extensive horizontal cantilever, angled wall at the far end of the hangar (visible in both the perspective and the section at the top of the drawing). Architectural ideas investigated in this early drawing would later appear in some of Reichert's roadside commercial designs for a boat sales yard, drive-through restaurants and food kiosks for the 1962 Seattle World's Fair. The drawing received a score of 250.

Robert Reichert completed his Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1947. His final thesis project was revealing in its program as well as its design and presentation. The design was for a Christian Science church (2.16). The interior perspectives included a detailed view of the pipe organ. Not revealing the designer's appreciation for eclectic or revival style architecture, the spartan design is highly reminiscent of the early European functionalists with horizontal strip windows and its subtractive form derived from a clear, S-shaped diagram (2.17, 2.18). The project was rendered in ink on white paper in a manner typical of the modernist era. Review of Reichert's Minnesota transcripts reveals his success in those subjects that most interested him: design and music. He was less successful in other subjects, receiving D's in Math, English and Professional Practice.<sup>38</sup>

After graduation on December 18, 1947, Reichert and his parents returned to their Queen Anne neighborhood in Seattle, feeling that there would be better opportunities for a young architect in



2.15 Reichert's student work at University of Minnesota, "Forest Rangers Camp," 1947, from *100 Years of Student Drawings*, University of Minneapolis, 2013.



**2.16** A series of snapshots of Reichert posing with his presentation model for his University of Minnesota undergraduate thesis project, “A Christian Science Church,” 1947. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39851, UW39852, UW39853, UW39854).

**2.17** Reichert’s University of Minnesota undergraduate thesis project, cover sheet and exterior perspective in ink, 1947. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39866).

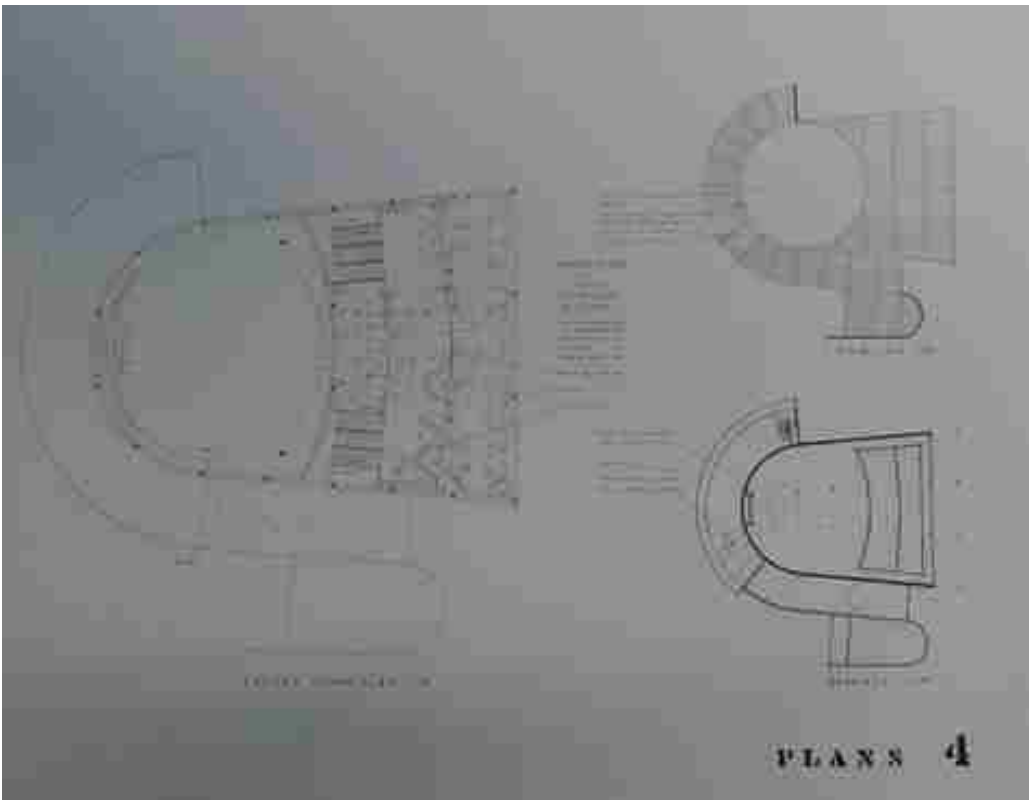
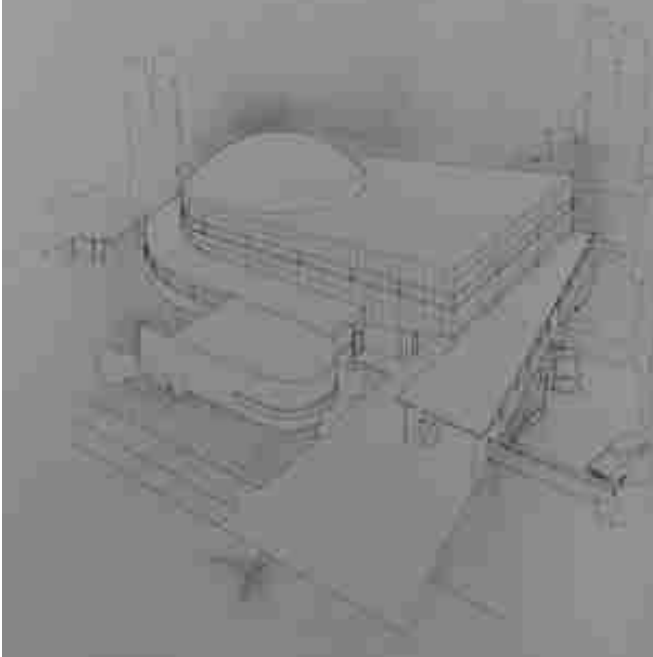
**2.18** Reichert’s University of Minnesota undergraduate thesis project, floor plans, in ink, 1947. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39871).



A CHRISTIANIA HOUSES: CLUB HOUSE

AN UNDERGRADUATE  
THESIS  
SUBMITTED  
BY  
ROBERT G. HEICHERT  
DECEMBER 15, 1947

SCHOOL  
OF  
ARCHITECTURE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF  
MINNESOTA



**2.19** Raymond Huff house, designed 1948, exterior view. Photograph by Robert Reichert, c. 1960. (UW College of Built Environments Visual Resources Collection).

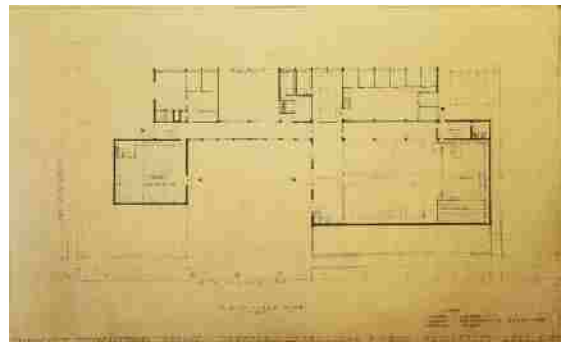
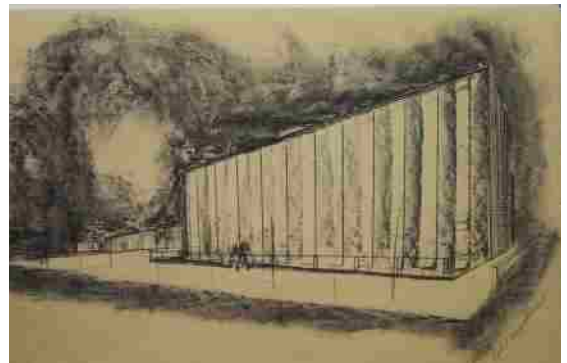


the rapidly growing Pacific Northwest.<sup>39</sup> He took a job in the office of Bebb and Jones, the successor office to the prominent Seattle partnership of Charles Bebb and Carl F. Gould. By the time Reichert joined this office, Charles Bebb had already died and the firm became known as Jones and Bindon when John Paul Jones partnered in 1947 with Leonard Bindon.<sup>40</sup> Bebb and Jones had become a large office known for completing significant projects in the emerging modernist style. A decade later, the office of Bindon and Wright would partner with Skidmore, Owings and Merrill on one of the earliest and finest International Style office buildings in Seattle, the Norton Building.<sup>41</sup> As a young and experienced designer at Bebb and Jones, Reichert was responsible for the design of the Raymond J. Huff house, an expensive, modern house for a prominent client in Normandy Park (2.19).<sup>42</sup> In 1949, he worked with Leonard Bindon on a design for the University Congregational Church. Reichert's unique graphite rendering technique is reflected in all of the drawings, and the church, although now altered, remains a landmark in Seattle's University District (2.20- 2.22). Reichert also "moonlighted" during this time, assisting William Carnes Wherrette (a University of Washington

**2.20** University Congregational Church (Bebb & Jones, architects, 1949), northwest corner of NE 45th Street and 16th Avenue NE - the Leonard Bindon design is still recognizable even with the courtyard infill. Photograph by Robert Reichert. (UW College of Built Environments Visual Resources Collection).

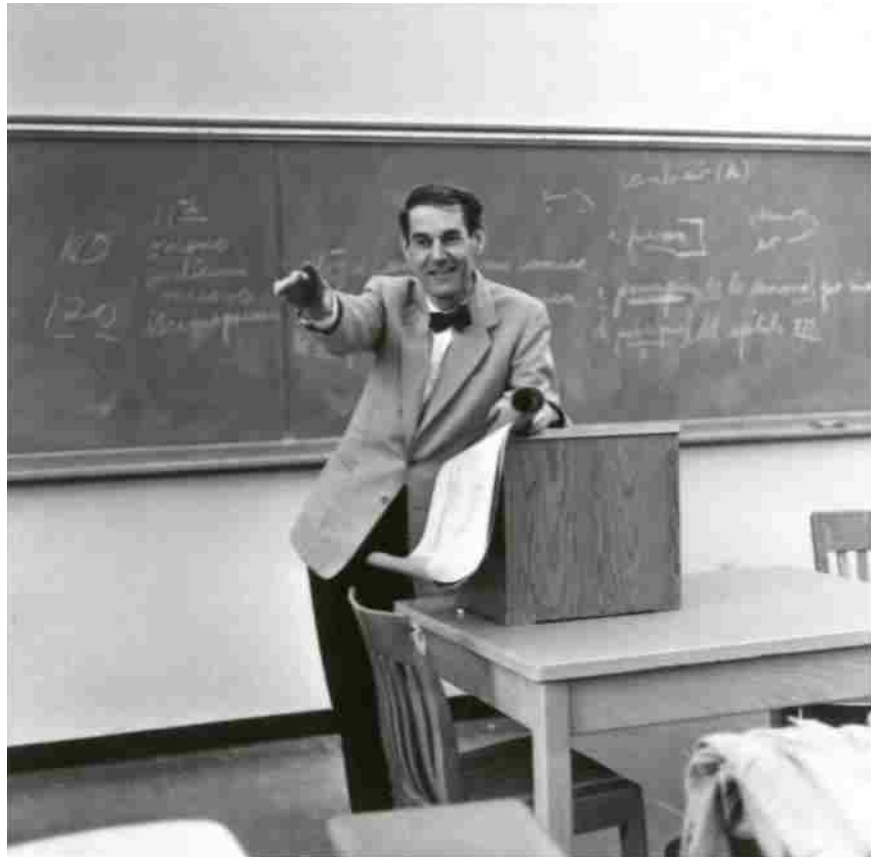
**2.21** University Congregational Church, (Bebb & Jones, architects, 1949), exterior perspective. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39867).

**2.22** University Congregational Church, (Bebb & Jones, architects, 1949), ground floor plan. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39868).



School of Architecture faculty member) on the John Sweet residence. Reichert took the week-long Washington State Architect Registration Examination in 1949 and was one of twelve who passed out of the 120 who sat for the exam.<sup>43</sup>

In the fall term, 1948, Reichert was hired for the first time to teach architectural design in the School of Architecture at the University of Washington (2.23).<sup>44</sup> His hiring came at a time when there was an intense need for architectural instructors at the university.<sup>45</sup> His teaching record indicates a position as “Acting Instructor, part time, in Architecture” from September 1948 until December 1949.<sup>46</sup> He enjoyed the interaction with students, often visiting the studio late at night to give desk critiques, or meeting students in coffee shops to discuss their progress.<sup>47</sup> During this time, he also performed a construction management role for several Bebb and Jones projects for new buildings on the university campus, including the Student



2.23 Robert Reichert lecturing at University of Washington. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39454).

Union Building (now the Husky Union Building or HUB).<sup>48</sup> In reflecting on his teaching experience, Reichert noted that:

The school had undergone a metamorphosis in changing from a traditional outlook to the then (for them) new and modern one; the entire staff was on the modern bandwagon all at once, in spite of what was in my opinion a misconception of modern design. I was left to feel as an unwanted, self-styled dissenter.<sup>49</sup>

After World War II, Beaux Arts based educational pedagogies were being challenged throughout the United States by the intense demand for trained architects. The Bauhaus provided a standardized model that emulated the productive methods of corporate offices. In 1948, Lionel Pries's traditional influence on the University of Washington department was declining as the department was rapidly adapting the new ideas for architectural education. In time, and with the hiring of significant faculty members like Daniel Streissguth and Keith Kolb in the early 1950s, the conflict between Pries and Lancelot Gowen and the younger modernist faculty would yield a program known for its unique hybrid of traditional and modern pedagogies.<sup>50</sup>

There are many common elements in Robert Reichert's and Lionel Pries's professional and personal lives. Significantly, Reichert would have been present for the final teaching of Pries's long-offered and extremely popular "History of Architectural Ornament" class in 1947-1948.<sup>51</sup> Reichert's own work would soon exhibit a strong sense of merging historical motifs and ornament with tight, rational building forms. Reichert also would have observed Pries, also an unmarried faculty member, merging his personal time with his responsibilities as an instructor, offering after-hours assistance and dropping by the school on weekends or to join students in watercolor painting.<sup>52</sup> Reichert had a similar appreciation for art and music; both architects were skilled musicians and would attract musicians as clients. Both of them also designed holiday cards and



**2.24** Robert Reichert posing on his motorcycle in front of the steam schooner, Tongass, c. 1957.

**2.25** House for Mr. and Mrs. G. B. Reichert, December 17, 1948, perspective. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW37574).

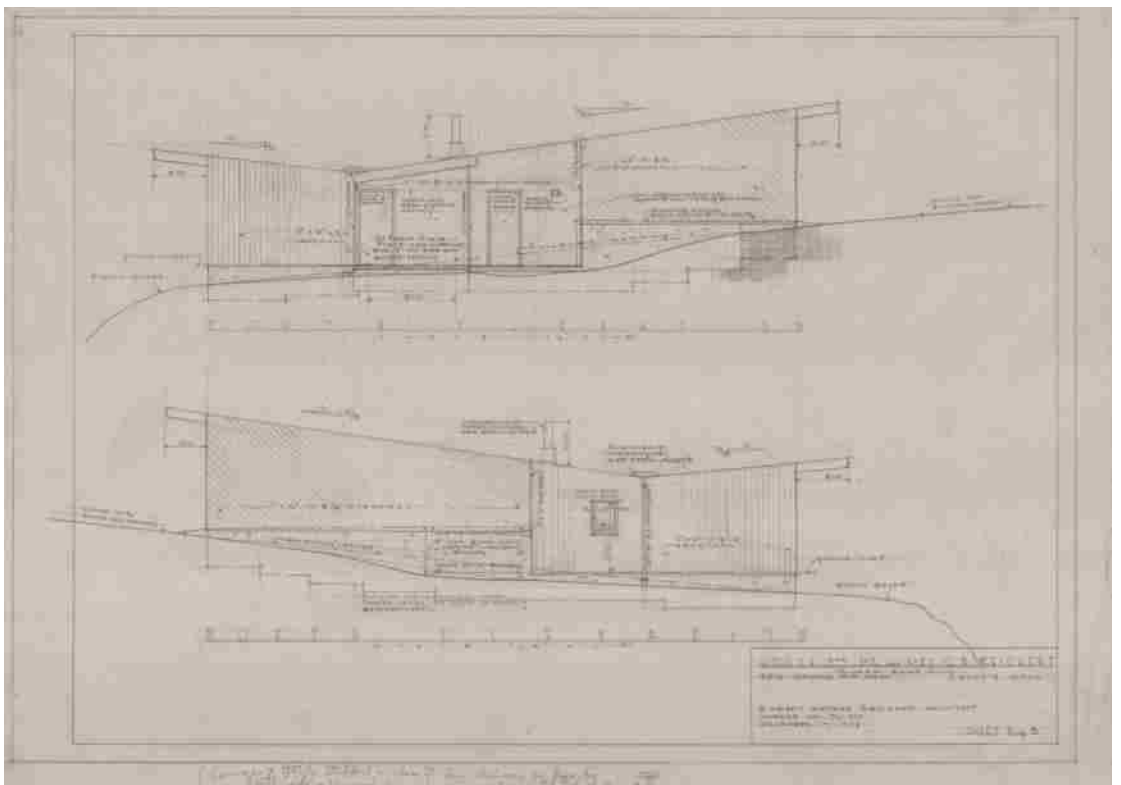
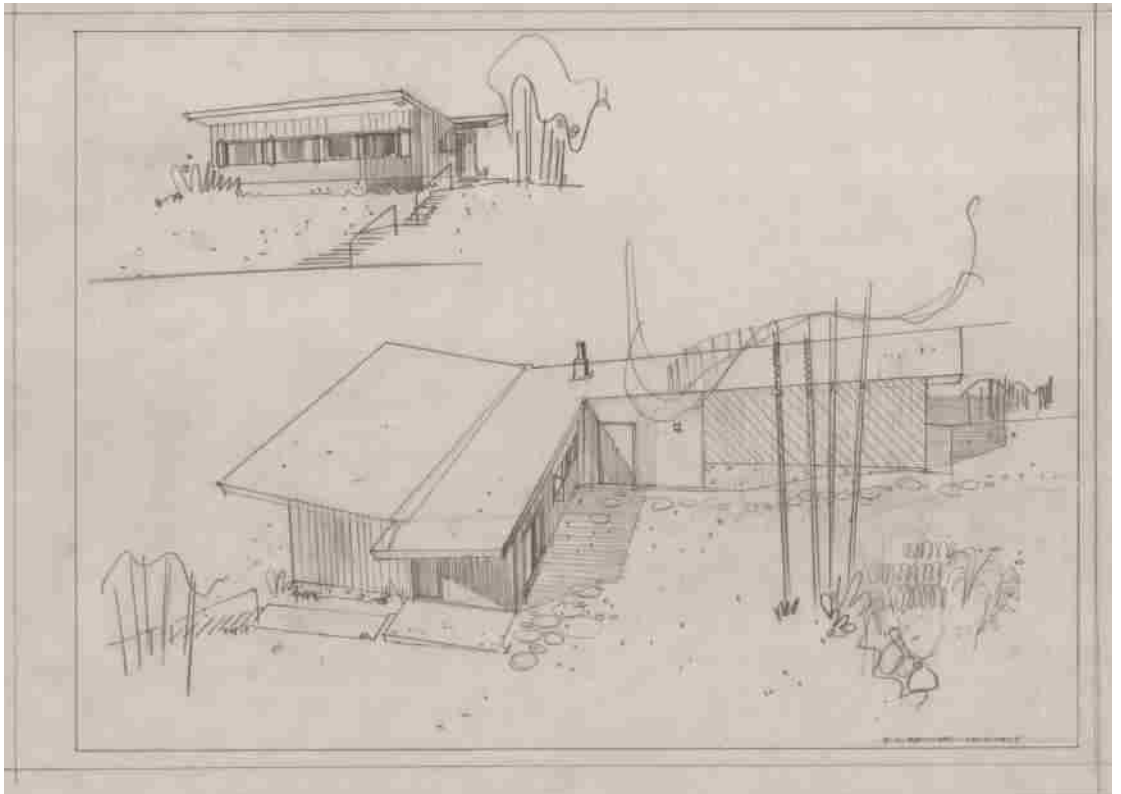
**2.26** House for Mr. and Mrs. G. B. Reichert, December 17, 1948, north and south elevations. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW37572).

musical programs. Both enjoyed the dramatic spectacle of dressing up for studio or events. Pries was known to wear a Japanese dressing gown for student seminars in his home,<sup>53</sup> while Reichert diligently recorded his daily fashion choices in his journal and was most remembered for regularly showing up after midnight to visit his students, rolling up on his massive Harley Davidson motorcycle, dressed in full steel-studded leathers, a dramatic contrast from the formal dark suit, white dress shirt and narrow, black tie he wore during the day (2.24).<sup>54</sup>

Busy as an instructor and working on increasingly complex projects for his employer, Reichert also continued his freelance work. Beginning in late 1948, he designed a house for his parents on property at 2514 Second Avenue West on Queen Anne Hill. The simple, modern house, L-shaped in plan, was designed to perch at the top of a site that rose steeply from the sidewalk. It featured a butterfly roof which responded to the changing slope of the site (2.25 - 2.26).

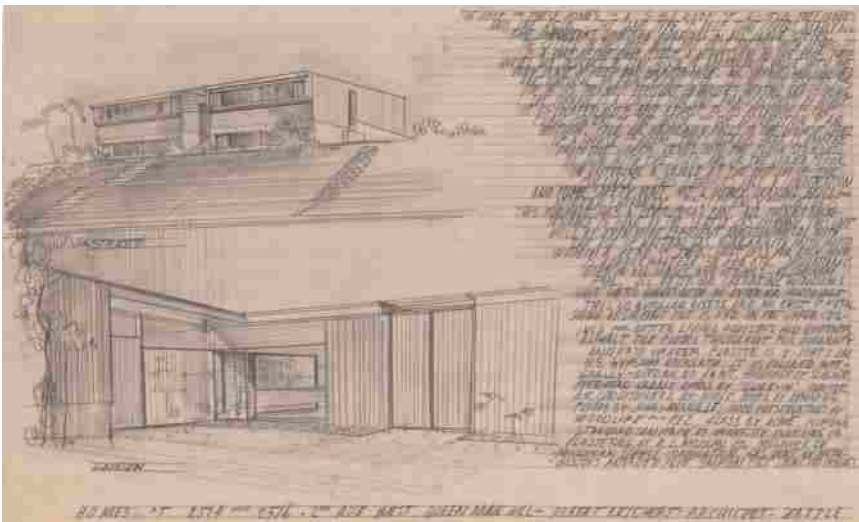
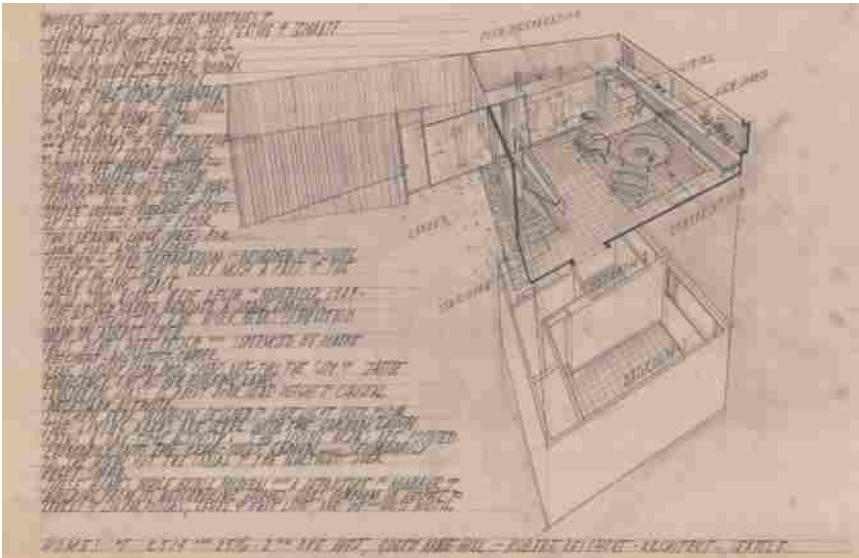
It is unclear why the house was not constructed, or how Reichert himself came to own the large lot, but the house design for Bernard and Tillie Reichert (drawings dated December 17, 1948) soon became a design for a pair of rental houses for Robert Reichert, himself, according to drawings beginning in October 1949. Later, Reichert would claim that the pair of rental houses was designed for an absentee client named Mrs. Norvel, who lived in Hawaii.<sup>55</sup> The revised design added a second building, which mirrored the first house in plan, and the two shared an entry stair from the street below (2.27). The main living spaces of the houses were on the upper floor, with private bedrooms built into the hillside below. The presentation drawing set seems to indicate that he entered the project in a competition, based on his descriptions on the features of the design as noted on the drawing borders:

Designed for maximum openness and lightness, economy,

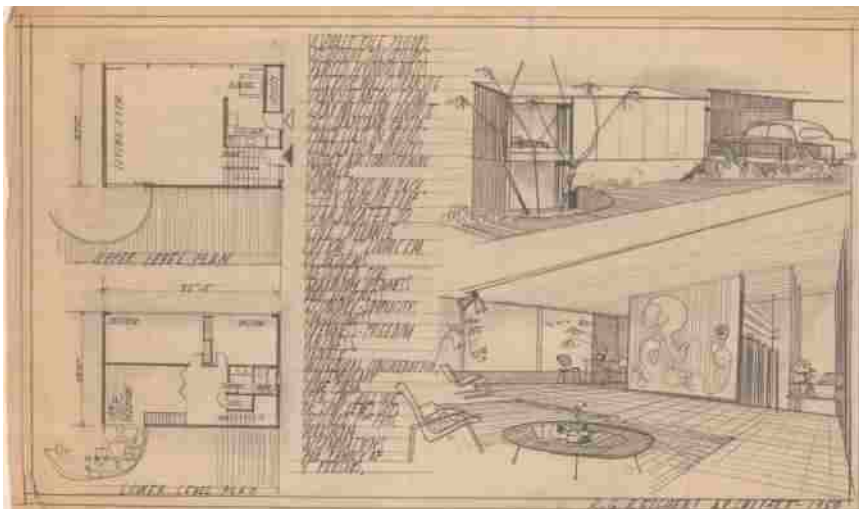








2.27 Two houses at 2514 and 2516 Second Avenue West, November 10, 1949, perspective facing street. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW37524).



2.28 Homes at 2514 and 2516 Second Avenue West, c. December 1950, Exploded axonometric, text block. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW37528).

2.29 Homes at 2514 and 2516 Second Avenue West, c. December 1950, exterior perspective and courtyard perspective, with descriptive text block. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW37527).

2.30 Homes at 2514 and 2516 Second Avenue West, c. December 1950, Interior and exterior perspectives and floor plans with descriptive text block. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW37526).

simplicity, spaciousness, openness-freedom, airiness.  
Privacy, individual consideration, contemporary, pure form.  
Designed for 1950.



**2.31** Homes at 2514 and 2516 Second Avenue West, c. December 1950, Interior perspective. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW37523).

The drawings are remarkable, with rich rendering and with the large blocks of text in graphite on trace paper serving as borders, framing the sheets (2.28 - 2.30). The houses were designed to exhibit the natural colors and textures of their materials, with polished concrete comprising the lower floor surfaces, fir floors upstairs, stained cedar exterior siding and natural wood built-ins (2.31 - 2.32). The houses survive in 2019, although the natural, unfinished cedar material siding has been painted over. The project was published around 1950 in a National Gas Association trade publication promoting natural gas for heating and appliances (2.33).

By 1950, Reichert may have felt frustrated by his brief teaching experience and by the knowledge that he possessed the professional competency to practice design according to his own inspirations. Reichert later reflected on his own undergraduate experience, recalling that he was,

Brought up at the University of Minnesota without being allowed exposure to other than rationalist concepts, and in this way it is today where I have taught at the University of Washington, and this must be broken.<sup>56</sup>

With this reflection, Reichert suggests for the first time a motivation to challenge the prevailing ideas in architectural design and education.<sup>57</sup> Reichert applied to graduate schools, hoping to attend the Graduate School of Design at Harvard, an institution under the leadership of Walter Gropius that was providing a model for the emerging modernist curricula that allowed architecture schools throughout the United States to rapidly grow in order to address the post-war expansion. Harvard might seem an odd choice for Reichert, but he recalled meeting Gropius previously



2.32 Homes at 2514 and 2516 Second Avenue West, c. December 1950, View from street, photograph by Robert Reichert, c. 1952. (UW College of Built Environments, Visual Resources Collection).

2.33 Brochure for houses at 2514 and 2516 Second Avenue West. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections).

and knowing that Harvard was the “school and environment” he wanted.<sup>58</sup> Most likely, Reichert knew the school to be at the forefront of architectural education. Harvard offered a prestigious degree that would allow him to pursue his teaching and practice. He submitted letters of recommendation from his employers, John Paul Jones and Leonard Bindon, as well as the director of the Architecture Department at University of Washington, Arthur Herrman. He was not initially accepted to Harvard and so considered his acceptance letters from M.I.T. and Yale. His luck changed, however, when “almost on the very day I was to leave, I received a telegram from Dr. Gropius to come immediately as there had been a cancellation and he was holding a place.” Reichert drove to Boston in his Oldsmobile convertible and matriculated in fall 1950 (2.34).

Reichert described his time at Harvard as “very busy, nervous, overloaded, fantastically interesting.”<sup>59</sup> He lived in a Cambridge apartment across from the Harvard faculty club<sup>60</sup> and described his daily routine as beginning with an early morning ride on his Harley Davidson (having traded his Oldsmobile for a motorcycle),



**2.34** Reichert with his car in Queen Anne, preparing to leave for Harvard. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39869).

then “around eight to school or to Glaser & Gray’s office in Copley Plaza, back to the square at noon, lunch and conduct my affairs, and then to school for the entire afternoon, sometimes back again at 5 or 6 to the office and work there until midnight.”<sup>61</sup> His internship with Glaser & Gray, a prominent firm with offices in Boston and Washington, D.C.,<sup>62</sup> allowed him to travel throughout the Northeast, and inspired additional trips to visit significant older buildings as well as new buildings designed by Gropius’ community of modernists. He may have obtained this position through the recommendation of his Seattle friend and architect, Royal McClure, who had previously worked for Glaser while completing his own studies at Harvard.<sup>63</sup> Reichert was assigned to work on large projects, including apartments (Commonwealth Avenue Apartments) and a public housing development (Dorchester Housing for Boston Housing Authority) in Boston and institutional buildings in Cuba (Planarc Housing) and Washington, D.C.<sup>64</sup>

During one motorcycle trip to Quebec, Reichert described the “rich and wonderful” region, enjoying the traditional stone architecture and especially the authentic church bell towers: “The sound of the bells carry up and down the river for great distances, so very wonderful. It is my most lingering memory of that trip.”<sup>65</sup>

Reichert took most of his tours alone, reveling in the curiosity he created in touring the country on his large, American motorcycle,

Sometimes believing that this is the only way to travel, and much of it by motorcycle so that I was really a part of it all, not only visually but socially in every coffee shop in every town in which I would stop, as everybody, I suppose, likes to stop and ask questions about a motorcycle when it is bright and shiny.<sup>66</sup>

Reichert’s daily routines would continue into his own professional practice, always incorporating rides on his motorcycle, engaging friends while sketching design ideas in coffee shops, diners and fast

food restaurants, returning home to lunch and work and ending the work day with another late night tour on his motorcycle.

Reichert's year in the Gropius Master Studio at Harvard (1950-1951) involved group studio projects. After his first project at Harvard, consisting of a collaborative project designing a building for the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, D.C. (2.35), Gropius invited Reichert and his cohort to a dinner party at his home in Lincoln, Massachusetts. Reichert's notes from this event reveal a sense of wonder in finding himself dining at the Gropius house. He took notes on some of Gropius' statements during the dinner:

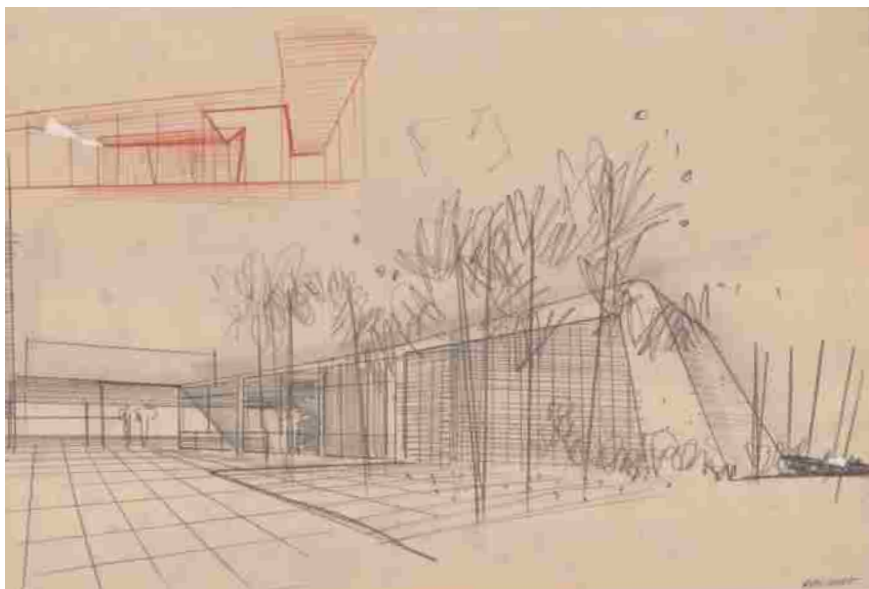
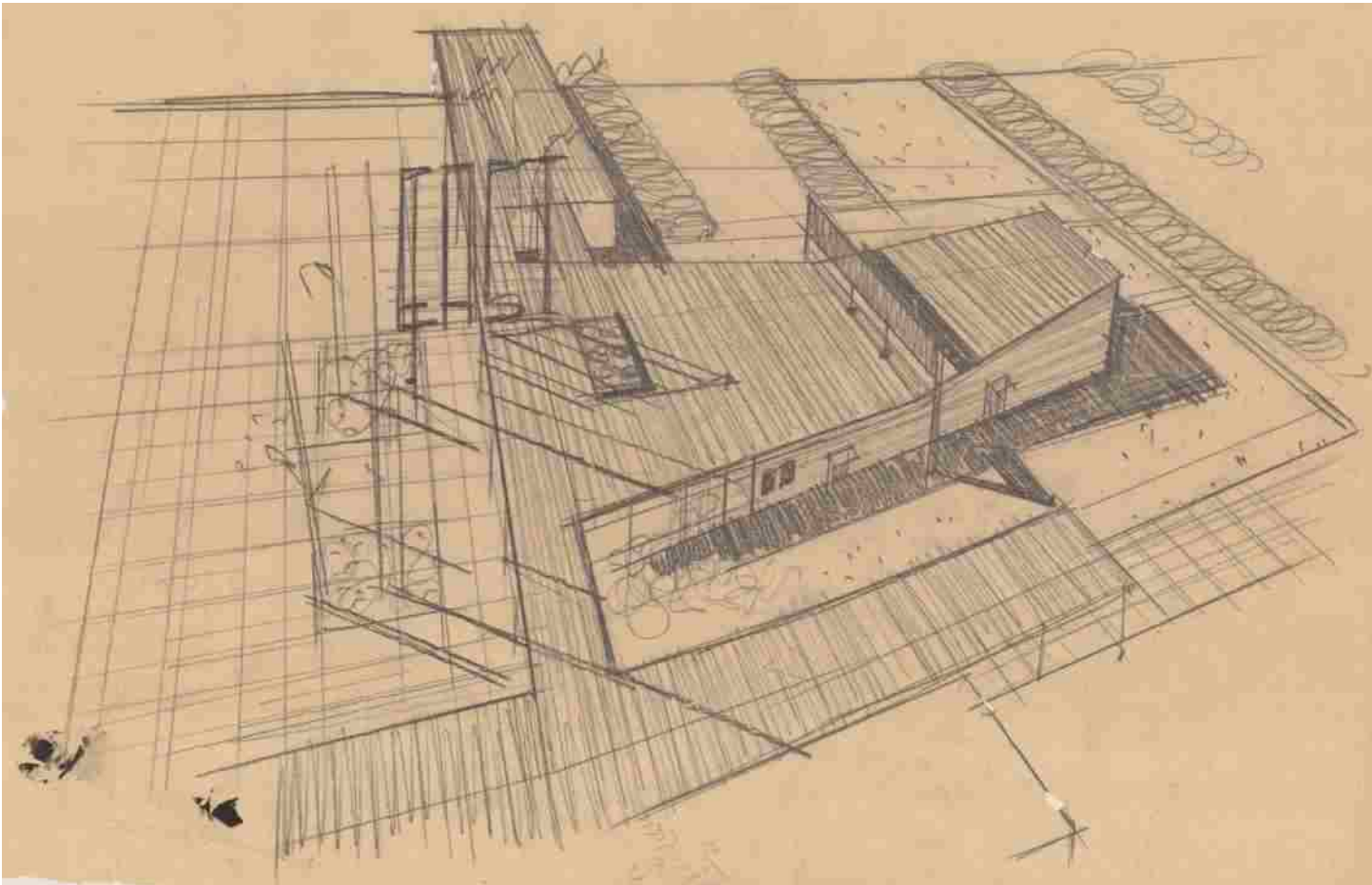
Seek to find your ability, your own special abilities, along the lines of things you like to do, and develop these things. It is these abilities on which you can progress. Stick to what you know is right, no matter what it costs one temporarily, loss of a commission or other. In the end you will be repaid. I have gained and not suffered what I knew to be right and I have stuck to it.

