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THE AMERICAN  
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# Memo

THE REVIEW OF PEOPLE, INFORMATION, AND IDEAS

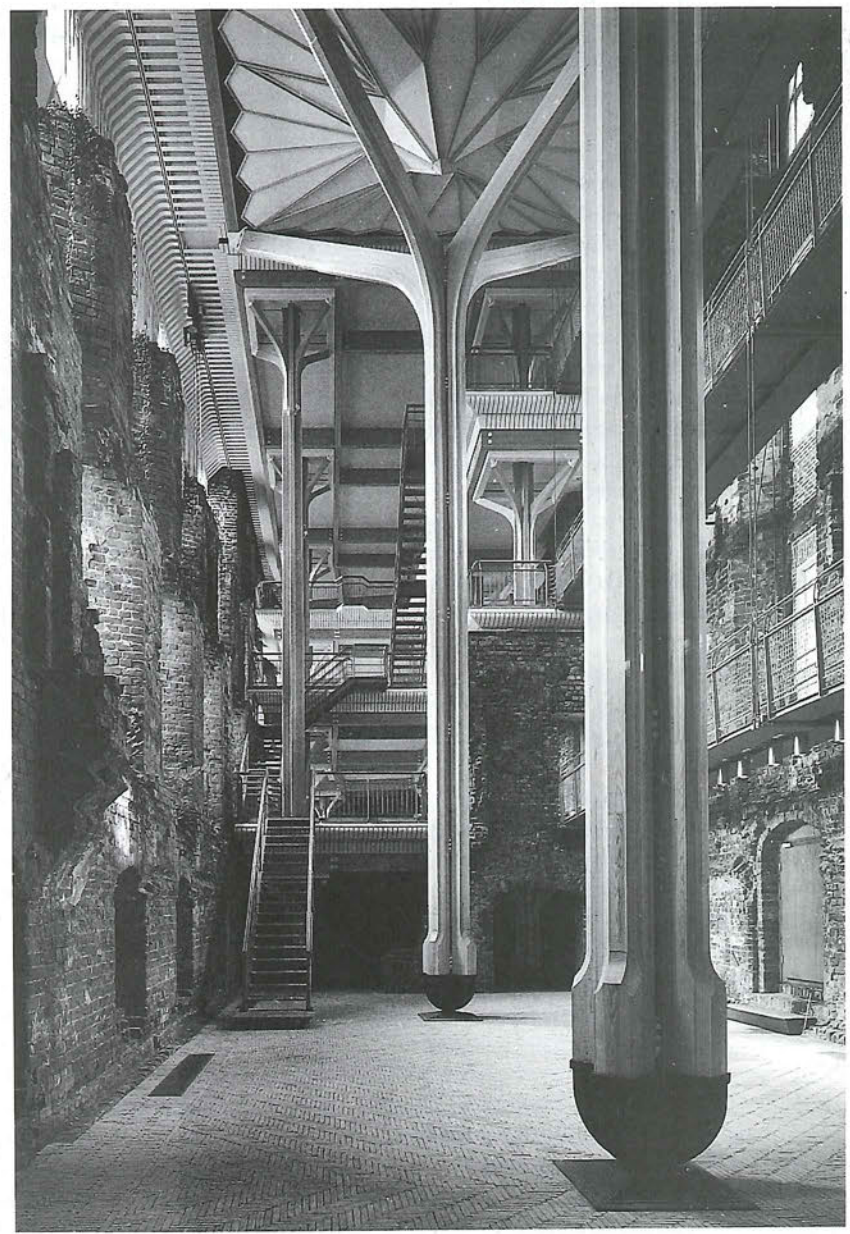
## Inside this issue

### FEATURES

Bostonians review buildings	3
Building review of Boston	4
The winner: common code format	6
The Exners, two great Danes	8
Vision 2020: Revisiting 'our town'	10
Book: Critic right on target	23
Supportive AIDS housing	26

### NEWS

It's almost time for—Boston	13
Services and treasures for members	14
AIA supports Jobs Act	16
Committees tout team-building	17
Network news	19
Book market turns over new leaf	20
AAF stresses good, low-cost housing	21



Courtesy of the Exners

The magnificent restoration of Koldinghus Castle, Kolding, Denmark, uses new freestanding elements to unite extant pieces of the castle's Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and ruin periods. It is just one example of the work of Inger and Johannes Exner, two of the AIA's newest Honorary Fellows. See page 8.

