

THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS  
THE OCTAGON, WASHINGTON, D. C.

COPY

*M. Thompson*

February 8, 1938.

Mr. John F. Harbeson  
1700 Architects Bldg.  
Philadelphia, Pa.

My dear Mr. Harbeson:

I have visited New Orleans recently with the Secretary and the Executive-Secretary of The Institute with the view to complete the necessary plans for the Convention. An important item of our program, of course, was the ceremony of awarding the Gold Medal, and it was decided that the Art Museum in the Park offered the most appropriate and dignified setting for such an event. As you know, it is customary to invite a number of the distinguished laity to attend this function, and we are concerned to know with what confidence you can speak of Mr. Cret's progress towards recovery, so that the occasion should be a thoroughly happy one for him. I should greatly appreciate a word from you on the subject, and also as soon as you can conveniently manage it a list of such friends as Mr. Cret would wish to have invited to the ceremony.

Personally I look forward anxiously to a good report of Mr. Cret's condition, and I beg you will not hesitate to convey any suggestion of his about the plans of the ceremony.

With kind regards, believe me

Sincerely yours,

President.

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PAUL PHILIPPE CRET  
Architect

Paul P. Cret  
John F. Harbeson  
William J. H. Hough  
William H. Livingston  
Roy F. Larson

Architects' Building  
17th Street at Sansom  
Philadelphia

*File*

February 12, 1938

Charles D. Maginnis, Esq., President,  
The American Institute of Architects,  
1741 New York Ave., Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Maginnis:

The office has already apologized for my delay in answering your notification of the Board of Directors' action.

What they could not tell is the feeling I have to be rewarded far beyond my deserts. However, to say so, would be questioning the judgment of those who represent our profession so ably. The only course open, therefore, is to express my thankfulness to you and to the members of the Board. My debt to the Institute for the encouragement and support I have always received during the years of my professional practice, has previously been heavy. With this award, I become not only unable to repay it but even to acknowledge it adequately. I hope the members of the Board will make allowance for this when we meet in New Orleans.

Meanwhile, please present to the Board my heartfelt thanks and sincere gratification in receiving the Institute's Gold Medal.

Very sincerely yours,

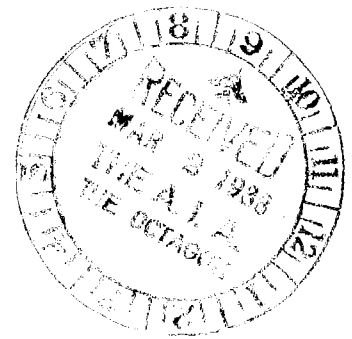
(s) Paul P. Cret

PPC

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COPY OF LETTER FROM  
MOISE H. GOLDSTEIN  
ARCHITECT

*File*



February 28, 1938.

Prof. Paul Cret  
Architects' Building  
17th St. at Sansom  
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear M. Cret:

I have just received from the Institute a copy of your very gracious letter of acknowledgement of the gold medal award and want to say how sincerely we all feel that we were doing the Institute honor in honoring you.

We look forward to welcoming you to New Orleans this April and trust that Mrs. Cret will be with you.

Sincerely,

MHG/B.

THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS  
THE OCTAGON, WASHINGTON, D. C.

COPY  
*Jm Kemper*

February 14, 1938.

Mr. John F. Harbeson  
Architects' Building  
17th Street at Sanson  
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Mr. Harbeson:

I was delighted to get your letter with its pleasant assurance that Mr. Cret is well on the way to a normal state of health, and that we may reasonably count upon his being present at New Orleans. I shall notify Mr. Kemper at once, so that the plans for the ceremony can go forward.

With kind regards, believe me

Sincerely yours,

President.

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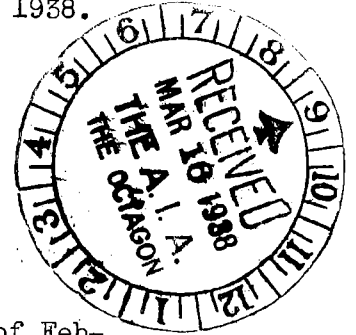
*5-11-38*

PAUL PHILIPPE CRET  
ARCHITECT

PAUL P. CRET  
JOHN F. HARBESON  
WILLIAM J. H. HOUGH  
WILLIAM H. LIVINGSTON  
ROY F. LARSON

ARCHITECTS' BUILDING  
17TH STREET AT SANSOM  
PHILADELPHIA

March 15, 1938.



