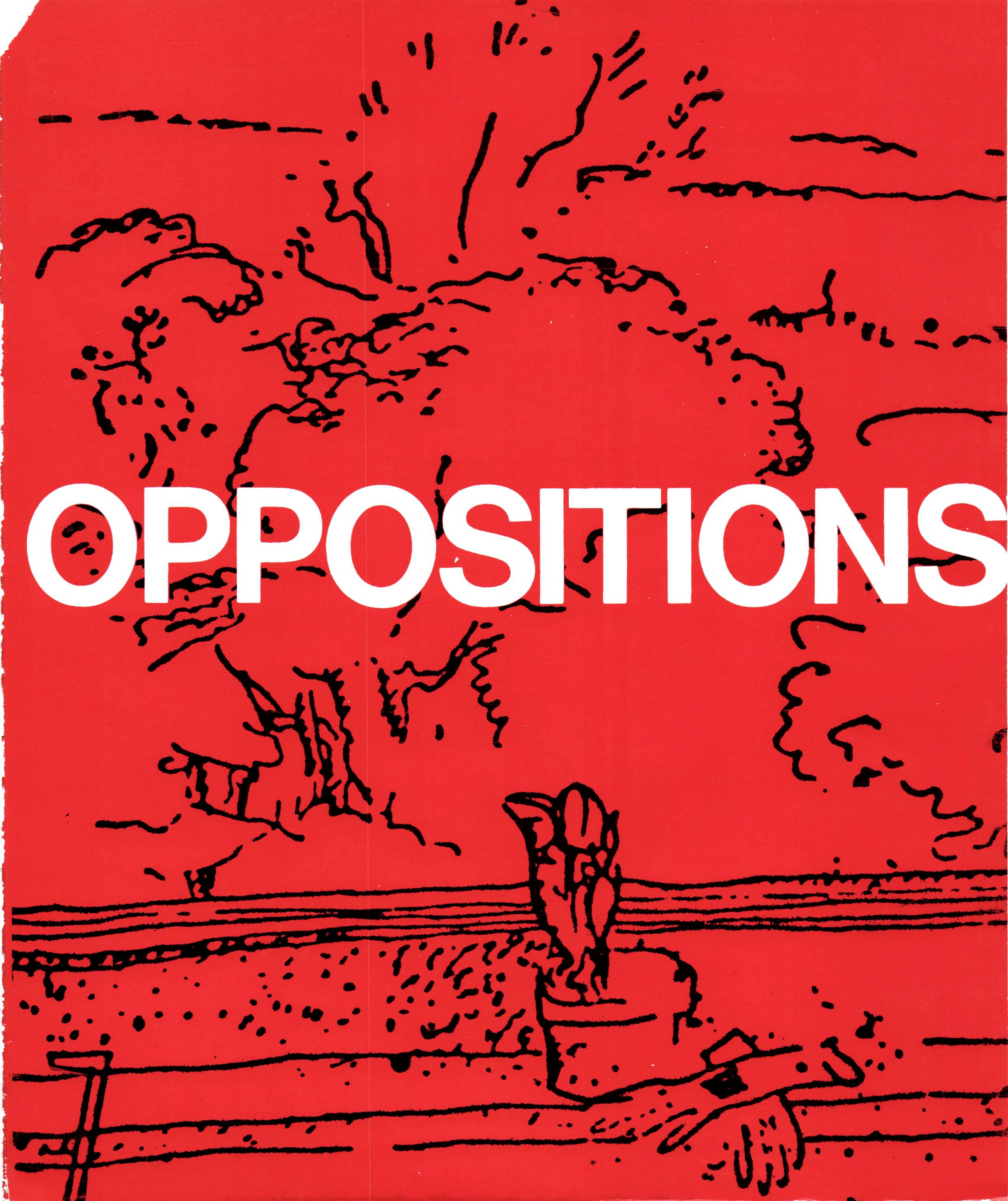
OPPOSITIONS



A Journal for Ideas and
Criticism in Architecture

Published for The Institute
for Architecture and Urban Studies

By The MIT Press

Fall 1978: 14

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OPPOSITIONS is published quarterly (Summer, Fall, Winter, Spring) for The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies by The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England. OPPOSITIONS 14, Fall, 1978.

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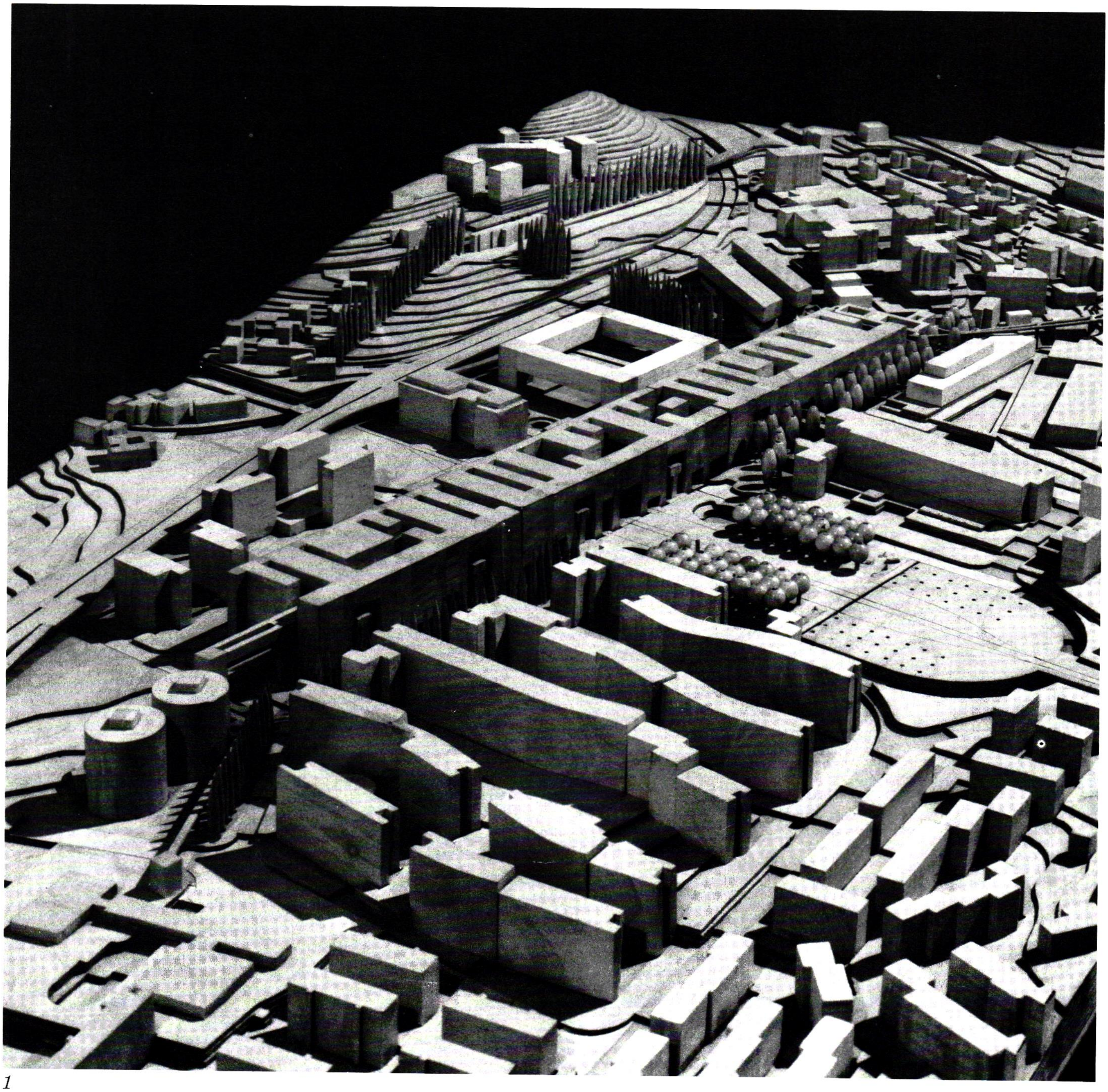
Printed in the United States of America
ISSN 0094-5676

Oppositions

Mario Botta and the School of the Ticino

Kenneth Frampton



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1 (frontispiece) Competition for Centro Direzionale, Perugia. Mario Botta with Luigi Snozzi, 1971. Model.

2 Competition for a school, Locarno. Mario Botta, 1970. Ground floor plan.

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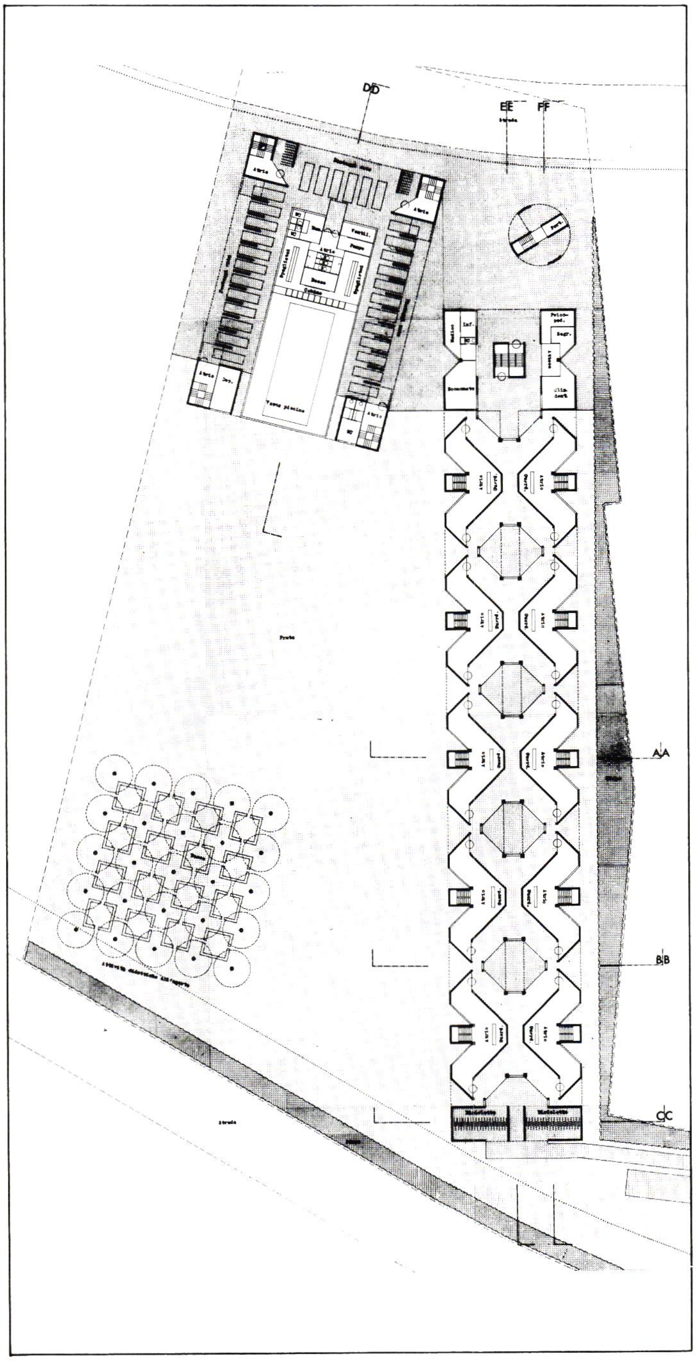

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Without challenging its relevance to the present capacity of the building industry, the case can be made that the Italian Neo-Rationalist movement—the Tendenza—has been the most important development in the evolution of architecture over the last decade. This movement came to acquire its critical following primarily because its principles were seen as resisting the general tendency to reduce architecture to a commodity. In its simplest terms the Tendenza stressed: 1) The relative autonomy of architecture and the need for its re-articulation as a discourse in terms of *types* and *rules* for the logical combination of its elements; 2) The socio-cultural importance of existing urban structures and of the role played by monuments in embodying and representing the continuity of public institutions over time; and 3) The fertile resource of historical form as a legacy which is always available for analogical reinterpretation in terms of the present. It is interesting to note in this respect that the code phrase for Mario Botta's entry to the Locarno School competition of 1970 (fig. 2) was, significantly enough, *Il Passato come un amico*.

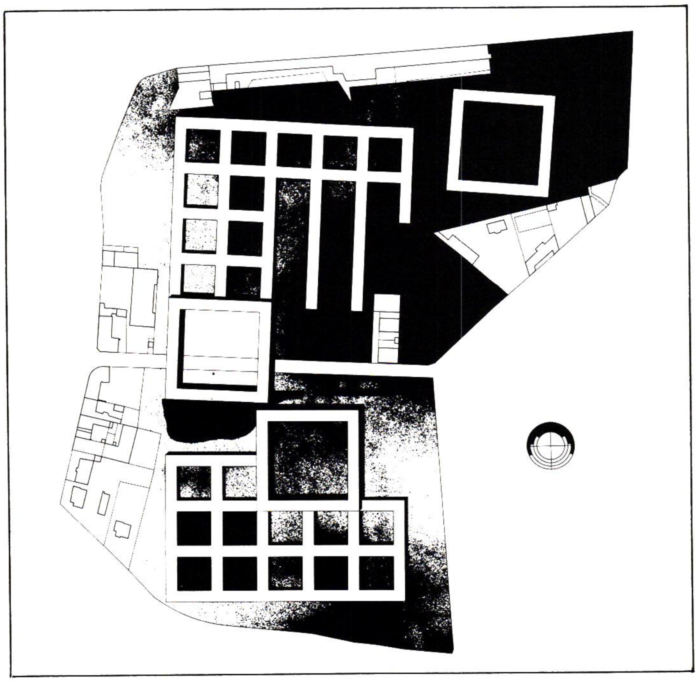
However, with the exception of some six structures realized by Aldo Rossi and about the same number to the credit of Carlo Aymonino, the Tendenza has built little, and paradoxically enough it is not in Italy but the Ticino where the Tendenza seems to have come into its own; that is to say, its principles have been more generally tested in Italian Switzerland than elsewhere. This fact offers further proof that the development of culture is by no means the simple consequence of acquiring power and accumulating capital. Surplus wealth is of course necessary but this in itself guarantees little. Knowledge is critical and refinement essential, but these attributes are impotent without the passionate adoption of a common cultural cause, without the use of architecture as an agent for both the realization and the representation of the society and its identity. Architecture, where it is not rooted in the community and cultivated equally by both the profession and the people, has little chance of emerging as a general culture, and the conditions under which the art of building may attain this stature are subtle in the extreme. To appreciate this, one need only compare the quality of the recent architecture built in the Ticino—population two hundred thousand—to the relatively banal, if technically competent, work achieved in the rest of Switzerland over the same period and in the service of a population that is almost thirty times the size of the Italian canton.

To some extent the success of the Ticinese school derives from the cultural survival of the European city-state, a phenomenon which finds its political parallel (some would say parody) in the Swiss cantonal system which still offers the world's most direct form of citizen participation. Its unique insularity also depends on the fact that the Ticino is split along cultural and political lines more than any other language group in Switzerland; that is to say, it is culturally and geographically oriented toward Italy, while politically it remains firmly tied to the Federation by its own political volition. And while one cannot really compare the history of the Ticino to the radical, not to say rebellious, cultural traditions of Catalonia, the Ticinese and the Catalonians share the same experience of being a frontier-culture, that is to say, of lying between two strong cultural groups and of not really belonging to either. The privilege and the stigma of being such a culture find their most direct expression first in the Southern Alps, which psychologically and physically isolate the Ticino from Zurich and then in the Ticinese dialect which serves, however marginally, to resist the influence of Como.[1]

One cannot justly situate the work of Botta without acknowledging that his Ticinese colleagues—principally Tita Carloni, Aurelio Galfetti, Ivano Gianola, Flora Ruchat, Luigi Snozzi, and Ivo Trümpy—have all frequently worked together both with him and with each other, and that these team efforts have been complemented by the daily contacts which have always been maintained between the various members of the group. At the same time no polemical formation seems to have been contemplated let alone declared, and it is possible that they remained totally unaware of their group significance until the publication of Martin Steinmann's *Tendenzen: Neuere Architektur im Tessin* of 1975.[2] However, where else in the Western world save in Italy or in the Ticino would it prove impossible to write about the achievements of an individual without constantly referring to the collective effort of which he or she is a part? Nonetheless, it is clear that Botta has occupied and continues to occupy a unique position within this circle, in as much as he has played, like Galfetti in an earlier period, a central and catalytic role within the whole development. On the other hand, the caliber of Botta's finest public work would indicate that he has been at his best when collaborating with complementary talents such as Luigi Snozzi and Rudy Hunziker.

The relation of the Botta circle to Italy is extremely complex; for while the Ticinese are obviously indebted to the Tendenza and to Rossi for their overall attitude to urban form it is clear that, with the singular exception of Reichlin and Reinhart, they have tried to distance themselves from the specific syntax of his personal style. Instead, they have all remained closely affiliated to the work of Le Corbusier or where they have moved away from the Swiss master they have gravitated toward the Gruppo Sette and, in Botta's case, toward the later work of Kahn.

Botta's contact with Kahn, coming as it did at the moment of his graduation from the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia (he worked briefly on the Venice Congress Hall project of 1969), was to be decisive for the rest of his career. It is interesting to note how Botta, as a direct pupil of the Tendenza, was able to return the work of Kahn to its roots, that is to say, to the Italianate, if not antique Piranesian Roman context from which Kahn drew his inspiration after 1951. This much first became evident with Botta's 1970 design for a school in Locarno (see fig. 2), a competition project which displayed to an equal degree both the Kahnian formal matrix and the Neo-Rationalist notion of an urban monument, conceived as representing and delimiting itself in terms of the overall fabric of the city. While both Kahn and the Tendenza seem to have agreed as to the importance of creating urban institutions in such a way as to permit renewal and reinterpretation, they seem to have differed as to the propensity for such structures to have a formally resonant



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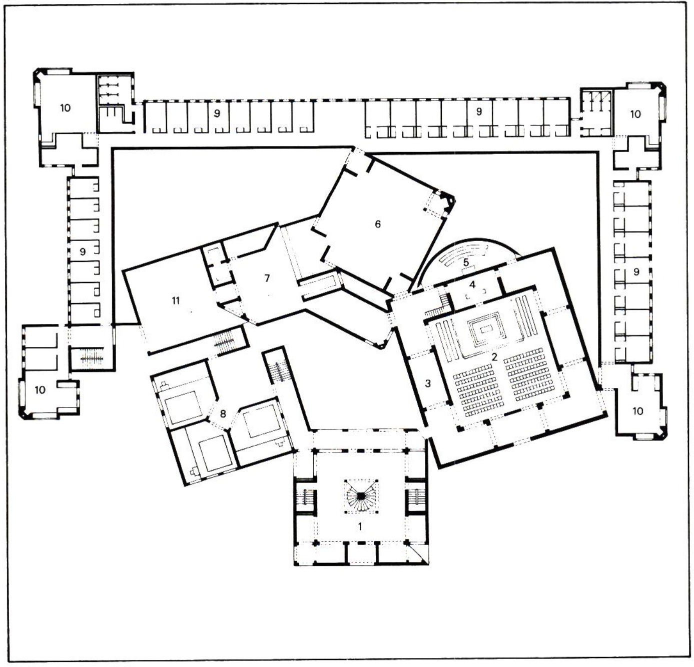

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relationship with the rest of the urban fabric. Such a resonance is already implicit in Botta's Locarno proposal where the "viaduct form of the school celebrates the extant limits of the built-up area while simultaneously establishing on the other side of this boundary a playground-piazza accommodating a gymnasium block set at an angle to the main body of the school." This Piranesian approach to site planning seems to stem in part from Rossi's San Rocco di Monza project of 1966 (fig. 3) and in part from Kahn's Dominican Sisters Convent, Media, Pennsylvania, dating from the previous year (fig. 4).

While almost every design by Botta, irrespective of its scale, "builds the site" in such a way as to make us critically if not poetically aware of its urban morphology or rural topography, the most important but as yet unbuilt aspect of his work has been his projection of large scale "social condensers," from his project for the new Ecole Fédéral Polytechnique de Lausanne of 1970 (designed in collaboration with Tita Carloni, Flora Ruchat, Aurelio Galfetti, and Luigi Snozzi), to his design with Snozzi and Martin Boesch for the second stage of the Zurich Railway Station Competition held in 1978 (figs. 5-9). This last design must surely be one of the most brilliant demonstrations of Neo-Rationalism yet projected in as much as the design achieves its formal and operational resolution with exceptional economy. Unlike the extremely elaborate urban proposal put forward in 1976 by Werner Kreis and Ulrich Schad for a new station in Lucerne, the Botta/Snozzi project for Zurich establishes a new urban situation with one single viaduct structure straddling the tracks between the Sihlpost and Zollbrücke, thereby linking two hitherto totally disconnected quarters of the city which had been separated from each other since the first rail entry into the urban core.

The decision not to go ahead with this proposal demonstrates once again the instrumental blindness of our epoch—its obsession with optimizing economic development as opposed to developing in such a way as to always reaffirm the existing morphology of the city. The multifarious advantages of the Botta/Snozzi proposal are so remarkable as to merit a brief but precise enumeration.

3 Competition for a residential complex, San Rocco, Monza. Aldo Rossi with Giorgio Grassi, 1966.

4 Domenican Sisters Convent, Media, Pennsylvania. Louis Kahn, 1965. First floor plan, final version. 1) entrance tower, 2) sanctuary, 3) ambulatory, 4) sacristy, 5) chapel, 6) refectory, 7) kitchen, 8) classrooms, 9) cell, 10) hall, 11) service court.

5 Competition for a railway station, Zurich. Mario Botta with Luigi Snozzi and Martin Boesch, 1978. Aerial view, sketch.

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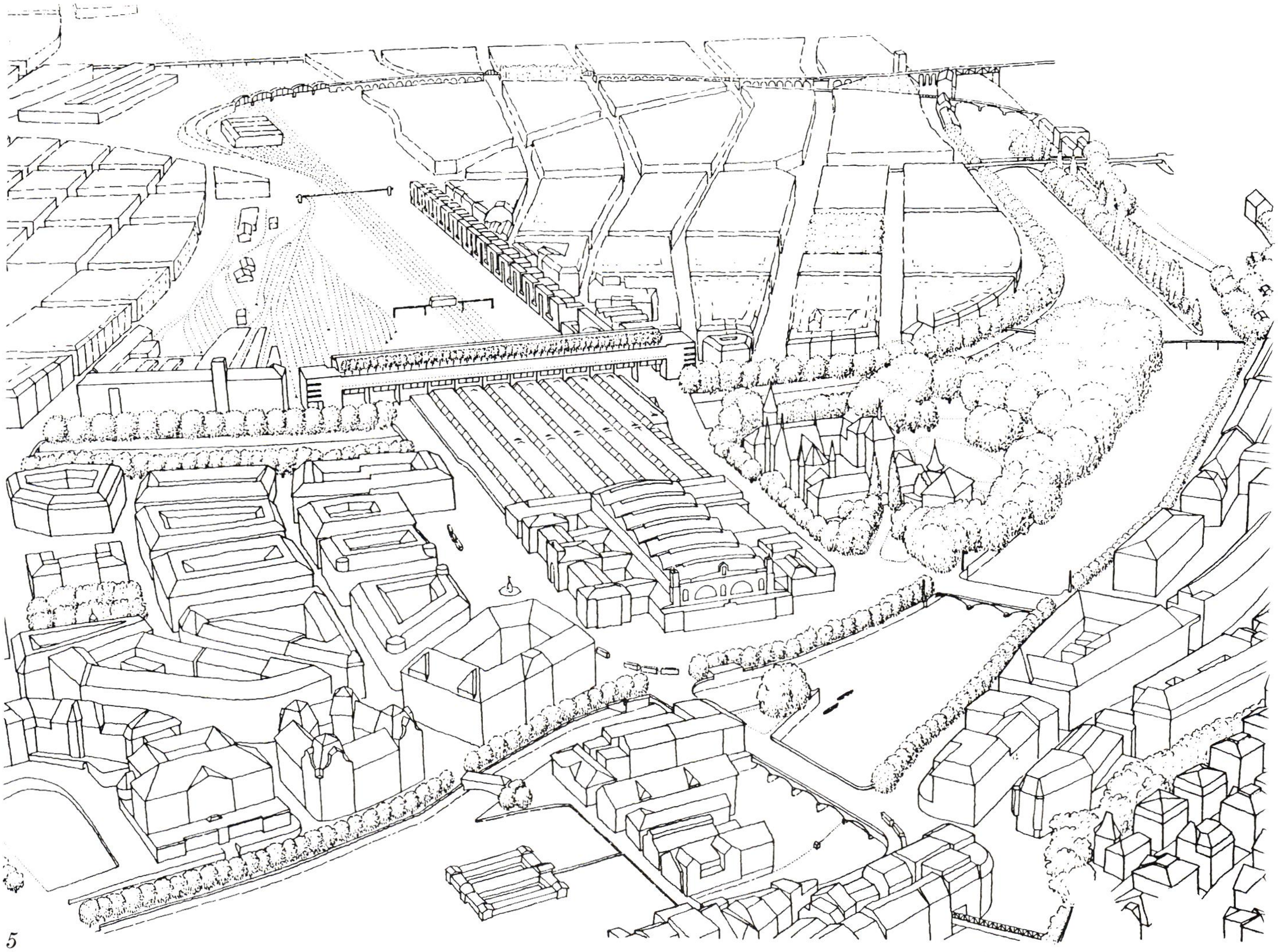

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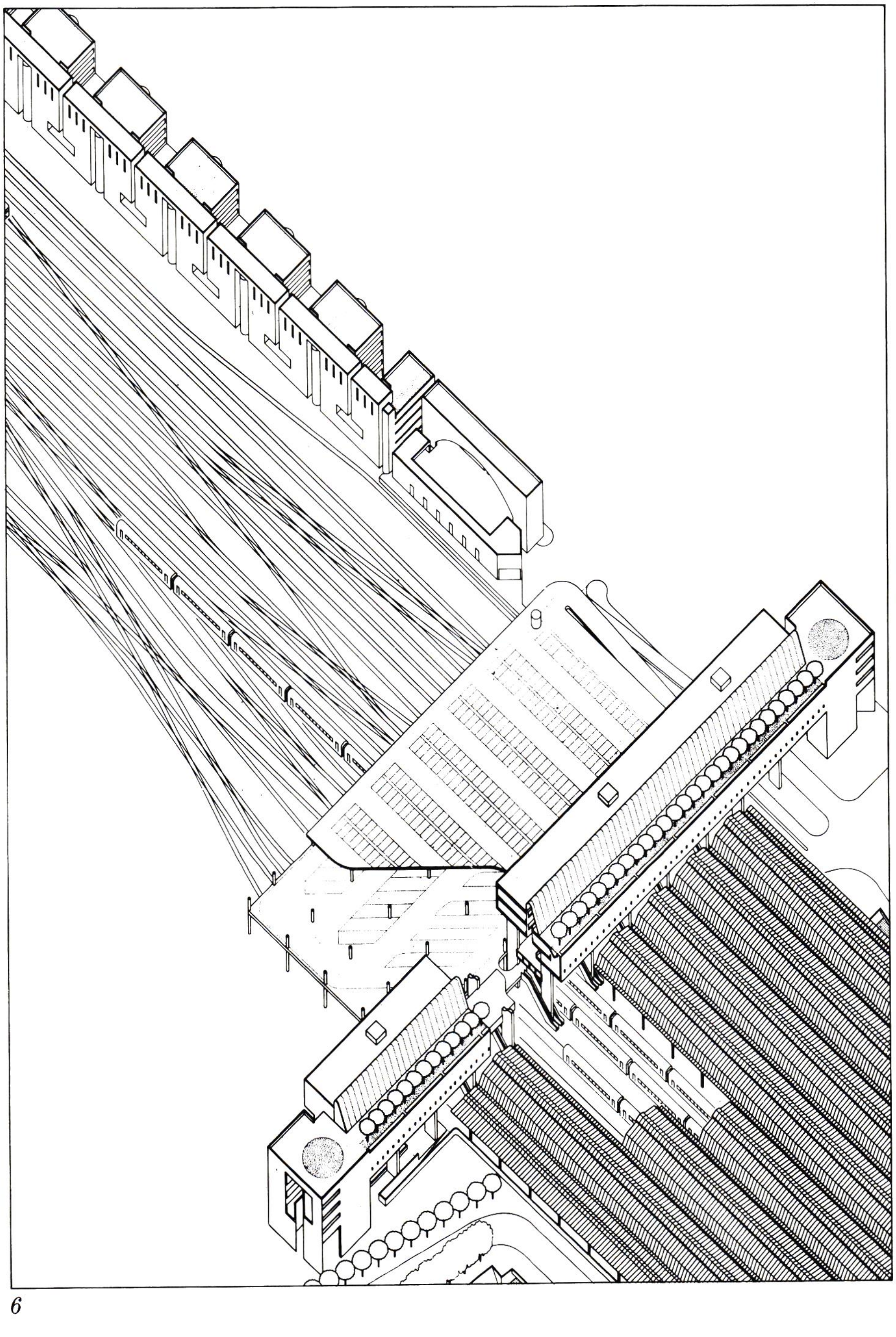
6 *6 Competition for a railway station, Zurich. Mario Botta with Luigi Snozzi and Martin Boesch, 1978. Axonometric showing the public bridge over the tracks with stacked parking to the rear. Residential accommodation is provided in the adjacent wall structure lining the tracks on one side.*

7 Elevation and sections through the public bridge.

8 Plans of consecutive levels rising upwards showing tracks, bus park, and car park with ticket concourse overhead.



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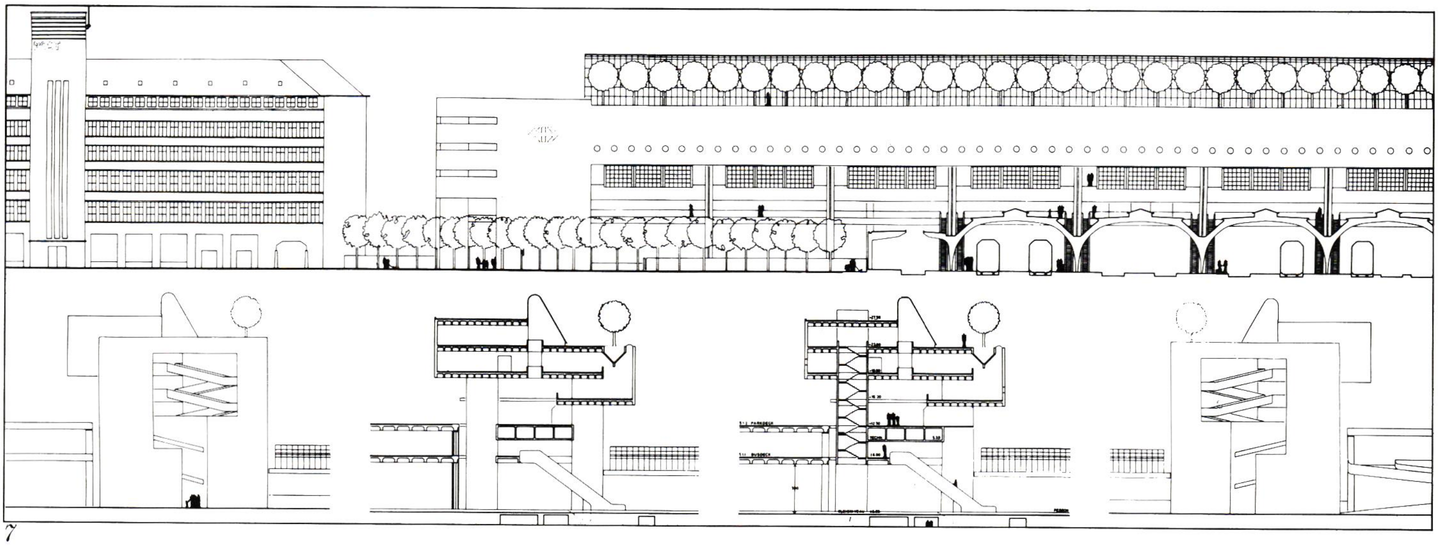

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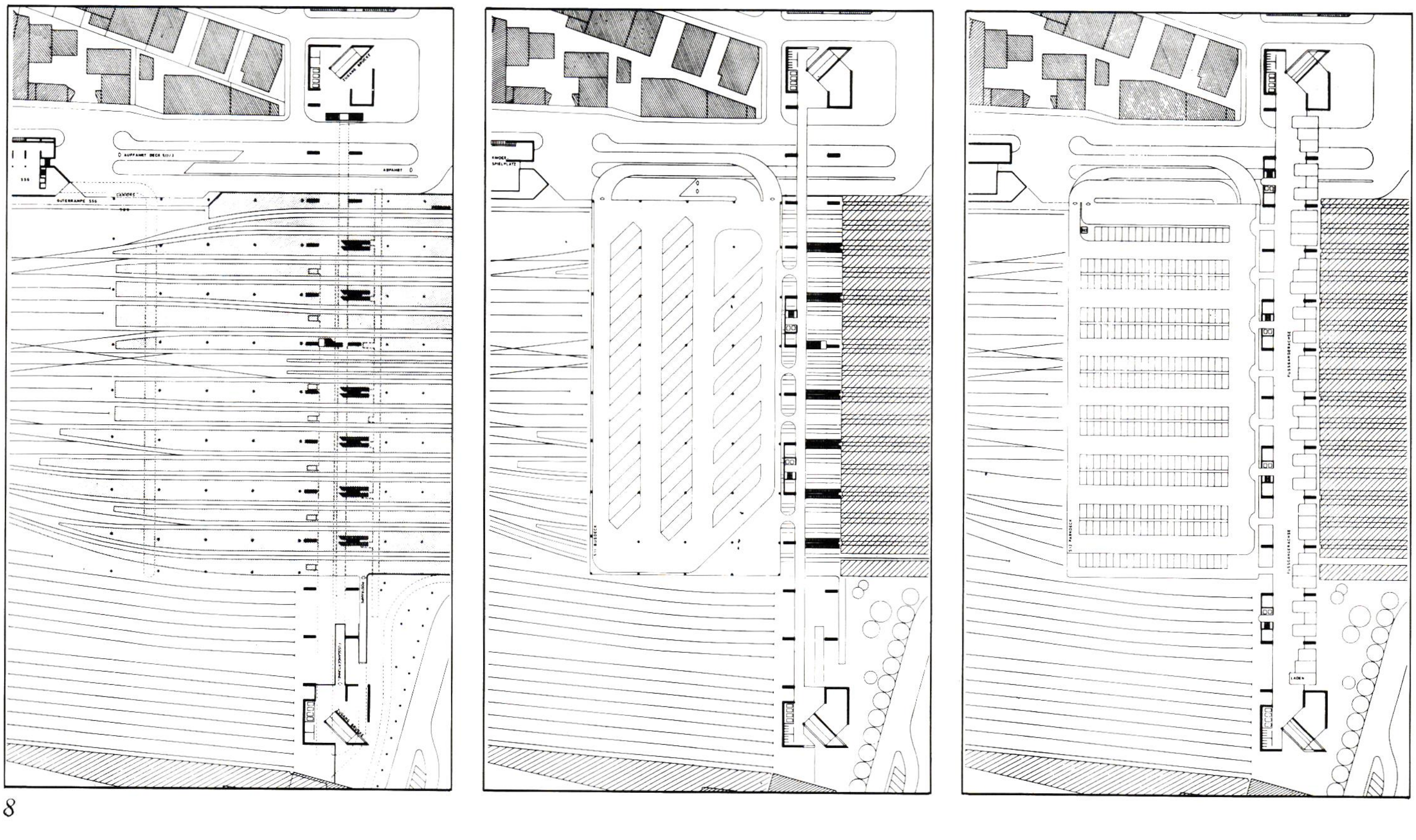

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9 Competition for the enlargement of Zurich railway station. Mario Botta with Luigi Snozzi and Martin Boesch, 1978. Sketches showing design processes.

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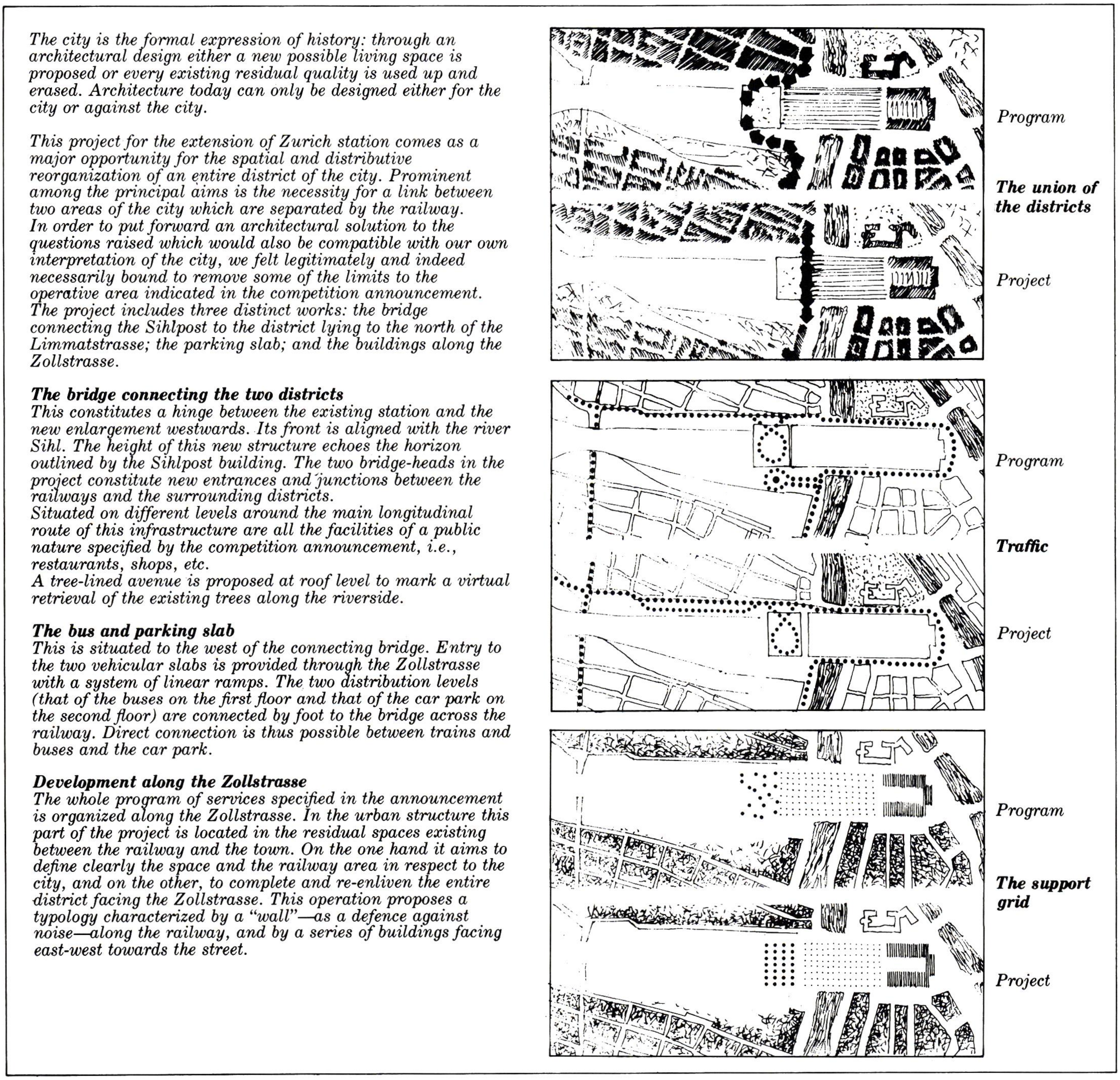


The city is the formal expression of history: through an architectural design either a new possible living space is proposed or every existing residual quality is used up and erased. Architecture today can only be designed either for the city or against the city.

This project for the extension of Zurich station comes as a major opportunity for the spatial and distributive reorganization of an entire district of the city. Prominent among the principal aims is the necessity for a link between two areas of the city which are separated by the railway. In order to put forward an architectural solution to the questions raised which would also be compatible with our own interpretation of the city, we felt legitimately and indeed necessarily bound to remove some of the limits to the operative area indicated in the competition announcement. The project includes three distinct works: the bridge connecting the Sihlpost to the district lying to the north of the Limmatstrasse; the parking slab; and the buildings along the Zollstrasse.

The bridge connecting the two districts

This constitutes a hinge between the existing station and the new enlargement westwards. Its front is aligned with the river Sihl. The height of this new structure echoes the horizon outlined by the Sihlpost building. The two bridge-heads in the project constitute new entrances and junctions between the railways and the surrounding districts. Situated on different levels around the main longitudinal route of this infrastructure are all the facilities of a public nature specified by the competition announcement, i.e., restaurants, shops, etc. A tree-lined avenue is proposed at roof level to mark a virtual retrieval of the existing trees along the riverside.

The bus and parking slab

This is situated to the west of the connecting bridge. Entry to the two vehicular slabs is provided through the Zollstrasse with a system of linear ramps. The two distribution levels (that of the buses on the first floor and that of the car park on the second floor) are connected by foot to the bridge across the railway. Direct connection is thus possible between trains and buses and the car park.

Development along the Zollstrasse

The whole program of services specified in the announcement is organized along the Zollstrasse. In the urban structure this part of the project is located in the residual spaces existing between the railway and the town. On the one hand it aims to define clearly the space and the railway area in respect to the city, and on the other, to complete and re-enliven the entire district facing the Zollstrasse. This operation proposes a typology characterized by a "wall"—as a defence against noise—along the railway, and by a series of buildings facing east-west towards the street.

9

1) Aside from linking the districts to the north and south of the rail head, the multi-leveled "bridge" structure would offer (like the nineteenth century galleria) all the aspects of a city in miniature, its concourse providing access to four levels of shops, restaurants, etc.; 2) This bridge element, backed by a parking facility, would also constitute a new "head" building at the end of the covered platforms, thereby paralleling in its placement and form the still extant nineteenth century terminus. One may regard this as a late twentieth century *répétition différent*; that is, as a transformed reflection of the original building; 3) The actual line of the proposed bridge element would flank the Sihl River and thereby mark the course of the tributary which is at present covered by rail tracks. This would in effect reveal a hidden aspect of the urban topography; 4) The multi-use "wall" along Zollstrasse flanking the rail yards would be sufficient to provide the necessary additional volume required by the demands of development; and finally 5) The horizontal low profile maintained by the whole scheme would harmonize precisely with the still largely nineteenth century skyline of Zurich. The failure to commission this scheme which is so obviously "for, rather than against the city," to paraphrase the architect's own competition slogan, makes one fear for the future development of Zurich. One large high-rise megacomplex built over the air rights of the rail head will surely be sufficient to convert this still elegant and unique city into one more international Alphaville.

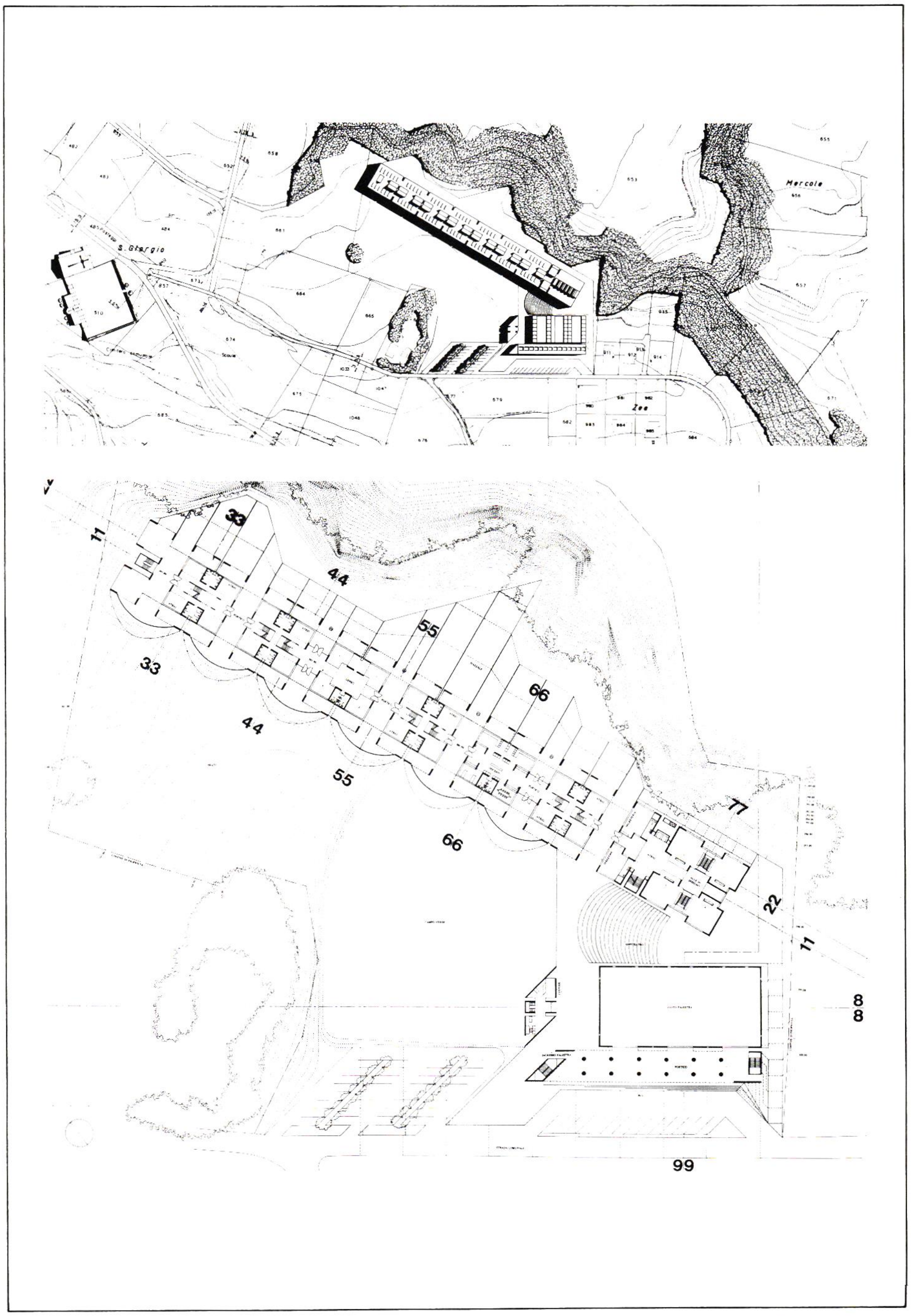
The "viaduct," or bridge, building type—derived in part from Kahn's Venice project of 1969 and in part from Rossi's first sketches for the Gallaratese block of 1970—has played a major role in Botta's urban repertoire. It was most fully elaborated in his Perugia proposal of 1971, a linear administration and multi-purpose structure designed in collaboration with Snozzi. In nearly a decade of practice, however, Botta has been able to realize this type only once and even then it was closer to being a series of stacked pavilions rather than a "bridge." The four versions that this paradigm passed through between the Locarno school project of 1970 and the school that Botta finally saw completed at Morbio Inferiore in 1976 (figs. 10-15) testify to the difficulty he experienced in trying to master Kahn's geometrical method of generating cellular space (cf. Kahn's Bryn Mawr dormitories of 1960). At the same time, for all the brilliance of the Morbio Inferiore school, Botta seems to have failed to understand the quintessentially urban nature of the Locarno *parti,* for while a relatively successful attempt was made to relate the strictly orthogonal form of the Morbio school to the irregular tree line at the crest of the hill (one should note the mediating role of the playground in this respect) this solution is vitiated by the angular siting of the gymnasium which, taken directly from Locarno, is incapable here of responding to the agrarian topography of the site.

Apart from his Zurich station proposal and his first work—a church addition built in Genestrerio when he was eighteen—the State Bank in Fribourg (figs. 16-18) is the most contextually responsive urban proposal that Botta has made to date. This project, which was won in competition in 1977, directly demonstrates the urban morphological arguments of the Tendenza. Situated opposite the station forecourt and at the northern apex of a nineteenth century extension to the old city, its location could hardly be more prominent. Botta has clearly shown how his solution directly reflects the structural inflections of the particular urban context. The sides of his corner composition (*bâtiment d'angle*) respond directly to the morphology of the terraces they face across the flanking boulevards while the corner itself is elaborately structured into two components—a projecting corner drum celebrating the apex, and a transitional cube confronting the station forecourt and articulating the drum from the office volumes which flank the converging boulevards on either side.

In a semi-rural context Botta's capacity to relate his architecture to a specific site seems best demonstrated by three houses that he designed and built in sequence: first at Cadenazzo in 1971 (fig. 19), then at Riva San Vitale in 1973 (figs. 20-22), and finally at Ligornetto in 1976 (figs. 25, 26). Apart from responding to the specifics of particular landscapes, each house made an oblique reference to a specific vernacular form. Thus, the gridded glass and concrete block facade of the Cadenazzo house seems to

10 *10 School at Morbio Inferiore.*
Mario Botta, 1972–1977.
Axonometric, project as executed.

