

# The New York Times

## Neighborhood Report

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U N I O N   S Q U A R E



### Giant Artwork to Announce Time in Infinite Detail

A 27-story building on the south end of Union Square Park will soon be the location of New York's very own time machine, so to speak. Now taking shape on the face of the year-old luxury apartment house, which has a Virgin megastore on its street level, the Metronome, as the timepiece is called, will cost nearly \$3 million.

Scheduled for completion in three weeks, the Metronome is to be activated in September. Fifteen digital numbers will relentlessly mark the hours, and a few feet away, on a 60-by-100-foot wall, steam will belch periodically from an opening five feet in diameter. An electronically generated tone will punctuate midnight and noon, and a gold-and-black sphere will rotate in synchronization with the phases of the moon.

The Metronome is one of New York City's biggest private commissions of public art in the last decade, according to Susan Freedman, president of the Public Art Fund, which helped coordinate the competition for the project. It was conceived by Andrew Ginzel and Kristin Jones, a husband-and-wife art team who in their 14 years together have created several public artworks, including one for a New York City school and one for a subway station. The Metronome, the artists say, is "an ode to the impossibility of knowing Time."

The 15 numbers of the digital clock will display time going and coming relative to midnight. For example, 070437000235616 will mean 7 hours, 4 minutes and 37 seconds after midnight, with 16 hours, 56 minutes and 23 seconds remaining until midnight; the middle three places will be a blur of instantaneously changing digits.

Asked whether the tone might disturb the building's residents or the neighbors, David J. Wine, executive vice president of the Related Companies, which developed the complex and commissioned the work, said: "The tone hasn't been finalized, so we haven't begun to test to see if it's intrusive. It's not our intent and the artists' intent to have the tone be a nuisance, and it won't be. It will be directed to street level, away from any residential apartments."

The project began four years ago, after Related Companies picked an architect to design the apartment building. The firm selected, Davis Brody Bond, included an "art wall" in its proposal. In 1996, under the auspices of the Public Art Fund and the Municipal Art Society, more than 200 artists were invited to submit proposals.

Mr. Wine said one of the things that sold the company on the Metronome was the way it "took advantage of the unique quality of the building aligning with Grand Central Station," which is 28 blocks to the north.

ERIC V. COPAGE

#### The Infinity

Five-foot circle from which steam will emanate; symbolizes city's internal energy, and the earth's.

#### The Vortex

Rippled facade of brick; symbolizes expansion of energy; metaphor for earth's rotation.

#### The Passage

Fifteen illuminated numerals, five feet high; will display hours, minutes and seconds elapsed in the day, and hours, minutes and seconds remaining; symbolizes city's speed, frenzy and fragmentation.

#### The Matter

Concrete cast of schist; symbolizes geological time and substance of earth under much of the city.

#### The Relic

Enlarged replica of right hand of George Washington from equestrian statue in Union Square Park; symbolizes wall's relationship with park.

#### The Source

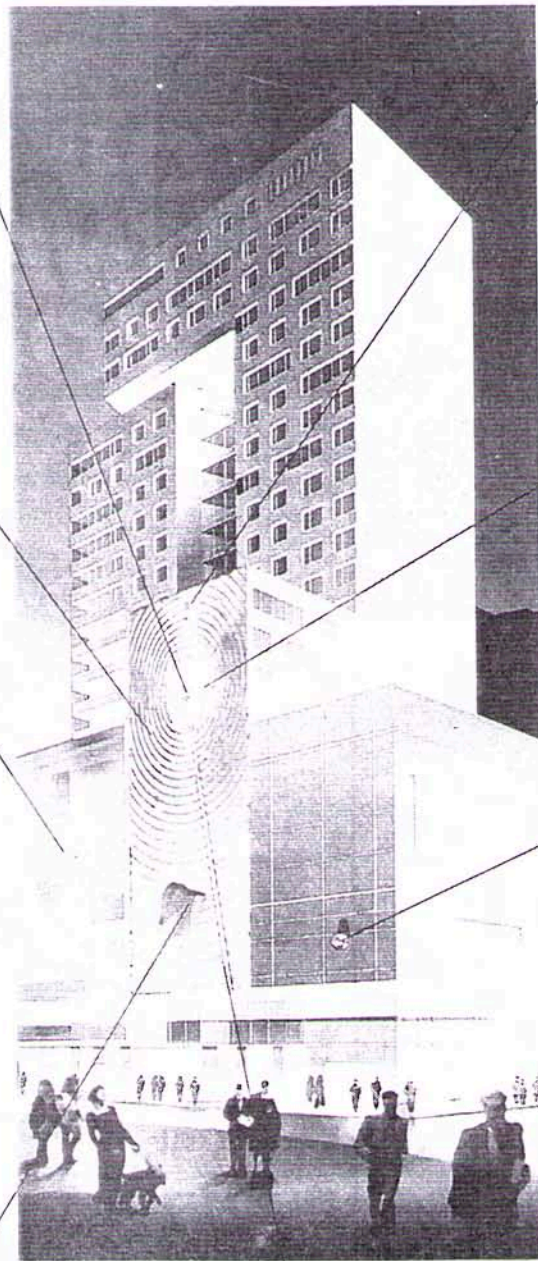
Gold leaf applied to brick radiates across the Vortex; symbolizes ultimate source of energy.

#### The Phases

Rotating sphere of gold and black, five feet in diameter, mirroring phases of the moon.

#### The Focus

Metal cone, 67 feet long, one-half inch in diameter at top, widening to 18 inches at bottom; will produce low tone at noon and midnight synchronized with plume of steam from the Infinity.



Daniel Brody