

**SIGNS OF LIFE:  
SYMBOLS IN THE AMERICAN CITY,  
EXHIBITION**

*Architects: Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, Inc.*

*Location: Renwick Gallery of the National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C.*

*Client: The Smithsonian Institution*

*Completion: 1976*

This Bicentennial exhibition was sponsored by the Smithsonian Institute and installed in its Renwick Gallery. VSBA's exhibit explored historical and contemporary signs and symbols in the American city. It emphasized the rich persuasion of signs and symbols in our environment, demonstrating their pervasiveness throughout our society. The exhibit was structured in three parts: signs and symbols in the home (furnishings, decoration, architectural style, and details); on the commercial strip (signs, architecture, gas stations, motels, etc.); and on the street (urban commercial streets, civic buildings as symbols, parks, squares, etc.).

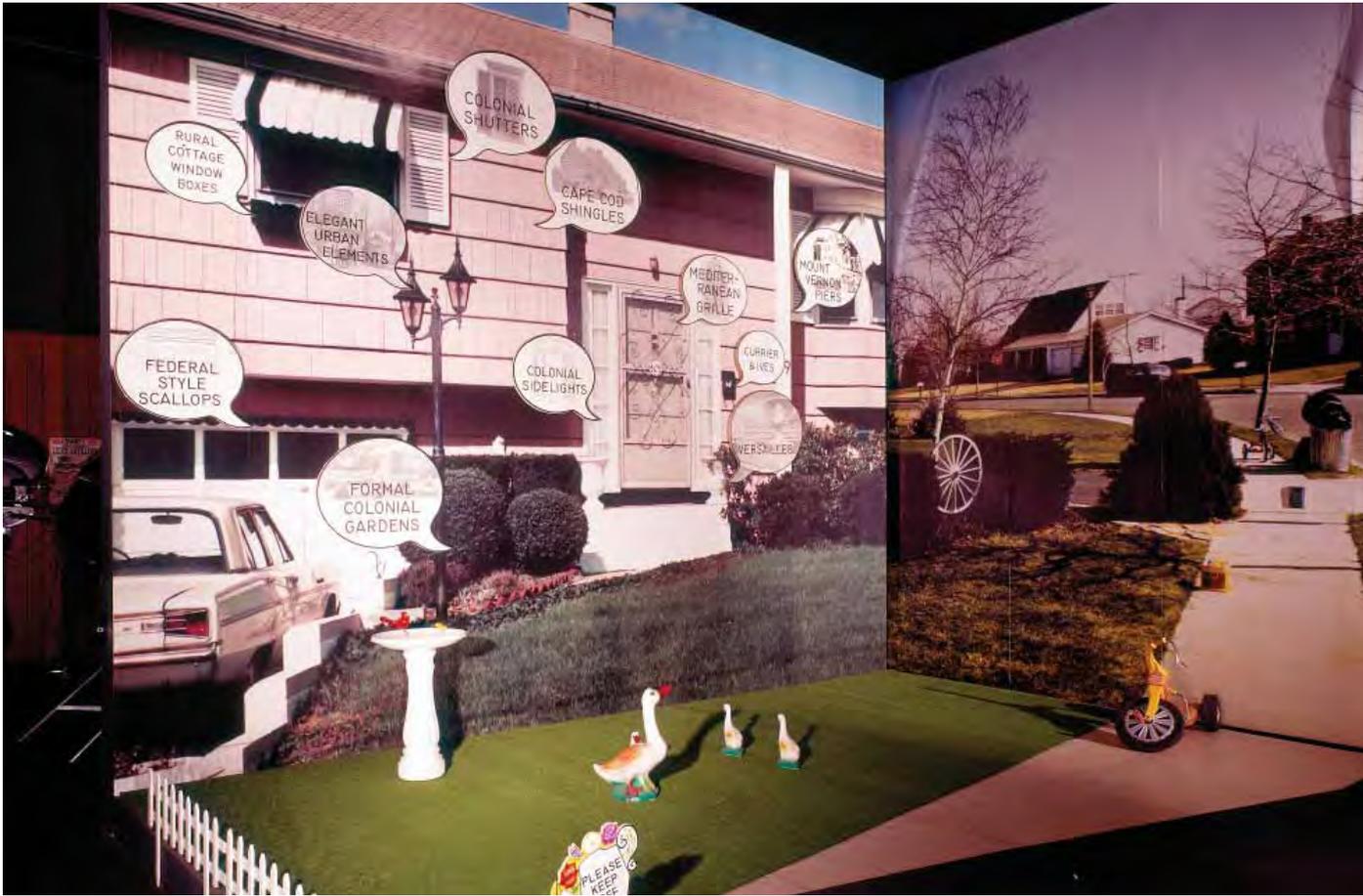


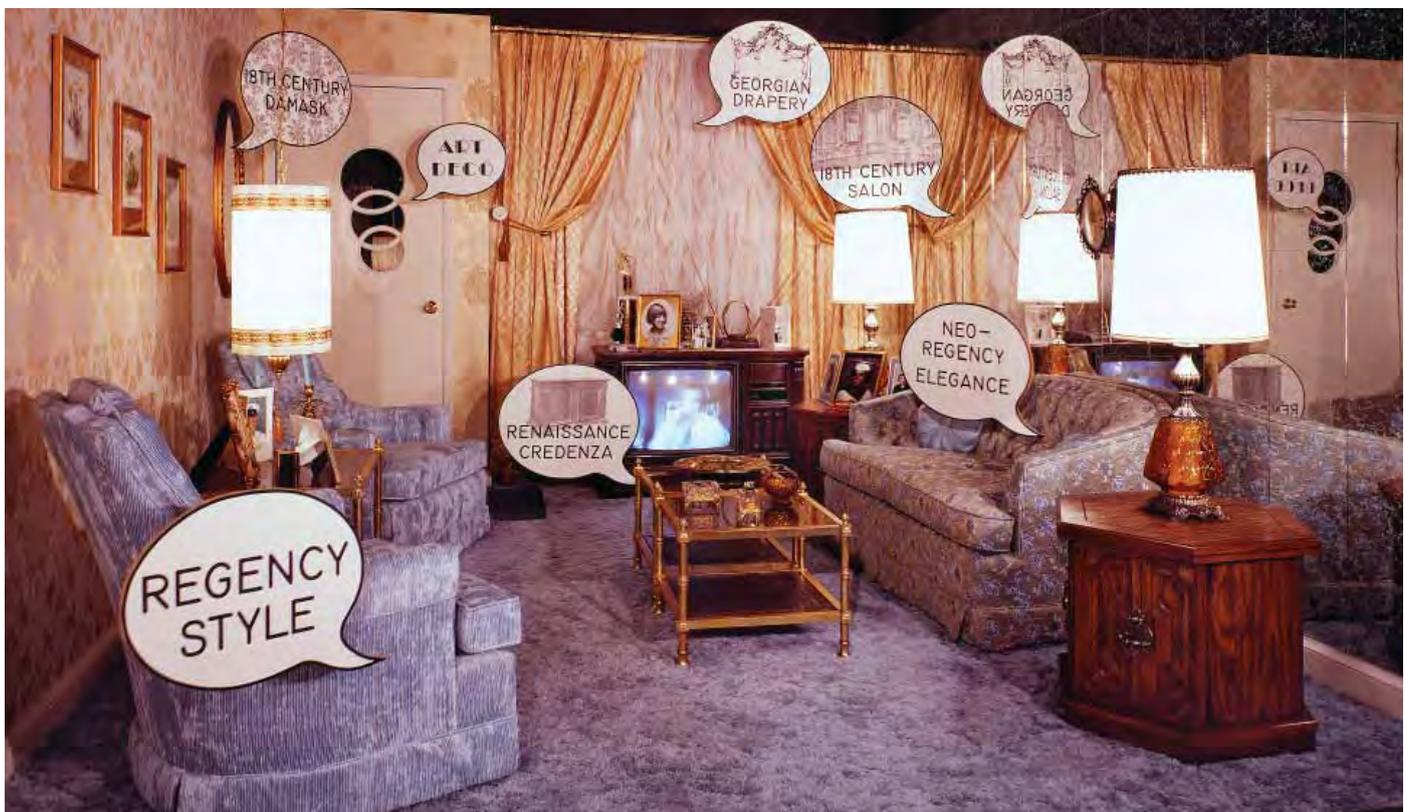
The exhibit attracted major attention on a popular as well as a critical level and was one of the most successful exhibits the Renwick Gallery has installed. *Signs of Life* was based on the "Learning from Las Vegas" research

project conducted by VSBA at Yale University in 1968 and on our further extensive research and analysis of American cities. Like the earlier books *Contradiction and Complexity* by Robert Venturi and *Learning From Las Vegas* by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Signs of Life* provoked a major public and professional reassessment of the importance of diversity and the vernacular in our lives and of the way we perceive our environment.



*Signs of Life in the American City,*  
Smithsonian Institution





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