11 View along classroom complex.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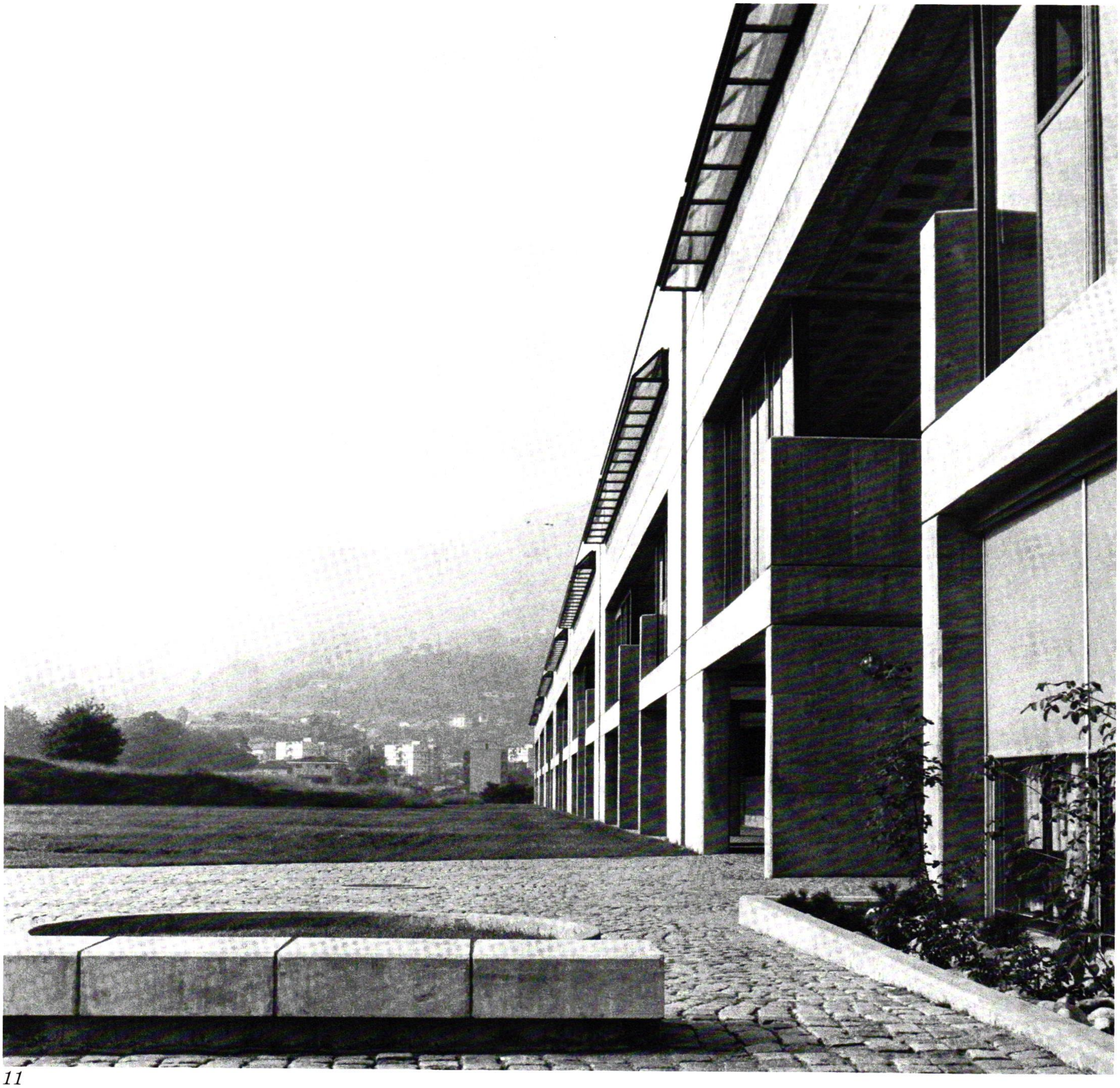

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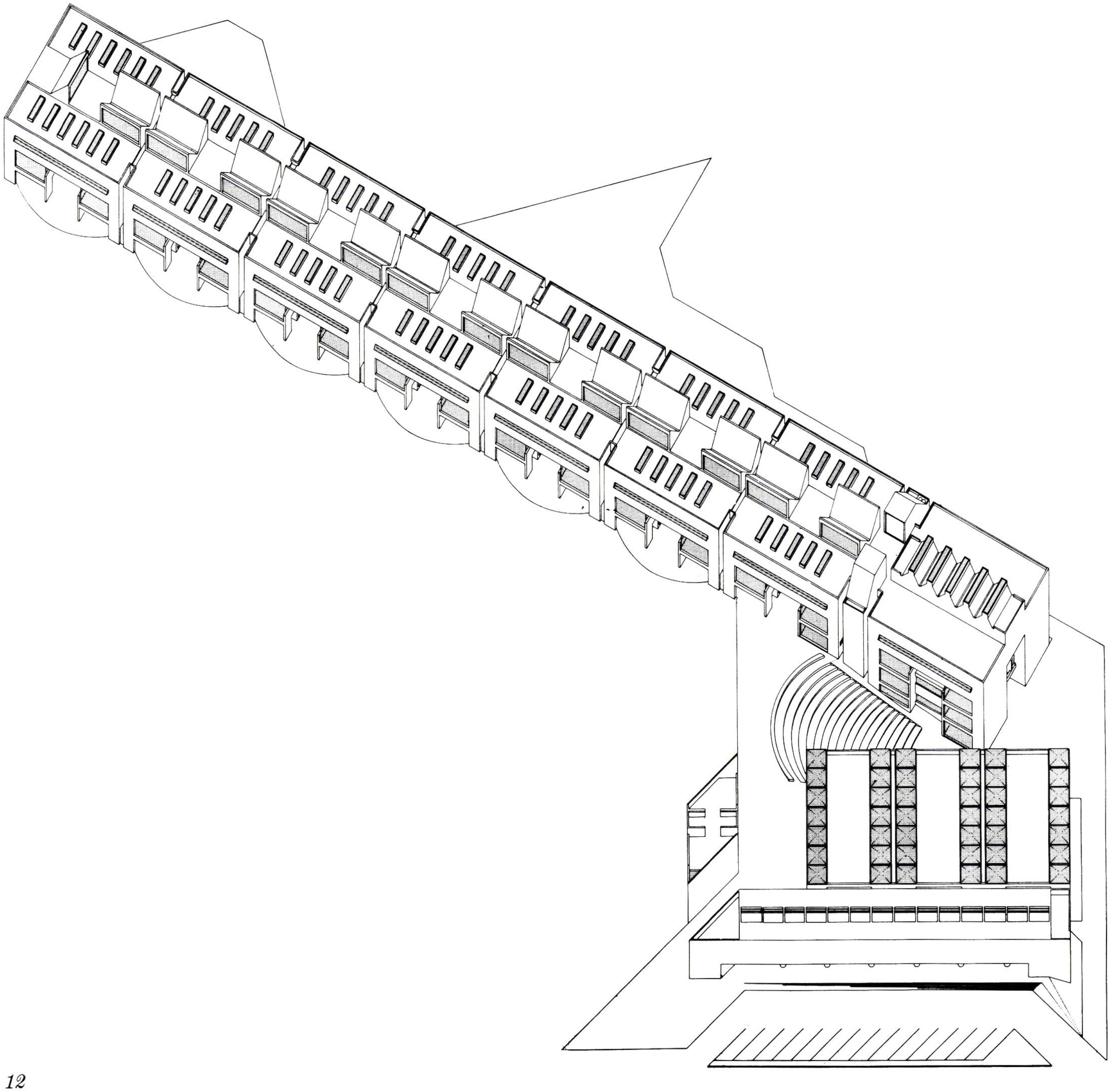

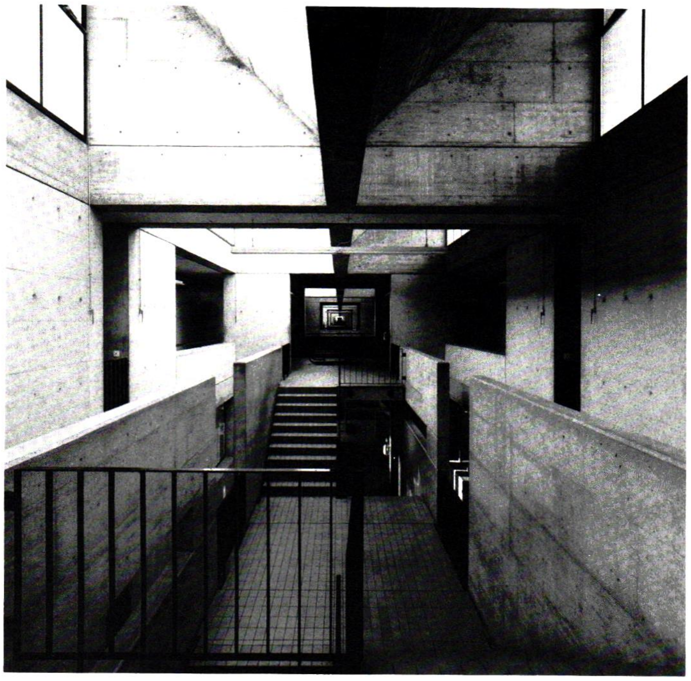

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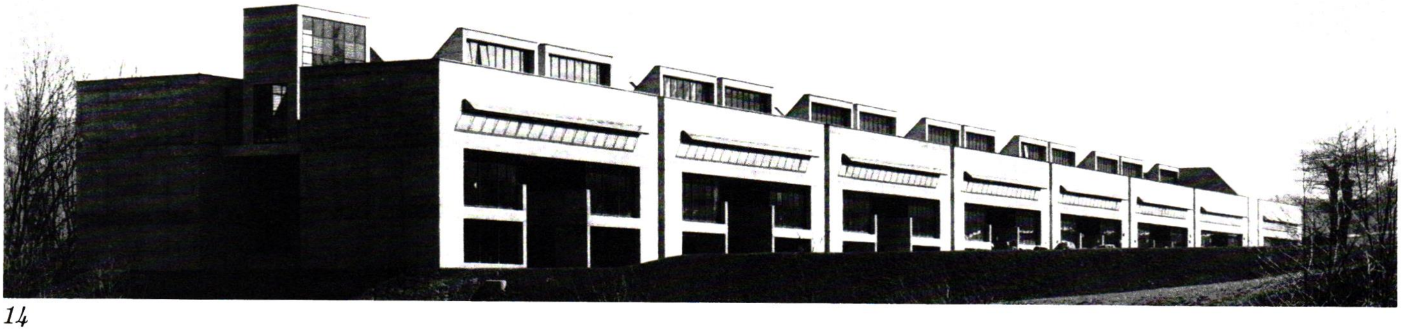
12 School at Morbio Inferiore.
Mario Botta, 1972-1977. Axonometric.

13 View along the interior corridor of the classroom complex.

14 Exterior of classroom complex.

15 Longitudinal section through the classroom complex.



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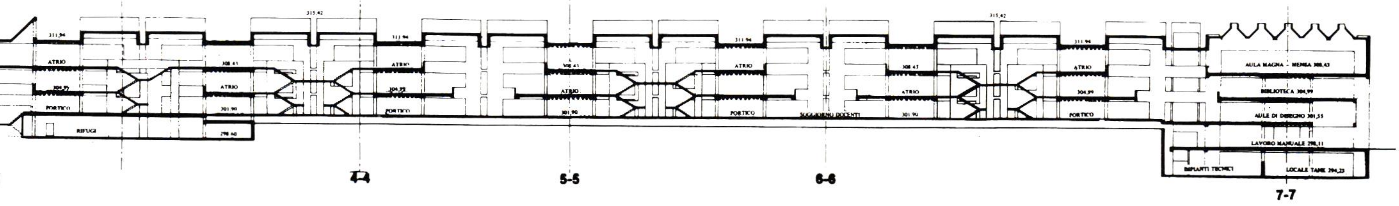
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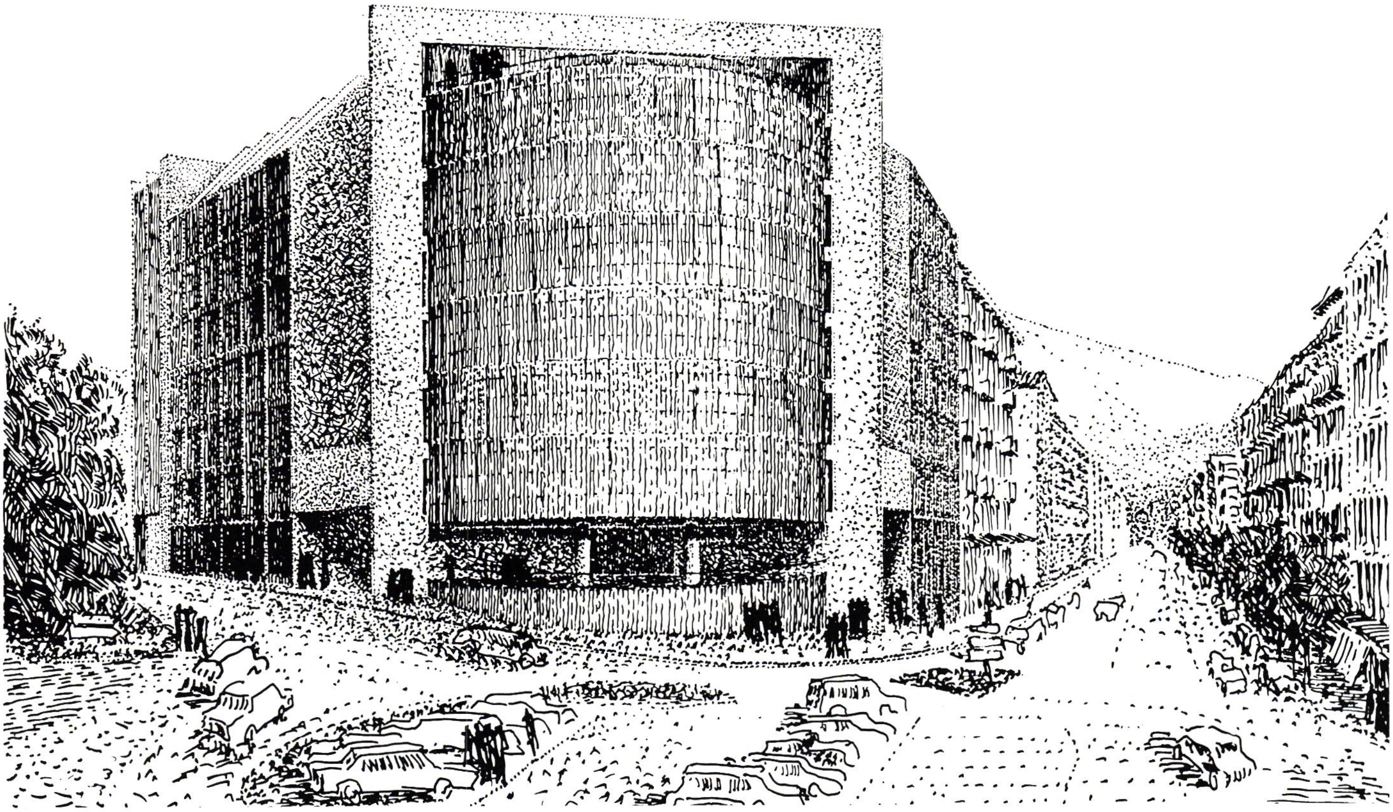
16 State Bank in Fribourg, competition. Mario Botta, 1977. Perspective.

17 Inverted axonometric.



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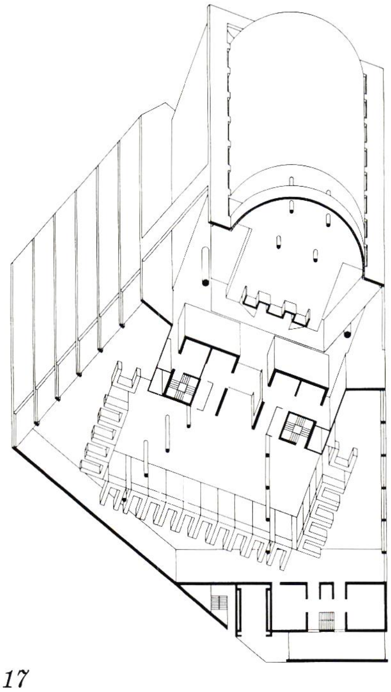

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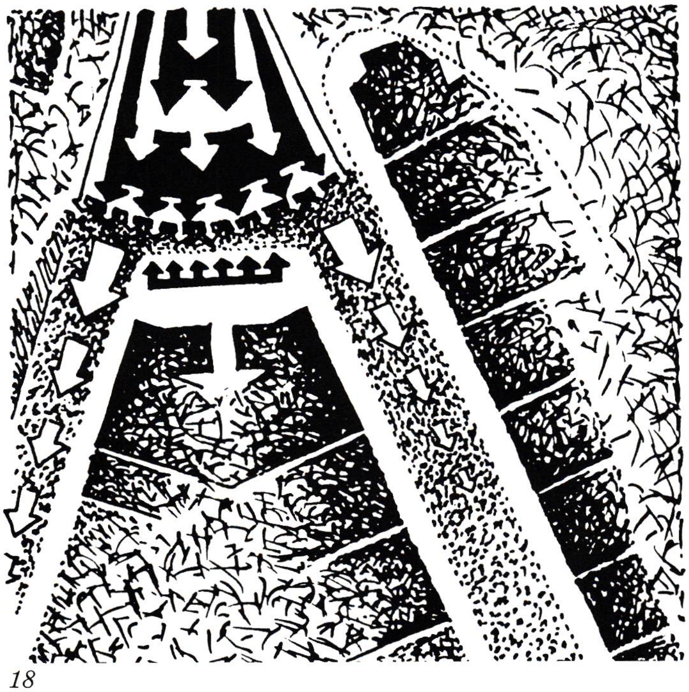

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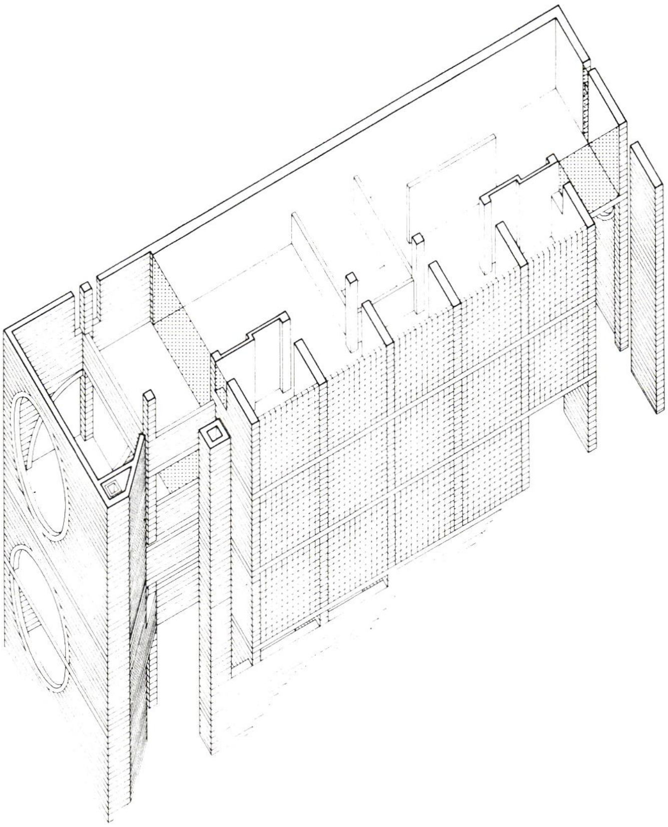
18 Site plan. The building is articulated into three parts. The 'head' which fronts onto the Place de la Gare and the two sections which flank the Boulevard de Pérelles and La Route des Arsenaux.

19 Single family house at Cadenazzo. Mario Botta, 1970-1971. Second floor axonometric.

allude to the open checkered block work of the traditional drying barn, while the solid masonry corners of the Riva San Vitale house refer, along with the type itself, not only to the traditional *rocoli* or bird-catching towers of the region but also to the vernacular (Tuscan) four-pier agrarian shelter form (see Gino Valle's house, built at Sutrio near Udine in 1958 [fig. 23] or Léon Krier's use of a similar form in his Tuscany house projected in 1974 [fig. 24]). Finally, the concrete blocks of the house at Ligornetto change color every three courses, from red to grey, thereby creating a banded masonry surface reminiscent of a two-tone Ticinese nineteenth century brick tradition.

Botta's domestic work to date seems to be predicated on seven basic principles: 1) The house is generally to be rendered as a marker or boundary in the landscape; at Ligornetto, for example, it establishes the frontier where the village ends and the agrarian system begins, furthermore the visual acoustics of its "concave" plan form (cf. Ligornetto and Ronchamp) deliberately focus the internal volume of the house toward the village; 2) The principal stairs of Botta's houses are invariably contained within structural modules close to the transverse central axes of these long barn-like boxes; the Riva San Vitale house is an exception to this; 3) *Passerelle* corridors are used to serve and structure the primary spaces of the elevated living volumes; both the Riva San Vitale and Cadenazzo houses display this last feature; 4) Openings invariably afford selected views over the landscape; at Cadenazzo, for example, Kahnian circular windows divide the available prospect into contrasting views of the distant Alps and the vineyard, rooftop landscape of the adjacent valley; 5) Wherever possible, partitions and doors are reduced to a minimum, and exterior terraces are rendered in such a way as to fuse with interior volumes—once again the house at Cadenazzo is exemplary; 6) In his terrace housing and even in his school typology Botta attempts to treat the domestic unit or classroom cluster as though it were a freestanding element (see his Rancate *Siedlung* designed with Snozzi in 1974 and his terrace housing projected for Riva San Vitale in 1979); 7) Last but not least, and this feature is patently regional, Botta always gains entry to his houses or cluster forms through recessed



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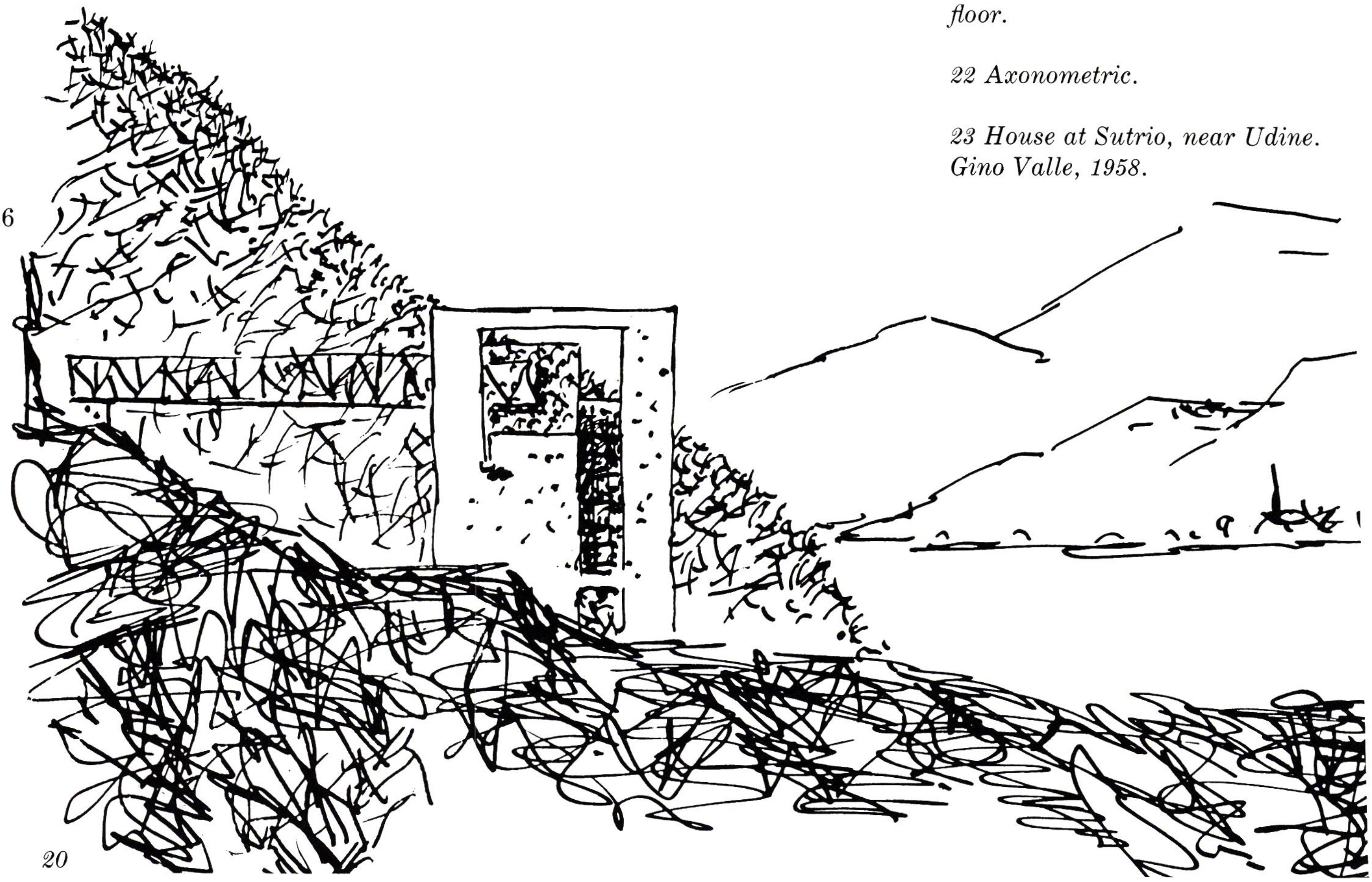
20 Single family house at Riva San Vitale. Mario Botta, 1972–1973.

21 Axonometric, cut at the third floor.

22 Axonometric.

23 House at Sutrio, near Udine. Gino Valle, 1958.



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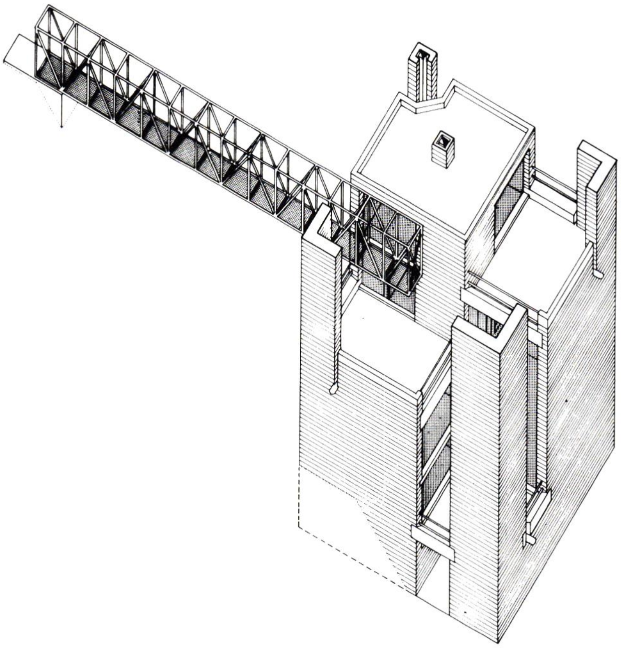

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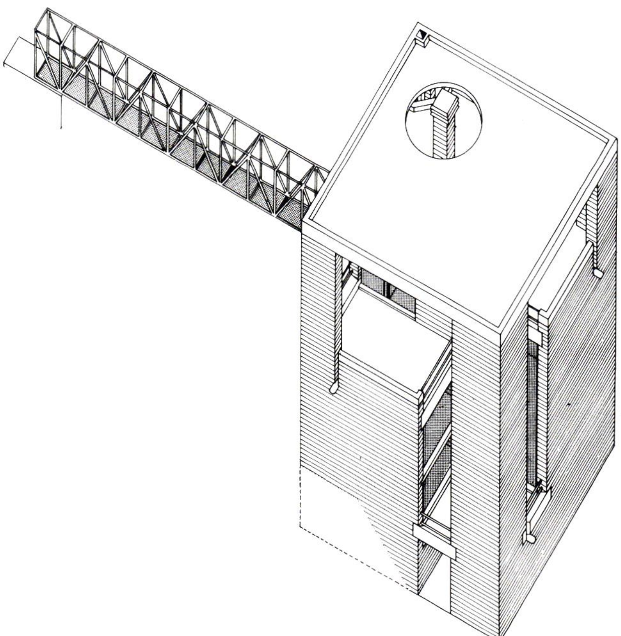

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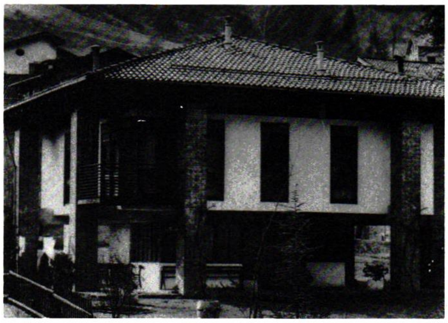

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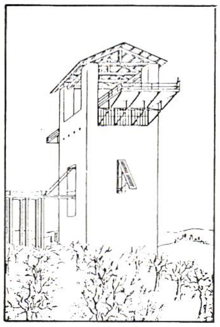

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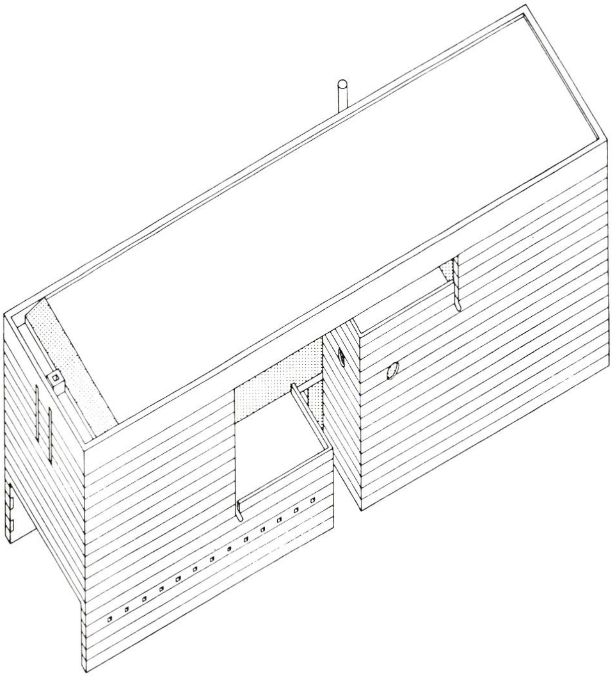
24 House project for a painter, Tuscany. Léon Krier, 1974.

25 Single family house at Ligornetto. Mario Botta, 1975-1976. Axonometric.

26 Perspective sketch showing relationship of the form to both the landscape and the village.

atria open to the air. Like Le Corbusier's use of the *piloti*, such an approach presupposes the elevation of the principal rooms to the first floor.

Unlike the neo-Corbusian houses built in the region by Snozzi, Ruchat, and Galfetti (Galfetti's Rotalini House at Bellinzona of 1961 may be considered as inaugurating the Ticino movement), Botta's houses are never contoured into the site, but instead declare themselves as clear primary forms set against the topography and the sky. Their surprising capacity to harmonize with the agrarian landscape seems to derive directly from their *analogical* form and finish, that is to say, from the concrete block from which they are invariably built and from the simple primary box-like forms which, together with the proportions adopted, allude directly to the traditional barns from which they are derived and to which they evidently refer. The intractable problem of achieving a satisfactory resolution between rationalist formal principles and an analogical commitment to the vernacular—the current problem of accessibility in modern architectural culture (particularly at the private level)—seems to be resolved in Botta's work through his strategy of according the vernacular shell precedence over the Rationalism of the interior. To this end the steel fenestration articulating the domestic space is always withdrawn from the facade into those recessed and shaded terraces by which his barn-like forms are penetrated. Apart from the imposed rationality of the flat roof, the inherently abstract quality of the traditional agrarian structure, long since celebrated by Bernard Rudofsky in his book *Architecture Without Architects*, is here capitalized upon as much as possible. The primitive architectonic nature of such structures even in their traditional form is surely the associational device through which Botta is able to pass from the vernacular referent of the exterior to the stoic and astringent order of his rationalist interiors; to the black slate, white-washed block, radiant wall panels, and to Escher-like staircases by which his modernist space is structured. It is by means such as these that Botta is able to evade the false naturalness of bourgeois ideology of which Steinmann wrote, after Roland Barthes,[3] in his seminal essay of September 1976 "Reality as History—Notes for a Discussion of Re-



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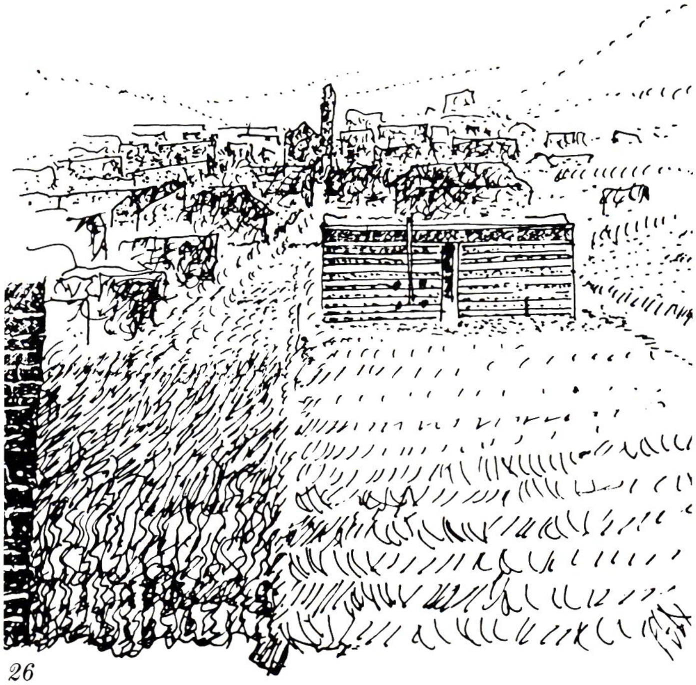

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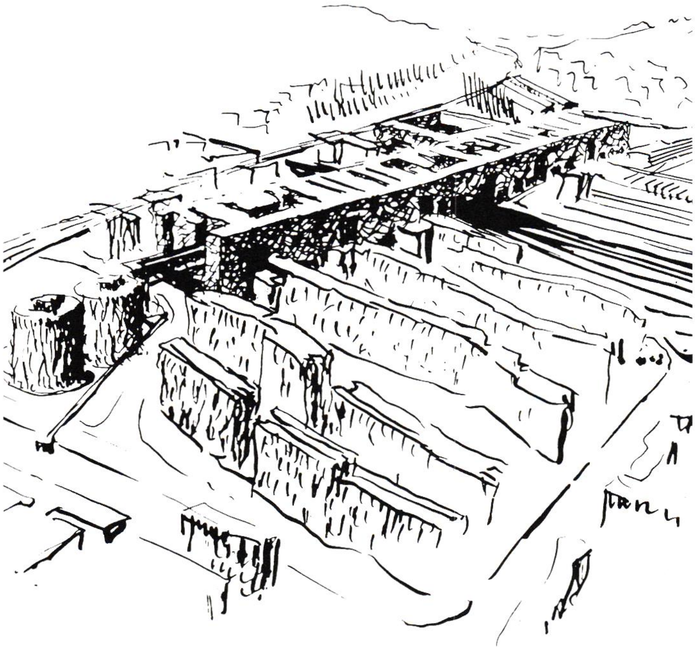

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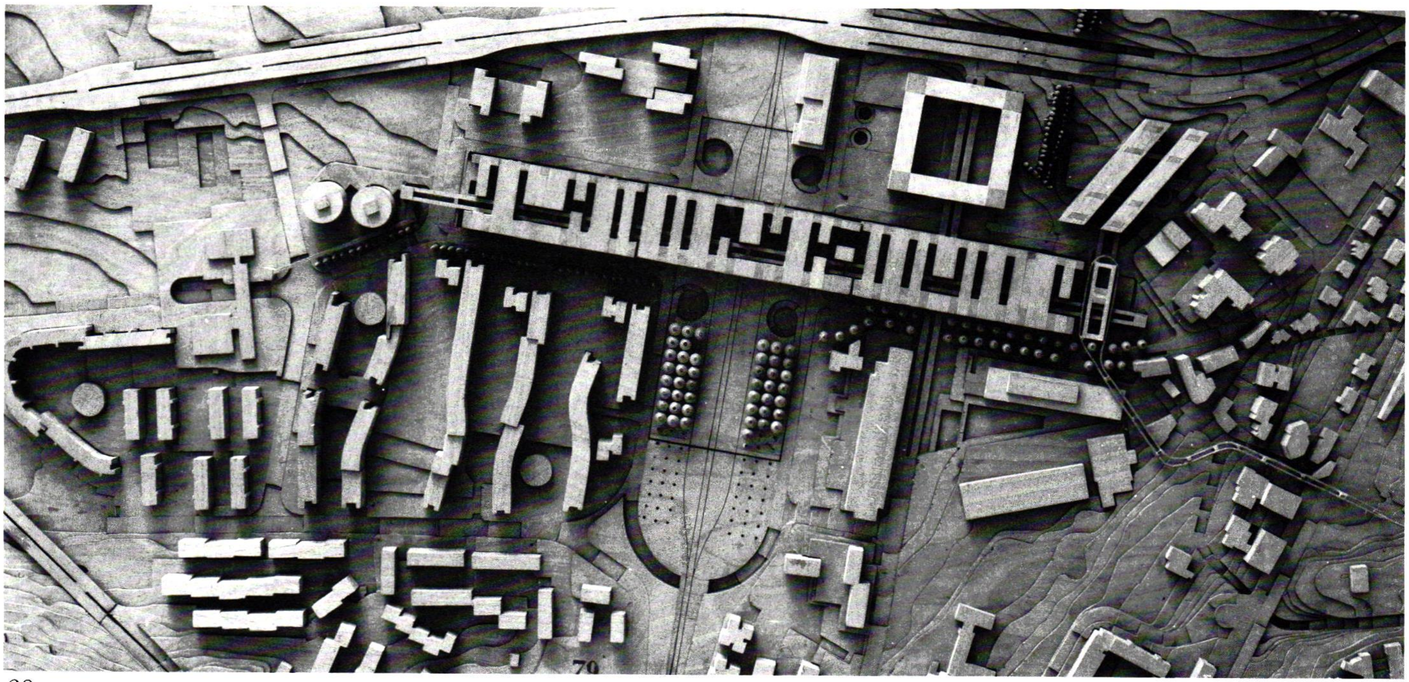
alism in Architecture." On this occasion Steinmann summed up the fundamental aims of the Tendenza and the Ticinese when he wrote of the now discredited functionalism that "The recognition of an autonomy of architecture means: to compromise this system of myths which passes itself off as a system of facts."[4]

Despite this indigenous demonstration of a modern domestic sensibility, the most critical aspect of Botta's achievement does not reside in his houses but rather in his public projections; particularly in those large scale works which he has developed in collaboration with Luigi Snozzi—their ill-fated proposal for Zurich and, of more importance for the future of urban development in general, their project for Centro Direzionale di Perugia (figs. 1 [frontispiece], 27–41). This relatively non-rhetorical work (as distinct from certain urban proposals made by the Tendenza) is clearly projected as a "city within a city," and the wider implications of this design clearly stem from its evident applicability to many megalopolitan situations throughout the world. This is no master plan, for master planning is regarded as anathema by the Neo-Rationalists, but rather an urban intervention in the best sense of the term. The whole situation synthesizes three major principles: 1) The exploitation of a major transportation interchange linking the historic center of Perugia to the nineteenth century rail and twentieth century road systems, and the use of this linkage as the basis for a public intervention in form of a mega-viaduct built as an "arcaded" thick wall, capable of signaling its urban presence over a great distance within the cacophony of the megalopolitan region (see certain analogous strategies postulated by Team X in the late fifties, such as the 'landcastle' concept of the Smithsons or the 'rivers, harbors, canals, and docks' of Kahn); 2) The provision of an enclosed galleria raised above the entry/parking and interchange levels at grade and subgrade and constituting a new urban realm elevated some five floors in the air, giving direct access to public services, shops, restaurants, etc., and to access towers stacked along the outer sides of the thick wall; these towers feed and support an office infrastructure built as a "light-filter" both above and below the suspended galleria or the *collegamento principale pedon-*

27 Centro Direzionale, Perugia, competition. Mario Botta with Luigi Snozzi, 1971. Perspective sketch.

28 Model.

29 Diagram showing the link between the old city and the Centro Direzionale. A) monorail station, B) monorail, C) pedestrian causeway, D) Centro Direzionale, F) railway.



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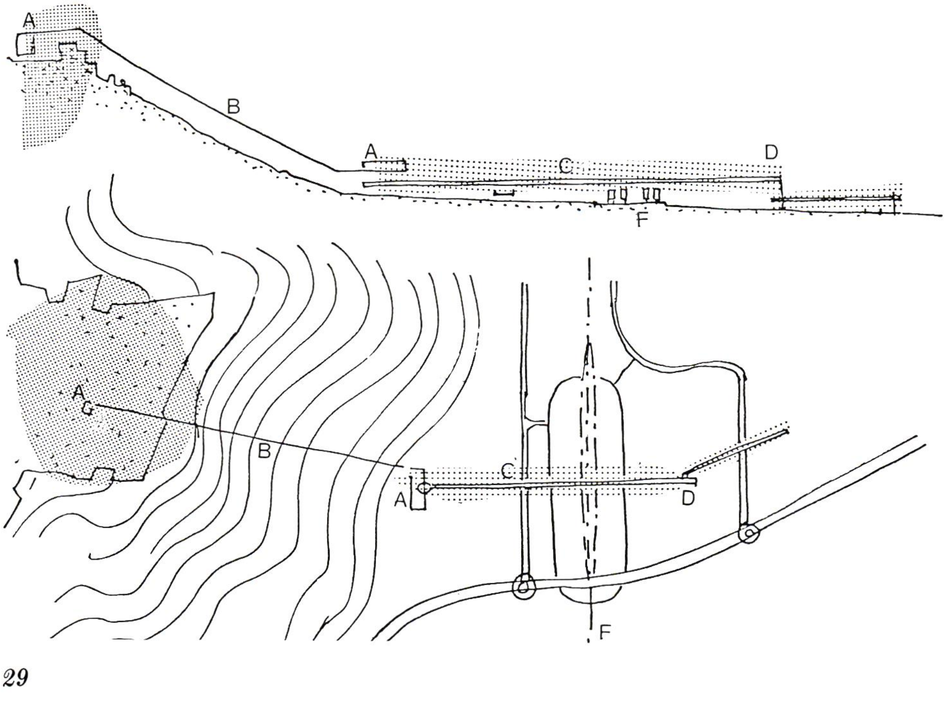

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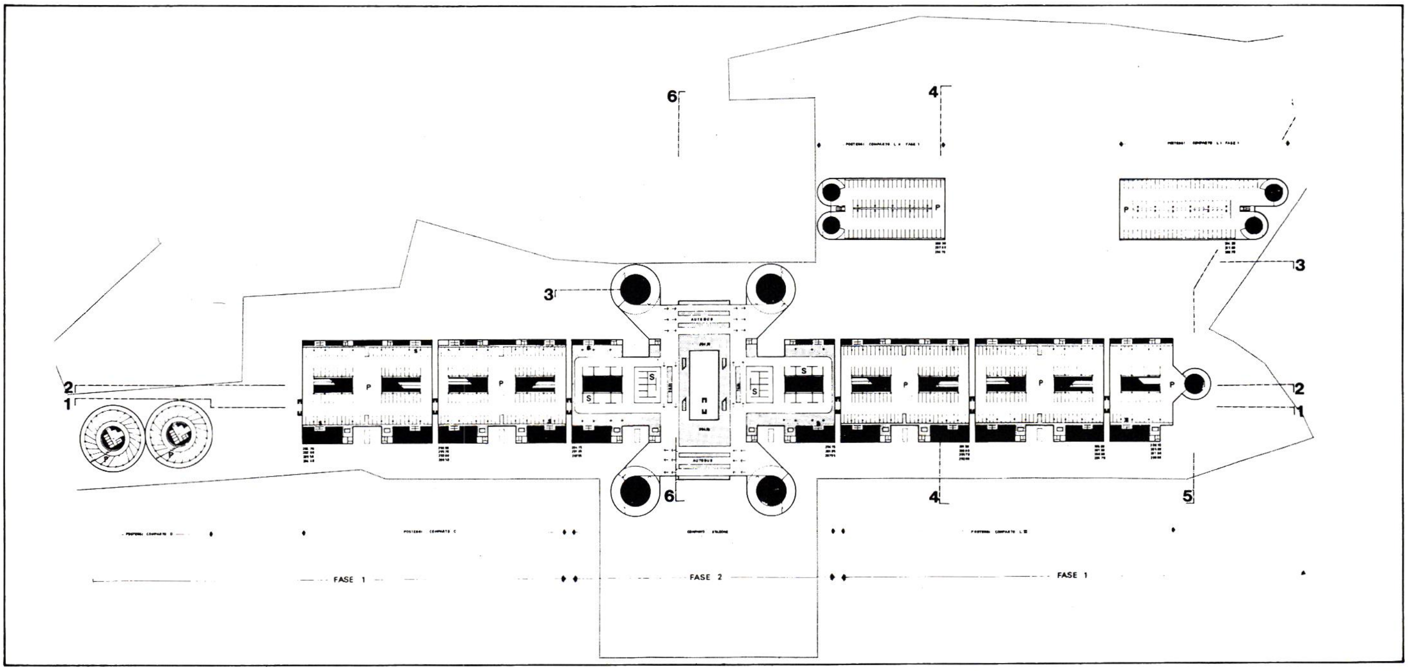
30 Centro Direzionale, Perugia, competition. Mario Botta with Luigi Snozzi, 1971. Plan, underground parking.

31 Ground floor plan.

32 Intermediate level plan.

33 Upper level plan.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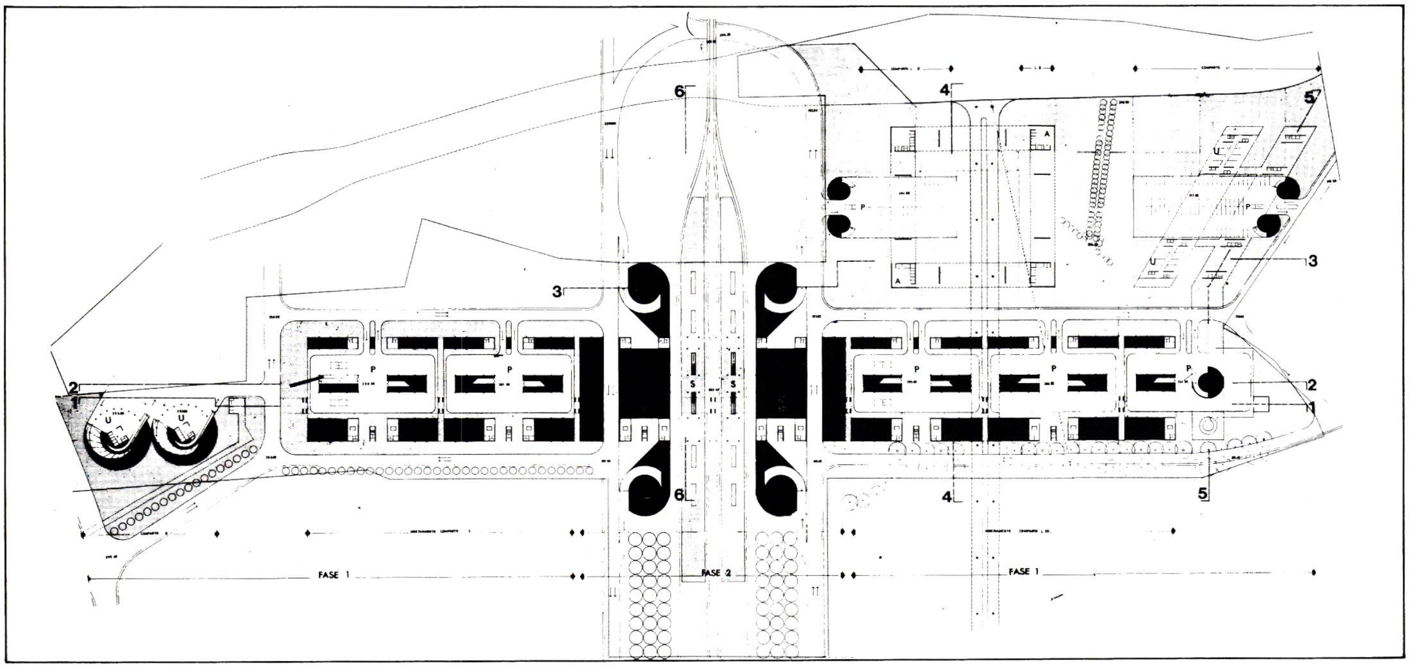
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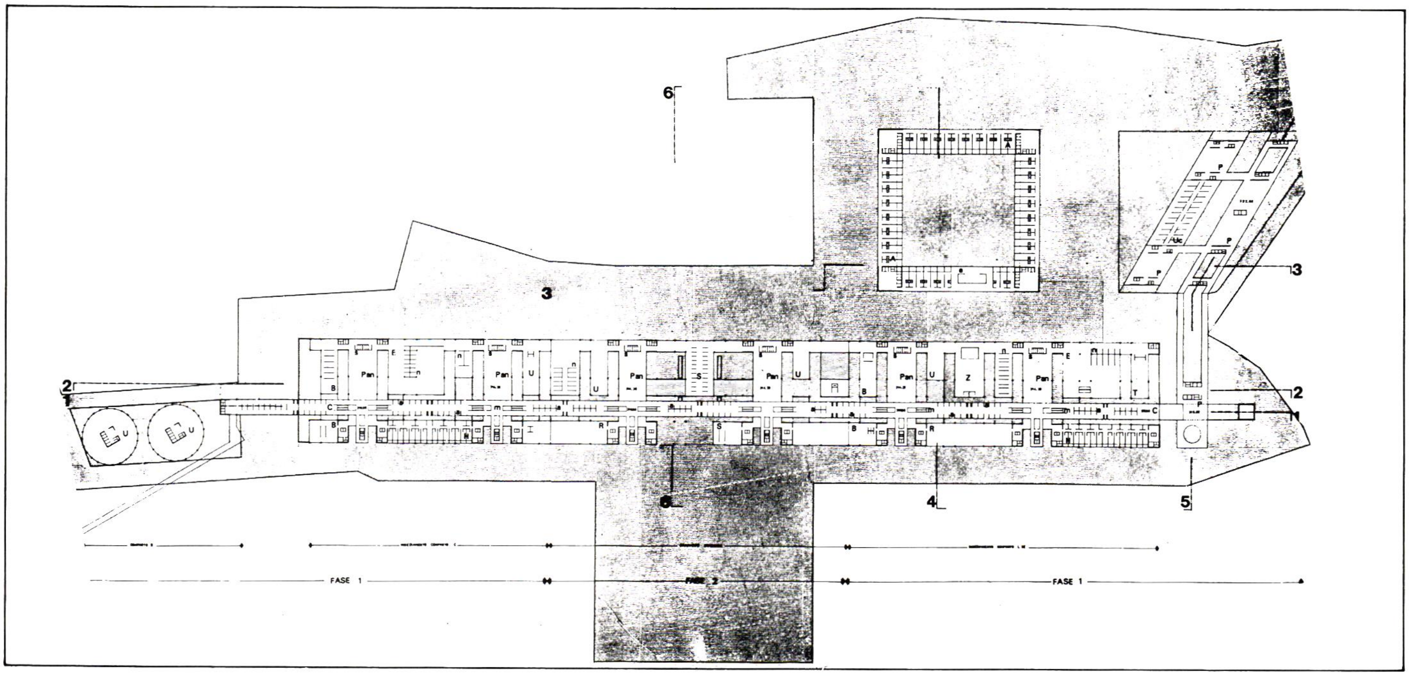
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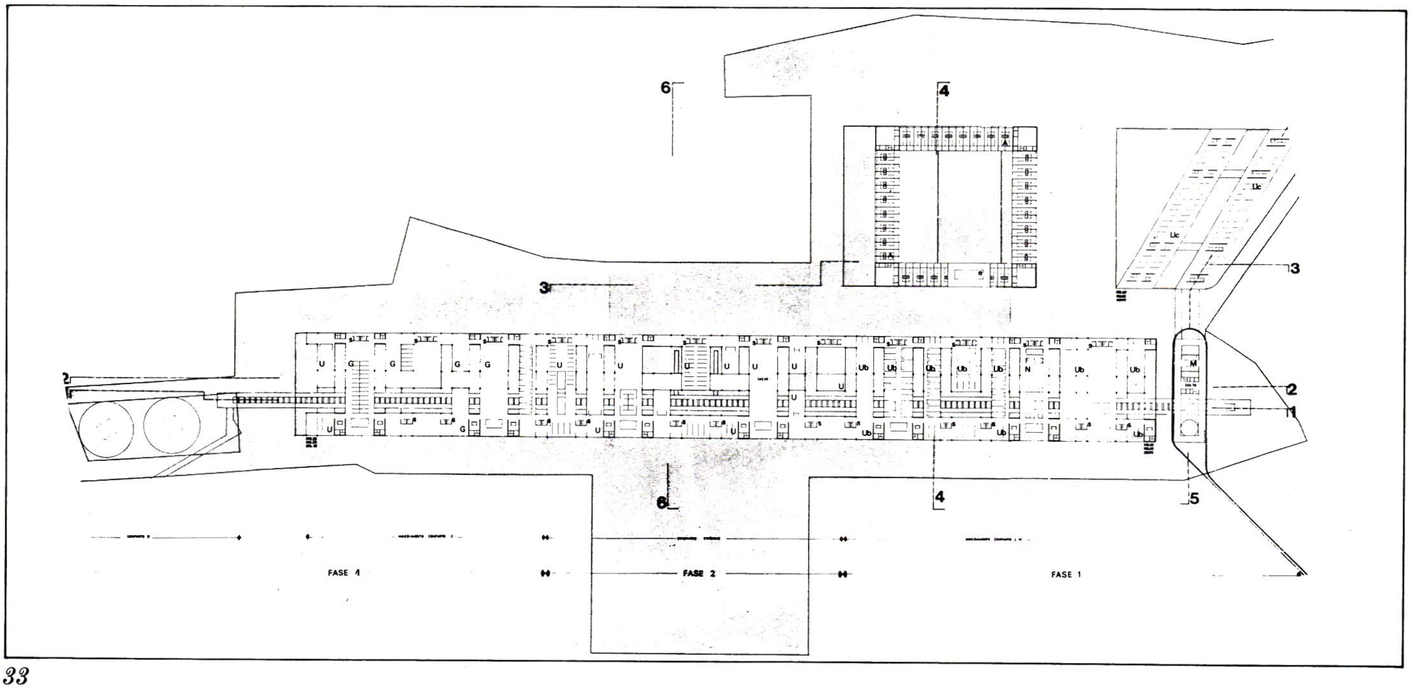
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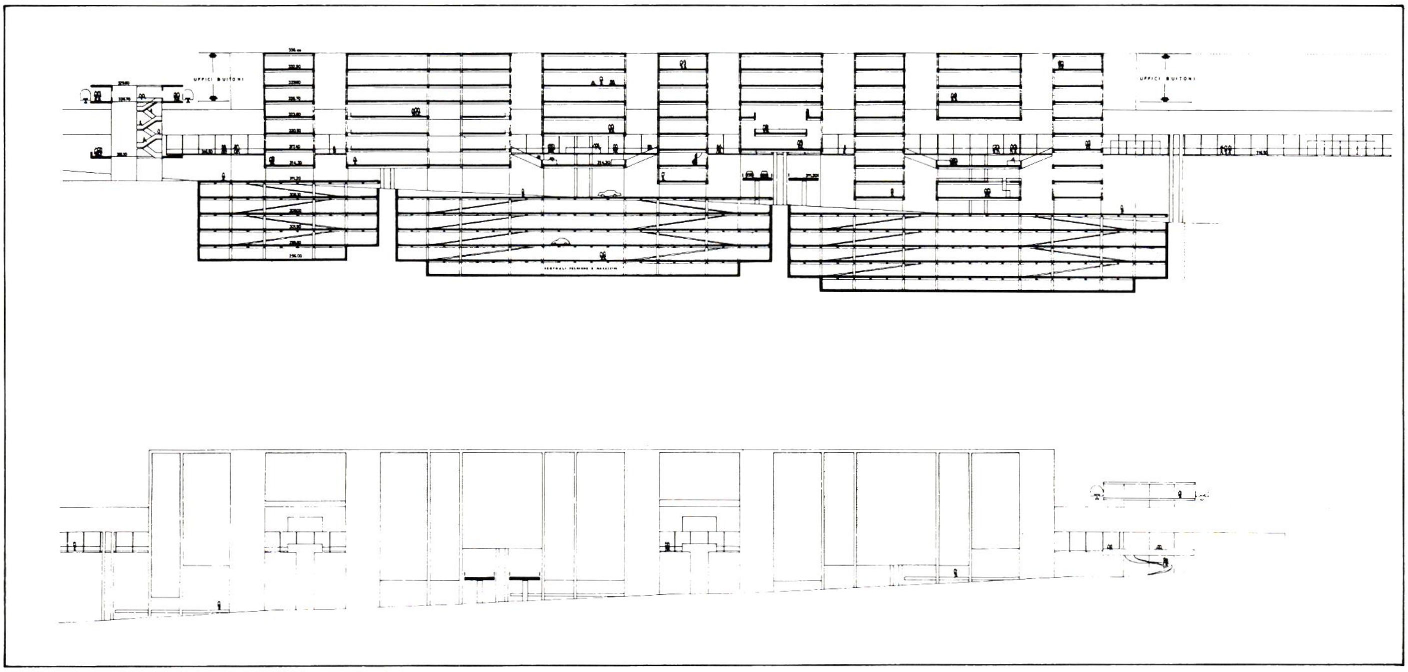
34 Centro Direzionale, Perugia, competition. Mario Botta with Luigi Snozzi, 1971. Section and southeast elevation.

35 Sections and elevation. Upper section shows cut through pedestrian causeway.

36 Detailed plan of area closest to the monorail station. Accommodation consists of covered piazzas, shops, ticket offices, banks, and restaurants.