Gropius also spoke on the group project studio pedagogy at Harvard: "It takes trust and love to make a collaborative group work and succeed. Love, that is it, nothing else." Reichert also noted comments by Mrs. Gropius: "Have you observed how birds flock together in times of need? There is natural cooperation."<sup>67</sup>

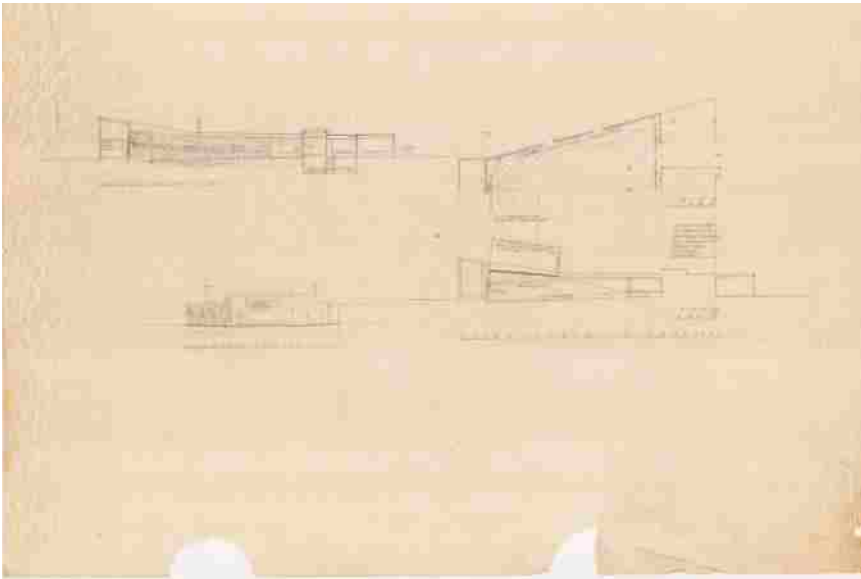
For the next project, Reichert was chosen the leader of a group of twelve to design a suburban complex of buildings, similar to a contemporary shopping mall.<sup>68</sup> Robert was responsible for the "Suburban Theater" component. (2.36 - 2.37). Development of this part of the building included the study of acoustics for an assembly space (2.38). It is clear from this study that the acoustical response generated the form of Reichert's theater. In section and in plan, it is a triangular space, a volumetric approach that Reichert would use in designing the shape of many of his buildings designed for music,



2.35 Model of building for American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington D.C., Harvard student project, 1950, photograph by Robert Reichert.





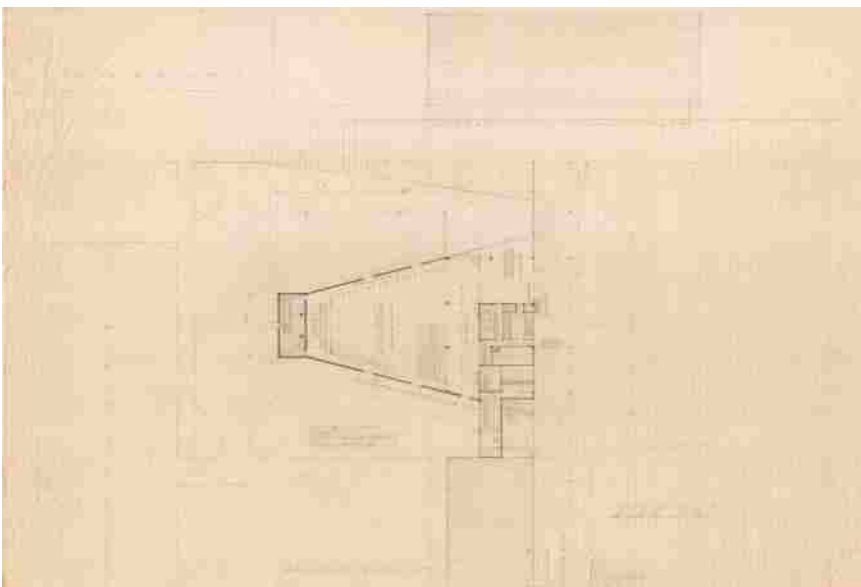


**2.36** Exterior study perspective drawings of theater, student project at Harvard, 1951. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW37577).

**2.37** Exterior study perspective drawings of theater, student project at Harvard, 1951. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW37578).

**2.38** Longitudinal and transverse sections and plan drawings of theater, showing acoustical analysis, student project at Harvard, 1951. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW37579).

**2.39** Floor plan of auditorium with adjacent buildings, student project at Harvard, 1951. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW3757980).



particularly his own house-studio and the Bellevue Christian Science church (2.39).

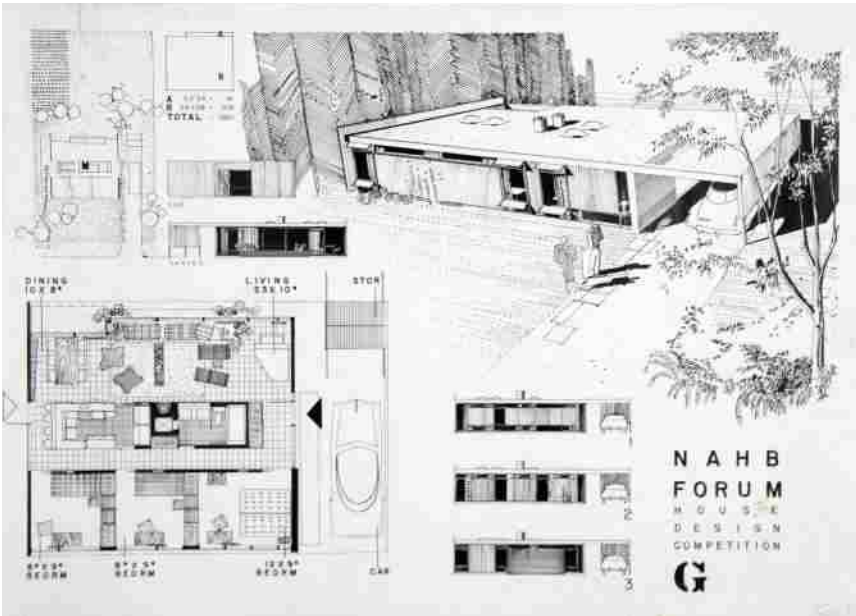
Prominent Seattle landscape architect Richard Haag, who was in Reichert's class, but in the landscape design program at Harvard, recalled Reichert to be an extremely prolific and talented designer.<sup>69</sup> According to Haag, Reichert would have several concepts fully developed for every one of his collaborators' schemes.<sup>70</sup>

Reichert maintained an interest in single family residential design while a student at Harvard. He visited 6 Moon Hill, a development of modern houses in Lexington, Massachusetts, designed by The Architects Collaborative (TAC), a group of young architects led by Gropius, and photographed the Jean and Norman Fletcher house (2.40). Reichert also entered the joint National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and *Architectural Forum* small house design competition in 1951. One of Reichert's Harvard classmates, Bruce Walker, won the competition and would eventually become a prominent architect in Spokane, Washington (2.41).

Reichert corresponded with Gropius even after his graduation (2.42) and must have considered his experience at Harvard a test and critique of his own romantic design ideas against the structured and disciplined, collaborative approach. Reichert recalled working



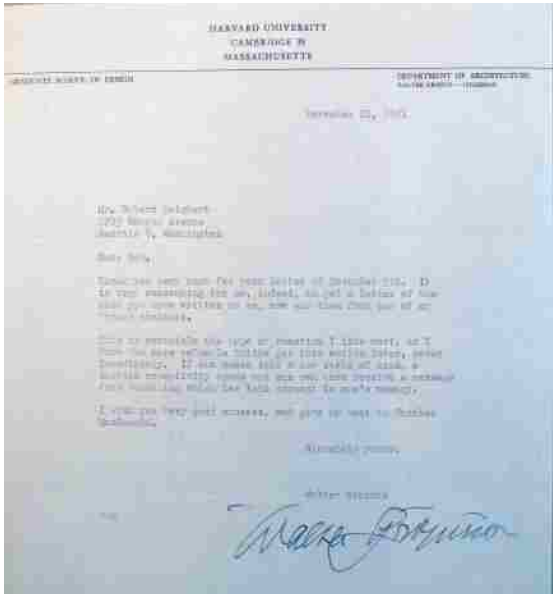
**2.40** Photograph taken by Reichert of the Jean and Norman Fletcher house (the architect's own home), Six Moon Hill, 1951. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39873).



2.41 Robert Reichert's entry in the 1951 NAHB and Architectural Forum small house design competition. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39881).

with “people of capability and understanding, which I had never found before.”<sup>71</sup>

Reichert drove home to Seattle in summer 1951 and took a job in the office of J. Lister Holmes, an architect who became noted for transitioning from the Beaux Arts to modernism.<sup>72</sup> Reichert thrived in the office, working on several large projects, including the Ancient Order of United Workmen (A.O.U.W.) building (1952) at 510 Dexter Avenue North (2.43).<sup>73</sup> He completed sketches for five alternate schemes. As built, the brick building is comprised of a low-flung and simple form, reflecting the industrial character of the neighborhood while standing apart in its unique composition and details. The primary facade reveals a fanciful play with window layout, and with its projecting parapet wall, Reichert clearly designed the signage to be a prominent architectural feature. This gesture presages his future roadside and commercial work. Reichert also began to attract attention for his rendering abilities and accepted additional freelance work as a delineator, creating drawings for Naramore, Bain, Brady & Johanson (predecessor to today's NBBJ), Bindon and Wright, and other firms.<sup>74</sup>

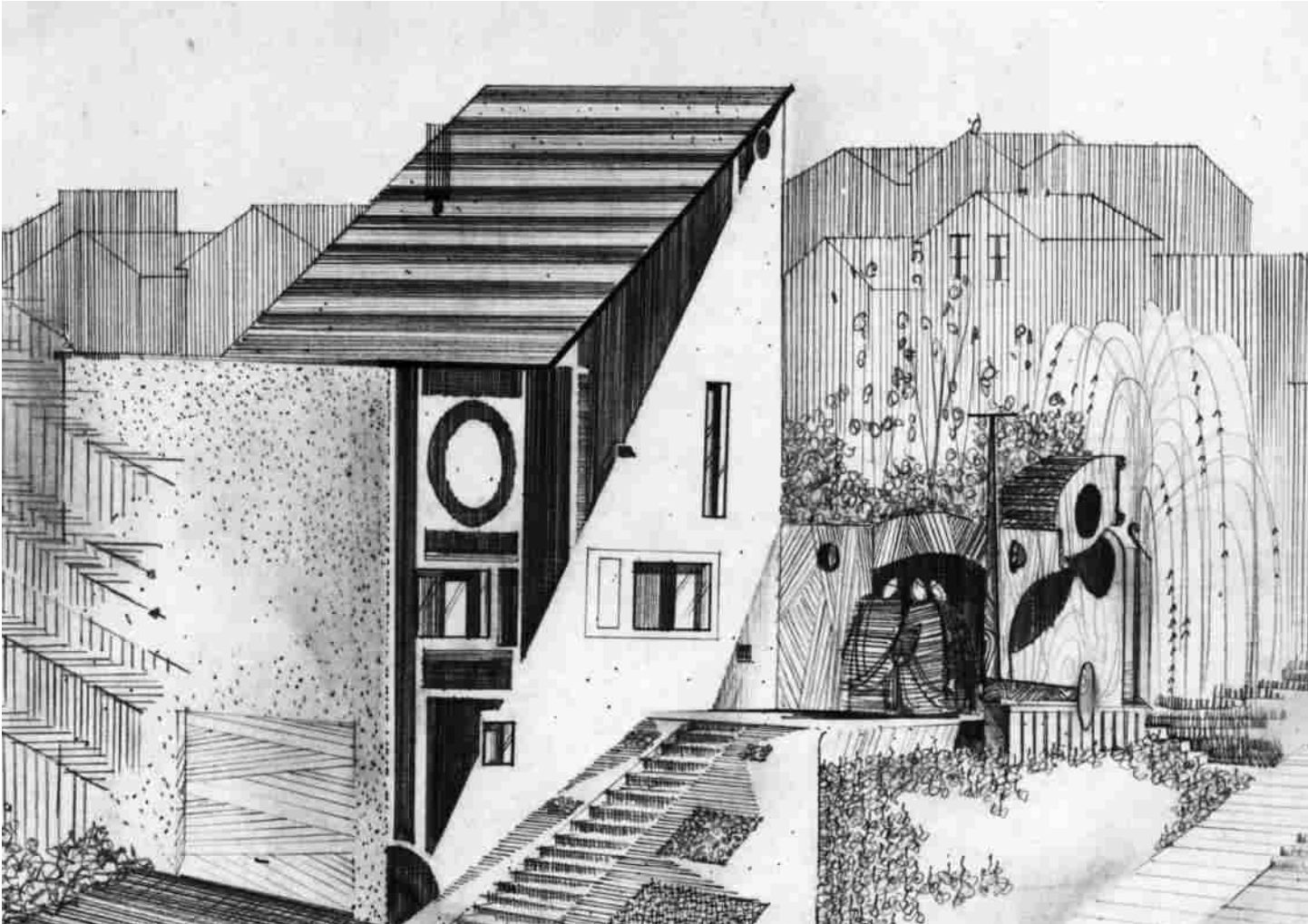


2.42 Letter to Reichert from Walter Gropius (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections).

2.43 Ancient Order of United Workmen (A.O.U.W.) Hall, 1952, photographs by Robert Reichert (UW College of Built Environments Visual Resources Collection).

In 1952, at thirty years of age, Robert Reichert held two architectural degrees and had gained significant professional experience. At this point, both his philosophy and his design talents were coalescing, as his designs exhibit a remarkable originality of expression. They were modern buildings sometimes tempered with ornament. Reichert must have felt fully prepared to create the romantic designs he had always envisioned. At the time, he wrote:

Romanticism has, in spite of the outward appearance of rationalism, been with us through the twentieth century. Socialist Rationalism has only dented or interrupted the scene—which will now go forth again—the energy of the 19th century is here with us yet.<sup>75</sup>



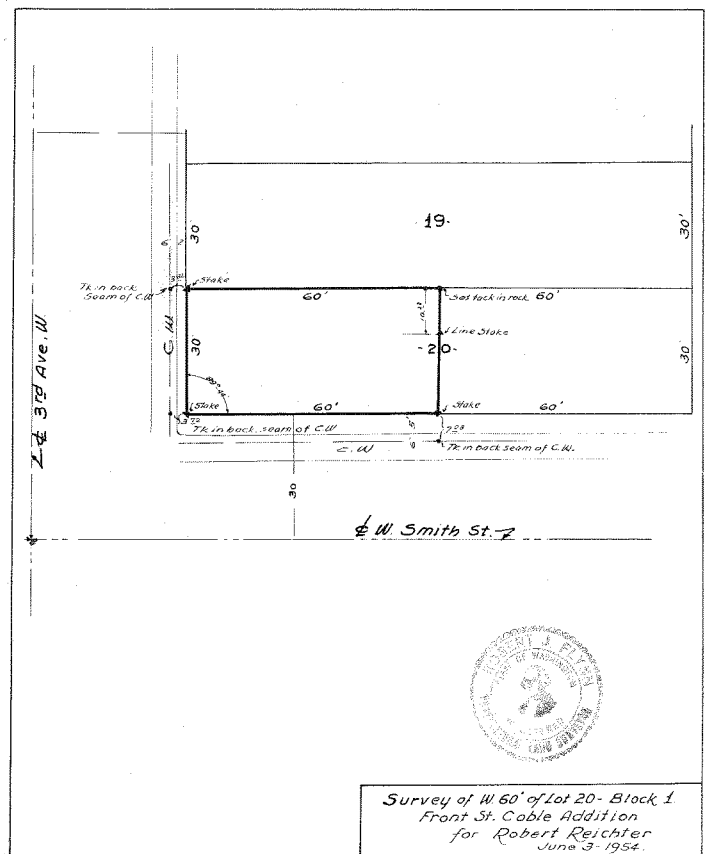
### 3. Reichert House-Studio, 1953-1954

Soon after returning to Seattle in 1951, and while still working for the J. Lister Holmes office, Reichert began designing for his own home and design studio. He looked at several parcels and nearly purchased a lot on 10th Avenue East, across from St. Mark's Cathedral in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood. He completed extensive site analysis and developed several schemes before his mother informed him that she had purchased a lot for him at 2500 3rd Avenue West on the north slope of Queen Anne Hill. Reichert's father died in September 1952, so the new house would become a home for Reichert and his mother. It would also accommodate an evolving collection of motor vehicles, at that time his Corvette and Harley Davidson motorcycle, his design studio and a planned multi-story pipe organ. Clearly, this was an ambitious program for what would be a small house on a very tight site of only 1800 square feet.

While planning his house, Reichert was approached by the First Church of Christ, Scientist to help with the design of a remodel of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Bellevue, a rapidly growing suburb of Seattle on the east side of Lake Washington. Reichert inquired as to whether the church would prefer to hire him directly or as an employee of J. Lister Holmes. The church responded that they wished to hire him alone. The signing of this contract in September 1953 marked the beginning of the office of Robert George Reichert, Architect. With his first significant commission

3.1 Presentation drawing of Reichert House-Studio. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW40056).

as a professional “on the boards” and while completing the construction of his studio-residence, Reichert embarked on a career working alone. Reichert never employed interns or associates in his practice, as he believed that the expression of architecture was highly personal and could not result from collaborative efforts, a contradiction to his experience at Harvard. The house-studio and the church both proved to be projects that would inform all of his subsequent works.



3.2 Survey for Reichert House-Studio site.  
(Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39883 ).



Reichert's house and studio stands as the first expression of his personal design ideology. The house was meant to be his home and his design studio, and had to be designed within local height restrictions to contain an eighteen-foot tall pipe organ.

As indicated in the site survey, (3.2), the lot at 2500 3rd Avenue West and Smith Street was only thirty feet wide by sixty feet long. The narrow side fronts on 3rd Avenue, which slopes down steeply from south to north, toward the Ship Canal which links Lake Washington and Lake Union to Puget Sound. The long edge on Smith Street slopes upward from west to east, toward the easternmost ridge of Queen Anne Hill. Although the shape and the topography of the site were significant constraints to the extensive program, Reichert noted how easily the design progressed from napkin sketch concept to fully developed design:

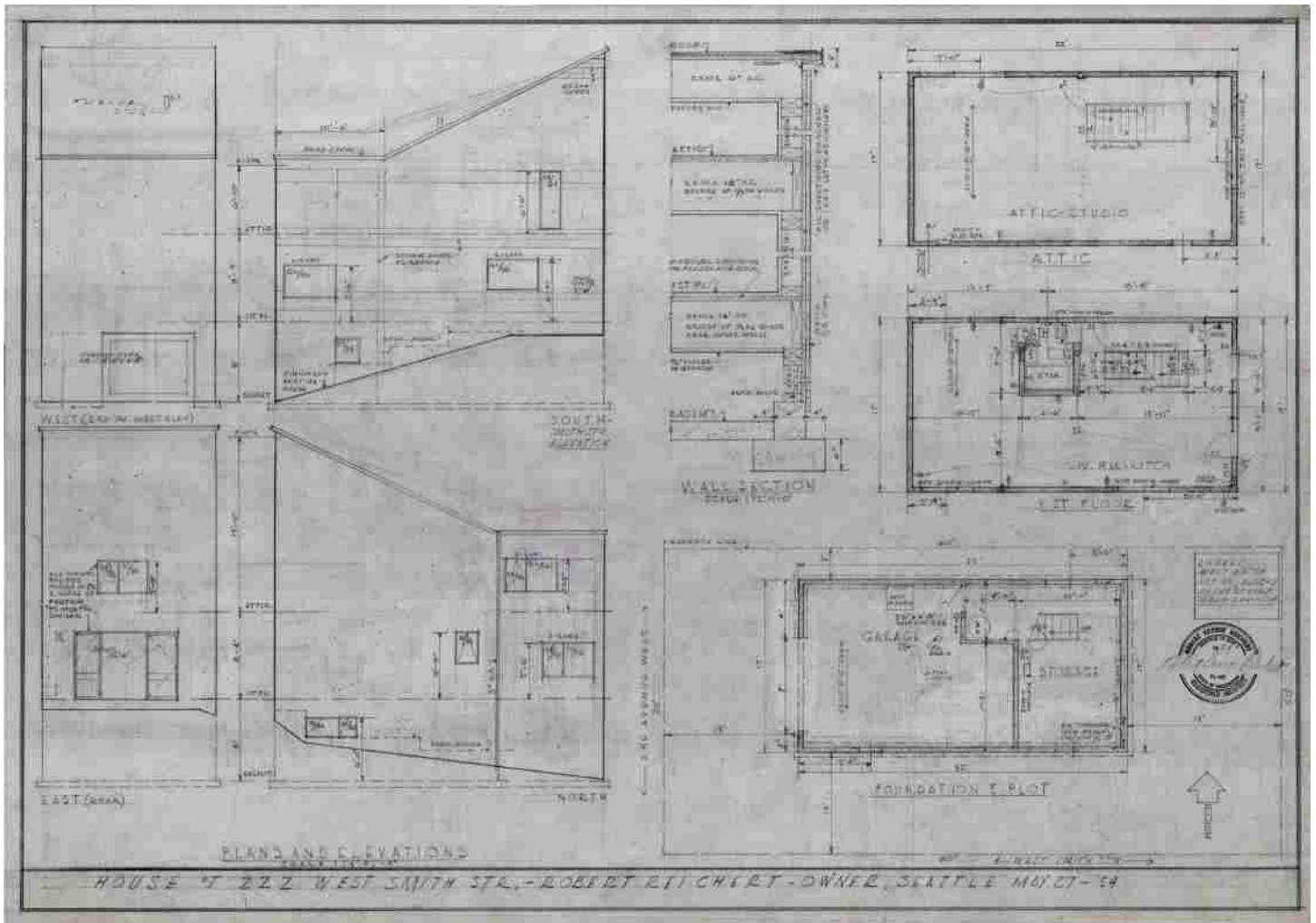
Though I had little time to spend on this design, it came out and unfolded naturally and easily, like a revelation, full of voices, ideas, history and with a message. To me this was a monument; it represents my feelings and thoughts about all this (3.1).<sup>76</sup>

The building's form largely results from setback requirements and the need for vertical space to house the long pipes for the organ Reichert intended to install. At 17 by 32 feet, the rectangular building footprint consists of only 544 square feet. The design responds sympathetically to the topography. While neighbors and the local press may have seen it differently, Reichert believed that the massing of the house complemented its neighbors and did not overpower them. In his schematic sketches as well as in construction drawings, Reichert clearly acknowledges the grade,

and shows that the house elevation responds directly to it; the grade slope is reflected in the parallel roof slope, shifted slightly to the east. This response can be noted on early elevation studies for subsequent projects, as well, with the variation in building height following or contrasting to the ground plane. He noted that his house differed from its neighbors only in its style. He wrote, “The pure wedge shape responds both to the site characteristics and the requirements of the building program, particularly to contain the organ and to provide a good acoustic space.”<sup>77</sup> He called the house a “tower design,” inspired by the churches he had visited as a child. In fact, the triangular sectional diagram for the building appears to represent a revisiting of Reichert’s acoustical research for the suburban theater he designed while a student at Harvard, and this parti would also appear in later projects designed for music, both houses and churches.

Reichert obtained a permit as an owner-builder, requiring less documentation to obtain city approval. This was fortuitous, considering that Reichert was in fact designing a mixed-use building—residential, office and assembly uses--in a residential zone. The building department did “redline” his single sheet drawing submission with a notation on the upstairs floor plan, Reichert’s future architectural studio, with the inscription “no commercial use” (3.3).<sup>78</sup> The Reichert house-studio shell was completed quickly, with the architect and his mother moving into the new house in October 1954 (3.4-3.5). Reichert completed the finishes after they had moved in.

The house is introspective, confounding anyone visiting for the



3.3 Fig 57: Permitted construction drawing sheet dated 27 May 1954, with upper studio level “red-lined” by building department with the inscription, “No Commercial Use.” (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39884).



**3.4** Reichert poses with neighborhood kids, “Bill, Jim and David,” in the poured concrete foundation, c. 1953. (UW College of Built Environments Visual Resources Collection).

**3.5** Reichert poses with his 1951 Mercury on Smith Street, looking down on the house with wood sheathing, c. 1953. (UW College of Built Environments Visual Resources Collection).

**3.6** The house-studio building complete, c. 1954. The entry gate and sculptural fence have not yet been constructed in this photograph. (UW College of Built Environments Visual Resources Collection).



first time, as no entrance is obvious from the street. The only visible doorway is the blank garage door at the low point of the site, facing Third Avenue and blending into the unadorned and unfenestrated facade. The only visible windows were those integrated into the mural design on the south elevation. From public areas, no openings were obvious on the short east and west facades (3.6). To gain access, one climbed the stairs parallel to Smith Street, heading east, adjacent to the south elevation. Reaching the exterior landing at the southeast corner of the house, one would expect to find a doorway. However, a guest needed to ring the buzzer on the wall and Robert or Tillie would peer out and decide whether to allow entry. A sculptural plywood black fence and gate prevented anyone from actually seeing the entrance, so a visitor had to wait, awkwardly perched on the landing, until the host came into the garden, opened the gate and allowed the guest to enter the garden and then the front door, a steel and glass pair of French doors on the east wall of the house (3.7-3.8). While it would have been straightforward to have entry stairs off Smith Street to a landing outside the garden gate, the complex entry sequence is a good example of the importance Reichert placed on the design of procession.

The exterior stairs were set into a sloping concrete pad which narrowed from bottom to the top, and which may have caused visitors to feel some psychological discomfort. As a visitor climbed the stairs, the street fell away on one side and the strong diagonals of Reichert's murals loomed on the other. The reinforcement of building design themes in the garden, in the form of two dimensional sculptures, planters, fences and gates would become a typical approach of the architect. Here, for the first time, he designed the house and landscape as a complete work. One of Reichert's students, Dale Jorgensen, recalled visiting Reichert at home:



**3.7** Reichert at the entry gate, c. 1957. Reichert at the house entry facing the garden. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39454).

**3.8** Steps to entry platform, c. 1961. Buzzer and peep hole are visible near the gate. Photograph by Charles Pearson. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW37778).



3.9 Reichert at the glazed house entry facing the garden. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39859).

I arrived at the house, walking up the open stairway of concrete, and not very wide, either, resulting in a small platform. From this platform, the anticipated front door was non-existent. In its place was a door buzzer and a small opening, circular talk-through. One felt quite uneasy because you faced a large, white wall with huge, black circular graphics. Remember, if this wasn't uncomfortable enough, the narrowness of the standing platform forced you to look at this great, white triangular surface from an impossible perspective. I felt exposed, but pushed the door buzzer and waited. The white wall made it impossible to see who the woman's voice belonged to, only a dark hole. The voice belonged to his mother. The voice asked, "whom do you wish to see?" I replied, "Bob." The voice corrected me: "You mean, Mr. Robert George Reichert?" "Yes," I said. "What time was your appointment?" "At noon," I replied. The person behind the dark hole then instructed me that it was 11:55, and to please wait. So I waited, all exposed and uneasy. Right at noon, Mr. Reichert rode up, in full leather, to the garage entrance and into the house. Almost immediately, I was instructed to walk through the wood gate and into the courtyard. The entrance was a glass door. He appeared in his suit and tie (3.9). He never introduced me to his mother, and I never saw her, only heard her most elegant voice. Anyway, he crawled up into the high pipe organ seat and played Bach. Of course, I felt privileged.<sup>79</sup>

Jorgensen's colorful memory of visiting Reichert's house-studio brings up several themes. The lack of openness of the building and its emotional impact on a visitor are noteworthy, as is the cool formality of Mrs. Reichert's reception. Robert's dramatic appearance on his motorcycle, his quick transformation to appropriate professional attire, appearing before his student and culminating in a musical performance all allude to a highly scripted experience, a merging of architectural design and practice with drama.

The processional sequence required of any visitor to his house was described by Reichert as an experience of the religious decorative themes of the house, with sculptural motifs recalling



chalices, ciboria and vessels used in Christian services.<sup>80</sup> There is a multitude of sketches for the development of the fence design, indicating that Reichert spent a great deal of effort on this sculptural part of the house. Constructed primarily of plywood and painted all black to “dematerialize” its forms, the fence did not have a long life, given the wet Seattle climate.<sup>81</sup>

Once Reichert or his mother allowed a visitor to enter the garden and then pass through the large French door into the house interior, the visitor encountered a truncated, five foot wide foyer of Alaskan marble, which spanned the narrow house’s width and linked to a stair with marble treads leading to the public third story, where Reichert had his design practice and organ loft. Beyond the foyer, one would face the small kitchen (which could be concealed by sliding wood panels) and small dining space set against the south wall. The living room spanned the full width of the house along the west wall and also served as Tillie’s bedroom; her bed was a convertible “davenport.” A narrow hall wedged between the north wall and the stairs provided access to the bathroom. A very narrow stair beneath the main stair led down to Reichert’s private bedroom and the garage. All of these spaces could be closed off with sliding panels to direct guests to the public rooms upstairs when the house was functioning as an office, studio or music performance space (4.9).<sup>82</sup> In Reichert’s words,

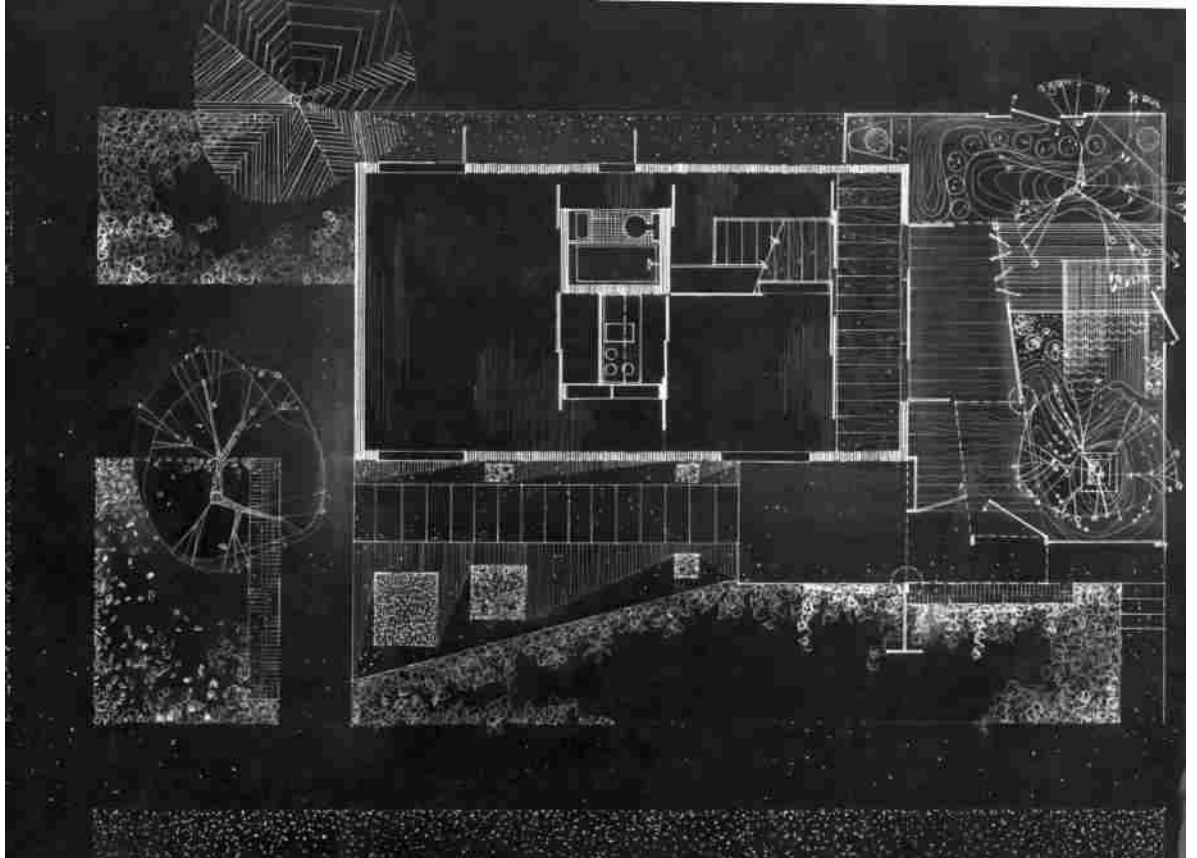
The building is primarily a studio in that it contains a foyer, conference room, office and drafting rooms. The main studio room is located on the upper floor, taking up the entire size of the building and is about twenty feet high in the east end to accommodate the baroque style pipe organ which was the clue to the original design.<sup>83</sup>

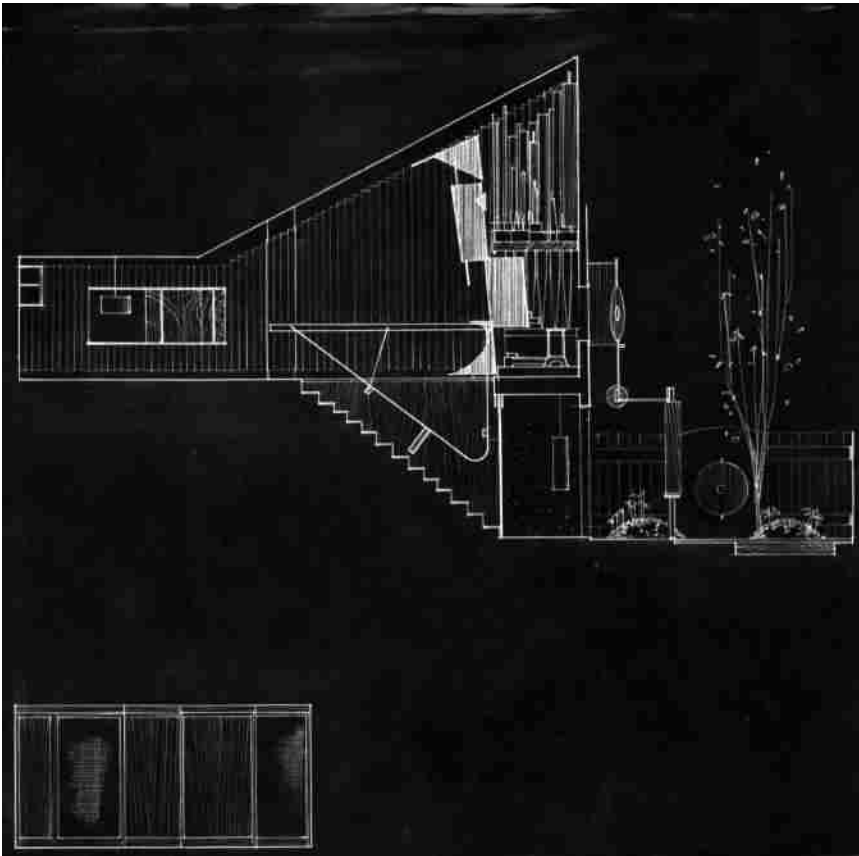
The floor plan was tight but flexible and the finished studio space was spatially dramatic with a very low ceiling, the tall architect could barely stand upright in his workspace (3.13-3.16). However, the room expanded vertically to the west wall, with the eighteen



3.10 Tillie in the kitchen. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Library Special Collections UW40055).

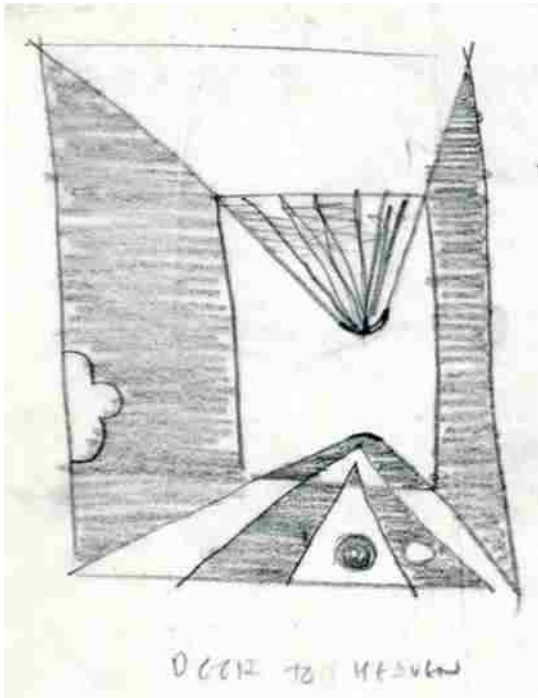
3.11 Interior of main floor of house-studio, which functioned as a kitchen or conference room, depending on the configuration of the sliding panels. Charles Pearson, photographer, c. 1961 (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Library Special Collections UW39870).





**3.12** Site and first floor plan, Robert Reichert house-studio. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39886).

**3.13** Partial longitudinal section through entry and stair to architectural studio and organ loft, Robert Reichert house-studio. The lower sketch is a detail elevation of sliding panels. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39887).



**3.14** “Door to Heaven” Sketch. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39885).



**3.15** View looking west into studio with ceiling mural, “Door to Heaven.” Photograph by Charles Pearson, c. 1961. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39872).

**3.16** Reichert working in his studio. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39861).



foot-long organ pipes. This dramatic height provided relief from the cramped studio, as well as a view of the organ wall and loft. The lowest level contained Reichert's private bedroom and the garage, facilitating Reichert's nightly motorcycle jaunts without disturbing his mother.

Reichert's house largely embodied his ideas of "romantic architecture" through the expression of ornament. He wrote,

It is primitive, natural and symbolic. Most meaningful is the shadow painting on the south wall; this building does not have to depend on sunlight but has its shadows on cloudy days and at night as well; it is expressive at all times, giving radiance to its surroundings. The design of the shadow reveals a love for traditionalism and history. Its paneling and shapes recall the Italian renaissance,



3.17 View looking south into studio with ceiling mural and organ visible. Photograph by Charles Pearson, c. 1961.

particularly the wall designs of the Florence Cathedral and Della Salute in Venice.<sup>84</sup>

Reichert's own graphic artworks convey his ideas about the design of the exterior ornament, and the primary focus on ornament over other architectural elements (3.19-3.21). The building is introspective; windows are small and placed more as part of an exterior composition than for interior light or to obtain exterior views.<sup>85</sup> Interior views predominate (3.17).

