

## Dedication to James Rossant

*Hyperion*, Volume V, issue 1, May 2010

# HYPERION

On the future of aesthetics

James Rossant, *Floating City*,  
pen and ink on Japanese handmade paper



James Rossant, *The Bridge*,  
watercolor



## **James Rossant**

**1928 – 2009**

This issue of *Hyperion* is dedicated to the memory of James Rossant.

Rossant was an architect, city planner, artist, and professor of architecture. A long-time Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, Rossant was a partner of the architectural firm Conklin & Rossant and principal of James Rossant Architects. Among a life-time of architectural accomplishments, Rossant is best recognized for his master plan of Reston, Virginia, the Lower Manhattan Plan, and the UN-sponsored master plan for Dodoma, Tanzania.

His paintings and drawings have been exhibited in galleries in various parts of the world, and have entered a variety of collections, including those of George Mason University, Columbia University, and Centre D'Architecture in Paris. In addition, he has illustrated a number of books, among them children's books and cookbooks written by Colette Rossant, his wife.

James Rossant's name will be new to many reading this journal. However, his reputation has been significant and is widely recognized, well known by those in his own field. Despite his achievements, and one would like to think more because of them, he was not the subject of a general popularity. He did not have to suffer the indignity of a broad assent founded on the shifting and quivering tides of mass sentiment, but rather had the respect of those whose acknowledgement is rooted in the understanding that comes of and is expressed in clear and formulated ideas. Like those who always are known only to those who know much, he had the respect of those whose opinions count.

It can be argued that freedom is only to be found in capability, in the free flow of thought that is unencumbered by clumsiness and an absent readiness to formulate itself at the moment of its own impulse. It is clear from his work in his various media that his mind invented in the way that native speakers talk—without having to think how to do what it feels the impulse to do, without having to think how to say what it wants to say. Rossant was one among

those minds in this time—as they must exist in every time, in every place—not so much respected as respectable, one of those minds who are free by their acquired, developed capacity to do as they wish immediately, with the quickness of thought, Such minds are often invisible to all but those how know how to recognize them, to all but those of their own kind. One can see it in his work, in his architecture, his paintings, his drawings. And one can read it in his texts, in the rigor and precision of his words, which can be found, in one example, in this issue.

It is appropriate to complete these thoughts with a portion of a text written to her father by Cecile Rossant.



All the colors of your brush including the unpredictable trespass of color on color are drawn across borders by your finger's steady stroke. Steady mastery, steady pen and I see a corner, cliff, wall and street of this inexhaustible Atlantis appear: *ciudad, citta, Stadt, cité*—eloquent city—tripping up round-faced typologies in its ever-advancing wake. Steady partner, your imagination: humorist, renegade, rebel and devotee.

Devotion? Unremitting imagination has chosen its faithful host.

Are you then midwife, who cups an infants head ignoring with wisdom a woman's otherworldly screams?

Or are you a river with complex, changeable currents, able to wear the colors of mud bank, bough and sky in silky reflection on your restless surface, or are you a river ready and willing to creep above a child's slender shoulder then slap her bottom, and rush through her hair, or are you a river, waiting, bottled in the barrel of the pen?

*Hyperion* is proud to publish in this issue James Rossant's review of *Le Corbusier and the Occult*, by J. K. Birksted.

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