

**M**YRON GOLDSMITH IS by any measure one of Chicago's most distinguished architects, yet even in this design-conscious city many people have never heard of him.

There is no reason, however, for remaining unaware of Goldsmith's internationally recognized achievements. A retrospective exhibition examining his work and thought is on view at the University of Illinois at Chicago through Jan. 21 and is well worth the time of anyone interested in first-rate architecture.

Goldsmith, 65, is a gentle, soft-spoken, instantly likable man. He spent most of his career in the Chicago office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill [SOM], where many of the city's best-known architects have practiced at least briefly since World War II. Yet he never got public superstar attention.

Why not? The question was well answered some time ago, even if obliquely, when the chairman of Harvard University's Architecture Department introduced Goldsmith on the occasion of Goldsmith's delivery of the prestigious Eliot Noyes lecture. Observed Henry N. Cobb:

"In architecture, as indeed in all of its manifestations, our culture cries for heroes. And when, as is surely the case today, architecture is on the cultural 'front burner,' so to speak, the public appetite for certifiable 'stars' . . . seems insatiable, almost ravenous in its intensity."

SOME ARCHITECTS turn out personalized drawings "to feed this appetite quickly and inexpensively . . ." Cobb said. "Yet the reality of architecture as a building art is just the opposite: Its production, as agonizingly slow as it is costly, is almost inevitably a group rather than an individual exercise . . ."

Tragically, Cobb said, architecture today is rarely a union between collective expertise and personal invention. But it is precisely Goldsmith's ability to bring this off that has made him so extraordinary.

"As a partner in SOM's Chicago office, Mr. Goldsmith has been responsible for many notable projects," Cobb said. "But beyond this impressive body of work, Mr. Goldsmith has played a central role in defining and developing the broad theoretical framework that has shaped a significant part of his firm's vast practice."

It was in connection with Goldsmith's visiting professorship at Harvard that the Graduate School of Design there organized the retro-

spective exhibit of his work now on view in Chicago.

Goldsmith studied under Mies van der Rohe at the Illinois Institute of Technology [IIT] and worked for him before joining SOM. While shaping his master's thesis, he began developing new structural approaches to skyscrapers framed with both steel and concrete. When Goldsmith himself later taught at IIT, he and one of his thesis students refined the notion of using exposed diagonal bracing in tall buildings. Other SOM architects ultimately employed such visible X-shaped members when they designed John Hancock Center.

**BUT IF SOME OF** Goldsmith's important engineering contributions understandably did not reach the level of general public comprehension, certainly some of the buildings and other structures he designed have left striking imprints on the built environment. Among the better known are:

● The Brunswick Building at 69 W. Washington St., an engineering *tour de force* that employs load-bearing exterior walls and flexes its clearly articulated muscles in the best Chicago style.

● The huge and impressive United Airlines office complex in Elk Grove village.

● The popular new large-mammal area at Lincoln Park Zoo, a delight in its own right and persuasive evidence that a talented architect can take up an entirely different kind of design challenge late in his career and cope with it in splendid style.

● Sleekly clean-lined rapid transit stations on the Dan Ryan and Kennedy Expressways.

● The Kitt Peak solar telescope near Tucson, Ariz., to which Goldsmith gave strong and greatly admired sculptural qualities.

● The Republic newspaper plant in Columbus, Ind., where Goldsmith fashioned a minimalistic glass and steel box to showcase the printing presses as striking if inadvertent pieces of industrial sculpture.

● The as-yet-unbuilt but award-winning design for the Ruck-A-Chucky suspension bridge above a California reservoir.

Goldsmith's design credits include many other noteworthy educational, commercial, sports and research facilities in the United States and abroad. He still teaches at IIT and is active in other architectural affairs.

The Goldsmith exhibit is in Gallery 400 at the College of Architecture, Art and Urban Planning at 400 S. Peoria St. [at Van Buren Street] Mondays through Saturdays noon-5 p.m.