



BREUER

of Roosevelt's Presidency. The year was 1937 and Breuer had accepted the invitation of Harvard to teach at its School of Design.

Of his early impression of Roosevelt, Breuer recalls, his Old World accent still evident: "He had a great reputation abroad and when I came here his programs were really taking effect and the mood was very exciting."

When Breuer, who designed New York's new Whitney Museum, was chosen by the Memorial Commission after the Roosevelt family had turned down the winning design of a national competition, he knew the image he wanted to capture. His design is a thoroughly contemporary arrangement of seven 60-foot-high sloping granite slabs—"denoting the momentum of great concepts"—set in a landscaped park. At the center is a polished granite block on which will be engraved a photographic image of FDR. (There remains the formality of Fine Arts Commission approval and the raising of public and Congressional funds before the memorial can be constructed.)

The design has not been without criticism that it is cold, impersonal, unimaginative. Breuer naturally disagrees. The park, he says, represents Roosevelt's personal warmth, the monumental slabs his dynamic ideas.

Breuer has always been very much the contemporary man, his furniture and architectural concepts always placing him ahead of his time. His trail-blazing career contrasts sharply with his soft blue eyes, white hair and calm, quiet-spoken manner. He was born in 1902 in Pecs, in

CLOSEUP

## FDR's Ideas in Granite

POST JAN 17 1967

ROBERTA BRANDES GRATZ

It is not inappropriate that Marcel Breuer, the man responsible for the final design of the proposed Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, is a Hungarian-born architect who came to this country in the midst

southern Hungary, the son of a doctor. As a boy he enjoyed painting and sculpture—they remain his "own secret fun"—but at the age of 20 he "decided that I had to have some connection with realities. Painting and sculpture were inadequate."

After brief studies at the Art Academy in Vienna, Breuer was working for an architect when he heard about and soon joined the newly established Bauhaus school of arts at Weimar, Germany. The impact of the Bauhaus on design development has been enormous:

"Its ideas were quite revolutionary and romantic, with the basic purpose of uniting the arts with the crafts of the industrial age, of applying the arts to utilitarian things like buildings, furniture, fabrics, metals, lamps."

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Breuer received his master of architecture degree in 1924, and when the Bauhaus moved to Dessau in 1925 he joined its teaching staff as head of the furniture department. He is credited with developing tubular steel furniture, then, followed in a few years by plywood and aluminum furniture.

After the Bauhaus and extensive traveling, Breuer practiced architecture in Berlin and London before coming to Harvard. Since 1946 he has been in New York. His projects have included the U.S. Embassy at The Hague, an IBM center in France, a Minnesota church, a department store in Holland, school buildings, an apartment house. "I like practically all my buildings," he says with a shy smile, "and the ones I don't like I won't tell you."

In 1940, while Breuer was at Harvard, he married Constance Leighton of Salem, who was librarian of the art department of Boston's Atheneum. They have a son at college in Berkeley and a daughter in high school in New Canaan, where the Breuers have lived since 1947. Breuer enjoys traveling, dabbles in photography and painting, and is an avid reader. "Mostly fiction, history and philosophy," he grins, "but very little on architecture."