

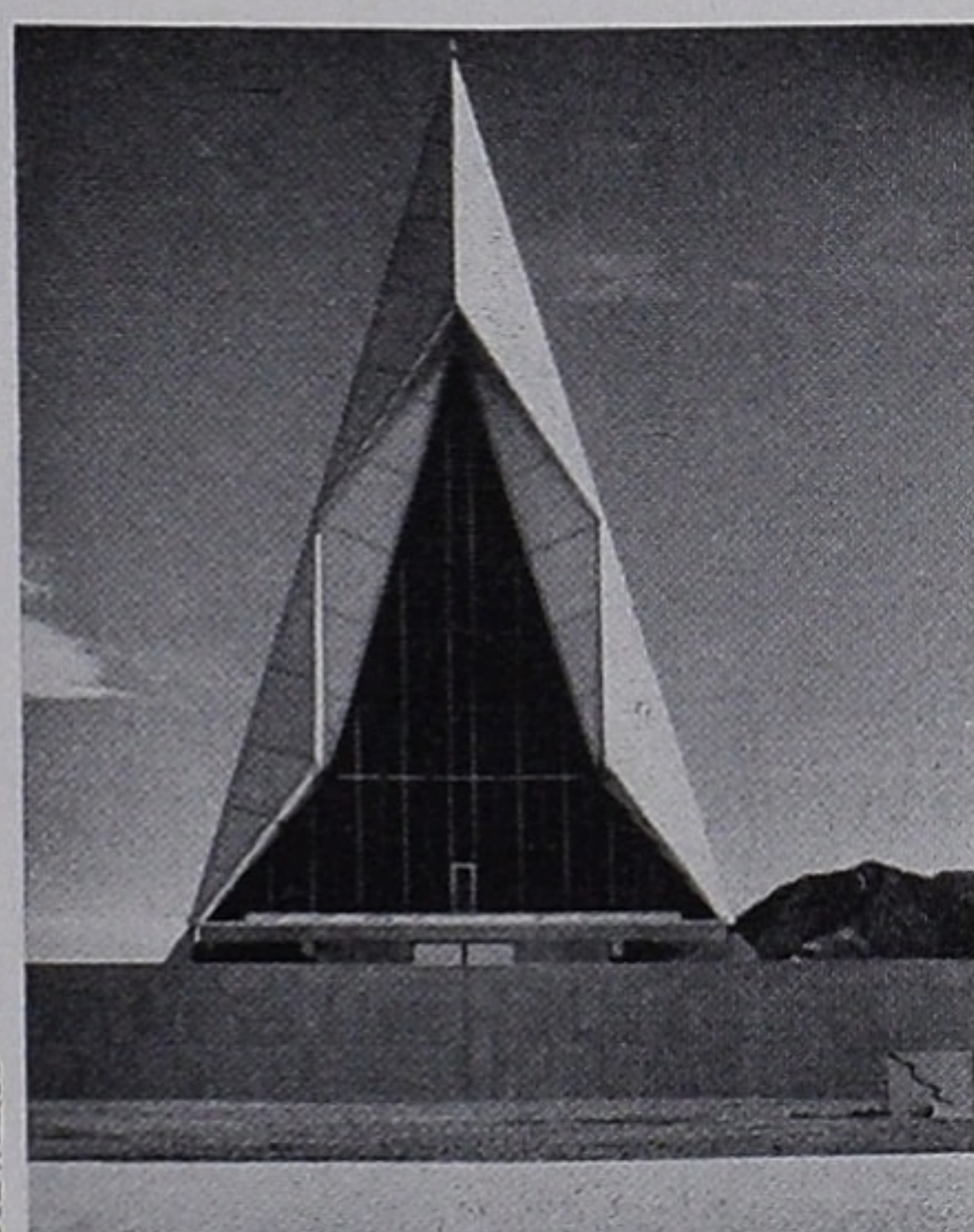
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

For years, people interested in the building arts have complained that there is no architectural criticism—at least none on a par with literary criticism, theatrical criticism, and art criticism. They have a point—up to a point. There has been precious little architectural criticism in the daily press and general magazines. The same might be said of those magazines published for architects alone. FORUM, on the other hand,



is published for architects' clients as well as for architects, and it has never shied away from publishing criticism of both architects' and clients' contributions to finished buildings—however painful some of it may have seemed to those criticized and to some of their confreres. (See "Letters," page 19, for reader reaction to FORUM's recent criticism of the Air Academy Chapel by Architects Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.)

"Criticism" of a building is not synonymous with "panning" a building (or a book, or a play, or a painting). To FORUM's editors it means first to try to state the architect's intention; next, to evaluate how well he succeeded in doing what he was trying to

do; and, finally, to do all this while making clear the premise on which the discussion is based.

This seems to be a fair way of going about it, and it is likely to produce a "rave review" quite as often as a "thumbs-down" verdict. Moreover, it is a procedure that might help the architect involved, and other architects—and might help the clients of architects to a better appreciation of architecture.

In their criticism FORUM's editors have taken on several pretty big guns in the architectural profession—and several big client-developers too. Some of those who got the "thumbs-down" treatment happened to be among the editors' best friends; others who got "raves" were practically unknown to them.

It was to be expected that some readers would be critical of FORUM's recently expanded program of architectural criticism. However, their reaction seems a little dangerous to the building arts themselves: when there is so much talk about growing conformism, what could be more conducive to conformism than to insist that critics and architects join some sort of mutual admiration society? The editors plan to remain non-members.

Aline Saarinen, a first-rate architectural critic in her own right, demonstrated a few months ago that she understands the need for unfettered criticism when she suggested that our editors publish Reyner Banham's adverse comments about her late husband's dormitories at Yale. (This was done in the December issue.) For this suggestion, FORUM's editors think Mrs. Saarinen—to borrow a superlative from movie criticism—deserves ★ ★ ★ ★ — J.C.H., JR.

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