



MICHAEL GRAVES
CENTENNIAL MEDAL AWARD
AMERICAN ACADEMY IN ROME, JUNE 4, 1996

Irving Lavin
Institute for Advanced Study

Some of you may object, or at least take exception to what I have to say, but I think that no other modern architect—I use those words advisedly—owes more to Rome than Michael Graves. He learned that supreme and eternal lesson of doing what the Romans did, which is to say that he embraced and co-opted an ancient and noble but moribund cultural language and gave it new life in a modern architectural diction that expressed the sometimes nostalgic ideals, feelings and values of a new age. Conversely, I also believe that Rome, in turn, owes more to Michael Graves than to any other modern architect. I remember a long period in which artists and architects who came to the Academy valued little of what they found here except a great studio and free time for work, while complaining about everything else, especially the distance from the New York scene. All that has changed utterly over the last decades, and now I see their

successors scrambling everywhere, sketchbooks in hand, rediscovering for themselves those fathomless antique treasures. I hold Michael largely responsible for this sea change, and hence it is singularly appropriate that he should have designed in his inimitable style—and I use those words advisedly—the new quarters for the Academy's fine collection of old and rare books, especially about Rome; and it is doubly appropriate for the Academy to award him on this occasion its Centennial Medal, designed by that other great co-opter of the classical tradition, Roy Lichtenstein. It is a particular privilege and pleasure for me—thanks to Adele—to convey the award because, as you might have guessed, I have admired Michael as an artist and loved him as a friend for more years than either of us would relish counting. Long and well enough to know how much he loves the Academy and how much this medal will mean to him. I only want to add personally, but also on behalf of all his friends and admirers, what they say where I come from—Michael, wear it in good health!