

## High Point's presence grows in modern architecture

Chicago architects, who insist that their predecessors invented the sky scraper, do not cotton to postmodernism

For them new high-rise buildings must follow either the international style - all steel, glass and function - or style including geometrical shapes reminiscent of the Art Deco detail of

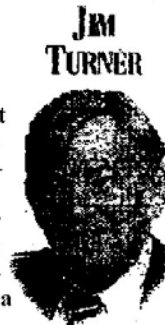
Louis Sullivan, which they call echo deco.

I learned this recently on the Chicago Architecture Foundation tour: The architect who conducted us first passed a postmodern building on the river without comment. When we came back down the river near this building with its Grecian Cornice at the top, he commented. "We call this Parthenon on a Stick."

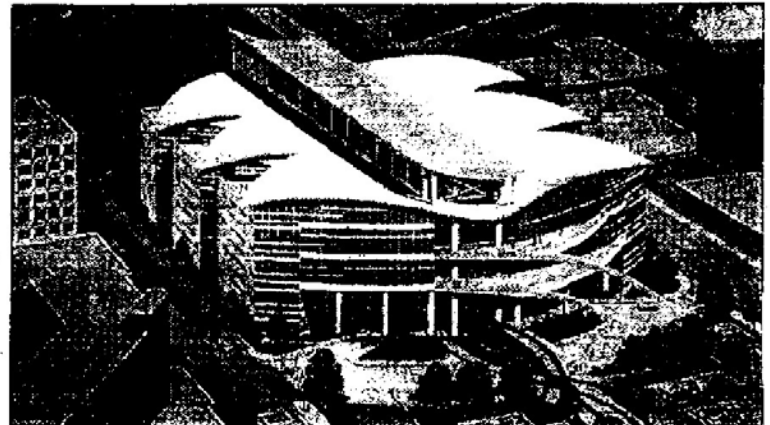
A high-rise with a curved footprint passes muster. The cornucob-shaped towers close-by Michigan Avenue at the river were admired. The condominium tower closest to Lake Michigan has the footprint of a fluffy asterisk. It is legitimized because the name of Mies van der Rohe inventor of the International Style, is associated with its design.

Aversion to the postmodern style means that clever uses of shape and color by architects such as Graves and Pelli have almost bypassed the Chicago river front. It is not surprising, then, that Chicago makes no use of the plastic multishaped roofs of the prize-winning architect Frank Gehry.

In the new Guggenheim Museum in



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Showplace, which will be used as furniture showroom space, is being built across East commerce Avenue from the International Home Furnishing Center. Use of Computer Aided Drawing has helped the process move expeditiously.

Bilbao, Spain and in the Folk Museum in Seattle, the roofs use not just curves but wrinkles. One reviewer described the Folk Museum as looking like nothing so much as a crushed guitar.

A city like High Point, which moves at the edge of interior furnishings on the Inside cannot afford, outside, the conservatism of Chicago architecture. So it was that the April 1998 Furniture Market witnessed the opening of Natuzzi'd ship shaped showroom on Commerce Place.

A GROUP OF High Point investors have purchased the Sears tract two blocks east of Natuzzi Leather. Last fall they sold space in the huge billowing tent. This is the story of their venture into modern architecture.

In the meantime, the focus of American architecture's unending quest

for public approval has shifted from high-rise to mid-rise, from sky scrapers to museums and exhibition buildings. the international economy no longer so readily supports the sky scraper as a corporate signature.

In New York there is no Pepsi in the famous Pepsi Cola building. In Greensboro there is no bank in the Wachovia Building or Southern Life in the U.S. Trust Building. Sometimes corporate names and needs do not last long enough to justify a high-rise symbol.

New York is focused on whether to build another Guggenheim Museum with a model by Frank Gehry. The model shows a building at the tip of Manhattan, with a roof shaped like advancing ocean waves.