

Power Move

After 15 years as the leading voice in architectural criticism at The New Yorker, Paul Goldberger moves to Vanity Fair where he will now include design in his repertoire.

BY CAROL KINO

The architecture critic Paul Goldberger once said that while a theater critic can force a Broadway show to close, no one in his position has ever convinced someone to tear down a building. But if any critic could, it would be Goldberger. After spending the first 24 years of his career at *The New York Times* (where he won a Pulitzer Prize) and the next 15 at *The New Yorker*, he recently moved to *Vanity Fair*. Carol Kino talks to him about his work, his design interests and the role that architecture criticism plays in our lives.

How often do you expect to be writing for *Vanity Fair*?

My commitment is to do at least three major pieces for the print magazine each year, and unlimited stuff online. I'll definitely be writing about architecture, but I will also be looking at design in a broader way—product design, industrial design, automotive design, maybe graphic design. When there's something interesting or fun to say, then I will.

When can we expect to see your upcoming biography of Frank Gehry?

That's a long way in the future, because it's such a gargantuan research job. One reason for moving to *Vanity Fair* is so that I can devote more time to the book.

Have you happened upon any new revelations about Gehry through your research?

Nothing shocking. Although if I had I wouldn't tell you—I have to save it for the book!

Your move away from a daily or weekly beat, has sparked a lot of talk about this being the end of architecture criticism. What role does it play in society?

The most important role it plays is creating a more visually literate public. It helps make people care, helps them to understand what they're seeing and helps them become advocates for better design.

Do you think the field is in danger of disappearing?

No, but it's definitely squeezed, because all of journalism is so squeezed. Yet public interest in architecture is higher than it's ever been before.

Can you name a few really promising young U.S. architects?

That depends on how you define young! Architects' careers have a very long arch, so young could mean under 50, or even 60. I don't know where to begin.

Who springs to mind?

There's a wonderful New York firm called Levenbetts. LTL Architects is another excellent young New York firm, as is Leroy Street Studio. But there are a lot of them all over, like Michael Maltzan in Los Angeles, a fantastic architect who's now becoming better known.

If you had your pick of any sort of building or structure to live in, what would it be?

I would love to live in a really perfect, minimalist, modern, glass house, in part because to do that successfully I would have to clean up my act and deal with all the junk I have all over the place. I think it would be very, very good discipline for me.

What kind of space do you live in now?

A nine-room apartment in a wonderful, rambling, 1929 building on the Upper West Side. It's great for parties, but it's gotten too full of stuff having raised a family there. My wife and I alternate between saying, 'This is ridiculous for two people,' and 'How could we live without this?' These conversations have been going on for a couple of years already. I think we enjoy having them and not concluding.



Paul Goldberger