

Custom House, Open House

By ROBERTA BRANDES GRATZ

WITH ITS protusion of classical ornamentation and elaborately carved marine motifs, its Reginald Marsh murals of New York harbor and its four limestone sculptures representing "The Continents" by Daniel Chester French, the U. S. Custom House at Bowling Green is an outstanding example of artistic splendor. For the first time since the federal government moved the Bureau of Customs to the World Trade Center in 1973, the Beaux Arts masterpiece will be opened to the public next week (from July 1 to Sept. 19) as part of the city's Bicentennial celebration.

Standing on the site of the original Fort Amsterdam, Custom House was built in 1907. The architect was Cass Gilbert, chosen after a competition. The fame that followed ultimately brought him commissions to design the Woolworth Building (1913), a mile or so up Broad-

way from the Custom House, and the New York Federal Courthouse (1938), a bit farther north at Foley Square.

The easy integration of sculpture into the architectural composition, the heavy use of intricate classical ornament and the building's symmetry combine to make it one of the city's most notable examples of the Beaux Arts style. The structure is designated both a city

and federal landmark and has long been the focus of efforts to refurbish it as a combined cultural and commercial structure. Involved are the New York Landmarks Conservancy, a non-profit preservation organization, the federal government, which still owns the property, and the Custom House Institute, a group of Lower Manhattan business leaders.

In addition to the building's impressive artistry, visitors will see a special exhibit entitled "Public Property"—a photographic display of publicly owned buildings throughout the city.

The exhibit is an

outgrowth of a survey the Conservancy has been conducting to identify architecturally significant buildings in the five boroughs owned by the federal, state and city governments. The aim: to determine which were worthy of preservation and appropriate for reuse if vacated.

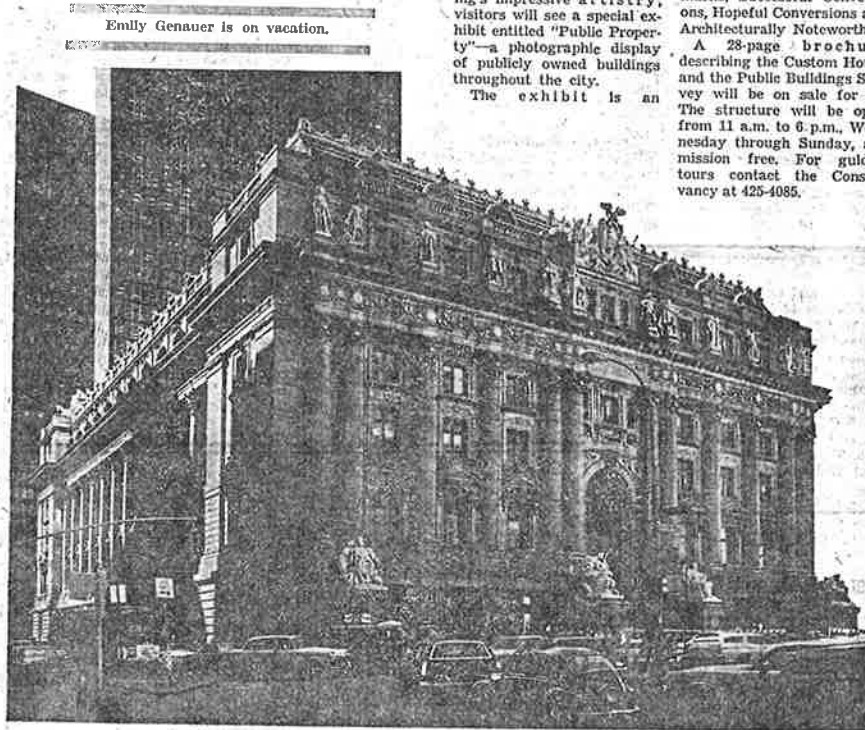
The exhibit—in four categories—contains 105 photographs including, by categories: Designated Landmarks, Successful Conversions, Hopeful Conversions and Architecturally Noteworthy.

A 28-page brochure describing the Custom House and the Public Buildings Survey will be on sale for \$1. The structure will be open from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday, admission free. For guided tours contact the Conservancy at 425-4085.



Reginald Marsh, an American scene master, painted 16 rotunda murals for the Custom House as a WPA project in 1937. The one above, an ocean liner overwatched by Statue of Liberty, is part of cycle depicting ship's progress through port. At left is the Continent America with torch of progress. It is one of four white limestone groupings by Daniel Chester French, sculptor of heroic public works like the reflective Lincoln of the Memorial in Washington, D.C. Below is the building's elliptical marble rotunda, supporting its 140-ton central skylight.

