

Artist would like to paint more hours into each day

By Willey Swann
News-Free Staff Writer

There is Herbert Bayer's greatest problem — how to get more of it in one day: 24 hours are not enough. He is, after all, an artist.

But if he could magically multiply four hours there in one, he would complete his contribution to the community-art and design projects for Atlantic Richfield Co., for which he serves as corporate art and design consultant, and he would wrap up the last multi-

million project he took in East, Wash. He would finish his apartment, his smaller drawings, attend his numerous art show openings around the world, and meet the press.

And then he would have more time to paint.

Bayer, who lives in Santa Barbara with his wife of many years, Joella, is a Bauhaus master. Critics have called him a giant in the art world who has deeply influenced, even inspired, entire new disciplines of architecture, interior, environmental and graphic

art. In every way where art touches mankind — whether in the form of visual communication or architecture or impression — those who have seen Bill Bayer have made unambiguous contributions.

Major collections of his work exist at the Bauhaus archives in Berlin, in the Dessau art museum, and in Santa Barbara — at the Breakers, a home on Channel Drive recently converted into a corporate retreat for Atlantic Richfield.

"I consider myself to be primarily a painter," Bayer said last week, "and painting is the continuous link connecting the various facets of my work."

When Bayer first signed up with the Bauhaus — a new art school founded in 1919 in Weimar, Germany — he enrolled as a student in the wall painting workshop. He was 24 years old.

In today's terms, wall painting might sound more like labor than art, but Bayer said that in three days it was like an artist learned drawing, color theory and painting techniques.

"The most important thing in Germany at that time, paint had to be made individually and another had to be run," said Bayer. "There were color theories and systems in vogue."

He explained that the organization of color is like a poem, in that the artist needs to know where to run that each one. In an organized system where color names are standardized, he said, the artist can achieve a certain color by name and get what he has visualized.

He said that an organized system for color was finally developed by the German Robert Ruyter when Wilhelm Gernsheim, and that a Chicago company eventually manufactured paint based on the Gernsheim system.

"That made it possible for me to do my work by name," said Bayer. "I could indicate colors without having to describe or refer to a manual."

He said that in the 1930s paint colors came in and the systematic color system was set, making it necessary for him to analyze each color he used in his interiors, carpets, graphic designs, architecture and paintings.

Bayer's art is very often bright, and his paintings are abstract, with sym-

bolic shapes a large part of each work he produces.

"Abstract art, in which I became exposed at the Bauhaus, involves an idea, the phenomenon of pure and essential form and color," Bayer said last week. Art and philosophy fused in kind, from the time of Bayer's graphic work at the Bauhaus, and as explained by the artist, the realization of the two was essentially the basis of the Bauhaus artistic work. Programs of actual issues such as housing, urban planning, manufactured products, and visual communication was limited to students, and the Bayer work incorporated itself with the rest of his life.

The Bauhaus philosophy, he explained, was essentially that in a creation of art, form and function had to be considered equally — whether the creation was a chair, a lamp, an office or a house. He said that while some people might believe an art form, the Bauhaus had no use for them.

"If I see something new," said Bayer, "something beyond the point functional, it usually has a reason in the nature of the thing I do. Whether it is a poem, architectural design, or painting, I never see a superfluous or attached object — it has to be organic with the structure, with the whole concept."

He discussed the popular book by Tom Wolfe, "From Bauhaus to Our Time," which critics have described as a critique of the Bauhaus theory in that even for architects in Minneapolis, says Wolfe, who says "glass box" buildings such as New York's World Trade Center as a case in point.

Bayer said the book didn't interest him.

"Wolfe is a character. He is a talker, he writes, and people believe anything that's written. But because anything he says may be seriously correct, you can't break his words. He does jump on the bandwagon, though."

Bayer objected to what he supposed was a superficial treatment of a deep subject, and reflected on the "glass box" buildings that have become so visible objects in city skylines of modern day.

"The real test is more important to the concept of design," he said.

"I had made some air when structural problems of the world were solved — such as drainage of water and work."

Environmental planning is one of Bayer's big contributions in the world of art, and he has influenced the overall design and style of important, light-colored city buildings, but of entire communities as well.

He was consultant to the architect of the NBC Plaza in Los Angeles ("They wanted to see light marks, I re-

vised them to use dark granite; what marks is a final material, dark granite has reflection"), and he influenced the architectural and environmental development of Aspen, incorporating the community from the glass tower that it was in the culture and all other that it is today.