Charles D. Maginnis, Esq., President,  
American Institute of Architects,  
The Octagon, Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Maginnis :

Please pardon our delay in answering your letter of February 8th to Mr. Harbeson concerning a proposed list of persons to be invited to the ceremony of the awarding of the medal.

I give below some names of friends or clients to whom invitations might be sent :

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| General John J. Pershing        | Tucson, Ariz.                             |
| Lt.Col. & Mrs. X.H. Price       |   |
| Dr. & Mrs. Adolph Miller        | 2230 S St., N.W., Washington, D.C.        |
| Mr. & Mrs. Chester Morrill      | 3908 Ingomar St., N.W. " "                |
| Dr. & Mrs. J.Q. Adams           | Folger Shakespeare Library, Wash., D.C.   |
| Dr. Leo S. Rowe                 | Pan American Union, "                     |
| Mr. & Mrs. John Sinclair        | 3613 Fox St., Germantown, Phila., Pa.     |
| Mr. & Mrs. George W. Norris     | Land Title Bldg. Phila.                   |
| Mr. & Mrs. Edw. G. Budd, Sr.    | 157 Pelham Rd., Mt. Airy, Phila., Pa.     |
| Mr. & Mrs. J. Stogdell Stokes   | Summerdale Station, Phila., Pa.           |
| Mr. & Mrs. R. Sturgis Ingersoll | Penllyn, Pa.                              |
| Mr. Ralph Modjeski              | 52 Vanderbilt Ave., New York City         |
| Mr. & Mrs. Thomas S. Gates      | Rex & Seminole Aves., Chestnut Hill, Pa.  |
| Mr. & Mrs. John Gregory         | 54 W. 74th St., New York City             |
| Mr. & Mrs. Sydney Waugh         | 101 Park Ave., " "                        |
| Mr. & Mrs. Gilmore Clarke       | 101 Park Ave., " "                        |
| Dr. & Mrs. Frederick Keppel     | 522 Fifth Ave., " "                       |
| Dr. W.J. Battle                 | University of Texas, Austin, Texas        |
| President & Mrs. J.W. Calhoun   | " " " "                                   |
| Mr. & Mrs. Beauford Jester      | Corsicana, Texas                          |
| Mr. & Mrs. A.G.B. Steel         | 9230 Germantown Ave., Chestnut Hill, Pa.  |
| Mr. & Mrs. Roland Morris        | 2113 Spruce St., Phila., Pa.              |
| Mr. & Mrs. Clyde Burroughs      | Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Mich. |

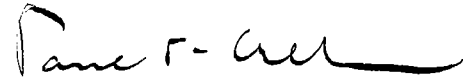
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Charles D. Maginnis, Esq. - 2

3-15-38.

I think that this list will suffice, and am exceedingly grateful to you for your many courtesies in connection with this great honor which is being afforded me. I shall have an opportunity in New Orleans to express my appreciation to you personally.

Very cordially yours,



PPC

The Board of Trustees of  
The Delgado Museum of Art  
requests the honor of your presence at a special ceremony  
to be held under the auspices of  
The American Institute of Architects  
for the presentation of the Gold Medal of The Institute to  
Paul Philippe Cret  
on the evening of Wednesday the twentieth of April  
at eight-thirty o'clock

The Board of Trustees of The Delgado Museum of Art  
requests the honor of your presence  
at a private view of  
an Exhibition of Maya Architecture and Art  
arranged by courtesy of the Tulane University of Louisiana  
following the presentation to Paul Philippe Cret of the  
Gold Medal of The American Institute of Architects

THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS  
GOLD MEDAL PRESENTATION CEREMONY

Please present this card at the  
Main Entrance to the Delgado Museum of Art  
April 20, 1938, at 8:30 P. M.