# The excellent Exners

by Stephanie Stubbs

Among this year's Honorary Fellows are Inger and Johannes Exner, a Danish wife-and-husband team who were nominated jointly for the award for their body of extraordinary ecclesiastical and restoration work. "In a time when architectural fashions seem to 'change on the hour,' there is a fundamental grounding to [the Exners'] work that is timeless," wrote John A. Carter, FAIA, in support of the Exners' nomination. "The projects all have that feel that makes a place special. The planning is rigorously disciplined; the opportunities for surprise and delight fully realized."

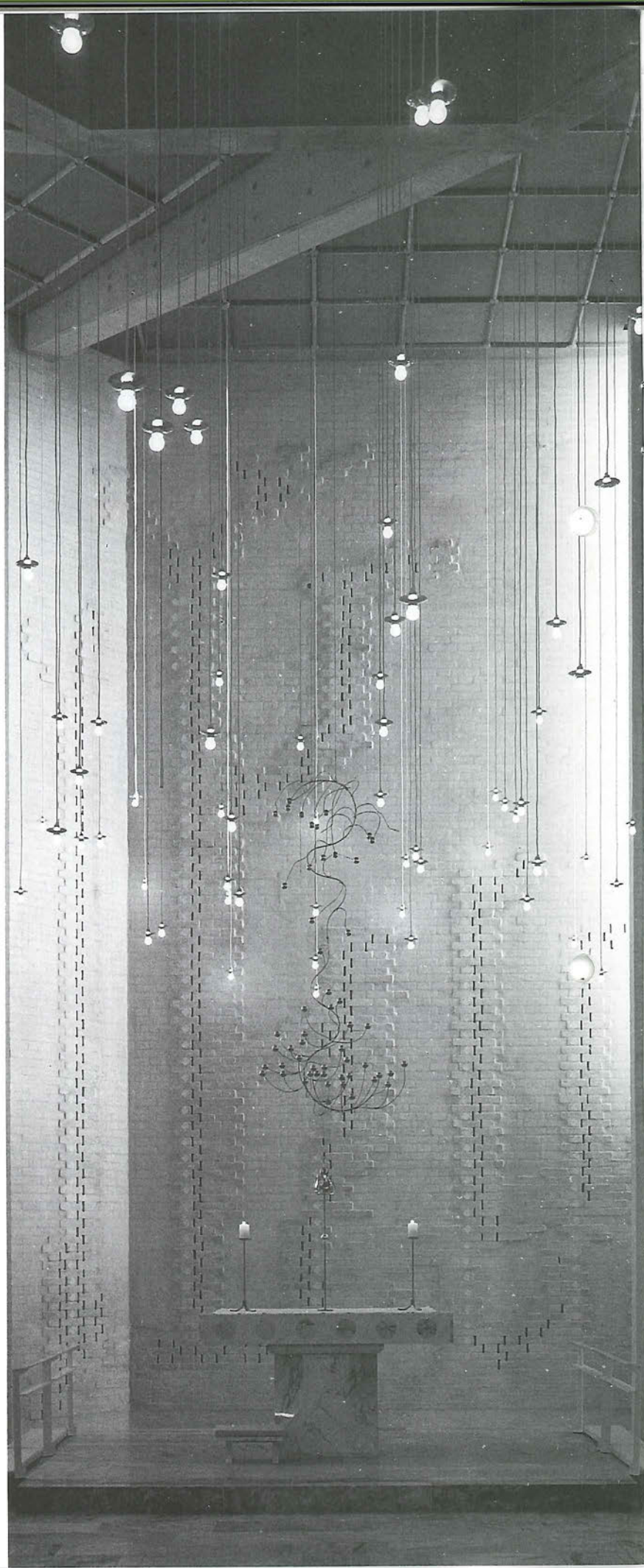
Both born in 1926, the Exners are graduates of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen, and also of the same secondary school. Both are members of the Federation of Danish Architects and share equally in numerous prizes, awards, and competitions, many won in their native Denmark. Their digest of achievements, submitted by others in support of their Honorary Fellowship, states: "Inger and Johannes Exner practice *together*; hence this joint nomination. ... That their collective process produces extraordinary work is easily visible." Their collaborative practice recalls the methodology of another team of Honorary Fellows, the Sirens of Finland, who were awarded fellowship in 1986.

Also like the Sirens, the Exners have been noted church architects for a span of three decades. Their work throughout Denmark includes new buildings—Hald Ege (Viborg), Gug (Aalborg), and Islev Church in Copenhagen are just a few examples—as well as restoration of many churches, some of which date to the Middle Ages. Growing alongside their body of work has been extensive research of Lutheran theology, and the result has been a new paradigm of ecclesiastical design, well accepted by the public in Denmark and throughout Europe.

