

Chicago Tribune

FRIDAY, MARCH 23, 2001

"The Perfect Chair," at the Architech gallery, is a more ambitious exhibition than is usually attempted by commercial showplaces in Chicago. It traverses more than 140 years — Owen Jones to Jordan Mozer — including a small group of contemporary fantasies and theoretical studies submitted on invitation, a small collection of historical designs and a selection from nearly 70 years of working drawings, collages and production models by Henry P. Glass.

The Austrian-American Glass, still active in his 90th year, showed at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1999 and is clearly the dominant figure here, despite first-rate pieces by such masters as George Mann Niedecken and Alfonso Iannelli. The collages and drawings on colored papers by Glass are especially appealing as art objects, not just examples of brilliant rational design. Almost everything on view by him — including a new design created es-

pecially for the show — indicates he is a questing spirit who continually has built upon the early modern rigor of his first quarter century in Vienna.

Apart from an anonymous 1900 drawing of a side chair that elegantly presents front, back, side and bottom views on one sheet, the other pieces strong enough visually to stand on their own are from living artists. None is as practical as any of the historical drawings; they are more philosophical statements or caprices that range in form from a comic strip on the history of chairs to a photorealist watercolor of lawn chairs observed during a solar eclipse.

At Architech, 730 N. Franklin St., 312-475-1290, through April