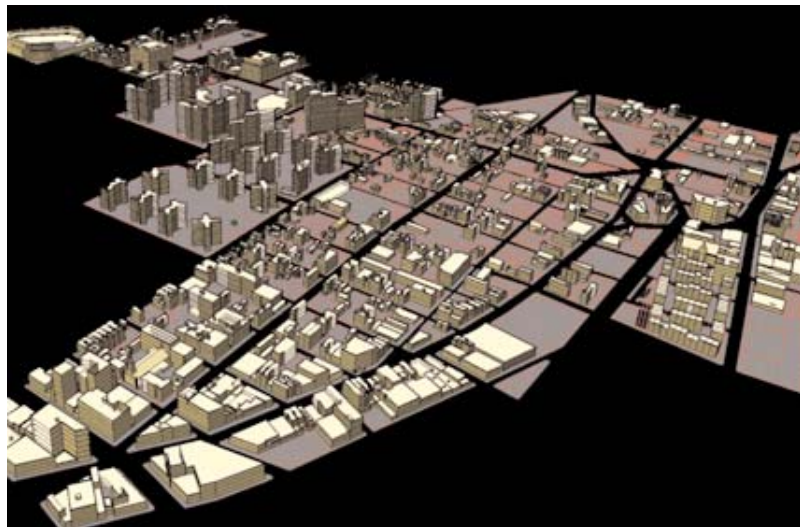


'Civics Lessons: Recent New York Public Architecture'; An Exhibition Honors Projects Done and Not Done

The budget for public buildings is slashed. Brilliant projects -- whether modest branch libraries or an elaborate police academy -- are stillborn on architects' drafting boards. Regional planners warn that if new capital projects are not undertaken soon, the city will lose its greatness. This is not a cautionary tale, it is reality, say the creators of "Civics Lessons: Recent New York Public Architecture," sponsored by the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. The exhibit opened Friday at the United States Custom House on Bowling Green and is open daily from 10 to 5.

The exhibition celebrates projects completed in the last decade (the majority of those in the display), but also bewails what its organizers describe as the limbo-like status of others, such as the shelved design for a \$230 million Police Academy in the Bronx and the plan to convert the General Post Office on West 33d Street into a new Amtrak station.

The stultifying effect of reduced



Aerial Model of Melrose Commons

budgets is also illustrated: The ambitious postmodern vision of the new South Ferry terminal by Robert Venturi, dominated by an immense clock face, has been transmogrified into a clockless gridded box.

The city's successfully completed monumental preservation and construction projects are here, but so are examples of housing and schools: Melrose Common in the Bronx by Magnusson Architects; the 1993 Stuyvesant High School by Cooper Robertson & Partners/Gruzen Samton Steinglass, the 1991 Hostos Community College buildings in the Bronx by Voorsanger and Associates and the colorful, ingenious Public School 233 in Jamaica, Queens, by Gran Sultan Associates.

"Thinking back to when I was a kid, I don't really remember the

monuments -- the City Halls and the courthouses," said Richard Dattner, an architect with five projects on display, including a striped sludge plant on Staten Island. "I remember the small stuff -- the libraries and schools I went to. But big or small, it's all endangered."

The 75 projects in the exhibition were chosen from more than 300 submitted by public agencies and architects. Selections were made by the architects Max Bond and Hugh Hardy, by Deborah Deitsch, editor of *Architecture* magazine, and by Lindsay Stamm Shapiro, the curator. The show will run through May and will then travel to the National Building Museum in Washington.