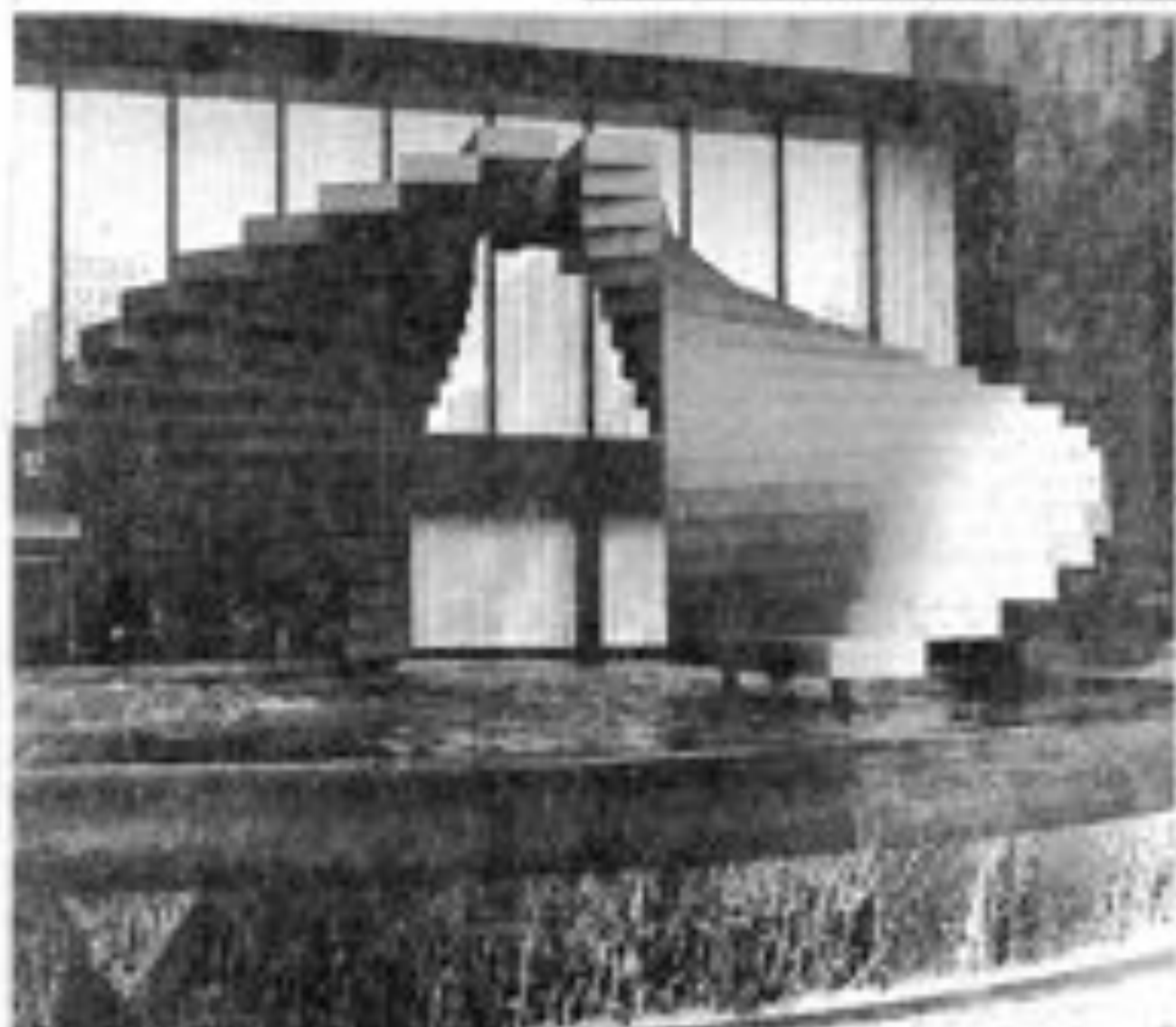
Bayer had left Europe in 1933, after the Nazis had closed down the Bauhaus in 1933 ("They called us 'Marxists'—

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Photo by Joseph E. Riney

CRITICS SAY that Herbert Bayer, here with his wife Joella, is a creative giant who has made significant contributions in such fields as exhibition architecture and environmental and graphic art.



HERBERT BAYER'S "Double Ascention" sculpture at Arco Plaza in the Los Angeles office of Atlantic Richfield Co. stands more than 12 feet high and sits in a 32-foot post.

Time is artist Bayer's greatest problem

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desires," and he worked in New York, Rome, in Mexico design consultant to the Combined Corporation of America ("That was one company that was using design in the corporation, in a different way"), and he was and married Lucia — a British woman he met in the art gallery world of that city.

"Then came the idea of design," Bayer related. "The president of the Combined Corporation asked a man over Arco and said there was a lovely village there, that I should do something with it. I loved doing, had tried to do something, and I knew the subject."

In 1946, the Bayer moved to Colorado, and in the 20 years they lived there, Bayer designed, among other things, all of the buildings for the Arco Division for Rockefeller Studies, Shell Center, Wheeler Opera House, and the Federal Reserve in New Orleans.

Four years ago, the Bayer moved to San Francisco — at the advice of his doctor, who suggested that his level attitude might be better for his health.

While most people in their early 50s look forward to a bit of time and relaxation, Bayer tries to find more time and still take his doctor's advice to get more rest.

Each day, a full-time secretary for Bayer at the Mendocino home each day

will work, working, if he is in a mood of the mood which has been set aside as an office. Each day, an art assistant also works 8 to 5 in a studio built just off the house, preparing various, building details for sculpture, painting Bayer is handling the demands for numerous design projects.

Most of Bayer's present time is spent on projects for Atlantic Richfield. When some artists might consider work done for large corporations as being only a secondary, Bayer sees such companies as "attractive investments of nature."

Lucia, who faithfully exercises with a joggler twice a week and who has a playful interest in everything around her, stresses much of her

husband's business. She said she was getting well the business for an upcoming opening in New York. In March there would be an opening of his works in Berlin, and after that, Munich.

Although the price of time and commitment, Bayer said Bayer from his studio all time — painting — it is on this subject that the only sort of frustration comes into his otherwise untroubled, relaxed manner.

"When you have to break up the time to work with other projects," he said, "it is difficult to keep the continuity. I push as much as I can. I have many statements, but with it's like in the past."

Finally, he said, is, after all, an extension of the period of his work.