37 Detailed plan of monorail 'head' section. Upper level divided up into offices and light industrial space.



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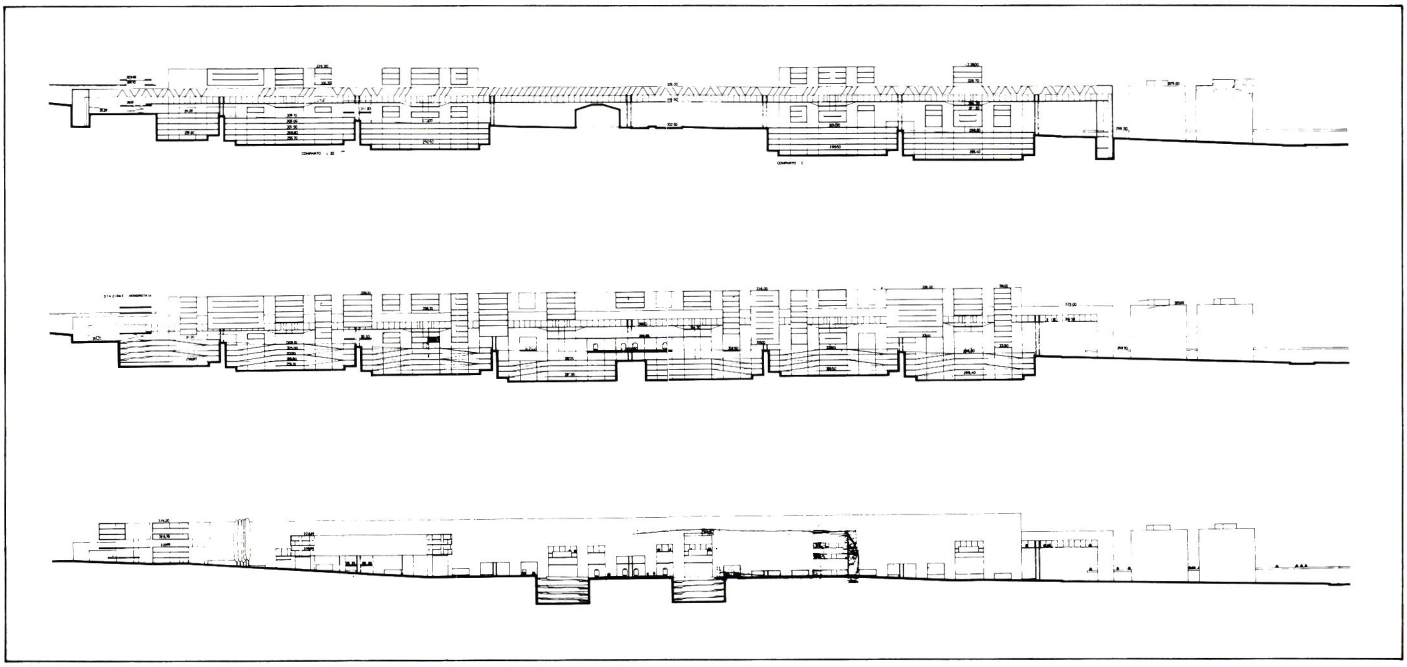

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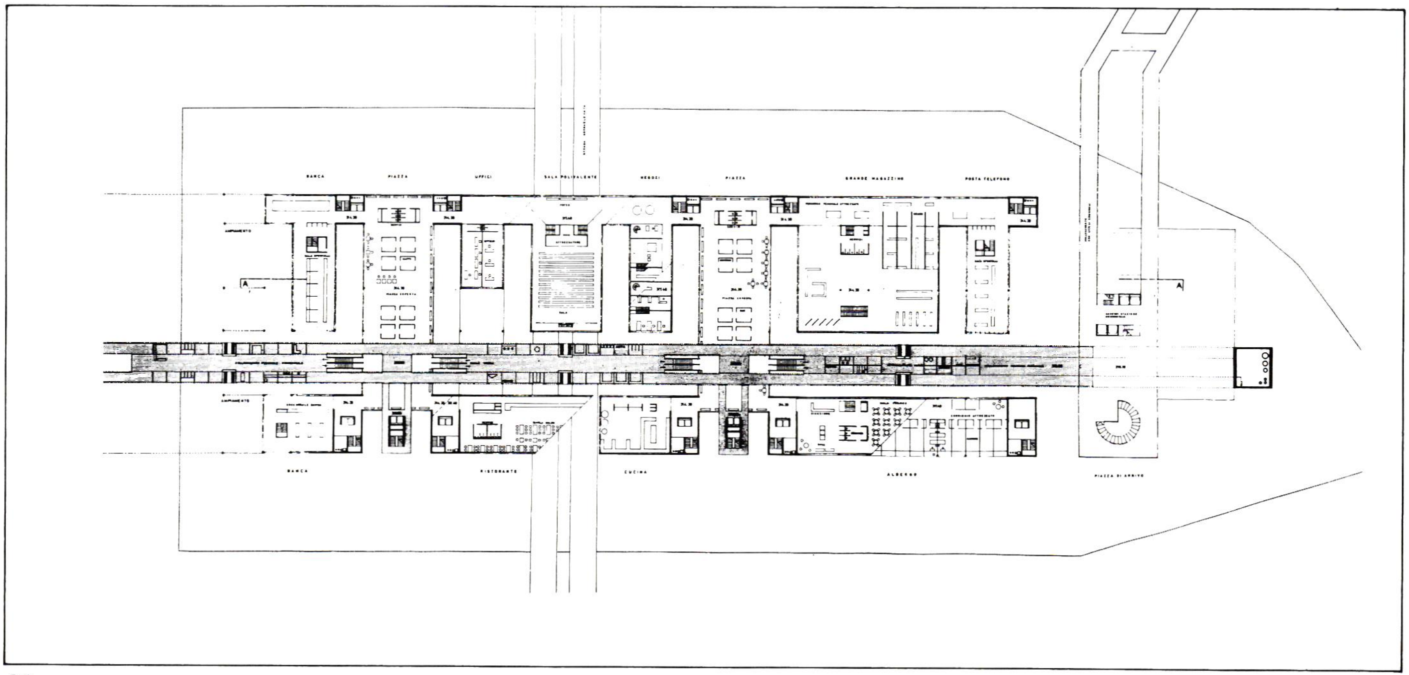
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SALA POLIVALENTE
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ALBERGO
PIAZZA DI ARRIVO

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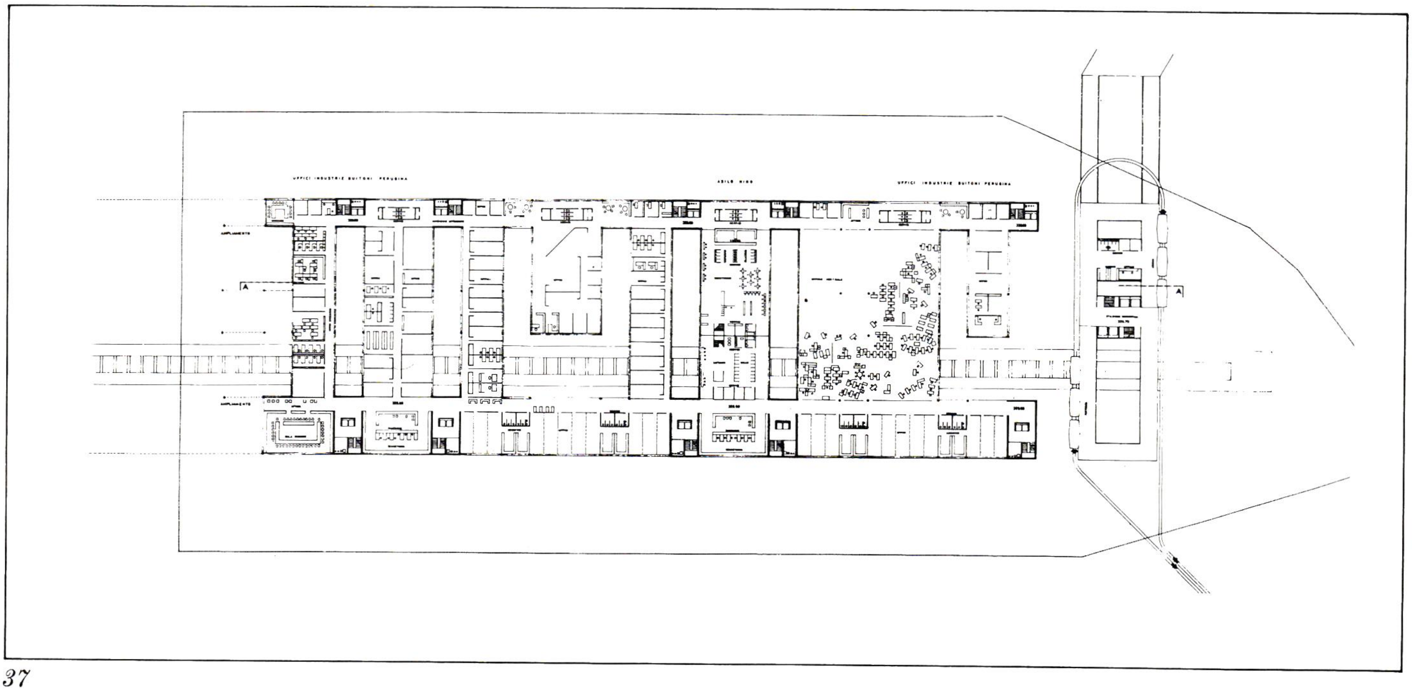
UFFICI INDUSTRIE BUITONI PERUGINA
ASILO NIDO
UFFICI INDUSTRIE BUITONI PERUGINA
AMPLIAMENTO
A

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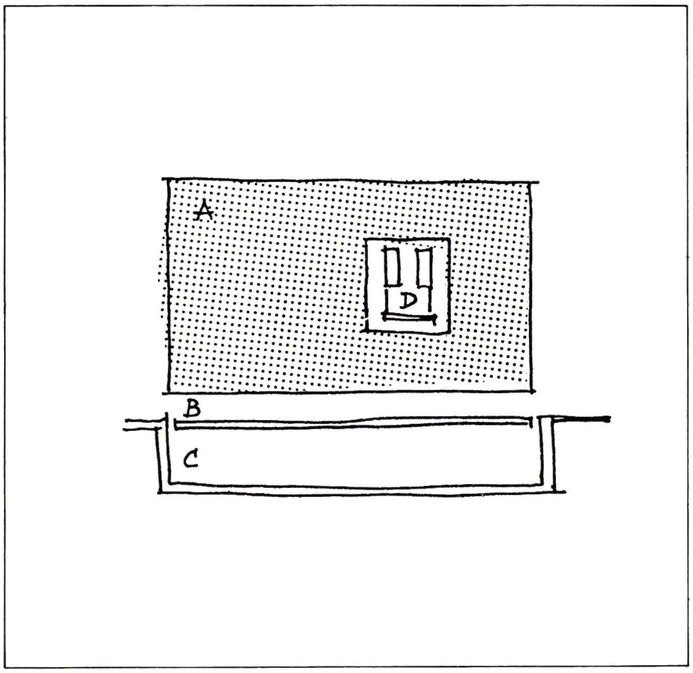
38 Centro Direzionale, Perugia, competition. Mario Botta with Luigi Snozzi, 1971. Diagram of circulation spine. A) rentable office volume, B) vehicle area, loading, servicing, and entry to parking, C) parking, D) pedestrian causeway penetrating office development.

39 Diagram showing circulation and principal expansion of relatively random stacking of office floors.

40, 41 System of pedestrian access showing linkage between the horizontal causeway, escalators, and the passage to elevator cores serving the offices.



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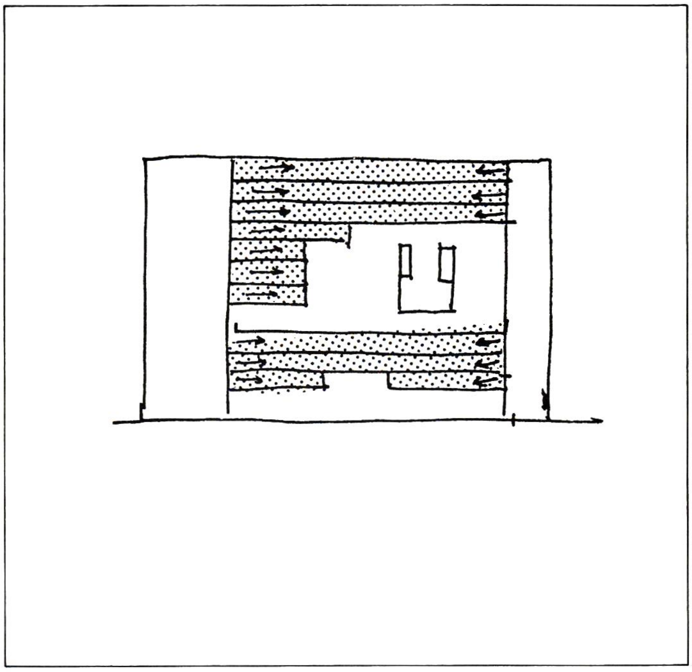

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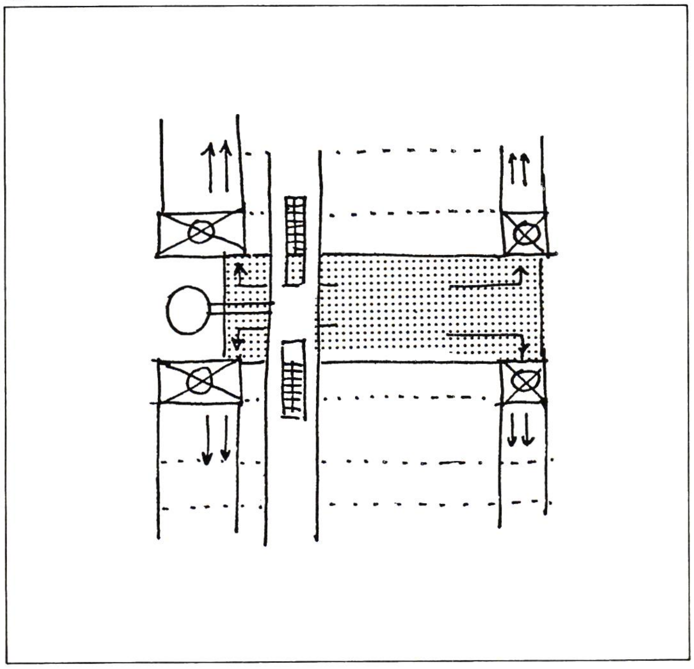

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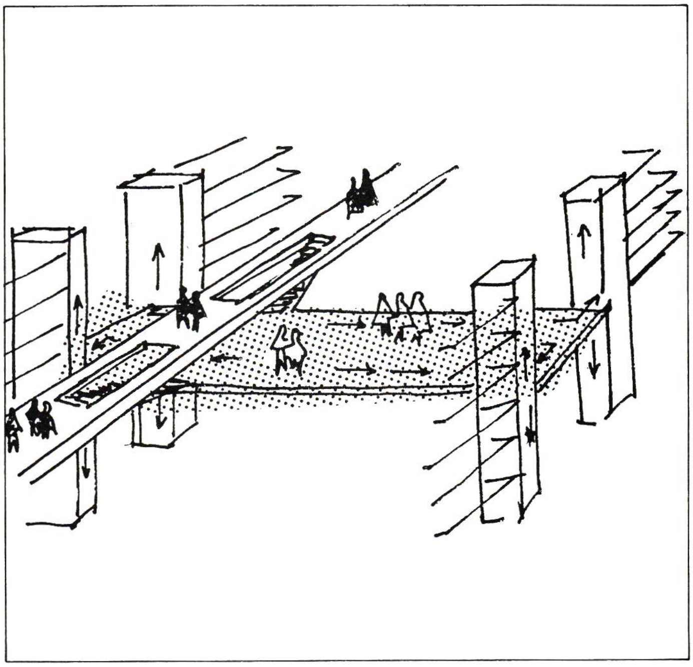

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ale; 3) The use of this intervention as a strategy with which to provide a range of random facilities at grade level, such as a public park and a residential perimeter block, etc.

Removed from all the utopian projections of the Modern Movement which history now seems to render obsolete because of their *boundless* nature and the cultural inaccessibility of modernist form, this work is utopian only insofar as it is defined, rational, and human. The feasibility and historical pertinence of Botta's Perugia is borne out by the fact that interventions on this scale and even of vaguely similar sectional forms have already been realized in the atrium hotels that John Portman has built in the United States. Are we not again confronted with capitalism's subtle appropriation of a cultural and technical capacity that legitimately belongs to the society as a whole? In a context in which Western industrial development gives precedence to the operational imperatives of structural urbanism, rather than to the *concrete* determination of urban form, Botta's and Snozzi's public works are projected as critical strategies for urban intervention. Distinct from the regressive utopias of the twenties, these "fragmentary" monuments are specific, limited, and realizable. They posit relevant types for urban place creation and proffer strategies for the definition of bounded domains; they are capable of articulating significant discontinuities within the space endlessness of the megalopolis.

Notes

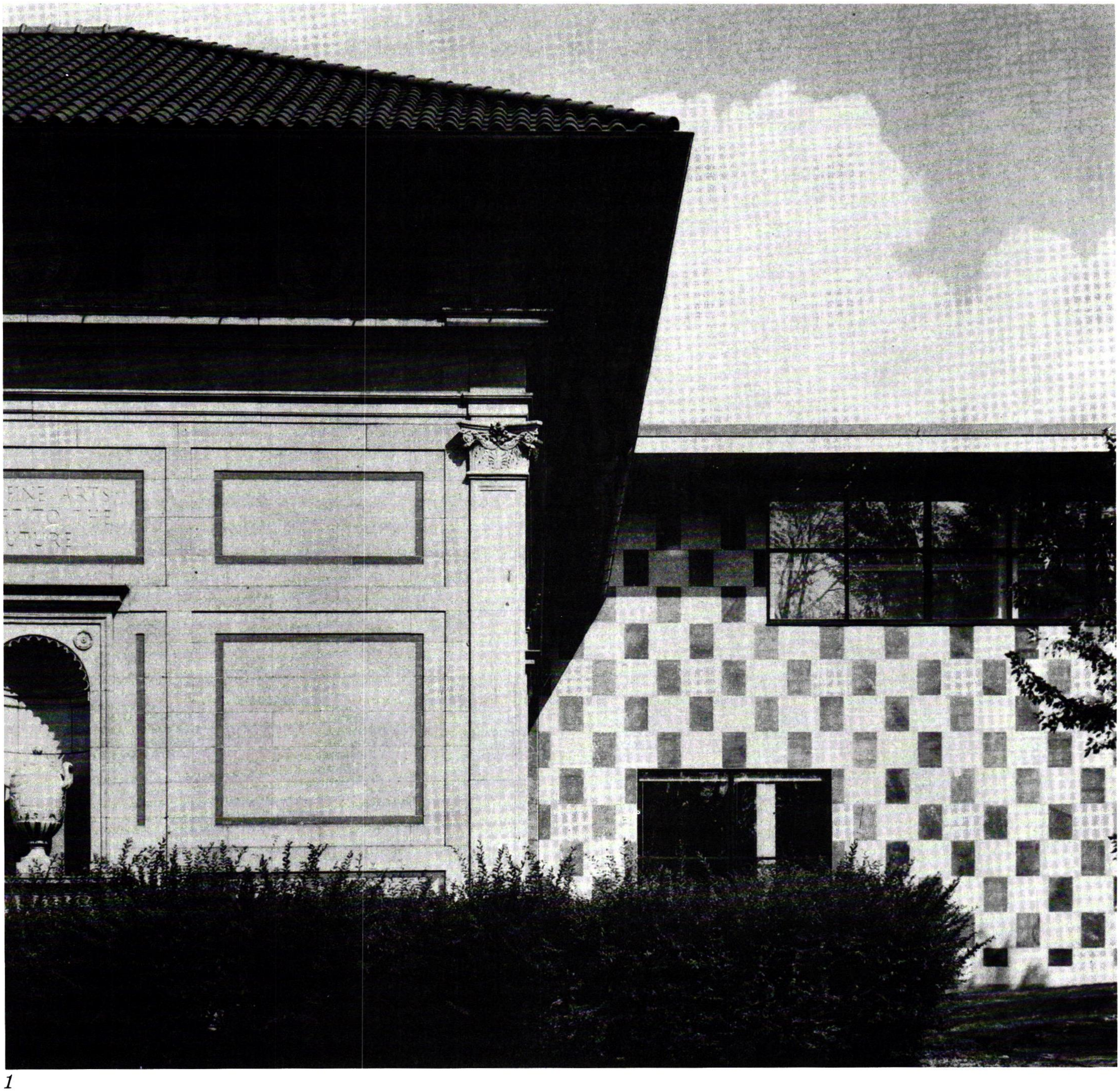
A version of this text was originally prepared for the Pro Helvetia catalogue and exhibition on the work of Mario Botta.

1. At the same time Como is the home of the originally Italian Rationalist movement.
2. First published on the occasion of the exhibition staged in the ETH, Zurich, in 1975, by Martin Steinmann and Tomas Boga.
3. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1957).
4. Martin Steinmann, "Reality as History—Notes for a Discussion of Realism in Architecture," *Architecture + Urbanism*, 9, 1976, p. 31.

Figure Credits
1, 2, 5-18, 20, 25-41 Courtesy Mario Botta.
3 From Francesco Moschini, ed., *Aldo Rossi: Projects and drawings, 1962-1979* (Florence: Centro Di, 1979).
4 From *Louis I. Kahn. Complete Works 1935-74*, Heinz Ronner, Sharad Javeri, Alessandro Vasella, eds. (Basel and Stuttgart: Birkhauser Verlag, 1977).
19, 21, 22 From *Architecture + Urbanism*, 69, September 1976.
23 From *Gino Valle Architetto 1950-1978* (Milan: Edizioni Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea di Milano and Idea Editions, 1979).
24 From *Rational Architecture* (Brussels: Archives d'Architecture Moderne, 1978).

Sign and Substance: Reflections on Complexity, Las Vegas, and Oberlin

Alan Colquhoun


FINE ARTS
TO THE
UTURE

1

Sufficient attention has not been given to the change in Robert Venturi's thought between his publication of *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* in 1966 and his publication, with Denise Scott-Brown and Steven Isenour, of *Learning From Las Vegas* in 1972. If one is to comment on Venturi and Rauch's more recent buildings, it is necessary first to examine this change of position, so that the buildings may be placed in the context of both the theory and the oeuvre as a whole. The change is not total. There are many ideas that are common to the two books; the alteration of viewpoint is often more one of emphasis than of the introduction of radically new concepts. Ideas which were secondary in the first book become guiding ideas in the second. But this shift of viewpoint is nonetheless significant, and it is reflected in the work.

The main purpose of *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* was to refute the Modern Movement idea that the functional organization of a building obeyed a unitary logic which constituted its aesthetic meaning. In showing that many 'logics' were involved in the design of a building and that architectural design was a process of 'accommodation' rather than deduction, Venturi inaugurated a shift in modern architectural theory and helped to open up a new path for architectural design and discourse.

Complexity and Contradiction emphasizes the semantic complexities of the architectural message, and its approach is empirical, relativistic, and anti-platonic. Nonetheless the semantic dimension of architecture is presented as supra-historical. Architectural meanings are seen as the result of the manipulation of forms whose exemplary qualities are independent of the historical conditions under which they were produced. But Venturi is not concerned with establishing the constitutive and unvarying principles which this view implies. That such principles are assumed to exist is clear: "you build up order and then break it down, but break it from strength rather than weakness . . . expediency without order, of course, means chaos."[1] But what this "principle of order" consists of is not made clear. Is it an order which springs from laws of formal organization, or does it rather lie in constructional logic and functional imperatives? "Though we no longer argue over the primacy of form or function, we cannot ignore their interdependence":[2] from this it is not clear whether what is at stake is the play of redundant, multiple connotations on simple functional norms or the play of contingent facts on basic formal laws. Does function provide the framework which is distorted by "forms," or do "forms" provide the framework which is distorted by function? Whichever might be the case, these underlying principles, which one must assume if 'complexity' and 'contradiction' are to have any meaning (since nothing can appear complex except in relation to something simple, and since in order to contradict something it must itself be non-contradictory), are not the subject of the book. Rather it is concerned with the innumerable ways in which disorder and ambiguity can enhance the meaning of architecture.

It would have been useful if Venturi had made a distinction between those types of ambiguity which are held to be inherent to all artistic works (the subject of Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*) and those types which vary according to historical conditions (e.g. Mannerism). Since in the latter case the ambiguities and contradictions depend on the prior existence of a language or style, the two kinds of ambiguity are, as it were, superimposed on each other. But this would have involved looking at architecture historically, and not treating history as a mere reservoir of examples.

In addition to this fundamental distinction, Venturi ignores that between complexities which are intentional and those which are the result of accretion over time. The focus of the text oscillates between the effect of a building on the perceptions of the observer and the effect intended by the designer, as if these were historically the same thing. The book is thus a plea for complexity in general without suggesting how different kinds of complexity are related to particular historical circumstances, and therefore how the examples might apply to particular circumstances of our own time. This lack of historical perspective allows Venturi to include his empyrean examples of modern architecture and to discuss them at the same level at which he discusses examples from the past. It would be

1 (frontispiece) Allen Memorial Art Museum addition, Oberlin, Ohio. Venturi and Rauch, 1976. Junction between old and new buildings.

logical to deduce from this that when he is quoting buildings of Le Corbusier, Aalto, Kahn, or Moretti as 'good' examples of complexity and contradiction, he is saying that the 'general' principles of architecture are just as applicable to an architecture based on the principles of the Modern Movement as they are to any other. And from this it would follow that the two principles are not in conflict, and that the failures of modern architecture are due to extrinsic factors—economic distortions, bad designers, etc.

But at other times in the text it is implied that it is precisely the principles of the Modern Movement which are wrong and which are incapable of engendering any but the most simplistic and diagrammatic forms. Are, then, Le Corbusier and Aalto exceptions which prove the rule, because they contradict the principles which they believe in? But is it not precisely in such a contradiction that architecture of the highest sort is held to lie? Venturi's inclusion of the modern masters and his quoting of Albers, that typical product of Bauhaus reductivism, in defense of the essential ambiguity of all art (he might have done better to quote Paul Klee)[3] suggest that a modernism which holds to the theory of the *tabula rasa* is perfectly compatible with the principles of complexity and contradiction within his own definition of those terms. Historical examples could then be seen as incorporating general principles or types, whose persistence did not depend on the memory of those figures in which they had been embodied previously. But Venturi's attitude to past forms does not take account of Quatremère's distinction between the type and the model. He sees past styles as available for re-use, not literally, but as conventional elements whose continuing vitality depends on their being distorted, so that they can be seen in relation to the often contradictory needs of the present. There is, therefore, some inconsistency between his book and his practice. The book does not exclude the possibility that the general principles of the Modern Movement were sound, and might still form the basis of a complex and subtle architecture; but the practice assumes that there is no way in which the general principles of architecture can be dissociated from stylistic traditions. If we are to have architecture at all we must abandon any attempt to found it exclusively on some assumed set of conditions belonging to modern life. The language of architecture rests on a dialectic between memory of past cultural forms and the experiences of the present.

But in spite of the irony which this view implies, there is, throughout the book, a strong sense that an architectural order analogous to that of the past is still possible. Architecture is "perceived as form *and* substance. . . . These oscillating relationships are the source of ambiguity and tension characteristic to the medium of architecture."[4] In the projects of the sixties, though the figures of past architecture are put in inverted commas and distorted, there is an attempt to integrate them within an architectural system. The contradictions are thought of as being derived from an ambiguity between 'real' and 'virtual' structure, which is inherent in all architecture. Ornament and stylistic dress may not be directly deducible from the architectural program, but neither are they independent of it. Order and disorder, symmetry and asymmetry are an integral part of the solution. What is real and what is illusory are inextricably interwoven and depend on that suspension of disbelief which all art entails. One is presented with the idea of an architecture which is arcane, and which, though it is accommodating to the needs of the client, is ultimately addressed to those who understand and love architecture for itself.

In *Learning from Las Vegas* there are two chief ways in which this point of view is modified. First, populism, which is a mere undercurrent in *Complexity and Contradiction,* becomes a main theme. Those popular pressures which were seen as the 'forces of life' which in all periods give architecture its vitality are now isolated as peculiarly modern, petit bourgeois, and above all, American. The basis for this populist tendency can be seen in Venturi's study of Las Vegas and Levittown, but there is an ambivalence in their interpretation of the way in which kitsch is to be translated into conscious architecture. On the one hand there is the position, held consistently by Denise Scott-Brown, that the role of the architect is to understand and interpret the wishes of the client. According to this view, the road to an architecture of meaning lies in making concrete the internalized value systems of the users. The role of the architect, as in the Middle Ages, is that of the 'technician' who knows how to translate these values into structure and ornament. But we know that today it is usually not the architect who is the expert in these matters, but the developer or the contractor. Even when an architect is called in to provide the 'architecture' he is expected to share the objectives and taste of the client and to act merely as his agent. Now, there might be an argument in favor of this point of view if modern society were constructed on medieval or even eighteenth century lines, and if there were a convergence of taste between society as a whole (or its dominant subculture) and the artist whose role was to interpret its values. But such a situation simply does not exist today.

In order to assume the role of 'servant' to society, the modern architect must submit to a self-denying ordinance and play a game of 'let's pretend'. It is hardly conceivable that Venturi and Scott-Brown are not aware of this; and that they are was demonstrated by Robert Venturi's intervention at the recent Beaux Arts Colloquium at the Architectural Association in London. Taking up one of the recurrent themes of the colloquium—the famous proclamation by Victor Hugo, in the second edition of *Notre Dame de Paris*, that architecture would be killed by the book—Venturi showed a number of recent projects whose purpose appeared to be to celebrate the death of architecture. In these projects, neutral structures were ornamented with 'incorrect' orders and other incongruous details. Who but other architects 'in the know' were the object of these exercises? Unlike the music hall comedian, whose jokes are understood by his box-office audience (even if their typology is only appreciated by his fellow actors), Venturi's wit seems to be aimed solely at his fellow architects. The semiological intention of these projects is clearly not to provide the client with what he wants (though an essential part of the joke is that they do so *faute de mieux*) but to draw attention to the absurdity of popular taste. My purpose here is not to discuss whether this particular subversive game is worthwhile, but to show that it is an equivocation to pretend that it can be defended on the basis of a 'sincere' relationship between client and architect.

The second way in which *Learning from Las Vegas* differs from *Complexity and Contradiction* is that the architectural act is no longer seen as aiming at an integral aesthetic object, but at an object whose aesthetic unity is *a priori* impossible. Function and aesthetics, substance and meaning, are now seen as incompatible (though equally important) entities. Venturi and Rauch seem to have arrived at this theoretical position as a result of practical experience, and this is recorded in a passage so crucial that it is worth quoting in full: "After the appearance of *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* we began to realize that few of our firm's buildings were complex or contradictory, or at least not in their purely architectural qualities of space and structure . . . we had failed to fit into our buildings double functioning or vestigial elements, circumstantial distortions, expedient devices, eventful exceptions, exceptional diagonals, things in things, crowded or contained linings and layerings, residual spaces, redundant spaces, ambiguities, inflections, dualisms, difficult wholes, or the phenomena of both-and. There was little in our work of inclusion, inconsistency, compromise, accommodation, adaptation, superadjacency, equivalence, multi-focus, juxtaposition, or good *and* bad space."[5] This list deals a death blow to *Complexity and Contradiction*, whose arguments it both condenses and parodies. It is hardly surprising that Venturi and Rauch had been unable to include all these qualities in their buildings; but the list acts primarily as a rhetorical device which makes the theory which follows it seem not only reasonable but inevitable by comparison. This theory is that of the 'decorated shed', according to which the architect should abjure "architectural qualities of space and structure" and concentrate instead on "symbolic content."

In fact the argument of *Complexity and Contradiction* had already included the idea of the decorated shed in a weak form, since it had established the merely indirect connection between the appearance of a building and its substance and had drawn attention to the arbitrary nature

2 Brant-Johnson House, Vail, Colorado. Venturi and Rauch, 1976.

3 Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, Ohio. Venturi and Rauch, 1976. The addition steps back in two blocks, the gallery is clad in granite and rose sandstone, the laboratory/library/studio portion in buff brick.

2

3

of the architectural sign. But the meaning of the decorative skin was still seen as referring obliquely to the structure behind it, as is shown by the remark, quoted above, to the effect that form and function are interdependent. Even in *Learning from Las Vegas* it is stated that the structural ornament of Renaissance architecture "reinforces rather than contradicts the substance of the structure and space,"[6] but this precedent is rejected (without explanation) in favor of a medieval paradigm in which the frontispiece of a cathedral is "a billboard with a building behind it."[7] One may question whether this is an adequate description of an element which not only provides a triumphal entry to the nave but anticipates the themes of the interior and establishes its symbolic meanings; but in any case, once it is admitted that one of the inherent complexities of architecture lies in the tension between what is real and what is apparent, the complete separation of the signifying and substantial parts of a building which this view of the Gothic facade implies can only weaken its complexity and trivialize its message.

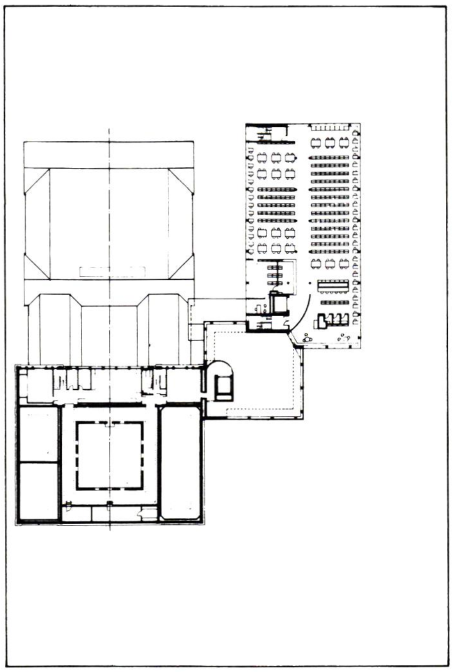
The idea of the decorated shed was a witty and devastating attack on the expressionism of Paul Rudolph and other architects of the 1960's and the idea that all buildings should be isolated *objets types* whose form 'expresses' their content. But it did, by its very incisiveness, convey the false impression that the only alternative to the expressionistic 'duck' was a building whose meaning lies in its appliqué ornament. The notion of the decorated shed seems to owe something to the nineteenth century concept of "ornamented structure" as opposed to the "structural ornament" of the Renaissance. But the nineteenth century idea was more a counterblast to nineteenth century ducks than to Renaissance architecture—to structural forms which were reproduced whole in ignoble materials, rather than those represented in more noble materials. As Joseph Rykwert has pointed out,[8] Pugin's idea of ornamented structure, which is referred to in *Learning from Las Vegas*,[9] included the notion that the ornament should be related, plastically and iconographically, to the 'real' building, whose structural form was thought of as an integral part of its meaning.

4 Second floor plan.

5 Site plan and first floor plan.

The idea of the decorated shed, although it is presented as a typical modern solution, has its most obvious application in programs resulting in large undifferentiated spaces—such as supermarkets and places of entertainment—whose purely commercial origins defy any attempt to assimilate them to a tradition of architectural complexity. There are a number of recently published buildings by Venturi and Rauch which do not fall into this category; they are quite clearly ducks rather than decorated sheds, that is to say their external forms conform to a unified architectural image whose connotations overlap those of their use and interior arrangement and reinforce the meanings which have been associated with them—often rustic and vernacular connotations achieved by direct, if ironic, quotation either from a local tradition or from Art Nouveau and National Romanticism (fig. 2). These parodistic assays in an 'eclecticism of taste' break with Venturi's earlier buildings, in which the historical references are at once more generalized and more fragmentary, and refer less to vernacular romanticism than to the classical tradition, however compromised this tradition is made to seem.

It might appear from these examples as if Venturi and Rauch were moving toward a picturesque theory of *genre*—of different styles appropriate for different types of program—but this expectation is not confirmed by their extension to the Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin (figs. 3-5) because, although this is a 'cultural' building with a strong 'architectural' context, they have chosen to interpret it as a decorated shed and to avoid any attempt to give the extension any of those 'high art' qualities which are exhibited in the original building. This suggests that the idea of the decorated shed is not restricted to a limited kind of commercial program, but is applicable to all cases except those in which an intimate, personalized, vernacular symbolism is thought to be appropriate. It is therefore precisely buildings of a public kind which are associated with the idea of a decorated shed—buildings in which there is a need to contend with the irreconcilable demands of economy and rational construction on the one hand, and public symbolism on the other. It is noticeable that whereas in the earlier projects public and private build-



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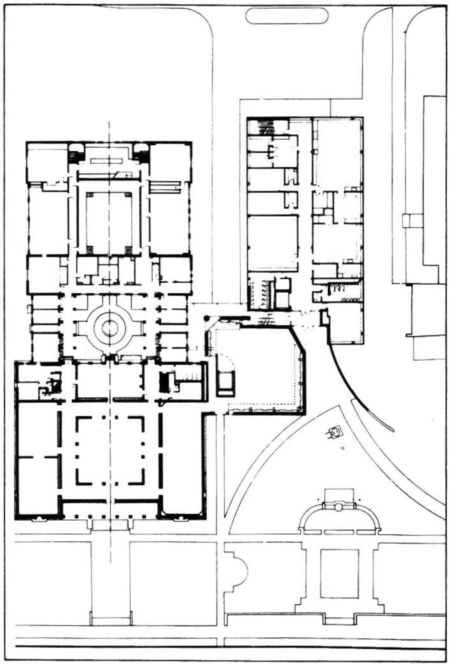

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ings were both thought of as vehicles for a complexity in which space and structure were an integral part of the symbolism, in the more recent projects these two categories are treated differently. Public commissions are either given typically 'modern' solutions with little symbolic content (fig. 6), or they are sheds, from whose purely decorative symbolism the architects maintain an ironic detachment. In commissions of a more domestic kind one has the impression that the architects identify with the nostalgic sentiments of their clients and provide them with buildings whose interior organization and external expression speak the same language and attempt to recover a unique 'atmosphere'. The vernacular details and comforting chintzes are the result of a certain complicity between architect and client, and if the architect still lays claim to irony it is not strong enough to subvert the values which the client sees reflected and made possible in the building.

But the Oberlin extension is a public building, and its overall organization is determined by the concept of the decorated shed. The problems of designing a new gallery and a teaching wing are considered to be 'modern' and 'functional'. At the same time there is no attempt at functional rhetoric. The 'functional' volumes are considered 'mute'. It is not their inherent structure or spatial disposition which provides their symbolic, cultural or aesthetic dimensions. These must be provided by modifying the basic shell by means of design decisions of a second order. They seem to belong to four main categories:

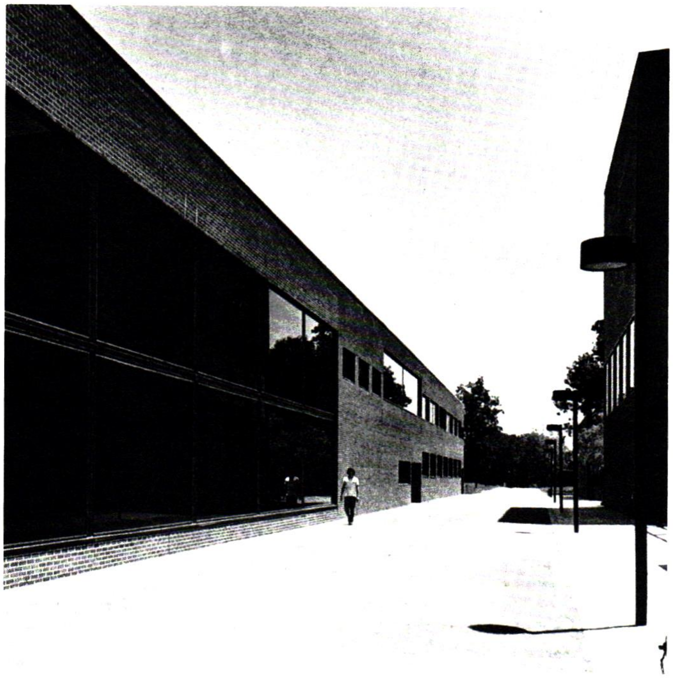
1. *Surface ornament:* Examples include the checkerboard pattern (recalling Ricardo or Lutyens), picking up the color and materials of the old building, though not its decorative scheme, and the blue and yellow roof fascia, suggesting the colored rafters and soffit of the old roof, but in terms of modern stick-on decor.
2. *Treatment of external architectonic elements:* Examples are the projecting eaves of the flat roof, making reference to the eaves of the old building; the strip windows which echo its horizontal emphasis; and more particularly, perhaps, the second floor window at the back of the old building (fig. 7).
3. *Isolated symbolic elements:* Examples are the parodistic Ionic column and the fragment of white marble on the entrance bench. These could be called 'external referents' since they refer either to a context beyond that of the building itself or to the cultural associations of the building (only marginally contributing to its aesthetic organization).
4. *Spatial modifications:* These are the result of 'collisions' in the plan and produce splayed walls and other plastic modifications of the basic shed. The building is not thought of, then, as a unified design in which the parts are capable of being consistently related to the whole, but as the result of a number of separate and conflicting demands. Frequently, the solution of two separate problems produces a conflict whose reconciliation seems to suggest the solution of a third problem; for example, the decision to place the strip window immediately under the roof with no lintel, and the need for a suspended ceiling for services and lighting in the gallery result in a coved splay, which reflects the daylight entering the gallery (fig. 8). But although this solution resolves the problem at a functional level, it deliberately leaves unresolved the problem of architectural meaning; the ceiling projects ambiguously without apparent means of support, its function as a suspended ceiling contradicted by its sculptural termination. This appears as a plastic outgrowth of the flat roof, an outgrowth which itself is incompatible with the planar quality of the roof signaled from the outside (fig. 9). This is one of many examples where the accommodation of conflicting demands gives rise to modifications of the basic shed. The treatment of mass and space offers several parallel cases. For example, the program has been interpreted in terms of two 'sheds'. No attempt is made to relate these sheds 'artistically', either to the old building or to each other. Instead the new gallery butts unceremoniously up against the old gallery, rising above it and slicing its cornice about halfway along the flank wall (figs. 1 [frontispiece], 10, 12, 13). The teaching block is impacted into the new gallery, overlapping it rather than being articulated from it, so that at the point of junction each shed is subjected to mutually accommodating compressions and distortions (fig. 11). Externally the effect of this compaction of the two volumes is to turn their external walls into a continuous, stepped facade (fig. 14). But al-

6 Social Science Building, S.U.N.Y., Purchase, New York. Venturi and Rauch, 1977.

7 Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, Ohio. Venturi and Rauch, 1976. External view of second floor window on the back facade of Cas Gilbert Museum.

8 Interior view of new gallery.

9 Exterior view of roof of new gallery.



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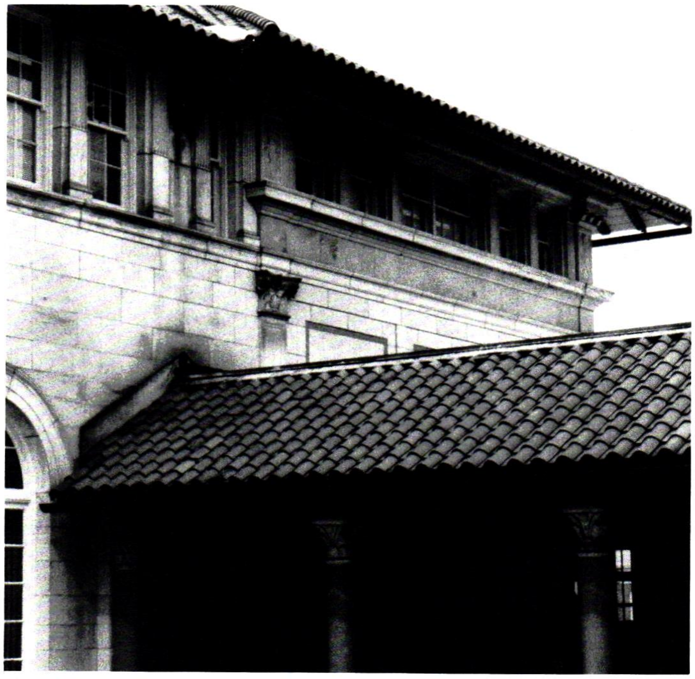

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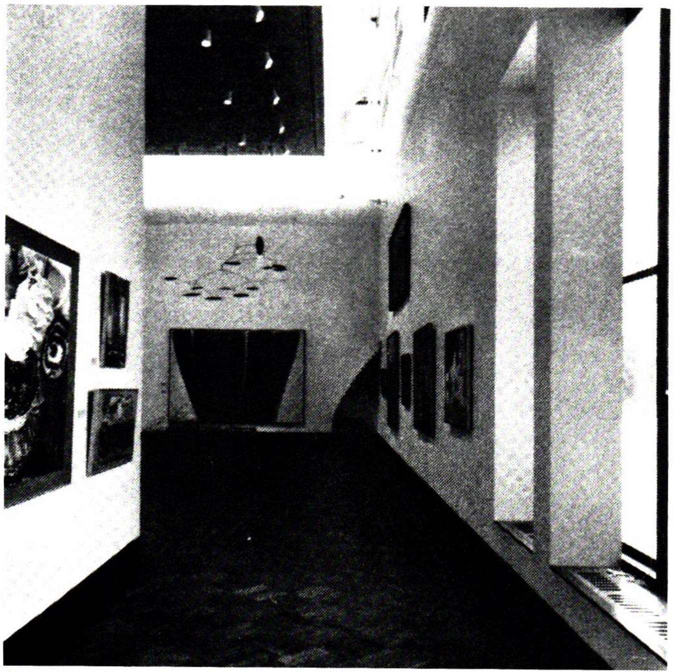

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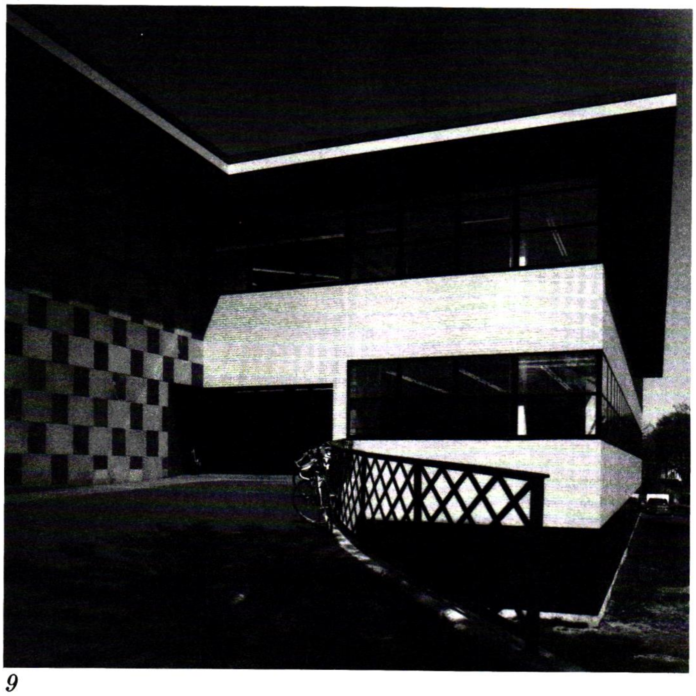

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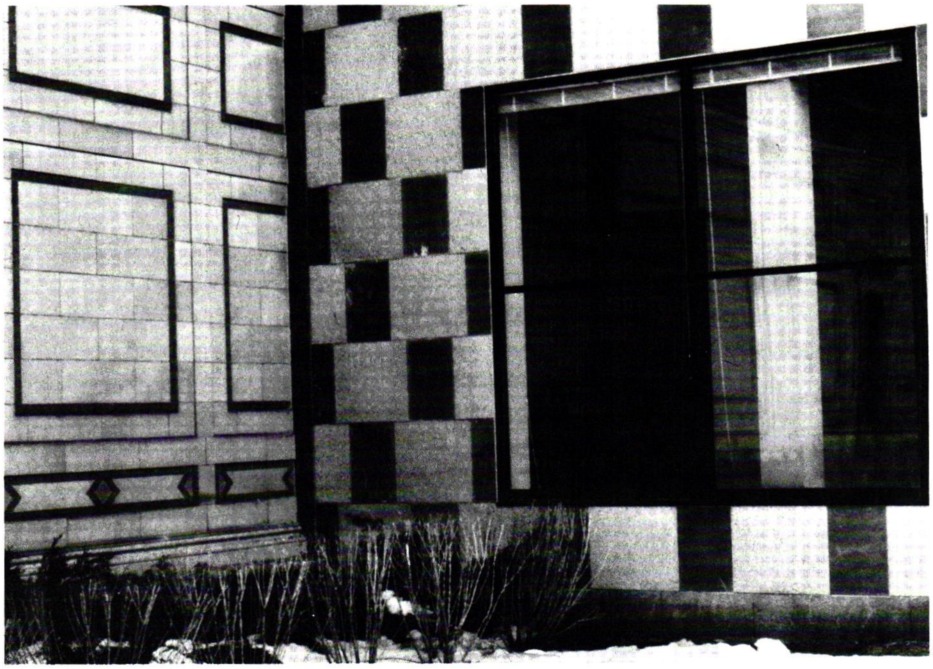
10 Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, Ohio. Venturi and Rauch, 1976. Exterior view of junction between old and new buildings.

11 Interior view of new gallery.

12, 13 Exterior view of junction between old and new buildings.



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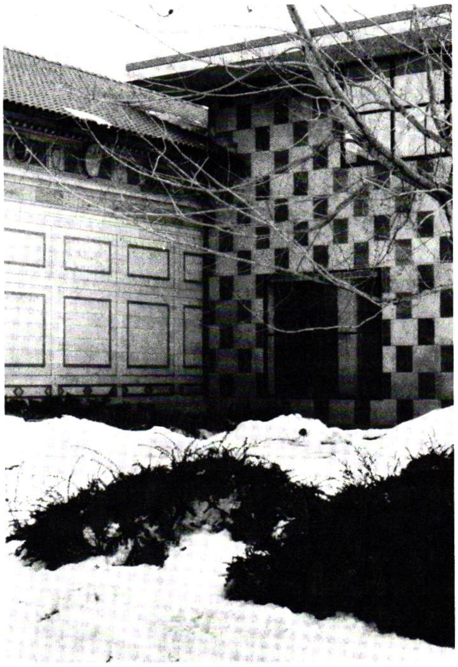

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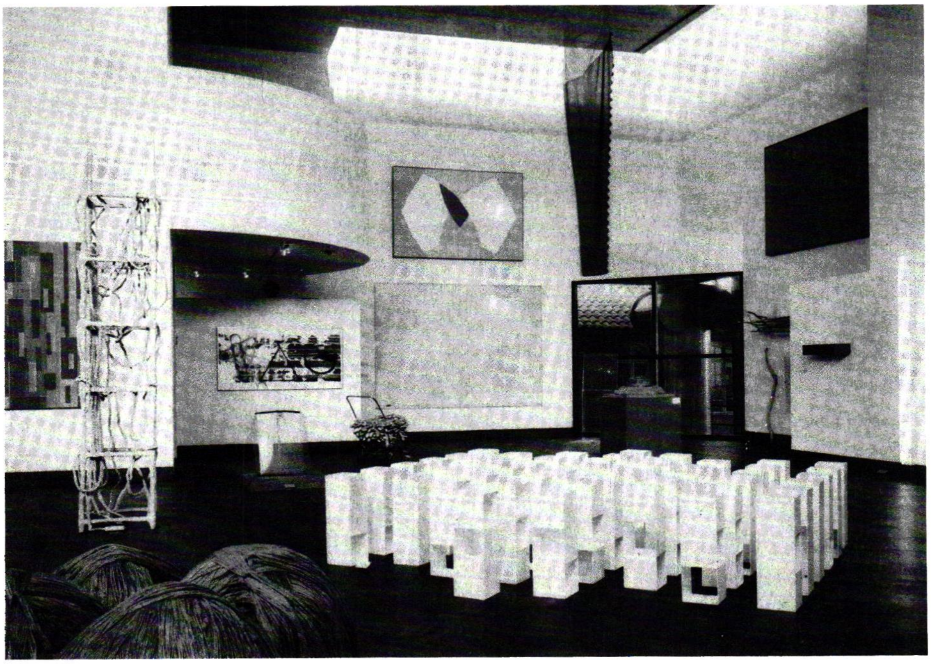

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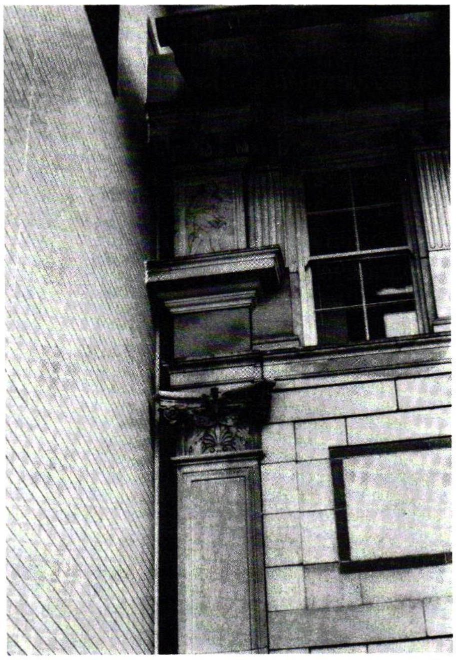

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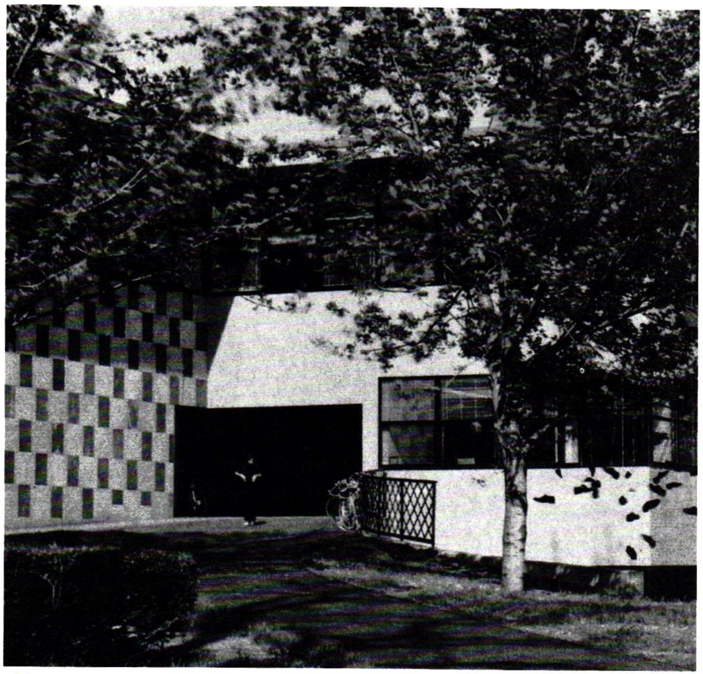
though the fenestration of this surface is manipulated to provide clues as to the different functions of the two blocks, the facade is not related to the spatial organization of the volumes behind. It is here that the concept of the decorated shed makes itself felt. The play of contradiction and ambiguity on the facade does not penetrate into the building, whose spatial arrangement remains basically that of the two sheds stitched together. 'Interesting' incidents may be developed at their interface, but they do not spring from, or generate, any transformation of the initial spatial theme. In its concern for isolated incidents and effects, the extension at Oberlin demonstrates an inherent weakness of the concept of the decorated shed. No theory of meaning in architecture can make sense unless it seeks to establish a relation between the general concept of a building and its parts, or between its ornament and its structural and spatial scheme.

