

A. G. Rizzoli: Architect of Magnificent Visions
 Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art, Chicago,
 September 14, 2007-January 5, 2008.

A self-styled 'architectural assistant to God,' Achilles G. Rizzoli (1896-1981) was born in California and studied at a polytechnic school. A lifelong bachelor, he was devoted to his mother and lived with her until her death. A longtime resident of San Francisco, in the 1920s he penned short stories and novellas, but it is a body of spectacular, meticulously rendered fantasy-architecture drawings that he produced from 1935 to 1944 for which he has become best known.

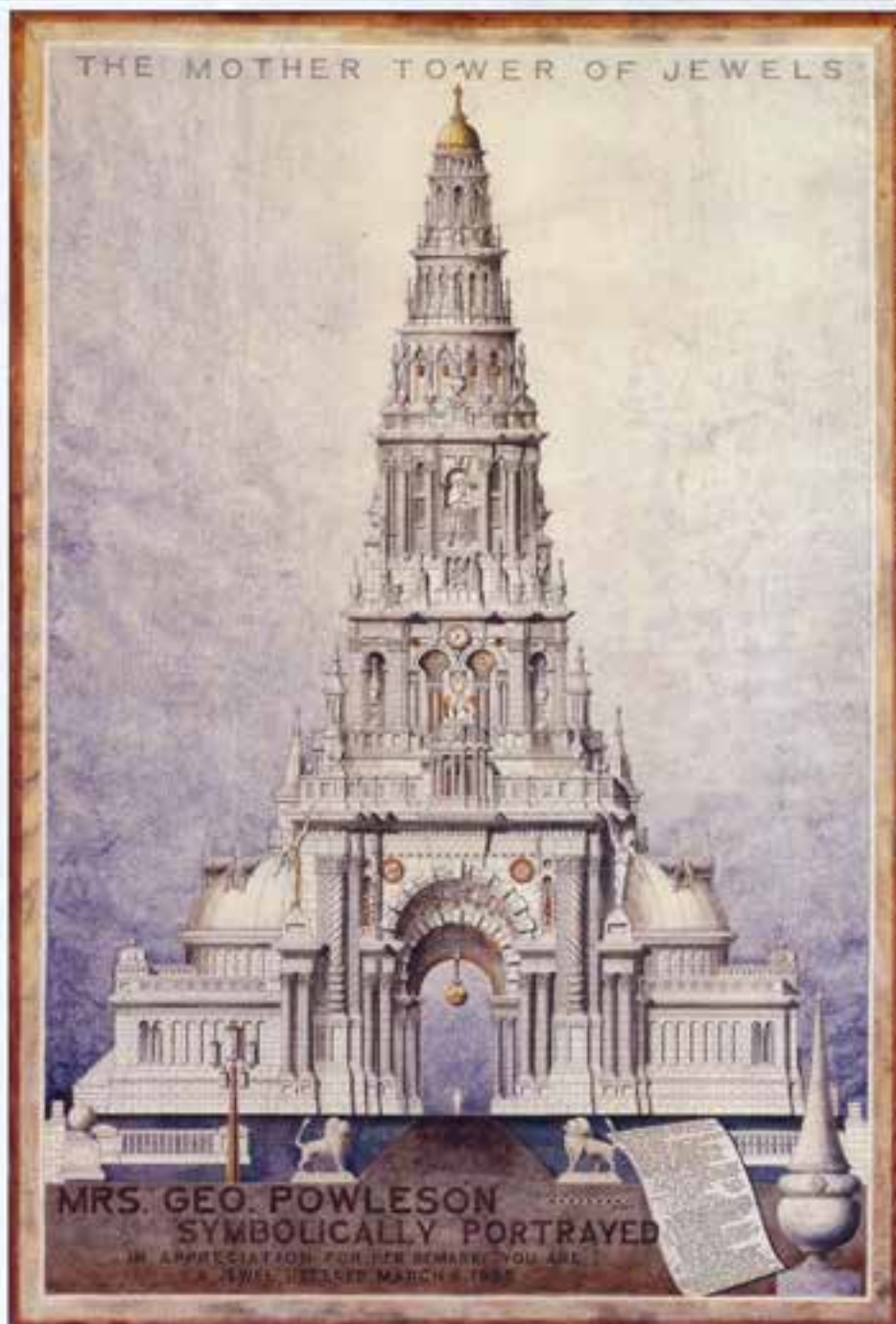
By day, Rizzoli, a devout Catholic, worked as a draughtsman. In his free time he created 'portraits' — he called them 'symbolic representations' — of people he knew well, like his mother, or who had crossed his path in what appears to have been a loner's life.

Intuit presented an extensive selection of Rizzoli's ink-on-rag-paper drawings, which were the product and document of his vivid imagination. Among them: *The Palace God is Building for Abraham Zachariah, Esq.*, a big — most of Rizzoli's fantasy edifices are monumental in scale — rectangular building in the Beaux-Arts style that the artist interpreted in his own ways; *Mrs. Geo. Powleson Symbolically Portrayed/The Mother Tower of Jewels*, an ornate, tapering, triangular pile with a gold dome that would rival the Taj Mahal were it ever to be built in the real world; and *The Spirit of Cooperation*, a line-up of towers linked by statue-filled niches set against a wash of blue sky. All of these works were made in 1935. Intuit also showed partly abstract or map-like drawings of people or places that represent a utopian world Rizzoli dubbed 'Y.T.T.E.' That acronym stood for 'Yield to Total Elation.'

On his architectural drawings Rizzoli indicated, with dated notes, when he worked on their lettering or other compositional elements. Intuit's exhibition proved just how broad his artistic vision and how considerable his technical proficiency were, and how they found visible form in a complex, original oeuvre. If one dominant strain of modernist aesthetics, which emerged during Rizzoli's lifetime, favoured a stripped-down, minimalist approach to style and form, by contrast, in the unique-to-itself world in which his work evolved, it was an unabashed spirit of maximalism that ruled.

Edward M. Gomez

All works courtesy of Ames Gallery, Berkeley, CA.



Mrs. Geo. Powleson Symbolically Portrayed/The Mother Tower of Jewels



The Palace God is Building for Abraham Zachariah, Esq.



The Spirit of Cooperation