This card is not transferable

Evening Dress



P r o c e e d i n g s

The

S e v e n t i e t h   C o n v e n t i o n

The American Institute of Architects

\* \* \* \* \*

April 19-20-21-22, 1938  
The Roosevelt  
New Orleans, Louisiana

Wednesday EveningApril 20, 1938

... The Ceremony of the Presentation of the Gold Medal of The Institute to Paul Philippe Cret was held at the Delgado Museum of Art ...

PRESIDENT MAGINNIS: Ladies and Gentlemen:

With a view to creating the spiritual setting of a ceremony designed to do honor to Paul Cret, I invited a distinguished architect of kindred philosophy to address you. I take great pleasure in introducing Mr. Ralph Walker of New York.

(Applause)

MR. RALPH WALKER: Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, and my dear friend Paul Cret -

... (Mr. Walker read the paper entitled "Paul Cret". See Appendix, page 315) ...

PRESIDENT MAGINNIS: I will now ask Mr. Emerson to read the formal salutation.

MR. WILLIAM EMERSON: To Paul Philippe Cret - Architect - Teacher - Scholar.

Increasingly honored by a professional recognition that distinguishes him even among his peers.

He has brought to the land of his adoption the sound sense, the clear logic, the discriminating taste that belong to

the classic tradition of an older civilization. Thus armed he has met and mastered with outstanding skill those problems that are inherent in new materials in a new world.

As his designs are acclaimed for their beauty, order, and character, so is he loved for his modesty and humor. Once again, as in the days of Washington, our architectural heritage is enriched by the presence among us of a distinguished Frenchman. (Applause)

PRESIDENT MAGINNIS: Paul Philippe Cret - in accordance with the unanimous will of The Board of Directors, it is the high privilege of my office to bestow upon you the Gold Medal of The American Institute of Architects.

In doing so, may I say how favored I feel that so agreeable an incident should have come within my presidency. (Applause)

MR. EMERSON: At the request of Mr. Cret, fearful lest his words of acknowledgment should not reach your ears. I am reading for him those same words.

... (Mr. Emerson read Mr. Cret's remarks. See Appendix, page 323)

... (Applause followed the reading of the paper) ...

PRESIDENT MAGINNIS: It is interesting to know that the award of the Gold Medal of The American Institute of Architects has kindled the French citizenship of New Orleans, and this feeling will be voiced by a distinguished citizen of

this community whom I will now introduce to you. I take great pleasure in presenting Judge Pierre Orabites. (Applause)

HON. PIERRE ORABITES: Mr. Chairman, the people of Louisiana are extremely grateful to your Institute for having postponed until this year the conferring of this honor upon so distinguished a son of France. (Applause)

Architecture is the quintessence of the quickness of things and you felt that a man of French background should receive this honor in a French city. We are grateful to you for that mark of discernment, and, if I may express myself, that mark of choosing the proper place for the proper thing. (Applause)

New Orleans has an architectural history. New Orleans means something in the field of architecture, and it means a lot to us to feel that we have achieved this recognition.

We are proud of our French blood. We are proud of our French tradition. We are proud of our great French future and we are proud for the man of our blood who has been deemed by an American institution worthy of this great honor of receiving your Medal.

We congratulate you. We thank you. (Applause)

... (Thus closed the ceremony of the Presentation of the Gold Medal of The Institute to Paul Philippe Cret) ...

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, and my dear friend Paul Cret.

When our President, Charles Maginnis, asked me to say these words, I was greatly honored and pleased for I admire, respect and know Paul Cret, and there is nothing, as I told him, which delights me more than having the opportunity of using him as a text.

These thoughts of mine are in no way an attempt to construct a philosophy of modernity, but merely to restate a few well-worn ideas which still have value and which need restating, because they are in contrast to so much of present day action.

They are in praise of individualism, the monumental and the creation of beauty in architecture, - thoughts which are associated and which you might well expect on an evening devoted to honoring Paul Cret.