From this point of view the notion of the decorated shed seems to be the result of a misinterpretation of the architectural tradition. Compared to the sculptural extravaganza of modern expressionist architecture, traditional structures and the spaces they articulate appear extremely simple. But they are not for this reason 'sheds' in the purely pragmatic sense in which Venturi uses the word. In them we find the subtle distillation of a long tradition in which the practical craft of building, the uses for which the building is intended, and a system of aesthetic representation are intimately connected. It is from this interconnection that the richness of architecture—its complexities, ambiguities, and multiple meanings—has been developed. In reducing this complex tradition to two unrelated parts—the building of 'sheds' and the development of 'signs' on their surfaces—Venturi is proposing a reduction just as simplistic as that of the kind of modern architecture which he so effectively attacked in *Complexity and Contradiction.*

But it would be a mistake to imagine that this 'misunderstanding' is unintentional. For the authors of *Learning from Las Vegas*, any attempt to recover the unity of the architecture of the past is incompatible with the modern social world and presupposes an idealistic role for archi-

14 Exterior view of new building. Stepped back plan exposes cubic volume of gallery and shows both portion of addition fronting the street.



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tecture which no longer exists. They thus reject both the Miesian solution in which the shed is idealized into a temple, and that of the New York Five and the Neo-Rationalists, for instance, who, in their different ways, see architecture as an autonomous discourse. For Venturi, Scott-Brown, and Isenour there are no autonomous discourses, and architecture is embedded in a global ideology from which there is no escape.

According to this view, modern programs, with the possible exception of houses and cognate types where private nostalgia can still operate to create 'dream houses', do not have the ritualistic and ceremonial content which gave traditional architecture its symbolism. They are purely pragmatic. Spatial and structural organization are matters of common sense and empirical arrangement. If, for example, we had looked for spatial themes at Oberlin which were related to those of the original building (atria, central axes, single banked accommodation), or if we were shocked that the only means of access to the second floor library is by means of a fire stair tucked into a corner at the immediate point of entry, we would be attributing to client and users a sensibility which they do not possess, and ignoring the fact that, today, galleries and libraries, like offices and studios, are 'functional' spaces and do not have special meaning for society. The modern type is the loft building, not the uses which can be fitted into it, and there can therefore be no question of space and structure becoming representational.

The implications of the notion of the decorated shed are therefore far-reaching. They lead to the assertion that architectural meaning has become irretrievably separated from its substance. Architects are impotent in the face of a society whose values have made this split inevitable. It is not by the vision of an alternative architecture that these values can be criticized, but only by the manipulation of its surface appearance, and then only by means of an equivocal irony, in which these values are alternately condoned and 'exposed'. The architect, like the fool in Shakespeare, uses his subservient role to flatter the king and to tell him a few home truths.

The contradictions in the buildings of Venturi and Rauch are not, like those of traditional architecture, subject to an overall aesthetic synthesis. They remain deliberately unresolved in a contentious dialectic of popular versus high; banal versus subtle; architecture as a mass media versus architect's architecture. They do not, as do other 'post-functionalist' buildings, attempt to define an alternative language to that of functionalism. They reveal, but do not overcome, the contradictions latent in the contemporary state of architecture, and this makes it difficult to find a basis for critical discussion of the work.

For these reasons this essay has done no more than attempt to interpret Venturi's point of view and reveal certain *internal* contradictions in his position; it has not attempted a definitive evaluation of his work.

Notes

1. Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: M.O.M.A., 1966), pp. 46–47.
2. Ibid., p. 26.
3. See Manfredo Tafuri, *Théories et Histoire de l'architecture* (Milan: Editions S.A.D.G., 1976), p. 295. Italian edition (Bari: Laterza, 1968).
4. Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, p. 29.
5. R. Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown, Steven Isenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Boston, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1972).
6. Ibid., p. 106.
7. Ibid., p. 105.
8. Joseph Rykwert, *Ornament is no Crime* (London: Studio International, 1975).
9. Venturi, Scott-Brown, Isenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, p. 163.

Figure Credits
1-5, 8, 11, 14 From *Progressive Architecture*, October 1977.
6, 9 From *Werk-Archithese*, No. 7-8, Vol. 64, July-August 1977.
7, 10, 12, 13 Courtesy Alan Colquhoun.

RESISTANCE
ANTI-
INDUSTRIELLE.

Theory

The Only Path for Architecture

Maurice Culot and Léon Krier
Translation by Christian Hubert

1 (frontispiece) "Resistance Anti-Industrielle," engraved stele dedicated to the final movement of resistance to the total destruction of Brussels, 1978.

> *You need a good black coffee to find something attractive about these reinforced concrete buildings. I read with horror (in the publicity brochure of an American contractor) that these skyscrapers survived the San Francisco earthquake. Having thought about it a little, however, I think they are more perishable than peasants' huts: these have stood upright for a thousand years, they were interchangeable, quickly wore out and grew up again effortlessly. I'm happy that this idea came to me, because I think with pleasure on these long lasting and glorious houses. I think the surface of the earth is destined for a great future. In civilized countries there are no fashions: it is an honor to resemble the models.*
> *Berthold Brecht,*
> Things which Pass, *1925.*

Unbridled industrialization with no aim but consumption has led to the destruction of the cities and countryside. The perspectives of "progress" are henceforth clear: everything will be destroyed, everything will be consumed! In the years to come the increasing unemployment engendered by industrialization[1] will widen and accelerate the process of destruction of the cities and, as a corollary, increase the alienation of individuals. Progress has reached a stage scarcely conceivable to the first socialist thinkers, and today it would be pointless to want to base ourselves on this tradition, to magnify the urban struggles, and "to exalt, with the help of the imagination, the work to be done to recapture the spirit of revolution rather than put chimeras back into circulation."[2]

It is too late to evoke the shadows of the past for the sake of putting them to our own use. Borrowings from history can be considered only within the framework of precise strategies for urban struggles, but they cannot in themselves reconstitute a coherent language.

What we wish to say is that a change in style or fashion is not enough this time. After all, we are dealing with a generation who, in the last thirty or forty years of its professional life, has changed styles more often than it has changed neckties. And it would be naive to see the current interest in architecture as an unmistakable sign of its renaissance. The only characteristic that the more recent experiences have in common—from Venturi to Kroll, by way of the stars of Ivry and the typological fever that ravages the architecture schools—is their fragmentary nature and provocative formal eclecticism. The barbarous profusion of the "innovations" applauded by the journalists of post-modernism and commercially promoted under the slogan of "complexity and contradiction" culminates in the kitsch which perverts every level of life and culture and constitutes the most important cultural phenomenon of industrial civilization.

Our proposal in terms of the European urban tradition is to take up the discourse of the city where it was brutally interrupted by "industrial civilization"; to continue this discourse in order to elaborate the project of reference in which urban struggles—and the aims of democratizing the decision-making process that they imply—will become recognized and find a necessary and fortifying theoretical coherence. The daily struggles which activate the inhabitants of European cities, menaced by the threat of "modern" urbanism, have led them to set up committees of inhabitants that, in the best of cases, have themselves federated to present a united front against the misfortune of capitalism. In Brussels, for instance, the inhabitants themselves are the only ones who have really developed a global alternative to industrial voracity and not the administrations, be they socialist or otherwise. But we are not dupes. Associations of inhabitants are not necessarily progressive. To locate the urban struggle within the framework of the class struggle requires a considerable internal effort, and encouraging local conditions cannot make us forget that it is necessary to refer them to a social utopia, since it is to this that one must return to precipitate a coherent opposition front to the process of fragmentation resulting from the social division of labor—a process by which the capitalist order successfully opposes change and which it uses as a solvent against the fact of class struggle.

It is important to note here that the city and its neighborhood can no longer be used as a field of experimentation for architects. The problem of the reconstruction of the European city is not posed at the level of individual prowess, but rather at the level of *architecture* and *construction*. The symbolic and iconographic vacuity of "modern" architecture can of course be explained by the fact that it has never been architecture but rather a form of packaging. And in its most ambitious examples, it can sometimes have been an "art" of packaging. Certainly even the most ambitious will never succeed in constructing the city through packaging. Nor does 'modern' architecture derive from construction. The latter, with its roots in artisanal disciplines, was transmitted as a culture through history by the collective memory until its final destruction by the industrial division of labor and by an education based both on the alienation of knowing from doing and on the glorification of 'creativity'. *Architecture* and *construction* have thus disappeared both as intellectual and manual cultures. The city of stone, the European city, has become, in the eyes of the prophets of mobility at any price, a synonym for a dangerous—mortal—inflexibility, even a sign of laziness.

As the European cities are being pitilessly ruined by the brutal construction of the new infrastructures of the advanced industrial state, the architectural profession has entered a state of crisis which no one since 1968 has been able to escape. Only the most retrograde faction of the profession persists in its self-delusion by brandishing ideals whose necessity and inevitability are convincing only to itself. Today there is no hope for the more conscious architects who desire to unify a professional practice with the practice of a progressive ideology. One can only oppose the process of merciless destruction of the cities through, on the one hand, urban action, which, in the current phase of industrial development of the cities, can only hope to avoid further destruction and gain time,[3] and on the other hand, through theoretical work which strategically reinforces this action.

One cannot be at once in the camp of the architect-constructors, as well intentioned as they might be, and in the camp of the architect-theoreticians, who are the only ones who might be able to learn through a rational mode of thought something other than the more or less servile reproduction of the dominant cultural model. As reproduction, one must include both the actual pastiche indulged in by 'modern' architecture as well as the fact of its acceptance of the myth of industrialization with all its negative consequences. The fact that this editorial is appearing with our joint signatures takes on a significance surpassing friendship or the existence of any international coterie. By this act we wish to make clear the existence of a movement of convergent theoretical reflection on the European level. We wish to define a movement in which intellectuals who engage in the struggle for neighborhoods at a daily level and others who develop a project for the city on the basis of a personal reflection on architecture gather together in the midst of pedagogical work and in the context of political and social preoccupations, outside of any spirit of avant-garde aesthetic. This convergence has nothing in common with the publicity campaign for industrialization orchestrated yesterday by the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne; instead it reflects a desire to escape the trap of fragmentation and situates itself within the framework of a specific project for social democracy, even if its modalities are not yet precisely defined. But, after all, the essential today is not to weigh the respective merits of popular democracy, the dictatorship of the proletariat, or some system of worker control. What is shared by all is the certainty that the constitutive elements of the pre-industrial European city—the quarter, the street, the square—must form the basis for any reconstruction of cities destroyed by 'modern' urbanism. This certainty has been acquired by those engaged in the practice of urban struggle, who have shown that socially, economically, and politically, only the traditional urban fabric can lead to satisfactory counter-measures to the social and physical disintegration of the city. It is now clear that the traditional fabric lends itself to step-by-step operations that are of greater social and economic interest than the politics of the bulldozer. This fabric ensures the best conditions for mixed use, reduces the costs of maintenance of public space, and permits precisely by virtue of its familiar character the mobilization of the population towards tangible goals, etc. . . . For the others, this certainty derives from an intellectual undertaking that includes, in addition to analyses of the Bologna experience and of the urban struggle, theoretical work on the definitions of architecture and construction or even critical research on the so-called progress of the industrialization of construction, etc. . . . The latter as well as the former reject 'modern' architecture and urbanism to the extent that they have been vehicles for the physical and social destruction of the cities (and countryside) and have relied upon the separation of functions, the myth of prefabrication, the useless typological works undertaken for themselves in the name of sacrosanct 'creativity', the principle of the mechanical mobility of individuals, the arrogant and obtuse refusal to accept the difference between architecture and construction. . . .

Thus, for the first time in the history of architecture since the Industrial Revolution, there appears a coherent European project capable of opposing the brutal repercussions of profit. A convergence of thought, a convergence of directions. The paths for architecture are not many but singular. The only objective, and several generations will have to harness their energies to achieve it, is the elaboration of a common language. For everything has to be relearned: by means of historiography the capitalist order has even consumed our memory.

We must begin by rediscovering the forgotten language of the city that achieved its formal perfection in the eighteenth century, and at the same time we must work at modernizing it, so that this language can incorporate the contradictions issuing from the European anti-industrial resistance.

It is a matter of specifying the fields of action of architecture and of construction. To be more restricted during the years of re-education, housing must stem only from the urban fabric, that is to say, from construction and not architecture; the typology of dwellings must be completely subject to the constraints of urban morphology, etc. . . . It is only much later, when the language will have become familiar, that one will be able to consider exceptions and divergences. It is through the rational mode of thought that topics of research and the important questions, matters of useful reflection, can be raised at the very interior of the utopian project itself. What are the conditions for an art of building that gives manual (as well as intellectual) workers the dignity that industrialization refuses them? How can the articulation between architectural utopia and social project be organized? Etc. . . .

Against the Moral Resignation of the Architect into a Collective Immorality

Because the cities are threatened with total destruction; because belief in the virtue of the positivist example today reveals an innocence of mind, a humanist dream; because we are witnessing a convergence of efforts both at the level of urban struggles and at the level of theoretical work on the city; because the contradictory, gratuitous, and dangerous architectural experiments against the cities are proliferating with the objective only of game, of fashion, or of scandal;

Because of all of this, we will speak, in the manner of Kraus and of Loos, in order to show that there is a difference between a vase and a chamber pot, between a street and a pseudo-street, between a square and a pseudo-square, between a complex quarter and a factitious one. . . .[4]

An indispensable difference which allows architecture and construction to find their proper fields of application.

It is still important to point this out, not out of any "taste for energetic surgical methods," but because at the moment when the process of regionalization gains hold throughout Europe, the anemic state of urban culture could lead to even more savage acts of vandalism than those perpetuated by centralized authorities who have maintained here and there a sense of decency.

There is thus nothing to be "learned from Las Vegas," except that it constitutes a widespread operation of trivialization, a cynical attempt to recuperate and accommodate the leftovers of the greatest of all cannibalist feasts, a desperate attempt to give the profession of architecture a final justification of its bad conscience: to make believe in its social utility despite its lack of project. The European city is a creation of the intelligence; the very trace of this intelligence embarrasses "the builders of today" who are all too happy to find in Venturi and the other consorts of post-modernism unexpected intellectual allies who do not hesitate to propose the forgetting of any pre-industrial tradition in favor of a mercantile conception of architecture. Opposing any direct communication between individuals and unquestioningly accepting the principle of feverish and obligatory mechanical mobility, they reject the very basis of any urban culture.

A Copernican Revolution

When we allude to the necessity for a global project, we do not intend by any means to say that we wish to cover the territory with plans, but rather that basic models which take man as their measure must be studied as a first priority—man as he is normally constituted, not man stricken with elephantiasis as he wanders through the projects of Speer, or that deaf and dumb man who surveys from his automobile the empty and discontinuous spaces of modern urbanism.

In Bologna, the ancient parishes have finally become an authentic model for democratic administration; in Brussels, the inhabitants of the most popular district have obliged a reactionary municipal administration to reconstruct their quarter in terms of real streets and real squares.

For the concept of streets and squares does not derive from fashion, but rather constitutes a historic concept inscribed within the European tradition, and it is not a matter of imitating them as style but as precise types.

A street is a street, and one lives there in a certain way not because architects have imagined streets in certain ways. As opposed to television and the automobile, which have already succeeded in changing the physical qualities of American man, the terrorism of modern architecture has fortunately not yet succeeded in changing the character of European man. (Scenario for a horror film: crab-man from Barbicane meets oblique-man from the city of Claude Parent.)

We must forcefully reject the American city and become savagely European; our objective is not a sort of supernationalism incompatible with the very notion of culture, but aims at the development of an intense social life, at the development of the highest and most differentiated levels of communication, in complete opposition to the industrialized media. *Against the agglomeration of buildings and of individuals we posit the city and its communities.* The inevitable results for a society which refuses the pleasure in work are suicide or collective fascism, toward which the most industrialized countries are inevitably drawn. The only means of avoiding this fate lie in the rejection of the social and industrial division of labor as well as in the espousal and even reinforcement of the professional division of labor, and at the same time the rejection of the social stratification between manual and intellectual work. Our project for architecture works in this direction: it tends to reduce the differentiation of social divisions. This is precisely where the essence of its political nature lies.

To "augment our well-being without reducing our pleasure"[5] or at the limit to insure our survival, we must immediately take part in the recognition and reconstruction of artisanry, of manual work. The latter, which has always been the basis for human creativity and personal realization, has become an exercise in degradation through the division of labor. And it is the schools themselves that have proceeded to destroy the culture and intelligence of the people.

Yesterday this willful destruction was still dictated by a "bourgeois coldness"; today this illegitimate rationality is weighed down further by stupidity and cynicism. More than ever before, the Modern Movement, in all its expressions—written, built, and pedagogical—presents the European city as a natural field for the experiments of the 'creators'. Those who are experiencing the destruction of the cities directly through the urban struggles know that administrative and artistic neutrality is a delusion and that technicians (engineers and architects) have played a determining role in the contagion and generalization of the destructuring models of the Athens Charter. This is why we insist upon participating in the urban struggles while at the same time developing new architectural models that anticipate a decentralized and self-governed society, as opposed to the Athens Charter, which stands on an argument based on a principle of outrageous levels of industrialization, of unbridled mobility, of zoning, of political and cultural centralization, etc. The freedom sold daily by the media through every possible trick is none other than the slavery of mobility, which has become today the cause and means of social fragmentation—a fragmentation necessary for the destruction of any resistance, of all intelligence awakening against the industrial system, the suicidal alienation of those with no other project but consumption.

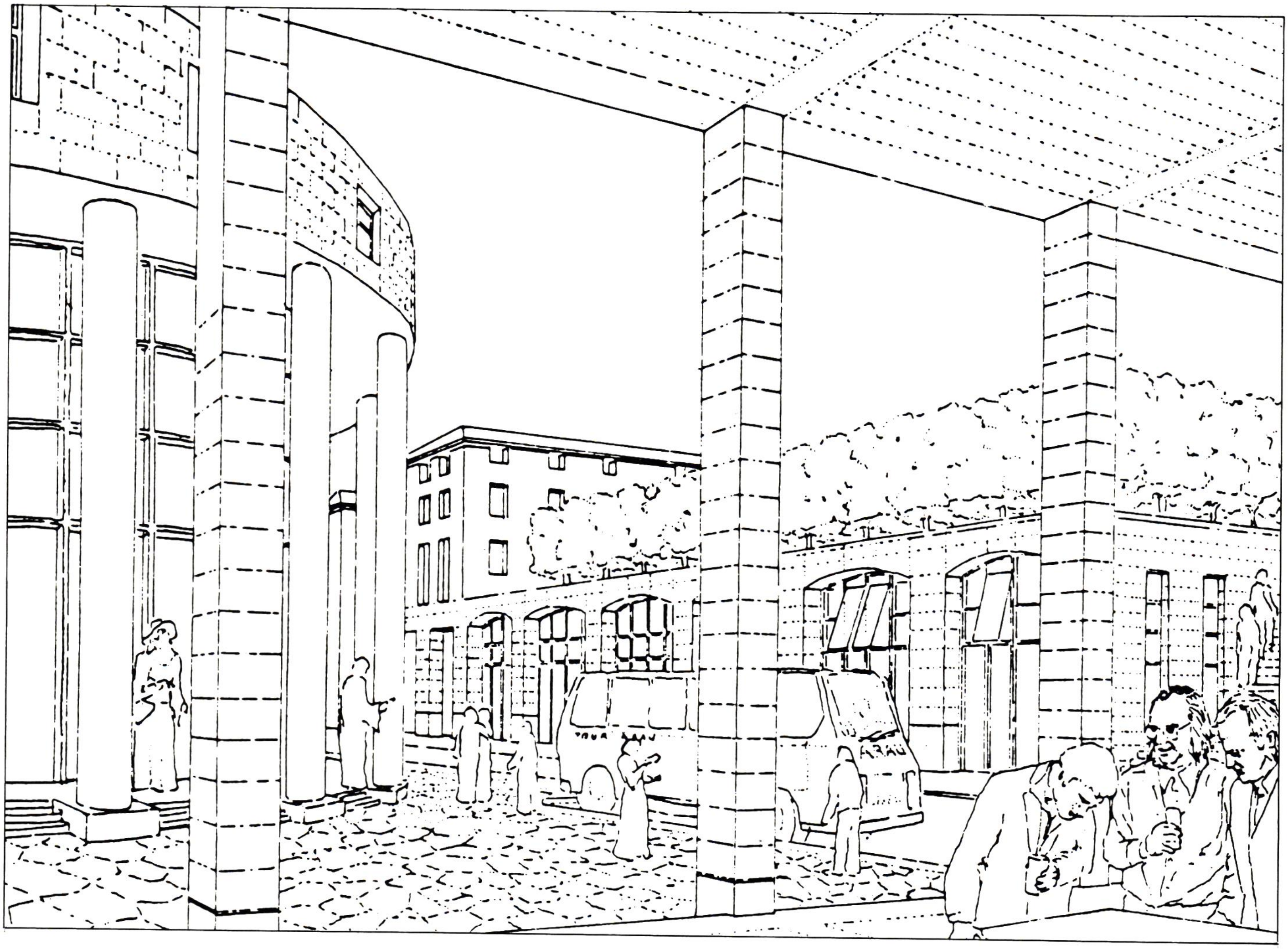
Within the framework of an anti-industrial resistance carried out at the European scale, we are engaged in theoretical exercises and their practical applications (to the architectural project), with the reconstruction of the cities in mind. These stimulating exercises have no innocent character; they permit us to verify hypotheses, to stimulate questions, debates, and works that are all situated along the only path of architecture.

Source Note
This article first appeared in French as "L'Unique Chemin de l'Architecture" in Archives d'Architecture Moderne, *2e trimestre, 1978 (Brussels), n. 14.*

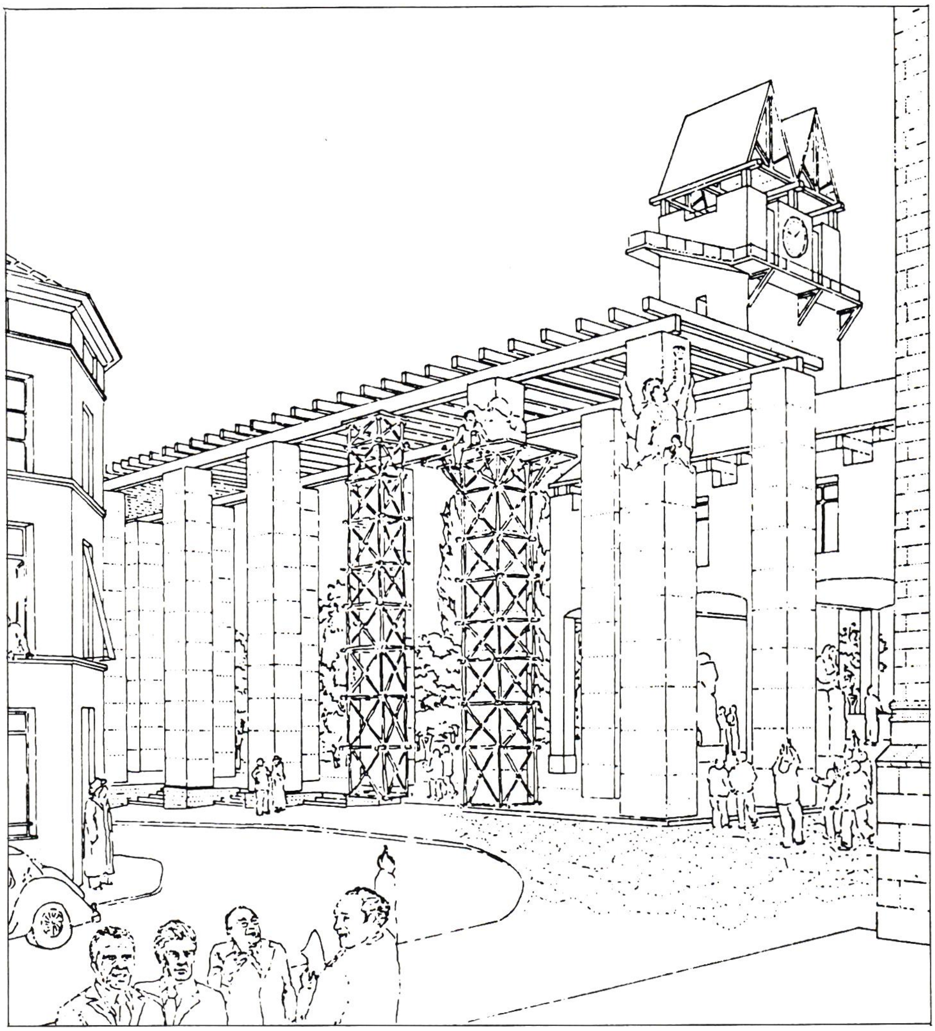
Notes

1. Two figures give some indication of the evolution taking place: German industry currently provides the same output as it did in 1974 with one million fewer workers. A French report, which has remained secret for good reason, estimates that within ten years thirty percent of the employees in banks, insurance companies, and administration will be eliminated (according to Michel Bosquet, in *Le Nouvel Observateur,* No. 702, April 1978).
2. Marx quoted in Tafuri, *Theory and History of Architecture* à propos of the value of the "heroic resurrection" of antiquity.
3. To gain the necessary time to integrate the urban struggle into the class struggle.
4. Cf. the chapter on Karl Kraus in A. Janik and S. Toulmin's *Wittgenstein, Vienne et la Modernité* (1978), p. 68.
5. William Morris in "Useful Work Versus Useless Toil."

Figure Credits
1, 6-9 From *Archives d'Architecture Moderne,* ler trimestre, 1978 (Brussels), n. 16.
2-5 From *Archives d'Architecture Moderne,* 2e trimestre, 1978 (Brussels), n. 14.
10-12 Courtesy Léon Krier.
13 From *Rational Architecture* (Brussels: Archives d'Architecture Moderne, 1978).



2 The Museum of Urban Forms
The Museum of Urban Forms built at the foot of the revised base of the administrative center of Brussels, in the district most ravaged by modern urbanism: the museum of urban forms. It is the meeting point for the tour organized by the Atelier for Research and Urban Action (ARAU), "Brussels seen by its inhabitants." While awaiting the departure of the bus, R. Schoonbrodt, president of the ARAU, gives a few explanations on a model. (Taken from a project for the reconstruction of the center of Brussels. S. Birkiye, P. Neyrinck, and G. Busieau, Institut Supérieur d'Architecture, La Cambre, 1978.)



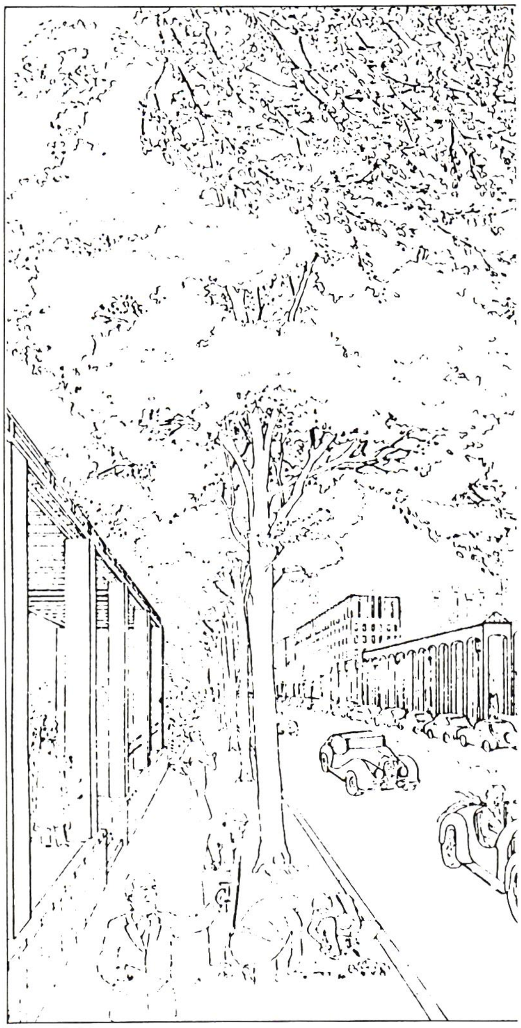
3 The Portico of the Master Quarriers

The imposing structure built near the Church of Our Lady of the Chapel (twelfth century) consists of a double row of columns, each built up from large stone blocks that come from the different quarries of Wallonie. These blocks are a gift from the master quarriers to the artisans of the Marolles quarter of Brussels. While the hardiest of the artisan sculptors work on the great pillars, the apprentices practice their stonecutting under the covered porch of the new district center. As soon as a pillar is completely sculpted, it is taken apart and sent back to Wallonie to decorate an important circulation route.

The drawing shows a group of inhabitants in ecstasy at the sight of the savage beauty of the sculptures. Sitting on a platform, an artisan is taking a well deserved rest. Nearby, temporary scaffolding holds up the roof until some new blocks arrive.

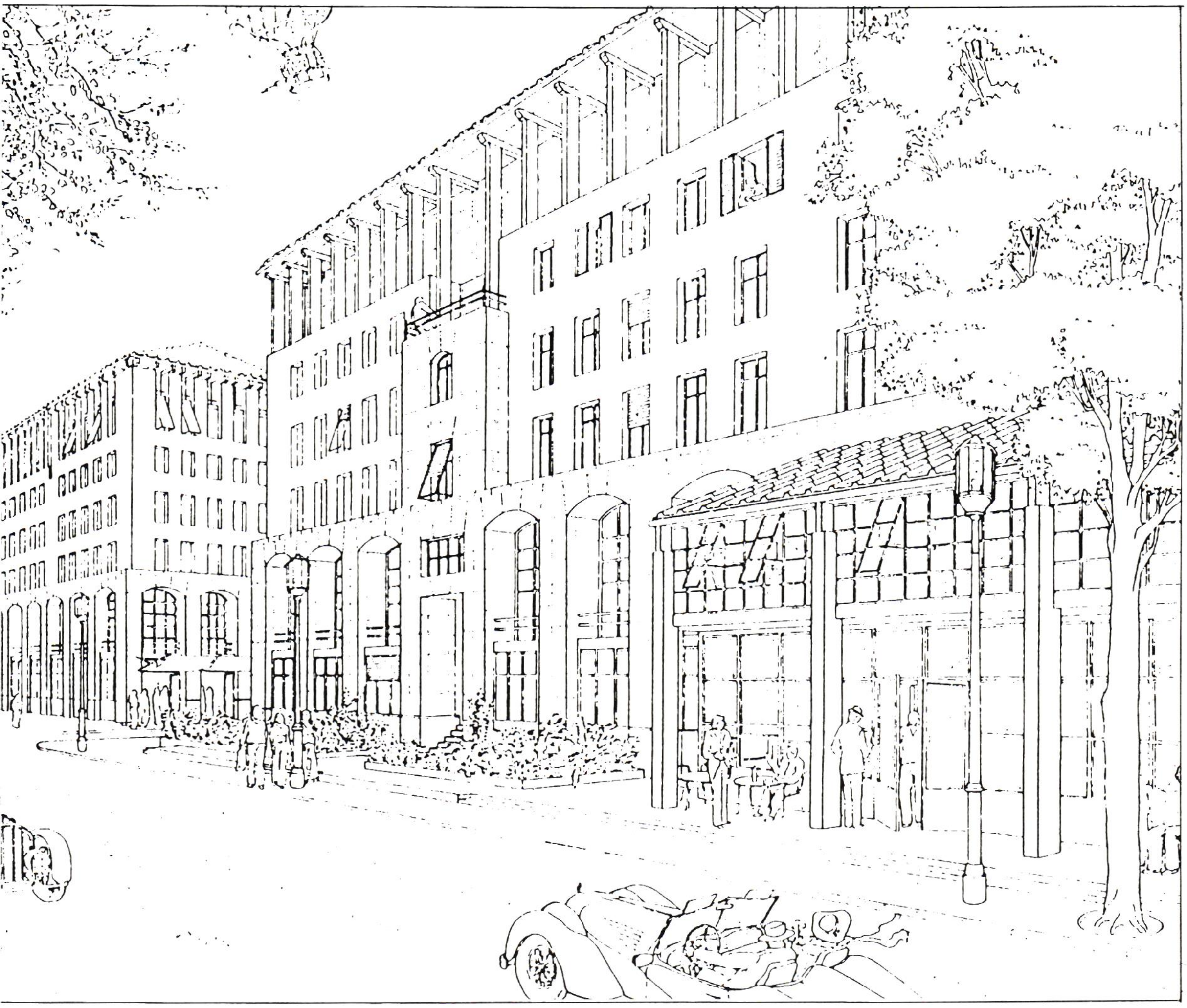
In the foreground Louis van Geyt, president of the Belgian Communist Party, is explaining to his colleagues G. Marchais, E. Berlinguer, and Santiago Carillo the reasons why his party has wholeheartedly committed itself to the anti-industrial resistance.

(Taken from a project for the reconstruction of the center of Brussels after its dismemberment by the construction of the Nord-Midi railway link. S. Birkiye, P. Neyrinck, and G. Busieau, Institut Supérieur d'Architecture, 1978.)

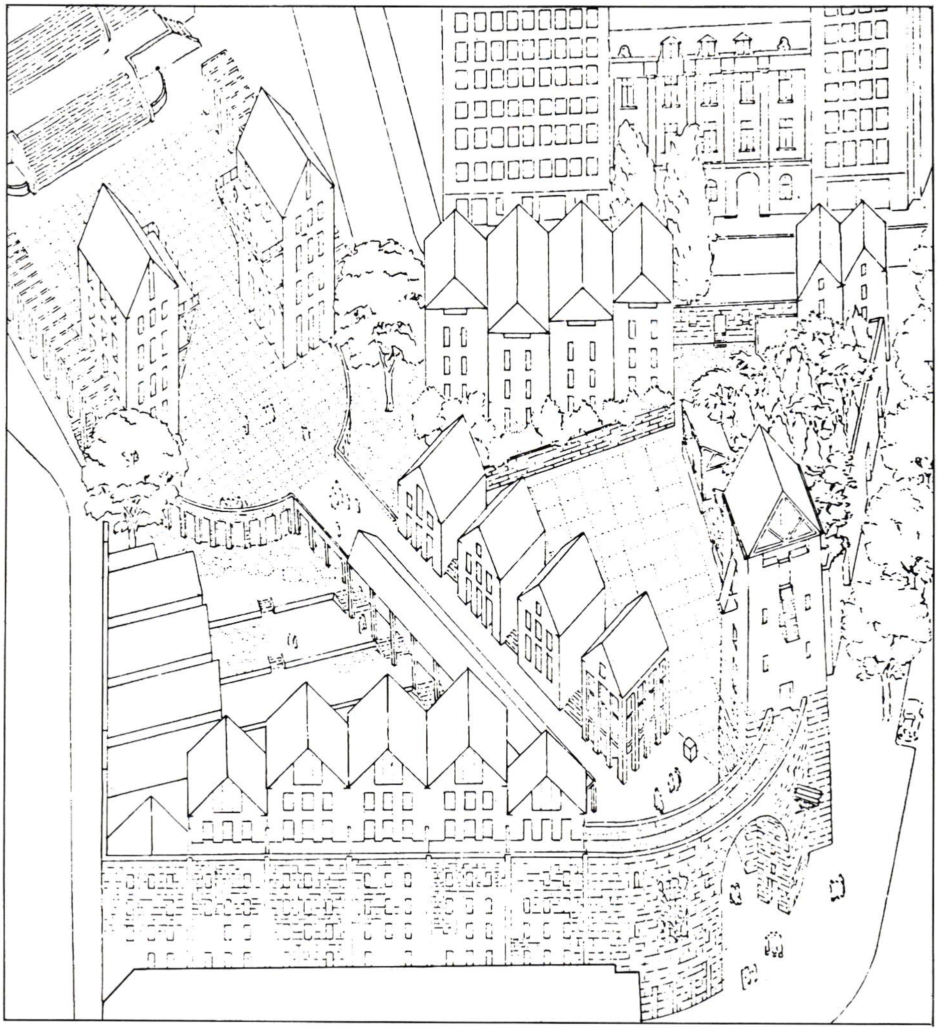


4 Reconstruction of the Northern Quarter of Brussels

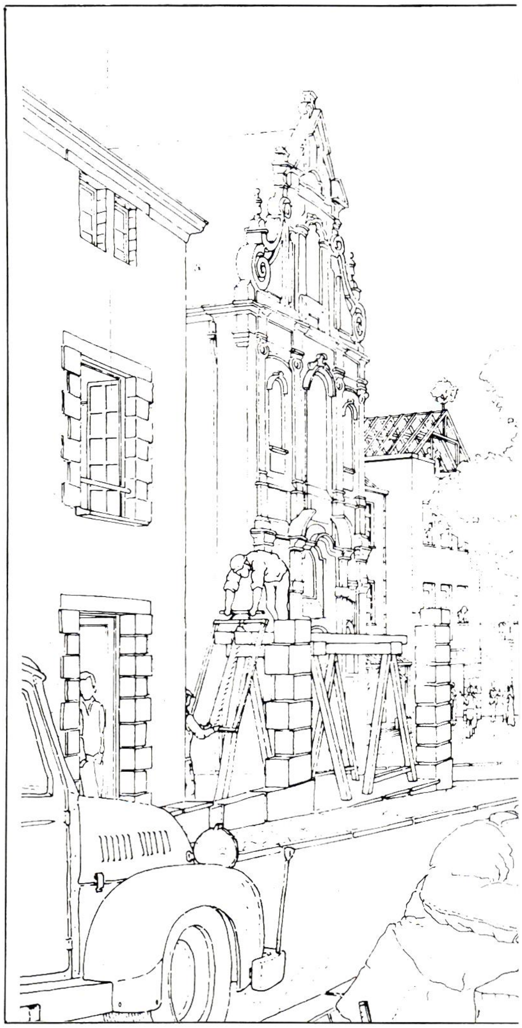
In this project, realized in conjunction with the inhabitants' committees of the north quarter (commune of St. Josse), priority has been given to repairing blocks destroyed a few years ago by the construction of a new urban highway. Now that the highway has become useless, it has been transformed into a pleasant artery that naturally prolongs the old boulevard of the nineteenth century. Large sidewalks provide for the eventually covered terraces. The construction of new buildings no longer requires the demolition of existing ones. A two-level arcade that projects forward from the street line accommodates an existing



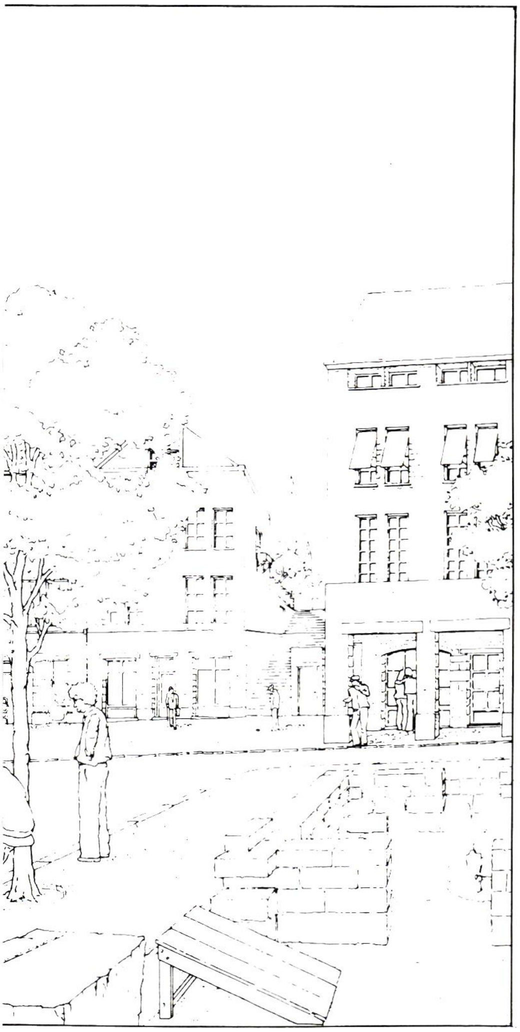
industrial establishment. The stone lower stories of the buildings provide space for shops, workshops for artisans and light industry, and dwellings. The facades are stuccoed and all the buildings have pitched roofs. (Taken from a project for the reconstruction of the center of Brussels. S. Birkiye, P. Neyrinck, and G. Busieau, Institut Supérieur d'Architecture, La Cambre, 1978).



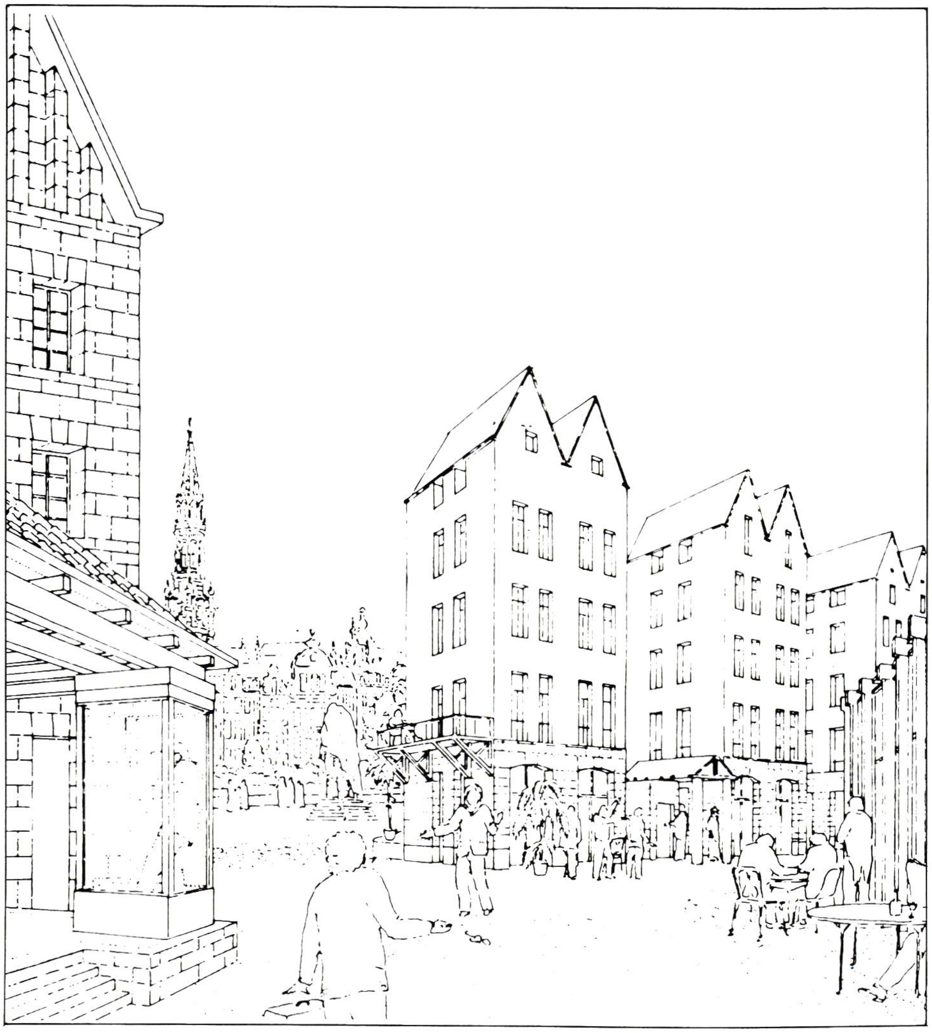
5 Reconstruction of the Parvis of St. Michael's Cathedral
A block of dwellings reached by a small, tourist, commercial street for pedestrians. The curved wall and observation tower are built of stucco. Later, if the community desires it, it will be rebuilt of stone. (Taken from a project for the reconstruction of the center of Brussels after its dismemberment by the construction of the Nord-Midi railway link. S. Birkiye, P. Neyrinck, and G. Busieau, Institut Supérieur d'Architecture, La Cambre, 1978.)



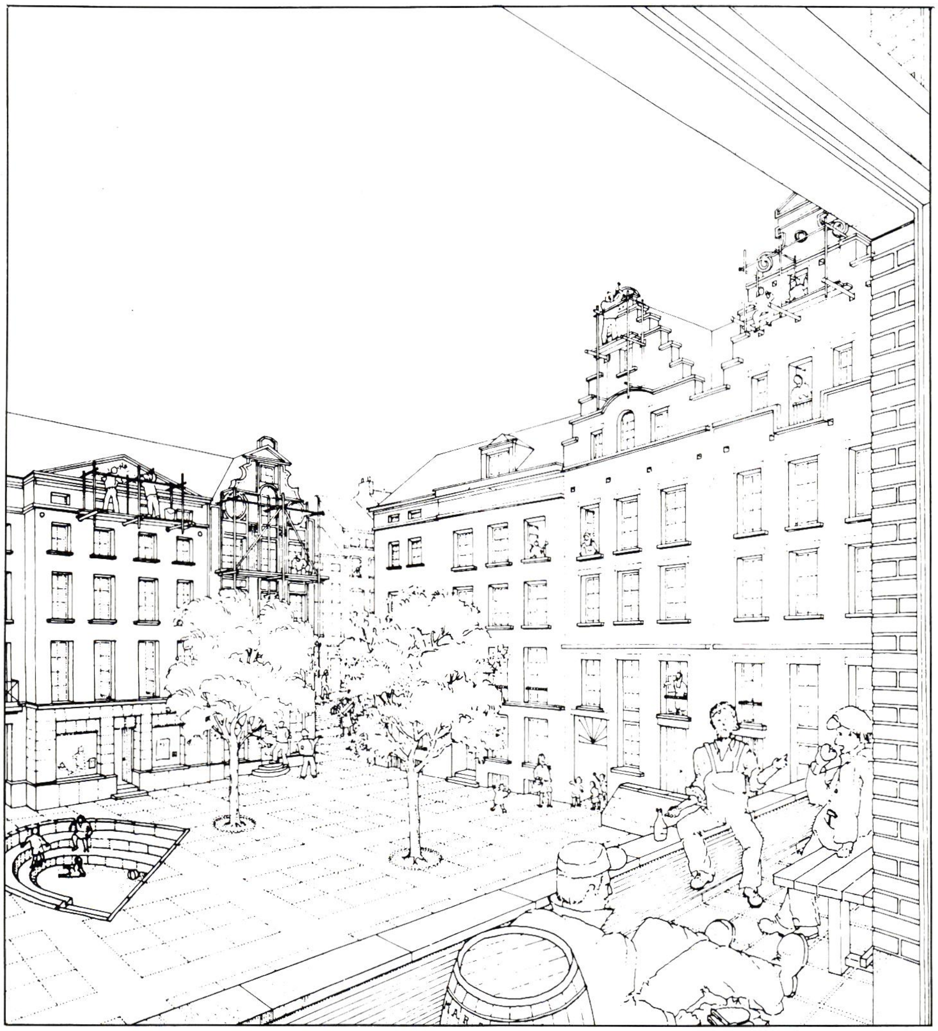
6 Reconstruction of Marolles
Through the initiative of the Society for the Development of Marolles, the reconstruction of the quarter is well under way. The local people who have received artisan training in the studios on the Rue Notre-Seigneur make up the backbone of this popular enterprise.
This evocative scene, a little way from the studios, shows that the Rue Notre-Seigneur and the Place of the Brigittines are nearly finished. The artisans are building durable and economic homes whose construction is governed only by their intelligent understanding of the materials and well preserved methods. In the foreground, the master mason begins to restore a block of stone while across the way two artisan-



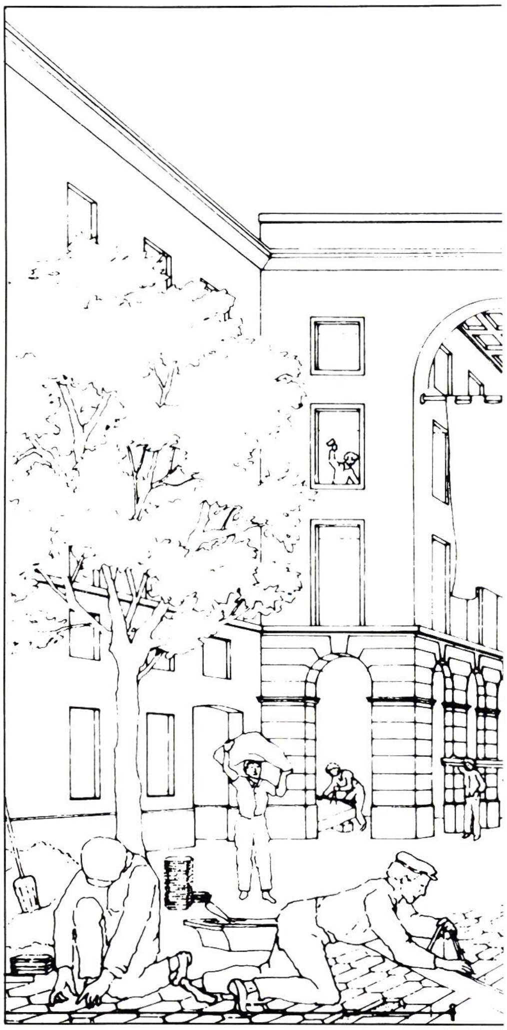
carpenters adjust a piece of wood previously squared by the newly established sawmill on the edge of the Nord-Midi link. On the opposite sidewalk, our friend Léon Krier has thrown off his jacket and is admiring, not without astonishment, their rediscovered savoir-faire. *On the other side of the Place of the Brigittines a few locals celebrate another housewarming. (Taken from a project for the reconstruction of the center of Brussels after its dismemberment by the construction of the Nord-Midi railway link. S. Birkiye, P. Neyrinck, G. Busieau, Institut Supérieur d'Architecture, La Cambre, 1978.)*



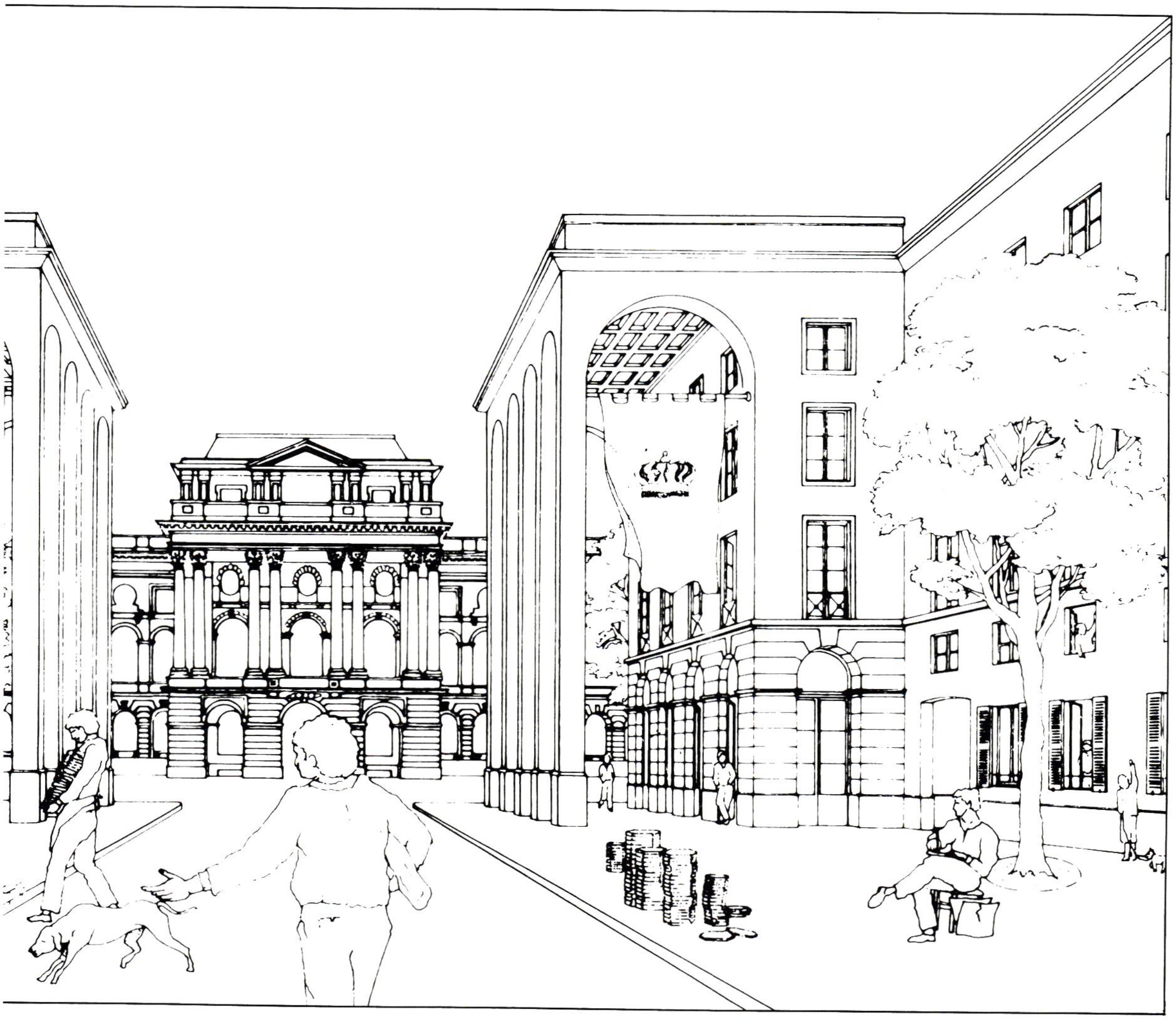
7 The Houses in front of the Station/The Evocative Meeting
Met at the exit of the Central Railway by his old friend Maurice Culot, Léon Krier, invited to La Cambre on the occasion of the seventh European forum of the 'anti-industrial resistance', drops his suitcase and his glasses in astonishment. Without doubt, the ravaged center of Brussels has been reconstructed according to the very principles of rational architecture: the streets, the stone buildings, the roofs, the democratic vertical windows. An active level of social interaction has replaced the former desolation resulting from a 'modern' urbanism based on the principle of unbridled individual mobility. It is certain that the two friends will lose no time in celebrating their meeting on the terrace of one of the cafes, while admiring the old city. (Taken from a project for the reconstruction of the center of Brussels after its dismemberment by the construction of the Nord-Midi railway link. S. Birkiye, P. Neyrinck, and G. Busieau, Institut Supérieur d'Architecture, La Cambre, 1978).