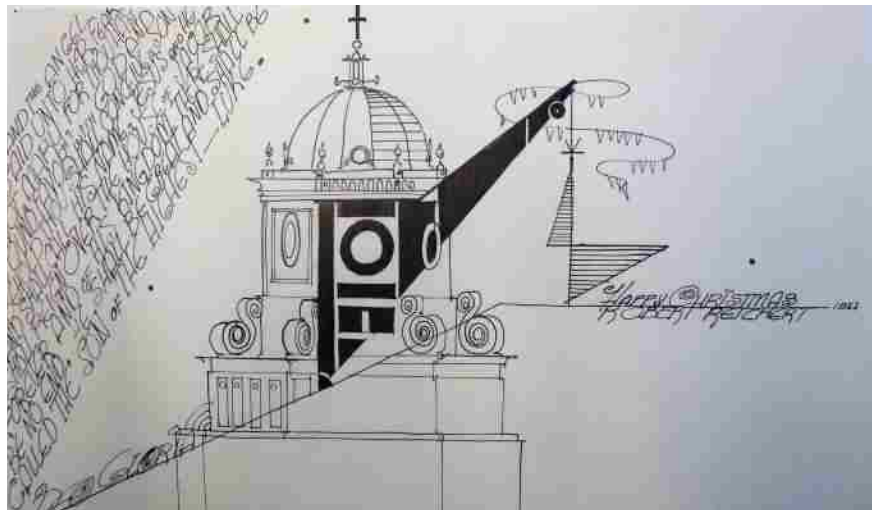
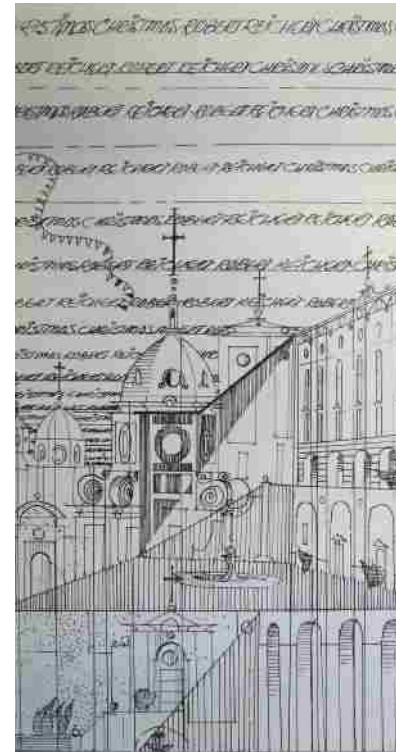
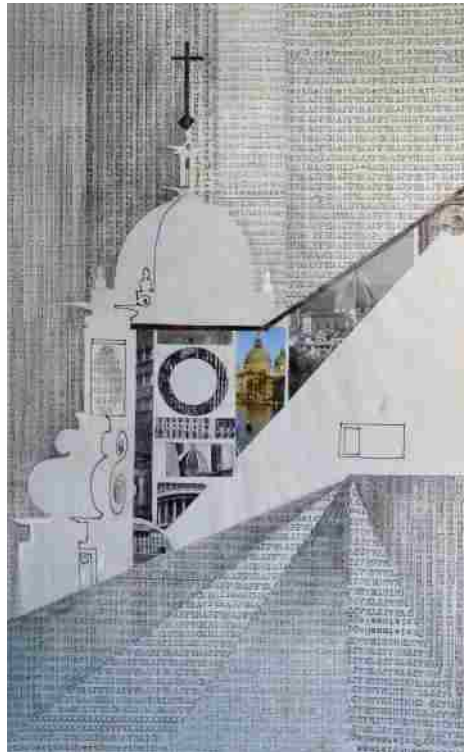
The interior furnishings were modern, yet decorative. Reichert painted a graphic mural on the sloping studio ceiling which he titled “Door to Heaven.” (3.14-3.15). Reichert constructed and installed the pipe organ in the late 1950s, using pipes he claimed originated from the Chicago World Columbian Exposition of 1893.<sup>86</sup>

Considered without its eclectic graphic ornament, the house-studio is a highly functional and minimalist architectural work, accommodating and formally responding to its multi-faceted program. From the outside, the building’s pure white form, devoid of structural expression, visible entry, or even a reading of what happens within, reveals a functional, if idiosyncratic, modern design.

Reichert’s use of ornament resulted in architecture that was more than merely functionalist design. The holiday cards and organ recitals he created help illustrate in two dimension the development of Renaissance and Baroque motifs that became the graphic



**3.18** Organ concert in the Reichert house-studio, c. 1962.



**3.19** Reichert's holiday cards featuring imagery of the house studio, illustrating sources of "supergraphic" ornament and fanciful historic architectural context, c. 1960 (upper left). (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39890).

**3.20** Reichert holiday card, c. 1962 (upper right). (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39891).

**3.21** Reichert holiday card, c. 1955 (lower). (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39892).



display on the south elevation of his house-studio (3.19-3.22). An unusual decorative element on several of his designs, including his house-studio, is the use of alternating black and white striped roofing material. While constructed of the simplest torch-down material, the high contrasting graphic expression belies its humble materiality.

The house was unpopular in the neighborhood and was considered a curiosity by the local architectural community. A contributor to the *Queen Anne News* called the building a “Freudian nightmare.”<sup>87</sup> Reichert claimed that the neighbor in the small house to the east regularly yelled profanities at him. He described another neighbor hauling her hose to his open garage and spraying him with water while he was working on his car.<sup>88</sup> Nonetheless, the building suited Reichert’s unique needs and the design reflects an intensive investigation; hundreds of drawings in the Reichert collection document the development of this small building. The unusual wedge-shaped form would be replicated later in his career in other residences, roadside commercial designs and church designs.

The triangular shape and irregular interior surface treatments were designed with acoustics in mind. The interior walls of the studio space were clad with vertically oriented lap siding, a detail Reichert would have taken note of as a student when visiting the Gropius house in Lincoln, Massachusetts. One resident of the Egan house (similar to the Reichert house in section but not designed to hold an organ) described how by placing speakers at the peak of the living room ceiling, one could hear in every room below whatever music was being played, even at very low volumes.<sup>89</sup>

On numerous occasions, Reichert would hold midnight organ recitals for students and colleagues at his house. Photographs of these events seem to capture guests’ sense of curiosity about their unusual surroundings (3.18-3.22). Often, Reichert’s friend and organist, Marvin Durland would play at these concerts. Reichert

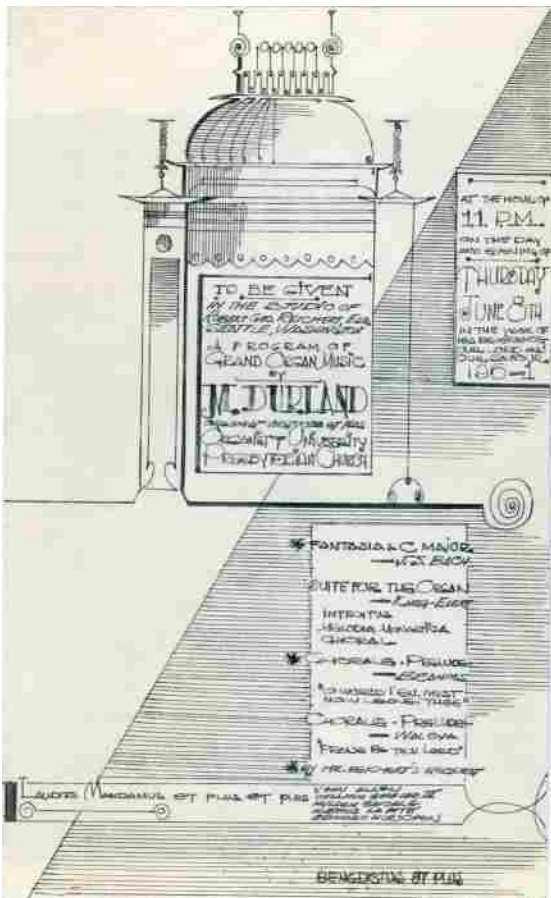
recalled neighbors throwing tomatoes at the house while he played, so it is likely that the late night organ music escaped the house into the quiet neighborhood.<sup>90</sup> According to a former resident of the Reichert house, the motor for the organ pump hung on an exterior wall, so that noise may have caused some aggravation to the neighbors.<sup>91</sup>

The house was published with more coverage in the European architectural press than it received in the United States. It was featured in the October 1958 edition of *Architectural Review*,<sup>92</sup> the April, 1959 issue of *The American Organist*,<sup>93</sup> and in the December 1960 issue of *L'Architettura*.<sup>94</sup> In 1990, the Seattle Art Museum curated an exhibit of Reichert's work.<sup>95</sup> In her description of the house-studio, the *Seattle Times* critic aptly mused, "Not everyone wants to live in a sculpture. Not everyone wants even to live next door to one." She called the house a giant wedge painted with black and white "supergraphics," commenting that Reichert "rocked a staid Queen Anne neighborhood in 1952 when, fresh from graduate work with the renowned modernist Walter Gropius, the architect built a house for himself."<sup>96</sup> At the opening for the exhibit, Reichert explained his idea for the shadow painting on the south wall: "The tower is a ghost design. I used it to show what was on my mind when I was designing the house (3.19). I'm a philosophical architect and my philosophy is romanticism."<sup>97</sup> Ament noted that Reichert's body of work had mostly gone unnoticed, but that other contemporary architects including Robert Venturi had used similar devices to those found on Reichert's house-studio, including plywood sculptural cutouts, randomly placed windows and supergraphics.

*Seattle Post Intelligencer* architectural critic, Don Canty also reviewed the show, commenting that Reichert's house "hit the neighborhood with some force:"

A triangle festooned with huge circles, precursors of

3.22 Invitation designed by Robert Reichert for midnight organ recital by Marvin Durland, June 1961 in honor of recent graduates. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39893).

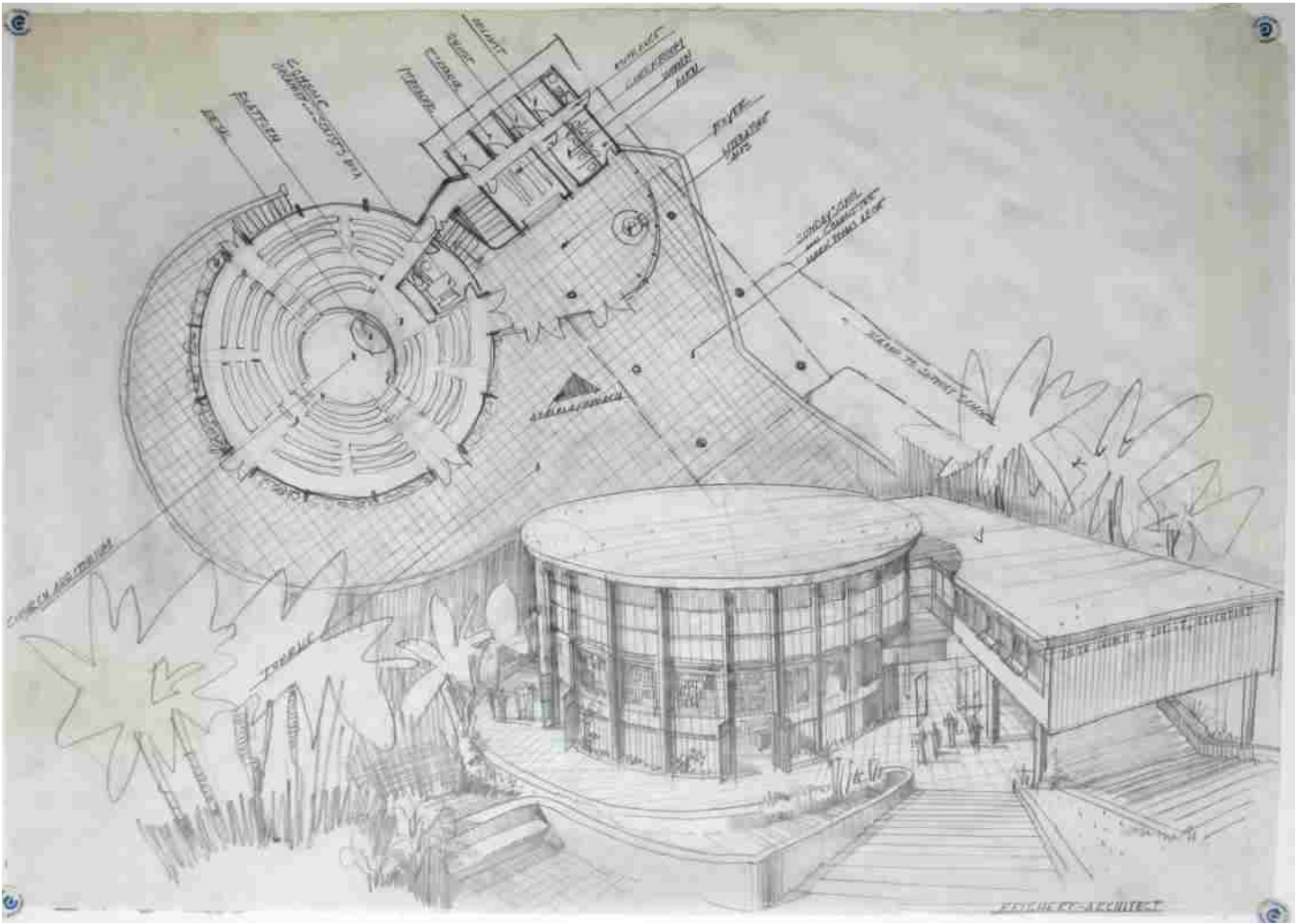




3.23 Reichert practicing on his organ in his house-studio, c. 1961. Photographed by Dan Berthold. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW38903).

“supergraphics,” it was nothing like the neighboring bungalows and Victorians. Nor did it have any affinity to the crisp wood forms of Postwar Northwest regionalism. It was more like the other visual arts of the 1950’s, a kind of pop architecture.<sup>98</sup>

In the architect’s statement, published in the exhibit program, Reichert explained, “I decided to go my own way,” describing himself as “a romantic in the Victorian sense. The Victorian was not well regarded in the 1950s.” Don Canty noted that Reichert’s own house was his statement, his protest: “He felt it expressed the exuberance of the period.”<sup>99</sup>

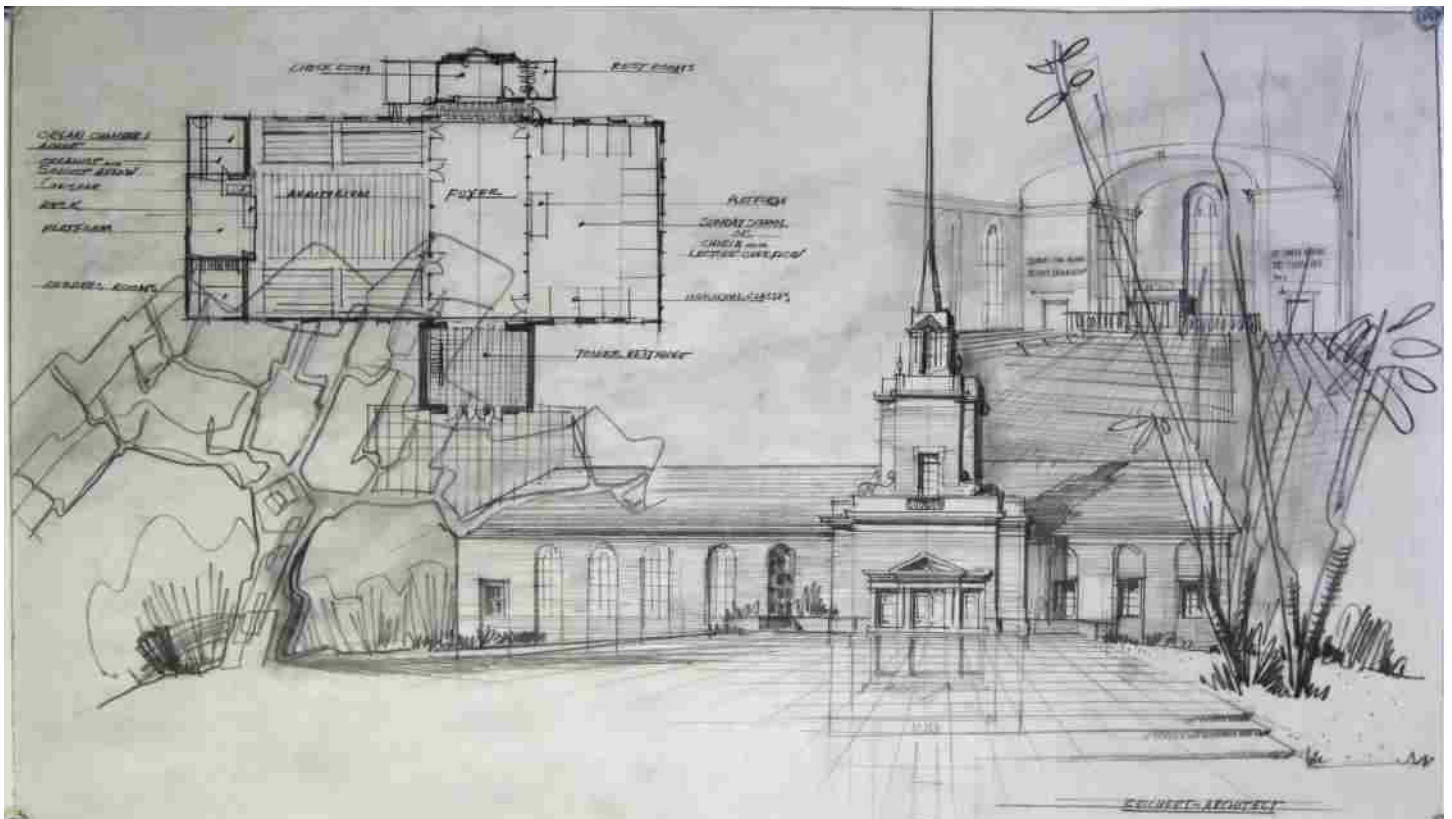


## 4. First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bellevue

Reichert began work on the First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bellevue, at the same time that construction was underway on his house-studio. Reichert's experience playing organ in several Seattle churches provided him the accessibility to a regional community of church leaders. Many of them would have known he was an architect. Reichert was well prepared for the project, having studied and documented dozens of Christian Science buildings, representing the history of the church building typology throughout the country. Reichert had designed a Christian Science church as his final undergraduate project at Minnesota; he had studied acoustics at Harvard for his design of a theater auditorium; and he had completed several theoretical design studies of church buildings, analyzing the layout and components of ecclesiastical typologies, both traditional and modern in style (4.1-4.2). In addition, in 1949 Reichert had worked on the design for the University Congregational Church project with Leonard Bindon in Seattle's University District.

His investigations suggest an early determination to become a church designer. Notes on the backs of his snapshots recorded details of the building features and church organs. Photographs dated 1949 show Reichert and his parents in Boston, visiting the central cultural complex of the Church of Christ, Scientist, the Mother Church (4.3-4.4). The original church was designed by Charles Brigham to the specifications of the religion's founder,

**4.1** Theoretical scheme for the "20th Church of Christ, Scientist, Seattle". (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39894).



4.2 Theoretical scheme for a Christian Science Church. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39895).



4.3 Reichert and his parents visiting the Mother Church in Boston, c. 1946. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39896).

4.4 Reichert in front of the Mother Church in Boston, c.1946. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39897).

4.5 First Church of Christ, Scientist in Minneapolis (constructed 1914, designed by Salon Beman), photograph by Robert Reichert. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39898).



Mary Baker Eddy, and was constructed in 1894 in the Romanesque style. As the religion quickly grew, the Mother Church soon required expansion. Solon Spencer Beman was hired to complete the addition in 1906.<sup>100</sup> Beman convinced Mary Baker Eddy that the Neoclassical style was appropriate for an urban church, setting a precedent for future Christian Science churches. Beman would subsequently design several prominent churches, including the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Minneapolis and the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, in Chicago (1904-1905), which was inspired by the Merchant Tailor's building at the Chicago World's Fair (4.5).<sup>101</sup> No specific style was ever dictated by the church, although early Christian Science architecture became known for its Neoclassical and Renaissance revival styles. The Church of Christ, Scientist, was largely an urban religion during its growth in the first decades of the twentieth century, which suggests the need for compact, central plan churches. Christian Science had become the fastest growing religion in the United States by 1936, resulting in a large building program.<sup>102</sup>

A typical Christian Science church building included a sanctuary focused on a dual podium for the speaker and an assistant; each would read from the Bible and from Mary Baker Eddy's writings.



Organ music was important to the service and so organ pipes were incorporated and an elevated organ console behind the reader's podium often figured prominently. Offices for the reader and other church officials were typically set to one side of the sanctuary. The church interior was usually painted in light colors and incorporated indirect natural lighting. A Sunday school was always part of the church program and was usually the same size as the church itself. As the American population shifted westward, there was less direct control from the Mother Church, and subsequently more design freedom. As more churches were built in suburban contexts, there was often less need for a compact, central plan church (4.6).



**4.6** First Church of Christ, Scientist in Los Angeles (constructed 1912, designed by Elmer Grey), photograph by Robert Reichert. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39899).

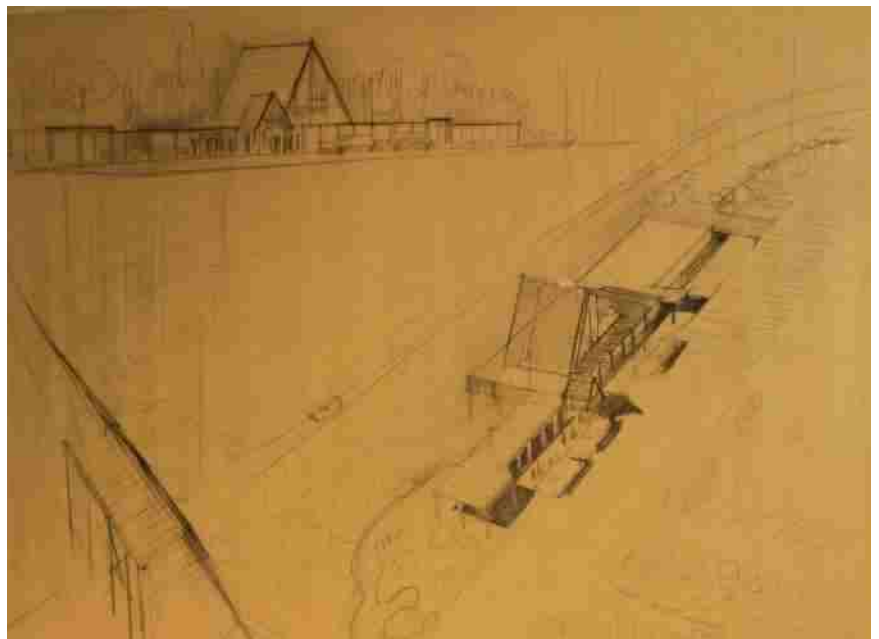
Churches in the West began to exhibit an acceptance of modern and regionalist revival styles. Bernard Maybeck's First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Berkeley, California is a famous, very early example, one that Reichert visited often. His journal notes reveal an appreciation for the "elevated and elegant location of the organ, framed behind the structural artistry of the chancel."



4.7 Original First Church of Christ, Scientist building in downtown Bellevue, (architect unknown) constructed c. 1923. (csbellevue.org).

4.8 First scheme for addition to First Church of Christ, Scientist in Bellevue, 1953. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39901).

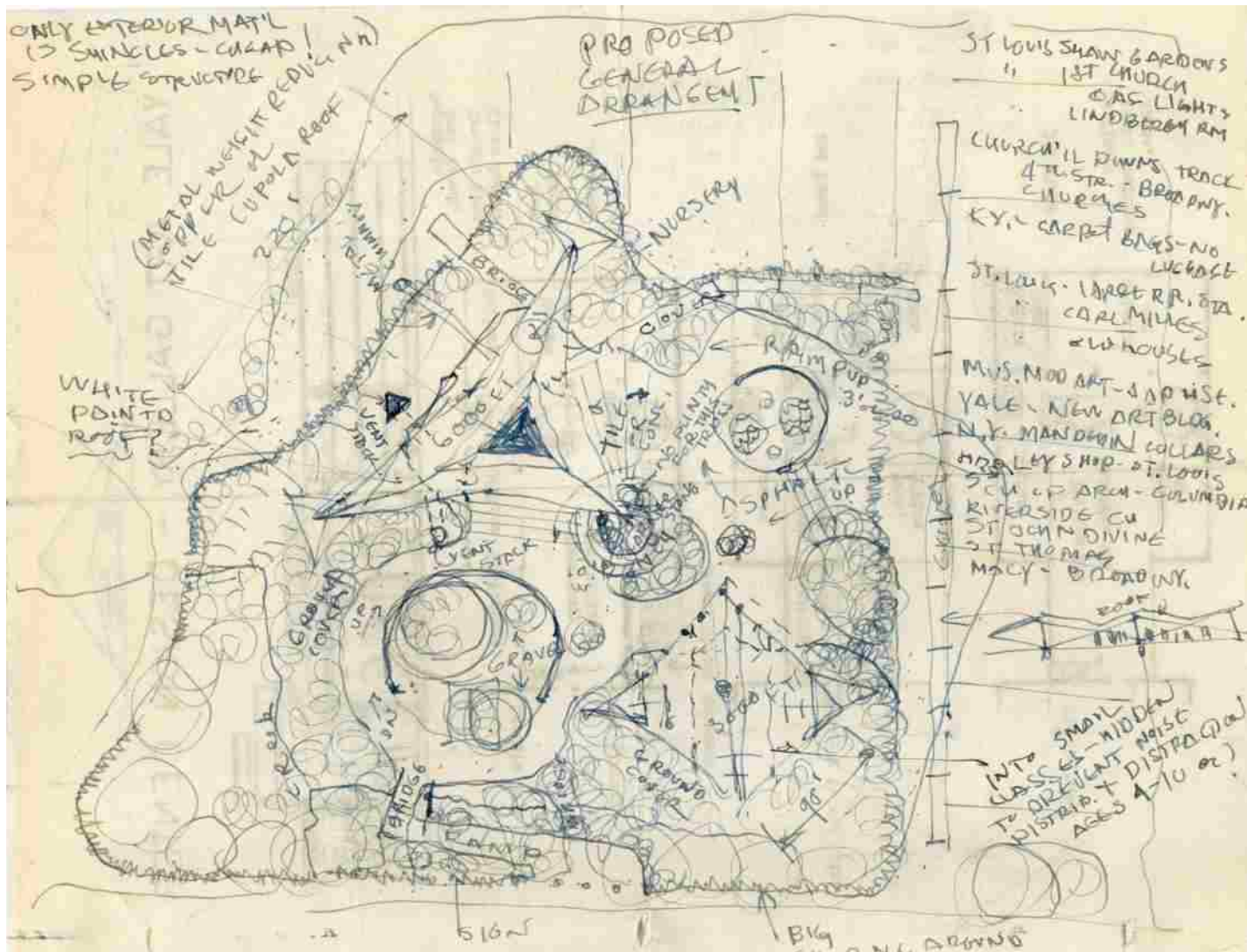
On receipt of his first commission as a sole practitioner, Reichert immediately went to work and provided a scheme for the remodel and expansion to the existing, relatively modest church on NE 2nd Street in downtown Bellevue, presenting his ideas in October 1953 (4.7). His design consisted of a steeply pitched roof form adjacent to a bar-shaped building form with covered outdoor space connecting the two elements (4.8). The design somewhat resembled the drive-in restaurants Reichert would design later in his career. The church building committee responded by informing Reichert that due to a rapidly expanding congregation, they were considering the construction of an entirely new building in the rapidly developing outskirts of downtown Bellevue. In November 1953, after consulting with Reichert, the church purchased a large



parcel on Lake Washington Boulevard, west of downtown, near Meydenbauer Bay (4.9) The opportunity to design a new, significant religious building so early in his independent architectural career would have been extremely exciting for Reichert. He immediately began working on a proposal for the development of the slightly depressed and heavily forested site, and in May 1954 presented a possible site planning scheme to the building committee in which the building would be on axis with Lake Washington Boulevard, with parking filling the lower area of the site. He proposed a covered walkway, stretching from the church plaza into the parking areas, resembling the curving Baroque colonnades surrounding St. Peter's Plaza in the Vatican (4.10). The church building committee was receptive to the scheme and Reichert started designing the church and Sunday school. Early site and building concepts were sketched on the reverse side of a gallery program and hotel invoice while Reichert was visiting Kahn's Yale Art Gallery in New Haven (4.11-4.12). Such inspirational design moments, emerging while away from studio, were typical of Reichert's working methods. The young architect had a preliminary design ready within five months and presented his design to the church leadership in October 1954.

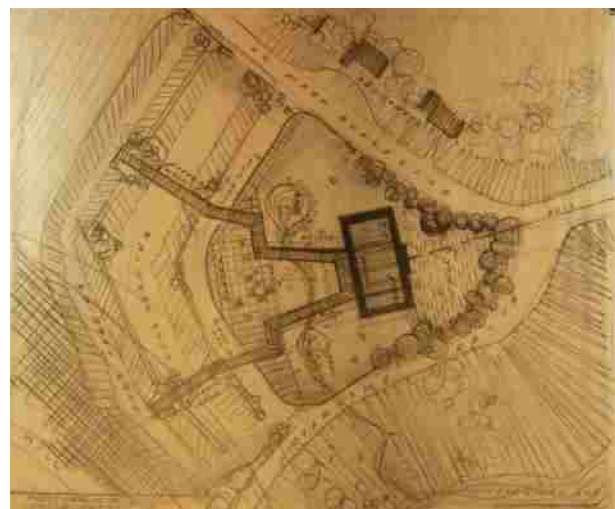


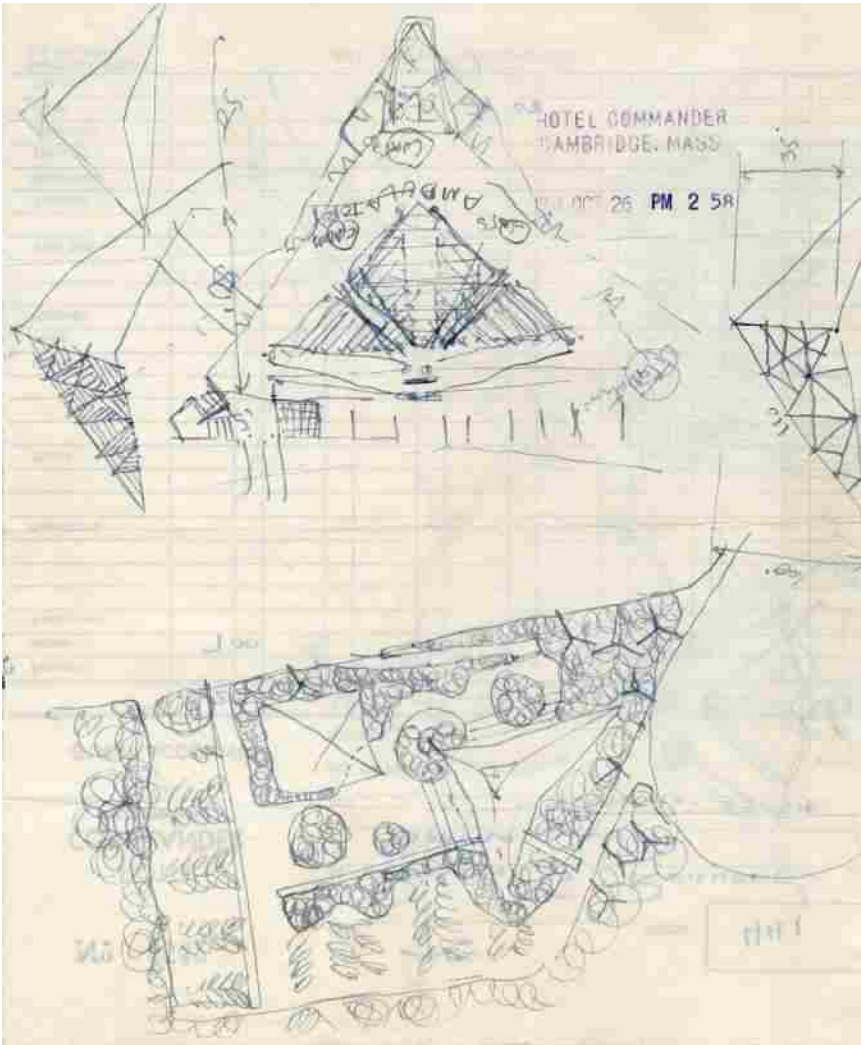
**4.9** Photograph of suburban site for new First Church of Christ, Scientist building at Overlake and Lake Washington Boulevard, Bellevue, 1953. Photograph by Robert Reichert (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39902).



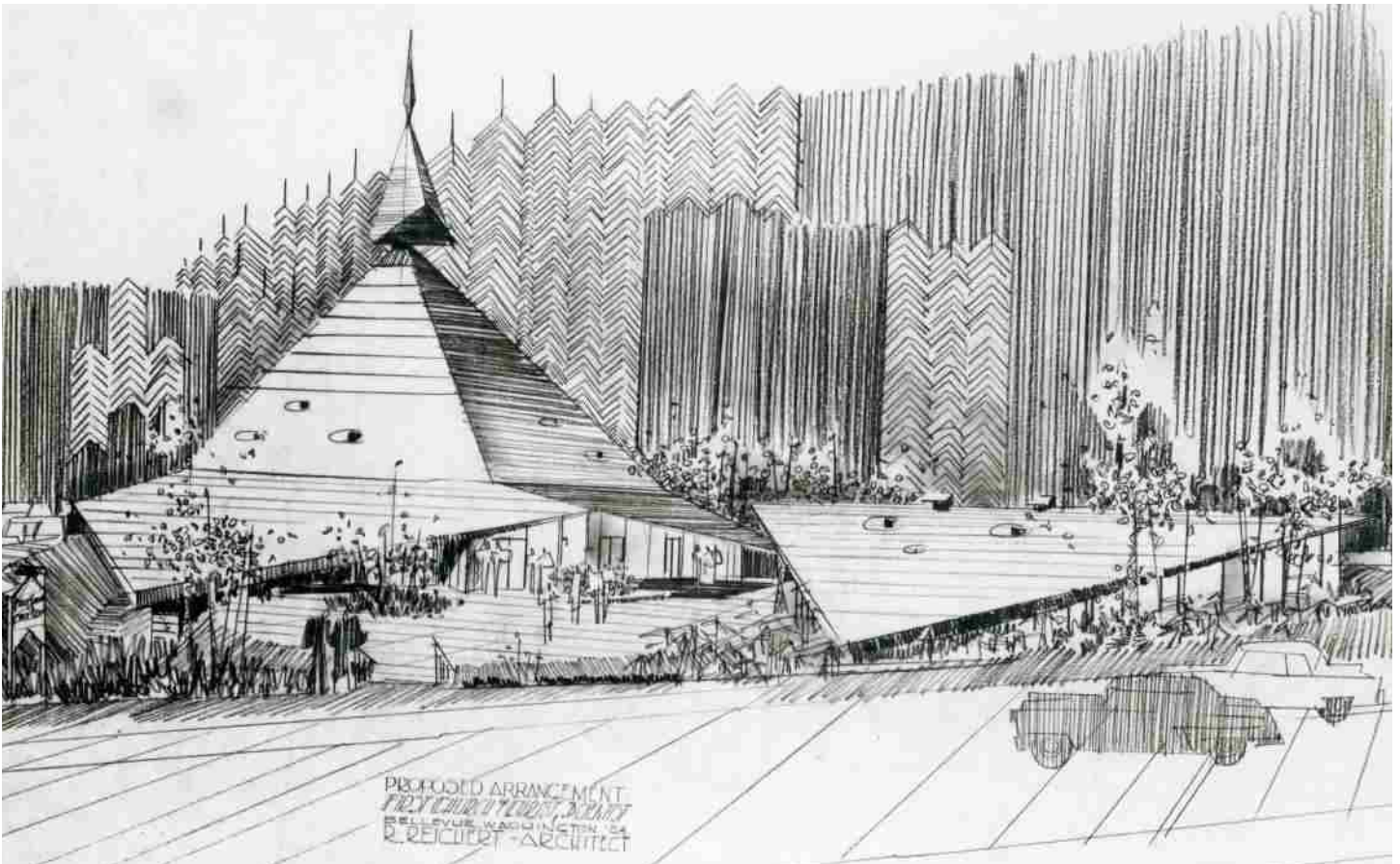
4.10 Site and building analysis for First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bellevue, sketch on back of Yale Art Gallery program. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39903).

4.11 Site study for First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bellevue, April 1954. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39904).





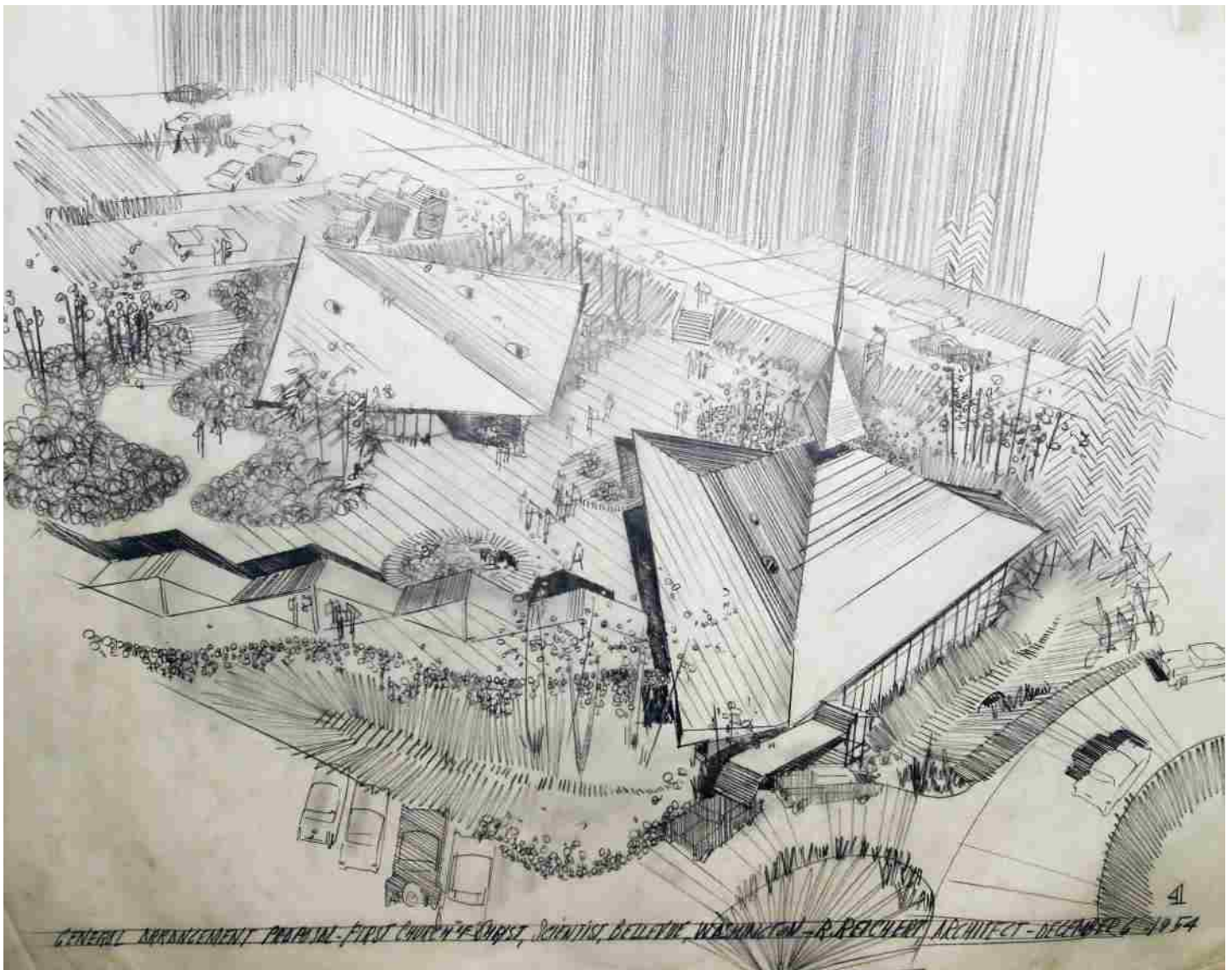
4.12 Analytic sketches for First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bellevue, sketch on back of Hotel Commander, Cambridge Massachusetts. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39905).