In considering his work we again realize that greatness in architecture, like greatness in all the arts, comes only from the stimulation and the encouragement of individual creation, and that there never has been a formula or a theory which, by itself, produced a great work of architecture, and while we hear a great deal about the advantages of collaboration we must admit that no group effort has ever done other than achieve a compromise. Architectural beauty must continue to be based upon seeds of reason and emotion, coming to fruition within the envelopment of a personality.

We, here present, should have no quarrel with those ideas even though there is a hard new world in which there seems to grow an increasing incompatibility between what stands for reason and a desire for beauty. The old liberal idea



of reason is being replaced by a purely mechanical rationalism, a straight line, shortest distance between two points kind of reasoning, which looks neither to the right nor to the left. It regards with little tolerance the architect who considers his real job to be the creation of beauty as well as the solution of human need.

Rather, this "brave new world" prefers a few well-thumbed theories of possible curses to social unrest, or it models its thoughts on an ideology to well-defined limitations of machine technology and production, and its sole purpose is the rapid increase of material satisfactions.

Again, there can be no real quarrel, especially if there is an appreciation of the fact that life itself is not one-sided; that concurrent with the material progress it is vitally necessary to find many ways in the creation of architecture, - ways through which spiritual needs will find tradition not a halter but a free rein to imagination, ways toward an approach to a classic ideal which is not a mere matter of detail but is of importance in expressing the proportions of man in relation to his community self.

All this is far beyond the understanding and the desires of the generation composing that world - a generation believed by some of our new teachers to be so bitter at lost opportunities that it has cast aside forever the artistic individualism of its fathers. Indeed it is so bitter that it has no desire for play - ornamental or otherwise. These prophets of negation limit this new generation, denying them any opportunity of greatness in art or architecture, claiming that the problems of social unrest and the new material ways of life are more important than beauty and culture. Therefore, of course, no one should waste their time on such wholly unnecessary efforts as artistic problems.

Few will deny, however, that these artistic problems are necessary or that



they are vital to our spiritual well-being, or that in teaching youth to seek broader powers these words of Paul Cret (which so well express his attitude toward his own work) are much the more healthy: "We must approach our problems with an open mind, give to each of their elements the critical examination which may bring solutions slightly better than those achieved around us and thus contribute to the healthy evolution of art. Above all, we must no more be hypnotized by the desire to be original than by the complex to be archaeologically correct. If, in the conception of a work, the study of its expression in form and decoration is your own and not a dull copy, you need not be concerned with being modern, you cannot be anything else."

Beauty is achieved not by what we believe but by what we desire. As we look about this new world we find science and engineering continually seeking for further knowledge, but we also find that whether a society boasts communism, fascism, imperialism, or democracy, a monumental type of beauty is also being sought as a symbol of ideals, - a monumental architecture which is suited to this purpose actually - a modern classic which eliminates the absurdities of translating the old into the new.

Possibly because of this and because the new style is not capable of producing monuments, it is the fashion in modern architectural thinking to disparage the building of the monumental. It seems as important to the political and economic life of a people as employment, or as the just modern social concept that all the people of a community shall be adequately and decently housed.

These symbols are evidently more important than bread. Long after a people and their means of sustenance is gone, stone rests upon stone and tells story more enduring than last year's harvest or today's sowing. We architects pre-



serve history. All present day people proclaim the spiritual need they have of considering themselves great. They accept housing as a necessity but they realize that monumental beauty and order expressed in architecture is a positive assertion of their collective consciousness, their will to do and their demand that they persist.

Regardless of the apparent present trend to social regimentation, we may say that without the desire or the ability to create a monumental architecture, people remain "builders by instinct only" - and strangely enough producing merely a civilization of habit and not of intelligence.

History is filled with building of the ants and the bees.

The necessity and order which motivates the design of a factory or a warehouse is not the same commodity which creates beauty in home life, and certainly they are not the qualities desired where the spiritual aims of a people demand expression.

Do you think there was no relationship between the monumental architecture, the literature and the greatness and the influence of the Athenians?

It is quite evident that the word function has been given a too narrow meaning in the last few years. It is one of the functions of architecture to inspire greatness.