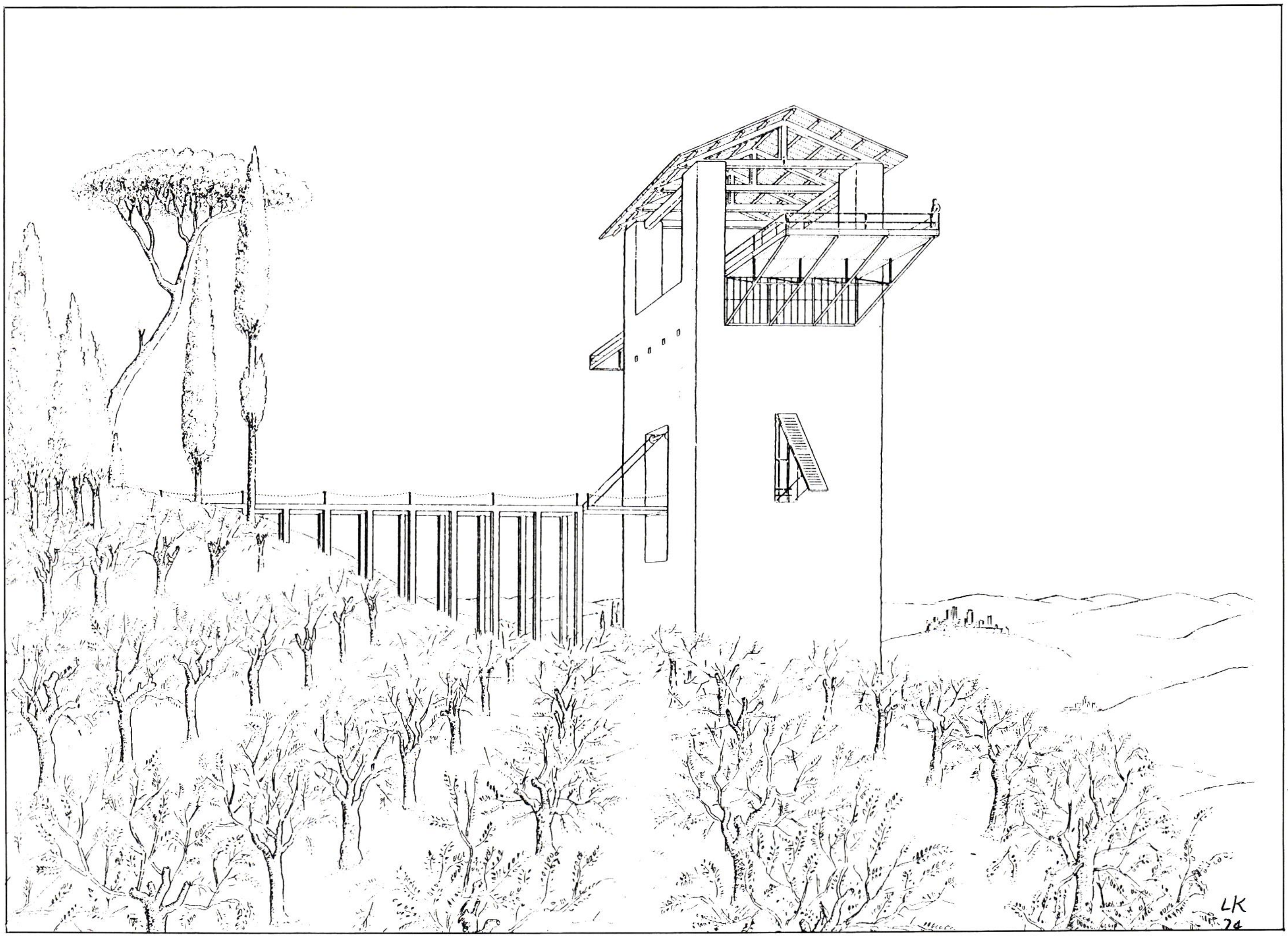


8 The Embellishment of the Place des Radis
It is spring, year 2000, and the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the 'Battle of Marolles' is soon to take place. The inhabitants of the Quartier des Radis are busy decorating the square. In the rear, at the left of the entrance to the square, painters are touching up the Baroque moldings of the House of Expiation (a facade given by the City of Brussels in atonement for their past urban crimes). Next to these freshly repainted facades, students from the School of Marollian Construction test their skills in sculpting the pediment of the House of the Artisans and in finishing the twin gables of the Ecole de Coupe. Midday has struck, the perfectionists dawdle on the scaffolding, others are already lunching at the Brasserie or the Cafe of Expiation. (Taken from a project for the reconstruction of a popular quarter of Brussels, the Quartier des Radis. D. Ange, R. de Gernier, A. Lambrichs, La Cambre, 1978.)



9 The Quarter of the Arts
The entry porticos of the New Place of the Palace frame the projecting central segment of the facade of the Balat. The visitors to the recently inaugurated Museum of the Dynasty (to the right) and the new residents admire the zeal and the ability of the artisans while they energetically finish the Grand Café Royal for the festivities of 21 July. . . . (Taken from a project for the Quarter of the Arts. Brigitte D'Helft, Michel Verliefden, La Cambre, 1978.)

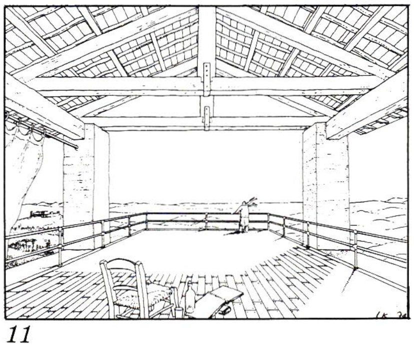




10 House for Giorgio Mayer, 1974
House for Giorgio Mayer, Bagnano, Tuscany. Léon Krier, 1974. This house continues the grand tradition of popular constructions in Tuscany. We added to it some extras necessary to an artist: the large panoramic windows, protected by the brise-soleil *windows, etc.*

11 House for Giorgio Mayer

12 House for Giorgio Mayer
After a heroic period of observing the industrial landscape, the painter Giorgio Mayer turns his attention to studying works of human intelligence and pleasure.



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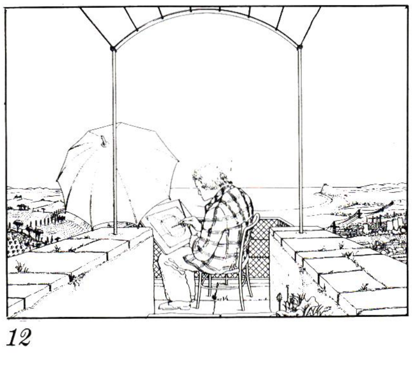

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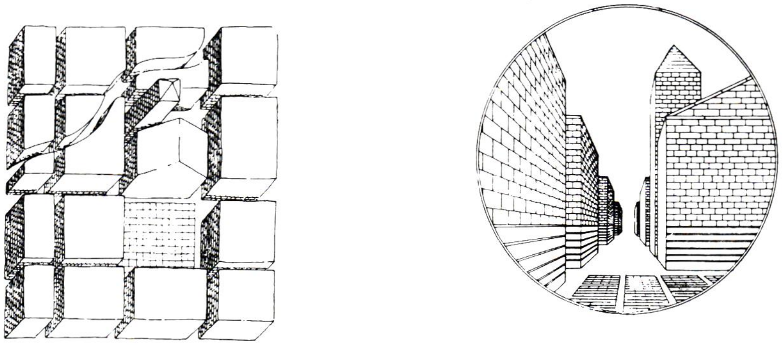
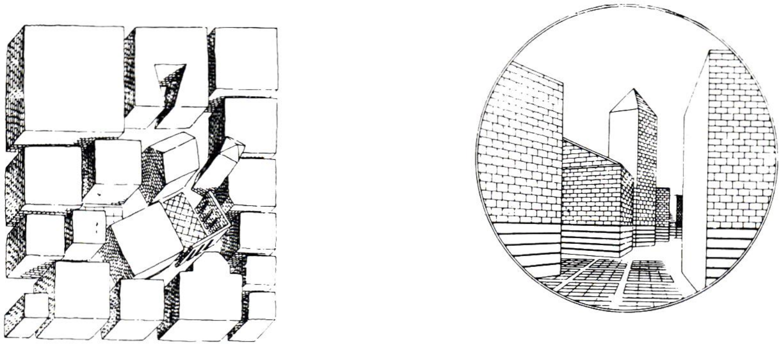
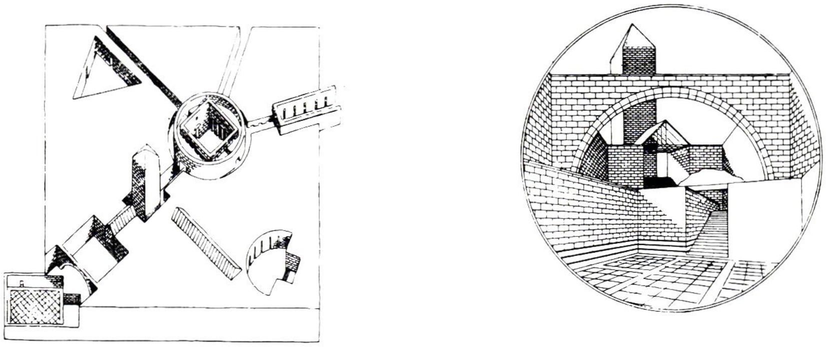


The blocks are the result of the street and square pattern . . .

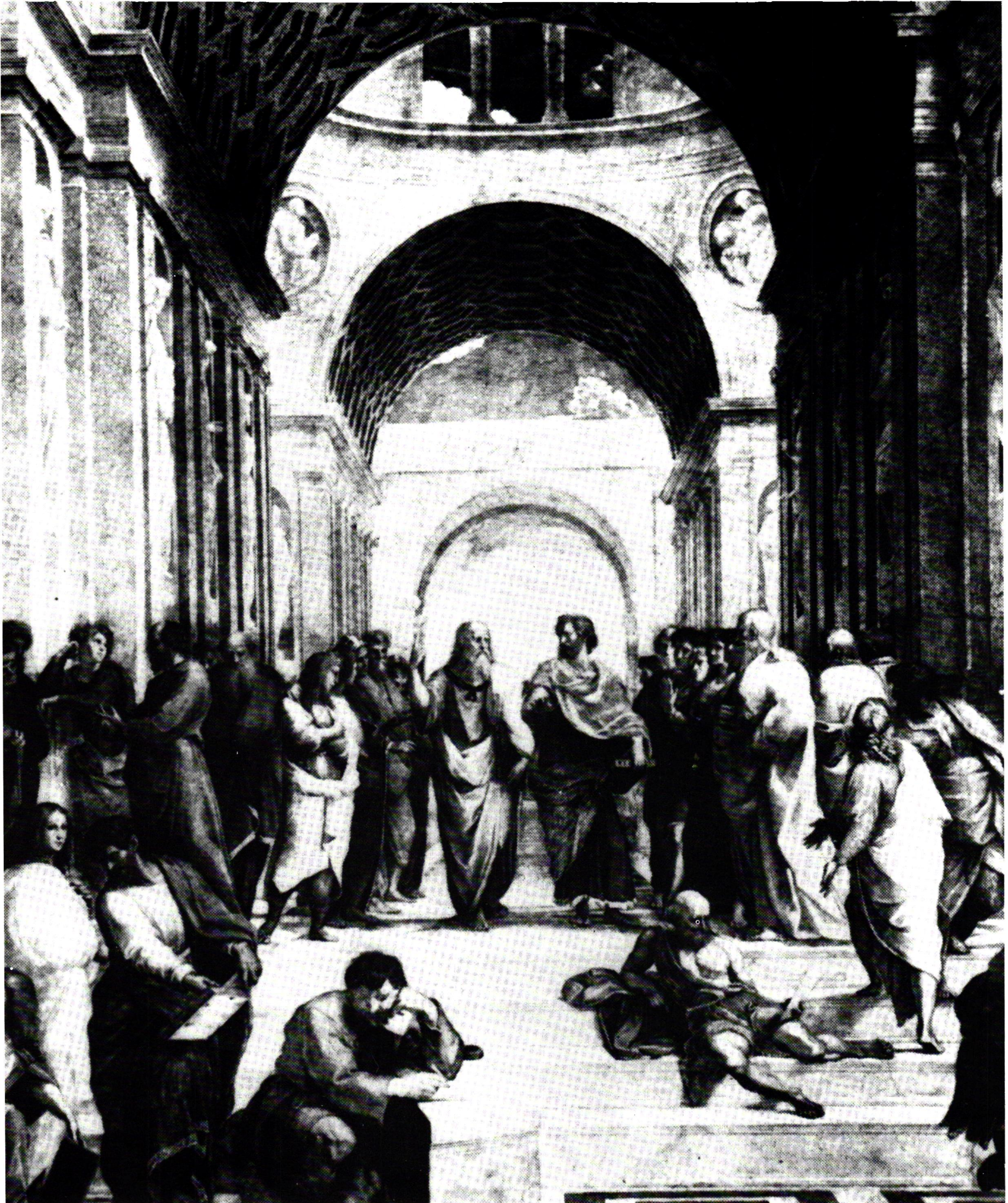


The streets and squares are the result of the position of the blocks . . .



The streets and squares are precise spatial types. The block is the result.

13 Three Models for Conceiving Urban Spaces
The street and the square represent the only and necessary models for the reconstruction of a public realm. In this context, we stress the necessary dialectical relationship between building typology and morphology of urban space, and within that dialectic, the correct relationship between monuments (public buildings) and the more anonymous urban fabric (building for private use). Léon Krier, 1978.



The Consumption of Culture

Léon Krier

1 (frontispiece) Raphael, School of Athens, *1510-1511. Detail. Fresco, Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican, Rome.*

When the French Revolution ended with the political victory of the bourgeoisie, education, which had been the privilege of a small class, became compulsory for every member of the new social order. Education, or rather its institutionalization, became probably the most important agent in the formation of the bourgeois state and in the stabilization of the new social and economical structure of the beginning industrial era. It also became the decisive instrument of the bourgeoisie for its installation as the most powerful political and social class.

This political victory coincided with the end of bourgeois culture, if ever this should have existed as an autonomous factor. The bourgeoisie was concerned now to secure the power it had gained against the growing momentum of the popular classes, made up of the peasants, the artisans, and the laborers. To achieve this it had to spread its control to all fields of life—social, political, and cultural. Bourgeois culture, which until the French Revolution had been an elegant version of popular or peasant culture, with visual codes mostly or still recognizably emerging from a manufacturing tradition, would no longer serve for the newly gained political position. If its concern so far had to do with practicality, solidity, and economy, it now had to be replaced by some system that could overcome its own cultural roots (so strongly related to manufacturing and trading), that could transcend the newly gained political victory into an entirely affirmative ideological and cultural system.

Neoclassicism represented the first crystallization of this still vaguely formulated system. It was, at the same time, the first attempt of the bourgeoisie to articulate the sublime. In this respect, at least for a very short time, it might have achieved great culmination, and, for a class basically concerned with trading merchandise, a total break with its previous cultural habits and tastes and with its built environment. Neoclassicism is now very often seen as a revolt against the extravagancy of Rococo, against the sinful excesses of a moribund aristocracy, rather than as a reaction, a brief but vivid explosion of creativity. Its sophisticated and positively sensuous nature, its almost obsessive elegance were imbued with the enlightened, progressive, and optimistic ideals that the bourgeoisie held at the beginning of the industrial era.

The Neoclassical domestication of visual codes from classical antiquity was motivated less by revolt than by the ambition to seek a new respectability in the most sublime of cultures, which classical antiquity represented ever since its enthusiastic rediscovery. The immediate availability and quick appropriation of a foreign culture like classical antiquity were only made possible through the newly enlarged educational institutions. The absolute unity which the Neoclassical language represented for the bourgeoisie, the revision of linguistic codes which it had to achieve to suit the new domestic environment, and above all the speed with which this most complex style appeared, flourished, and vanished—all this monumental, extravagant, and totally daring enterprise could never have been managed by the slow educational movement and the conservative cultural stability of artisanal production. The existence of the Academy with its by now absolute monopoly over culture delivered the necessary didactic machinery, which became instrumental in the implementation of this new style.

With the Restoration and the increasingly conservative nature of bourgeois political and cultural ambitions, the strong feelings of uneasiness after the French Revolution, or more correctly after the Vienna Congress, were followed on the cultural level by a quick series of irreversible and radical changes. In fact, the process of appropriation of alien cultures through the efficient educational machinery, far from producing only a style, was overtaken by the ever-increasing spread of consumption caused by the merchandise-oriented character of the bourgeois economical system; the artistic perfectionism of Neoclassicism was soon overtaken by the hasty production and consumption of neo-culture, of styles. Culture became reduced to yet another form of merchandise; the circulation of knowledge became yet another trade. Culture, from having been the social privilege of a few, became buyable by those who could afford it.

The level of consciousness reached with the Enlightenment, however, at the same time as it enabled the appropriation of alien cultures and codes, delivered also the bad conscience inevitably created by their increasingly superficial consumption and by the inability of the bourgeoisie to find proper cultural roots and expression. For political reasons, the bourgeoisie had to cut its links with its former allies; to defend its newly gained privileges against the rising resistance of the usurpated classes, it had also to cut the previous cultural links which had bound it before the Revolution so closely with the laboring classes and peasants. It was this feeling of being suspended, of being cut off from traditional roots and habits, of not really belonging to the cultural space which it painfully had to occupy to become respectable, which propelled the bourgeoisie and with it the whole of society, into an accelerated agonizing process of cultural consumption. This usurpation of an alien culture can be paralleled to the usurpation of political power symbolized by the Restoration.

The bad conscience and lack of respect for its own cultural products, the entirely new phenomenon of official and unofficial art, and the quick elimination of the one by the other indicates to what degree respect for the father was replaced by disgust. The historical balance of power which had somehow existed between popular culture and high culture, between craftsman and artist, became radically eroded and the institutionalization of educational systems began to pervade and control all levels of private and public life and, what seems most important, began to centrally control all classes of society. The traditional dialectic of high and popular culture, of laborer and intellectual, became re-formed in the new totality of the State, which pervaded all levels of material and spiritual life.

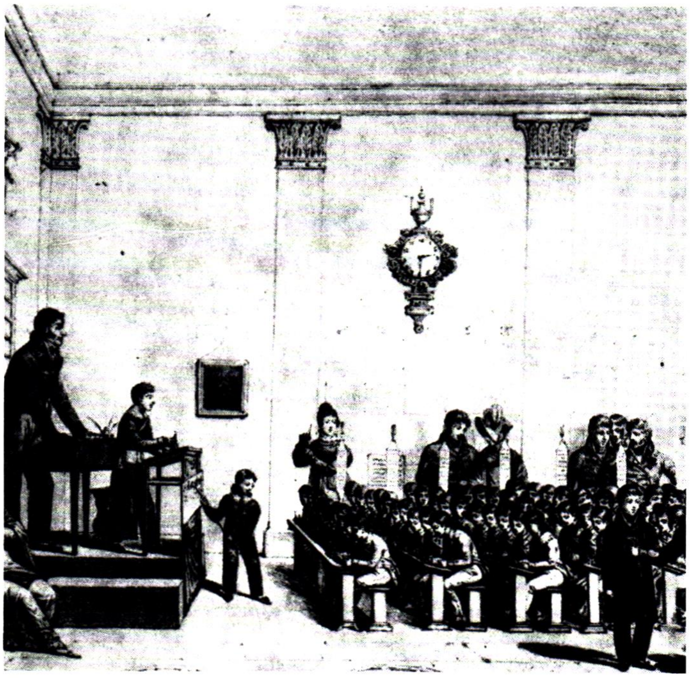
What was so new about this bourgeois state was that it integrated by force all classes into a vast and apparently coherent pyramidal society, based on natural law. In that way, the classes not only lost their relative previous cultural autonomy, but the social division of labor and mass education meant the irreversible expropriation and destruction of both high and popular cultures, and the universalization of bourgeois middle-class values. An essential step in the institutionalization of culture through the educational machine was the reduction of both aristocratic and religious as well as popular cultural codes to styles. Through these styles, alien cultures became immediately available, reduced to purely intellectual systems with a total autonomy from their historical reality and memory, devoid of their initial social or religious purposes.

On the level of popular culture, the social division of labor and the mechanical forms of production destroyed the deeply rooted crafts tradition and its social structure. Compulsory education began to morally control and erode the vast building of popular knowledge which had been carried through time by collective memory.

"Au vide du siècle machine, il faut répondre par l'effusion ineffable d'un décor berceur et doucement enivrant." With eclecticism, styles became the means for the previously described consumption of cultures. Consumption meant effective destruction, burning, using up. This consumption very quickly eroded the refined codes of high culture, and the industrial division of labor effectively destroyed the conditions of production of the popular cultures. This apocalyptic process of erosion lasted for less than one hundred and fifty years, to come to an end with all previous human cultures. It leaves us today either with shambles and detritus or with arrogant caricatures and illusions of culture, but in most cases with kitsch. Kitsch might be described as an amorphous compilation of confused codes, and it pervades all branches of contemporary life, both spiritual and material. It is truly the most violent indication of the profound alienation which lies at the basis of industrial production.

In the architectural thinking of the nineteenth century, styles were the ideological instrument which superficially seemed to heal the still burning wounds caused by the industrial division of intellectual and manual production. It was, however, the brutal social division that irredeemably alienated the hand from the mind through their different status in the social pyramid more than the division of labor (which had always existed in the human condition), which reduced the products of human labor and pain to mere trivia.

2, 3 Schools for the teaching of cooperative elementary education, Rue du Port-Mahon. A writing lesson. Lithograph by Hippolite Lecomte, 1818.



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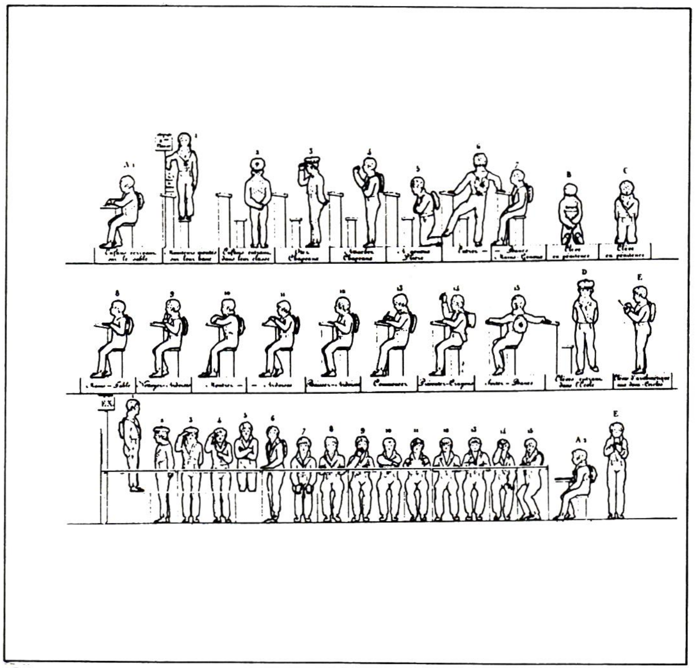

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Functionalism represents only a radicalization in this accelerated process of consumption, and it can be defined as a stripped style. For Le Corbusier, the rejection of styles represented a moralist upsurge against the excesses of the nineteenth century; for the still young building industry, the new purism represented a welcome means to get rid of a cultural facade which by then seemed to have become apparently useless. However, by voluntarily ignoring the appeasing ideological role which styles had exercised in the production and consumption process, by not taking note of the crisis of intellectual and manual production which had caused the rapid qualitative decline of nineteenth century values, the new functionalism, in giving up styles, returned the already reduced versions of art to an even further reduced form, to kitsch. (We will ignore here the interesting but socially isolated *oeuvres* of what survived of high culture in some personalities like Le Corbusier and a few others.)

Kitsch must then be identified as the most important cultural phenomenon of the industrial age, as the real *Zeitgeist* of the machine age. For it is no style and it is all styles. It is ugly; but then its function is not to be beautiful, but to replace beauty, to stand for beauty, to signify a status. It is not sensuous, does not satisfy the senses; but it satisfies an instinct for beauty, and as instincts do not reflect upon but react to phenomena, it fulfills its ideological and economic function.

If the artist was the last member of the human species who in an industrial society could reconcile manual and intellectual labor in a totally satisfying experience, the subversive nature of his work and the model it represented had to be attacked at its roots. And as the *métier* of art, the manual part of the artistic creation could not survive untamed in a society controlled by the social division of labor, the intellectual and theoretical body of his art had necessarily to collapse. The musician who is experimenting with mathematical models, the architect who is clumsily handling a computer, and the painter who is using Letraset are all part of the same process of alienation, reducing art to a desperate search for expression rather than expressing a social content. Picasso was probably the last who could say candidly "je ne cherche pas, je trouve." However subjugated to political or religious ends art and architecture might have been in pre-industrial societies, ultimately it always succeeded in talking of the reign of liberty, of freedom, and of earthly paradise—of the ultimate liberty of the senses.

As art represents a basically static and undynamic moment, its experience presented a threat to a society whose production and immediate consumption had become more and more inexorably linked in a profit-making process. The very finality of art tending to a state of satisfaction, and contemplation of "luxe, calme, et volupté," had to change radically. Kitsch represents this change, the delaying of satisfaction without fulfillment. This constant dissatisfaction and necessary frustration with the kitsch object seems to be the fundamental basis of the never ceasing production and consumption process. The deceived promise is only fulfilled by an almost ritualized chain of minor technical and stylistic "improvements." These slight and trivial modifications have the profound effect of diverting attention from the object one is about to taste and consume; but even more importantly, they perform a social function. The kitsch object to which the consumer is fatally attracted is by the very transience of its nature always the one which is slightly ahead of the position and status which he has just reached in society.

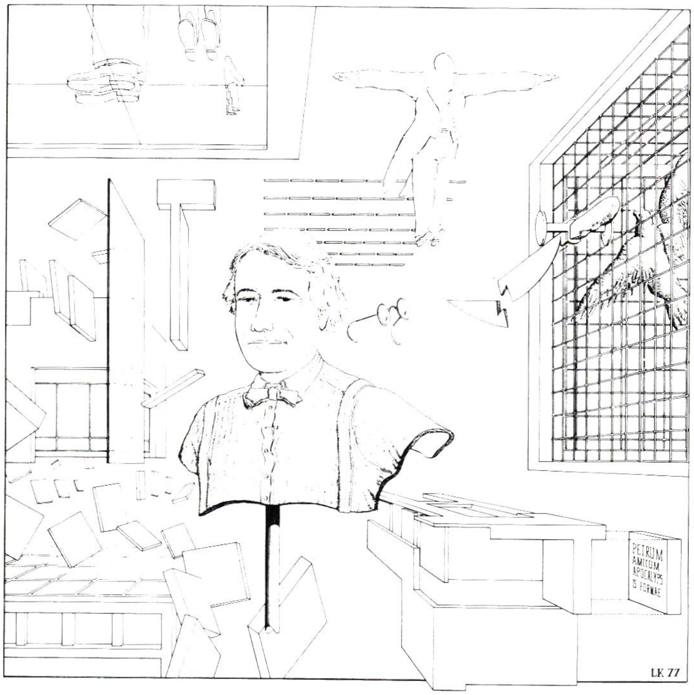
Industrial production, from having promised the liberation of mankind from enslaving labor, seems only to have perpetuated the state of human affliction in another more radical and unescapable form. Architecture, as the art of building, had finally to become included in this all engulfing cycle of production and consumption. From having promised the ultimate shelter and the liberation of mankind from the afflicting conditions of nature, the architect has turned out to be Sisyphus. From having had to do with promise, building has turned out to be a threat in the collective mind.

If kitsch is the necessary result of the social division of labor, the problem of socialist realism can no longer be addressed merely on the level of artistic forms. It is interesting to note that the debate on socialist realism in the Soviet Union in the 1930s was concerned not with the possible development of popular culture, but in a totally paternalistic way, with style. The technicians who organized the new production lines were interested in methods by which to discipline the popular masses into an industrial proletariat, and in that context, the creative potentials of popular culture, their autonomy, and their profound concern with quality rather than quantity and with stability rather than change presented a constant threat to "democratic" centralism. Western critics have always stigmatized the Constructivists as good and the academicists as bad revolutionaries. *Fei-ling* (proletarian culture in China), however, has demonstrated at length that both these tendencies were part of the same revisionist process, that they were both equally concerned to place the control of production back in the hands of a privileged class, of a technocratic and bureaucratic "elite." Culturally this renewed form of social division of labor had, after a short and orgiastic abuse of all styles, to result in yet another fatal glorification of production and consumption, in another triumph of kitsch.

Ever since the elimination of aristocratic and popular cultures, our fathers have persistently endeavored in the assassination of the pleasures which were such an essential, if not the most important part of the pursuit and circulation of knowledge, of life. Education, from having been the pleasurable privilege of a few, has become the tortuous necessity for all. A humanity whose goal is not the pursuit of pleasure, but the omnipresence of necessity, ironically must find its only pleasure in its own destruction, in the recognition of its ultimate uselessness.

A state of pleasure is also one of contemplation of one's own being and doing. Narcissus is calm and holds his breath so as not to confuse the reflection of his own beauty. Now if being and doing are but mere necessity, the moment of contemplation, from having been one of satisfaction, has become one of urgency, and ultimately of agony. In that perspective, the self-destruction of humanity becomes obviously a moment of relief, a relief from the urgency, ugliness, and futile agony.

4 Poster for an exhibition "Peter Eisenman: House Number X," at Princeton University. Léon Krier, 1977.



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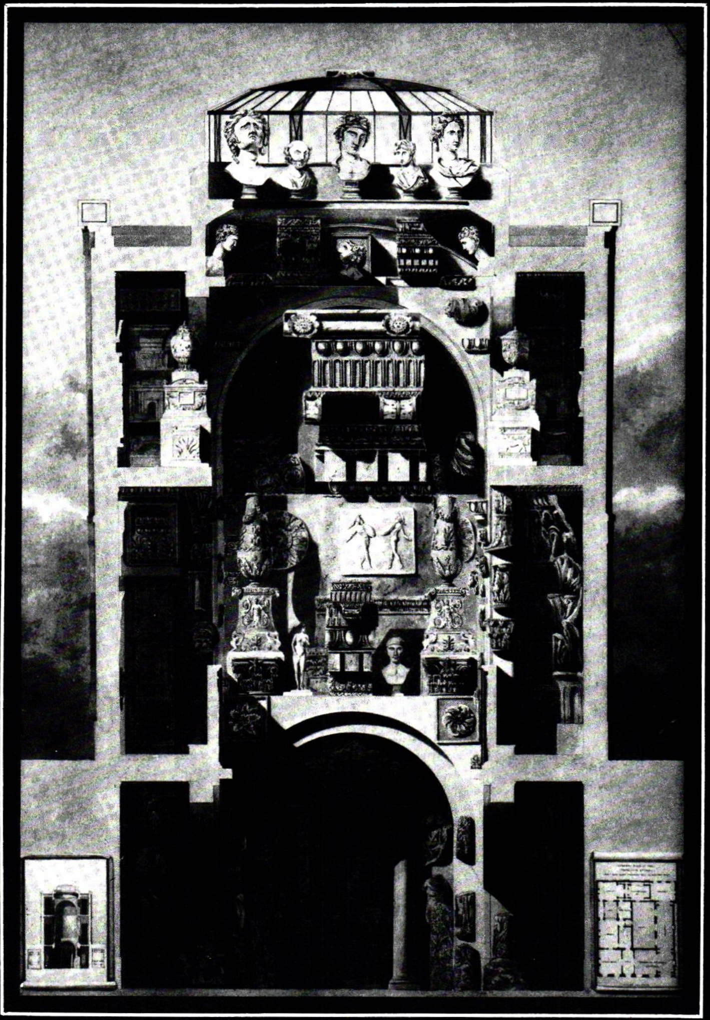


John Soane and the Birth of Style (notes on the architectural project in the years around 1800)

Georges Teyssot
Translation by Christian Hubert

1 (frontispiece) The room of the "dome," Sir John Soane's Museum. Sir John Soane, c.1813.

Between 1800 and 1805, George Dance the younger, the master of John Soane, insisted upon the necessity of a 'liberation' of "unshackled architecture."[1] It is this notion of *liberty* with which we shall concern ourselves here.

It would appear, seemingly as a contradiction, that the foundations for *irregularity* (the liberty of the project) were laid toward the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth—just at the time the reign of absolute *regularity* in architecture was inaugurated. (In the case of France, one can point to the architectural output of the Service des Bâtiments civils, as well as the plates of Durand, Bruyère, Brisson, and Gourlier.) One should keep in mind that the dialectic between *rule* and *license*, which informed architectural thought from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, is inadequate as an interpretation of these developments. The contradiction between regular and irregular (brought to light by the work of Jacques Guillerme),[2] and this newly formulated liberty which accompanies it, are often presented as the seeds of the future eclecticism of architecture and the introduction of the notion of *style* into architectural discourse.

While remaining aware that these are but partial and hardly definitive results, we shall sketch out two sorts of analyses whose conclusions do not always coincide: 1) From a logical point of view, we shall formulate a theoretical hypothesis, inspired by notions borrowed from Max Bense concerning the modes of architectural creation; then briefly test their validity by a study of the process of design in selected projects around 1800. We hope in this way to clarify the transformations in the relations that govern rules, liberty, creation, inventions, and innovations in the elaboration of "urban forms" in the period under consideration. 2) From a semantic point of view, we shall disclose, through the analysis of texts, the existence of *analoga*, such as those of *style* and *language*, which inform the written discourse on architecture.

We do not intend to propound once again today a "technological aesthetic" such as that advanced by Max Bense in the 1950s and 1960s. There is, however, a fertile direction taken in his *Aesthetica:*[3] the attempt to write the history of the distinction established approximately from the eighteenth century on (already apparent in Descartes and subsequently re-established in Leibniz) between the modes of artistic creation and technical invention. One can readily admit that the architectural object belongs at the same time to both spheres. After that the project oscillates between the author's work and the anonymous reality of the built environment. It might be useful to attempt to theoretically ground these differences.

Liberty and Realization

By examining the two spheres of art and the new process of urban and national planning, one can comprehend the play of relations between architectural "freedom" and "rationalization"—communication in general, technics, and later technology—or, to put it in other words, between "liberty" and "realization."

Citing Leibniz, Max Bense has shown the ontological difference between the technical object that determines a sphere of interrelations in which each element possesses a function and occupies a necessary position (instruments, machines, equipment), and the aesthetic object which is a free entity, more or less autonomous. The work of art owes its existence to the fact of its production, in effect, but it does not 'function'. Its mode of realization is not simply necessity; it is supplemented by a mode of casualness.[4]

A "freedom of choice" (as with Leibniz) presides over the decision of *realization* (the passage from an unlimited possibility to a reality): but the *actualization* "does not in any way change the manner in which things are made." They remain in the state "in which they already were found as possibility."[5] In other words, if one cannot invent a language, since its "conventionality" is determined by its collective use, one can nonetheless transform it through "speech." A relation of statistical *probability* is thus established between the "freedom of choice" of the decision and its actualization, a relationship which excludes all "romantic" spontaneity and creative intuition in the promethean sense of the term.

The rejection of rules and of imitation—the prerequisite of subjective "freedom"—does not only aid in the conception of the new "art," the new nature—that of the city and territory—and even less in the inauguration of a "pre-romantic" era or a "romantic classicism," but rather in the establishment of the *material* conditions for a formal rationalization. "Liberty" must allow for an ever more effective domination of the process of actualization of form.

Abandoning the rules (of "classical" architecture) means, for the architect and the engineer of the eighteenth century, to gain access to a liberty that should not be thought of only as a method of thinking reality, or as the writing of "new rules"; above all this new freedom would give a great power of domination over the real by virtue of their taking into account a greater amount of information. Thus, in this case, liberty must be freedom *for* technique.

Up until now, however, we have only described the production of the technical object. A casual *process of transformation* within the modal schema is required for an object to pass from the condition of functional object to that of a work of art. Linking the "probabilism" of Leibniz to the modern theory of information, Bense states that the work of art is a system of absolute probability placed before an infinite number of possibilities. When it is actualized, the aesthetic object introduces into the original and absolute disorder a series of orders defining zones of relative probability.[6] The structure of the work of art is thus indeterminate and ambiguous. This margin of relative indeterminacy permits the displacement of *meanings* and defines the limits of the domain of *play.*[7] The "liberty" of the decision is the freedom *for* actualization. The logical relations between these phases are at the same time of a *statistical* nature (the margin of relative indeterminacy at the information level) and of a *ludic* one. Therefore, in addition to the "informational" signification of aesthetics, there is a ludic signification. The communicative function is manifested in the informational signification; the realizable function of art appears in the ludic signification. Citing Wittgenstein, Max Bense has shown that the play of games represents an aesthetic category in itself, outside of those of information and communication, because the game always has a realizable function and never a *codifying*[8] one; or at least this latter character always remains secondary. The result is that the ludic signification of a text (or an image) and its actualizable aesthetic message do not depend on the quantity of information conveyed (the codifiable semantic message).[9] The *precision* of the object, as a category of its semantic and communicative dimension, belongs to the realm of technics, of security and work. The *value* of the object, as a category of its aesthetic and realizable dimension, is a category of dispersion, dissemination, and play.

Architecture, belonging at the same time to the spheres of technical objects and aesthetic objects, as we have described, is actualized according to a double modality. As aesthetic object the modes of its creation belong primarily to "ludic" (or "frivolous") signification, a function where the indeterminacy (the ambiguity) which governs the creation of the object can *play*. As a technical object, "post-classical" architecture must be measured by the law of innovation. The "creativity" of classical *invention* only establishes the conditions for the reflection of reality; the *ars combinatoria* untiringly articulates the same "utterances." Innovation, on the other hand, introduces an unlimited and dynamic field, which has only one direction: the system must become *development*.

These innovations, which unsettle the traditional sphere of architecture, must be *applied* (in as much as they are rationalizations of the means of communication) to the city and territory. Let us sum up in a diagram the double modality of architectural realization:

Architecture as technical object	Information: Communicative Function
Functionality Innovation	Code, Security, Work
Architecture as aesthetic object	Game: Realizable Function
Casualness Ludic signification	Codification not by necessity —"poetry"

This double nature of architecture, which corresponds to the contradictory modes of its actualization is reflected in the production of architects and engineers at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In effect, if there is indeed an opposition or a competition between these two categories of designers, it is primarily of a corporative sort. More fundamental is the opposition between the two modes of creation: an opposition, or historical contradiction, which is experienced as much individually as collectively by architects and engineers, and whose traces are evident in numerous projects; an opposition—so called—which can clarify the originally perceived contradiction between regular and irregular. A few projects chosen from the period 1794 and 1812 will illustrate our remarks:

—The "Mountain" designed by the engineer L. Dutour in Bordeaux (figs. 4, 5) the third fructidor of the year II, illustrates the play between rule and license as seen in projects for revolutionary stage settings which come out of the experimental tradition of gardens: a *play of oppositions* perfectly organized by the theory of the picturesque and of the sublime. Here theatricality, by the erection of this peculiar "equipment," leaves the private domain to be integrated into the technics of communication and persuasion.

—The courthouse (*Palais de Justice*) of Pontivy (Morbihan) built in 1808 in the central square of Napoléonville, the city founded under the Empire in order to pacify Brittany: this work of the engineers of the Ponts et Chaussées, built under the supervision of the Service des Bâtiments civils, is one of the first examples of the "regularity" of the State, such as it would be applied to numerous departmental equipment in France.

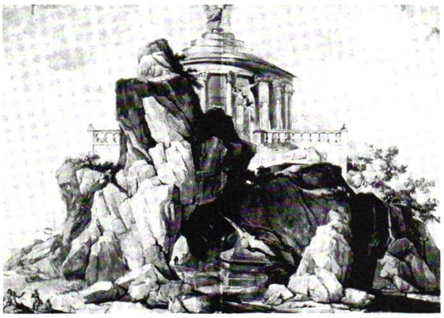
—The Emperor's library at the Chateau of Malmaison (figs. 2, 3), built according to the project of Percier and Fontaine between July and September 1800 and decorated with frescoes by Moench: a 'private' space in which the play of *deformation-transformation* on pre-existing models can be carried out (such as the lowered and penetrated cupola, the serliana, the 'furnace hole' formed by a half cupola).

2, 3 The Emperor's Library, Château de la Malmaison. Percier and Fontaine, 1800. Executed project.

4, 5 Projects for a temple on a "mountain" and on a "rock," Bordeaux. Dutour, engineer-architect (3 fructidor, year II).

2

3



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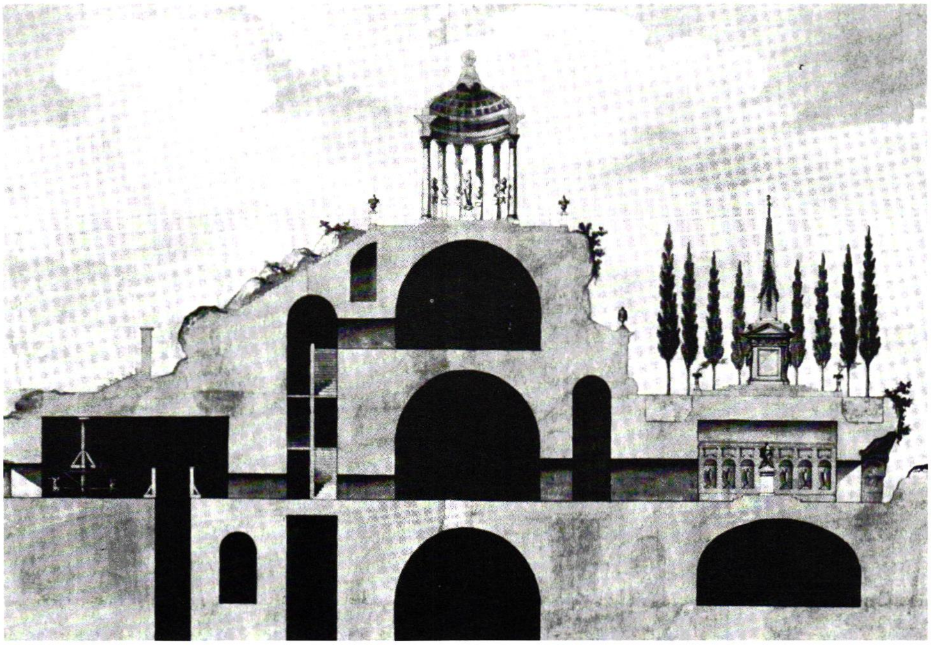

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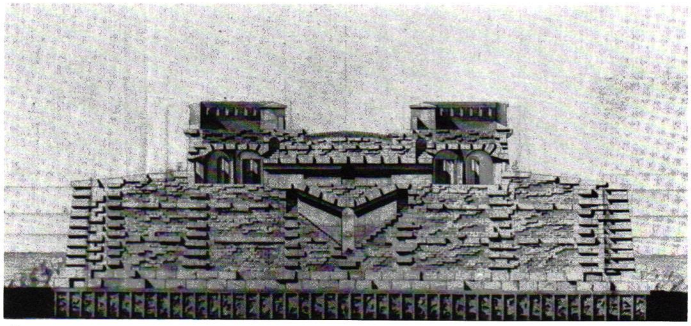
—The drawings executed by the Service des Ponts et Chaussées for a bridge between Mayence and Cassel in 1808 (figs. 6-10), with the study for docks and a triumphal arch, the project for an administrative complex, and three versions of a design for a bridge (in laminated wood, iron, and stone). The architecture projects conserved at the Ecole des Ponts et Chaussées show that all the students passed through an apprenticeship in poetic figuration. We find, in these projects, a freedom of rendering, a meticulous attention to detail, a daring use of color: all of which would tend to undermine that rule of *uniformity* which is characteristic of the plans of engineers at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The redundant precision of drawn detail is contradictory: one would think, in light of the imperatives of the "industrial" production of major equipment, that such lyricism of representation would have been excessive. Under Napoleon, the projects of engineers became inflamed with expressive generosity, apparently in obedience to the subjective dictates of creativity rather than the strict rule of *innovation.* This lyricism would be eliminated in favor of less redundant figurative information which would allow innovations to be effectively *applied.*

These several projects (equipment, 'private' and 'public' architecture) illustrate the difficulties in establishing the historical anteriority of what has been termed "the rise of regularities" in relation to the development (or the reactivation) of an emblematic of architectural forms during the construction of the great metropolises in the second half of the nineteenth century.

We can then ask the following questions: Is it the apparently ever increasing domain of regularity which permits the application of "all sorts of styles" to buildings? Or rather: it is not at the very moment that urban form becomes a "matter of regularity and clarity within completely and perfectly identifiable spaces" that the question of architectural style arises once again?

A detailed analysis of John Soane's Dulwich Gallery (1811-1812) will furnish us with some elements of an answer.

6-8 Project for a bridge (Pont des Victoires) on the Rhine, Mainz. Engineers of the Corps des Ponts et Chaussées, 1807-1813. Sections through the stone pilings and the iron arches.



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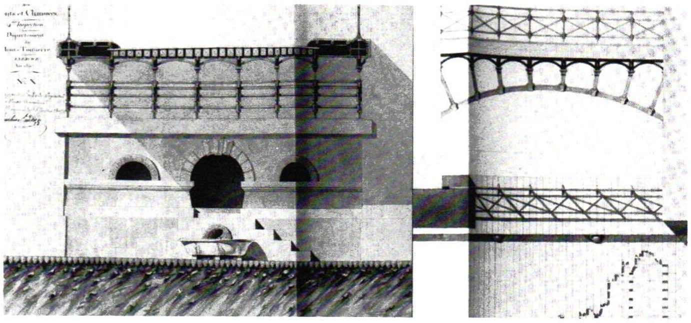

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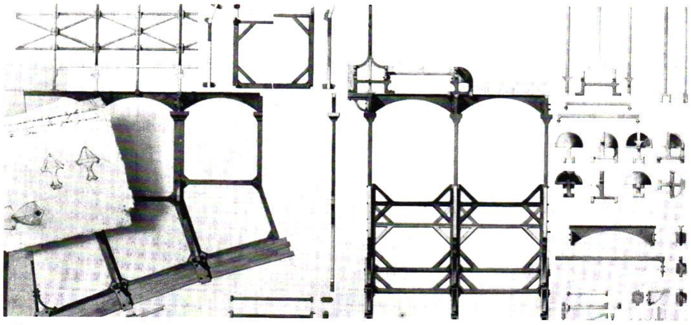

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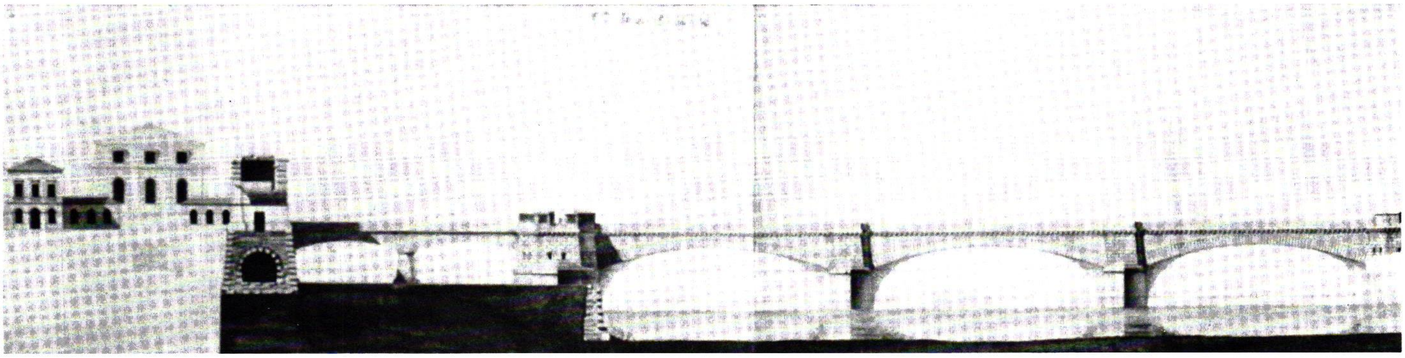
9, 10 Project for a bridge (Pont des Victoires) on the Rhine, Mainz. Engineers of the Corps des Ponts et Chaussées, 1807-1813. Principal elevations.

11 The Mausoleum next to the house of Sir Francois Bourgeois (1756-1811) on Charlotte Street, Portland Place. Sir John Soane, 1807-1808.



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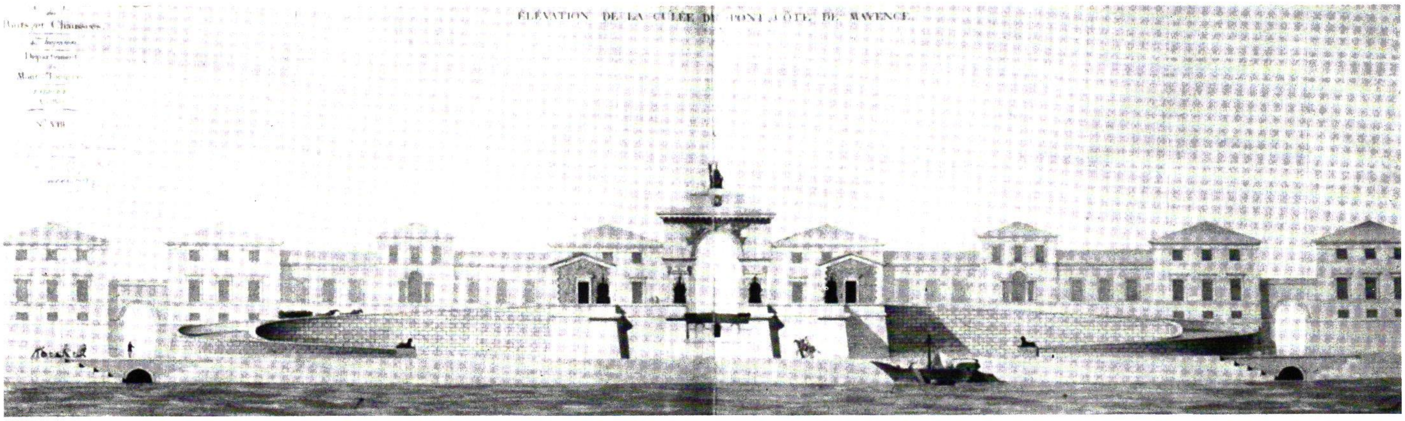
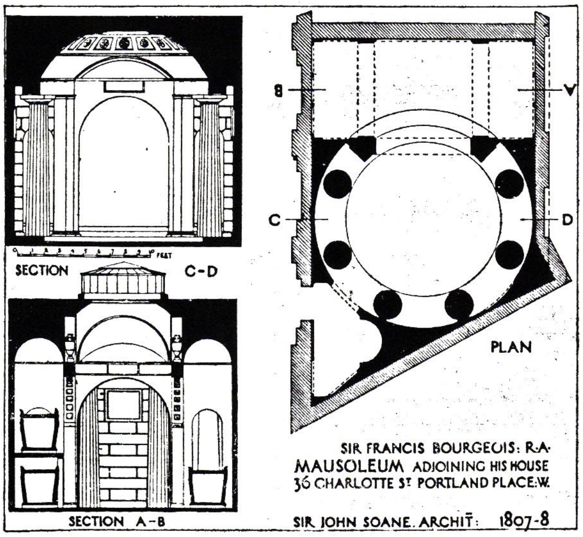

ÉLÉVATION DE LA CULÉE DU PONT, CÔTÉ DE MAYENCE.
Ponts et Chaussées
N° VIII

10


FEET
SECTION C-D
SECTION A-B
B
A
C
D
PLAN
SIR FRANCIS BOURGEOIS: R.A.
MAUSOLEUM ADJOINING HIS HOUSE
36 CHARLOTTE ST PORTLAND PLACE:W.
SIR JOHN SOANE. ARCHIT: 1807-8

11

John Soane's Dulwich Gallery

In January 1811, John Soane was entrusted with the construction of a monument to be erected in the memory of his friend Sir Francis Bourgeois (fig. 11) who recently had died. This landscape painter, a distinguished member of the Royal Academy, willed to Dulwich College (founded in 1626, a few kilometers south of London) an entire collection of paintings, much of which he had himself inherited from Noël Desenfans, a Frenchman who had established himself in London as an art dealer. Bourgeois also left to the college a sum of ten thousand pounds sterling for the construction of a tomb destined for the remains of the Desenfans and Bourgeois families and a gallery for the proper display of the painting collection.[10]

Such a program could hardly have escaped the attention of an architect like Soane. At this time in London, it was fashionable to build picture galleries and museums—one thinks of the debates provoked by the buildings 'in style' (neo-Greek, neo-Indian, etc.) and the house of Thomas Hope on Duchess Street, opened to visitors ten years earlier. This kind of program, at once 'classical' (a tomb) and 'modern' or functional (a museum), allowed the architect to experiment with architectural solutions, at the very outbreak of the 'battle of styles'. This battle began in England in 1805 with the polemics around Wilkins's neo-Greek style and reached its height with the competition for the construction of the new Foreign Office in 1857.