Reichert's proposal featured two separate, highly sculptural building volumes sited to create a protected outdoor plaza, noting that the valley location "provided a safe, secure, hidden feeling and that the buildings formed to create an element of surprise." He noted that the scheme took full advantage of the site, using the forested hills as a backdrop (4.13). The church building formed a tower, visible from busy Lake Washington Boulevard and conceived in section as a triangular volume, essentially a spatially and geometrically expanded version of his recently completed Queen Anne house-studio; the Sunday school was lower, deferring to the sanctuary. The two structures were to be fully clad in shingles, sculptural volumes without punctuation of windows or differentiation between wall and roof (4.14). Reichert noted that the building was shaped to sympathize with the coniferous forest, rugged hills and mountains.<sup>103</sup> It was a provocative and unorthodox design,

5.13 Preliminary proposal for First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bellevue, view from Lake Washington Boulevard. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39912).

5.14 Preliminary proposal for First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bellevue, aerial perspective drawing, December 6, 1954. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39913).



especially compared to more traditional Christian Scientist building typologies.

The expressive scheme anchored the undeveloped suburban site (4.15). In elevation, the building forms appeared like origami sculptures set lightly on heavy, triangular piers. The asymmetrical site plan diagram provided individual foyer spaces for each building (an unconventional design, as most Christian Science structures would have one entry to access both church and school), with a shared, protected outdoor plaza. Reichert commented that the triangular floor plan provided a space in which “all seats are at an advantage to the reader’s box; the plan provides excellent visibility. The organ is located for modern tonal ideas with open, visible pipes.” (4.15-4.18). The design fully engaged the site, with program elements including the church and school, exterior gardens and parking for 350 church members.

The church building committee was not happy with the unorthodox design, responding in writing that they would not accept the studies as presented. The committee noted that they were “not sure they wanted a tower, but a building that would be visible to the community as a church.”<sup>104</sup> This was a blow to Reichert’s carefully researched ideas on the meaning of Christian Science church architecture. They commented that the light structure did not convey a sense of permanence, and suggested that a masonry structure might be more appropriate. They also wanted the two buildings to be connected somehow, to provide protection from the weather. Clearly, the church board was looking for a building design more aligned with Christian Science building traditions; what Reichert was proposing was a unique architectural composition, well suited to the Pacific Northwest architectural context--inspired by, but not a clear replication of, Christian Science building precedents.

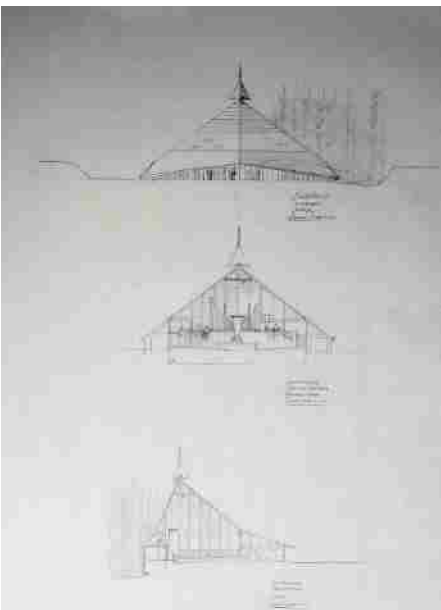
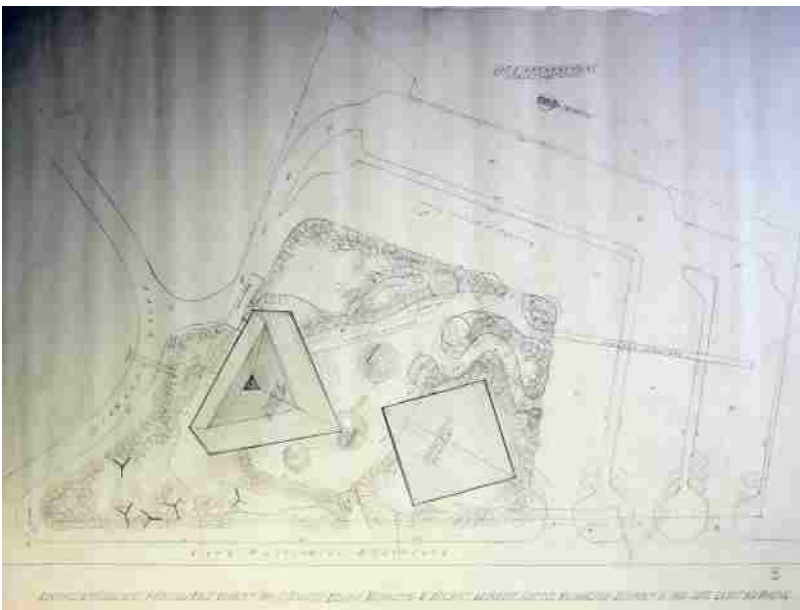
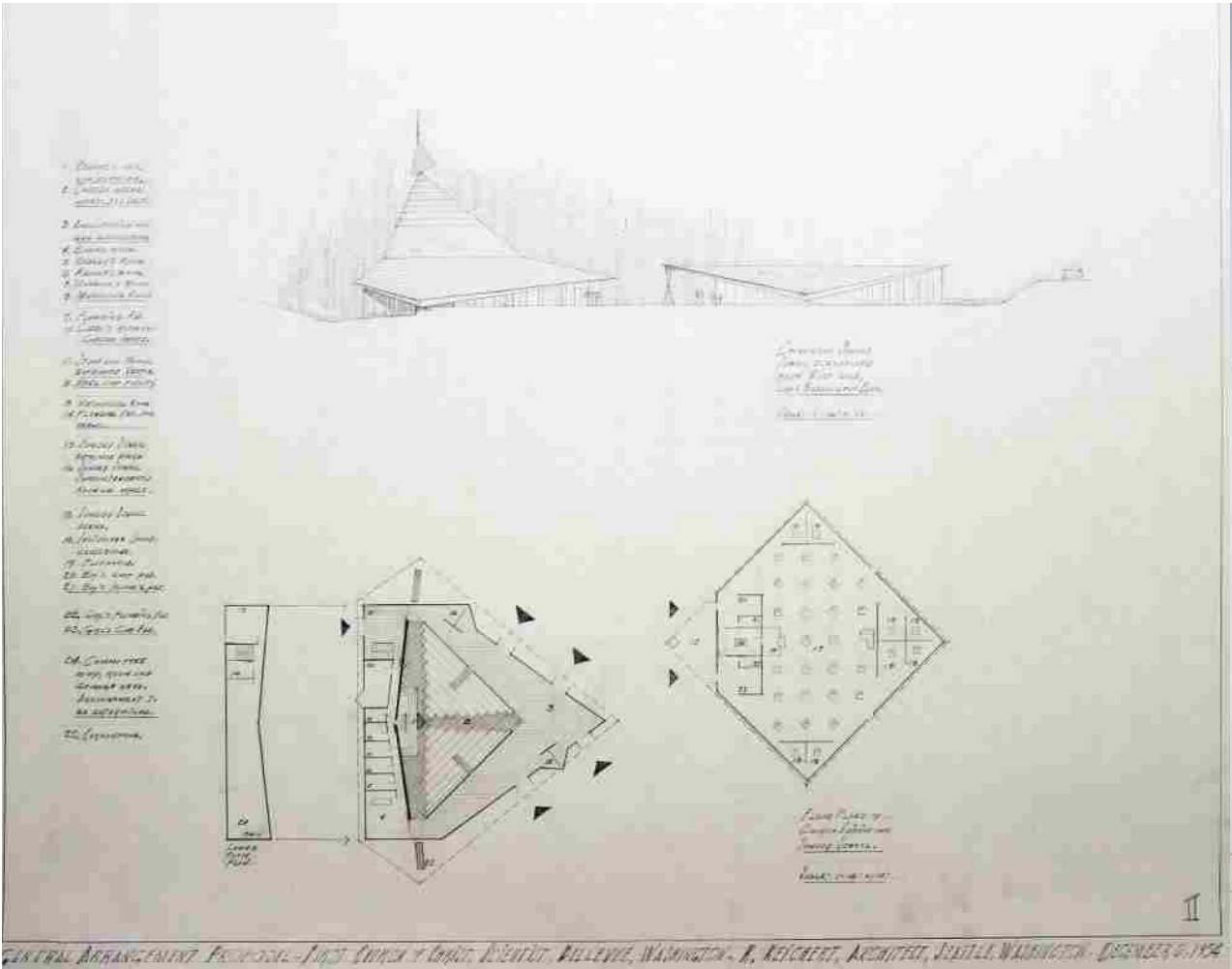
Reichert went back to work and quickly designed multiple

**4.15** Presentation drawings for First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bellevue, elevations and plan drawings, December 5, 1954. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39914).

**4.16** Presentation drawings for First Church of Christ, Scientist, site plan, December 6, 1954. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39915).

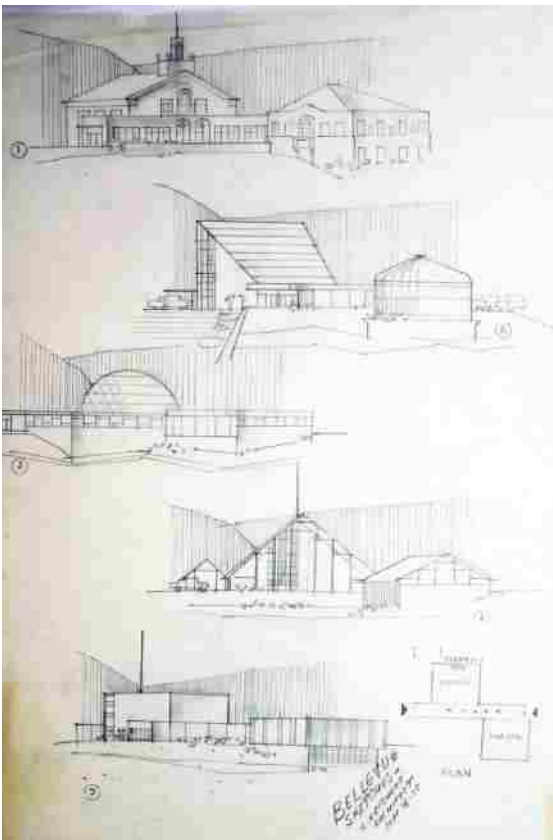
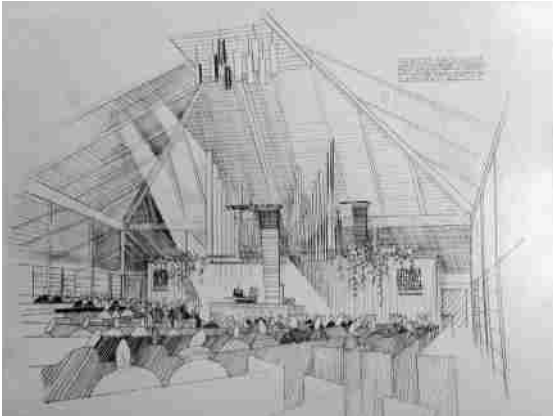
**4.17** Presentation drawings for First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bellevue, elevations and section drawings, December 5, 1954. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39916).





**4.18** Presentation drawings for First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bellevue, interior perspective drawing, December 6, 1954. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39917).

**4.19** Studies of various church forms for First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bellevue, interior perspective drawing, September 26, 1955. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39927).

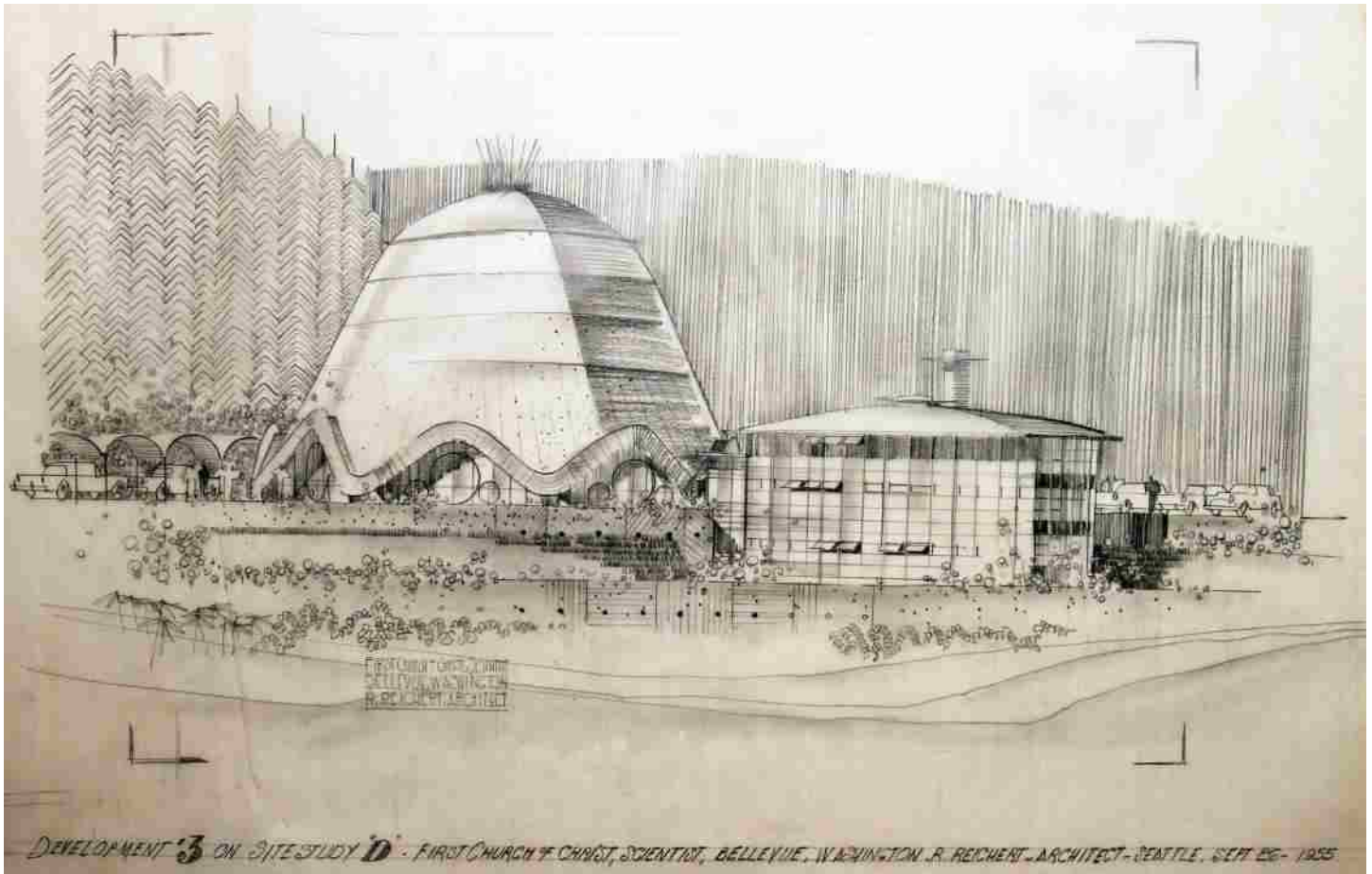


revised schemes for the building committee, exploring various forms (4.19). Perhaps as a result of this intensive revisiting of the requirements, Reichert came to a confident realization that his original scheme was the correct approach. He wrote to the church leaders, suggesting that “perhaps the members had not spent sufficient time reviewing his scheme, or else did not understand the drawings and should seek help.” Through this interaction, Reichert’s inexperience and immaturity exacerbated an already strained relationship with his client. The chairman of the building committee responded,

It would be a mistake to entertain that the committee would come to accept the essential features of your first studies. It was quite distressing to me, therefore, in the course of discussing other comments, (when) you made the remark to the effect that you could draw them so we wouldn’t like them. Such things naturally do some damage to the feeling of confidence which is so important in our relationship with you.<sup>105</sup>

Reichert presented a revised scheme for the church, consisting of two circular volumes for church and Sunday school, connected by a lobby vestibule (4.20). He noted, “The church will be a monument to Mrs. Eddy and to Christian Science. There is precedence for this church form, based on the Pantheon. The design contrasts with its surroundings and local architecture instead of blending with it. It is dramatically strong in spirit.”<sup>106</sup>

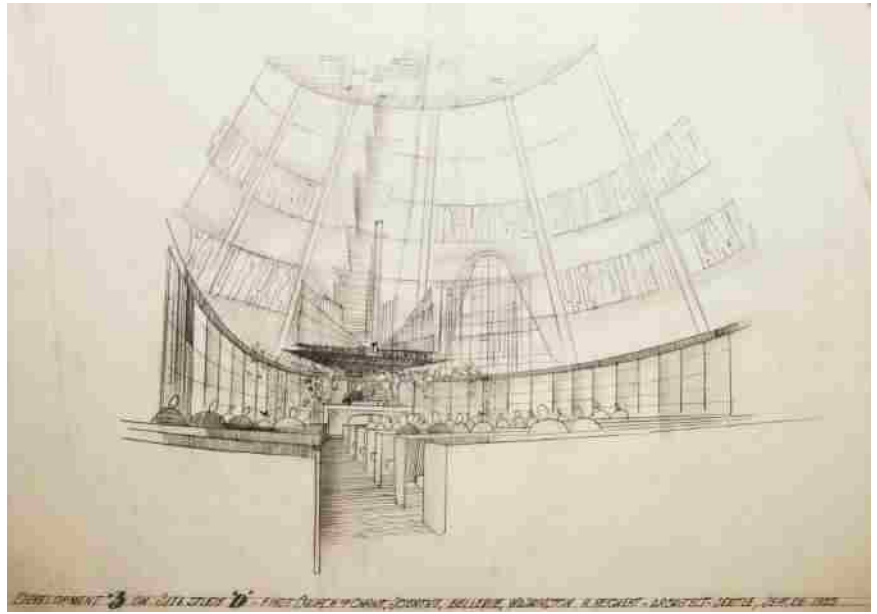
The design resembled a fanciful hat set on the landscape, its scalloped edges meeting the ground and providing openings for light and access. The low, round Sunday school form, as in his prior scheme, deferred in scale to the church. The covered connection between the two round buildings was awkward and far less successful than his first submission. He depicted the church interior, facing the readers’ desk, with large, six foot tall biblical quotations encircling the interior (4.21). The high space was to be



clad in scalloping horizontal bands of wood panels that reinforced the domed form of the building.

4.20 Revised scheme for First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bellevue, exterior perspective. September 26, 1955. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39928).

It is not clear whether Reichert actually believed he was providing a viable alternate scheme that would be acceptable to the church board. It is possible that he had already determined that he was not able to work within the organizational structure of the building committee and church boards, and provided a seemingly “over the top” design in response to what he perceived as the committee’s banal requests. On November 5, 1955, Reichert received a registered letter immediately terminating his contract with the church.<sup>107</sup> He responded, “I am deeply saddened over your dislike for the architectural schemes which I have prepared and your decision to end my efforts as I have wanted very much



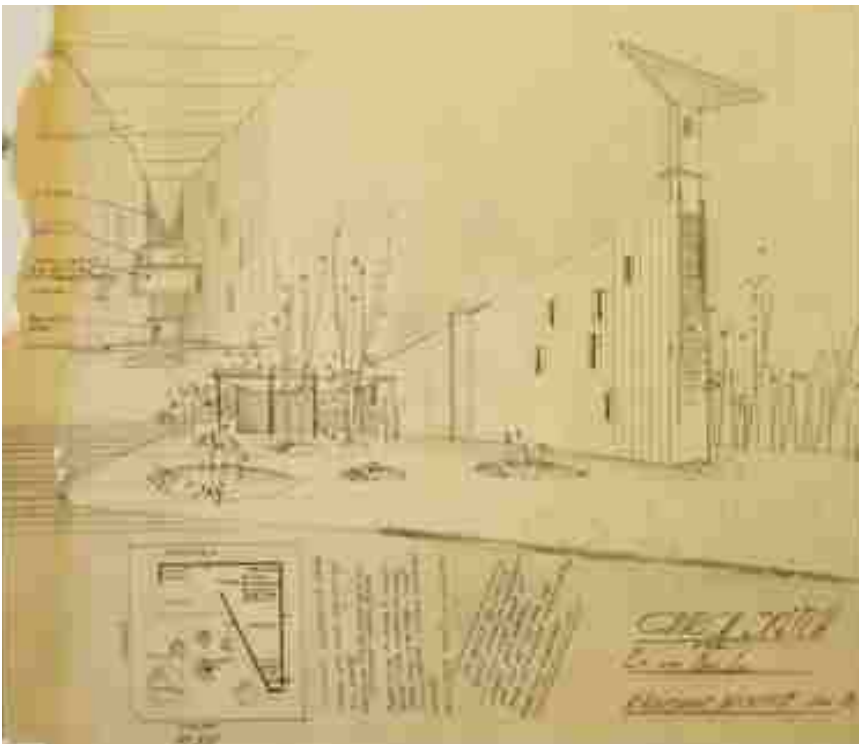
to design this building.” In October the following year, Reichert sent thirty drawings of First Church studies with a note that he still nurtured hope that one of his designs could be carried forward to completion.<sup>108</sup> His letter was returned with a handwritten note stating that the church had voted to develop working drawings based on preliminary work by the architect Paul Carson. Carson’s scheme exhibits many of the prevailing Northwest Modern design ideas with broad, overhanging eaves, exposed natural cedar and large windows. Reichert’s initial site design is clearly evident in the location of the church and supporting elements on the site.

While he would never complete a project as significant as the Bellevue Church, Reichert did design several other small churches and renovations as well as organ screens and consoles. In 1958, former residential clients Bo and Ada Lou Ross invited Reichert to design a church for their Christian Science Society (a smaller congregation than a numbered church) in Oak Harbor on Whidbey Island (4.22). The small church is a wedge shaped “tower design,” clearly a development of his own house-studio on Queen Anne Hill, with organ pipes located high above the reader’s

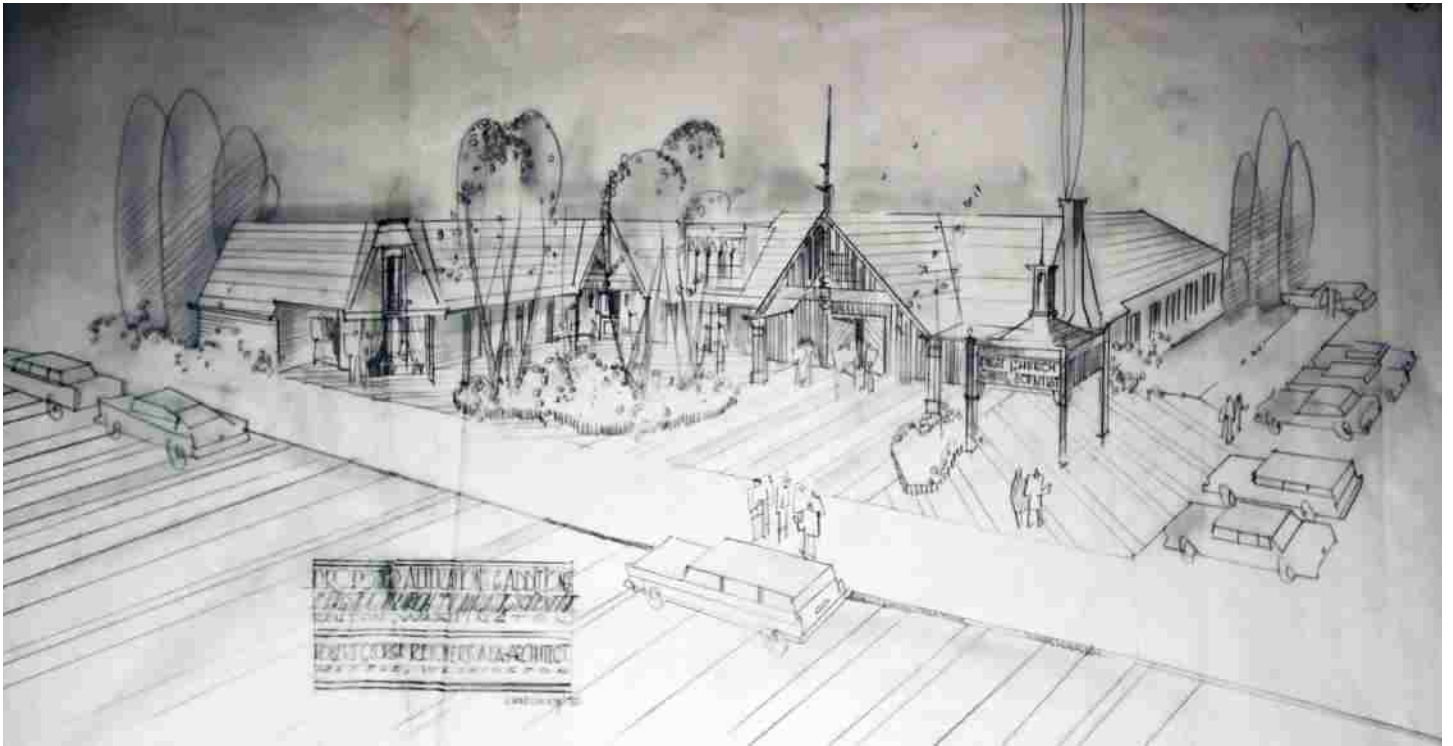
**4.21** Interior perspective of revised scheme for First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bellevue, interior perspective drawing, September 26, 1955. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39929).

podium. Reichert noted the location of the organist's console as being similar to Maybeck's church in Berkeley. The windows are located to provide a pattern of light on the interior and a graphic composition on the exterior. Thinking of the church architecture as an element of the suburban roadside experience, Reichert described the building as having "advertising value, looking over the city and bay." His clients subsequently moved to California and the project was dropped by the church board.

Reichert would get the opportunity to complete the design for a remodel and addition to the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Renton, south of Seattle, starting in 1961. Reichert's notes described the design inspiration for the corner site as a Medieval English village. The project was delayed; conceptual sketches began in the early 1960s and a presentation rendering is dated 1970 (5.23). The church was finally constructed in 1976 and the pipe organ was installed in 1980. The building was demolished in 2012.<sup>109</sup>

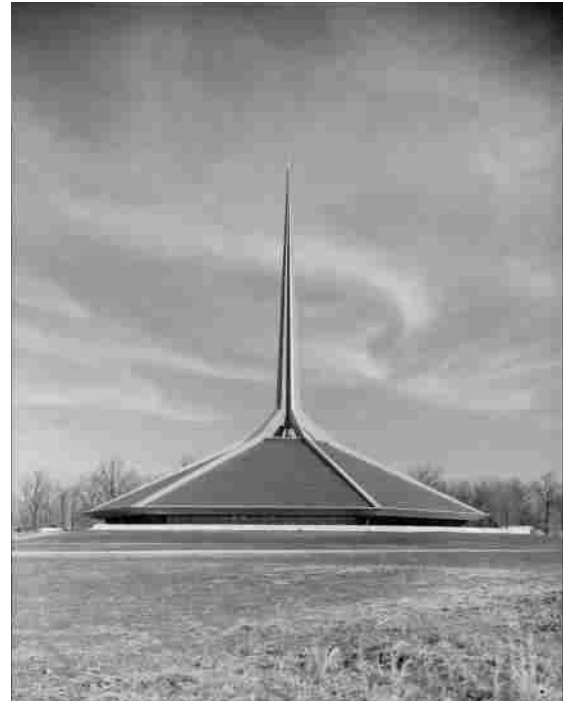


4.22 Preliminary sketch for Christian Science Society in Oak Harbor, Washington, interior and exterior perspectives and floor plan, 1958. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39930).



4.23 Scheme for First Church of Christ, Scientist, Renton, 1970. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39931).

The loss of the Bellevue church commission proved a turning point in Reichert's career. Had the church been completed, Reichert's work may have reached a larger audience beyond the Seattle architecture community, possibly gaining the interest of practitioners and critics who also would be investigating alternative modern architectural responses a few years later. In form, although not in material, Reichert's design for the Bellevue church prefigured Eero Saarinen's concrete framed North Christian Church in Columbus, Indiana, constructed a decade later in 1964 (4.24).<sup>110</sup> Reichert's journals described uncertainty about how to proceed in his career after losing the commission. He considered moving to a larger and presumably less provincial city such as San Francisco or Boston, or even pursuing a career teaching and writing about architectural theory. Nonetheless, Reichert remained in Seattle for the rest of his life, designing evocative, small buildings that were often loved by their owners.



**4.24** North Christian Church in Columbus, Indiana, by Eero Saarinen, architect. (Library of Congress Korab Collection. Balthazar Korab, photographer c. 1959.).





## 5. A Diverse Domestic Practice

Following the Bellevue Church project, Reichert's practice became focused primarily on residential design. Working with clients who shared similar interests and passions, Reichert successfully designed houses that were individual expressions of the client and the architect. He designed houses for several organists and musicians, for artists, for motorcyclists and for members of his church. Always working alone, he completed designs for thirty houses between 1955 and 1965, about three houses per year, in addition to other small commercial and civic projects.

Similar architectural and decorative themes appear in many of Reichert's houses, often traceable to the elements in his own house-studio. One overriding rule was that he made minimal use of color. Exterior and interior finishes ranged from white to gray to black, with a very occasional accent of red or green. Plaster was white and walls often incorporated ornamental panels of cut plywood, sometimes accented with recessed lighting. In form, Reichert's houses were often angular expressions, and he frequently decorated the highest diagonal point of the structure with a small birdhouse (6.1). Reichert never wrote about why he incorporated this decorative element. In fact, his own house did not have one—but it seems to have been his way of punctuating the predominant diagonal line of his building forms.

A January 1, 1990, article by Don Canty in the *Seattle Post-*

5.1 Photograph of Eckmann house by Charles Pearson. (UW College of Built Environments, Visual Resources Collection).

*Intelligencer* described a panel discussion for the Seattle Art Museum exhibit on residential architecture. He commented that Reichert “somehow found a few brave clients and that some attended the seminar and voiced their lasting pleasure in the houses.”



5.2 Martin & Eckmann's clothing store, February 1971, Paul Thiry design. (blog.seattlepi.com).

One of those “few brave clients” was Nancy Eckmann. In 1955, Reichert was approached by Robert and Nancy Eckmann to design a house for their family on a lot they owned at 8615 26th Avenue N.E. in the Wedgewood neighborhood, north of the University of Washington. Robert Eckmann was a partner in the Martin & Eckmann men's clothing store founded by his father, prominent Seattle city council member Ray Eckmann. The store was located on the southwest corner of University Way and Northeast 45th Street, in a building with a modern storefront designed by Paul Thiry in 1949 (5.2). Given the architectural provenance of their business, the Eckmanns clearly had an eye for architecture, and so it is not surprising that they chose Reichert to design their home. They had probably read of Reichert in local newspapers and may have seen Reichert's own controversial house. From her correspondence, it is clear that Nancy Eckmann, herself an accomplished pianist, strongly admired Reichert's work.

### **The Eckmann Residence**

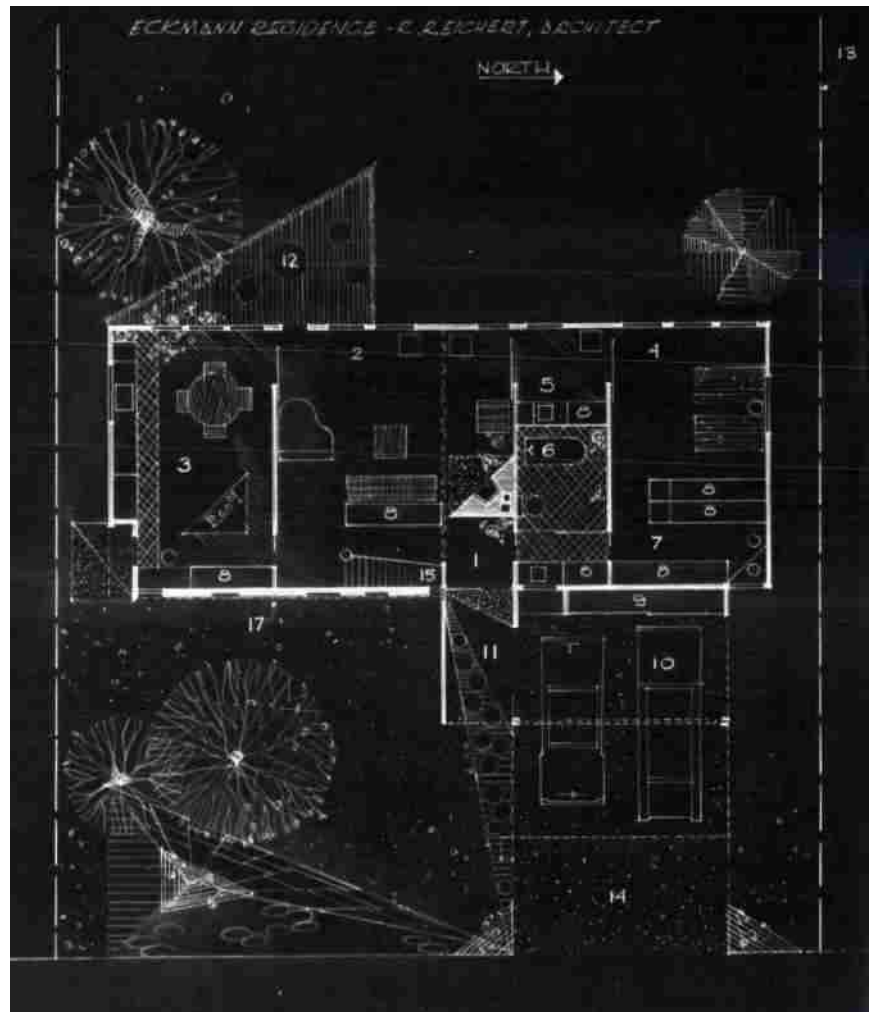
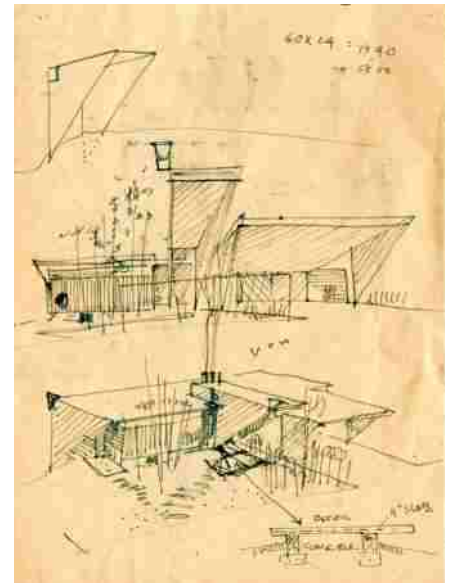
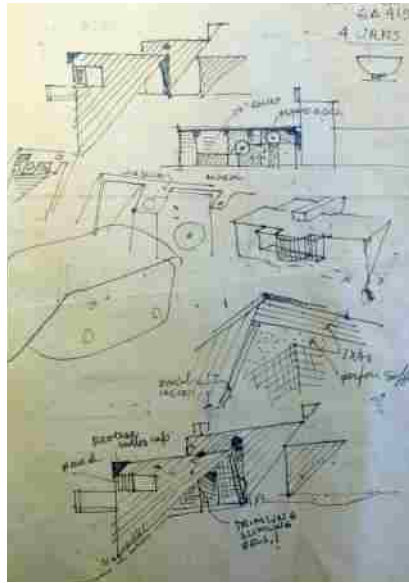
Unlike Reichert's studio house, the Eckmann house is situated on a parcel which is flat at the street, but which slopes steeply down at the rear. In form, the house is a simple rectangular box set into the hillside, reading as a single story from the street and entry but more than two stories from the rear (5.1). The entry vestibule, living room, kitchen, dining area and master bedroom are located on the main level; the children's bedrooms, bathroom and playroom complete the lower level (5.6). Referring to the playroom downstairs, Mrs. Eckmann noted, “The large room between the bedrooms has much potential. Please, let's not call



it a ‘family room.’ I prefer to think of it as a ‘child development room.’”<sup>111</sup> Large, surface-mounted sliding doors divide each of the rooms on the main level; when the wide doors are pulled open, the house becomes a single open space. One can see from the master bedroom at one end, through the house to the kitchen at the other end (5.3).

Diagonal motifs and geometric shapes predominate in the design, with sculptural hoods over the garage and main entrance reaching out toward the street and establishing the dominant visual motif. One of Reichert’s birdhouses appears at the top of the front door portico, and the hood projects over the top of the roof, defining the entrance foyer and stair with a raised ceiling, relieving the otherwise consistent ceiling height. Portions of this raised wall are glazed, so that it becomes a light monitor, bringing light and shadows to the triangular hearth set in this space and also illuminating the extremely narrow stair which runs parallel to the street-facing wall (5.9-5.10).