Many claim that the need for the monument is dead. But we know our American democracy needs beauty and distinction in public buildings, in all buildings - beauty toward which the citizen may look for a symbol of public obligation based on a sense of proportion in private life. We in America once had this in our early history and we have also had a great deal of ugliness, and while there is no reason to look backward, we are



again attempting a way and must find it regardless of mechanical blight. The monumental is conceived in the spirit of a time and does not necessarily mean conservatism, or that the past is our only master. In a world which has rediscovered concrete, invented extruded steel and improved glass, the monumental is too often confused with the bones of the Greek doric. There is, however, just as much new free opportunity in the design of stone and marble as there is in steel and glass, and while one group is more recent than the other both are in constant need of new thoughts.

Quietly, without much acclaim until this evening, but with much success, Paul Cret has helped to give a new direction in beauty to modern American public works.

Originality really means individuality. But originality is always based on some tradition. Most of us, moreover, much as we dislike to admit it, work under traditions of a kind which make mental slaves of us all. Much of the modern has its backgrounds of the orient, or of cubism, or of surrealism - styles and traditions as definite, if not as old, as those of the renaissance.

Now and then an artist like Paul Cret takes the traditions of a people and makes of them a living form and sets the world recreating new traditions. Again, an intellectual group takes a few thoughts and gives them a fresh twist, and a new philosophy is born, which is absorbed into the general tradition of a people.

Both breed further creators and both are the basis of further plagiarism, of work which is eclectic, whether the form copied is a Greek doric or a lally column. The copyist aimlessly and stupidly will copy any past whether it is two thousand years ago or but yesterday.

Our civilization thanks no artist, no matter how minor, for a loss of individuality. Every artist has the opportunity of creation, and his creed should be - "I create to please myself first." The world is continually on the alert for the outstanding individual.

After viewing a successful work, we ourselves, and our fellow men also, later discover "deep intentions" where only a joy of creation, a joy of design, a joy of pleasing one's self made the work. We fumble a great deal to produce philosophy.

\* \* \* \* \*

These are the "deep intentions" which are to be found in the work of Paul Cret. This is his character. Perhaps he may recognize both himself and his thoughts.

An old pupil of Paul Cret's tells this story: When Cret first came to teach at Penn., his English was meager and his pronunciation was something to wonder at, but always a favorite phrase of encouragement on a good beginning of a problem was - "If you are very careful, it will devil up."

Paul Cret, by training, by desire, by creative instinct is a classicist. By circumstances as well as ability most of his work has been monumental in character, and while he has not brought into it radical invention, he has helped to give a new life to the architectural traditions of the culture of the western world.

Within him there is no incompatibility between his rationalizations and his desire to create beauty. He has no inhibitions against trying to create beauty, and he is willing to leave the question of the immortality of his work to the future. He believes himself modern and as having a definite place in today's life.



He, above all, is a realist, and to him the basis of any design is thought as pure and direct as his emotional self will permit, and as balanced as a constantly growing sound judgment follows his added years. That does not mean he cannot make a mistake. He does not believe that reasoning as to necessity and materials should result only in a narrow set of limitations. The end he seeks and the ends he has inspired others to seek is architecture based on reason, which results in beauty and which, above all, attains distinction.

He believes, as did his own teacher, that distinction in architecture is the most desirable quality to strive for, and he knows that the artist working in the full of his powers exercises a strict restraint upon his own work, but that the result is successful only in so far as that restraint is self-imposed and not that of an external theory. We know, without enumerating his many works, that in them, having sought for distinction, he has attained it in an unusual magnitude.

He is not a copyist. His work, from the Pan American Union on, is remarkable for three things - good planning, individuality and good proportions. There are no loose ends. The character of each building is complete to itself. They may be reminiscent but they are dominantly the work of Paul Cret.

He does not believe that architecture to be a work of art must be aggressive, that it must make no compromise with nature, that it must affront, or rebel against the slowly acquired refinement, elegance, and all those qualities of sensitive culture which man, after forty centuries, seems at present so willing to cast into discard.

These deep intentions are so well illustrated in the beauty of the Folger Library. Both in the rare distinction which places it so far in advance of



all modern building in Washington, and in the exquisite design relationship to sculpture and to nature, even though that nature is formalized and is only primarily that of a flat city lot.