The Dulwich Gallery represents an unusual attempt. In this project, Soane in effect already raised the questions of *style,* of *rule,* and of *invention.* Calling into question the universal validity of the classical rules, Soane rejected the simple copying of the Gothic or 'Classical' as design methods. With every means at his disposal, he sought instead to 'invent' new rules, keeping himself beyond any 'stylistic' problem. "We must combat the arbitrary rules derived from pure routine," he claimed in his lectures at the Royal Academy. "How can we hope for any progress in architecture if we limit ourselves to the copy of precedent?" Soane rejected *bricolage* as an "already there" of history: "We can well see the beauty [of the Gothic structures from the past]," he adds, "but we know as well that it cannot be directly transferred into modern buildings."[11] Only "Gothic effects," as picturesque effects, could be translated into architecture. In 1855, George Godwin would be able to say that Soane "propounds the doctrine of predominant novelty, and the details of his architecture are produced through fairly simple means, usually consisting of the inversion of the ordinary."[12]

In a table of correspondences published in 1808, Humphry Repton, the theoretician of the picturesque, had sought to establish the genealogical relations between the Indian column and Greek order.[13] Soane was aware of the dangers inherent in such a syncretism and published in 1832 the ironic comments of one of his friends: "Now for the Picture Gallery! For a minute, gentle reader, pause we, only a moment of this minute, on the exterior. What a thing! What a creature it is! A Moeso-Gothic, semi-Arabic, Moro-Spanish, Anglico-Norman, a what-you-will production! . . . It has all the merit and emphatic distinction of being unique [*sic*]."[14] What was here described with humor had also been disputed with sarcasm; in 1824, an article in *Knight's Quarterly Magazine* announced the appearance of the sixth order of architecture, in the Dulwich Gallery, itself: the 'Boethian' order, unknown to Palladio, Scamozzi, Vignola, or Perrault, but referred to by an author as erudite as imaginary, the Doctor "Vander von Bluggen, in his chapter on *Capitals.*" The lengthy article ended with a parodistic ode to the Dulwich Gallery, extolling its "monstrous magnificence":

"The *stepless* door, the scored wall
"Pillars *sans* base or capital,
"And curious antiques;
"The chimney groups that fright the sweeps
"And *acroteria* fifty deep
"And all thy mighty freaks"[15]

Let us examine the numerous drawings which permit the reconstruction of the history of this project.[16]

As early as April 1811, Soane envisaged the destruction of the west wing of the old college and the construction of a "quadrangle" on three sides, the traditional type of the

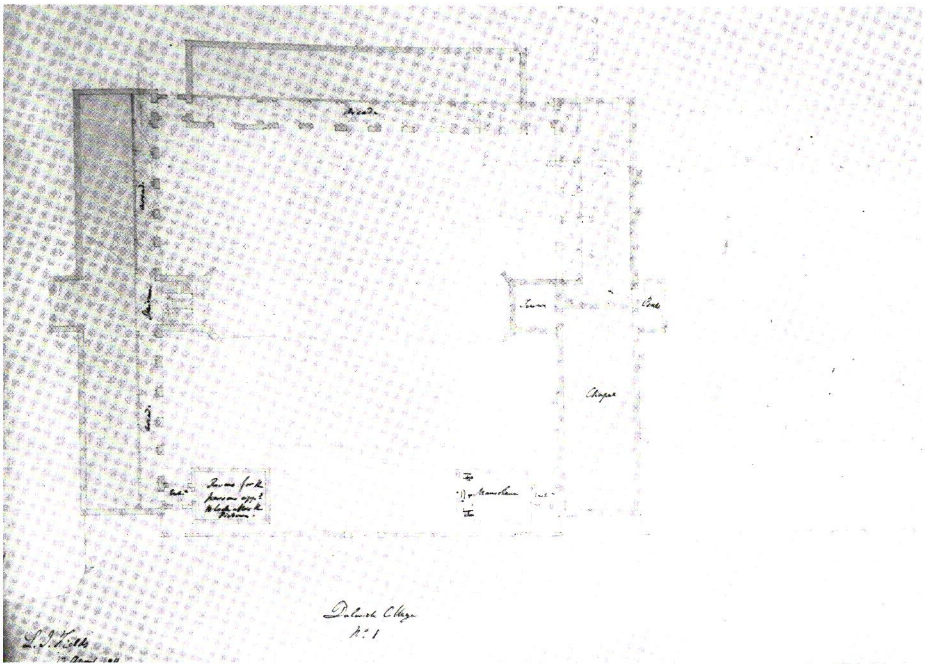
12 Dulwich Gallery, first project (17 April 1811). Sir John Soane, 1811. Destruction of the west wing of the old college (Alleyn's College of God's Gift) and reconstruction of a gallery, mausoleum, and rooms for the Sisters.

13, 14 Dulwich Gallery, second project with the quadrangle (May 1811). Plan (with skylight room, gallery, and mausoleum) and perspective view.

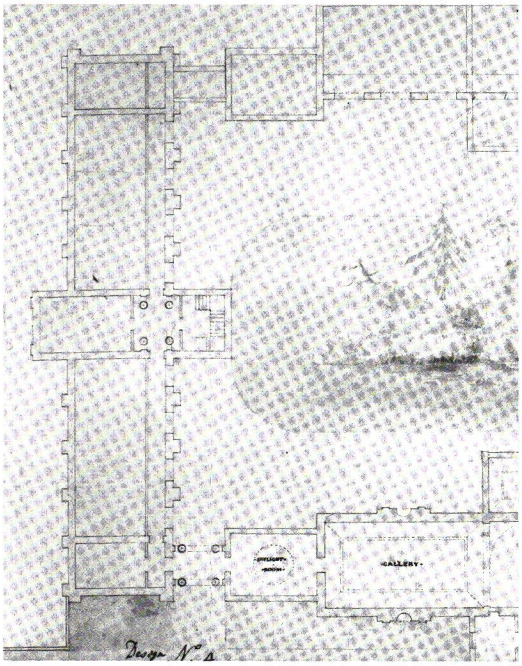
15 Dulwich Gallery, studies for the gallery and the mausoleum (n.d., before 25 May 1811), with variants in crayon.

16 Dulwich Gallery, variant of second project, see Figs. 13, 14 (May 1811).

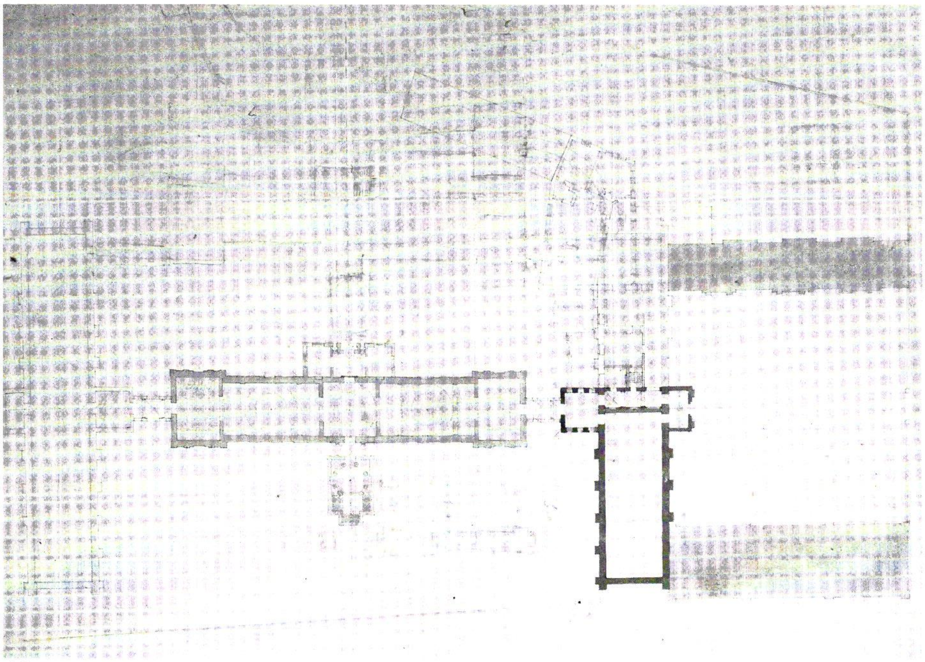
17 Dulwich Gallery, studies (25 May 1811) of the mausoleum, gallery, and the new rooms for the Sisters.


Arcade
Chapel
Mausoleum
Dulwich College
No 1

12


SKYLIGHT ROOM
GALLERY
Design No 4

13



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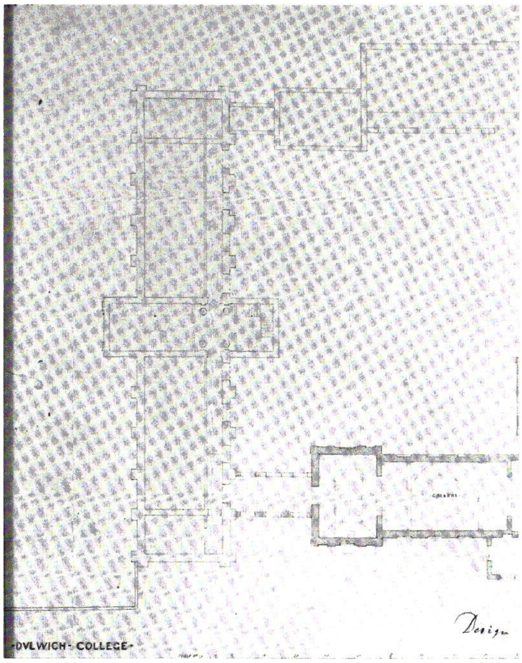
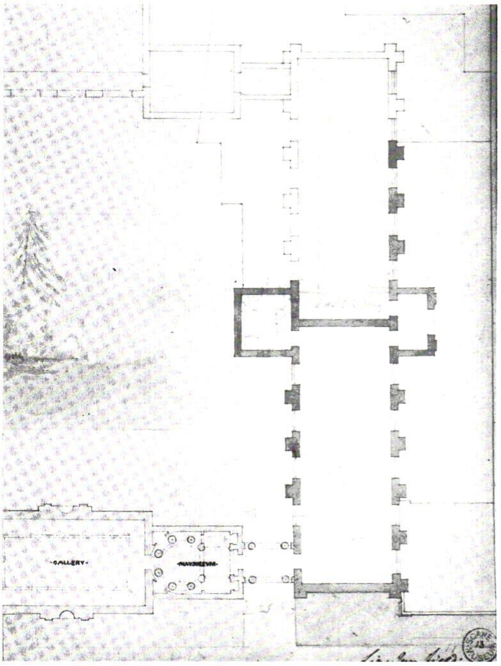
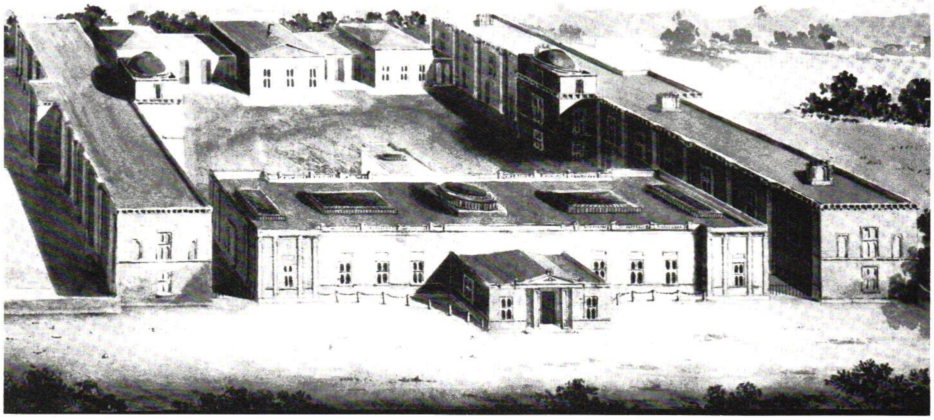

GALLERY
DVLWICH · COLLEGE
Design

16


GALLERY
MAUSOLEUM



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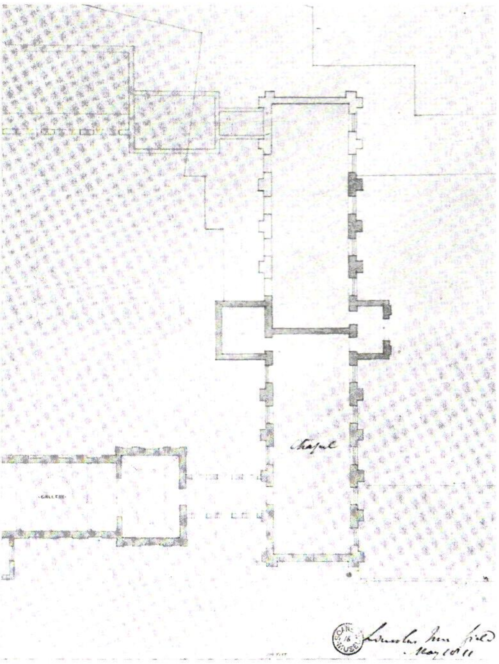
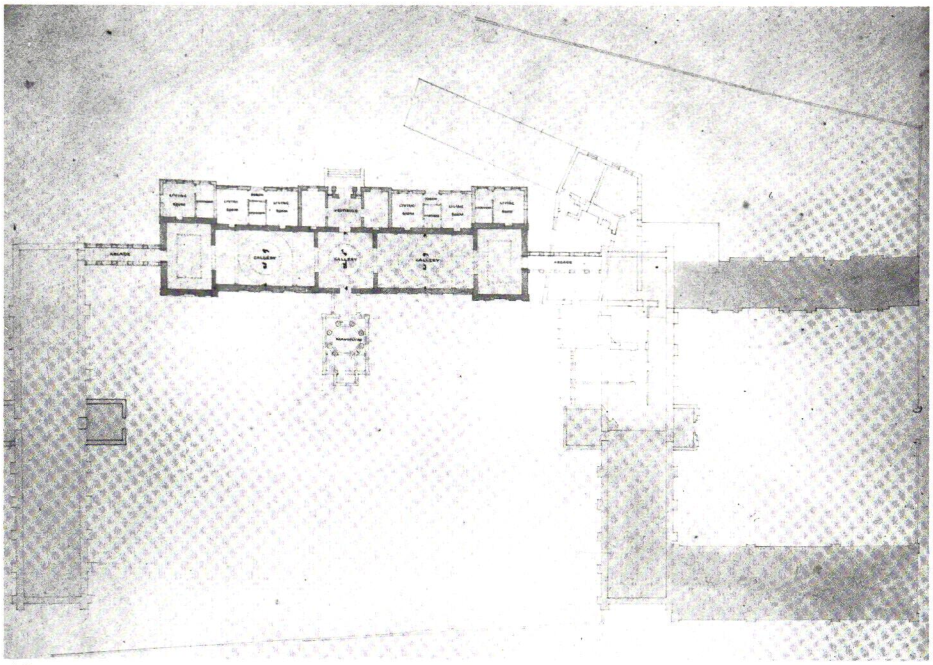
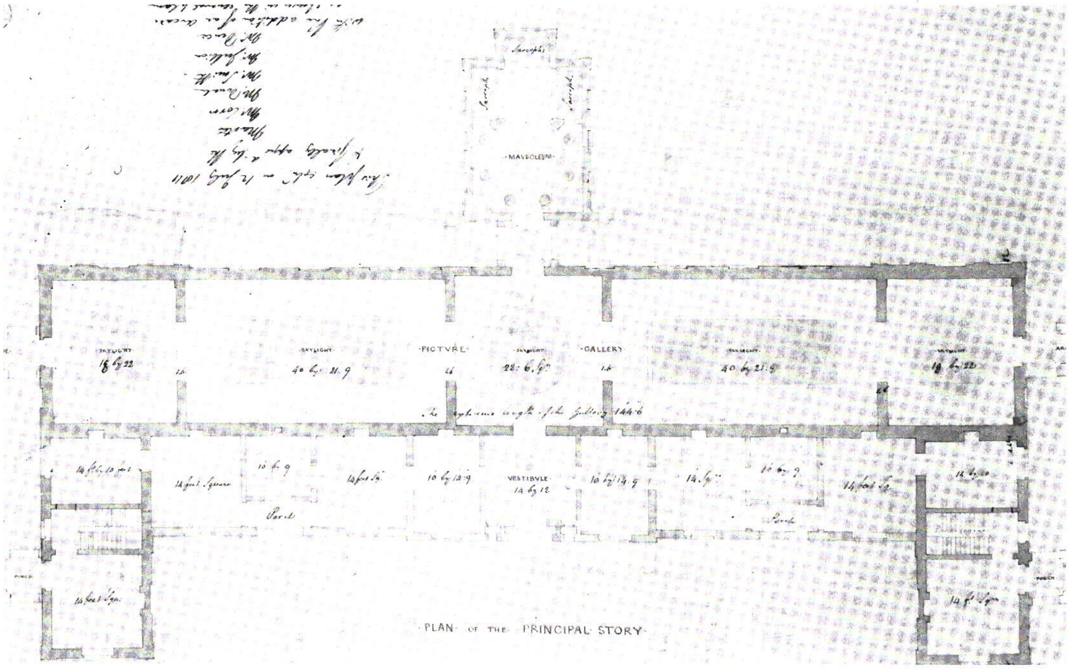

GALLERY
Chapel
May 1811


LIVING ROOM
LIVING ROOM
LIVING ROOM
VESTIBULE
LIVING ROOM
LIVING ROOM
LIVING ROOM
ARCADE
GALLERY
GALLERY
GALLERY
ARCADE
MAUSOLEUM

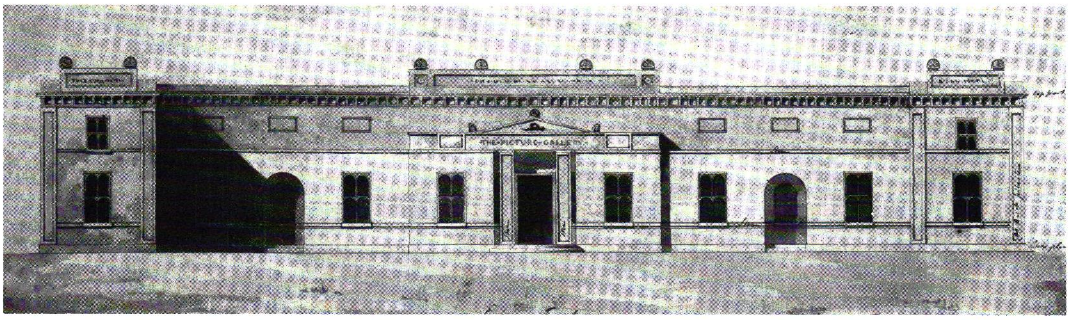
17

18–20 Dulwich Gallery, planimetric study (12 July 1811), with variations in crayon. The program for this study now comprises the rooms for the Sisters of the College and the proposals for the front and back elevations in a Greco-Gothic style.

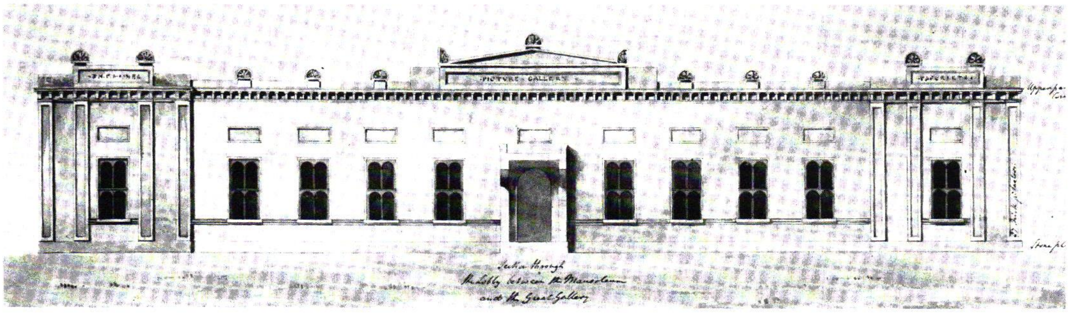
21 Dulwich Gallery, view of gallery (May 1811). A recessed cupola is lit by a small lantern.


MAVSOLEVM
SKYLIGHT
PICTVRE
GALLERY
VESTIBVLE
14 by 12
PLAN OF THE PRINCIPAL STORY

18

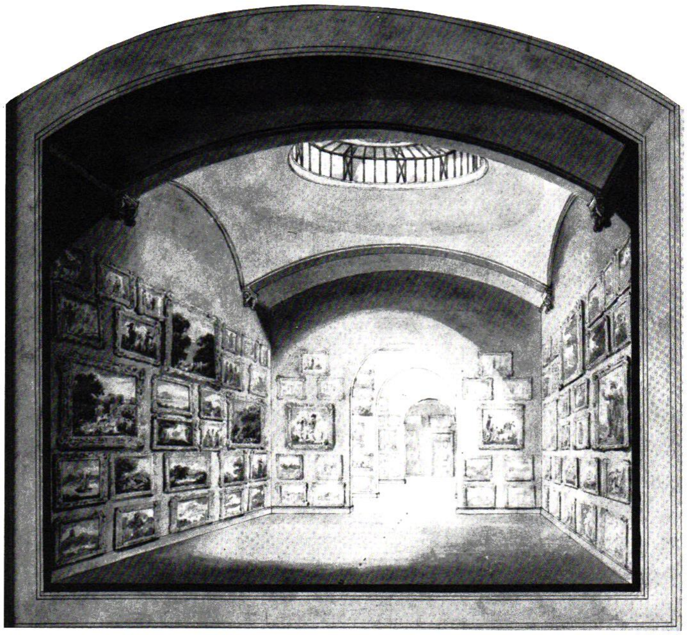

THE PICTURE GALLERY

19


PICTURE GALLERY
Section through the Lobby between the Mausoleum and the Great Gallery

20

English college. The following month, however, he rejected this approach in favor of a free-standing building consisting of two well-defined segments: the museum and the mausoleum (figs. 12-17, 21). The latter forms a small edifice consisting of a chamber vaulted over by a flattened cupola supported by Greek columns forming a rotunda—a *tholos*—inscribed in a square. The floor is slightly carved out. The whole is plunged in semi-darkness, lit only by a door leading into the square sarcophagus chamber, illuminated from above by a rectangular lantern pierced with amber-colored stained glass windows.[17] The picture gallery consists of various rooms whose proportions (squares and double squares) are inspired by English neo-Palladian theories. The problem of lighting was resolved as follows: Soane inscribed in each major room a shallow cupola, supported by pendentives and pierced at the top by a glazed lantern (a solution perhaps derived from *La coupe des pierres* of De La Rue [as was suggested by Sir John Summerson] and already experimented with by Dance the Younger and Soane himself). The 'novelty' consisted in denying the presence of the pendentives through a facing which indistinctly covered the vaults. In addition, the weight of the dome and the vaults were denied by the absence of engaged columns or pilasters at the support points of the pendentives, whence the floating effect achieved by the system of vaults apparently unsupported by the walls. It is by the *play* of presence and absence of elements (expected and unexpected) that Soane introduces "novelty" and invention.



21

Parallel to the multiple variations on the plan which attempt to organize the functional and geometric elements of the program (the mausoleum, the gallery, the functional lodgings, etc.), Soane develops a morphological *play*, whose variations do not derive simply from changes in the plan, in a number of projects for the facades (figs. 18-20). This relatively autonomous play of forms in elevation, which in addition refrains from instituting any architectural emblematic, invalidates the principle of "the part informing the whole" (a principle still reaffirmed in 1839 by such a 'Neoclassicist' as Quatremère de Quincy: "The received names already indicate the forms of works of architecture, of decoration, or of ornament").[18]

22 Dulwich Gallery, planimetric study (17 July 1811). The arcades articulate the separation between the mausoleum and the gallery.

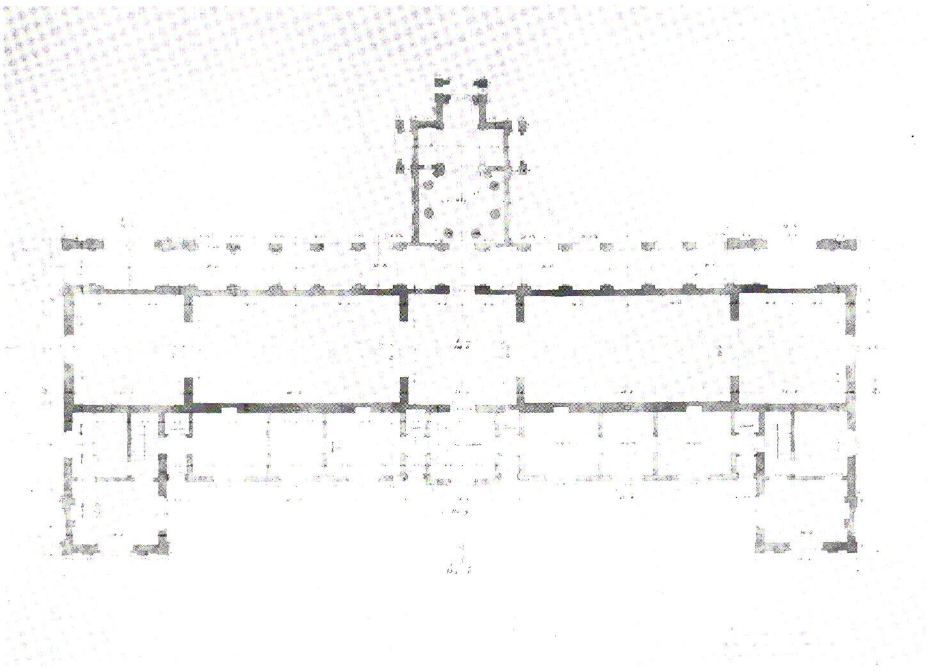
23 Dulwich Gallery, variant of the elevation of the mausoleum and of Dulwich gallery (August 1811).

24 Dulwich Gallery, perspective view (22 July 1811) of the project shown in Figs. 22 and 25.

25 Dulwich Gallery, elevations (29 July 1811) of the project shown in Fig. 22.

26 Dulwich Gallery, variant of the elevation of the mausoleum and of Dulwich gallery (August 1811).

27 Dulwich Gallery, perspective view (8 August 1811) of the scheme shown in Figs. 23 and 26.



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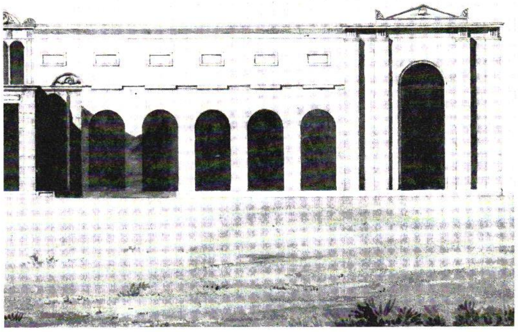

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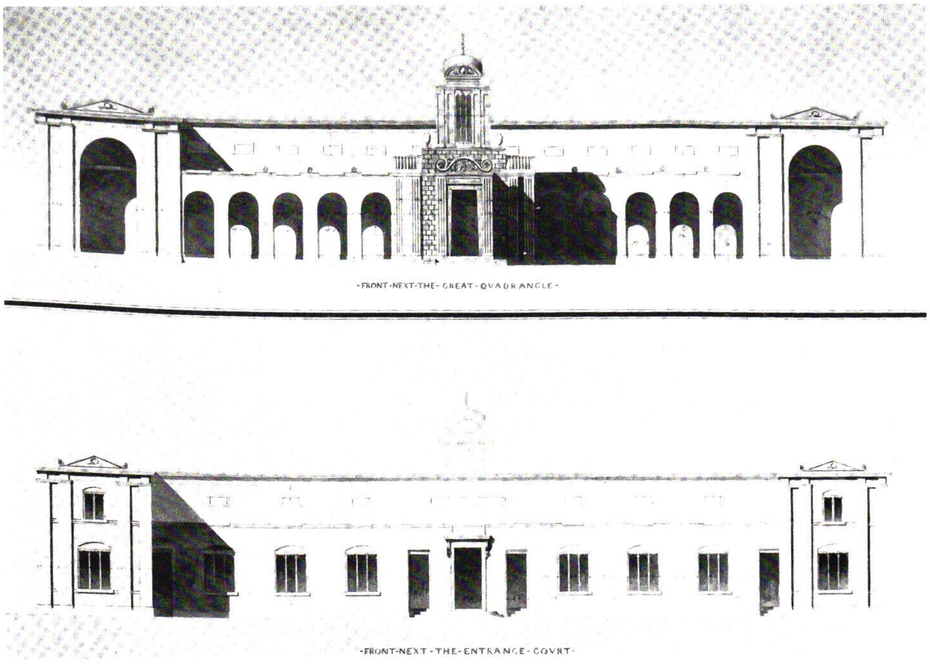
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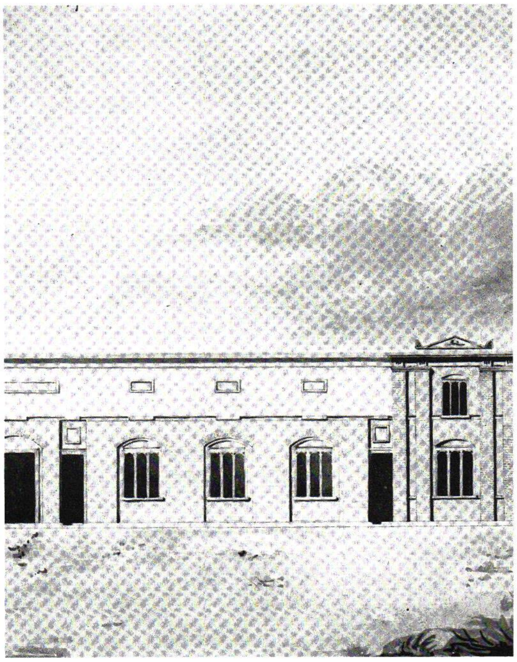

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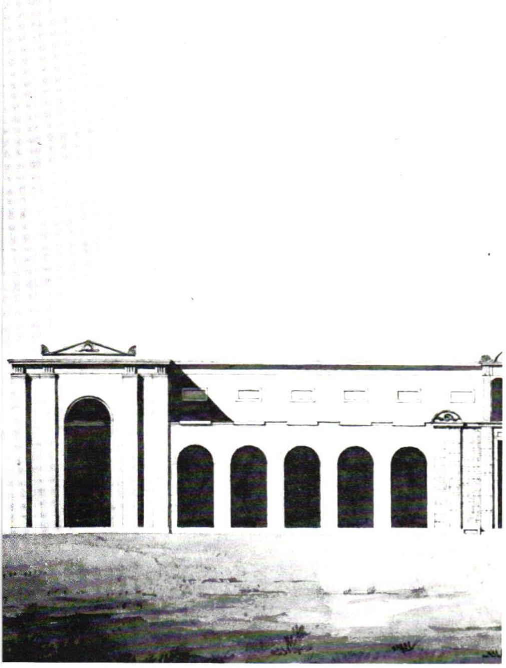

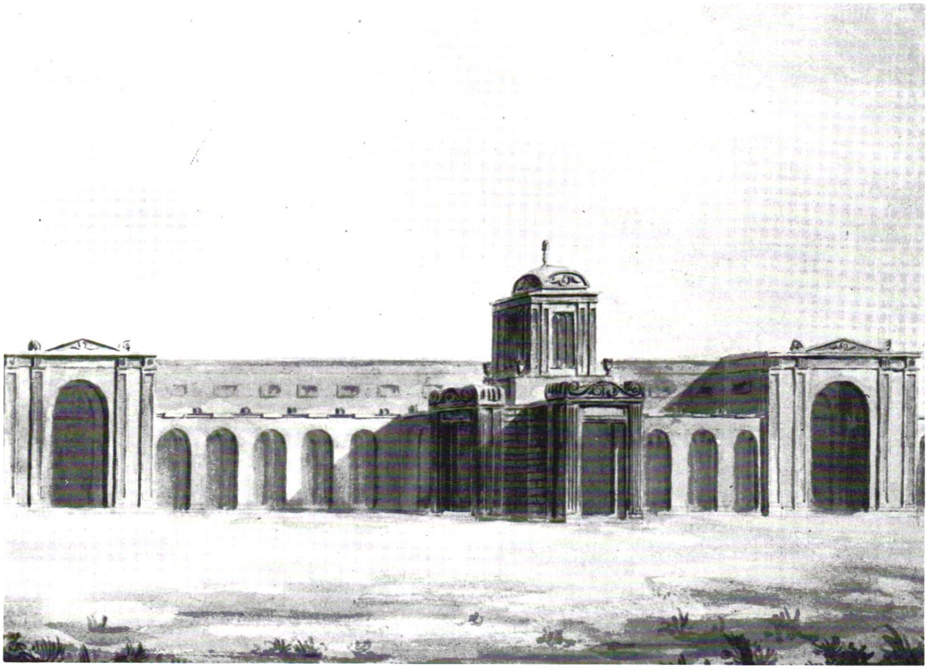

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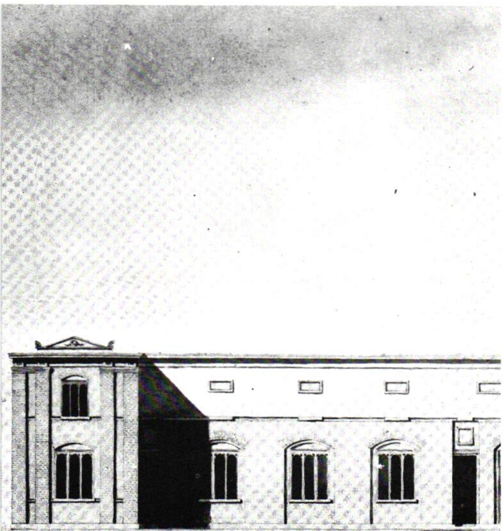
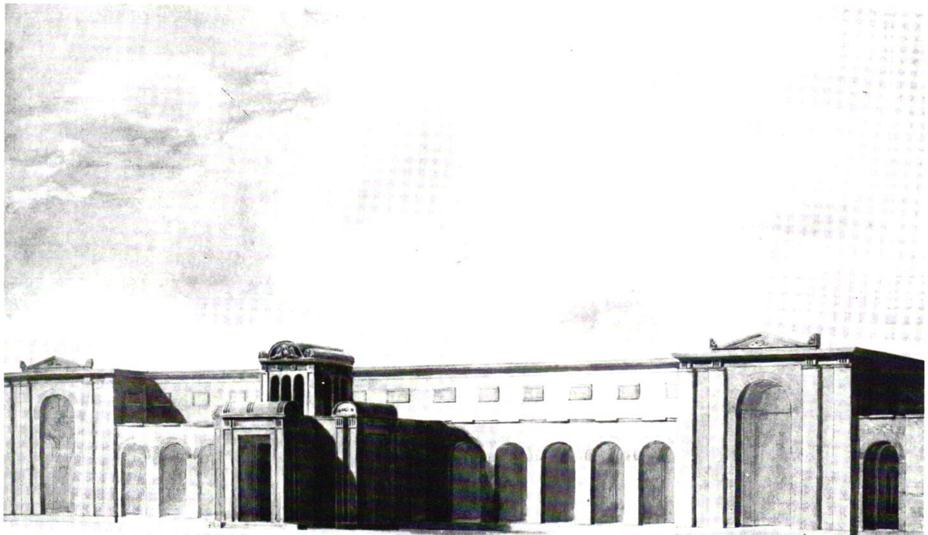




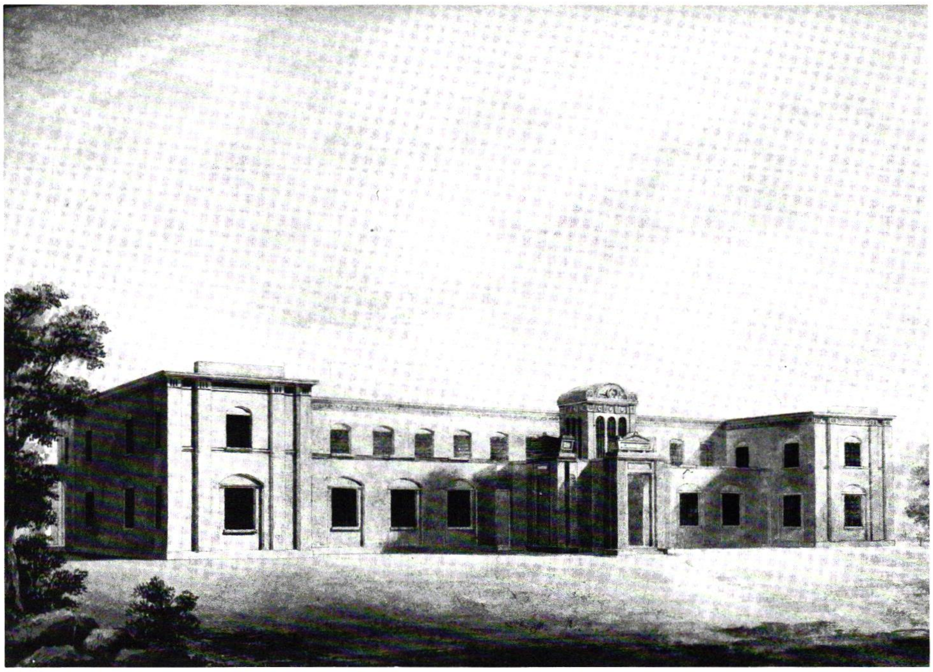
27

28 Dulwich Gallery, study of a variant (28 October 1811), the arcades behind the mausoleum are eliminated.

29 Dulwich Gallery, variant of the final project (13 April 1812). Two elevations showing the entrances.

30 Dulwich Gallery, final project (n.d.).

31 Dulwich Gallery, interior view of the picture gallery. The building was badly damaged by bombing in 1944.



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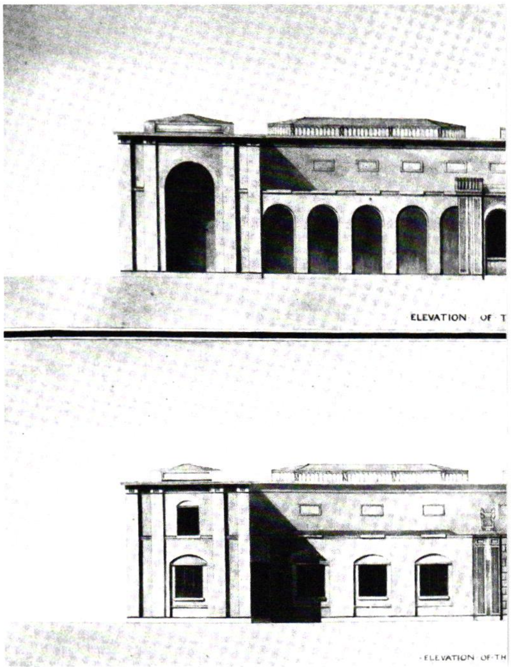

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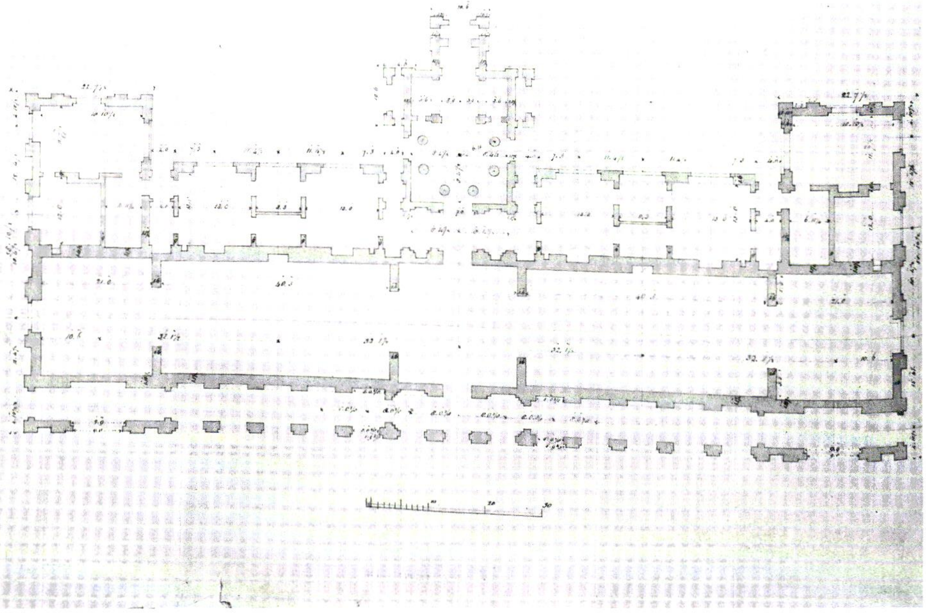

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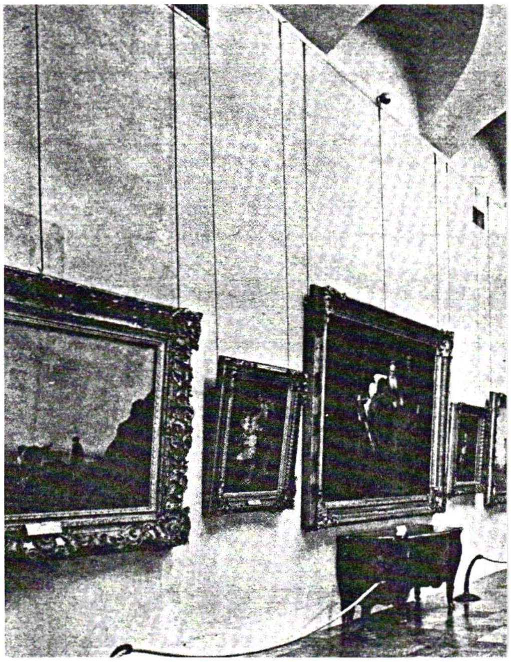

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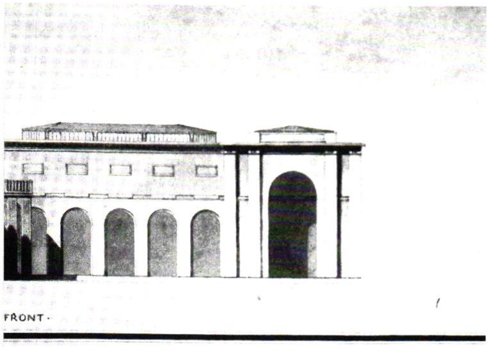
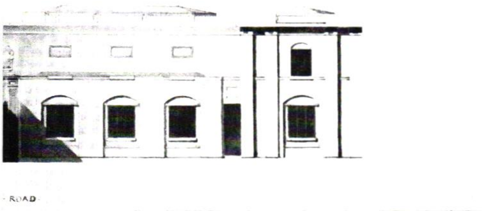
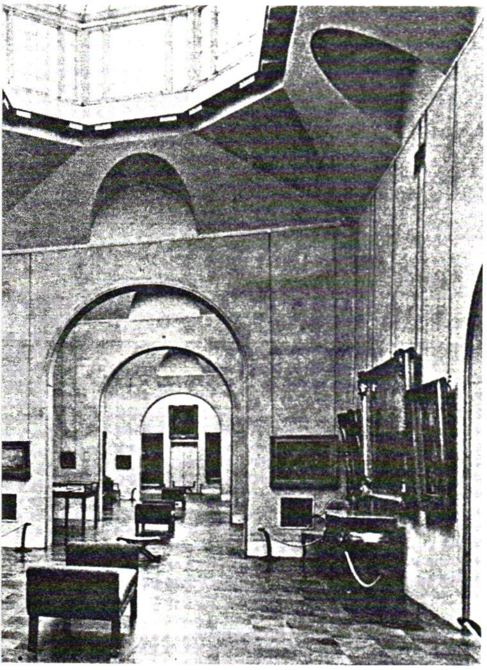






The director of the college had requested a Gothic edifice in harmony with the rest of the ensemble (fig. 22). Soane attempts to draw an 'a-stylistic' edifice. In a variant of July 29, 1811 (fig. 25), the sarcophagus chamber is topped by a lantern crowned by a flattened cupola, whose extrados recalls in miniature the larger vaulting system to be seen on the inside of the museum.[19] Architecture *en ronde-bosse,* the exterior cupola presents itself as a reduced mold of the interior vaults (figs. 23, 24, 26, 27). The vertical elements of the mausoleum reveal a planar 'bas-relief' architecture through the suppression of the orders and their replacement by carved profiles.

The final project (of October 1811)[20] and the executed project (April 13, 1812)[21] show the influence of "neo-picturesque" theories (of Payne Knight, Uvedale Price) on the heightened play of volumes (figs. 28-35). In a lecture at the Royal Academy, Soane states that the poetry of architecture is obtained through the *play of opposing masses* and the *play of light* (amplified in his case through the use of mirrors and stained glass).

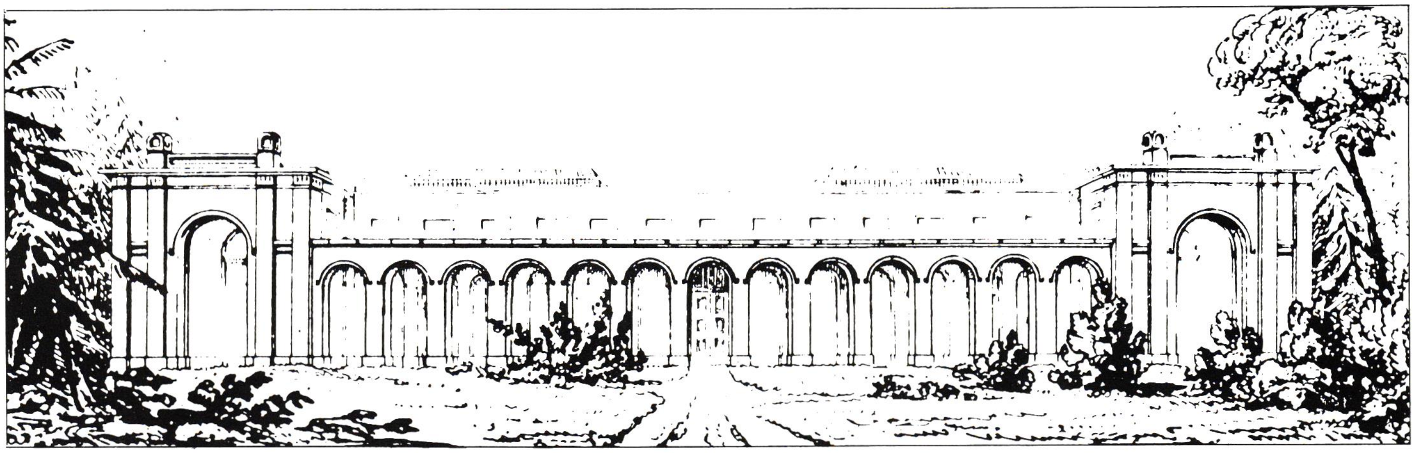
In June of the same year, Soane bought the house next to his own at 13 Lincoln Inn's Fields and began the construction of his own *museum of architecture*: an experimental microcosm where, from one room to another, the value of any historical model was put into question.[22] The Soane Museum has been described in terms of a "crisis of the object," as an interiorization of a grand tour, of a *voyage* in the historical time and geographical space of architecture (see fig. 1), as the negation of any mimetic procedure in design, as a utopia (derived from Piranesi) of continuous invention, as the reaffirmation of the subjective necessity of *play,* and consequently as the reaffirmation of poetry in the face of the empire of regularity (in England, Robert Smirke). The work of John Soane is indeed a "negative utopia." Inversely, in architecture, positivity becomes *style.*

The moral use of the word 'style' in the theoretical language of the fine arts

After Semper, Riegl, Schlosser, Schapiro, Ackerman, etc.,[23] who have tried to erect a theory of style; after

32–34 Dulwich Gallery as shown in Sir John Soane's Designs for public and private buildings. *Lithographs by C. J. Richardson.*

35 Dulwich Gallery, the mausoleum as built.



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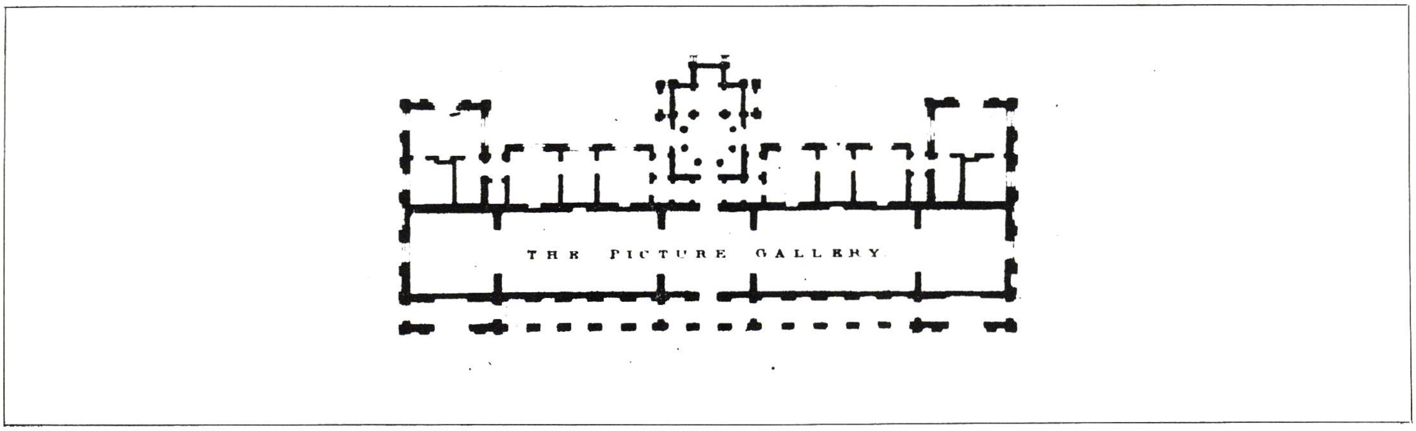
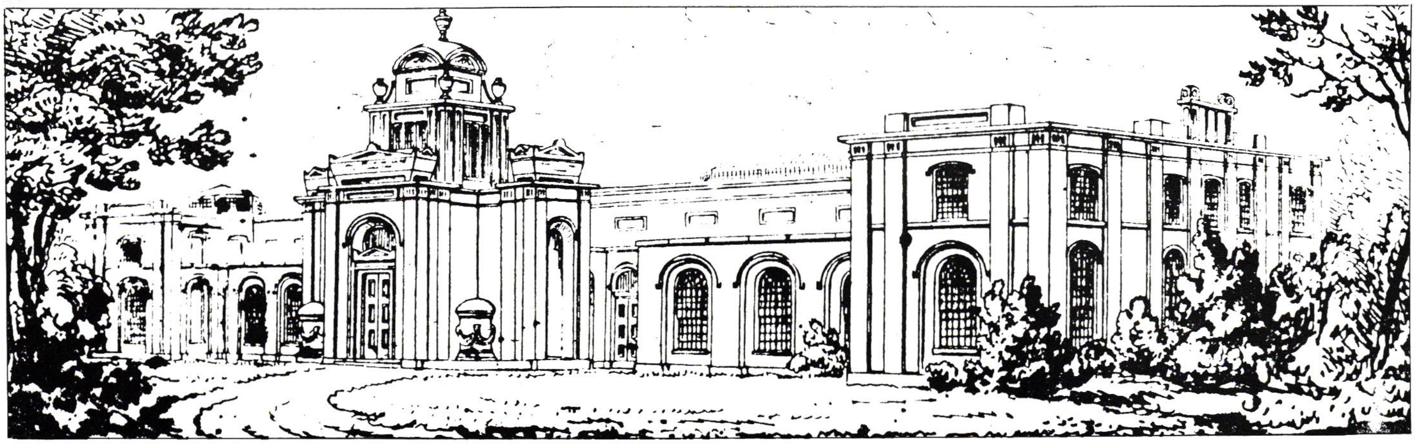

THE PICTURE GALLERY

33



34

Ivanoff, Collins, Wittkower, Guillerme, and Vidler,[24] who have, more simply, written the history of the application of this concept to the figurative arts, we will limit ourselves to the recapitulation of the opinions of a few of Soane's contemporaries on the question of style.