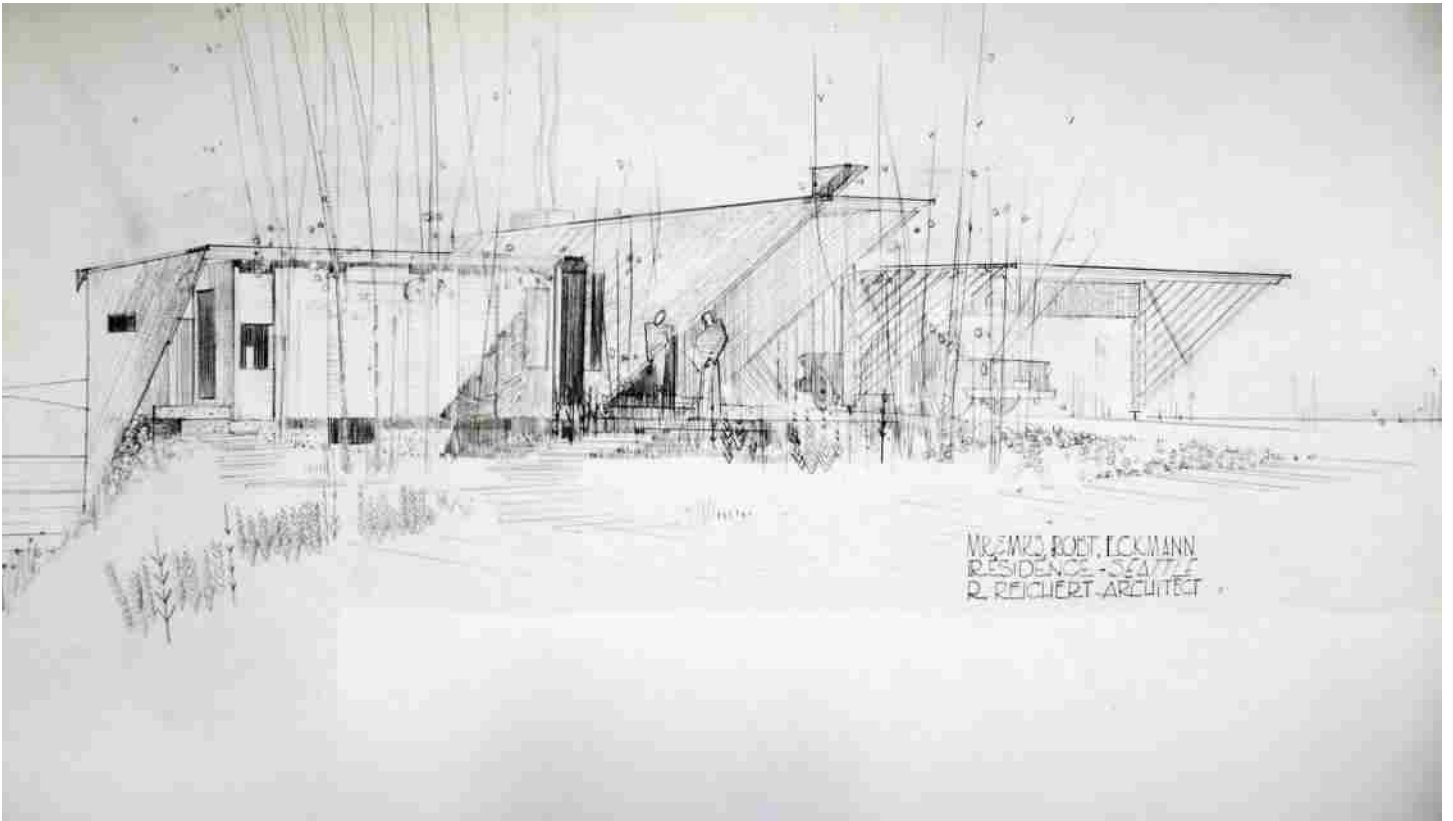
5.3 Interior view of upper floor plan of Eckmann house, looking toward master bedroom and illustrating predominating diagonals of floor and ceiling finishes. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39932).



5.4 Eckmann House sketches. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39933).

5.5 Eckmann House sketches. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39934).

5.6 Upper floor plan of Eckmann house. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39935).



5.7 Presentation drawing of Eckmann house.  
(Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special  
Collections UW39936).



**5.8** Havens House by Harwell Hamilton Harris, 1941. (UW College of Built Environments, Visual Resource Collection).

**5.9** View of triangular hearth lit by entry volume clerestory (photograph by author).

**5.10** View of stair, oriented parallel to street wall, with floor opening shaped to create forced perspective (photograph by author).

The Eckmann house may have been partly inspired by Harwell Hamilton Harris's widely published Weston Havens house of 1941, in Berkeley (5.8), similarly perched on a steep site and a work Reichert probably would have visited on one of his numerous trips to the San Francisco Bay area.<sup>112</sup> Formally, the Havens house appears as three repeating extruded triangular forms, inverted gables, supporting each level and projecting over the steep slope. The primary difference between the two houses is that the form of the Havens house is a structural expression of material technology, while the similar Reichert motifs are primarily decorative.

Reichert integrated the Eckmann house with the landscape, repeating the house's formal and decorative elements with triangular "earth forms" and wood structures to complete the composition seen from the street (5.11). There are few windows on the street side, although the entry is the same glazed steel frame system that Reichert specified for his own house. The rear elevation markedly contrasts with the front; it is a two story tall flat wall with a triangular deck projecting off the upper level (5.12). A circular wood panel originally screened the downstairs door and landing. The window arrangement on the rear elevation is a development of the expression on Reichert's studio; the windows form a composition with varying shapes and head heights. Some windows are flush with the floor; others are high on the wall. There are no large windows, although there is a view to the west over the ravine. The composition of the pattern of windows on the facade suggests a musical score, a motif probably appreciated by the musician client.

Nancy Eckmann became a willing student of Reichert's architectural philosophies. Her letters show that she had clearly absorbed Reichert's ideas on avoiding the use of color for both the interior and the exterior, as well as ideas on the meaning of the unique design. After construction began in August 1956, Mrs.

Eckmann wrote to Reichert from her summer home on the Kitsap Peninsula:

The incredible has happened and our house has actually been started. When it is convenient for you, would you make some sketches of ideas you have for furniture? My idea is to have as little as possible, don't you agree? Did I ever tell you that I sold everything I owned except the washer and dryer and piano? So in your planning you might include flatware, dishes and color of towels. I want a basic set of white dishes, but it might be fun to mix some black ones in.

Reichert designed furniture and light fixtures for the mostly monochromatic house, continuing the theme of triangular forms from the exterior; the architecture was a consistent expression, with design integrated from landscape to building form to interior design to furniture and lighting. Even the floors were laid diagonally in the rooms.

Reichert wrote to Margery Phillips, *Seattle Times* architectural critic, in January 1964, describing the house as highly innovative for its time. He noted, "The house can be seen along its entire length by sliding open the large wall panels." The openness of the main floor level, visually connecting all of the rooms from kitchen to master bedroom, foreshadows the so-called "open concept" house designs which would become popular decades later. Reichert described the unique strategy of creating one room of the dining room and kitchen:

It was decided here to combine the usual rooms into one large one. Rather than the usual common eating arrangement in which one finds dining in the "L" of a living room, this is a dining room in which one prepares meals. Instead of the usual surgical ward white porcelain utility kitchen, this room is finished very formally, and in the same treatment as the living room just adjacent.





5.11 Eckmann house, street elevation showing entry and carport hoods, decorative elements on street facade and earthwork and wood sculptures. Photograph by Charles Pearson, c. 1958. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39937).





5.12 Eckmann house, rear elevation showing window layout, deck and round lower door screen. Photograph by Charles Pearson, c. 1961. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39938).

The Eckmanns moved into their new house in September 1957. Nancy wrote to Reichert to express her reactions to the design:

It is impossible to say how I feel. People say, "Will your house be contemporary? I mean, lots of beams and windows?" I say, "Yes," rather than explain. I am learning to loathe the word "contemporary" as much as I do "modern." This house is either "progressive," or perhaps, "R. Reichert."

The Eckmann house is a compelling architectural and sculptural expression that was much loved by its client.<sup>113</sup> It represents an example of how the enthusiasm and involvement of the client can result in a successful project.

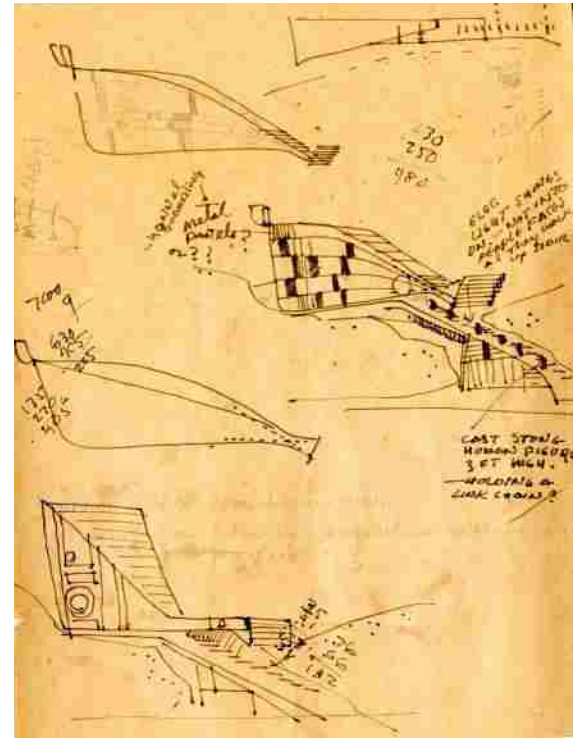
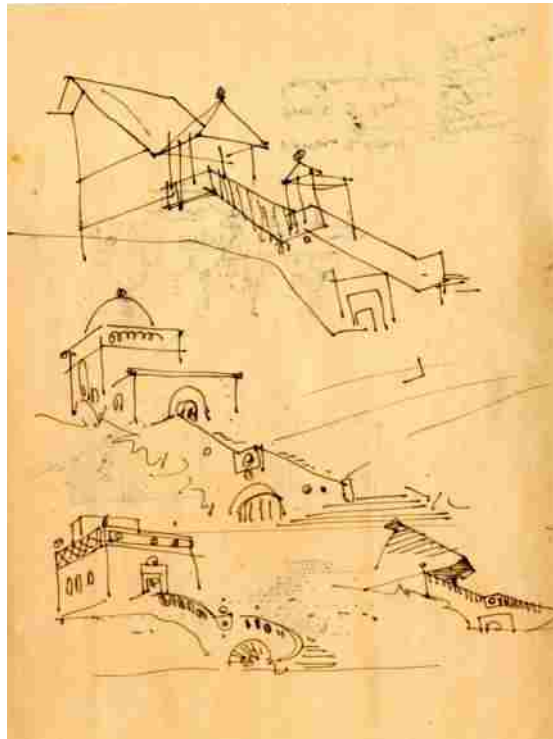
The concept that space and architecture have a distinct place in human memory has been studied by architectural theorists. Donlynn Lyndon, in his essay titled, "The Place of Memory" in the book, *Spatial Recall: Memory in Architecture and Landscape*, makes a distinction between "site" and "place." He notes, "'Place' refers to spaces that can be remembered, that we can imagine, hold in the mind, and consider," and further argues that "Good places are structured so that they attract and hold memories."<sup>114</sup>

During the completion of this thesis, the author was contacted by Robert and Nancy Eckmanns' daughter, Jane Eckmann Bedell. She wanted to share her feelings about the house, which she described as an "unconventional, brilliant piece of artwork."<sup>115</sup> She grew up in the house from 2nd grade until she left for college, and was inspired to build a scale model of the house, not wanting the original design to be lost and forgotten. She built the model from memory, photographs, and *The Seattle Times* article on the house.<sup>116</sup> Her ability to "hold the house in her mind," as well as the desire to re-create the spaces which had remained with her for so many years, speaks to the emotional connection Reichert made between the place and its young inhabitant.



5.13 Robert Reichert on his Harley Davidson, in front of the Eckmann house, c. 1991. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39939).

The current homeowners, Dale and Marilyn Nordell, have lived in the house since 1981 and they had the opportunity to meet Reichert when they reached out to him for advice on making some water-damage repairs to the house. Mr. Nordell was surprised when Reichert answered their call; the architect noted how lucky it was that they had called when they did, as he only answered the telephone on Tuesdays, between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.<sup>117</sup> Reichert visited the house only once, in 1991, to have photographs taken of himself on his motorcycle in front of the sculptural entry (5.13). The homeowners invited him to come inside to look at the interior of the house, but he refused. After thirty-nine years, Mr. and Mrs. Nordell still claim their home is “a joyful house to be in,” and believe that the house has “aged into its time.” The Nordells



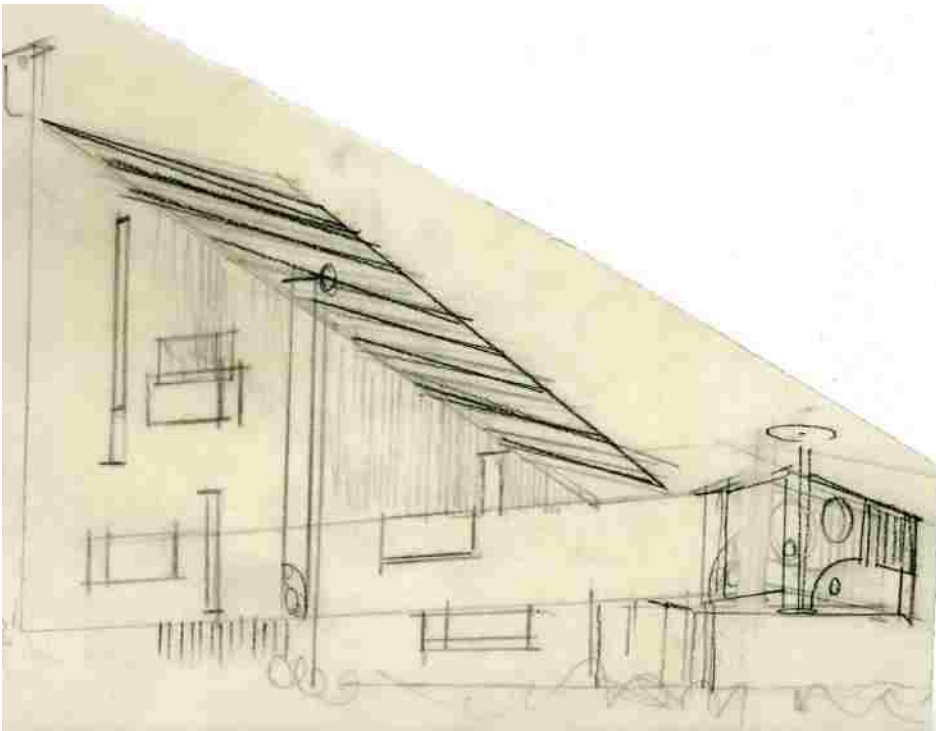
5.14 Egan house, early design sketches. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39940).

5.15 Egan house, early design sketches. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39941).

have been excellent stewards; the Eckmann house remains a well preserved Robert Reichert design.

### The Egan Residence

While the Eckmann house was under construction, retired Navy admiral Willard Egan made an unannounced visit to Reichert's house-studio. He informed the architect that he had purchased land at 1500 Lakeview Boulevard East, and wanted to construct a house similar to Reichert's for himself and his wife, Mary. The site was a difficult one, located on the east side of Lakeview, along the western base of a steeply sloping portion of Capitol Hill, below St. Mark's Cathedral. Just west of Lakeview, the construction of the



new Interstate 5 freeway was already underway.

It is interesting to consider that Egan was requesting a house similar in shape to Reichert's, which was designed specifically to accommodate his pipe organ and to provide a responsive acoustical environment. The Egans were not musicians, so the desire for a house like Reichert's seems somewhat arbitrary. However, Reichert was inspired by the highly forested site, and the prominence of the church at the top of the hill. His initial sketches depict an abstraction of an ancient hill town cascading down the slope (5.14-5.15). The first presentation drawing indicates a curving roof line, reminiscent of the wedge shape of Reichert's house, but freed

**5.16** Sketch for second scheme of Egan house. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39942).

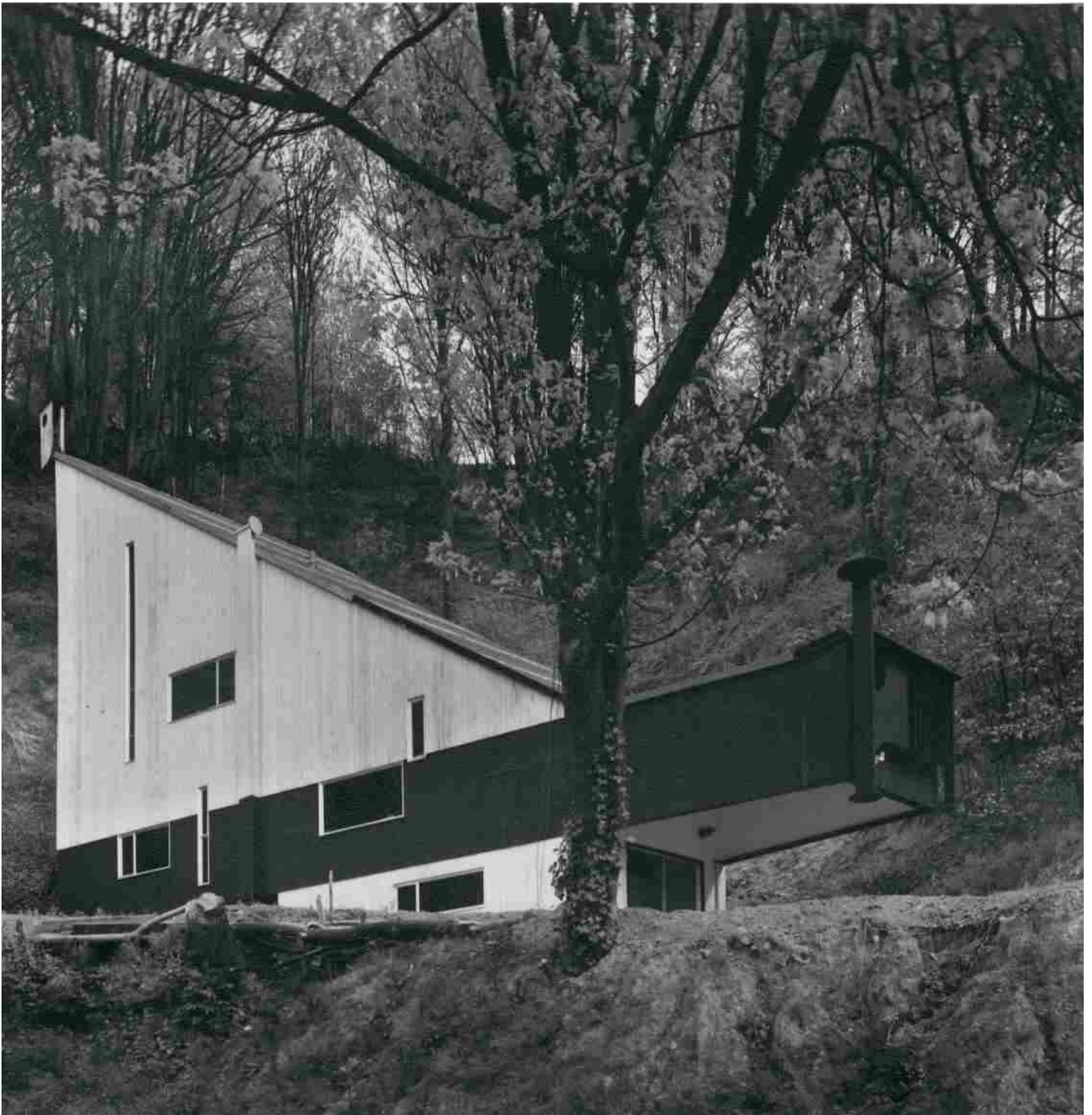
from the constraints which determined the design of the studio. Reichert conceived the Egan house as a sweeping white graphic element against the steep and densely forested site. The hill became background and the house the subject of a nearly two-dimensional composition. In his original scheme, Reichert envisioned a house cantilevering dramatically over the driveway and entry (5.16). Initial bids were over \$20,000, which was double the Egan's budget. Consequently, Reichert simplified the design to a wedge-shaped form, with the layout of thin, vertical windows balancing those on the horizontal base, and providing interplay against wood textured surfaces, black and white striped torchdown roof and with sculptural plywood ornaments applied to the end of the projecting base. The final presentation drawing shows a triangular building volume, reminiscent of Reichert's house, with a prominent horizontal base which cantilevers over the entry at the south end. A birdhouse adorns the peak of the roof and a chalice marks the end of the cantilever. The outline of St. Mark's Cathedral figures prominently in the heavy graphite drawing (5.17).

In May 1958, Egan signed a contract with Sanford Moglebust, the builder of Reichert's own house, to complete the shell of the structure for \$10,762, with the client completing most of the interior.<sup>118</sup> Less expensive materials were specified to further reduce the construction cost (laminated plywood beams instead of dimensional lumber, for example). Reichert noted that the house progressed very quickly, "too fast,"<sup>119</sup> and he noted that the client's daily interaction with contractors and changing design elements "on the fly" was disruptive to the project. By July 1958, Reichert noted that the birdhouse had been installed.

Reichert had been stung by the negative publicity regarding his own house and so he wanted to control the way the public interpreted construction of the Egan house. He chose not to post a sign advertising himself as architect, and asked Moglebust to refer

5.17 Egan house presentation sketch, with St. Mark's Cathedral in background. The alternating striped roof is similar to that on Reichert's own house-studio. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39943).





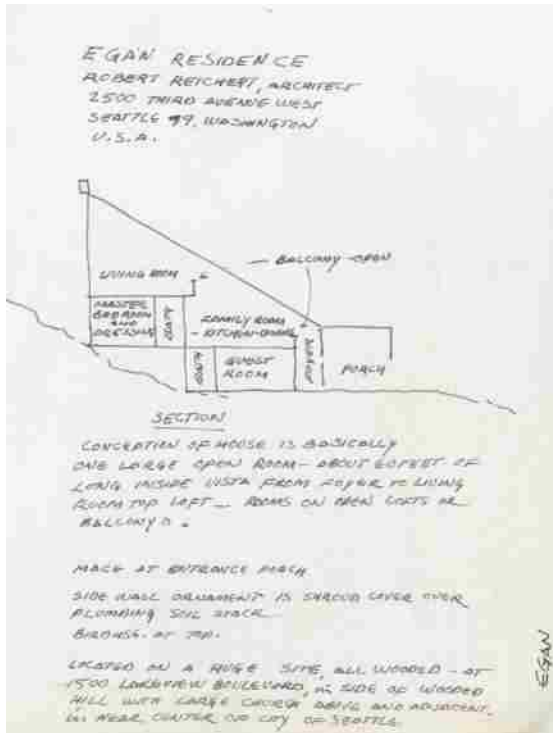
5.18 Egan house, c.1961. Photograph by Charles Pearson. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39944).





5.19 Egan house, c.1961. Photograph by Charles Pearson. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39945).

any media inquiries to Reichert, himself. After returning from an extended trip to Europe, Reichert found that the provocative house had been discovered. He was informed that two reporters had been on site, asking questions of the contractor: “What is it?” In late July, Reichert was informed that a crew of *Seattle Times* reporters was on site and taking photographs, “against my request.” Reichert recalled arriving at the project to find students sketching the building, photographers and members of the public milling around the site and observing construction of the unusual house. Eventually resigned to the furious amount of public discussion as the house neared completion, Reichert finally hung his sign in the window in early August, noting that “everyone seems to know this is my job, even though I have tried to keep it secret.”<sup>120</sup> On August 8, 1958, Moklebust informed Reichert that he had heard radio talk show host Al Cummings talking about the house on his program. Listeners described the house as a giant ski slide or a work shack for the freeway. Another story called the building a giant wedge of cheese. Finally, in late August, Reichert was approached by *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reporter Charles Russell to write a story on the house, with Reichert’s own descriptions.<sup>121</sup>



5.20 Egan house notes with longitudinal section sketch indicating organization of rooms. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39944 reverse).

Project notes indicate that the house was nearly finished by October 1958, with “very good and white, for Alaskan marble” being delivered, the material Reichert usually chose for stair treads, and the black “hood mace and ornamental pieces” waiting in the living room for installation on the exterior (5.18-5.19). The character of the house interior retains the feeling of Reichert’s initial sketches. Rooms are stacked and terrace up the hill, within the house, and the sloping ceiling provides a consistent datum over the terraced spaces. A sectional diagram by Reichert describes this organization of spaces (5.20).

The Egan family lived in the house for about thirteen years, selling the property shortly after a landslide damaged the house in 1967. At



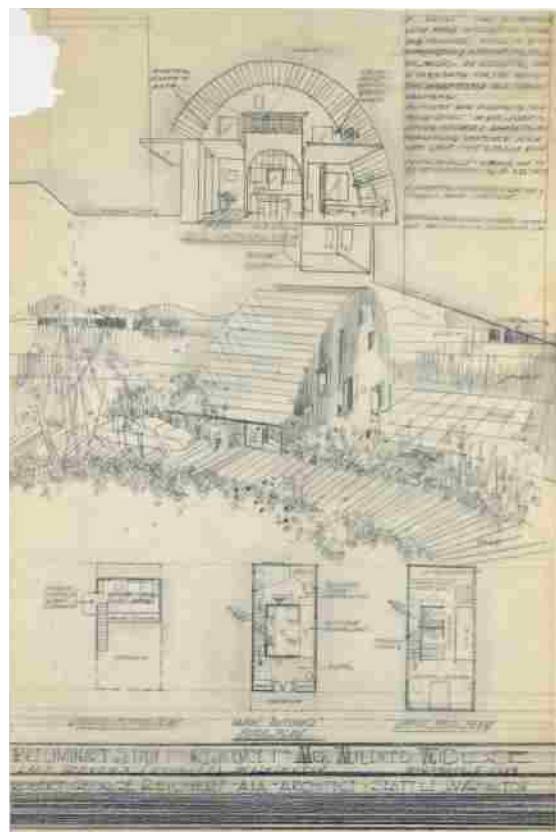
5.21 Photo of Mildred Close at her house, 1972. (Photograph by Chuck Close, from Christopher Finch's *Chuck Close: Life*).

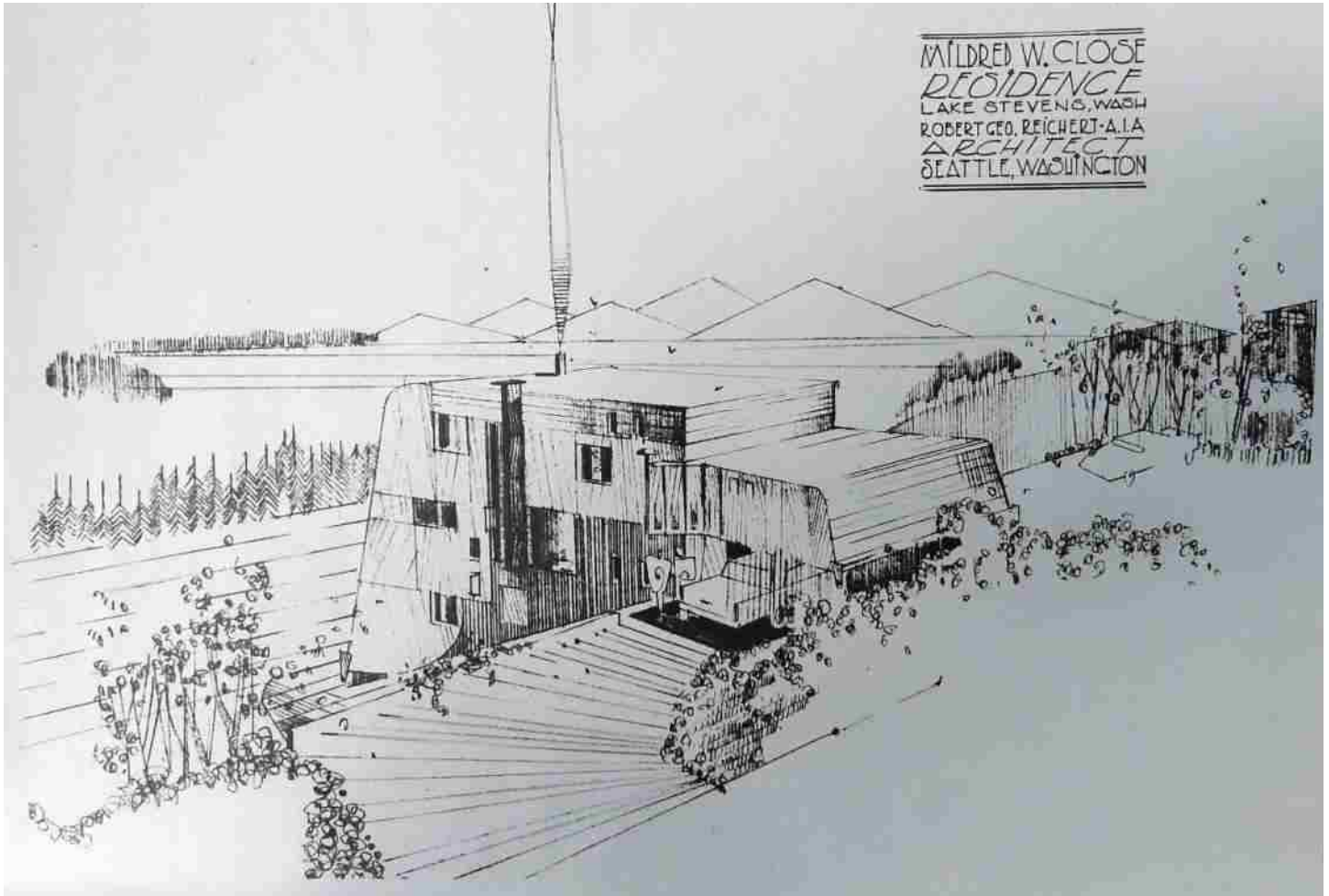
5.22 Mildred Close House preliminary study, November 1964. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39946).

risk of demolition in the early 1990s due to deterioration from moisture as well as the unorthodox design, the house was acquired by the Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority in February 1998. The house was stabilized and rehabilitated, integrating many of Reichert's original design elements, and has been rented to a series of tenants who have commented on the unique experience of living in a design by Robert Reichert.<sup>122</sup> The house was designated a City of Seattle Landmark in May 2010, the only one of his works so far to be recognized.

### The Close Residence

Reichert's clients were often fellow church members, motorcyclists, or musicians. Mildred Close, the mother of artist Chuck Close and herself an organist, pianist and art student, approached Reichert to design a house on a site overlooking Lake Stevens, just east of Everett, Washington, at 501 101st Avenue NE (historically Lakemont Vista Drive). Reichert first met Millie Close at the home

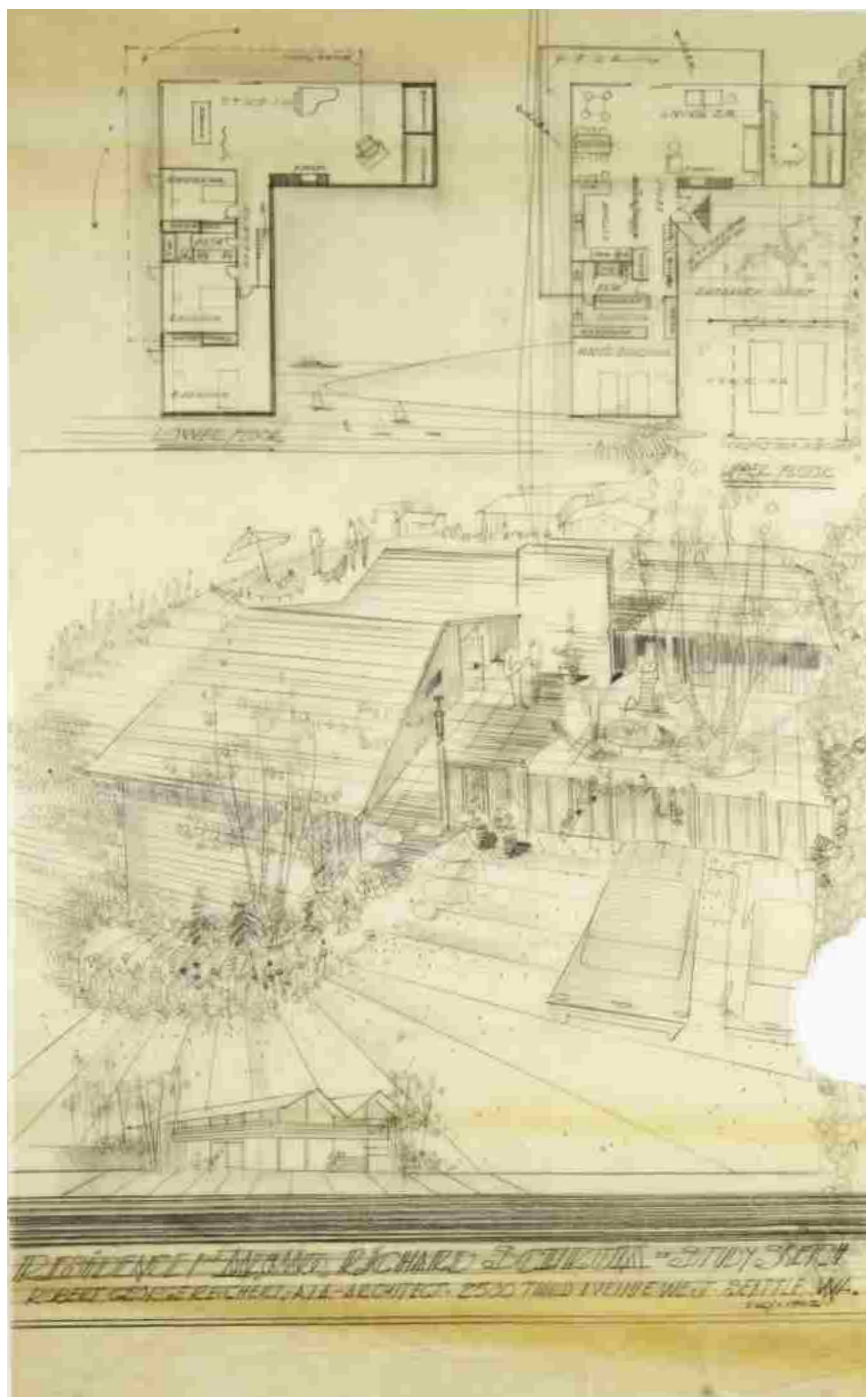




5.23 Mildred Close house on Lake Stevens, presentation drawing. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39948).



5.24 Mildred Close house on Lake Stevens (unknown photographer). (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39947).



5.25 Schrum Residence Study. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39949).

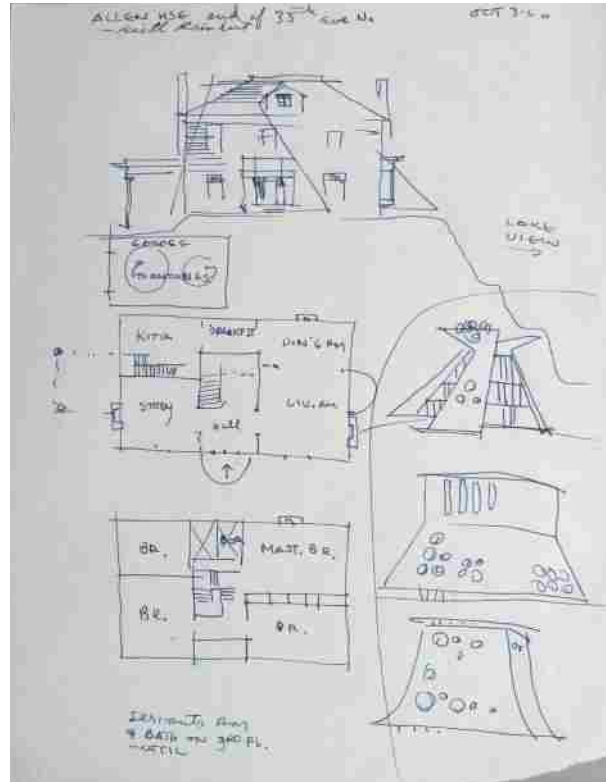
of fellow organist Georg Belch, who would end up purchasing Reichert's house-studio in 1965. The Close house was designed as a "tone chamber" for music (5.22-5.24). An article by Jeanne H. Metzger of the *Everett Herald* began, "Let's talk about a home as a work of art," a title which probably satisfied Reichert. Other critics, however, were less kind, calling it an "overgrown camper top." Metzger acknowledged that it was not a "pretty, traditional Northwest style home," but that it "dares to be different."<sup>123</sup> Fully transitioning in his role from architect to artist, Reichert designed three freestanding sculptures for the yard, similar to the sculptures he placed in the Eckmann front yard. Young art student Chuck Close provided a wall mural and consulted on the design, especially the decorative elements and sculptures.

Construction of the house was halted when an inspector discovered the loft ceiling height to be too low. Reichert cited a "grandfathered" element of the building code to continue the project. Even so, Millie Close's art loft had a very low ceiling. But the main interior is a double height space, designed with angled walls to optimize the acoustics for piano and organ music. Reichert only managed the construction of the exterior shell, as Close had a very limited budget for the project. She and her son finished the interiors. However, Reichert met with his client over dinner for many lively nights during the design and construction phases, and they were clearly like-minded artists (5.21). Millie lived in the house for only a short time and some of the house's decorative elements have changed. But the house was still recognizable in 2019 as a unique design by Robert Reichert. Critics of the Close house decried the building's odd shape and proportions. However, like Reichert's



5.26 Photo of Reichert and John Allen. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW38907).

5.27 Reichert's as-built sketches of the Rhinehart house, and investigation as to new form for house remodel. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39950).