To Paul Cret, the teacher, the profession owes a great deal. His influence has helped many to find an ideal, and from his many pupils to him there comes a great respect, a warm affection and an acknowledgment of spiritual leadership.

To quote him: "The satisfaction of physical needs is not the only spring of human ingenuity and man has never been content with merely devising a shelter. What he seems to seek in all his artistry is to give concrete form to his dreams - dreams that vary greatly from race to race and from generation to generation. To reflect ideas, beliefs, aesthetic creeds, goes much beyond construction logic or functionalism. The true functionalist would have stopped at the beehive, so admirably adapted to its purpose, and not bothered with unprofitable experiments in form and decoration. Instead of this, man went into plastic research and applied himself to creating forms for the sake of giving an outlet to his creative impulse and for the pleasure there is in the pursuit of something called 'beauty.'"

To the question once asked him - "What in your mind is the biggest problem facing the architectural profession?" - Paul Cret answered, "To do good work."

We honor Paul Cret the artist, and in doing so we once more proclaim the greater need for beauty.

RALPH WALKER

April 15, 1938

## Acknowledgment - Paul Cret

April 20, 1938.

Some 20 years ago, I had the unusual experience of reading my own obituary. I was in the Army when the news arrived of what seemed to me an untimely end. A good friend of mine, who sent the newspaper clipping, added the terse comment...."You will have a hard time living up to it !"

This caution is uppermost in my mind today after listening to an appreciation of my professional career, dictated, I fear, rather by friendship than by cool appraisal. A distinction, such as the one conferred by the American Institute of Architects, places the recipient in an embarrassing position. Should he say that he did not hope or deserve to receive so great an honor, he is at once suspected of false modesty, an attitude far worse than naif complacency; nevertheless, it may be the plain truth.

When I was informed of the action of our Board of Directors, I looked back over my professional life without discovering anything which set it apart from that of most of my fellow practitioners. After years of preparatory work, when the time came to begin active practice, I had merely to follow the trail my predecessors had opened for me. From them, I learned the aims and standards which make of Architecture a profession. In approaching a problem, their previous solutions were available, as well as their countless experiences with forms, materials and construction. Thus, the realization of all I had received made the amount I had given dwindle to very little indeed.

In the art of Architecture, collective effort counts more than individual industry in giving form to the ideals of a period. Even when a strong personality seems to dominate the whole scene, a little research will show how often existing trends were used, and principles discovered, fecund in themselves but inadequately formulated by their authors. There are, too, contributions which in time become anonymous and are apt to be ascribed to the one name which sur-



- 2 -

vives. To be one of the artisans who create the architecture of our time is satisfaction enough, even if the part contributed should go unrecognized.

Yet it has been your pleasure to select for recognition one of the rank and file, and it ill-becomes him to question that choice. He is deeply grateful for the encouragement he has received from the profession in the past, and for the signal honor conferred today. Credit and acknowledgment must be given here to devoted partners and to the collaborators, draftsmen and engineers who constitute that familial group known as an Architect's Office, where mutual esteem and affection have not yet been replaced by bargaining.

He also wishes to thank those members of the profession in his own city and in many other places where his good fortune has permitted him to practice. They were ever ready to help him by their counsel and experience, placing before any selfish consideration a devotion to what they felt was the best interest of their art.

(Paul Cret's remarks upon the occasion of receiving the Gold Medal of Honor of the American Institute of Architects, in New Orleans, April 20, 1938)

4-7-1

TO PAUL PHILIPPE CRET

ARCHITECT - TEACHER - SCHOLAR

Increasingly honored by a professional recognition that distinguishes him even among his peers.

He has brought to the land of his adoption the sound sense, the clear logic, the discriminating taste that belong to the classic tradition of an older civilization. Thus armed he has met and mastered with outstanding skill those problems that are inherent in new materials in a new world.

~~As he is~~ loved for his modesty and humor, so ~~are~~ his designs acclaimed for their beauty and order, ~~for their charm and character,~~ <sup>See the</sup> Once again, as in the days of Washington, our architectural heritage is enriched by the presence among us of a distinguished Frenchman.