The textural brickwork, combined electric and natural light from the sky, and minimalist altar of the Church of the Resurrection (this page) illustrate the Exners' facility with elegant detailing.

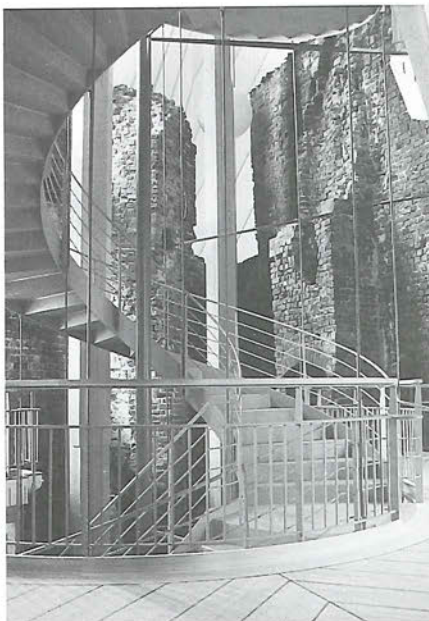
The entry court to Hald Ege Church (facing page, bottom) uses a rich blend of textures and simple geometry to create a transition from nature to house of God.

Freestanding metal stairways rise along side of ruined walls in Koldinghus Castle (facing page, top), separated by a wall of glass and several centuries.



A major spatial implication of this study stems from the belief that public services should not take place at one end of the church building, separate from the people they serve. The Exners' church designs, through plan and section, encourage services amid the congregation. A second hallmark of design derives from Exnerian emphasis on the interaction of materials' texturing and lighting effects. Their buildings define and inspire space with collages of sunbeams, daylight, and artificial lighting, which often takes the form of raindroplike cascades of individual light points.

Inger and Johannes Exner are renowned for their work in, and theory of, historic preservation as well as their elegant church designs. They are the architects of one of the most complex and complicated restorations in Europe, perhaps in the world: the restoration of Koldinghus Castle in Kolding, Denmark. The castle, which exhibits all phases of its life through additions and modifications, was slowly rotting away, a burnt-out ruin since a fire in 1808. All new Exner additions, through a series of free-standing columns and floors, respect extant pieces of the castle's Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and ruin periods. It now serves as a museum.



The Danish periodical *Arkitektur* quoted the Exners' point of view: "To restore an 80-year-old experienced lady and re-create her 18-year-old appearance seems grotesque to us. ... Why do historical or worn houses not generate the same feeling in us? Why do we not preserve much more of the historical development, thereby securing the narrative value of the building?"

The project was ongoing from 1973 to 1990. Carter sums up, "The Koldinghus restoration is an extraordinary project; the historical stages are very visible, yet the means of reclaiming the space entirely current. ... [This] project alone is ground for an enduring reputation for these extraordinary architects."

The Exners will present more of their theories and work when they host the International Fellows Forum at the AIA convention in Boston on Sunday, June 21, from 2:45 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. The cost is covered by the basic registration fee for the convention. The forum is open to 200 participants; you may sign up in advance by checking Forum F03 on your convention registration form. ■



Photography courtesy of the Exners.

## Honorary Fellows

The title of Honorary Fellow is awarded to architects of distinguished achievement who are not citizens of the U.S. and who do not practice within the Institute's domain. The AIA Board of Directors may elect up to 10 Honorary Fellows each year from nominations submitted by the Board, the College of Fellows, or the International Committee. Past recipients of the award include: Ricardo Bofill (1985), Ralph Erskine (1966), Hassan Fathy (1976), Norman Foster (1980), Arata Isozaki (1983), Ricardo Legorreta (1979), Frei Otto (1963), Aldo Rossi (1989), and Bruno Zevi (1968).

In addition to the Exners, the 1992 Honorary Fellows are:

**Donald C.R. Bailey, LFRAIA**  
Cammeray, Australia

**Nils Carlson, Arkitekthuset**  
Stockholm

**Vakhtang Davitaia**  
Georgian Technical University  
Tbilisi, Georgia

**David W. Edwards, MRAIC**  
Royal Architectural Institute of Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario

**Sara Topelson de Grinberg**  
Lomas de Chapultepec, Mexico

**Shoji Hayashi**  
Nikken Sekkei  
Tokyo

**Alexandr P. Kudryavtsev**  
Moscow Institute of Architecture  
Moscow

**Vladimir Slapeta**  
Prague