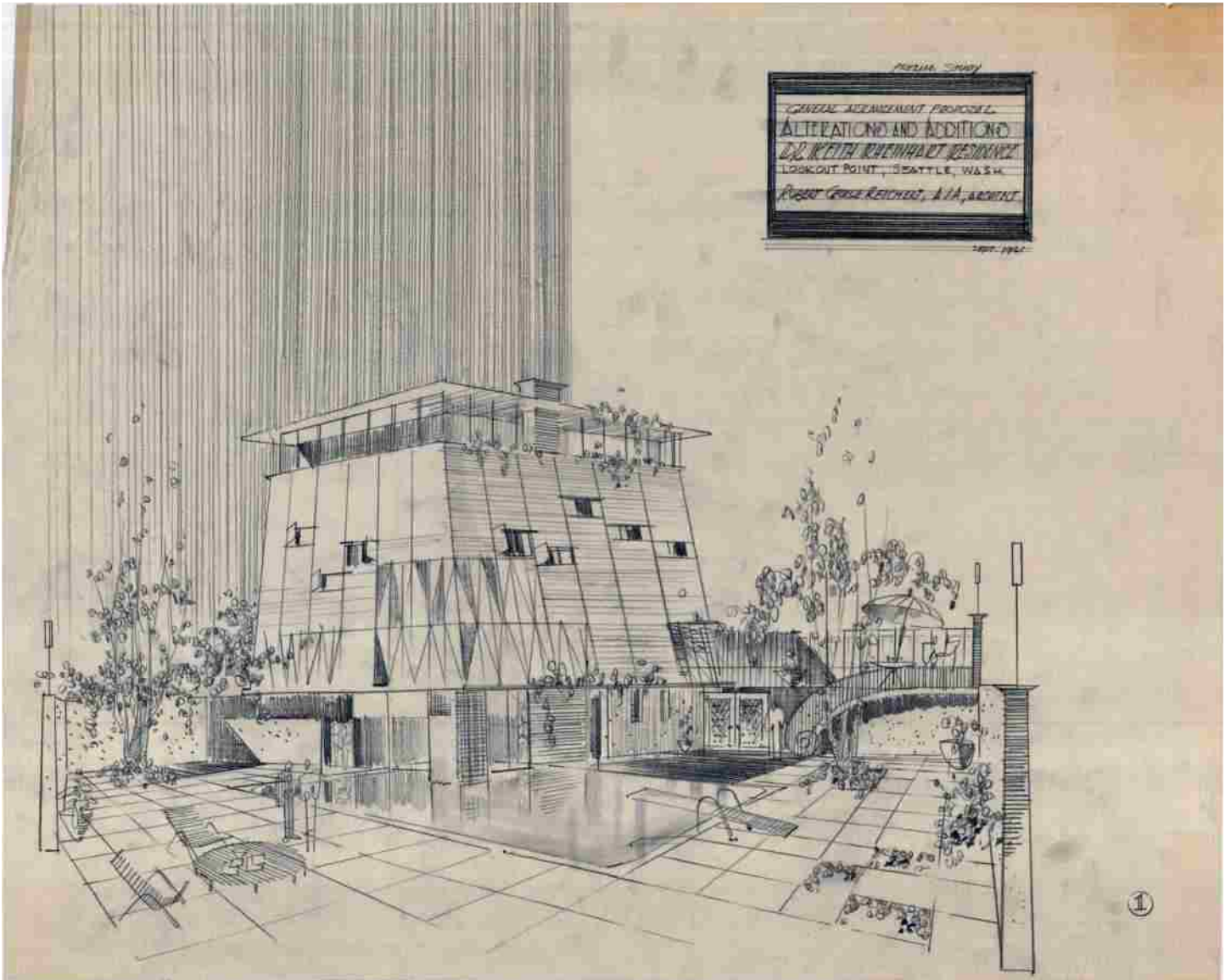
own house-studio, the building successfully integrates sculpture, painting and music in its formal design.

### Other Houses

In 1962, Reichert designed a house for the professional organist, Richard “Dick” Schrum, a prominent theater organist in Seattle. He played in the Paramount Theater in the 1960s and was the organist for the Seattle Supersonics professional basketball team as well as the Seattle Totems hockey team. The floor plan indicates an organ and a grand piano in the large, double height living rooms space.<sup>124</sup>

Referred to as the “John Allen House” in Reichert’s project





5.28 Keith Rhinehart house. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39951).

records, the Keith Rhinehart project of 1962 was a remodel of a traditional Seattle “four square” house at 416 35th Avenue North. Reinhart was a prominent spiritualist in the 1960s counter-culture movement in Seattle, dropping out of the University of Washington in order to start the Aquarian Foundation. Keith was somehow involved with John Allen, Reichert’s younger motorcycle partner (5.26). The house design was uniquely sculptural in form and was comprised of unusual rooms, including a space for Rhinehart’s pet lion, Tammy, and a circular room in the basement for séances. Reinhart was sentenced to the state prison in Walla Walla for homosexuality and the peculiar house remodel never moved past the schematic design stage (5.27).<sup>125</sup>

Reichert completed a variety of unusual houses during his career. All of them were interesting as works of arts in their form and expression. His project records reveal contentious relationships with many of his clients, who probably became tired of indulging the artist-architect and simply wanted their houses completed. The most successful houses were designed, like his own house, as spaces for the creation of music.





## 6. Motorcycles, Hamburgers and Monuments

Reichert's interest in imagery, graphics and surface ornament fit with the emerging requirements of "car culture" and the new commercial strip. He rode his motorcycle all over the city and region and frequented numerous roadside restaurants. Roadside commercial design was, therefore, an area where several threads of Reichert's professional and personal life came together. In *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, published in 1985, Chester Liebs traced the evolution of American roadside architecture through the late twentieth century. Starting with Maryland's Old National Road, constructed in the early 1900s and crowded with Ford Model-T travelers and the varied structures that popped up to serve them, new building types and styles responded to the increasing speeds and independence offered by automotive transport.<sup>126</sup> Automobile production effectively ceased in 1942 in order for factories to accommodate war production; by the early 1950s, when Robert Reichert first established his architectural practice, a post-war construction boom that resulted in development of new suburban housing tracts also resulted in new types of roads and highways to accommodate higher speeds and large volumes of traffic - and requiring new roadside architecture.

In Seattle, the opening of the Alaskan Way Viaduct in 1953 along the central waterfront exemplified the trend in post-war highway construction. Single occupant vehicles could get on the viaduct and enjoy the view as they flew over congested city streets, connecting

**6.1** Photograph of Reichert and Otto Drager's son in front of the interior murals he designed for Drager's Harley Davidson shop (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39952).

6.2 Spud Fish and Chips restaurant on Alki Beach in West Seattle, c. 1940. (Image from Spud Fish and Chips website.)



north to the established commercial strip along Aurora Avenue or southwest to the expanding Seattle suburbs. For Reichert, this route offered the chance for a quick motorcycle ride from his home on Queen Anne to burgeoning roadside fast food restaurants and coffee shops. His weekly practice or organ performances at Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist in West Seattle were usually followed by a stop at Spud Fish and Chips on the Alki waterfront or pancakes at the Twin Teepees on Aurora (6.2). Seattle's suburban commercial built environment became architecture as advertising, with building forms and signs competing with one another to grab the driver's attention and to lure the traveler to stop in for automotive service, fast food or a modest overnight room.

In a 1963 essay first published in *Esquire* magazine, "The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby," Tom Wolfe offered several names for this style of roadside architecture: Boomerang Modern, Palette Curvilinear, Flash Gordon Ming-Alert Spiral, McDonald's Hamburger Parabola, Mint Casino Elliptical. He observed,

Endless scorched boulevards lined with one-story stores, shops, bowling alleys, skating rinks, tacos, drive-ins, all of them shaped not like rectangles but like trapezoids, from the way the roofs slant up from the back and the plate glass fronts slant out as if they're going to pitch forward on the sidewalk and throw up. The signs are great, too. They all stand free on poles outside. They have horribly slick dog-legged shapes that I call boomerang modern.<sup>127</sup>

Reichert's commercial architectural work during this period was as expressive as his residential designs, but rather than contrasting with the traditional house forms of architecturally conservative Seattle, the commercial designs could be understood as an appropriate celebration of post-war automotive culture. As an architect who viewed the city from the seat of a Harley Davidson, Reichert understood that buildings with sculptural shapes or fanciful graphics would catch a passing driver's attention. Large, elevated signs addressing speeding vehicles would be most appropriate for a building to hold its own in a roadside context. There is little information in Reichert's archive on the commercial projects; no project files exist for these commissions and some designs exist as drawings with no notes identifying the project or client. The commercial projects are presented here thematically, and roughly chronologically. Typically, the only information available for a discussion of Reichert's roadside architecture are the single sheet aerial perspective presentation drawings, a few photographs and numerous napkin sketches.

Reichert's first commercial commission came in 1952, shortly after becoming a registered architect in Washington. Not surprisingly, the project was for a Harley Davidson motorcycle sales shop at 1827 Broadway in the Capitol Hill neighborhood. The client was motorcycle racer and collector, Marion Diederik. Diederik was born in Portland, Oregon, and was the All Pacific Northwest Hillclimb champion in 1933-1935. The races were held at Longacres hill in Renton, Washington, and required riders to



**6.3** Marion Diederik's Harley Davidson shop before the Reichert remodel, ca 1945. Architect unknown. (Assessor card, Puget Sound Regional Branch, Washington State Archives).

**6.4** Harley Davidson sales shop design for Marion Diederik; 1952; Broadway, Seattle; Robert Reichert, architect. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39953).



climb a 72% grade up the 140-foot hill. As a regional celebrity among his motorcycling peers, Diederik obtained the Seattle Harley Davidson franchise in 1938.<sup>128</sup> The 1945 tax assessor photo shows the original shop to be a typical retail storefront in a neighborhood that had developed with the prominence of the automobile as the “auto row” of Seattle (6.3). The modest reinforced concrete structure consisted of 3,620 square feet, divided into three storefront bays. Reichert’s modernization of the building extended the facade upward about ten feet over the glazed storefront system, allowing the building to serve as a marquee sign and to appear much larger than it was (6.4). Multiple signs were integrated



with the architecture, advertising “Harley Davidson Sales,” “The World’s Greatest Sport,” “Where Riders Meet” and “Antique Museum in Back.” Motorcycle shops became gathering places for hobbyists; an advertisement in the September 1957 edition of *American Motorcycling* lists the Diederik shop as “the largest and best equipped motorcycle shop in the beautiful Northwest. The welcome mat is out for all.”<sup>129</sup> The building was demolished around 2009 to become the western entrance to the city’s Capitol Hill subway station.

Reichert obtained a commission in 1952 to design a second Harley Davidson shop for “veteran racer and hillclimber,” Otto Drager. Drager moved his motorcycle shop from Bremerton to Seattle after Harley Davidson sold him a franchise in 1950. Drager would have been in direct competition with Diederik’s shop, as they were likely also competitors in motorcycle hillclimbs. The Drager design was for the construction of a shop at 1207 Dexter Avenue North, set against the hillside between the western shore of Lake Union and Aurora Avenue, the commercial strip extending north out of the city. The building was a simple rectangle in plan, constructed of concrete masonry, with a low concrete bulkhead facing the Dexter Avenue that supports a large storefront window system across the entire front of the building. The motorcycles on the sales floor



**6.5** Otto Drager’s Harley Davidson sales shop on Dexter Avenue, Seattle; 1952. Building design and murals by Robert Reichert. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39954).

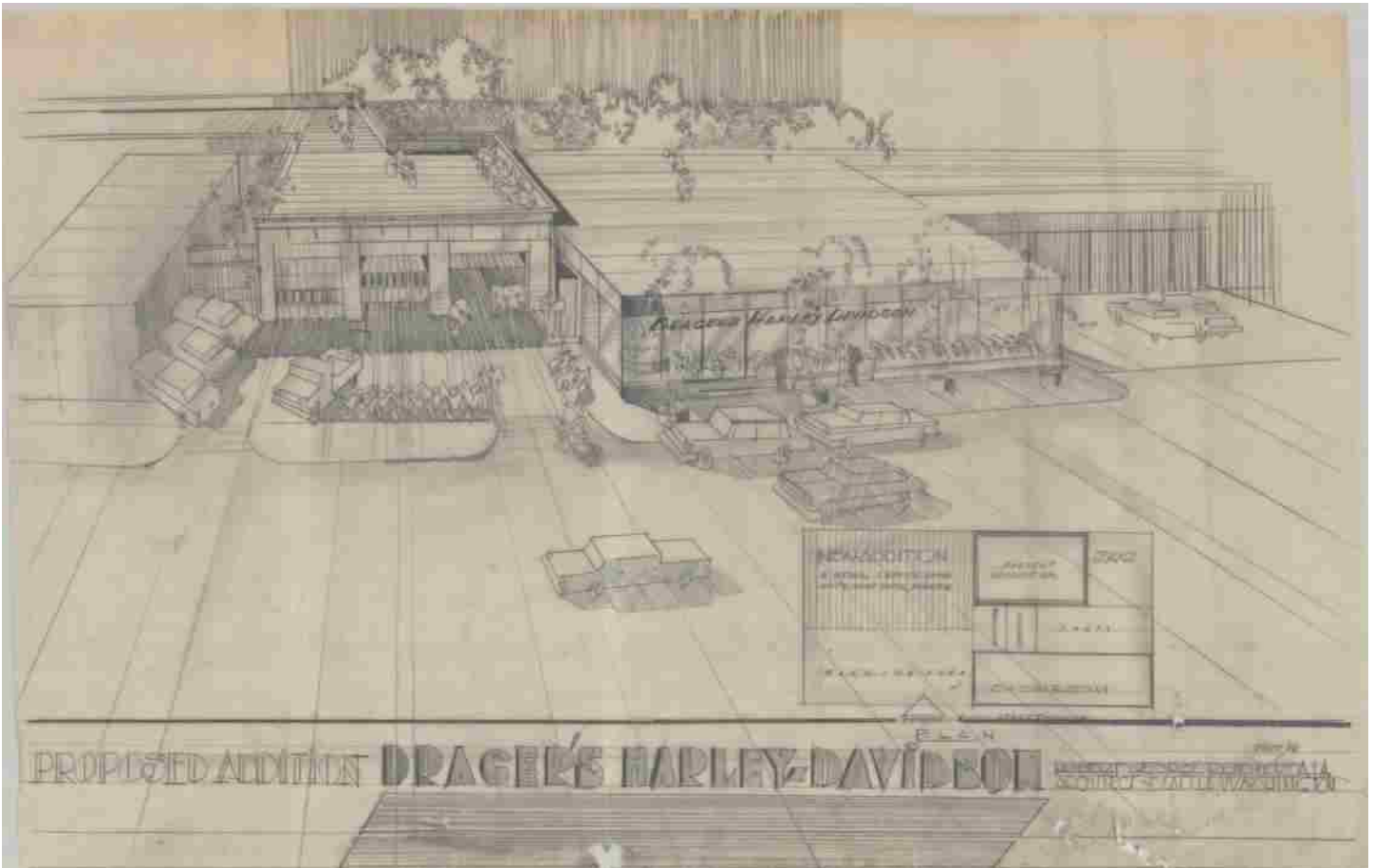


6.6 Reichert at a cafe meeting with students.  
(Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special  
Collections UW39855).

became the advertising, along with some illuminated neon signs and the huge mural Reichert painted on the north exterior wall, capturing the attention of customers driving south on Dexter. An interior mural repeats the same themes. The mural shows Reichert's first use of black, white and dark red graphics, a color scheme he would use on future projects, including his own house. The north wall extends above the roofline, conveying an intention to make the decorated wall a feature of the architecture. A predominance of repeating diagonal forms in multiple directions celebrate the freedom and speed of motorcycle riding (6.5).

Otto Drager was the eventual winner of the Harley retail competition. By 1957, Diederik had converted his shop to a Renault dealership. Drager hired Reichert to design a 1966 expansion to the south end of the shop; the aerial perspective drawing for the addition depicts an active building where cyclists are gathered within and even on top of the building (6.7). Reichert's renderings always integrate the motor vehicle and celebrate the space required to address their circulation and storage, his houses often set the carport or garage adjacent to the pedestrian entry, while most architects today attempt to hide the garage. Reichert's Eckmann house, for example, has a dramatic carport entry that juts up diagonally toward the street; the adjacent pedestrian entry repeats the same form. Otto Drager's original Seattle shop was demolished in 2016 for the construction of new apartments, but the Drager business still exists in a northern suburb of Seattle, farther north on the Aurora commercial strip.<sup>130</sup>

Reichert was an enthusiastic participant in roadside restaurant culture, usually riding his motorcycle for a morning coffee or a late night burger. During these jaunts, he would sit, sketching and chatting with friends, students and colleagues. He spent many hours at the Hasty Tasty, the Coffee Corral, A&W, Spud Fish and Chips, and many others. He did much of his design work at



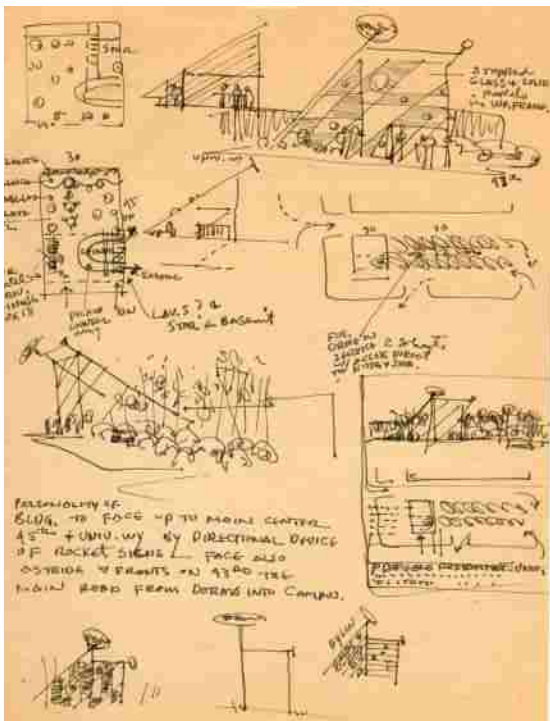
these places. The architectural drawing collection includes many hundreds of napkin sketches, provocative musings in ink, often on grease-stained paper. He also informally met with students, believing it was important for them to experience the world and not to be tied to their drawing boards (6.6). Former student Dale Jorgensen recalled of Reichert, “He loved sitting at the ‘pin heads’ (counter stools) at his old haunt on University Way, the Coffee Corral.”<sup>131</sup> Harvard educated Reichert was unique in that he admired buildings that responded to the celebration of technology

6.7 Proposal for south addition to Otto Drager’s Harley Davidson sales shop on Dexter Avenue, Seattle; 1966. Additional space for parking and gathering is located on the rooftop of the addition. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39955).

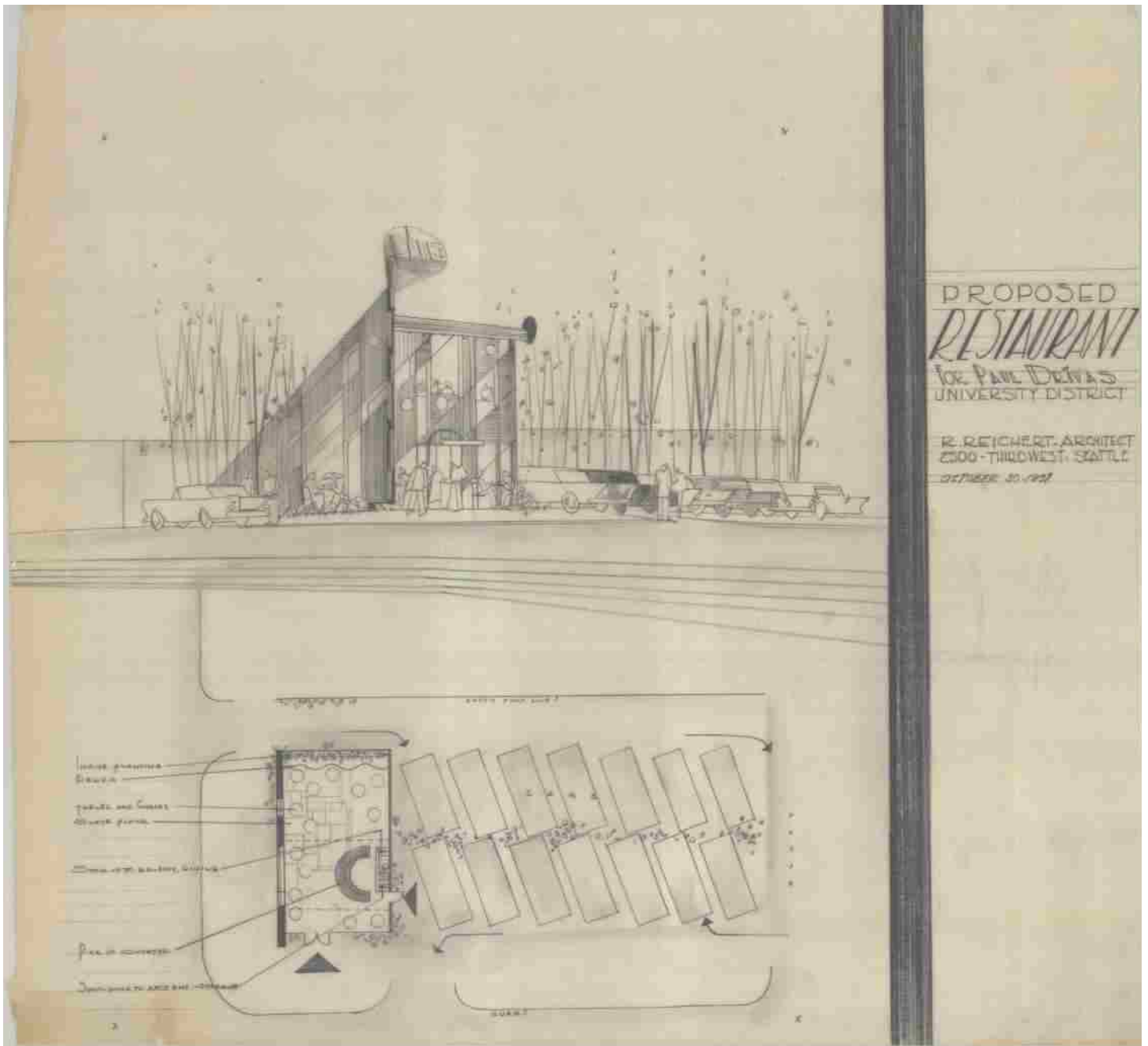
and independence offered by automotive and motorcycle transportation. Most architects with his experience were educated to address an “elite” culture, not the popular culture of roadside commercial architecture. The architect would have become familiar with the owners of these places and they occasionally approached him to design new restaurants.

A 1957 restaurant design for Paul Drivas took formal cues from Reichert’s own studio residence and the Egan house. The corner site at NE 40th Street and University Way, the location of the current Community Design Center across University Way from the College of Architecture’s Gould Hall. Reichert would have understood the site well, having taught architecture at the Friends Center building, the future site of Gould Hall. Design process sketches show several fanciful schemes for the building (6.8). The final design and decoration, with its triangular form reinforced by the diagonally oriented storefront window system, gestured to the speed of the automobile, and the rapid service of a drive-in restaurant. Reichert’s tell-tale birdhouse ornament, which he often used to punctuate the triangular termination of so many buildings, in this case became actual signage for the business (6.9). Drivas’ restaurant was not built, although another fast food establishment was later constructed on the site in 1978.<sup>132</sup>

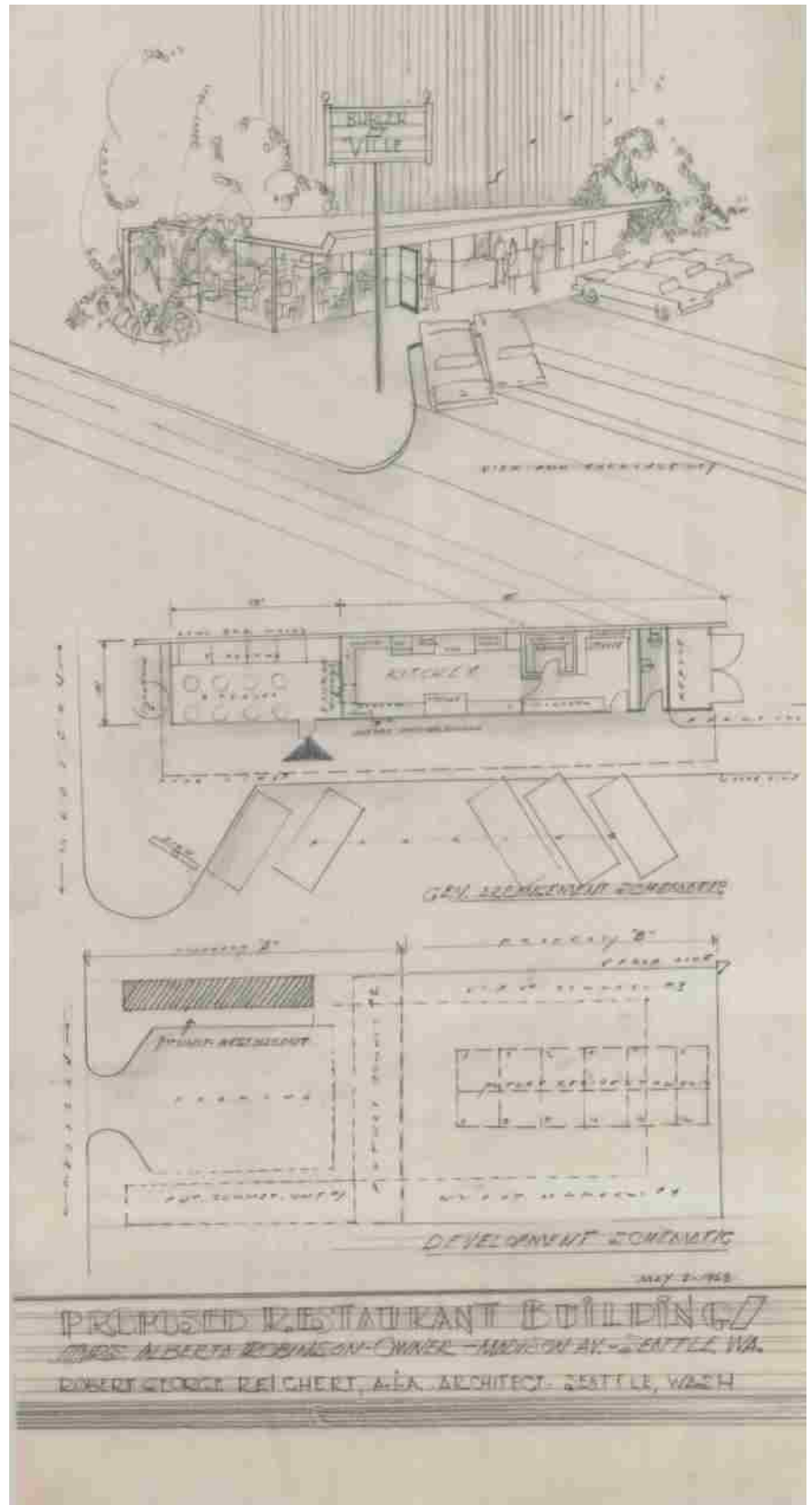
6.8 Detail of design process sketches for Paul’s Restaurant in University District, 1957. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39956).



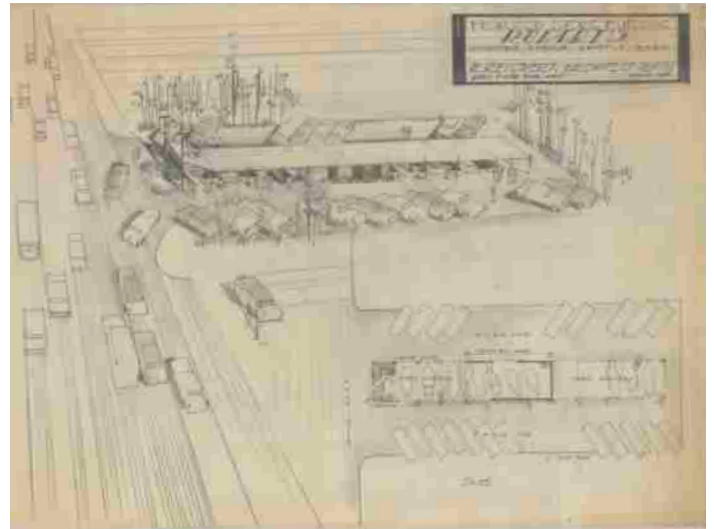
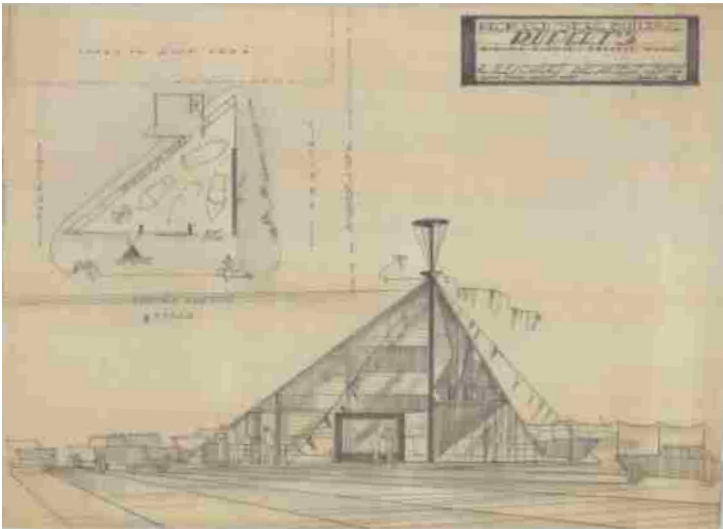
Reichert developed lasting friendships with many of his female residential clients. There is an extensive body of cards and letters between Reichert and these women, one of whom was Alberta Robinson. Robinson hired Reichert in 1968 to maximize the value of a property she owned on Madison Street, a busy thoroughfare crossing the city and connecting the Elliott Bay waterfront to the Madison Park neighborhood on Lake Washington. He provided several schemes for the site (its specific location is unknown), including increasing the density from the existing single-family house to various mixed-use options. The scheme for the site



6.9 Perspective and parking scheme ground plan presentation drawing for Paul's Restaurant in University District, 1957. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39957).



6.10 Perspective and ground plan presentation drawing for Burgerville Restaurant for Alberta Robinson, 1968. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39958).



that was most fully developed proposed a take-out restaurant for the Vancouver, Washington, fast food chain, Burgerville (6.10). Recognizable Reichert motifs appear in his design for this bar-shaped building; the roof overhang along the length of the building folds upward, gesturing to the street. Walls primarily consist of storefront glazing and the project featured a tall pole-mounted sign to draw the attention of motorists on the busy street. None of the Robinson schemes was realized.

**6.11** Perspective and ground plan presentation drawing for Rupert's boat shop, 1958. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39959).

**6.12** Perspective and ground plan presentation drawing for an alternate scheme, for Rupert's boat shop, 1958. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39960).

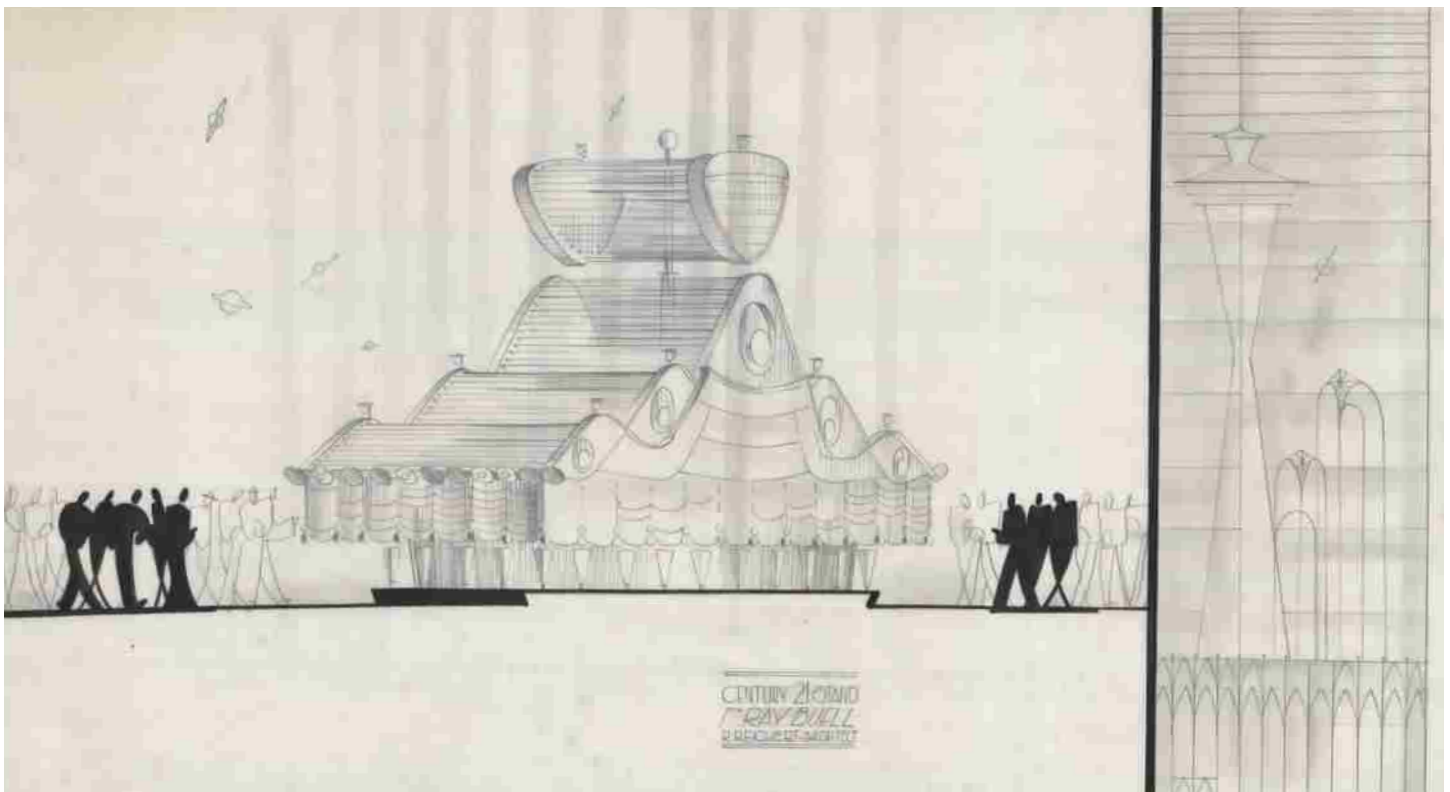
In 1958, Reichert designed two separate schemes for a boat sales shop north of Seattle. The specific location on Aurora Avenue is not provided, but the designs illustrate clear understanding by the designer of how the building would be perceived by traffic moving rapidly along the main arterial. The first design for Rupert's Boat Store takes the triangular sectional qualities of Reichert's wedge shaped houses and the upward reaching Eckmann house and extends the lines beyond the building, reaching over the site

with boat-like rigging, signage and flags (7.11). The advertising value of the building was more important than housing boats on trailers. This initial design held only three or four boats. With its tensile structure, the scheme recalls the fanciful project Reichert completed as an undergraduate for a forest ranger station.

The second proposal for Rupert's also sits lightly on the site and appears almost temporary (6.12). The speed of vehicles on Aurora is conveyed prominently on the left side of Reichert's aerial rendering. The building roof tilts in an apparent gesture to rapidly passing traffic on the street side of the rectangular building.

Reichert was approached by several food service entrepreneurs to design kiosks for the food court in the former National Guard Armory at Seattle's 1962 World's Fair, the Century 21 Exposition. His food booths were all highly expressive designs and unlike most of his other commercial work, these were actually realized.

**6.13** Presentation drawing for Century 21 food kiosk for Ray Buell, 1962. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39961).





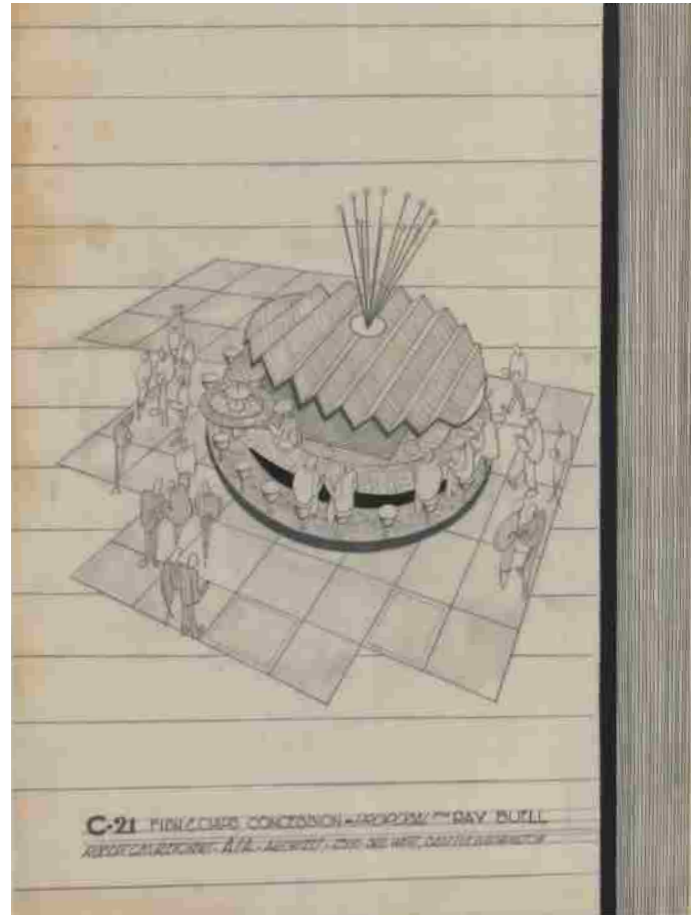
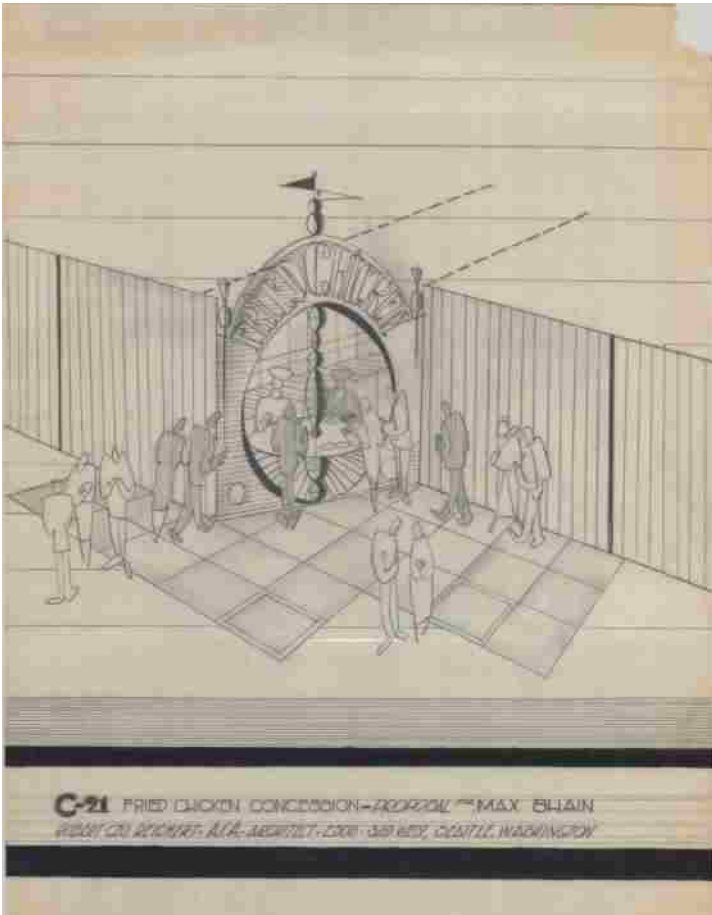


**6.14** Photograph of Century 21 food kiosk. Photograph by Charles Pearson, 1962. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39962).