Photos by Richard Benson, Geoffrey Clements, Nathaniel Lieberman, Jerry Spearman



Granite and marble exterior of Custom House is rich in detail. Forty-four Corinthian columns encircle building; carved head of Mercury, messenger of the gods, tops each capital. Seated figures at street level represent Asia, Africa, America, and Europe; 12 marble statues at upper reaches depict world's commercial centers. Keystones over 2d floor windows represent eight "races"—Caucasian, Hindu, Latin, Celtic, Mongolian, Eskimo, Slavic and African. Copper-crested roof, other detailing are typical of Beaux Arts style.



Art Museum Shows

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, Central Park West at 79th St., Mon.-Sat., 10-4:45; Sun., 11-5. Recycling America's Resources to Aug. 31. Rare books—Ernest Thompson Selon Memorabilia. This Exhibition in Preparation. How a museum mounts a show to July 31. Malissas and Manding. Hayden Planetarium: Things That Go Bep in the Night to June 23. Display of Diamonds to June 28. Return to the Kubruer: Ethnologist in the Field to July 31. Hayden Planetarium: Yankee Star-gazers, June 30 to Sep. 27.

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF THE ARTS, 851 Grand Concourse, Mon.-Fri., 9-5; Sun., 2-4:30. History of Baseball to June 30.

BROOKLYN MUSEUM, Eastern Park

way, Wed.-Sat., 10-5; Sun., 11-5. Closed Mon. and Tues. Ceramic Art of Kikaku Rosanjin to June 27. Japanese Sword Guards to June 27. Contemporary Japanese Ceramics to June 27. Romanian Folk Rugs to July 4. Fence Art Show Winners to July 25. Brooklyn Photographs by High School Students to Aug. 1. Physicians as Potter, July 1 to Sep. 28. American Watercolors and Pastels from the Museum Collection, July 2 to Oct. 31.

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY, 1120 Film Ave. at 94th St., Tues.-Sun., 11-5. Alaska's Gold Rush to July 11. Maritime Memories to July 11. Bicultural Immigrants to July 11. Camp to July 11. JEWISH MUSEUM, 1109 5th Av., Mon-

Thurs., 12-5; Sun., 11-6. Ludwig Y. Wolpert: Retrospective to Aug. 8. Samuel Friedenberg Collection of Coins and Medals. Celebration of Jewish Life: of Days and Seasons, of Time and Its Passage. Middle Eastern Judaica. Biblical Archeology. Contemporary Ceremonial Art. Tapestries by Shilpa Ghosh. The Book and the Seede: Archeology and the Bible. Image Before My Eyes: Photographic History of Jewish Life in Poland (1864-1939) to Sept. 5.

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 5th Av. at 82nd St., Wed.-Sat., 10-4:45; Sun., 11-4:45; Tues., 10-8:45; closed Monday. Goya: Paintings from The Prado to Aug. 8.

AMERICAN WOMEN OF STYLE to Aug. 31. Robert Lehman Collection. Lella and Emma Sfeater Collection: Selective Presentation. Islamic Art Collection. Ancient Art: Harbert Schimmel Collection to Jan. 7. Bicentennial Treasury: American Masterpieces from the Metropolitan to Jan. 7. Ancient Art in Miniature: Near Eastern Scale. American Ephemera: 1765 to 1935 to Aug. 15. Studies in Connaisseurship: Chinese Paintings from the Arthur Sackler Collection to Sept. 7. Summer Aquatints: Timess Land-scapes to Sep. 7. French terracottas to Oct. 31. 19th Century Afro-American Art to Aug. 1.

MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN IN-

DIAN, Broadway at 155th St., Tues.-Sun. 1-5. Legacies of Indian Culture in the Caribbean. **MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY CRAFTS**, 29 W. 53d St., Tues.-Sat., 11-4; Sun., 1-5. **MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**, 41 W. 53 St., Mon., Tues., Fri., Sat., Sun., 11-4; Thurs., 11-4; closed Wed. Architecture of Luis Barragan to Sept. 7. Projects: Video VIII to June 30. Projects: Video IX, July 1 to Sep. 14. Photography: Recent Acquisitions to July 13. Narrative Prints to August 8. Surrealist Andre Masson: 1922-1945 to Aug. 17. Taxi Project: Realistic solutions for Today to Sept. 7.

NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 170 Central Park West at 77th St., Tues.-Fri., Sun., 10-5; Sat., 10-5. American Genre Painting/American Folk Art. **QUEENS MUSEUM**, New York City Building, Flushing Meadows, Tues.-Fri., 12-5; Sat., 10-5; Sun., 11-5. Panorama: Scale Model of New York. Stained Glass by Frank Wright. The Tulip and the Rose: Seeds of Queens History. **SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM**, 1071 5th Av., Tues. 11-4, Wed.-Sun. 11-5. Closed Mondays. Museum Collection: Paintings 1800-1945 to Oct. 3. Double-Vision by Dall. **WHITNEY MUSEUM**, 845 Madison Av., Sun. 12-6. Closed Mondays. 200 Years of American Sculpture to Sept. 21. Wed.-Sat., 10-6, Tues. evenings to 10,