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'Architecture in Perspective' Draws on a Renaissance Art

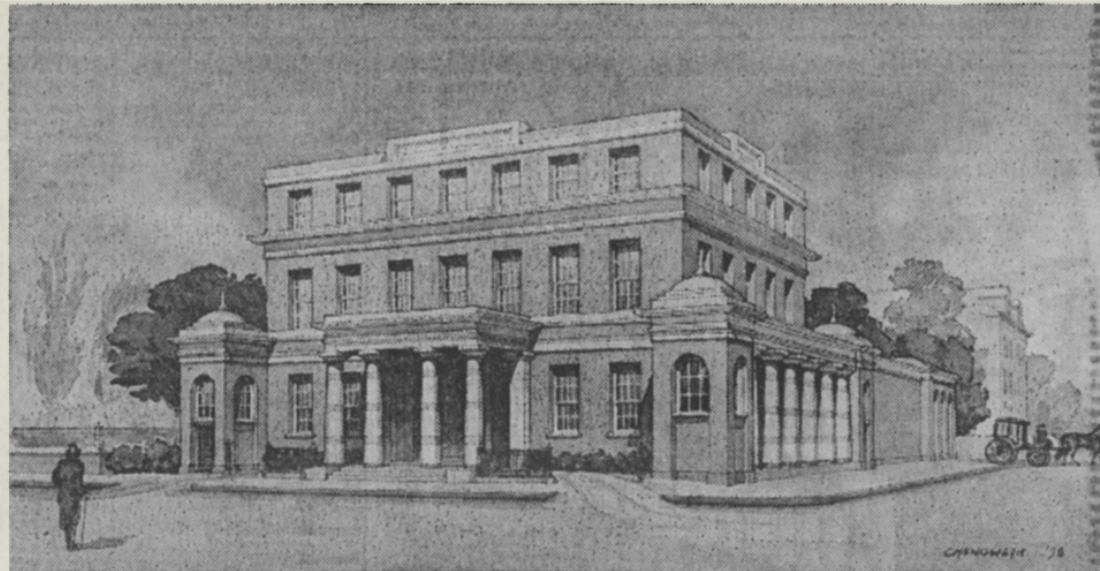
By Benjamin Forgey
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"Architecture in Perspective," at the Octagon, is a neat, conventional little package of 55 drawings by today's leading architectural illustrators.

Organized by the American Society of Architectural Perspectivists, the juried show focuses exclusively on the Renaissance art of rendering three-dimensional reality convincingly on a two-dimensional surface. Today, such drawings are used mainly to communicate the essence of a building design to non-architectural audiences—to sell a project, as it were—to developers, prospective tenants, public agencies or groups of citizens.

Consequently, there is a tremendous emphasis on kindly atmospherics. On occasion, you will find it

See OCTAGON, C7, Col. 4



Artist Richard Chenowith's watercolor of a mansion designed in the 1790s but never built.

COURTESY RICHARD CHENOWITH

The Octagon, Putting Plans in Perspective

OCTAGON, From C1

necessary to blink two or three times before realizing that the building you are looking at—the subject of a drawing—is an architectural mediocrity. This makes you appreciate the renderer's talents all the more.

Predictably, there is a mixture of hand-drawn images and computer-aided renderings. If, for some reason, you have a bias against the machine-aided product, this show likely will cure you of it, for some of the most gorgeous and persuasive images are done with computers.

The most interesting image in the show, however, is a watercolor rendering commissioned especially by the

Octagon. Painted by Silver Spring artist Richard Chenowith, it depicts a mansion designed in the 1790s by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, but never built. Based on plans held by the Library of Congress, this rendering is a fascinating foray into Washington history, for the house was intended for the Tayloe family—the very same folks who commissioned William Thornton at the very same time to design the Octagon.

Architecture in Perspective, through July 5 at the Octagon, 1799 New York Ave. NW, Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is \$3 for adults.