All of the structures provided a small cooking space and flexible seating areas. The simple booths become elaborate sculptural forms through Reichert's creative use of simple, flat plywood. The drawing for a project for Ray Buell references other buildings on the Seattle Center campus: John Graham's Space Needle and Minoru Yamasaki's Pacific Science Center (6.13). A scheme for a fried chicken kiosk, located on a perimeter wall of the food court, was primarily signage (6.14-6.15). A second kiosk for Ray Buell, for a fish and chips stand, was a round, free-standing booth characterized by its diagonal corrugated roof and extensive ornament (6.16).

Similar to Reichert's other "roadside" building designs, these booths were meant to stand out and draw the attention of thousands of passing fairgoers. While the renderings focused on presenting the temporary buildings' fanciful character, Reichert also created carefully detailed construction documents, specifying how they should be built.

Reichert's interest in the architecture of the Century 21 Exposition

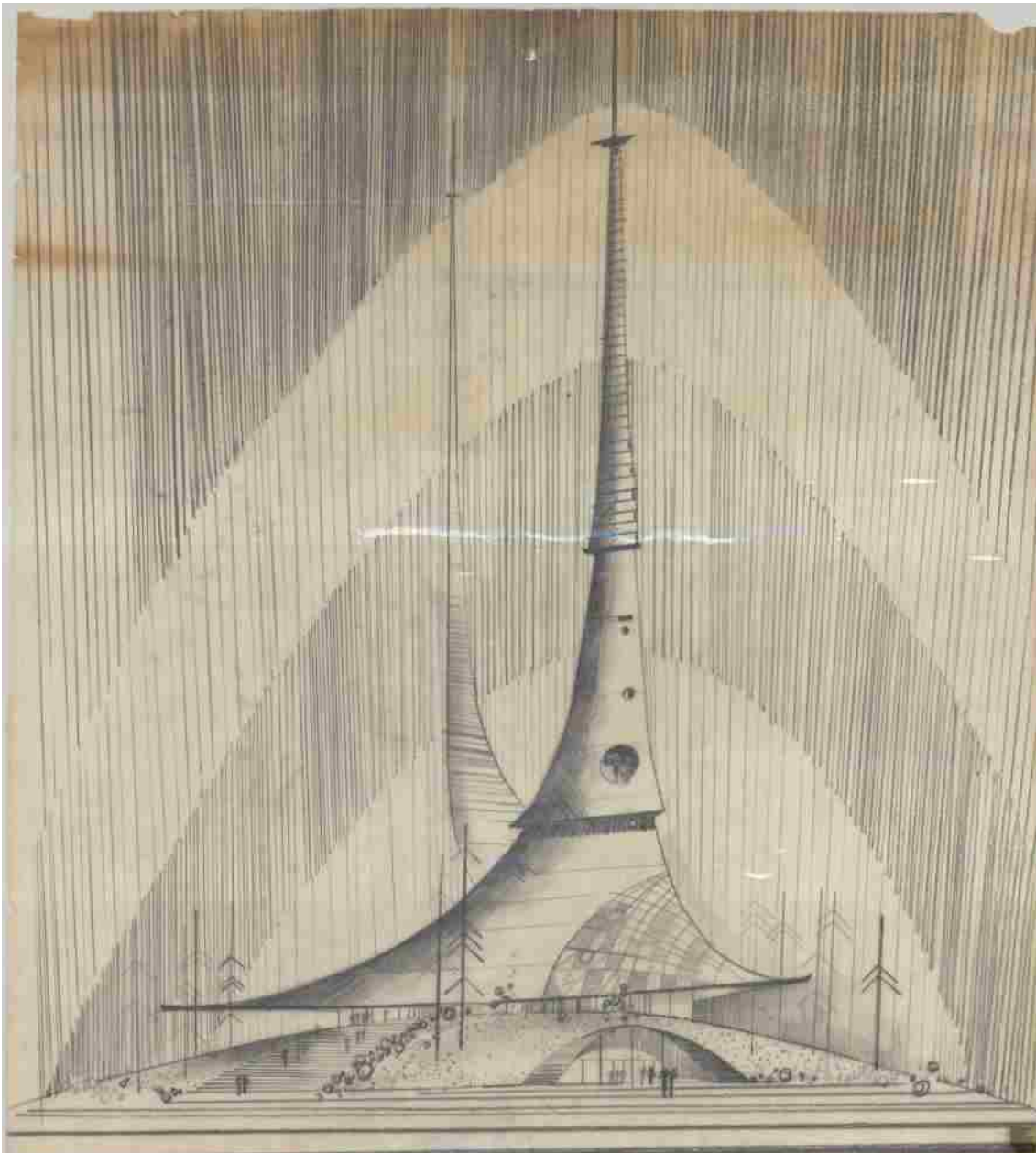


**6.15** Presentation drawing for Century 21 food kiosk for Max Shain, 1962. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39963).

**6.16** Presentation drawing of Century 21 food kiosk for Ray Buell, 1962. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39964).

**6.17** Presentation drawing of proposal for Queen Anne Television Tower, 1959. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39965).

was not limited to food kiosks. In 1959, he submitted an alternate design for the centerpiece of the fair, the Space Needle (6.17). He argued that having a tower at the top of Queen Anne Hill, rather than at its base, would provide much more dramatic visual impact as it could be seen from throughout the city and would have a 360 degree view “over Puget Sound Country,” unlike the “limited area which could be seen from the Space Needle, located in a valley overlooked by adjacent Queen Anne Hill.”<sup>133</sup> Like the Space Needle, he envisioned a tapering structure with viewing platforms



# QUEEN ANNE TV TOWER PROPOSAL

*R. REICHERT-ARCHITECT*

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A PERMANENT MONUMENT FOR SEATTLE'S HIGHEST HILL, Q.A.</li> <li>◆ Q.A.'S PART IN 1960 WORLD FAIR. LIGHTEST 57% WITH ALUMINUM SHEETING.</li> <li>● ON 2 ACRES OF LANDSCAPED PARK, OWNED, FACILITIES PROVIDED AND MAINTAINED BY A TOWER CORPORATION.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ A YOUTH FACILITY, NEARBY Q.A. HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL FACILITIES.</li> <li>● PERMANENT YOUTH ART EXHIBIT, DRAWINGS, CARDS, GAMES, SPORTS.</li> <li>● RISE VALUE OF NEARBY HOMES.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ ELEVATOR TO 200 FOOT LEVEL AFFORDING THE ONLY 360 DEGREE VIEW OF Puget SOUND COUNTRY.</li> <li>◆ ONE THE HIGHEST STRUCTURES ON THE WEST COAST AND A SYMBOL OF PRIDE FOR Q.A. AND THE CITY OF SEATTLE.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|---|



**6.18** Vintage Auto Parts, Seattle, 1962, photo by Robert Reichert. (UW College of Built Environments, Visual Resources Collection).

**6.19** Vintage Auto Parts, Bothell, 1967, photo by Robert Reichert. (UW College of Built Environments, Visual Resources Collection).

and a “high level coffee shop.” He proposed that the base would be a youth art exhibition space. Reichert’s scheme was submitted and was published in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, but was never seriously considered.<sup>134</sup> After the Space Needle was built, the musician Reichert felt compelled to write to the editor of the *Seattle Times* to decry the electronic carillon that had been installed



at the top of the needle, claiming that the amplified melodies heard throughout the fairgrounds were a garish facsimile of real bells.<sup>135</sup> It sparked a reply letter from the manufacturer, George Schulmerich, and then several follow-on letters from musicians in the city who supported Reichert's opinion.

In 1962, Robert was asked to design signage for Vintage Auto Parts, a retailer specializing in classic car parts, where Reichert was also a customer. His response was to turn the entire modest building into a sign (6.18). The super-sized graphic fonts reached out to drivers on Roosevelt Way as they sped down toward the University Bridge. As the business expanded, in 1967 Terry Jarvis asked Reichert to design a new warehouse building in Bothell, a growing suburb northeast of Lake Washington. The design is for a large warehouse, with massive "supergraphic" signage spelling out "VINTAGE" and calling out to the customers on the new State Route 527, which linked the towns of Bothell and Snohomish (6.19).

A 1980 rendering for an unknown factory proposal with an adjacent rail line is the only industrial project in Reichert's archive. The drawing is compelling with its unusual tower building forms, vertical graphite shading and depiction of factory exhaust; but it is unclear if this project was ever built, or if it was just a conceptual product of Reichert's architectural imagination (6.20).

While few of Reichert's commercial designs were realized, they all celebrated the post-war enthusiasm for the independence provided by an expanding road and highway system and the improving technology in automotive design. Robert Reichert loved the freedom of riding his Harley Davidson motorcycles, and this spirit is evident in his commercial designs.

**6.20** Presentation drawing of a factory warehouse, 1980. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39969).





## 7. End of a Career

Reichert practiced architecture for his entire life, but the work dwindled in quality and volume with each passing year after the mid-1960s. Despite his passion for sharing his ideas on architecture with young designers, he did not teach again at University of Washington after winter term 1979. Indeed, later in life, Reichert seems to have become isolated from the architectural community. A moment that seemed to mark the beginning of his personal struggle was the death of his mother on January 18, 1961. Reichert had relied on his mother for cooking, cleaning, and performing receptionist duties, supporting his architectural practice. His mother had made sacrifices to ensure that young Robert was able to pursue his passions in music and architecture, and mother and son had remained incredibly close (7.1).

Reichert began keeping a daily journal on the traumatic day that Tillie died. His description of having to help her prepare his breakfast by keeping her steady as she cooked his eggs and bacon, indicates utter personal dependency:

I do not know how to cook or even warm up the least bit. I had to help her by holding onto her arms at the kitchen sink and then put the stool under her and she would tell me what to do—to peel the potatoes and onion or whatever she needed, to cut the bacon, etc.<sup>136</sup>

A Christian Science “visiting nurse” (Reichert’s quotation marks)<sup>137</sup> arrived after breakfast that morning and determine that Tillie

7.1 Photo of Reichert and his mother in the studio (c. 1960). (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39966).

should not be doing housework and should be moved immediately to the Newhaven Christian Science nursing home in Puyallup. As Robert assisted his mother downstairs and to the garage and his car, she collapsed, and the nurse called for an ambulance. Reichert described the ride in the back of the ambulance, recalling his uncertainty of what was happening and also commenting on the unusually sunny weather, pastoral scenery and the attractive blue 1959 Cadillac ambulance. Leaving Tillie in her hospital bed at Newhaven, and promising to come back the next day, Reichert rode with the ambulance driver back to the city. He played organ at the Wednesday church service that same evening and returned home, receiving a telephone call that his mother had died during the afternoon.

Reichert was devastated, and his journals describe his attempt to process the loss of his mother as well as his series of emotional, irrational thoughts, calling for her to return to him. His journal notes that he waited over a week before having her body cremated, much to the alarm of the Christian Science nurses. He visited his mother at the Arthur Wright Mortuary in Queen Anne several times a day, finally setting up camera equipment to photograph



7.2 Reichert playing the organ. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39967).



her before allowing the cremation. Reichert noted the anniversary of his mother's death by the week, month and year in his journal entries, always wondering why she had left and whether she would come back to him.<sup>138</sup>

In September 1965, a few years after Tillie's death, Reichert somewhat impulsively sold his house-studio to another organist, Georg Glynn Belch, an act not fully explained in his journals and seemingly regretted soon afterward.<sup>139</sup> After Belch subsequently sold the house, the new owner sold the pipe organ to Pizza and Pipes, a restaurant in Portland, Oregon, so the primary reason for the building's unique form would no longer exist.<sup>140</sup> From fall 1965 to summer 1966, Reichert lived unhappily in two different apartments, one on Queen Anne Avenue, and the other a basement apartment on Dexter Avenue. In August 1966, Reichert purchased a storefront and residence at 2265 North 56th Street, in the Greenlake neighborhood, as his new home.<sup>141</sup> Reichert made repairs, added a garage and was able to practice architecture once again from the commercial space in his home. About five years later, Reichert sold this property to Folke Nyberg, an architecture professor at the University of Washington who would make his own noteworthy alterations to the building.<sup>142</sup> Reichert would then move to an unremarkable Tudor bungalow at 5735 25th Avenue Northeast, north of the university, where he lived for the rest of his life (7.3).

Reichert's journals provide a glimpse into his daily work routines as he struggled to keep his career on track after the loss of his mother. He focused on his avocations as much as he did his design practice. Continued professional organ practice, site visits, teaching, client and building department meetings usually involved side trips to thrift shops (in search of blue and white china, music, books, vintage clocks, and so forth) or to perform vehicle reconnaissance, in search of the perfect Harley Davidson motorcycle, or Corvette,



7.3 Napkin sketch for alterations and additions to Reichert house on 25th Avenue NE. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW40057).

or some other vehicle. Reichert was always acquiring and selling personal items.

The architect's late nights were spent in coffee shops or on extended rides on his motorcycle and usually resulted in waking midmorning to a telephone call from a contractor or client. His mother had never been happy with his late night jaunts, although the quantity of provocative napkin sketches in his archive illustrate that these visits were not unproductive. He typically had some breakfast, worked at his drawing board, and then left for the first of his daily visits to coffee shops. He often dressed all in leather, very aware of the spectacle his appearance created, and sat talking with friends and sketching ideas for current projects on napkins. He described the romance of his motorcycle trips:

Riding the bike, well, it's just like being a medieval man on a horse. You know, I always think of myself as a leftover from the 12th Century. My architecture makes me often misunderstood as a modernist, but I'm just a romanticist trying to speak the language of the times.<sup>143</sup>



7.4 Reichert on his motorcycle, January 1957. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39968).

During his career as a professional organist, Reichert played at the Wednesday evening and Sunday morning services at several Christian Science churches in Seattle. He played for many years at 6th Church of Christ, Scientist in West Seattle. On Thursdays or Fridays he would “peddle Christian Science literature” around downtown Seattle. Saturdays often involved an extended ride on his Harley Davidson (7.4).

By the 1990s, Reichert became increasingly reclusive and began to exhibit unusual behaviors. He contemplated writing about his career, and had his photograph taken on his motorcycle in front of the Eckmann house in 1991. When the owners invited him inside, he refused to enter the house, even though he would have been pleased to see how intact his designs for the interiors remained. He limited to a single block of four hours per week the time he

would answer telephone calls, making it very unlikely that he would obtain any architectural commissions.<sup>144</sup> Dale Jorgensen, the former student who had lived in the Egan house for several years, recalled thinking it would be interesting to visit Reichert at his small cottage on 25th Avenue. He noted that he had had a few beverages beforehand, and in hindsight realized that an unannounced visit was not a good idea:

It was dark out, and the house had the blinds pulled, and little light inside. Of course I was out of line and lacking good judgment when I rang the front doorbell. Reichert opened the door only a few inches, but enough for me to see that he was wearing long johns, without pants. The interesting part was that in one corner of the room, where a one-light lamp revealed a pile of hardbound books, to the ceiling, with a cave-like space for sitting; hundreds of books surrounded his seat. The pile looked as if it had been dumped by a truck. Reichert answered my request to visit inside with the strangest answer: “I don’t admit anyone, not even the King,” and closed the door.<sup>145</sup>

Robert Reichert died of a heart attack at his house on January 20, 1996. According to his obituary, “The accomplished organist with a passion for Harley Davidson motorcycles” was dressed in full motorcycle leathers and had \$2,200 in his pocket, as he “did not believe in checking accounts.”<sup>146</sup> The iconoclastic architect even attempted to control how he was perceived by whomever would find him after his death.

*The Seattle Times* columnist, Jean Godden, later referred to Reichert’s death notice in her column, “A Salute to Some Worth Remembering:”

Remembrances will live on in the spirit of his Seattle architecture, in the music of great pipe organs, and in the sight and sound of a Harley Davidson motorcycle on the open road.<sup>147</sup>



## 8. Conclusion

*Architecture is an art, art is an attitude and therefore metaphysical and romantic. We must have romance in architecture and design, and this must triumph over the present-day emphasis and drama of structure, technique and function.*

RGR <sup>148</sup>

Many people in Seattle today are aware of Robert Reichert for just one project, the Egan house. The fact that he completed designs for more than 75 buildings in the city while he was in private practice, from 1952 until his death in 1996, is known by very few.<sup>149</sup> Reichert may be better remembered as a colorful figure, noted for his love of riding Harley Davidson motorcycles and for sitting in coffee shops wearing full studded leathers, sketching on napkins, and for his mastery of the pipe organ (and the house he designed for a pipe organ). The well known Egan house is often the single work onto which is projected the collective memories and stories related to this iconoclastic figure, and that has likely led to an incomplete understanding of his life work and architectural achievements.

This examination of his career indicates that two early projects framed the trajectory for almost all of the subsequent work: The unrealized First Church of Christ Scientist in Bellevue, and his own house-studio. These seminal designs were developed at the same time, shortly after his return from Gropius' Masters Studio

**8.1** Reichert House and Studio. Photo by Rich Haag. (UW College of Built Environments, Visual Resource Center).

at Harvard. As the first projects the young architect completed in sole practice, these designs make surprisingly strong statements, suggesting a degree of independence not often associated with an architect just initiating his own practice. The church went unbuilt, but his house made a dramatic statement to the neighborhood around it—a two-dimensional sign, more a work of art than an example of conventional residential architecture. Both works embody Reichert's ideas that the practice of architecture was an artistic endeavor, one that attempted to engage one's personal spirit more than addressing strictly functional or technological architectural ideas. Reichert's house-studio was designed to contain his personal life, his architectural practice, his musical practice and finally, his motorcycles and other vehicles. It is interesting to consider that Reichert's culminating works were completed at the beginning of his career. What is surprising is that these works, which for many architects would come at the climax of their careers, were produced by Robert Reichert at the initiation of his solo practice.

How, then, are Reichert's buildings to be understood? In order to outline the significance of an architect's work, historians usually seek to place their subjects within some contextual framework: the pedagogy and impact of their education, the work of their predecessors, peers or competitors within the same time or region, global or local dynamics in the economy, building technologies, and so on. In thinking about Robert George Reichert, it is difficult to subject his work or methods to this kind of analysis.

Some architects and theorists have argued that there is a difference between “building” and “architecture.” A building, they argue, addresses functional requirements, but architecture does more. Le Corbusier, for example, mused:

You employ stone, wood and concrete and with these materials you build houses and palaces; that is Construction. Ingenuity is at work. But suddenly you touch my heart, you do me good. I am happy and I say, "This is beautiful." That is Architecture. Art enters in.<sup>150</sup>

From the first, Reichert sought to create works that were more than buildings. Indeed, he may have compromised certain functional aspects to strive for the creation of places that engage on a more "spiritual" level (to use his term). And with some clients, he succeeded.

Reichert's architecture does engage the spirit of its users. Mary Ann Kofler lived in Reichert's house studio for about five years, beginning in 1976, and owned the house until 2015.<sup>151</sup> She commented on the building's lack of windows, which left her yearning for both daylight and views, the extremely low ceilings, the challenge of living in a one bedroom house with a single tiny bathroom. And she recalled the crumbling stucco walls, which she, herself, eventually tore away and replaced with lapped cedar siding. She also recalled loving the wonderful open and spatially complex studio level, calling it a spiritual space.<sup>152</sup>

Historic Seattle, the Preservation Development Authority that has owned the Egan House since 1998, has rented the house to artists and other creative professionals. Perhaps more attuned to a qualitative understanding of architectural space, these tenants have reported that in spite of the challenges of living in the house (which were numerous) they felt there was something truly memorable about their lives there.<sup>153</sup> Glenn Weiss, the curator of the 1990 Seattle Art Museum exhibit, wrote to Reichert in 1993, "I often think of your buildings," and suggested that one or more of Reichert's designs should be preserved as local landmarks. These recollections of Reichert's users can be explained by thinking of his architecture as being less about the functional qualities of a

well designed house, and more like the emotions one feels when connecting with a work of art, or recalling it from memory.

That these clients loved their Reichert buildings is all the more remarkable given the difficulties they had to endure. Reichert did not design buildings that were easy to inhabit. The narrowing stair to the lower level of the Eckmann house was scaled for the children it was designed for, not for the full-sized couple currently residing there. The ceiling of Reichert's own studio space was so low that he would bump his head if he stood fully upright, and it remains so for the owners who recently remodeled the house for themselves. The same condition at the residence for Mildred Close caused the building department to halt construction of the house. In addition, Reichert's buildings have often imposed significant costs on their owners in order to maintain them. Reichert's clients were generally people of limited means. The buildings were, therefore, designed and built of inexpensive materials: typical light wood frame structure, stucco or T-111 siding, painted plywood and multicolored torch down asphalt roofs. The composition and decoration of these materials were not a celebration of their own intrinsic qualities; rather, they were added to create an impression of decorative complexity, a celebration of spirituality and ornament. Reichert's architecture was characterized by basic forms, upon which he applied decorative layers like a collage. Unlike most works of art, the buildings were not designed to last (by Reichert's own admission, they were designed to last about fifty years) and those that have survived to the current time have suffered from existing in a very wet climate.

A different way to consider Reichert's career suggests that he simply did not fit his time. A common theme from those who knew Reichert or who lived in his buildings was the idea that he was a figure far ahead of his time, and his works suggest a future only a few clients or critics could perceive. Glenn Weiss wrote, "I



personally believe his work is a unique experiment in post-1945 American architecture and foreshadowed West Coast residential experiments of the 1980s.”<sup>154</sup>

Reichert had begun thinking about architecture from the time he was a small child, standing in a darkened Gothic Revival church, listening to the powerful sounds of organ music echoing off its walls. He continued to think about architecture as a middle school student, designing buildings for a city plan which would require no jail. He worked as a draftsman in a significant architectural office while in high school and completed freelance house projects on his own before ever beginning a formal education in architecture. Reichert’s early experiences in architecture and music, and his motivation to pursue both, shaped a personal approach to design that coalesced early and framed his designs through his entire life. The research suggests that Reichert returned to Seattle at age thirty from his graduate study at Harvard with a mature set of design skills and a well formed approach to architecture. If Reichert’s original church design had been executed, it probably would have drawn a great deal of attention in the architectural community and may have been a turning point in his career. Instead, his own house became the primary realized expression of his design approach. Together, the two works may have shown a wide-ranging design imagination. The house, alone, often evoked a negative response.

In his 1977 work, *Supermannerism*, C. Ray Smith described “supergraphics” as applied decorations which abstract scale, perspective or form, which have multiple meanings above the simple ornamentation of the wall surfaces.<sup>155</sup> Acknowledging that vernacular and agricultural buildings had previously used supergraphics (tobacco advertisements on barns, for example), he defined architectural “super graffiti” as integral to the architectural statement of the building. Smith cited some of the earliest evidences of architectural supergraphics from the late 1960s, noting



8.2 Reichert in his studio. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW39860).

that “paint, applied, unnatural, cosmetic decoration, returned as a mainstay.”<sup>156</sup> He also described a response to the pure, universalist modern design ubiquitous in mid-twentieth century architecture as a desire to return to an engagement of historical references in decoration. Reichert’s work predates virtually all the examples of “supermannerism.” Although Reichert had been a pioneer in the application of what came to be known as “supergraphics,” his work was largely unknown outside Seattle (with the exception of the publication of his house in a few European journals). Sadly, his pioneering work was overlooked. Inclusion in *Supermannerism* might have revived his career. Instead, he could only watch as others received credit for what he had done over twenty years earlier.

The drawings in the Reichert collection are artworks in themselves, and were usually very literally translated into built form. Reichert typically completed a single highly detailed exterior perspective and each graphic flourish would appear on the executed building, and nearly as two dimensionally, with extensive ornament on one elevation, and very little surface development on the other elevations. Windows and murals worked together in the composition; remaining elevations were often treated as background, with few openings.

Thus, in the early 1950s, Reichert was experimenting with what would later become popular ideas in the era of architectural post-modernism. The south mural on Reichert’s house-studio incorporated historical motifs from specific Renaissance buildings while also reinforcing building form and the internal importance of the studio and organ loft with repeating upward sloping diagonal forms from the base to the peak, with images which Reichert called “shadow paintings.” The diagonals on the mural as well as the plan of the entry steps and garden sculptures distorted one’s sense of perspective, particularly while interacting with them at



8.3 Reichert in front of his house-studio. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW40100).

very close range (which one must, to enter the house). The typical Renaissance colors of black and red on the mural reinforced the historical meaning of the surface application.

The exterior and interior murals applied to Drager's motorcycle shop (1952) provided dynamic diagonals to an otherwise static warehouse building. The motorcycle figures on the wall implied speed through a black and white repeating pattern over the wall. The interior mural on the studio ceiling of Reichert's house was similarly layered in its meaning. Titled "Door to Heaven," the mural integrates a religious concept into the architecture, reinforcing the upward focus of space, circulation and decoration in the house, drawing one's attention to a culmination at the peak, the location of the organ pipes. His early work for Vintage Auto Parts turned the modest building into a large scale sign for the business; a second design for a new suburban warehouse years later expanded the concept of building as sign, and pre-dated Robert Venturi's concept of the "decorated shed."<sup>157</sup>

The term "jewel box" is sometimes used to describe small works of intensely expressive architecture. They are usually constructed with rich materials and exhibit high levels of craft. Grant Hildebrand has proposed that a group of architects practicing in Seattle designing small, well-crafted wood buildings in the mid-twentieth century might be considered a Puget Sound school of architecture.<sup>158</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, the period in which Reichert completed the largest quantity and his best design work, his contemporaries such as Paul Kirk, Gene Zema and others were exploring a regionally tempered type of modern architecture appropriate to the region, such as that described by Hildebrand.

In a different way, Reichert's buildings also could be described as jewel boxes, or more accurately, music boxes. The exterior of his buildings were introverted, yet highly decorated. The interior was unseen and not understood from the exterior, until opened



8.4 Reichert house-studio facade. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW40099).

by the owner. They were not the open, structural expressions of Northwest Regional Modernism. Specifically, Reichert eschewed the expression of structure, stating that:

Structure should not be dramatized, or even visible. How often in my childhood memories have I recalled the awe and startling character of an inspired magnificent form only to lose all of this glorious wonder later when I discovered the trusses that held up the pile. No longer was I able to retain the original wonderful impression.

Colin St. John Wilson describes psychological dualities in how we experience architecture: comfort and discomfort, inside and outside, dependence versus self-sufficiency. He argues that these feelings are rooted in psychoanalytic ideas of how an infant passes from a position experiencing

qualities of the mother figure... a protective all-enveloping environment...a sheltering fusion [to an experience of] shocking change to the contrary position of Exposure or Detachment, in which the infant becomes aware of both its own separate identify from the mother and from all other objects out there.<sup>159</sup>

Architecturally, for an experience of “envelopment and sheltering fusion,” St. John Wilson cites qualities of interior, protected spaces, using Scharoun’s Philharmonic Hall as a built example. For the opposing position of independence and exposure, he suggests qualities of openness, “carved and massive frontality,” and external confrontation, and suggests Le Corbusier’s Villa Stein at Garches as an example.

St. John Wilson continues to argue that in buildings, one or the other of these positions tends to predominate. It is only in the simultaneous experience of both these two polar modes that a work of architecture can be experienced as a “masterpiece.” He describes a need to merge both interior and exterior, to engage the concept of threshold, a place “betwixt and between.” He cites the Bradbury

Building in downtown Los Angeles, with its unexpectedly rich interior, skylit Victorian courtyard and the “turning of the stair” in the portico of Schinkel’s Altes Museum, which merges the visitor’s experience of moving from exterior to interior, from lower to upper floors and incorporates the experience of the museum in these transitions.

Considering Robert Reichert’s work through Colin St. John Wilson’s theories, it can be argued that his buildings mostly exhibit the position of “exposure.” St. John Wilson notes that the feeling of exposure, with lack of protection, can lead to a sense of panic. The facade of Reichert’s own house is confrontational, and his neighbors reacted accordingly. Lacking any projections from the pure building form, not only does the house not present an element of “betwixt and between,” it does not even offer a clear point of entry or threshold. The sense of “frontality” of the house is clear, having a single facade with decorative expression; the other three facades are blank. Reichert explained that the black and white “shadow paintings” conveyed a sense of historicity, providing shadow patterns in muted northwest light, but they also confuse one’s expectation that a building’s form creates its shadows. One would assume a void or enclosure would result in the high contrast pattern on the facade, but neither exists. Once inside the garden gate, the imposing shell of the building softens. The glazed entry, invisible from the outside, merges the small garden with the entry foyer. Sliding interior wood panels allow the interior to open up. They also provide privacy, when required. The ceiling mural in Reichert’s studio, “Door to Heaven,” recalls the contrast and color of the exterior. It calls one’s attention upward, but without the angular forced perspective and sense of unknown destination conveyed by the exterior murals. The seemingly overly aggressive responses of Reichert’s neighbors to his house, from throwing tomatoes at the building to spraying its architect with a hose, seem to reinforce this notion of architectural confrontation.

In contrast to Reichert's house studio, the Eckmann house more closely aligns with the concept of the "masterpiece," in St. John Wilson's terms. While the street facade is largely blank, a canvas to express its two dimensional ornament, the thresholds for both pedestrians and vehicles are dramatically expressed. The "hood" projects over the building roof, creating a raised element over the hearth that allows for clerestory windows. Once one enters the shaded entry porch, Reichert specified the same steel and glass door system as in his own house, allowing the guest to freely view the daylight interior space, seeing the hearth illuminated at the center of the building. The poetic richness of this experience reflects a merging of St. John Wilson's conceptions of envelopment and exposure.

The drawings in Reichert's collection were usually rendered on trace in simple graphite or in ball point pen on the back of recycled church programs or wall calendar sheets. In spite of the modest and very degradable media, they are highly expressive, creative works beyond simply architectural representations, and are clearly recognizable in style from any other architect's work. His buildings were also intensely personal artistic expressions, both inside and out, rendered simply in the least expensive materials. Like the rich ornament of a child's music box.

During his career, Reichert struggled to find colleagues or clients interested in the pursuit of an architecture that was not based in materiality or space, but which represented a striving for a romantic and emotional expression of art. It was only through a multi-year discourse (1959-1961) with Bruno Zevi, the Italian architect, author and publisher of *L'Architettura* that Reichert found a sympathetic voice. Zevi appreciated that Reichert approached architecture as an artistic practice; however, he noted that there was "a point in which we disagree totally: When you say that space is a negative notion. I have written a book, *Architecture as Space*, demonstrating that

space is positive.”<sup>160</sup> In their correspondence, Zevi also struggled to come to an understanding of the meaning behind Reichert’s work, stating that “up to now, I must confess, a story does not come out. After all, what is important is to present your work as a case, as a problem, as a research, and this does not as yet come through.” He finally conceded the point that Reichert’s work would not be appreciated in the current time. Zevi’s 1961 article, entitled “*American Curiosity*,” described Reichert’s houses,

As toys fixed there on the ground, almost by chance. They are connected more to the electricity of telegraphic appliances in the sky, because they have a tension that prevents them from belonging to the undifferentiated world. To build these dreams a strong personality is needed, and also an original, creative mind. They are, in a way, “futuristic” buildings. But to look at the future is necessary in the present stage of intellectual and artistic depression.<sup>161</sup>

Simply having a dialogue with Zevi must have been encouraging to Reichert, being able to debate the meaning of the work with an architect who published a theoretical journal with global reach. On the one hand, Zevi disagreed with Reichert’s comment that space was a “negative notion,” directly contradicting Zevi’s thinking on spatial composition; on the other hand, Zevi put forth the prospect that Reichert was thinking about architecture in a way that would be better understood by future generations. The next thirty years of practice, however, proved challenging to the Seattle architect. Reichert yearned to have his designs appreciated in their local context by his peers. He found few colleagues in practice or in academia who agreed with his ideas about architectural design being purely spiritual in its sources and romantic in its execution, a form of art. They were clearly not ready for Reichert’s alternative ideas about modernism. Even today, his work is difficult to fully comprehend.



8.5 Reichert musing in front of his house-studio. (Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW38911).





# List of Projects:

## 1939

Roy Walin residence  
Minneapolis, MN

Ralph E. Dunham residence  
Minneapolis, MN

Colonial Residence for John Cotton, Contractor  
Minneapolis, MN

## 1941

J. Lundstrom residence  
Minneapolis, MN

## 1949

George B. Reichert residence (unbuilt)  
2514 2nd Avenue W, Seattle

Reichert rental houses  
2514 and 2516 2nd Avenue W, Seattle



Bethany Presbyterian Church  
(Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special  
Collections UW40119).

## 1950

Bethany Presbyterian Church, proposed chancel alterations  
2044 Yale Avenue N, Seattle

## 1951

Page Brown residence  
137th Street and 3rd Avenue NW, Seattle

## 1952

Reichert studio-residence (unbuilt)  
10th Avenue N, Seattle

## 1953

Otto Drager Harley Davidson shop  
1027 Dexter Avenue, Seattle

Park residence  
Unknown

Reichert studio-residence  
2500 3rd Avenue W, Seattle

First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bellevue, addition (unbuilt)  
NE First Street and Fifth Avenue, Bellevue

## 1954

Otto Drager residence  
Highland Drive and Dexter Avenue, Seattle

Erickson Four-plex apartments  
1011 10th Avenue and E. Boren, Seattle

Ivan Hanson residence  
5658 39th Avenue W, Seattle

1954-1955  
First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bellevue (unbuilt)  
Lake Washington Boulevard and Overlake Drive, Bellevue

## 1955

Harley Davidson Shop for Marion Diederik  
1827 E. Broadway, Seattle

Robert and Nancy Eckmann residence  
8615 26th Avenue NE Seattle

H. Keith Miller residence  
Warm Beach

C. E. Pickrell house, alterations and additions  
107 Valley Street, Seattle

Fred Schmidt residence  
5705 S. Dawson Street, Seattle

## 1956

Halladay residence, alterations and additions  
17522 13th Avenue SW, Normandy Park

Alberta Robinson proposed apartment and commercial additions  
(unbuilt)



Halladay Residence  
(UW College of Built Environments, Visual Resources Collection).

2102 E. Madison Street, Seattle

Mr. and Mrs. Rudy Stromberg residence  
5006 NE 114th Avenue, Kirkland

### 1957

Baker residence alterations and additions  
Kinnear Park, Seattle

Drive through restaurant for Paul Drivas (unbuilt)  
3947 University Way NE, Seattle



Walter O. Elliott Residence  
(UW College of Built Environments, Visual  
Resources Collection).

Walter O. Elliott residence  
Lakeridge Drive and Rowan Road, Seattle

Garden Study for Joseph  
Unknown

Queen Anne TV Tower Proposal for 1962 World's Fair (unbuilt)  
Queen Anne Avenue N and Galer Street, Seattle

Willard Egan residence  
1500 Lakeview Boulevard, Seattle

### 1958

Charles Miller residence  
Kenmore Park

Madison Terrace apartment and commercial building for  
Alberta Robinson (unbuilt)  
2102 E. Madison Street, Seattle

Proposed Oak Harbor Marina and Civic Activities Building  
(unbuilt)  
Oak Harbor, Whidbey Island

Proposed Civic Recreation Building (unbuilt)  
Oak Harbor, Whidbey Island

Bowman and Ada Lou Ross residence (unbuilt)  
Oak Harbor, Whidbey Island

Two schemes for Rupert's Boat Store (unbuilt)  
Aurora Avenue, Seattle

Christian Science Society Church (unbuilt)  
Oak Harbor, Whidbey Island

Reichert triplex apartment buildings  
2048 and 2052 13th Avenue W, Seattle

## 1959

Baker residence apartment conversion  
Olympic Way near Highland Drive, Seattle

Baker residence alterations and additions  
9th Avenue W, Seattle

Geraldine Chaplin Apartment entry alterations  
4040 Woodland Park Avenue, Seattle

P. T. Hosterman residence, alterations and additions  
5422 Seward Park Avenue, Seattle

P.T. Hosterman Residence  
(UW College of Built Environments, Visual  
Resources Collection).





Mario Torre Residence  
(UW College of Built Environments, Visual Resources Collection).

Mario Torre residence  
5524 Dawson Street, Seattle

**1960**

Martin Gray residence  
5535 S. Oakhurst Place, Seattle

Charles Larson residence  
Lake Forest Park

Parkins residence, alterations and additions  
15820 12th Avenue SW, Seattle

Saunders residence addition  
unknown

**1961**

Keith Reinhart residence, alterations and additions (unbuilt)  
416 35th Avenue, Lookout Point, Seattle

Evangelical Temple  
8th Avenue NW and 81st Street, Seattle

**1962**

J. C. Barker residence, alterations and additions  
8046 Fairway Drive, Sand Point, Seattle

Century 21 Food Circus Fish and Chips stand for Ray Buell

Century 21 Food Circus Darigold stand for Ray Buell



Martin Gray Residence  
(UW College of Built Environments, Visual Resources Collection).

