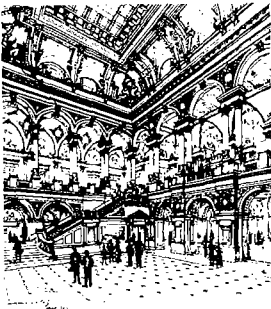


**THE AMERICAN  
RENAISSANCE, 1876-1917**  
edited by the Brooklyn  
Museum  
Pantheon, 1979  
232 pp. \$25



Turn-of-the-century American artists, together with the Vanderbilts, Rockefellers, and Morgans who patronized them, believed that their society would rival, even surpass, the great civilizations of the past. Artists and architects did not seek an original style but appropriated, without shame, "the best from all cultures, even our own." The neo-Baroque Library of Congress was decorated with neo-Renaissance murals and sculpture, the dome of San Francisco's City Hall was modeled after that of St. Peter's, and the homes of the rich on New York's Fifth Avenue and in Newport, R.I., were derivations of French chateaux and Italian villas. Art historians generally slight the period; this book's three essays demonstrate that its studied eclecticism, even when bordering on the grotesque, was not a failure of imagination but a creative response to America's new wealth and position. U.S. artists saw themselves as "new bearers of the torch of Western civilization." Their mission: to articulate the link between America and cultures of the past, while celebrating and strengthening homegrown virtues. Indeed, the authors observe, wealthy art consumers, for all their vanities and greed, were benefactors; they financed our cities' great libraries, museums, and parks as symbols of America's destiny.

—Wanda M. Corn ('80)

**THE ZERO-SUM  
SOCIETY: Distribution  
and the Possibilities for  
Economic Change**  
by Lester C. Thurow  
Basic, 1980  
230 pp. \$12.95

MIT economist Thurow provides a shrewd analysis of America's ailing economy—but he offers disappointing political recipes for recovery. Sluggish growth, he asserts, has reduced the American economy to a "zero-sum" condition. No more pie is being baked; if Peter is to get a larger piece, it must be taken from Paul. Politicians, unions, consumers, and businessmen have all tried to forestall the economic pains that would accompany a necessary cutting back of low-productivity enterprises. Among the results: regulations that bind railroads to unprofitable lines and subsidies to keep the inefficient shipbuilding industry afloat. The United