

Robert Griffith Ernest (1933–62) was an architect of rare promise and remarkable early success, whose award-winning career was cut short by cancer at age twenty-eight in 1962. Despite the brevity of Ernest's life, his education and practice were intertwined with some of the most important figures in architecture, including his interactions with Louis I. Kahn during his post-graduate studies with Paul Rudolph at Yale University, and his working with Rudolph for two summers as well as supervising construction of Rudolph's last Florida house. Ernest's exceptional architectural designs, though honored during his lifetime with three *Progressive Architecture* Awards and one Record Houses Award, as well as being celebrated after his death in a solo exhibit at Yale University, and the dedication of *Perspecta* 9/10 and an issue of the *Florida Architect* to his memory, have never been documented in a comprehensive manner and are now almost completely lost to disciplinary history.

Yet the materials in the architect's personal and professional archives covering the ten-year period from the beginning of his undergraduate education in 1952 until his death—on which this book is almost entirely based—clearly indicate that Ernest was a remarkably talented and unusually gifted architectural designer, whose future promise and potential were inestimable. Ernest's two built works, both realized before he turned twenty-eight, his one work built after his death, as well as the remarkably innovative unrealized projects documented in his archives, indicate that had Ernest lived to a normal lifespan, he would have been without question one of the most important architects of his generation, with the potential to design precedent-setting buildings equal to those realized by the most recognized architects in the sixty years after his death. This is evidenced by the fact that, while Ernest had only three buildings realized (one posthumously) during his brief two years as a sole practitioner in Jacksonville, Florida, these buildings have exercised a significant influence on more than one generation of Florida architects, as well as on the evolution of modern architecture in Florida after 1960.

Next pages:

Fig. 1.15 Sketch of Basilica, Vicenza, Italy, Andrea Palladio, 1957.

Fig. 1.2 Cartoon of caveman and Mondrian, ca. 1952–57.

Fig. 1.5 Cartoon of Christmas tree trimming, ca. 1952–57.