Century 21 Food Circus stand (unknown product) for Ray Buell

Century 21 Food Circus Fried Chicken stand for Max Shain  
Vintage Auto Parts shop remodel for Jarvis brothers  
8501 Roosevelt Way, Seattle

Benjamin Harty residence, alterations and additions  
7548 Sunnycrest Road, Seattle

Nick Jorgenson apartment building  
111 Aloha Street, Seattle

Robert Kenkman residence, alterations and additions  
4451 Forest Avenue SE, Mercer Island

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Schrum residence  
Seattle, Washington

### 1963

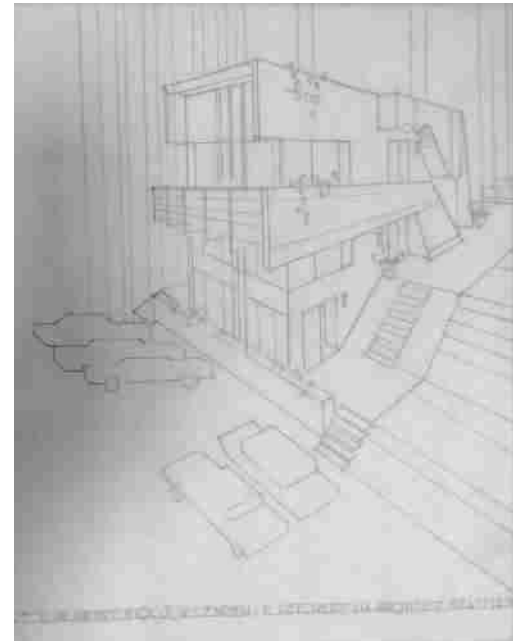
J.A. Brown residence, alterations and additions  
19525 Fremont Avenue N, Seattle

Dorothy Callender residence, alterations and additions  
319 NE 89th Street, Seattle

Ray's Drive In restaurant for Ray Buell (unbuilt)  
Aurora Avenue, Seattle

William Goodloe residence  
13190 Edgewater Lane, Cedar Park, Seattle

Sanford Moglebust residence, alterations and additions  
15816 25th Avenue NE, Seattle



Nick Jorgenson Apartment Building  
(Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special  
Collections UW40120).

Chadwick Memorial Nursing Home  
707 228th Street SW, Bothell

**1964**

Mildred Close residence  
Lake Stevens



Mr. and Mrs. Anton Rotermond residence, alterations and additions  
Woodinville

**1965**

13th West Apartments for Toulouse  
13th Avenue W, Seattle

Rotermond Residence  
(Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special Collections UW40121).

Morris Morby residence  
Oakhurst Road S, Seward Park, Seattle

**1966**

Reichert shop-residence, addition  
2265 N. 56th Street, Seattle

Belmont E. Apartments  
322 Belmont Avenue E, Seattle

Drager Garage addition (demolished)  
1207 Dexter Avenue, Seattle



Store and Garage Alterations for Timothy Gregerson  
2416 32nd Avenue W, Seattle

## 1967

Phil and Alice Bier residence  
1356 N. 78th Street, Seattle

Vintage Auto Parts Storage Building for Jarvis brothers  
Snohomish-Woodinville Road, Snohomish County

## 1968

Burgerville Restaurant proposal for Alberta Robinson (unbuilt)  
2038 E. Madison Street, Seattle

Alden B. and Kathy Winters residence  
8417 California Avenue SW, Seattle

## 1970

Repairs to Drager Garage (demolished)  
1207 Dexter Avenue, Seattle

Karl K. Larsen residence  
18000 15th Avenue NW, Innis Arden, Seattle

First Church of Christ, Scientist, Renton (demolished)  
Renton

## 1974

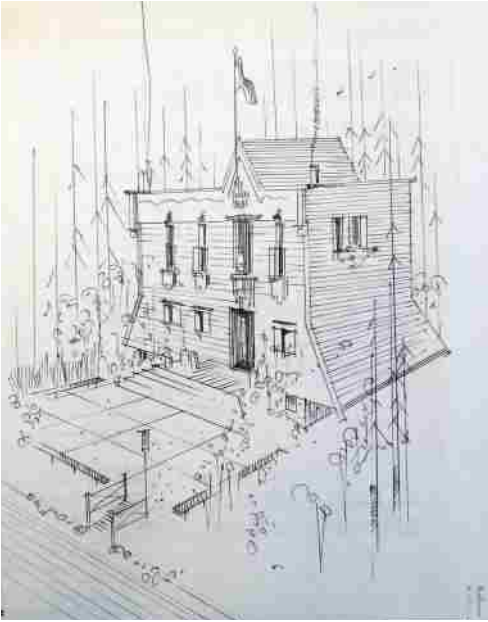
Robert Reichert residence, alterations and additions  
5735 25th Avenue NE, Seattle



Karl K. Larsen Residence  
(UW College of Built Environments, Visual Resources Collection).

**1976**

Kalm Brae School  
Bellevue



Kalm Brae School  
(Robert Reichert Collection, UW Libraries Special  
Collections UW40107).

**1977**

Karl K. Larsen apartment building  
Greenwood Avenue, Seattle

**1980**

Factory on Burlington Northern rail line  
140th Avenue NE, Woodinville





## Endnotes:

In the notes that follow, items such as letters, journals, clippings, ephemera and similar items cited are all found in the Robert Reichert collection, University of Washington Libraries Special Collections.

1 The City of Seattle Landmark Nomination for Egan house was submitted by Susan Boyle in 2009 on behalf of DoCoMo-Mo-WeWa, a local group that advocates for the preservation of modern architecture.

2 Mathew Albores and Jeffrey Murdock, “Ghosts of a Renaissance Cathedral,” *Column* 5 13 (1999): 60-64. The television interview and tour took place on the “Persons and Places” show produced by KIRO television. It appeared in April 1958.

3 Reichert’s musings on design trigger recollections of the lectures of Professor Folke Nyberg, a colleague and friend of Reichert’s, from his Scandinavian Architecture seminar in winter quarter 2000. The class took place four years after Reichert’s death. Nyberg entreated students to approach design as something more than just a rational act of organization.

4 Between 1956 and 1961, Reichert and Bruno Zevi exchanged multiple letters. Reichert initiated the discourse, sending several photographs of completed projects and hoping that Zevi would be interested in publishing the work in *L’Architettura*. Zevi requested additional drawings, as well as biographical information on the architect. Reichert responded on 29 February 1960 with a lengthy (9,200 word) discussion of his youth, education, architectural inspirations, impressions and working methods.

5 Sally Woodbridge and Roger Montgomery, *Guide to Architecture in Washington State* (Seattle: University of Washington

Press, 1980), 231.

6 Erik Lacitas, “Architecture is Just Frozen Music,” *Seattle Times* (8 June 1979) A15. In the article, Lacitas quoted Professor Emeritus Daniel Streissguth, who was a professor in the College of Architecture.

7 Personal interview by the author with Daniel Streissguth at his home, 2 June 2016. Professor Emeritus Streissguth was a faculty member who chaired the “Basic Design” group of instructors at the college when Reichert was teaching in 1962-63.

8 Jeffrey Ochsner, ed., *Shaping Seattle Architecture: A Historical Guide to the Architects*, 2nd Edition (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 17.

9 The national conference of the American Institute of Architects (A.I.A.) was held in Seattle in 1953; the national journal, *Architectural Record* devoted its April issue to architecture of the Pacific Northwest. It featured a discourse by six Puget Sound architects; Paul Thiry, Robert Dietz, John Morse, Victor Steinbrueck, Perry Johanson and John Detlie each contributed a short article on the current meaning of modern architecture in the region, answering the question, “Have We an Indigenous Northwest Architecture.” The contributors sometimes contradicted each other in their responses to the specific question, but all noted regional influences that impacted architectural design: trade history with Asia; response to a moody, wet climate; proximity to a watery and mountainous geography; availability of wood material; indigenous building traditions.

10 The University of Washington has been a leader in this discussion. Faculty members Grant Hildebrand, Jeffrey Ochsner and David Miller, among others, have published investigations into the meaning of modern architecture in the Puget Sound region.

11 Reichert’s family structure is confusing in that he sometimes referred to Bernard as his stepfather, even though his parents were married at least a couple of years before his birth, as indicated on the January 1920 federal census. Additionally, Reichert occasionally signed drawings “Robert George Chase Reichert.” It is possible Reichert was adopted, as several sources in the software application, Ancestry, list the parents of another Robert G. Reichert with the same birth and death dates as Reuben Christian Richert and Elsie Lavina Givney. However, this does not explain Reichert’s use of the name, “Chase.” Reichert visited family in California named Chase and his obituary listed him as the youngest of five children.

12 Federal census records for 1900, 1920, 1930 and 1940 reveal birth dates, and Tillie's naturalization status.

13 Accessed from census records from Ancestry.com.

14 Between 1956 and 1961, Reichert and Bruno Zevi exchanged multiple letters, in which Zevi hoped to understand the context and meaning behind Reichert's work, before he published it. Reichert initiated the discourse, sending several photographs of completed projects and hoping that Zevi would be interested in publishing the work in *L'architettura*. Zevi requested additional drawings, as well as biographical information on the architect. Reichert responded on 29 February 1960 with a lengthy (9,200 word) discussion of his youth, education, architectural inspirations, impressions and working methods. Reichert wrote to Zevi several times, struggling to explain his work to the prominent critic, architect and theorist. Reichert admitted the following: "My work is exactly indigenous to the owner, site, and community. . .the work is not intended to be representative of the local Pacific Northwest region, nor is it representative of the times. My work is. . .based on a conscious use of symbolism, including historical mannerism."

15 Reichert letter to Zevi, 29 February 1960.

16 Reichert letter to Zevi, 29 February 1960.

17 Described in letter from Reichert to Thomas Bethell, 5 October 1966.

18 Described in letter to Thomas Bethell, 5 October 1966.

19 While Reichert's work as a whole could not be described as revivalist, the projects do refer to colors, motifs and other historicist themes.

20 Reichert describes this early music education in multiple locations, though evidence of his attendance has not been confirmed. MacPhail School of music in Minneapolis was founded in 1907 by William MacPhail, an original member of the Minneapolis Symphony. Originally called the MacPhail School of Violin, the popular youth music program expanded its curriculum to include classical instruction, jazz, music history and drama. It moved to a larger facility at 1128 La Salle Avenue in the 1920s. The school was gifted to the University of Minnesota in 1966, where educators created revolutionary curricula for young children. In 1987, the university announced that it would dissolve relationships with institutions that did not primarily serve college students and MacPhail again became an independent organization. The school

moved to its current location at 501 South Second Street in 2008.

21 “Exceptional Architect Besides Being a Great Musician.” *Bryant Times*, 15 April 1936, 1.

22 Letter to Thomas Bethell, October 5, 1966. Smith’s office was in the Andrus Building in Minnesota (*Engineering News Record* dated 1 January 1920) and then moved to 700 Oneida Building (*American Architect* and *The Architectural Review*, July and December 1921). Smith died in 1952, according to AIA records.

23 National Register of Historic Places entry for First Church of Christ, Scientist, Mason City, Iowa, entered 30 October 1997.

24 Reichert claimed to have autonomy over small residential projects; original design drawings for two houses in the collection do reflect his hand and are signed by Reichert. There is not reference to Clyde Smith or his office on the drawings.

25 *The Centralian*, 1939, 79.

26 Reichert letter to Zevi, 29 February 1960, 4.

27 From a 24 February 1940 church letter of recommendation from H. R. Hund who stated that Reichert was “a talented organist fully capable of rendering good service as a church organist. He is very capable and has a conscientious regard and love for the work.”

28 Reichert listed the churches where he played in Minnesota in the Bethell letter. The archives also include letters from members of Churches where he had played, thanking him for his music.

29 From matriculation record, University of Minnesota.

30 Reichert letter to Zevi, 29 February 1960.

31 David Rash, “McClure, Royal Alfred,” *Shaping Seattle Architecture*, ed. Jeffrey Ochsner (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 459.

32 Reichert’s archive includes dozens of photographs of churches he took during many travels throughout the United States.

33 Arthur Bates Jennings, Jr. was the son of an architect. The senior Arthur Jennings was a student of Arthur B. Post. Jennings was also the University of Minnesota organist. Jennings must have been impressed by Reichert’s ability, as he allowed his protégé to play the large pipe organ in the Cyrus Northrop Memorial Auditorium.

34 From Reichert’s collection of church letters documenting hiring and termination of Reichert as their organist.



35 Paul Oberg, the University of Minnesota Music Department chair, wrote on a university application for academic credit, “In view of his superior work in works represented by Bach, Mendelsson, Wodor and Vierne, I feel he has earned the right to these credits.”

36 Despite inquiring of several university archivists, it is not yet clear how the drawing problem scoring system worked at University of Minnesota during this period.

37 The editor noted that during the years Reichert was away from University of Minnesota, enrollment in the architecture school dropped precipitously, with only three students graduating in 1945. At the time Reichert was an undergraduate architecture student, Roy Childs Jones was the department head (1937-1954) and many design projects reflected themes of the depression or of the war.

38 Reichert’s Minnesota grade reports are in his archive.

39 From notations on photographs, the Reicherts first lived at 2412 Nob Hill Ave. N. (March 1948) and later at 1703 Warren Avenue N, in 1951.

40 Duane Dietz, “Bindon & Wright,” *Shaping Seattle Architecture* (2014), 422.

41 Reichert photographed Pietro Belluschi’s significant glass curtain walled Equitable Building in Portland during Bindon & Wright’s development of the Norton Building.

42 Located at 1919 SW 170th Street.

43 Reichert letter to Zevi, February 29, 1960.

44 According to Reichert’s teaching record, he taught sporadically at University of Washington. His position was “acting instructor, part time” from September 16, 1948 until December 15, 1949. He was rehired on September 16, 1955 and on September 16, 1956 as an instructor in the art department and was terminated June 15, 1957. During the 1963-1964 academic year, Reichert was “acting assistant professor of architecture” and in the fall and winter quarters in 1978-1979 as a “lecturer, part time,” in architecture.

45 Jeffrey Ochsner, *Lionel H. Pries, Architect, Artist, Educator: From Arts & Crafts to Modern Architecture* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2007), 265.

46 From University of Washington teaching record card.

47 From entries in Reichert’s journals.

- 48 All of the Bebb and Jones structure has been destroyed, except for the west-facing facade (the portion facing into the campus core).
- 49 Reichert Letter to Zevi, 29 February 1960.
- 50 Ochsner, *Lionel H Pries*, chapter 10 describes Pries and Gowan as “outliers,” much as Reichert considered himself to be in the Department.
- 51 Ochsner, *Lionel H. Pries*, 276.
- 52 Ochsner, *Lionel H. Pries*, 167-168.
- 53 Ochsner, *Lionel H. Pries*, 171.
- 54 Interview with Daniel Streissguth and email correspondence with Dale Jorgensen.
- 55 Reichert letter to Zevi, 29 February 1960, 16.
- 56 Reichert journal entries, c. 1961-1975.
- 57 In spite of Reichert’s positive connection with students, Daniel Streissguth recalled that Reichert “was not really tenurable,” not because his ideologies were inconsistent with the school’s, but because Reichert didn’t write and wasn’t involved in community service. The vote was 10-9 against him. Still, Streissguth noted that Reichert was fun to teach with, always wore “ivy league attire” and loved to parade up and down University Way on his motorcycle. Streissguth commented that Reichert was “one of the initiators” of supergraphics. His Queen Anne house was the first (example of) supergraphics he had ever see or heard of.
- 58 Reichert letter to Zevi, 29 February 1960.
- 59 Reichert letter to Zevi, 29 February 1960.
- 60 Reichert letter to Zevi, 29 February 1960. Reichert lived at 35 Prescott Street.
- 61 Reichert letter to Zevi, 29 February 1960.
- 62 Milton Glaser was a Boston architect, primarily known for designing modernist residences and synagogues. He was a neighbor of Gropius and Marcel Breuer and collaborated with The Architects Collaborative on several large projects. (George Goodwin, “Woonsocket’s B’Nai Israel Synagogue,” Rhode Island History, Rhode Island historical society, Vol 58 No 1 Feb 2000-3).
- 63 A letter from F. Marshall Smith to Reichert tells of Smith’s purchasing McClure’s Magnolia bluff studio, which he had pur-

chased “from Mac when he went back to Harvard.”

64 Reichert’s notes from Harvard.

65 Carbon copy of letter from Reichert to unknown recipient.

66 Reichert letter to Zevi, 29 February 1960.

67 From Reichert’s notes titled, “Dr. Gropius—Harvard”.

68 A note in Reichert’s student notebooks state, “I was a leader of this project.”

69 From the author’s interview with Richard Haag on 1 April 2015.

70 Haag recalled being brought in to “shrub up” the architecture student drawings.

71 Reichert letter to Zevi, 29 February 1960.

72 Duane Dietz, *Shaping Seattle Architecture*, ed. Jeffrey Ochsner (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 248.

73 The building remains in its rapidly changing neighborhood as of 2019. The one story building is vulnerable to redevelopment, which would likely result in its destruction.

74 Swedish Hospital drawing for NBBJ and a drawing and model for Bindon and Wright of the Seattle Public Library.

75 From Reichert’s notes in Special Collections.

76 From Reichert’s letter to Zevi, 29 February 1960. The word “monument” is an interesting choice by Reichert. Monuments are often contrasted with functionalist works. Lewis Mumford had written an essay, “The Death of the Monument” in the 1930s, in which he famously declared, “if it’s a monument, it is not modern; if it’s modern, it is not a monument.” Reichert signals here his anti-modern position. In the late 1940’s and early 1950’s, a debate took place about whether it was possible to construct a monument that is modern. When Eero Saarinen won the competition for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (Gateway Arch) in St. Louis, that debate mostly ended.

77 Reichert letter to Zevi, 29 February 1960.

78 Diazotype print in U.W. Special Collections, stamped 27 May 1954.

79 Email to author from Dale Jorgenson, 5 April 2015.

80 From Reichert’s article submission to *American Organist*.

- 81 The current owners of the house are working with their architect to design a fence which is reminiscent of Reichert's, although it is intended to be constructed of steel, a material which can be more easily fabricated into pure sculptural forms, and should last longer than plywood.
- 82 Reichert's flexible house-studio suggests the influence of Gerrit Rietveld's Schroeder House in Utrecht, a very small house that used moving panels to divide or open up spaces in primary living areas on the upper levels. This work would have been shown in any coursework addressing Modern architecture, and must have been known by Reichert.
- 83 "Studio House at Seattle." *Architecture Review*. vol. CXXIV, no. 741 (October 1958) 240–242.
- 84 Letter to Queen Anne Tours. Undated.
- 85 A window on the south wall, which faced up 3rd Avenue W. and offered the opportunity for views as well as daylight, was installed with a strangely low head height. It is only when viewing the mural outside that the reason for the window placement becomes clear, as a component of the mural expression.
- 86 Reichert letter to Zevi, 29 February 1960.
- 87 "From Where We Sit." *Queen Anne News*. 23 September 1954.
- 88 Reichert's journal entries.
- 89 From the author's experience as a volunteer docent at Historic Seattle's tour of the Egan house, 16 August 2015.
- 90 Reichert's journal entries.
- 91 Meeting with Leeanne Olson and Mary Ann Kofler, 8 May 2017.
- 92 "Studio House at Seattle." *Architecture Review*. 240–242.
- 93 "Studio Residence of Robert Reichert." *American Organist*. (April 1959) 144-145.
- 94 "Documents Northwest: Robert Reichert and Mark Millett." 18 January – 11 March 1990, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle.
- 95 Reichert's residential work was shown alongside that of architect, Mark Millett.
- 96 From Deloris Ament's review of the show, "Ideas to Build On-Architects Robert Reichert, Mark Millett Designed 'Sculptures to Live In.'" *The Seattle Times*. (18 January 1990).

- 97 From Reichert's notes on the presentation.
- 98 From Don Canty's article discussing the show and panel discussion in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* on 19 January 1990.
- 99 Canty, Don. *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* article, 19 January 1990.
- 100 Beman was well known for the design of the manufacturing plant and company town for the Pullman Palace Car Company south of Chicago, which comprised 1300 buildings designed in a picturesque eclectic style. Beman also built several Neoclassical buildings for Daniel Burman's "White City," the World Colombian Exposition of 1893.
- 101 6657-59 S. Harvard Avenue, Chicago, from City of Chicago Landmark nomination report dated December 1, 2005. [https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/zlup/Historic\\_Preservation/Publications/Canaan\\_Baptist\\_Church\\_Building.pdf](https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/zlup/Historic_Preservation/Publications/Canaan_Baptist_Church_Building.pdf)
- 102 Rodney Stark. "The Rise and Fall of Christian Science." *Journal of Contemporary Religion*. Vol. 13, No. 2 (1998) 190-191.
- 103 From First Church of Christ, Scientist project notes, which contains all communication between Robert Reichert and the building committee and Church Board.
- 104 From Reichert's project file which contains all notes and records.
- 105 From Bellevue Church project file.
- 106 From Reichert's notes on sketches of the scheme.
- 107 Letter from church dated 5 November 1955.
- 108 Letter from Robert Reichert dated 20 October 1956.
- 109 The Church of Christ, Scientist population has been shrinking nationally since the late twentieth century. Many of the church buildings have been demolished; others have been adapted by other religious groups or have been converted to new uses. Their lack of religious iconography, light interiors and efficient plans facilitate adaptive reuse.
- 110 Columbus, Indiana had the advantage of J. Irwin Miller's program of providing funds for architect's fees if the architect was selected from a list of leading American architects - as a result, Columbus is a showplace of modern architecture.
- 111 Letter from Nancy Eckmann dated 10 October 1956.
- 112 Reichert made nearly annual trips to San Francisco on his

motorcycle, always crossing the bay to visit Bernard Maybeck's First Church of Christ, Scientist in Berkeley and commenting on other new architecture throughout the Bay Area in his notes.

113 Client is used singular here, as it was revealed by the current owners that the Eckmanns divorced shortly after moving into the house. Nancy Eckmann remarried and continued to live in the house.

114 Mark Treib, ed. *Spatial Recall: Memory in Architecture and Landscape*. (New York: Routledge, 2009).

115 Letter from Jane Bedell to the author, 15 November 2017.

116 Margery Phillips featured the house in *The Seattle Times* Sunday Magazine, "Pacific Northwest Living" in an article titled "The Emphasis is on Romance."

117 Meeting with Marilyn and Dale Nordell, March 16, 2017.

118 Notes on the design and construction progression of Egan house are from the Egan project file in the Reichert Collection.

119 From Egan project records.

120 From Egan project records. Reichert often documented challenges with clients, contractors, reporters, and so forth, in these files.

121 Egan project records.

122 Two former tenants visited the house during an open house held by Historic Seattle in August 2015. They described their feelings about living in the Egan house to the author.

123 Metzger, Jeanne H. "Close Home Includes Imaginative Features" *Everett Herald*. (November 12, 1968): 6.

124 From Puget Sound Theater Organ Society website: (<http://www.pstos.org/organists/wa/schrum.htm>)

125 Paulson, Don. "Seattle Gay History: Reinhart, Seattle's Psychic Wonder." *Seattle Gay News*. Volume 38, Issue 15 (9 April 2010): 1.

126 Liebs, Chester. *Main Street to Miracle Mile*. (Boston: Little Brown, 1985), 4.

127 Wolfe, Tom. *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*. (New York: Picador, 1963).

128 Heuser, Tom. "The Motorcycle Hill Climber Who Climbed Capitol Hill, Part 1." *Capitol Hill Seattle Blog*. 15 October 2017. Web. Accessed 15 April 2018.

129 *American Motorcycling Magazine*, September 1957.

130 Drager's first relocated in 1986 to 4905 Aurora Avenue N and later moved further north to 18805 Aurora Avenue N. in Shoreline, WA. The business is now called Drager's International Auto Sales.

131 Email from Dale Jorgensen dated 10 May 2016.

132 The building currently on the site was designed by Schorr, Barnett, Miller Company, Architects as a restaurant called "Man Bites Dog." It now functions as the University of Washington Community Design Building. The building is described in Woodridge and Montgomery, *"A Guide to Architecture in Washington State"* (UW Press, 1980) on page 211.

133 Robert Reichert, letter to the editor of *The Seattle Times* from Robert Reichert, 22 November 1960, 10.

134 "A TV Tower Design." *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 6 October 1957, page 8.

135 Robert Reichert letter to the editor, 3 January 1963, *Seattle Daily Times*, 10.

136 Recollections of the details of Tillie Reichert's death are taken from Reichert's own journals in the Reichert collection, 18 January 1961.

137 His placing the word "nurse" in quotations causes one to question whether Reichert was experiencing doubts about the more controversial Christian Science teachings, including the idea that physical illness was an illusion to be corrected not by medicine, but through prayer. The nurses visiting Tillie Reichert would have been trained in Christian Science metaphysical healing, but may not have been trained in traditional medicine.

138 The medical and funerary traditions of the Christian Scientists are not discussed in detail here, but the reliance on Mary Baker Eddy's writings and the idea that physical health was a function of a healthy mind, that reality is purely spiritual and the material world an illusion, meant that practitioners avoided medical treatment. It is clear that her sudden death was unexpected; combined with his dependence on her, and his apparent isolation from others, this clearly is a case of what we might call "complicated mourning."

139 From his journals, it appeared that Belch contacted Reichert to see if he would be interested in selling his "house for an organ." It's not clear why Reichert followed through on the sale without a

plan for a new residence.

140 From a meeting with Mary Ann Kofler on May 8, 2017. She owned the house for many years before selling it around 2000.

141 Reichert later sold this property to Folke Nyberg, a U.W. professor, architect and activist, who would make alterations to the property, creating his well-known house.

142 City of Seattle's online Historic Sites Survey notes that the Nyberg house warrants evaluation for designation as a landmark, citing comments from Woodbridge and Montgomery that the house was remodeled into a "remarkable contemporary house" stating that in Nyberg's design "the influence of early Modernism traceable to Scandinavian roots is combined with a contemporary concern for using salvaged materials and a sure touch with scale and detail." (<https://web6seattle.gov/DPD/HistoricalSite/QueryResult.aspx?ID=1801712732>).

143 Erik Lacitis, "Architecture is Just Frozen Music," *The Seattle Times*, 8 June 1979, A15. Lacitis encountered Reichert at the Jack-In-The-Box restaurant in the University District and asked to interview him the next day. Lacitis had spoken with Streissguth for the article about Reichert's place in architectural culture, who commented, "The Establishment still hasn't caught up. But there are architects doing now what Reichert was doing 20 years ago."

144 In the interview with the Nordells, they commented that they called Reichert for some advice on interior finishes; the architect commented on how lucky they were to reach him, given his limited hours in accepting calls.

145 From an email from Dale Jorgensen dated 5 April 2015.

146 Jennifer Bjarhus, "Robert Reichert's Home Designs Broke All the Rules," *The Seattle Times*, 30 January 1996, B3. The quotation about checking accounts was attributed to Reichert's nephew, Bob Sumner, who lived in Utah, and subsequently donated Reichert's archives to the U.W.

147 Jean Godden, "A Salute to Some Worth Remembering," *The Seattle Times*. 27 May 1996, B1.

148 From an article Reichert submitted to Margerie Phillips about the Eckmann house. However, she wrote her own article without this quotation.

149 A list of projects is included as an appendix.

150 Le Corbusier. *Toward An Architecture*, trans. by John Good-



- man (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007), 195.
- 151 Interview with Mary Ann Kofler, 8 May 2017.
- 152 Interview with Mary Ann Kofler, 8 May 2017.
- 153 From discussions with two former residents at the Historic Seattle open house on 16 August 2015.
- 154 Artist and curator Glenn Weiss wrote the introduction to the catalogue for the Seattle Art Museum Exhibit, “Architecture in the House,” in January 1990.
- 155 C. Ray Smith, *Supermannerism: New Attitudes in Post-Modern Architecture* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977), 270.
- 156 Smith, *Supermannerism*, 262.
- 157 Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour published their classic tome on Postmodernism in 1972, *Learning From Las Vegas*. It compared two building design strategies, the “duck” versus the “decorated shed.” The duck (referring to “The Big Duck,” a concrete duck-shaped building on Long Island, New York, from which a farmer sold ducks and duck eggs) is formed by its function, while the decorated shed’s meaning is gained through the application of ornament and imagery to a basic form. As a response to Modernism, the “decorated shed” became the favored strategy characterizing early Post-modern design.
- 158 Grant Hildebrand, *Little Wooden Buildings: The Puget Sound School* (Seattle: Marion Dean Ross Chapter, Society of Architectural Historians, 2014), 39.
- 159 Colin St. John Wilson, “The Natural Imagination: An Essay on the Experience of Architecture.” *Architectural Review* 185 (January 1989): 64-70.
- 160 Letter from Bruno Zevi, 22 November 1959.
- 161 Bruno Zevi “Quattro Residenze dell’architetto Robert George Reichert.” *L’Architettura* 62 (December 1960): 598-603.



# Bibliography:

*100 Years of Student Drawings: Celebrating the School of Architecture's Centennial, 1913-2013.* University of Minnesota School of Architecture, 2013.

Albores, Mathew and Murdock, Jeffrey. "Ghosts of a Renaissance Cathedral. *Column* 5. Vol XIII (1999): 60-64.

Alofsin, Anthony. *The Struggle for Modernism: Architecture, Landscape Architecture and City Planning at Harvard.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002.

Ament, Deloris. "Ideas to Build On—Architects Robert Reichert, Mark Millett Designed 'Sculptures to Live In.'" *The Seattle Times*, 18 January 1990.

Armstrong, Joseph. *The Mother Church: A History of the Building of the Original Edifice of The First Church of Christ, Scientist in Boston, Massachusetts.* Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1937.

Bjarhus, Jennifer. "Robert Reichert's Stark Home Designs Broke All the Rules." *The Seattle Times*. 30 January 1996, B3.

Blanton, Joseph Edwin. *The Organ In Church Design.* Albany, Texas: Venture Press, 1957.

Blanton, Joseph Edwin. *The Revival of The Organ Case*. Albany, Texas: Venture Press, 1965.

Boyle, Susan. "City of Seattle Landmark Nomination for Admiral Willard Egan Residence." Seattle, 2009.

Department of Neighborhoods, City of Seattle, Landmarks Preservation Board minutes, 24 February 2009.

Boss, Kit. "Back to the Future: Architecture From the Past Demonstrates How Staid Are Today's Styles." *The Seattle Times*, 3 April 1987.

"Canaan Baptist Church of Christ Building." (Formerly the 4th Church of Christ, Scientist.) City of Chicago Commission on Chicago Landmarks. 1 December 2005.

Canty, Don. "Architecture in the House." *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 19 January 1990.

*The Centralian, Minneapolis*. (High school yearbook) from Minneapolis History Collection and Special Collections, Minneapolis Central Library, 1939.

City of Seattle, Department of Neighborhoods. Historic Preservation Program. Historic Property Inventory for Reichert house studio at 2500 3rd Avenue, <http://web6.seattle.gov/DPD/HistoricalSite/QueryResult.aspx?ID=-1599775234>

Colquhoun, Alan. *Modern Architecture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Le Corbusier. *Toward An Architecture*, translated by John Goodman. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007.

Detlie, Dietz, Johanson, Morse, Steinbrueck and Thiry. "Have We An Indigenous Northwest Architecture?" *Architectural Record*. (April 1953): 140-146.

"Documents Northwest: Robert Reichert and Mark Millett." 18 January – 11 March 1990, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle.

"Drama Is In the Art: Is This a House? It is, Says Architect." *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 15, 1958, 5.

Durland, Marvin. "Reichert Studio Organ Opened." *Queen Anne News*, 14 May 1959, 12.

Edel, Leon. *Writing Lives: Principia Biographica*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984.

"Exceptional Architect Besides Being a Great Musician." *Bryant Times*, 15 April 1936, 1.

Finch, Christopher. *Chuck Close: Life*. New York: Prestel Verlag, 2010.

"First Church of Christ Scientist, Mason City, Iowa." National Register of Historic Places. NRHP Reference #97001285, 30 October 1997.

"From Where We Sit." *Queen Anne News*, 23 September 1954.

Fuller, Peter. "The Search for a Postmodern Aesthetic." In Thackara, John, Ed., *Design After Modernism*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1988.

Godden, Jean. "A Salute to Some Worth Remembering." *The Seattle*

*Times*, 27 May 1996, B1.

Goodwin, George. "Woonsocket's B'Nai Israel Synagogue." *Rhode Island History*. Rhode Island Historical Society, Volume 58, No. 1, (February 2000).

"Gropius House." Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities: Annual Report. Lincoln, Massachusetts, 1987.

Gropius, Walter. "Blueprint of an Architect's Education." *Scope of Total Architecture*. New York: Harper, 1955.

Godden, Jean. "A Salute to Some Worth Remembering." *The Seattle Times*, 27 May 1996.

Gottschalk, Stephen. *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

Hess, Alan. *Googie: Fifties Coffee Shop Architecture*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1985.

Hess, Alan. *Googie Redux: Ultramodern Roadside Architecture*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004.

Heuser, Tom. "The Motorcycle Hill Climber Who Climbed Capitol Hill, Part 1." Capitol Hill Seattle Blog. 15 October 2017. Web. Accessed 15 April 2018.

Hildebrand, Grant. *Little Wooden Buildings: The Puget Sound School*. Seattle: Marion Dean Ross Chapter, Society of Architectural Historians, 2014.

Ivey, Paul Eli. *Prayers In Stone: Christian Science Architecture in the*

*United States, 1894-1930*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

Jakel, John A. and Sculle, Keith A. *Fast Food: Roadside Restaurants in the Automobile Age*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

Johnson, Larry. Interview by the author at The Johnson Partnership, Seattle, 12 March 2015. Johnson was an architecture student at University of Washington when Reichert was an instructor.

Johnston, Norman J., *The College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Seventy Five Years at the University of Washington: A Personal View*. College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Seattle: 1991.

Jorgensen, Dale. Email correspondence over several months in 2015-2016. Jorgensen was a former student of Reichert's and also owned the Egan house for a short time.

Kofler, Mary Ann. Personal interview in her Seattle home, 8 May 2017. Kofler owned and lived in the Reichert house-studio for a few years beginning in 1976 and rented it until she sold the house in 2015.

Lacitis, Erik. "Riding Double: A Free-Wheelin' Architect," *The Seattle Times*, 8 June 1979, A3.

Lacitis, Erik. "Architecture is Just Frozen Music." *The Seattle Times*. 8 June 1979, A15.

Liebs, Chester. *Main Street to Miracle Mile*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1985, 4.

McCullough, Mary Kae. Telephone interview. 26 March 2015.

McCullough co-curated the MOHAI exhibit with Lawrence Kreissman. She recorded a telephone conversation with Reichert, noting that his communication was “a little contentious.” Reichert wanted to present a larger body of work than what was “on the frieze. He wanted context, the ability to talk about his work, wanted to be heard.” The recording has been lost.

Metzger, Jeanne H. “Close Home Includes Imaginative Features.” *Everett Herald*, 12 November 1968, 6.

Meyer, Leslie. Personal interview at Special Collections, University of Washington, January 16, 2015. Meyer often waited on Reichert at Jack in the Box in the 1970’s when he would ride his motorcycle on “the Ave.” She commented that he was “a presence on the Ave.” She noted that he never talked; he drank coffee, sketched on napkins, and that he was quiet, polite, reserved.

Nordell, Dale and Marilyn. Interview with the author at the Eckmann house. 16 March 2017. An afternoon spent with the long time owners and residents of the Eckmann house.

Ochsner, Jeffrey. *Lionel H. Pries, Architect, Artist, Educator: From Arts and Crafts to Modern Architecture*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2007.

Ochsner, Jeffrey, ed. *Shaping Seattle Architecture: A Historical Guide to the Architects*, 2nd Edition. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014.

“Odd Structure is Studio, Not Home.” *The Falcon* (Seattle Pacific College’s daily newspaper). 5 April 1963.

Phillips, Margery R. “The Emphasis is on Romance.” *The Seattle Times*. 4 June 1961.



Phillips, Margery R. "Seward Park Home Where Design Is Dominant," *The Seattle Times*. May 23, 1963.

Poulson, Don. "Seattle Gay History: Rhinehart, Seattle's Psychic Wonder." *Seattle Gay News*. Vol. 38, Issue 15. 9 April 2010.

"Preserving the Egan House." *Preservation Seattle*, online magazine published by Historic Seattle. November 2003.

Reichert, Robert. Letter from Reichert to Bruno Zevi, 29 February 1960. A chronological account of Reichert's work and projects, an "answer to your last letter, requesting additional data."

"Robert Reichert." [www.docomomo-wewa.org](http://www.docomomo-wewa.org). Accessed December 15, 2018.

"Romantic Studio-Home in Sculptural Form." *Architecture/West*. May 1964: 26-27.

Serraino, Pierluigi. *NorCalMod*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006.

Smith, C. Ray. *Supermannerism: New Attitudes in Post-Modern Architecture*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977.

Stark, Rodney. "The Rise and Fall of Christian Science." *Journal of Contemporary Religion*. vol. 13, no. 2, 1998.

St. John Wilson, Colin. "The Natural Imagination." *Architectural Reflections: Studies in the Philosophy and Practice of Architecture*. New York: Butterworth Architecture, 2000.

Streissguth, Daniel. Personal interview at his home, 2 June 2016. Professor Emeritus Streissguth was a faculty member who chaired

the “Basic Design” group of instructors at the university when Reichert was teaching.

“Studio House at Seattle.” *Architecture Review*. Vol. CXXIV, no. 741, (October 1958): 240–242.

“Studio Residence of Robert Reichert.” *American Organist*. (April 1959): 144-145.

“This is Vintage?” *Northwest Rod News*. May 1962.

Thompson, Emily. *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002.

Treib, Mark, ed. *Spatial Recall: Memory in Architecture and Landscape*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

“A TV Tower Design.” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 6 October 1957, 8.

Venturi, Robert; Brown, Denise Scott and Izenour, Steven. *Learning From Las Vegas*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972.

Voorsanger, Bartholomew and Latour, Alessandra. “*The Legacy of the Masters: Students’ Work under Gropius, Mies and Kahn*.” Exhibit of the American Institute of Architects, New York Chapter. New York: AIA, 1986.

Weiss, Glenn. “Architecture in the House.” *The Poncho Series*, Seattle Art Museum. January-March 1990.

Wolfe, Tom. *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*. New York: Picador, 1963.

Woodbridge, Sally and Montgomery, Roger. *Guide to Architecture in Washington State*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980.

Zevi, Bruno. *Architecture as Space: How to Look at Architecture*. New York: Horizon Press, 1957.

Zevi, Bruno. "Quattro Residenze dell'architetto Robert George Reichert." *L'Architettura* 62 (December 1960), 598-603.



## Acknowledgments:

I'm grateful to the former colleagues, clients, students, motorcycle enthusiasts and coffee servers who knew Robert Reichert and who were willing to meet with me to talk about Reichert's life and career. Their stories brought a human dimension to the boxes of drawings, photographs, sketches, notes and records in his archive. The library students and staff in University of Washington Libraries Special Collections were generous to allow an architecture student into their domain and I am especially grateful for the tireless assistance of Architecture Collections Archivist, Kelly Daviduke. Professors Jeffrey Ochsner and Brian McLaren, my thesis committee members, provided insightful guidance, observations and suggestions at each step of this project. Finally, thank you to my family and friends, and Mat and Lili, who have always been there to support me in my endeavors.