35

We must first refer to Quatremère de Quincy, principal founder of the system of the Beaux-Arts, and more specifically to his article "Style" in the third volume of the *Encyclopédie Méthodique: Architecture*: "This accepted use of the word style, applied to literary works, or the art of the expression, through discourse, of ideas and images of things, [enters] into the vocabulary of the figurative arts as well. These arts must, in effect, be considered as a language and a manner of writing which employ in truth objects and matter, particularly to express intellectual relations and moral sentiments in forms perceptible through the senses, and to produce, through other means, effects which are of the province of the imagination, of the spirit, and of taste. Without a doubt, the moral use of the word style passed into the theoretical language of the Beaux-Arts from literature. . . ." Quatremère, for whom the art of drawing architecture and the art of writing correspond to each other in a manner as much metaphoric as metonymic, goes on to say, "by the varied use of the parts, members, details, and ornament, [architecture], like the signs of writing, can evoke in us well defined ideas and positive judgments concerning the physical objects of its creation." Finally, he concludes: ". . . by the varied modulation of harmonies that [architecture] produces, it arouses in us impressions of all the moral qualities which are in its imitative domain." Beyond the sensualist theory which underlies this affirmation, one hears the echo of the logic of Port-Royal and its enunciation of the utopia of the absolute transparency of the sign ("the sign contains two ideas: one of that which it represents, the other of the represented object; and its nature lies in the excitation of the latter by the former").

Two points emerge from this text, which is a belated but extremely clear manifesto of classicist or 'Neoclassic' thought in architecture: 1) Style, in architecture, leads to the concept of architectural *language*, and to the notion of architectural *writing* through the assimiliation of architecture into the art of drawing; 2) By analogy to rhetoric, style can be a synonym of "manner," "genre," or "character."

In 1767, D'Hancarville "showed the connections between the *figures* of *discourse* and those of art."[25] But this had already been discussed by Jacques-François Blondel and Boffrand: between the rhetorical notion of style and the mimetic notion of character lies, in effect, the entire 'sensualist' theory of *architecture parlante.*

We find the linguistic analogy in the *Principes de l'Ordonnance*, written by Charles-François Viel, architect of the General Hospital,[26] where style is described as the equivalent of eloquence in discourse: "Although the word style is employed in literature, one can apply it equally well to the matter with which we are dealing. . . . In effect style in architecture lies in the choice, the disposition, and the purity of the different parts which make up a building."[27] Later, the analogy is stated quite literally: "The architect uses lines to draw his plans as the author uses words. . . . The different members of which the orders are composed are born of the diversity of distribution of lines, just as one composes the phrases of discourse through the arrangement of words."[28] Here one finds a doctrine of absolute transparency, where language operates as a relay system for the allegorical and emblematic significations transmitted by form. This doctrine is most clearly formulated in the work of Quatremère de Quincy. In another chapter of his treatise, Viel adopts almost naively the elementary divisions of classical rhetoric (in which one distinguished between simple, tempered, and sublime rhetoric), so that Doric becomes the simple, Ionic the tempered, and "the sublime" can "use the Corinthian to advantage."[29] It would be excessive to cite the treatise of pseudo-Longinus as a source for this theoretical nonsense, especially since in this regard the Chevalier de Jaucourt in his article on style in the *Encyclopédie* had already warned against the confusion of the sublime style with the sublime in general.[30] From page to page, the analogy between *style* and architectural *language* oscillates between different usages. After this brief reference to the rhetoric of the good fathers, as applied to the arts, are we not then sent back to the theory of *character*, when Viel on the same page claims that "if it was a matter of assigning a style to an edifice destined for the incarceration of the guilty" he would pick the Doric "but taken at the origin of the order"? This idea is in effect the basis for the 'sensualism' of the Enlightenment and the 'primitivism' of architectural theory, but here it falls to the level of commonplace. Through its universalist and allegorical pretensions, the concept of architectural 'language' becomes empty of content. This appears quite clearly with Saint-Valéry Seheult, an author from Nantes who describes himself as a "history architect," by analogy, perhaps, to the "history painters." In a book published in 1813, Seheult proposes to examine "the various parts of this language [*langue* not *langage*], which one can call the language of the architect, because it is through its help that he manages to express his ideas."[31] What is a "language" in architecture? For Seheult it is "the totality of words that a nation puts into use to express its needs and thoughts by sounds or by characters that speak to the eyes. Since it expresses sentiments and a diversity of thoughts through signifying characters, an architecture is thus a language."[32] But who is the speaker? One "discovers upon considering a monument that this art [architecture] is a language, for the edifice must converse with spectator and indicate to him the intent behind its construction."[33] At the base of this linguistic analogy in architecture one finds functionalism, or rather an allegorical functionalism, the result of the secularization of symbols that occurs in the second half of the eighteenth century. And how is architectural language born? "History furnishes it with the characters of its language, which are commonly called the ornaments of architecture."[34] And since "all of nature contributes to its formation,"[35] Seheult can claim that "the language of architecture is eternal and universal and will only lose its expression when nature returns to a state of chaos."[36]

But unfortunately, after Babel, mankind speaks several languages. Let us distinguish, therefore, between "primitive characters"[37] and the complex (or metaphoric) characters of architectural language. One cannot invent language, nor speak an artificial language, nor even draw artificial "characters."[38] From its beginnings, language is revealed: "The language of architecture has but two tenses, past and present; it cannot have a future."[39] The primitive language is superior to the vulgar (and corrupted) languages of the present. Nonetheless, "it remains true that one can tolerate the characters of these languages in edifices, as the vulgar languages do belong to the language of architecture, and through their differences they serve to indicate the nations who built them. The language used in forming these inscriptions must be that of the nation that builds the edifice."[40] It is precisely this notion of vulgar language that justifies for Seheult the use of Gothic architecture.[41] This is not far from the notion of a 'Gothic style', existing and finding its justification as a local dialect in relation to a *lost* universal language.

It would be tempting at this point to contrast the double parallel movement: on the one hand a theoretical teratology of architecture, and on the other the rhetoric, logic, and linguistics of the eighteenth century, from, say, Maupertuis, Turgot, and Du Marsais—without forgetting Rousseau's *Essay on the Origins of Languages*—up to De Gérando, François de Neufchâteau, and Pierre Fontanier. But as we do not hold this ambition, we shall limit ourselves to the expression of two hypotheses on the historical significance of these inquiries: 1) Through the incessant establishment of analogies between language, style, and architecture, theory around 1800 inherits the tradition of the innateness of language. 2) Semiotic theories, which tend toward the rationalization of the means of representation (a rationalization belonging to channels of communication in general, as we mentioned above), participate in the general project of transformation of the means of production (and of reproduction) which takes effect at the end of the eighteenth century—a project whose protagonists are, among others, Monge, Durand, Bruyère, Brisson, Babbage. . . .[42]

We will give some information on these two points. The theory of innatism and of a primitive natural language had recently been popularized through the work of the famous polymath Court de Gébelin. In his *Histoire naturelle de la Parole* published in 1772,[43] he had attempted to show that alphabetic writing derived from hieroglyphics, and claimed to explain, through this connection, all the allegorical mysteries of antiquity. An etymology influenced by sensualism allowed him to believe that vowels represented sensations and consonants ideas. In his *Discours Préliminaire* he gave notice that "the origin of language and of writing is necessarily linked to the monuments of antiquity, and one can hardly understand one of these objects without the aid of the others."

Any consideration of language should begin with the mechanism of speech: "It is in the nature of the vocal mechanism that it is capable of exertion at its two extremities and at the center, such that the same word can be pronounced differently among different peoples, according to which part of the vocal mechanism they are accustomed to using: whence the varieties in language that instill the belief that each nation speaks a different tongue, whereas they all speak the same tongue, but subdivided for this reason into different dialects." Seheult applies the same reasoning to "architectonic language [*langue*]." The theory of "primitive language" had been the subject for numerous dissertations in the seventeenth century, especially in England: the aim of the linguists had been to create a universal language—a "pasigraphics"—by the creation of universally legible *characters*. One finds traces of this utopia, a classical one par excellence, in a more vulgar form in Court de Gébelin, who had nonetheless adopted a traditional position and denied any arbitrary or conventional nature to the sign: "Having formed speech for man, God did it in the manner most suiting to man . . . these means were all to be found in nature and never in the arbitrary, for speech, being an act of painting, could never depend on convention."[44] Clearly this purely mimetic theory of language (of discourse as painting) would serve as a basis for the imitative concept of architectural creation.

Implicitly dependent on such analyses, certain theorists of architectural style (or language) around 1800 proposed once again a magical notion of architectural symbolism.

Seheult wrote, "all these orders (the Doric, etc.) were symbolic in origin and were created only as symbols for monuments."[45] This was an opinion previously shared by such an architect as Jean-Louis Viel de Saint-Maux, for whom, as he stated in his *Letters on Architecture*, published in 1787, the architectural order found its "sublime origin" in "agriculture itself": it is its "*poëme parlant* [speaking poem]."[46]

In the world of architecture in which "one instructed oneself as from a book," the temple of the ancients regained at the same time its emblematic, allegorical, and symbolic value: it was a "*theoretical construction*," or even a "theoretic ex-voto."[47] Here is a logical consequence of this anti-rationalist belief: "The Ancients did not confuse, as we do, sacred Architecture with the art of building individual dwellings; the latter had no relation to the Architecture of Temples and Monuments,"[48] a passage which foretells the polemical accent of Adolf Loos's writing one hundred years later, when he limits the field of architecture to the *tomb* and the *monument.* With Viel de Saint-Maux we touch upon one of the obscure and contradictory points of the history of the linguistic analogy. This theoretical, symbolic, and esoteric model, contemporaneous with Boullée's drawings, found its practicing adherents in, for example, the "house for a cosmopolitan" of A. T. L. Vaudoyer,[49] which is a veritable architectural pasigraphic. It ends in an impasse in which one gives readings "as from a book," in which one "speaks" too much, in which architecture becomes redundant or mute. In both cases architecture orders only *temples* and *necropolises*; by evoking what is not here, but there or beyond, it proclaims its own death or "dissolution" in the Hegelian sense of the term. In contrast to the esoteric tradition incarnate in this theoretical teratology of architecture lies the rationalist Aristotelian tradition, in which the relation between words and things does not derive from a natural identity but rather from a conventional correspondence. For this rationalistic tradition the power of the metaphor is grounded in logical analysis.[50] Without undue risk we can place within this tradition the treatise of the "idéologue" De Gérando entitled *Des signes et de l'art de penser considérés dans leurs rapports mutuels (Concerning the Signs and the Art of Thinking, Considered in Their Mutual Relations)* published in 1800, in which the *imitative* nature of drawing is decidedly contrasted to the *arbitrary* system of writing.

The ambiguity which caused the confusion between architecture and drawing, and consequently between built and figurative space, is resolved. De Gérando's ambition is no longer to recover a primitive language but to determine the possibilities of the utopia of an analogical or methodical language (such a utopia of logic had already been investigated by John Wilkins in the seventeenth century) and especially to ascertain whether such a utopian project could compare positively the ambition to create a "language of the experimental sciences."

The concept of an 'architectural language' takes on a number of different forms, and we cannot help but cite a few sentences from César Daly, although they lie outside the period under consideration. In 1853 in the *Revue Générale,* Daly states to the young exhibitors of the salon of 1853, "To know only one style is to know only one language. . . . To know them all, to have compared them to each other, is to regain one's freedom; it is to become master of each and slave of none."[51] Through this approach Daly hoped to found the theory of eclecticism, instrument of transition to a "new style," and in opposition to any purist and archaeological "exclusivism." Ten years later he repeated that "Any system of signs, symbols, or representations whose function is the expression of sentiments or the communication of intelligence is a language, but a language that has undergone as many revolutions and radical transformations as its history presents distinct styles."[52] This is an attitude shared by C. A. Opperman, editor of the *Nouvelles Annales de la Construction,* who wrote in 1865: "There are as many different styles in architecture as there are different types of materials, of special procedures for their use, and of climates, customs, and ideas that govern the creation of works by the hand of man." "Architecture is the sister of history," and consequently it was now a matter of "creating a modern style, and to translate for each country the artistic situation of the nineteenth century. . . ."

Through the introduction of objectives such as a new or modern "style" or the concept of "stylistic revolution," Daly and Opperman carry us far from the original rhetorical theories of the linguistic analogy. (In order to evaluate their claims one would have to compare them to those of Donaldson, Owen Jones, and Charles Blanc, as well as those of Semper or Leslie Fiedler).

There can hardly be a question of "conclusion." We have attempted to analyse the scission which leaves its mark on the production of 'urban forms' around 1800 (apparent as much in the works of architects as of engineers), a scission between the formal and 'fortuitous' play of architecture and the technics of organization of the built environment. It is this aporia that the theory of style and language in architecture attempts to overcome. There are those like Soane who react *negatively* to the scission. The positivistic theories of a César Daly, on the other hand, seek to establish new relations between freedom, innovation, and invention in architecture. If the architect is powerless to create, "he can follow the path of eclecticism," as Daly goes on to say in a text of 1863, "this wisdom of societies in a state of transformation. . . . But if he has genius, he will create in the independence of his genius," because, for Daly, freedom is the daughter of science.

Notes

1. In the *Farington Diary*, March 25, 1804: "Dance called on me and I went with him to dinner at Sir George Beaumont's. The conversation after dinner and throughout the evening was very metaphysical, in which Coleridge had the leading, and by far, the greatest part of it. . . . Architecture was spoken of. Dance . . . derived the prejudice of [confining] designs in architecture within certain rules, which, in fact, though held out as laws, had never been satisfactorily explained. He said that in his opinion . . . *unshackled architecture* would afford to the greatest genius the greatest opportunities of producing the most powerful efforts of the human mind."
March 31, 1804, after a visit to the house of Thomas Hope, on Duchess Street: "Dance told me . . . that by the singularity of it, good might be done as it might contribute to emancipate the public taste from that rigid adherence to a certain *style* of architecture and *unshackle* the Artists" (emphasis mine).
2. Cf. Jacques Guillerme, "Notes pour l'histoire de la régularité," *Revue d'Esthétique*, no. 3, 1971, pp. 383-394.
3. Max Bense, *Aesthetica* (Baden-Baden, 1965), Italian Translation (Milan, 1974).
4. Ibid., Italian translation, pp. 50-51. We have already touched upon these problems in the introduction to the French edition of Emil Kaufmann's *Three Revolutionary Architects: Boullée Ledoux, Lequeu* (Paris: S.A.D.G., 1978), published in part in an English translation in *Oppositions*, 13, Summer 1978.
5. Ibid., p. 322.
6. According to Wittgenstein, ". . . just as we are quite unable to imagine spatial objects outside space or temporal objects outside time, so too there is *no* object that we can imagine excluded from the possibility of combining with others," *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuiness (New Jersey: Humanities Press Inc., 1974), section 2.0121.
7. A. Ehrenzweig claims that "creative thought involves the capacity to handle imprecise material with extreme precision," in *The Hidden Order of Art*, French translation (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), p. 73.
8. Bense, *Aesthetica*, pp. 105-107 and 410-422.
9. Further, one discovers that architecture does not "speak." "That which finds its reflection in language, language cannot represent. What expresses *itself* in language, *we* cannot express by means of language." Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, section 4.121. That is to say, that which is reflected in architecture cannot be represented by it. That which is *itself* expressed in architecture, *we ourselves* cannot express by language (our discourse on architecture), or by architecture itself (a project). Yet the eighteenth century makes architecture "speak." The problem of style finds its place between logical, opaque silence and transparent, bubbling noise.
10. We are not claiming to write an exhaustive history of the project. Soane is known to have already built a mausoleum for M. Desenfans in 1807, erected in Charlotte Street, London. On Soane, see J. Summerson, *Sir John Soane 1753-1837* (London: Art and Technics, 1952). For further graphic documentation, see D. Stroud, *The Architecture of Sir John Soane* (London, 1961).
11. J. Soane, *Lectures in Architecture*, A. T. Bolton, ed. (London, 1929). Eighth lecture. See also: *Plans of . . . buildings*

(London, 1788), p. 9 of the introduction.

12. Quoted in P. Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1967), p. 23.

13. Repton, *Designs for the Pavilion at Brighton* (London, 1808).

14. Quoted in A. T. Bolton, *The Works of Sir John Soane* (London, 1924), p. 79.

15. Quoted by A. T. Bolton, *The Portrait of Sir John Soane* (London, 1927), pp. 374-381.

16. Sir John Soane's Museum, Dr. 13, set 5, Dr. 31 (65), set 1; and Folio B, case C; also *Soane's Notebooks*, vol. VIII. We have consulted the archives of Dulwich College as well.

17. Cf. also J. Rykwert, "The Architecture of Dulwich Picture Gallery," *The Listener*, vol. LXXI, no. 1817, pp. 158-159. See Soane in his *Lectures*, where he invokes an architecture of shadows. "The *lumières mystérieuses* so successfully practised by the French artists is a most powerful agent in the hands of a man of genius. . . . It is, however, little attended to in our Architecture, and it is for this obvious reason that we do not sufficiently feel the importance of Character in our buildings, to which the mode of admitting light contributes in no small degree," p. 126.

Later, Soane adds, in giving a veritable example of the "funereal work" of architecture: "To increase the enjoyment of this splendid scene, we have only to fancy the Gallery brilliantly lighted for the exhibitions of this unrivaled assemblage of pictorial art, whilst a dull, religious light shows the Mausoleum in the full pride of funereal grandeur, displaying its sarcophagi, enriched with the mortal remains of departed worth, and calling back so powerfully the recollection of past times, that we almost believe we are conversing with our departed friends who now sleep in their silent tombs," in *Memoirs of the Professional Life of an Architect* (London, 1835).

18. "By means of discourse, a writer can enumerate all the figures of a subject and tell what might lead each person to act in a certain way; but this sort of inventory of each part of a whole cannot give the slightest idea of the whole in relation to art. . . . This is not at all the case with works of architecture as well. . . . [Whereas] an ensemble . . . cannot result from the measures of the writer, on the contrary . . . if one gives us the dimensions of a circular or rectangular temple, or the order of a frontispiece or peristyle of six or eight columns, then they will be depicted in our imagination under a positive form that could not result from any composition of painted figures." Quatremère de Quincy, *Monuments et ouvrages d'art antique* (Paris, 1839), p. II.

19. Sir John Soane's Museum, Dr. 13, set 5, no. 4, compare to Dr. 31(65), set 1, no. 27: Dated July 22, 1811.

20. Ibid., Dr. 31(65), set 1, no. 18, 35, and 49.

21. Ibid., Dr. 13, set 5, no.3.

22. This inquiry continues with the studies of the main halls of the Bank of England (from 1818 to 1823), then with the new courthouse at Westminster (1820-1824), and finally with the masonic assembly hall on Great Queen Street in 1828.

23. G. Semper, *Der Stil im den Technischen Künsten*, 2 vol. (1860-63); A. Riegl, *Stilfragen, Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik* (Berlin: 1893), Italian translation *Problemi di stile* (Milan: 1963); Julius von Schlosser, "'Stilgeschichte' and 'Sprachgeschichte' der bildenden Kunst," in *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, I (Munich, 1935); Meyer Schapiro, "Style," *Anthropology Today: Selection*, ed. S. Tax (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1953; 1965, 2nd ed.), pp. 278-303; James S. Ackerman, "A theory of Style," in *Aesthetic Inquiry: Essays in Art Criticism and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. M. C. Beardsley and H. M. Schueller (California: Dickenson, 1967).

24. N. Ivanoff, "Stile e Maniera" in *Saggi e Memorie di Storia dell'Arte, I.* (Venice: Neri Pozza, 1957), pp. 107-163; P. Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture;* R. Wittkower, "Imitation, Eclectism and Genius" in *Aspects of the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 143-161; Guillerme, "The Idea of 'Architectural Language': A Critical Inquiry," in *Oppositions*, 10, fall 1977; G. Germann, *Gothic revival in Europe and Britain: Sources, Influences, and Ideas* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1973); A. Vidler, "The Languages of Modern Architecture," in a series of five lectures, A. A. School of Architecture, London, England.

25. In his *Antiquités étrusques, grecques et romaines*, vol. I, 1767; mentioned by Guillerme, "The Idea of 'Architectural Language'," op. cit.

26. Cf. J. M. Pérouse de Montclos, "Charles-Francois Viel, Architecte de l'hôpital général et Jean-Louis Viel de Saint-Maux, Architecte, Peintre et Avocat du Parlement de Paris," in *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français*, 1966, pp. 257-269.

27. C. F. Viel, *Principes de l'ordonnance des bâtiments*, part I (Paris, 1797) p. 96. See also the study by A. Perez-Gomez, "Charles-François Viel: primer representante de la reaccion antiracionalista del siglo XIX," *Arquitecturas-bis*, 22, 1978.

28. Ibid., p. 115.

29. Ibid., p. 105.

30. T. XV, 1765: "The sublime style and that which we call the sublime are not the same thing. The latter is all that seizes our spirit and troubles it all of a sudden: it is a momentary flash. The sublime style, on the other hand, can be sustained over time—it is an elevated tone, a noble and majestic bearing."

31. A. Saint-Valéry Seheult, *Le génie et les grands secrets de l'architecture historique* (Paris, 1813), p. 4.

32. Ibid., p. 7.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., p. 21.

35. Ibid., p. 25.

36. Ibid., p. 39.

37. "Having noticed that the eagle was always triumphant, men adopted it to indicate victory," ibid., p. 25.

38. P. Rossi, *Clavis Universalis* (Milan: Ricciardi, 1960).

39. Seheult, *Le génie et les grands secrets de l'architecture historique*, p. 26.

40. Ibid., p. 41.

41. The author quotes from "Le Génie du Christianisme." Later Seheult summarizes his thought: "Our gazes are arrested by the works of the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Goths, one after another, and everywhere we are convinced that the genius of architecture lay in the thought within the edifice; that

this thought was constantly being recalled in the inscriptions formed by the characters of architectonic language. We have indicated the advantages in the study of this language . . .," p. 76. He finishes the work with a project for a temple to the Légion d'Honneur (we are under the Empire!), which he presents as an "architectonic poem."

42. See our article, "La ville-équipement; la production architecturale des bâtiments civils (1795-1848)" in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, no. 45, 1978.

43. *L'Histoire naturelle de la parole, ou origine du langage, de l'écriture et de la grammaire, à l'usage des jeunes gens* (Paris, 1772, 1776, 1816), making up the second and third volumes of *Monde primitif analysé et comparé avec le monde moderne*, published in nine volumes during 1773-1782.

44. *Histoire naturelle de la parole*, ed. in 1816, pp. 66-68.

45. Seheult, *Le génie et les grands secrets de l'architecture historiques*, p. 53.

46. J. L. Viel de Saint-Maux, *Lettres sur l'architecture des Anciens, et celle des modernes, dans lesquelles se trouve développé le génie symbolique qui preside aux Monuments de l'Antiquité* (Paris, Brussels, 1787), first letter, p. 16 (seven letters edited between 1779 and 1787).

47. Ibid., p. IX, and first letter p. 17.

48. Ibid., II: letter, p. 12.

49. Published in *Annales du Musée*, II, 1802, p. 123, with a quotation of *Lettres* by Viel de Saint-Maux: cf. J. M. Pérouse de Montclos.

50. Cf. P. Junod, *Transparence et opacité* (Lausanne: L'Age de l'Homme, 1976), pp. 308 ff., in which the author draws a parallel between "Classic Iconology" (from Ripa, Delafosse to Quatremère de Quincy) and Aristotelian logic and linguistics.

51. In *R. G. A.*, XI, 1853, p. 213.

52. Ibid., XXI, 1863, p. 5.

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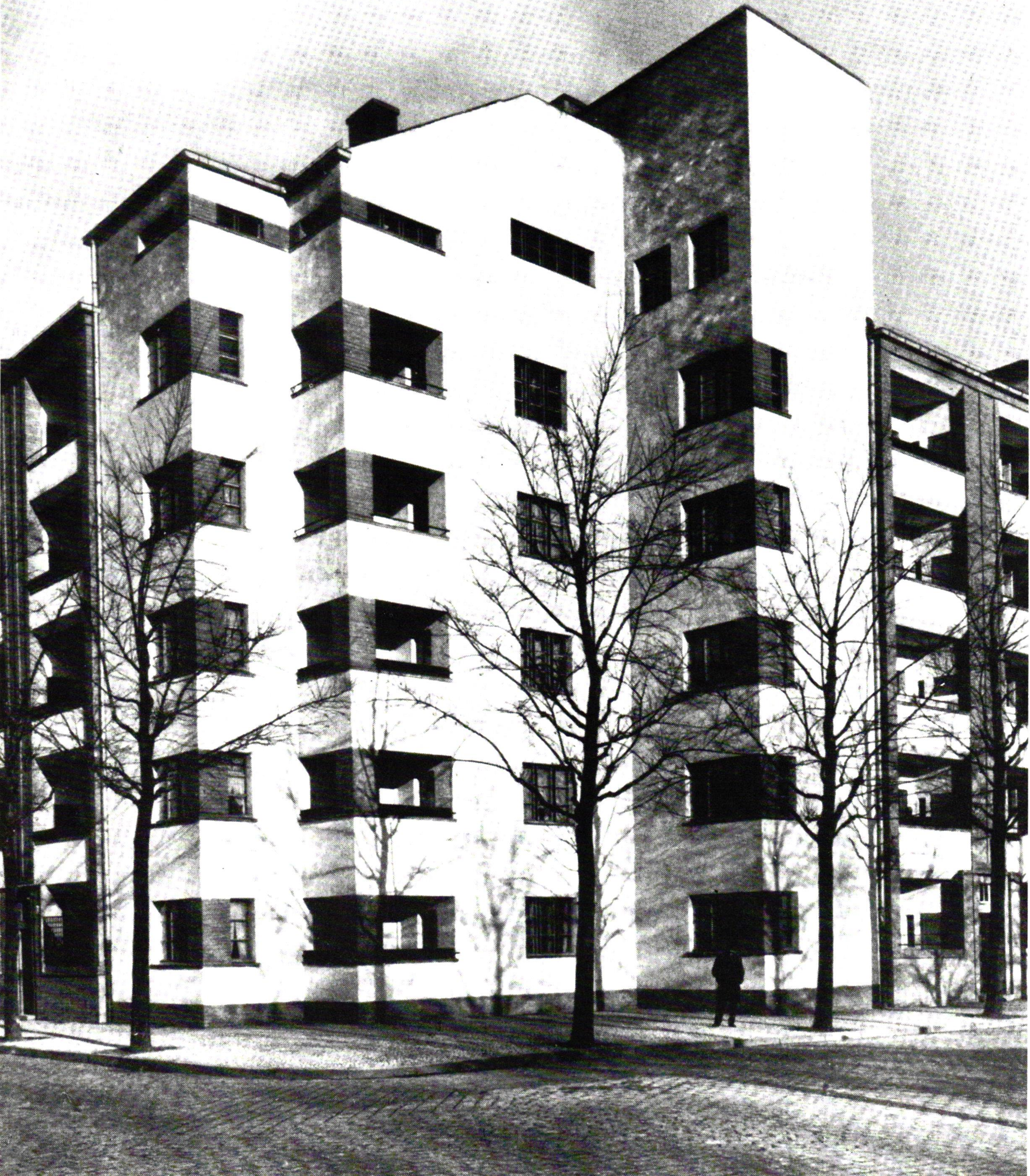
1, 12-30 From Sir John Soane's Museum.
4-10 From the Archives Nationales, Paris.
11 From J. Soane, *Lectures in Architecture*, A. T. Bolton, ed. (London, 1929).
31 From the Archives, Dulwich College.
32-34 From Sir John Soane, *Designs for public and private buildings.* Lithographs by C. J. Richardson.
35 Photograph by Studio A. Zen.



The Earth—A Good Home

Bruno Taut

Introduction by Ludovica Scarpa
Translation by Diane Ghirardo

1 (frontispiece) Apartment block, Leinestrasse, Berlin. Bruno Taut, 1926-1927.

Introduction

Early 1919: The first signs of the failure of the hopes of November, 1918 had become clear. Martin Wagner, of the 1919 Stadtbaurat of Berlin-Schoeneberg, of the 1926 Stadtbaurat of "Greater Berlin," and one of Taut's collaborators in the Berlin *Siedlungen,* laments in an essay on the building industry[1] (contemporary with the following article by Taut) the slowness and contradictions with which the debates and actualization of socialism are proceeding. Bruno Taut paints the same concepts in ideological hues, but in drier terms: "return to Mother Earth," "the earth must be made free." Free from what? From capitalist private property? The desire is for *self-liberation* from the "curse" of capital and from its cities, symbol of all evil—"politics and war will not disappear if first cities do not disappear"[2]—and also from the "curse" of money which, as Simmel has noted,[3] eliminates any quality, making everything founder in the flux of the "monetary river." For Taut, salvation means to hypothesize a world without cities, without money, *without politics.* How much of all this was dictated by the contingencies of events, and how much reflects basic aspects of the social democratic cultural circles?[4]

It has already been noted that the council movement was the expression of a precise *type* of worker, the *gelernter Arbeiter*: "the idea of 'participation' that dominates the council theme on the level of politics is, at bottom, the will to take effective control of the process of production which the qualified work force was able to exercise in the preceding phase of the capitalist relationship with production."[5] "In highly specialized industry," as has been noted elsewhere, ". . . the worker in the position of collaborating with the technician and engineer in the modification of the work process was the most materially susceptible to an organized political design like the workers' councils, that is, to the self-management of production."[6] The *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* in part reflects these characteristics of the council movement and developed to the fullest the meaning of the individual responsibility. Taut's invocation of the Rousseauian man, with his *Sehnsucht,* was not empty rhetoric, but an aspiration toward a community of "good" and "aware" men, who could be depositaries of "hope."

And the continuous flowering of religious attachments is hardly accidental in this and other works by Taut. The citation of Tolstoy's phrase, "where there is a content, form finds itself," is a proclamation of faith in the realization of hope. In this Christian concept, how much echo of the "automatic advent of socialism" do we hear? More important, Taut, as an architect, gave "form" to the *Siedlungen* projected during Wagner's management. Consistent with Tolstoy's pronouncement, Taut derived architectural form "naturally" from the contents that came to light in "Die Erde eine gute Wohnung." But the contents are often ideological. In fact, the myths Taut brings together in his article are multiple: the overcoming of the lamentable division of labor, a critique not in political but moral terms of the contrast between city and country; the ideas of Kropotkin concerning an organization of industrial production that tends toward autarchy, but also the overcoming of borders between countries. Taut also cites Leberecht Migge, a landscape architect active first in Silesia and then in Frankfurt with Ernst May, who published with May "Das Schlesische Heim" in Silesia, creating a precedent for "Das Neue Frankfurt" and "Das Neue Berlin." Migge was a believer in self-sustenance, in the cultivation of a garden annexed to the individual house after working hours. These politics were typical of the Anglo-Saxon tradition, where paternalistic intervention in the domestic economy of working-class families had the objective of lowering wages and reducing the number of subsistence goods that had to be acquired on the market. This system, criticized by Engels in "The Housing Question" apropos of the politics in "company towns," is similar to the solution proposed by Migge, and shared by Taut and defined by him as a "return to the earth," "to Mother Earth." On this sedimentation too he constructed his ideology.

While Taut dreamed of "stars in the sky and stars on the earth that salute one another," Marshall had already scientifically isolated the economic law that impelled the location of industry outside the city: it was the incentive of the price of land decreasing from the center to the periphery, producing a less than epic *Auflösung der Stadt*, certainly not a Tautian utopia, and one tethered to the suburbs. The *city* remained in the hands of big capital: not even the great experience of Weimar could modify the structural laws of development.

Notes

1. Martin Wagner, *Die Sozialisierung der Baubetriebe* (Berlin: Heymann Verlag, 1919).
2. Bruno Taut, "Die Erde eine gute Wohnung," in *Die Volkswohnung*, Vol. I, No. 4, 24 February 1919. All quotations from Taut are from this text.
3. Georg Simmel, *Gross'Stadt und Geisesleben.*
4. See Giancarlo Buonfino, *La politica culturale operaia* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), for the tradition of social democratic circles from the end of the nineteenth century.
5. Massimo Cacciari, *Pensiero negativo e razionalizzazione* (Padua, Venice: Marsilio, 1977), p. 95.
6. Sergio Bologna, "Composizione di classe e teoria del partito alle origini del movimento consiliare" in *Operai e stato* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1972), 3rd., p. 15.

Figure Credit

1 (frontispiece) From Walter Müller-Wulckow, *Wohnbauten und Siedlungen* (Leipzig: Karl Robert Langewiesche Verlag, 1928).

The Earth—A Good Home

Bruno Taut[1]
Translated by Jane O. Newman and John H. Smith

"The Earth—A Good Home" was originally published in German ("Die Erde eine gute Wohnung") in Die Volkswohnung, *Zeitschrift für Wohungsbau und Siedlungswesen* ("People's Housing, *A Journal for Housing Construction and Development*"), *Vol. 1., No. 4, 24 February 1919.*

Christmas, 1918

"Men were created not to swarm in ant hills, but to spread out across the land which they were intended to cultivate. Physical debilitation and spiritual vices are the unavoidable consequences of overcrowding. Man is the least gregarious of all animals. Men would quickly die if they were to be penned in like sheep. The breath of one man is lethal to another." Thus wrote Jean-Jacques Rousseau long ago in his *Emile*. People heard his call, but they did not follow it. The same call arises again today, but lower and more timid—will they follow it today? Will they at least take the first steps? It was said in the early days of the revolution that the land should be liberated. Large estates and government properties should be divided up so that people could return to Mother Earth to live on small farms and gardens. But what happened? Endless debates in committees and newspapers, theoretical pros and cons, but not a single practical action. Why this despondency? Do people feel, perhaps, that any such attempts would be a death-blow to the heart of the city, that it would mean the beginning of the dissolution of the city and thus the destruction of our entire culture? The socialist papers cry out: "Workers! Get out of the mass graves of the cities!" But how? Where is the program for land development?

The belief in the existing order as an absolute fact has become strong and unyielding. It rests on a fear of the collapse of the political structures, which now depend fully on the centralization of industry, the division of labor, a separation of city and country, and concentration in metropolitan centers. It is hardly necessary to mention the signs of dissolution in the cities; they are clearly surfacing, and were surfacing before the war. At that time, numerous well-founded investigations demonstrated the increasing economic instability of house and land ownership in the wake of property speculation. More and more people attempted to divert interest from the dominating direction of world trade and to call into attention the maintenance of the land through private initiatives. Individual groups of industrialists, merchants, and large-scale agrarians resisted the movement in order to protect their material interests. And thus it took the material needs of the war to translate these demands into deeds. The project went as well as circumstances permitted, and the idea received new emphasis. Today, in the wake of the war, there is no choice: the land itself must nourish all its inhabitants. According to L. Migge,[2] a four hundred square meter garden can provide a five-member family with sufficient fruit and vegetables to be entirely independent of the market. Franz Oppenheimer has established that five hectares suffice for a small farm, which means that the land could theoretically support forty million inhabitants instead of the present seventeen million. Such a population shift would result in a tremendous alleviation of industry. Once freed from the pressure of exporting and world trade, industry could serve exclusively domestic needs. It could dispense with the "reserve army" of workers which in a boom it needs suddenly and in a crisis delivers up to misery. Theories and interests can be argued back and forth, but one thing is certain: with proper and full use of its land, Germany could feed its own population. Given the prewar population of seventy million, seventy-seven hundred square meters, well over half an acre, exist per capita. Belgium, according to Kropotkin, lives from its domestic land use with only thirty-seven hundred square meters per capita. The incipient process of the dissolution of the cities becomes clearer once we consider the evident efforts of industry to settle in areas with good transportation availability but which nevertheless lie on the distant outskirts of the cities. In addition, many factories are purchasing property for development by their own workers. As the absolute division of labor begins to break down, it may become possible to install the Taylor-system on an overall basis. The foreman will no longer judge only isolated hand and arm movements; his workers will become more valuable and he will be encouraged to preserve their energies and physical as well as mental well-being by offering a satisfying part-time employment with machines and a half-day of working the land. In his book *Agriculture, Industry, and Handwork* (Berlin, 1901), Kropotkin demonstrates through a strictly scientific investigation how industry is reversing the trend of monopolization and centralization, and how this new tendency is expanding around the world. The day will come when each country will possess its own means of industrial production and will therefore subsist without imports or exports. Industry will then coincide fully with farming. Kropotkin points out the origins of this and shows the unmistakable movement in the direction of the abolition of the division of labor, toward the union of city and country, toward a new life. Jules Méline, in his book *Return to the Soil,* comes to the conclusion that the old idea of special countries for individual branches of production has been superseded.

Theories and facts, experiences from the war and from the present come together and pose incontrovertible demands. And what happens? In the great French Revolution of 1792, the fulfillment of Rousseau's ideal appeared to everyone as a golden hope. Today, we have made a few small steps; our revolution has raised this hope anew. Should it once again, 126 years later, be in vain?

If a revolution is satisfied only with a change of regime and with reforms, then it is undeserving of its name, for it has failed to revolutionize those who violently demanded a complete conversion of intolerable conditions. The truly "radical" revolution is not so easily satisfied, for it must reach to the very foundations of society. A step has been taken; it would be deplorable if the opportunity provided by the present relaxing of social norms was to be missed, and if no transition to a new state was to occur before it imposes itself with its own right to legitimacy, with its own force. Well-founded and deeply rooted hopes may remain quiet for a time, but they do not die. And this hope, which inspired Rousseau and countless others after him—Tolstoy, Scheerbart, Campbell-Bannermann, Posadowski, to name but a few—must not die. It is a hope which is mankind's most fundamental desire—only seemingly is the longing for an opening up of the land a materialistic wish. If the government is terrified of the first steps along a new path, this is because it senses the final consequences and knows that there is no turning back. It will not prevent the inevitable even if bourgeois elements, fearing the "danger" of urban dissolution, divert the stream into so many minor canals.

But there is no use hiding one's head in the sand like an ostrich. The displacement of the city has already begun; its dissolution will follow—even if it takes another 126 years and emerges only gradually toward the turn of the next century. We must look to the future and, lest we wander haphazardly, fix our eyes on the distant goal on the horizon. This greatest revolution of mankind will destroy countless values; how many have been lost already in the World War? But so many fewer will be lost if more adopt this one goal.

"Dissolution of the cities"—this is a negation. But fundamentally, it is much more an affirmation. Man possesses his earth again, and need no longer be a mere wanderer on her. He will inhabit her. This new fact, which lies in the future, may seem at first like the fulfillment of only material desires, a promise of a healthier life and better nourishment; but it hides a greater treasure: a fundamentally new and different culture from all others present and past. What is happiness? Tolstoy answers this question: Happiness is life in and with nature. Necessarily, all contemporary city dwellers are unhappy: the enjoyment of nature, like the enjoyment of art, is not itself happiness; only life within nature is happiness. Once man finds happiness and spiritual peace in his connection to the earth, his soul is again fulfilled. It acquires repose in the world, in God. Then Europe, once again after such a long, long time, will have a religion. "The steps of religion," writes Fechner in the *Daily View,* "are great, but slow. A millenium is needed to take one step. The raised foot hovers, already sinking, in the air. When will it finally be set down?" It will be set down when man finds his home again on the earth. With this home humanity will possess a content, and "where there is content, the form arises on its own" (Tolstoy). A new culture blossoms, a true culture.

Ideas are road signs. The image of a distant future must light up the way for our aspiration. Men cannot be shown enough how they must become bored with the present and must strive ever more intensely for fulfillment. Do I, as an architect, not work against my own art by calling for the dissolution of cities? The greatest buildings, however, outgrew the city and I myself attempted to depict the coronation of the future city in my "City Crown."[3] The greatest buildings of all, the gigantic temple parks of Asia, Angkor Wat, Borobudur, stand alone. Thus, I wanted to isolate the buildings in my "City Crown" in the middle of an expansive development and thereby to awaken, in principle, the sense of the isolated building.

Let us paint a clear picture of the new face of the earth: large estates cultivated communally so that more people might work and live off the land. All fields covered with farms and gardens; in between woods, meadows and lakes. Then, interspersed in the landscape, extended developments with small houses, huts and gardens. Industry follows this picture naturally, scattered in many workshops so that it can easily serve men's needs. The process is accelerated by new modes of transportation: the large train lines will vanish, giving way to a tightly woven net of smaller roads for cars and trucks. Raw materials will be transported almost exclusively by river and canal. Markets will become almost superfluous, since the population will be able to support itself and live by the natural exchange of self-produced goods. The power of money will recede, disappear—who will need to buy much in the country? We will live, after all, in nature, work in it, lead a harmonious existence with a healthy balance between hand and mind, between workshop and land. The vacation trip will become obsolete and, since men will live harmoniously, the individual will feel aloneness as an even stronger tie to the others; he will seek them out only when driven by an inner need, a need for communication after a period of isolated development. Then he can spend a day as the guest of another; in turn, he will have enough room to take another in. The individual will encounter the group in a totality only where such encounters should take place: in the building of religion. This end will become the only reason for a journey and lodgings will be provided for staying overnight. Otherwise, there will be no need to travel. Whoever wants to visit a distant country will travel mostly by air. The development of airplanes will accelerate this trend. The rarity of trips will restore their true value, but for the most part, Scheerbart's slogan will hold: "Travel at home!"

But alas! What has happened to the architectonic image of the cities? Let us not lament the loss. A completely new vision will arise. The "urban building" will disappear completely into housing developments [*Siedlungen*], individual houses will acquire a completely new significance. Likewise, the isolated large buildings. If we rise up from the earth in a balloon, we see beneath us, like sprinkled grains of sand, the houses, occasionally joined in rows. The grains melt together and the higher we rise, the more it appears like a fog which blows across the green land, now denser, now lighter. And in this fog shine some sparkling spots, smaller and larger ones, like stars in the heavens. These are the houses of worship; constructed out of glass, they light up the night. Everything is separated; men now understand deeply for the first time the necessary isolation of the architectonic work, which blossoms here and there like a rare and precious flower. The stars in the sky and the stars on the earth will greet one another.

All great religious prophets found God in their loneliness: Buddha under the Bo tree, Christ in the desert. The new messiah and the new man will find Him as well. A new bond will unite all men. Where and why should we desire to designate frontiers and borders when the earth will look like this? Borders will be unthinkable. New forms of collaboration will be established. States, the powers of the state, will disappear. A new form of human relationships will arise, which is at most preventative, but never organized or commanding. It will provide help voluntarily. Since the city is the sign of stately power, its force and its consequences—politics and war—will never disappear until the city disappears. If herein lies the remedy for colonialism, then let us apply all energies to revolutionize the human spirit. Our desires are for love and not hate. "Its foot hovers, already sinking, in the air. When will it finally be set down?" Will it be possible for the new messiah to arrive at the beginning of the third millennium?

Notes

1. Chairman of the Architects' Board of the "Workers' Council for Art."
2. In his book *Jedermann Selbstversoger* (*"Everyman's Self-Sufficiency"*) (Jena, 1918).
3. This appeared in a publication containing articles by Paul Scheerbart, Erich Baron, and Adolf Behne (Jena: Diederichs Publishing House).

Reviews, Letters, and Forum

Apparent Simplicity: Notes on Kurt Junghanns's book Bruno Taut, 1880-1938.

Kurt Junghanns. *Bruno Taut. 1880-1938.* 1970, Berlin, Deutsche Bauakademie, Schriften des Institus für Städtebau und Architektur, Henschelverlag.

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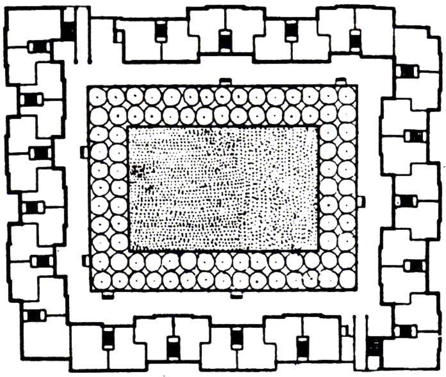

1

"Die Erde eine gute Wohnung" is the title of one of Bruno Taut's most important essays. Written in 1918, in the fiery years of postwar Berlin, the article appeared in 1919 in the fourth issue of *Die Wolkswohnung.* It is a significant document, punctuated with slogans that give shape to a noteworthy period in Taut's intellectual development. If the title already sounds like a slogan, the text also furnishes the political key for the formula "die Erde eine gute Wohnung": "the socialist newspapers shout 'Workers! Get out of the graveyard of the cities!'"

This old political formula was destined to enjoy a substantial fortune. Taut was a leading figure of modern German culture and an undisputed leader of the architectural scene between 1910 and 1930, and after spending considerable time bringing it to maturity, Taut remained faithful to the principle he enunciated in the *Wolkswohnung* essay. A student of Möhring, Goecke, and Fischer, he was one of the liveliest exponents of the artistic branch of the Werkbund. As chief architect of Magdeburg, he linked his name to one of the most formidable campaigns in the field of low-cost housing following his activity as principal consultant for the Berlin social-democratic cooperatives during the 1920s. He made his debut in 1904. He received his first important commission through Karl Ernst Osthaus, a typical intellectual and industrial figure of the Wilhemine age, an 'entrepreneur prince' who was the upper bourgeois alternative to Hagen in the ducal Darmstadt of von Hesse. Around 1910, Taut developed close relationships with the German association for the promotion of the garden city; in 1913 he began building the first *Siedlungen* (housing projects), inspired by the Anglo-Saxon garden city models. In the same year he realized the German *Stahlwerksbandes* pavilion for the International Baufachausstellung of Leipzig. The influence of Behrens was clear and symptomatic: Behrens's architecture, Taut wrote, "sang the exalted song of work that must fascinate all." This is one of the central points in Taut's ideology: the aristocratic populist reformism that induced Taut to participate in the programs of the Gardenstadtgesellschaft (Garden City Association) was not in contradiction with the *Arbeitsideologie* (work ideology)—a synthesis emblematic of the tensions that animated late imperial German culture.

From these positions Taut traced his own highly personal dialogue with contemporary avant-garde currents, which he resolved in a close relationship with Paul Scheerbart. The pavilion for the glass industry that Taut constructed for the 1914 Cologne Exposition, designed in collaboration with Max Pechstein and Thron Prikker among others, was directly inspired by the visions of the fantastic world "narrated" by Scheerbart. Once again, Osthaus obtained the commission for him. The Scheerbartian principles of *Glasarchitektur* (Verlag der Sturm, 1914; the book was dedicated to Taut) were picked up again in the "fantastic" works Taut conceived during the war years. Taut's designs express something more than a liberating utopia: the "*Stadtkrone*" is a *Zukunftsstadt* (city of the future) that falls into crisply detailed architectural formulas and a profoundly religious, even mystical, aspiration. But Taut's mysticism, rooted in an inevitably neglected, almost "premodern" (we can say, with Ernst Troeltsch) conception, lacks the disconcerting quality of its model, "the astral esperanto of Scheerbart's creatures," from which came, as Walter Benjamin beautifully expressed it, the true *modern lesson* "for understanding a humanity that affirms itself in destruction." Tautian mysticism—"will it be possible for the new messiah to arrive at the beginning of the third millennium?"—instead is intimately bound up in a populist web, offering typical echoes of *Volk* culture in which hints of Taut's youthful thinking can be discerned. But these residues are collected within the most mature "utopian" formulations: *glass architecture* conceals

1 Apartment block, Leinestrasse, Neukölln. Bruno Taut, 1926-1927. Site plan.

2 Apartment block, Leinestrasse, Neukölln. Bruno Taut, 1926-1927.

a profound aspiration toward a purity that seems possible to realize only through the rediscovery of the deepest roots of popular culture in a world freed of the dramas that were rendered painfully present by the war, through a palingenetic 'revolution' of the spirit—for which the Arbeitsrat für Kunst (Workers' Council for Art) "plotted" its own version of utopia. This notion not only derives from the myth of the medieval community—the model of an effective popular participation in an original state of "artistic naturalness"—insinuated in the "secret thoughts" of all the members of the Arbeitsrat "sect," but it also partakes of a sort of mystical regret for "the good old habits" whose praises Taut had already sung. The ideal of the medieval city and the symbol of the Gothic cathedral which run through the writings of Gropius in the immediate postwar years were exalted as alternatives to the fragmentation produced by modern technique, and the separation and division of work it generates, resolving itself in a profound regret for lost and "erudite" artisanal qualities. This is a key that permits us to penetrate the nature of the *Arbeitsideologie* typical of Taut's thought and that of many spokesmen for radical intellectual groups in postwar Germany.

Inevitably, the convergence with Peter Kropotkin flowered; Kropotkin's anarchistic regressions were tinted with dazzlingly prophetic hues. Implicit in Taut's religiosity is manifest a prophetic vocation that constitutes the key to the utopian narration accompanying the miraculous illustrations for *Die Stadtkrone* (1919), *Alpine Architektur* (1919), and *Die Auflösung der Städte* (1920). In these it is not hard to distinguish the amount of debt Taut owes to Scheerbart's "stories," to works such as *Rakkox der Billionär* (1900) and *Der Kaiser von Utopia* (1904)—a debt that even diffuses into the most minute aspects of Taut's "prophecy," as demonstrated by the recurrence in his work of a kind of futuristic or Scheerbartian fascination with the envisioned conquests of aviation. Taut's experiences afford us the possibility of judging with a good measure of accuracy the characteristic of the cultural climate formed by significant segments of German culture beginning at least as early as 1917. They can account for the most radical tempers and tensions in the overall experience of the Arbeitsrat für Kunst and in the secret meditations of the members of the Glaeserne Kette (Glass Chain)—experiences within which Taut played a fundamental role. The profound distrust of the Arbeitsrätes over the disconcerting results produced by Wilhelmine "*Zivilisierung*" was tinted with a regressive mysticism quite similar to that which animated Taut's principal works. As Adolf Behne, one of the most representative members of the Arbeitsrat, wrote, "when the world is guided by wisdom and goodwill we will help build it; until then we will build pure fire. We are working for the future; we must abandon the present." This is a dramatic renunciation, almost as if the moral imperative concealed in the most profound etymon of the word *bauen* ended up acquiring a crushing weight; as if to abstain from construction in order to plan its re-establishment constituted the necessary act for separating the destiny of architecture and art from that of civilization. This renunciation is unquestionably tinted with tones that are difficult to decipher and assumes contours that cannot be examined here—one thinks of, for example, the Gropius of the Fagus factory of 1911—but certainly is profoundly motivated by Taut, who in *Auflösung der Städte* affirmed, "cities are the ruin of humanity." If the meaning of the title of his essay "Wolkswohnung" is thus further clarified, one thinks inevitably of the notorious survey that the National Socialist Party organ *Völkischer Beobachter* began to publish in 1928 under the heading "notices from the asphalt deserts." An explicit anti-urbanism is the true matrix of the *Arbeitsideologie* that runs through Taut's thought, increasingly confirmed by the anticapitalist vocations of the author of *Fields, Factories, and*

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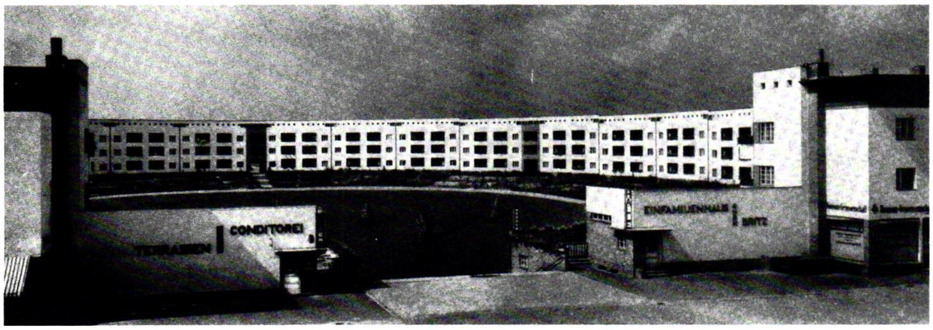
3 Britz housing project, "Das Hufeifen,' Berlin-Neukölln. Bruno Taut, 1926-1927.

4 Falkenberg Kolonie, Berlin. Bruno Taut, 1911-1914.

5, 6 Britz housing project, Berlin-Neukölln. Bruno Taut, 1926-1927.

7 Single family house. Bruno Taut, 1926.

8 Gehag housing project, Berlin-Zehlendorf. Bruno Taut, 1926-1927.



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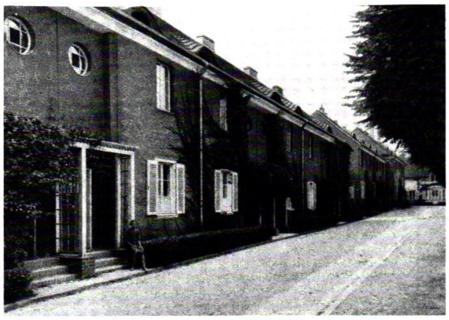

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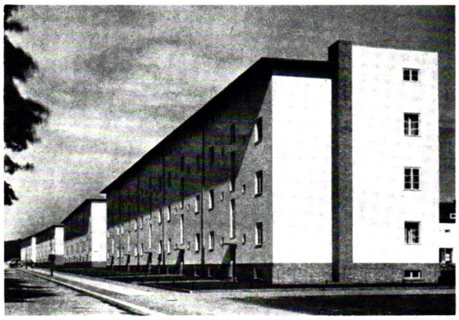

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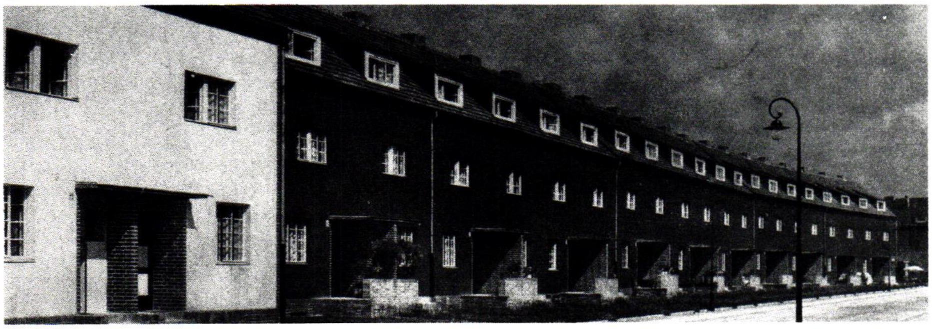

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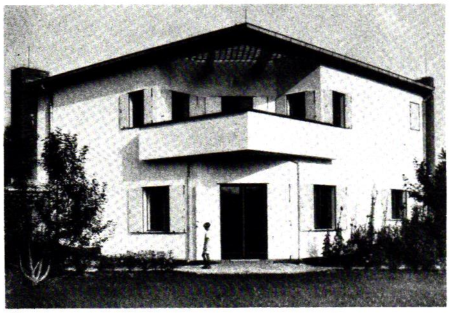

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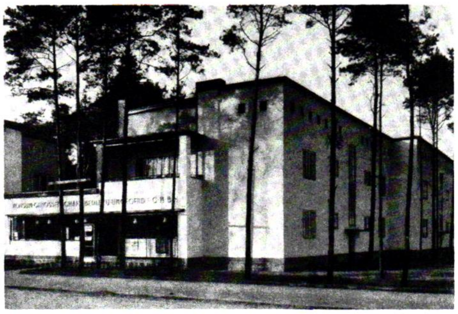

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Workshops Tomorrow. These are the contents of Taut's revolutionary vocation, a dream of the reconquest of purity, of natural religion in Rousseauesque terms. The use Taut makes of Tönnies's conceptions of *Gemeinschaft* is entirely inspired by an anti-capitalist ideology. This ideal is embodied in the sidereal architectural forms derived from Scheerbart, and leads the "astral language" back to earth, even if its home is on the inaccessible summits of *Alpine Architektur.* And, again, this mystic exaltation of the mountains re-echoes a typical theme of the *Volk* tradition.

It is not hard, then, to isolate in this phase of Taut's research the consolidation of intellectual positions that will characterize his subsequent works. From 1921 Taut was chief architect of Magdeburg: his long collaboration with the social democratic-inspired administrative and economic apparatus originates here. Taut's program for "painted Magdeburg" is steeped in populism: urban workers are incited to redeem their houses from anonymity by painting them, while at the same time painters such as Karl Krayl and Hans Fischer repainted the city's most representative buildings. This initiative seemed to have activated the similar program elaborated by Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and Alexander Klein during the era of the Arbeitsrat für Kunst.

The Magdeburg experience helped relate projects initiated during the war with the far more important work Taut undertook after 1924 in Berlin as a consultant for the Gemeinnützige Heimstätten Aktiegesellschaft (Gehag)—an agency organized for the purpose of entering on a massive scale into low-cost housing, which united diverse pre-existing, union-financed building enterprises, and was led by Martin Wagner, one of the most significant personalities of the SPD technical-cultural organization. In this enterprise Taut could avail himself of the services of the best collaborators, among whom he paid particular attention to Leberecht Migge, theorist of residential dispersion, as Taut recalled in "Die Erde eine gute Wohnung." He was also flanked by a research and experimental organization in the field of technology and building design, the Reichsforschungsgellschaft für Wirtschaftlichkeit im Bau- und Wohnungswesen, and supported in political battles against the city administration and the bureaucratic apparatus of the Zhnerring, the association to which the principal progressive architects belonged. Thus Taut became the protagonist of one of the most ambitious efforts undertaken by European social democratic forces on behalf of definitively resolving the low-cost housing question. Some of the Berlin *Siedlungen* realized by Taut in the 1920s, from Schiller Park in Berlin-Britz to Ankel-Toms-Hutte at Freie Scholle, remain unsurpassed monuments of that broad program, monuments to the memory of German social democratic politics. It was no easy experience, but clearly a linear series of efforts.

"The era of big words is over," noted Taut in 1927 at the culmination of his Berlin work, when he found himself harassed with projects that involved the construction of tens of thousands of new rooms. The "utopias" of the immediate postwar era seemed destined to be realized but subjected to substantial changes of program. And certainly the spirit of those "utopias" was inevitably modified in their expressionistic architectural forms which were all marked by the Gehag's insistence on economic rationalization and the curtailment of costs. But Taut's ideal enthusiasm did not seem diminished, despite the conditionings his grandiose dreams had to undergo upon their return to earth. Engaged to build "housing for the people," Taut could not avoid polemicizing with the most radical contemporary architectural tendencies against the "pathetic modern," as he defined certain contemporaneous tendencies, nor could he refrain from taunting Sigfried Giedion's ingenuous faith in the "new models of life" suggested by modern architecture. Here Taut's thought further manifests its coherence and the profound honesty of his obligation. But despite that coherence and honesty, the breadth of the efforts of social democratic inspired administrations who were committed to building programs of vast range in all the major German cities—availing themselves of the cooperation of the most progressive architects—the Tautian dream of becoming a protagonist as an architect, participating organically in the politics of the workers' overall urban reform movement, was destined to reveal itself as an impotent utopia, a dream incapable of being liberated from the "damnation" of its origins. Within only a few years, the crisis of the early 1930s rendered useless the grand programs of the previous decade—which had been artificially created by the anomalous conditions resulting from the Dawes Plan and the particular use administrations made of the resources placed at their disposal by that plan. Protagonists of a formidable process of rationalization in the building industry, artificers of the innovations needed to make the mass housing programs operative, architects at the end of the 1920s found that they had to recognize that *technique* did not exhaust the *political* nature of the contradictions determining and regulating the forms of urban development. "Big words abandoned," the utopian dream of total immersion in the "practice of utopia" superseded, they seemed to rely entirely on technical resources, trusting in the powers of design; but beyond that threshold of partial rationality, there emerged with stunning force the question of the practical impossibility of technique insofar as it became the reason for politics, and for design the impossibility of expressing a will to power that overcame its own political destiny. That knot of contradictions emerges with unusual vigor precisely from the experience of Martin Wagner: we can measure the complexity of the problem in the criticism that this chief activist of the Gehag aimed at SPD politics when he resigned from the party in 1931. He explicitly denied the impossibility of modifying the existing urban order, and of weighing its development through the politics adopted from social democracy, and the partiality of the techniques in which they were expressed. The Berlin *Siedlungen*, truly islands of "economic democracy," to use the expression of the historian Enzo Collotti, did nothing but sanction the irreversibility of the segregation of working class housing and the marginality of that sector with respect to the "vital brain" of the city. The ideological and cultural matrices that sustained urban reform programs should also be reconsidered from this perspective: if the great Berlin *Siedlungen*, conditioned by functional demands imposed by economic and production constraints, ended up losing their primitive and nostalgically populist character, they did not cease to function according to schemes rooted in the garden city model, with all the contradictions and economic problems this implies from an urban, political, and administrative standpoint. This helps explain the fact that Taut designed the residential complex of Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg and the *Siedlungen* "Paradies" and Berlin-Hohenschönhausen all at the same time. These latter were newly regressive and populist, and even typological research is irrelevant. They appear to be forerunners of the small agglomerations of detached, single-family houses typical of the *Kleinsiedlungen* which were constructed mainly during the Nazi period in order to integrate marginal fractions of the unemployed work force but which remain typical expressions of the anti-urban ideology animating *Volk* culture.

Thus, the Taut story, far from being geometrically precise, brings to light a whole range of questions, some of which suggest disquieting correspondences. In this story, however, there are numerous cues marking the intricate paths along which modern architectural culture has developed, allowing us to understand with greater precision the unresolved problem regarding the *continuity* between the architecture of the 1920s and that of the 1930s. That is to say, to probe the complexity of a historiographical question that is *forced* to consider the "demonological" interpretations of what occurred in German architecture after 1933, and at the same time to contribute to the difficult work of dismantling the consoling myth that accompanies all demonological and moralistic indignation—the myth, that is, of the progressivist motivations of modern architecture, of its unexhausted democratic vocations, of its *obligation*, to say it in a single word.

On this basis, the most complete and fully documented account of Taut, Kurt Junghanns's *Bruno Taut, 1880-1938* seems more disappointing than ever. Junghanns's thesis is even more explicit: its principal effort is to recover Taut as a typical, positive expression of working-class culture and to appropriate his work totally into the cultural patrimony of the German working-class movement. If the thesis aims at dispelling doubt, equally deprived of doubt is the analysis made of Taut's own work, of the quality of his architectural experiences. The thesis of Taut's innate adherence to the working-class cause is affirmed, while the theory of his equally innate vocation for socialism is constructed by patiently smoking out any element that could bring its basic design to light, in a way that leaves many questions unresolved. For these reasons the relationship between Taut and Scheerbart is hastily dispensed with. It is equally surprising not to find in this book any serious analysis of the basic political questions that weighed so heavily on the exalting experience of Taut's work in Berlin; in the face of these questions, Junghanns retreats to interpretive simplifications and political schematicizations that have nothing to do with a proper attentiveness to the historical dialectic. Nevertheless, while we learn little that is new about certain fundamental questions (such as how building programs function, how political decisions about urbanism were made within social democracy, how the cooperatives and the Gehag were organized), Taut's role in the battles between the various currents of the architectural culture is carefully detailed. From this derives the accent on Taut's individual role, on his specific gifts and moral qualities, nearly always analyzed in a way that tends to outline a fully developed "hero figure" who stands out from a scenario of errors, weaknesses, political betrayals—a confused and very schematically traced scenario. The hagiographic manner in which Junghanns discussed the end of Taut's Berlin experience and his later work in the Soviet Union is symptomatic of a painful and unhappily concluded experience, one which certainly does not represent the political apotheosis of Taut's story. The book seems almost to suggest that the destiny of this extraordinary architect could only conduct him toward the nation of the October Revolution. This destiny is far too simplistically described, as is Taut's interlude in Japan before his final digression into Ataturk's Turkey—yet another episode left without real explanation.

Junghanns's thesis ends up having a consoling function, useful only to those who want to cast a rapid or distracted glance at modern German architecture. Perhaps in this historiographical attempt, stamped with an old-school Marxism that is by now unacceptable, there are hidden purposes difficult to unveil: and for this reason alone it is useful to persist in a close reading of the book. Certainly in some ways it enlarges our understanding of Taut; but the impression remains valid that despite the conquests, contradictions, and copious efforts of the German Social democracy in the 1920s, the germ of ideologies, values, and models of the architectural culture were kept more or less alive and mature. Their continuity was not shattered by the crisis that concluded the second decade of the century. If historiography has a meaning, it is found in the attempt to illuminate—*sichtbar machen*; but to make clear does not always mean to illuminate a clear surface, a smooth plane on which the threads of history are perfectly aligned and drawn. Often indeed, *sichtbar machen* means to "uncover" and *say* how coiled and inextricably knotted such threads are. All the more so must Marxist historiography accept the challenge of that real multiplicity.

Figure Credits
1-8 From Walter Müller-Wulckow, *Wohnbauten und Siedlungen* (Leipzig: Karl Robert Langewiesche Verlag, 1928).

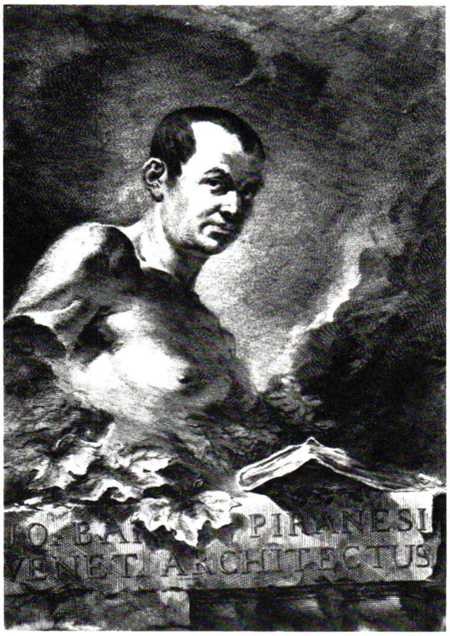
Inscribing Piranesi[1]

John Wilton Ely. *The Mind and Art of Giovanni Battista Piranesi.* 1978, London, Thames and Hudson.
Jonathan Scott. *Piranesi.* 1975, London, Academy Editions. New York, St. Mar-
Manfredo Tafuri. "Giovan Battista Piranesi; l'utopie negative dans l'architecture," *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui.* 184.

Anthony Vidler

Anthony Vidler was born in England in 1941. He was educated at the University of Cambridge where he received a degree in architecture. Since 1965 he has taught at Princeton University where he now holds the position of Associate Professor. He is also a Fellow of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies.

With the same power of endless growth and self-reproduction did my architecture proceed in dreams.
Thomas de Quincey, 1821.



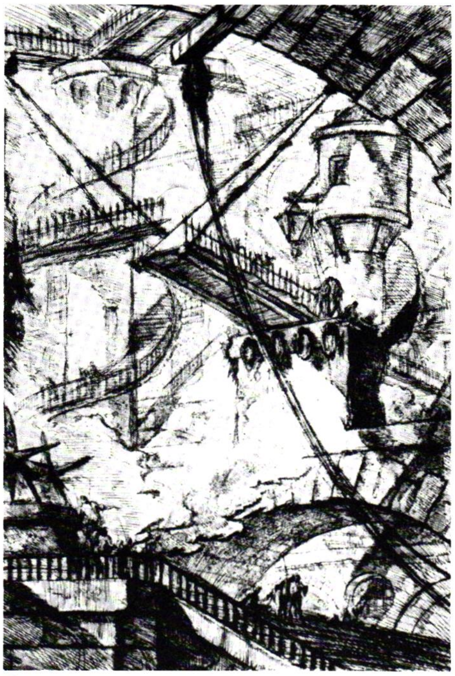
1 Felice Polanzani, Portrait of G. B. Piranesi *(aged 30). Etching, c.1730.*

A contemporary biographer of Piranesi is faced by almost two centuries of critical "interpretation": from William Beckford, de Quincey, and Walpole, to Balzac, Hugo, de Musset, Baudelaire, Gautier, and Mallarmé, to, in this century Proust, Aldous Huxley, and Yourcenar. This has led a recent reviewer of this "year of Piranesi," troubled that a talent so limited to the provincial milieu of eighteenth century Rome should have excited so much past and present enthusiasm—an artist of lesser talent than Tiepolo and Canaletto, Rembrandt, and Goya, an architect with only one small commission to his credit—to explain it away by claiming that "Piranesi is very much a writer's artist."[2]

This is as if the stream of English and French architects to his workshop was merely an affair of interested tourism; or the influence of his engraved work, patently demonstrated for the single case of France by an entire exhibition of drawings and projects by architects, was mere copyism in the last half of the eighteenth century;[3] or the fascination of Romantic writers from de Quincey, Hugo, and Baudelaire to Huxley was simply an occasion for the demonstration of literary skill; or, more importantly, the attempts of modernists like Eisenstein to analyze his techniques were so many irrelevant impositions. Or finally, as if the theory and practice of one of the Enlightenment's most impassioned spokesmen for the city and its architectural formation, which has come to be seen as crucial for an understanding of modern architecture and its discontents, might be written off as "too confused and eccentric to have ever had much influence."

This tradition of interpretation has also troubled the authors of the two major monographs on Piranesi recently published. It seems to present an uncomfortable "block" to proper philological understanding, to correct assessment of the historical reality. While the "influence of Piranesi" has to be taken into account, it should, it is implied, in no way be allowed to interfere with the broad objectivity of the final survey. And exceptionally good surveys they are: carefully documented, and, in the case of Wilton Ely, beautifully illustrated, they trace the known events of the artist's career, his friendships, the chronology of the works, the arguments of the polemical texts, the disputes with patrons and other theorists. They painstakingly compare the actual remains of Rome with Piranesi's fantasies, and situate his archaeology in the developing practice of the time. They contrast his "visions" with those of other artists before and after in an attempt to explain their unusual power, their idiosyncratic spatial effects and heterogeneous iconography. Perhaps Scott is better on the conditions of an etcher's life, Wilton Ely on the theory: but both will (somewhat confusingly, it has to be admitted) take their place as the standard works on the subject.

The question of "interpretation" still remains, however; it lurks disturbingly behind every citation of contemporary and later commentary. Despite an insistent (some would say obsessive) concentration on the "common-sense" view and the balanced judgment, the murmur of centuries of speculation and reinterpretation will not go away. There is of course a perfectly acceptable "historical solution" to this: a simple acceptance of so many commentaries into the history of the work itself, an understanding that the "cultural history" of an object's reception is part and parcel of the object itself. When John Wilton Ely dismisses the successive enthusiasms for the *Carceri* as a "serious distortion" to Piranesi's reputation, he is *as historian* dismissing a cultural fact that would have profoundly enriched his own history. What makes, indeed, the assessments of contempories in the end any more "true"



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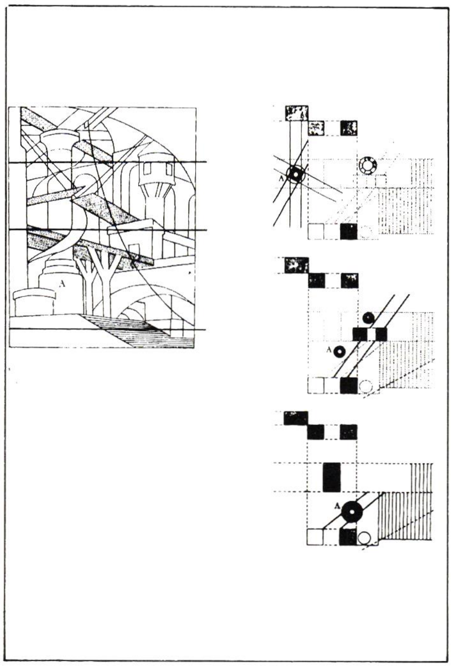

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2 *G. B. Piranesi,* VII Prison *with various wooden galleries and spiral staircase. Etching, c.1743-1744.*

3 *Reconstruction of Plate VII Prison showing plans at three levels (b, c, and d).*

than those of later writers? The distortion, it seems, is more on the other side: underlying the pragmatic quibbles of the two authors is their self-evidently fruitless attempts to reduce history to provable statements, documented facts, and evidence in itself. This for the most part excludes everything but what remains within the domain of etching and its obvious architectural subjects. Piranesi's intellectual milieu is referred to but given little credit; the discourse of the grand tour, especially that of the French, is hardly treated at all; even the economic and social conditions of life as a printmaker escape all but the most cursory notice. This might well be, of course, for lack of evidence; certainly there are few details of the biography that were not already recorded in Legrand's early manuscript account. But the world of Cassanova and the politics of court, church, and state; the intrigues of patronage; the modes of vision common to or differentiating archaeologist, architect, scene painter and engraver; the social conditions of mid-eighteenth century Rome; and most importantly the culture of the Roman avant-garde, of Piranesi's circle outside of architecture and engraving; all these should be accessible to the historian. But where we look for an insight we find only the most "orthodox" of art-historical observations. It is as if, frightened by so many wild and diverse interpretations, these scholars wish only to retain the most "likely" of theses—with the result that beyond a documentation—extremely valuable as it is—neither work allows us to *touch the subject.*

Nor, perhaps equally importantly, does it finally touch the object of analysis, the engravings. For despite the careful tracing of origins, of similar views, of graphic styles and parallel archaeologies, the etchings themselves remain largely unanalyzed in these two works. Even the careful reconstructions of Ulya Vogt-Göknil[4] are bypassed as "after the fact" diagrams of spatial dislocations that are more probably explicable by Piranesi's notorious carelessness. Following this line, Hugh Honour has proposed that the *Carceri* were reworked "in order to gain cogency, to make the constructions they depict more logical." Such a "connoisseurial distance" might well ward off the discomfort aroused by Piranesi's self-contradictions, but it surely does not explain the increasing illogicality of the etchings, either in themselves or in relation to their importance in history (figs. 2, 3).

In the first place, Piranesi's importance was insured by his incessant drive toward the interpretation and reinterpretation, through his chosen medium of etching, of the spatial themes of the late Baroque in a period when they were coming under increasing scrutiny by rationalists and new geometers. Secondly, as Werner Oechslin demonstrates,[5] his position as a catalyst of *archaeological* enquiry and his attempt to record and restore its findings in his etchings inserted the "archaeological" into the discourse of urbanism, at the very point at which it was likely to be subsumed by the "historical." Thirdly, his *inventions* (what the Rococo called caprices and the Romantics were to call dreams and nightmares) took up space and objects where Baroque stagecraft had left them, transforming their relations according to the implacable "logic" of repetition and recombination, to develop a series of explosions and highly explosive "theaters" in which plans, elevations, and perspectives take on their own life as emblems of an *other* architecture. Fourthly, as his polemics made clear, this was no disinterested or "aesthetic" drive: the politics were overtly directed toward the ideal of a republican Rome, mediated, it is true, by a paranoia about the contemporary patronage system, but finally pointed to a state where the construction of the city and its monuments was an affair of public virtue and remembrance, not private speculation and luxury.

There were, of course, contradictions

among these different positions and the way in which they were represented. The question of working on the language of Baroque representation in etched form, of an architect practicing largely through the plate; the impossible nostalgia of the archaeological utopia; the lexicon of the inventions, consumed and denied "value" through incessant repetition; the ideal of a city remade in the image of the Marble Plan, atemporal, without hierarchy; types and their combinations spread across a field with no criteria for siting save that of adjacency—these and more gave the lie to any *positivity* almost before it was displayed. But if, as Manfredo Tafuri has pointed out, the utopian project of modern bourgeois architecture can be characterized at one level as the technique of *managing contradiction*,[6] then surely Piranesi was nothing but a master of the art.

We look then at the work of Piranesi not so much to admire genius, painterly skill, or technical innovation; nor to immerse ourselves in dreams, madness, and the "dark" side of the Enlightenment. Rather we see in his "tightrope act" a drive for overcoming the ruptures introduced into a traditional world by international consumerism (the grand tour) and simple-minded rationalism (the *tabula rasa*); we see in him a model for the nostalgic utopia of the avant-garde, its use of Etruscan and Roman remains as Pugin was to use fourteenth century parish churches. More especially we see a project that, however unconsciously determined by the emblematics of the Baroque, finds in ruins the material for a wholly new construction of the real, and in geometry its instrument.

There seems, in the end, despite all wishes to the contrary, little that is hermetic or mysterious, little "darkness" about these experiments. For experiments they were—in combination, reduplication, representation, and deformation, *en abîme* . . . until we grow exhausted at the sameness of it all, as if we were suddenly confronted with a scientific calculation, algebraically spelled out, of all the positions possible in De Sade's *120 days*; as if exploration for its own sake has finally reduced all signs to their original arbitrary state; as if the desperate attempt to *motivate* the ruined fragments of Rome by, so to speak, putting them literally in motion, has succeeded only in abstracting them still further. The project of making Rome nonconsumable by trying to make it regain its lost mythic organicity collapses into an endless speculation through images. This, as Eisenstein realized, was technique raised to the level of art, of devices displayed in all their nakedness as the material of artistry itself.[7] We can in fact recognize many devices isolated by Formalism, set out in the raw: displacement, making strange, close up, break, repetition, and the like. This is not the operation of a literary mind in art but simply the operation of modernism in art. Perhaps this was the result of a forced production, of a reduplication *en serie* that in its effects was bound to play with montage; but the self-consciousness of the continual transformation of the plate makes one suspect a half-conscious understanding of the results and a certain consciousness of "art" in the *process*.

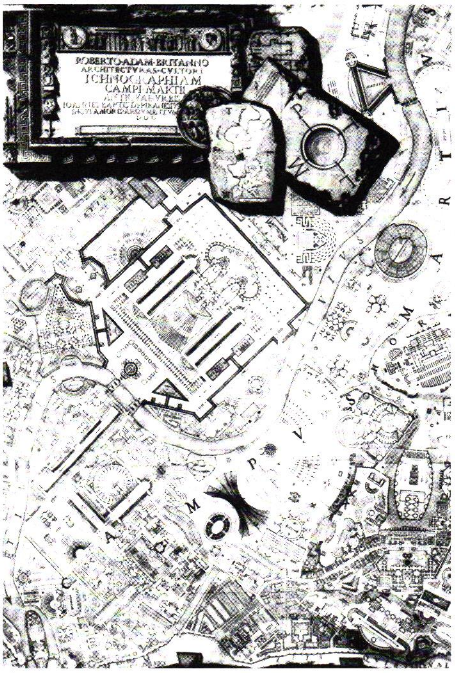
The most persuasive of contemporary interpretations, for architects at least, has been that of Manfredo Tafuri.[8] Tafuri understands Piranesi to stand at the very end of the classic order, when the authority provided by religious exegesis and antique revival has been demonstrated arbitrary and willful; when all that is left are a series of fragments and "deformed symbols." The impenetrable "forest" of the *Campo Marzio* (fig. 4) and the sadistic hallucinations of the *Carceri* represent both Piranesi's attempt to restore a lost organicity and his failure. The "colossal *bricolage*" of Piranesi's city is simply a mask that covers the crisis of architecture in the city, a contradiction soon to be smoothed over by the "invention" of urbanism. If the *Campo Marzio* displays the crisis in architectural form, then the *Carceri* show it in its social dimension, where "the prison coincides with the space of human existence"; resistance to the implacable realities of the new bourgeois order is paid for with torture. For the libertine in an alienated society, there is no escape. The result, for Piranesi, is the ultimate silence of his "empty signs," which for the first time express *anguish* in its modern form. Tafuri thus sees Piranesi's most tortured experiments as the prefiguration of the condition of the modernist avant-garde, whether positive and progressivist, or critical and counter-modernist.

This interpretation has been subject to considerable misunderstanding: it has been objected that such a "psychological" interpretation would have been, as Scott remarks, "unintelligible to Piranesi himself"; while Hugh Honour has dismissed "all the paraphernalia of psychoanalysis, Marxist historical theory, linguistics, and structural anthropology," used by Tafuri to describe Piranesi's vision as a "negative utopia," as far-fetched. Without going too deeply into the theory of historiography, it must be said that if all interpretation of an artist's work was forced to rely on what the artist himself would have understood, the art of history would itself be in a bad way; and further, Tafuri's discourse would be bare indeed if, in the seventies, he was unable to enter into the different fields listed by Honour. But Tafuri's sophisticated Marxism alone would caution against the ready assumption that he has simply "applied" this fearsome apparatus of criticism "cold" to the unwilling subject of Piranesi.

In fact, working with the careful "formal" analyses of the *Carceri* by Ulya Vogt-Göknil,[9] and with his own perceptive reading of the evidence of the drawings, Tafuri has made a serious attempt to confront these drawings as meaningful in themselves. Rather than describe their content, or compare similar descriptions

4 G. B. Piranesi, Ichnographia, *Campo Marzio, pls. V-X. Etching in six contiguous plates, c.1762.*

5 G. B. Piranesi, Colophon to the 'Lettere di Giustificazione': *a serpent in the form of a circle with artist's and architect's instruments. Etching, c.1757.*



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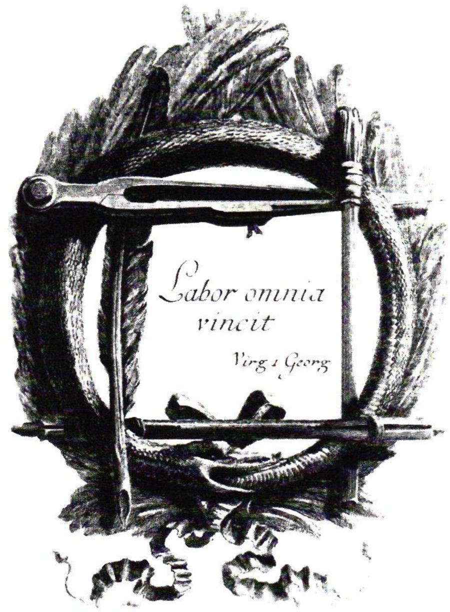

5

of similar content ("the sources of Piranesi's imagery") he has, following Eisenstein, Baudelaire, Hugo, and de Quincey, looked at the image and its transformations internally and as articulated with other images. Such an enterprise may be unpalatable to the historian, but it is surely based on *evidence*. Other and equally significant formal studies might be proposed for Piranesi's particular "reading" of the ruins, his careful distortions of classical perspective, his metonymical assemblages of ornaments, the very layout of his complex and multi-layered pages with their vignettes on "paper" or "stone," overlapping and piled up in the hollowed space of the etching itself.

The effect of Tafuri's contribution has been twofold. It has placed Piranesi within the general problematic of the "Enlightenment," as contributing to its complexities not only through his writings, but also through his "inscriptions"; and, it has entered the question of the fragment at a critical moment in its development into the debate on typology and the city. In the first instance, the historical evaluation of Piranesi, however schematic, allows for an entirely new and political reading—what Wittkower commenced by a cool analysis of the texts, Tafuri has continued in the realm of the drawings. In the second, the double nature of Piranesi's view of urbanism has allowed for his adoption on two fronts: that of the Tendenza where his project has found its analogy in the *Città Analoga* of Aldo Rossi, and more recently that of the "anti-industrial resistance" of Léon Krier and Maurice Culot. Piranesi as experimental inventor of urban form, or as nostalgic "negative-utopian" of the Enlightenment: both assimilations might well "seriously distort his reputation," but both recognize his continuing role in modernism, as the inventor of many of its own techniques of distortion.

Notes

1. This is the first part of a three-part review article on recent and past Piranesi studies.
2. Hugh Honour, "Piranesi's Year," *The New York Review of Books*, August 16, 1979.
3. *Piranèse et les français, 1740-1790* (Rome: Editioni dell'Elefante, 1976).
4. Ulya Vogt-Göknil, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi's "Carceri"* (Zurich: Origo Verlag, 1958).
5. Werner Oechslin, *L'intérêt archéologique et l'expérience architecturale avant et après Piranèse* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Elefante, 1978). English translation, "Interest in Archaeology and the Architectural Experience before and after Piranesi," *Oppositions*, to be published.
6. Manfredo Tafuri, "Architettura artificialis: Claude Perrault, Sir Christopher Wren e il dibattito sul linguaggio architettonico," *Barocco europeo, barocco salentino* (Lecce: Atti del Congresso Internazionale sul Barocco, 1969).
7. Sergei Eisenstein, "Piranesi, Or the Fluidity of Form," translated in *Oppositions*, 11, New York, 1977; also Manfredo Tafuri, "The Dialectics of the Avant-garde: Piranesi and Eisenstein," *Oppositions*, 11, New York, 1977.
8. Manfredo Tafuri, "Giovan Battista Piranesi: l'architettura come 'utopia negativa'," *Atti del Convegno sul Bernardo Vittone* (Turin, 1972); and translated into French in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 184, March-April 1976. See also the first pages of *Architecture and Utopia* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1975).
9. Vogt-Göknil, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi's "Carceri"* (Zurich: Origo Verlag, 1958).

Figure Credits
1, 4, 5 From John Wilton Ely, *Piranesi* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978).
2, 3 From Manfredo Tafuri, *Giovan Battista Piranesi: l'architettura come "utopia negativa"* (Turin: Accademia delle Scienze, 1972).

To the Editors:
Today we received a copy of *Oppositions 12* (1978), which includes the text of our interview with Albert Speer.

We want to thank you, as usual, for the care with which you have elaborated our text. We are particularly grateful to Kenneth Frampton for the rich iconographic apparatus which he organized to complement the text.

We would like to clarify to you and the readers of *Oppositions* that we furnished a large part of that material, choosing it with particular care so as to illustrate specifically some of the most interesting issues that emerged from the interview. In our view there was a direct relationship between the text and the images, and with that in mind, we prepared the definitive draft of the interview.

While we are grateful to Frampton for his efforts, the illustration apparatus he constructs does not respond entirely to our aims. Above all—as we thought was clear on the basis of our introductory remarks to the interview—we do not believe that it is useful to continue to mix, and especially at the level of simple images, architectural happenings of an entirely different historical nature, as in fact Frampton did by inserting into the material photos of the work of A. Libera, K. Melnikov, E. Boullée, A. Rossi, M. De Renzi, and Mies van der Rohe.

We initially proposed publishing our interview with Albert Speer as a way of clarifying the absolute specificity of and differences between intellectual attachments and historical phenomena that coexisted within modern architecture—even after 1933 there was modern architecture in Germany—convinced as we are that *Oppositions* is equally engaged in that work of clarification, in light of the many mystifications we have inherited from the 'high priests' of the Modern Movement.

On the basis of Frampton's work, however, although it is intelligent, there is the danger in this instance of giving rise anew to misunderstanding and of reviving absurd *analogies*, thereby leaving our work apparently incomplete in one of its most essential parts.

We are sure that you will want to include our clarification in *Oppositions 13*. We cordially salute you,
Francesco Dal Co & Sergio Polano
Venice, 6 June 1979
Translation by Diane Ghirardo

Reply to Dal Co/Polano letter of 6 June 1979:
We wish to apologize for the inadvertent omission of illustration references in your interview with Albert Speer. The oversight came about because Kenneth Frampton recognized the need for a somewhat broader panorama of images to be put before the readers of Oppositions. *At least for an American audience, this helps counteract that facile identification of Speer with Nazi architecture against which you inveigh in the first sentence of your introduction. Faced with the notorious scholarly reluctance to abandon ideologically convenient opinions—such as the neat separation of good modern architecture from regime building, be it Germany's or Italy's—*Oppositions *confronted precisely the issues that Speer's interpreters passed over in silence.*

We do not feel that such visual juxtapositions—"on the level of simple [?] images," as you say—are useless or confusing. Disconcerting and even insidious, yes, but very telling on such issues as Heimatstil *and monumental public buildings. One needs to keep in mind that the* Heimatstil *had its equivalent in virtually every European* *country. Even while Switzerland felt acutely threatened by the Reich, a Swiss* Heimatstil *flourished which would have easily passed muster before Reich authorities in charge of planning and building (cf.* Werk/Archithese, *27-28, 1979, esp. pp. 47-52). On the other hand, the fate of Tessenow's work seems more pathetic than evil when it is set into the larger European scene. Bear in mind that the School and Estate at Hellerau were not proto-Nazi, but rather that much of the* Siedlungsarchitektur *of the thirties was post-Tessenow.*

Frampton's portfolio offers perfectly appropriate comparisons free of innuendo and polemic. By contrast, Speer's answers to your questions are replete with innuendo, distortions, and outright falsehoods: his evasions betray him for a fox.

You let him get away with it.

To qualify the interview "as nothing but a document" is also to acknowledge that something is missing. If it is "nothing but a document" it is precisely in need of the kind of historical context without which documents remain silent. Here the silence is all the more ominous because you chose to lower a heavy curtain of two lengthy quotations fringed with historical metaphysics over the scene of the interview instead of providing an introduction that addressed the issues lurking in your colloquy with Speer. In the end, Speer's sphinx may let out no more than a "meow," but its paw is still poised.

We do regret having omitted figure references from your interview, but we are confident that Frampton's "Synoptic View of the Architecture of the Third Reich" enhanced what your interview elicited from Speer, making it (a little) more than "a document."
With cordial best regards . . .
Kurt W. Forster, Editor, Oppositions

Reply to Dal Co/Polano letter of 6 June 1979:
Thank you for your letter of June 6, which we will of course publish in Oppositions 14. *I have just returned from a vacation in Europe and naturally I was a little chagrined by your letter. I do of course owe both of you an apology for using the material that you supplied in a somewhat cavalier manner, and naturally I should have asked your permission or at least have informed you beforehand. However, I would like to attempt a brief justification of my actions.*

1) Our initial intention had been to integrate your illustrations with the interview, but this proved to be somewhat difficult for two reasons. First, because the interview was so dense and specialized that we could not really find an appropriate place for all these images, I felt that we could not simply distribute the illustrations throughout the text without any explanation other than regular captions. Second, as you will recall, you had not keyed this material into the text.

2) In addition, I felt that we could not really rely on the readers to construe the illustrative matter in an appropriate way without some kind of synoptic linkage in the form of extended captions.

3) It really disturbs me that you feel that absurd analogies may still be deduced from my synoptic overview. I tried to construct the captions in such a way that it would force the prejudiced reader (prejudiced by the "high priests of the Modern Movement" and by others) to look at the material afresh. It is for this reason that I included some of the recognized (could one say so-called 'positive figures'?) from the still unfolding history of the architecture of the Western Enlightenment—figures such as Boullée, Mies, Libera, Melnikov, and even Rossi. This juxtaposition was meant to provoke questions not simplistic answers. Why should one not induce people to confront the 'arbitrary' quality of modern monumental form and cause them to question what is the necessary correction between architectural form and ideology? Your quite remarkable interview with Speer tends to concentrate on the specific context in which Nazi architecture evolved, and it is in this sense 'scientific'. But I think you ought to ask yourselves whether there would not have been a larger possibility for an even grosser misunderstanding on the part of our readers if we had simply illustrated your article objectively.

It is possible that my 'synoptic view' regrettably reflects that conceptual arrogance which Canetti finds to be poisonous, but on the other hand is there not also the chance that 'value-free' objectivity can on occasion be grossly misconstrued in certain social contexts?

While you made your own position clear in your introduction, I feel that you ought also to reflect on the fact that Oppositions *is published in the United States and that for us to adopt an absolutely 'cool' attitude toward the Third Reich would, in light of the material we have recently published, leave us open to being totally misunderstood. No doubt all of this could be discussed at great length and possibly we will have an occasion to do so in the future. In this matter, in any event, I acted alone and I owe you both my personal apology.*
With best wishes, yours sincerely,
Kenneth Frampton
Editor/ Oppositions
23 July 1979

Dear Kenneth,
I received your letter of July 23 during my vacation, so for this reason I'm writing you only now. In order to avoid any kind of misinterpretation I am writing it in Italian.

First of all, I would like to make clear that the letter Sergio Polano and I sent to *Oppositions* was meant *exclusively* as a due clarification. It is quite superfluous to add that our position *is not in the least* influenced by the way you—as I imagine after consulting your colleagues on *Oppositions*—used the photographic material we provided together with the text of Speer's interview, even though it would, perhaps, have been more correct to inform us at least about the way you (or all of you) decided to use it. However, this matter is *irrelevant.* If your intervention had been limited to utilizing the material as well as integrating it with other homogeneous illustrations—in addition to making a commentary, which is obvious—we certainly wouldn't have wasted our time writing this clarification.

As you wrote in your letter, it is up to *Oppositions's editors* to evaluate the most appropriate utilization of the different contributions bearing in mind *your* public as well as the cultural context in which *you all* operate. With respect to this point I have nothing to add to what you write. What, instead, I want to discuss with you is what you define as our "cool" and detached approach to the "Speer problem." The point is that we *programmatically wanted* to be "cool" and "detached"—in other words: we wanted to construct a "document" as well as a "testimony" which would be as objective as possible—an interview, nothing more. Such a position has some basic motivations. I will simply try to list them in the following order:
a) *Nazism* is a historically defined phenomenon just as Speer's architecture is historically defined. Instead, Nazism and even more often Nazi culture are viewed as a perpetual condition of human history or as a hereditary disease of German culture or as a *constant* in history. This is the matrix which characterizes all the demonologist "studies" devoted to this stage of history.
b) Since I do not believe that history follows the laws of metempsychosis or, in more prosaic terms, that history is a sequence of *corsi e ricorsi* (courses and re-courses), I do believe that Nazism should be studied as a phenomenon. I mean, it should be considered in its own specificity, a specificity which—as Speer's work demonstrates—is "cool" and "objective" (in Europe as well as in the United States).
c) In the face of such an objectivity everyone can, then, express his own "feelings," the uneasiness of his own "morality." We were not interested in this aspect of our work. We did not want to express our own moral judgment on *that* occasion.
d) Furthermore, there was another question which we implicitly wanted to answer through our interview, and this was, is there any direct relationship between the architecture of Nazism and Nazi power? As you can see, the question is obvious and that is why the answers have also almost always been obvious. I mean: the architecture of Nazism has been too often interpreted as a sheer "prosecution" of the power system in service of which it offered its capability. This *continuity* caused German architecture to be understood for what it really wasn't (i.e., as "power") while its specificity was its being *other* (*altro*) than power, and having this connotation, precisely its will to be an expression of power. This is a subtle matter which, in my view, is at the basis of the questions you raise when introducing the problem of the *monument.* Generally speaking, I am convinced that architecture, as an autonomous language, should aspire to the fullness of such an autonomy. But architecture is put at risk and runs on a very narrow causeway the moment it addresses itself to the problem of the monument, for, as Loos affirms, the monument is the *place* where architecture is potentially closest to its fullest appearance as "autonomy." But at the same time, an architecture which pursues its own definite "monumentalization" (cf. Speer)—that is to say, an architecture which aspires to the highest historical representivity thereby binding its own destiny to the moment of representation and living in the *absoluteness of the present*—should of necessity aspire to the greatest identification with what is "other than itself" (*altro da se*'): in this case, Nazi power. But this *other* is not always *the same* other: it is historically determined. It is a specific *other* that is different from the power that the monuments of the Enlightenment speak of; again, it is a different *other* from the power of Fascism; and it is yet a different *other* from Soviet power. Finally, it is also specifically other than the power to which Rossi or Melnikov address themselves (but we should discuss this point and we can do it in the context of my next essay for *Oppositions*). These are all moments and phenomena which are different from Nazism. Therefore, the relationship architecture establishes (or refuses, since it is the same thing on an operative level, however radically different things may be from a moral point of view) with the historical specificities of power implies *differences.* It is *the other* which is inclined to speak within architecture; architecture, at the same time, is inclined to give its own language to what is "other than itself." Such an interlacing finally causes the *monument* to be the expression of its historical being instead of being a category of the essence of architecture, an immobile category of its spirit. This is why any monument is specific. What is

other than the monument is historical plurality.

For these reasons I thought it was opportune to send you this clarification. As you see, it is an issue of basic discourse. But if this is not enough, I would like to add a further consideration with regard to your work. I can understand that you think it necessary to provide the reader of Speer's text with a frame of reference—the letters I received after the publication of the interview fully prove this necessity—and, as I already wrote to you, I am grateful to you for the work you took upon yourself. But there is a further point: why should you suggest to "our" readers prefabricated comparisons? Why not respect the information which is more effective to the degree it is circumscribed and specific? In other words: why do you integrate "Nazi material" with "architects of the Enlightenment," why Rossi, why Melnikov, why Libera? These are not fortuitous choices: they are meditated ones. Although they are carefully edited, each of them speaks of *something else* besides its own specificity. Then, isn't there the risk of falling again—and I think you will agree with me on this point—into just what should be avoided: that is to say, the confusion which hides diversities and specificities? That is to say, the obliteration of *infinite others* which interact with architecture? And, finally, isn't there the risk of hiding what is *always different*, which is pursued by architecture either when presented in the Olympian nudity of its own separateness, as a crystalline language; or when it intends to make itself a representation, to pursue the marriage with power, and to immerse itself in history, reliving again the utopia of being able to influence the flow of time?
Sincerely yours,
Francesco Dal Co, 23 August 1979
Translated by Alessandra Latour and Maria Lima

To the Editors:
In the interview with Albert Speer that appeared in the Spring 1978:12 issue of *Oppositions*, Herr Speer refers to a close association between the Nazi architect Herbert Rimpl and Mies van der Rohe, something which he asserts he learned from me in the course of my study of the activities of Mies during the Third Reich. It is important that it be made clear that no such relationship in fact existed: Herbert Rimpl was neither an "assistant to Mies van der Rohe" nor "a close collaborator of Mies in his studio."

My discussions with Albert Speer regarding Herbert Rimpl took place in 1974, one day after an interview with Herr Rimpl. In the course of years of kind and patient assistance with my work on Mies, Herr Speer has provided me with the names and addresses of numerous individuals, of whom Herr Rimpl was one. I can only attribute Speer's inaccuracy to either faulty recollection of a conversation that had taken place three years before Messrs. Dal Co and Polano, or genuine misunderstanding of statements which I made to Speer in English, which is after all not his native tongue.

But for his elegant industrial buildings erected during the Third Reich, Herbert Rimpl would have disappeared into the shadows of architectural history. Not only do his seemingly innumerable industrial buildings serve as incontrovertible evidence that modernism was alive and flourishing under the Nazi regime (albeit within a highly restricted context and without the presence of the "great names"), but, in terms of quality of design and finesse of construction and detailing, equaled the buildings illustrating Hitchcock and Johnson's pivotal work of 1932 on the International Style. Indeed, if one were ignorant of the politics and ignominy of the Third Reich, a cogent case could be made for the continuity of development of modernism in Germany under the Nazi regime—restricted of course, in terms of building types (i.e., industrial for the most part) and by the critical absence of leadership provided in pre-Nazi days by such individuals as Mies, Gropius, Taut, Wagner, and so on.

Also missing during the Nazi period was the impassioned discourse that provided the peppery accompaniment to the early years of the Modern Movement in Germany. The sheer volume of rhetoric that scatters the pages of German modernism during the Weimar period (and earlier) tends to magnify the number of buildings actually erected—with the possible exception of workers' housing. The same distortion exists during the Nazi period, only in reverse. The architectural illustrations that accompany the seemingly limitless articles emanating from the Nazi press are, more often than not, the same designs appearing over and over again—most of which never got off the drawing boards. These were the buildings by which the thousand year Reich was to be remembered in history. It is ironic that Hitler's desire to leave his words "in stone" have served their purpose: they have survived in the popular consciousness, while the numerous but often unheralded modernist industrial buildings are usually ignored and forgotten.

This is one instance when the historian searching through the archives of the period can so easily be misled. The truth of the matter is that construction of these modernist industrial complexes, which included not only factories, but power plants, airplane hangars and so on, far exceeds in quantity any other form of construction during the Third Reich, with the possible exception of the *Siedlungen*. Of course, in the final analysis and in terms of architectural and historical significance, what mattered was not what was built, but what was not and why. Who would deny that the emigration of Mies and Gropius to the United States was of more architectural significance than any modernist industrial building erected by Rimpl?

Herbert Rimpl and Albert Speer shared much in common. They were contemporaries (Rimpl was born in 1902 and Speer in 1905), both came from educated backgrounds (Speer's father was an architect, Rimpl's was an engineer) and both were educated at the same institutions, the Munich Institute of Technology and the Berlin Institute of Technology in Charlottenberg. Youthful and unknown, they made up in charm and ambition what they lacked in reputation or genius. And, unlike their more renowned masters, they were "flexible." Both, in their separate ways, became the ideal Nazi architect.

Prior to his involvement with the Nazis, Rimpl had won several competitions to build postal stations throughout Bavaria. Speer, on the other hand, had built nothing prior to his association with the Nazis, having had the misfortune of completing his training during a period of acute economic strain in Germany. Rimpl became involved with Heinkel, the airplane manufacturer, when he won a competition sponsored by the Munich Institute of Technology—a relationship maintained and expanded during the Nazi years and through which he came in contact with Goering.

Beginning about 1934, Rimpl's office turned out a staggering number of complexes under the aegis of Goering, employing a staff of sixty-five or so. What was so unique about Rimpl's practice was its separation into two independent offices. One group, who mainly worked under the patronage of Speer, concerned itself essentially with housing, built in the traditional style known as *heimatgebunden*, complete with the requisite pointed roofs. The other group, working for the most part under Goering and staffed by many ex-Bauhaus students, turned out the extraordinary industrial buildings that dotted Nazi-occupied Europe. Gerhard Weber, the Munich architect and student of Mies at the Dessau and Berlin Bauhaus, considered himself fortunate indeed to have secured a job in Rimpl's firm and stayed with him until the end of the war.

This "Goering" wing of Rimpl's office received the highest priority in obtaining materials and exemptions from local *baupolizei* restrictions—privileges denied to other areas of construction and even to the "Speer" section. Whenever an over-zealous party official on the staff of the local *baupolizei* insisted on the placement of pointed roofs on a planned factory, Rimpl need only complain to Goering, and the restriction would be overruled.

"I worked in total freedom," Rimpl said to me. Such "freedom" was not due to any sense of altruism or architectural liberalism, but simply to the priority given by the Nazis to facilities contributing to the rearmament program. The "total freedom" enjoyed by Rimpl, was—needless to say—denied to Mies. While Mies never displayed great interest or enthusiasm for industrial construction (his sole contribution, the Verseidag Factory of 1930/32 was frequently omitted from the list of his buildings in Krefeld), given the choice of building factories or nothing, I believe that Mies would have indeed chosen the former, provided of course that he was given a free hand. Hitler's interest in industrial construction was limited mainly to efficiency of operation. According to Speer, Hitler spoke approvingly of the appropriateness of modern design in industrial application, believing that stark functionalism contributed to its ultimate serviceability. Despite this limited sympathetic bent toward modern design in industry, it is inconceivable—given Hitler's frame of reference—that he would have allowed a bona fide "cultural bolshevist" such as Mies any position of architectural prominence, even in a limited sphere.

Fortunately for Mies, Hitler would not allow him to build and we are left with the sense of appreciation, halfhearted and even embarrassing, that Rimpl's office provided sustenance for scores of Bauhaus trained individuals, all of whom worked together to produce industrial complexes of high enough quality to bear comparison with their distinguished predecessors—and this in the midst of the most acute artistic and political harassment and persecution. While Mies himself was prohibited from making the architectural contributions he so earnestly wished, his would-be disciples revealed his influence in the elegant designs, the sensitive use of material and control of detail, that became characteristic of this section of Rimpl's office. This was the nature of the "relationship" between Rimpl and Mies that I discussed with Herr Speer—a relationship far more tenuous, subtle, and illusive than simple collaboration.

Elaine S. Hochman
Graduate Center,
The City University of New York
July 12, 1979

To the Editors,

Labels and Libels

Cesare de'Seta in a review of my book on Le Corbusier (*Oppositions*, 13, pp. 114-20) ends with a plea and the following non sequitur, a cliché: "But in the end, the blame is ours [architectural critics and historians] for having lent credence to labeling. Clothes do not make the man . . ." (p. 119). The difference between clothes and labels might be an obscure distinction for de'Seta to make, but he can, if he wants, take credit for the misuse of labels, the critic's tools of thought. Labels are approximate modes of classification—we can't think without them—and their sensitive or crude application and development are all that distinguishes a good critic from a bad one. His branding of Le Corbusier's compromises with Vichy, etc. as "political cynicism" and his dismissal of Le Corbusier's work at Chandigarh as "imperialist" and "outdated colonialism" are typical cases of insensitive classification. Where I tried to distinguish the contradictory motives for Le Corbusier's political compromise—his attempt at libertarian architecture within authoritarian regimes (p. 133)—de'Seta comes down with his heavy-handed generalization, "political cynicism." Where I tried to show relationships between Le Corbusier's architecture, personal life, painting, interest in women, and economics, de'Seta has me as a vulgar Freudian or vulgar Marxist. When I show a link between two areas, de'Seta immediately turns it into a one-way determinism. A few of his oversimplifications:

1) He claims that Le Corbusier's interest in primary forms and his artistic formation were most decisively influenced by Cézanne. Although there is the famous quote "tout est sphères et cylindres" (illustrated incidentally on page 54 of my book with *more* than this, the five Platonic solids), and Le Corbusier admitted the influence of Cézanne, the greater influences were, in 1904, Platonism and, in 1920, a geometrically disciplined Cubism. Their combination is what counts in any attempt to explain Le Corbusier's anti-naturalism (in which he differs from Cézanne) and his advocacy of object types and evolutionary perfection (again not shared with Cézanne). De'Seta accuses me of not doing primary research, but my book was the first to give long textual analysis from the various books throughout Le Corbusier's life—those that encompassed architecture, city planning, painting, equipment—and to elucidate such common themes as Platonism, Nietzschean rhetoric, etc. Obviously I have overlooked some themes of importance, but de'Seta overlooks my analyses, so intent is he on fixing me with the vulgar Marxist label, among others.

2) One case at issue concerns the photos of Le Corbusier in the twenties. These show him stern, underweight, 'Calvinist', a demeanor which I connect with his espousal of Purism (in part an argument that economic selection produces beautiful objects). De'Seta avers that an economic determinism is being misapplied. However in the text I was careful to show the *links* between Le Corbusier's own financial hardship and his ascetic doctrine, but also acknowledged that Purism came before his financial failures and that, in any case, it was his Nietzschean rhetoric and ideas which were driving him then, as later. I wrote that financial hardship "supported his new philosophy of Purism," not determined it. And incidentally, de'Seta is so confident about his thorough going knowledge of Marx, and so cavalier in applying his 'bull in the China shop' label to others who use the Master ironically, that he fails to admit that He too was occasionally vulgar ("the mode of production of material life determines the general character of the social, political, and spiritual processes of life"—Marx, 1959). Irony and wit are modes of writing that de'Seta is determined to take without laughter (and understanding).

3) A point which de'Seta says he cannot understand concerns the "love of the impersonal" shared by Le Corbusier, T.S. Eliot, and Sergei Eisenstein. Perhaps I should have quoted line and verse of their well-known statements on impersonality, written in the twenties when Le Corbusier was espousing a similar position, but I assumed that these views were widely known. The relevant passages can be found in T.S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1921) and Eisenstein's many remarks (1923-5) on film as composed of objective "stimulants and reflexes," his emphasis on "concrete reality," and his method of montage whereby real events and objects act not unlike T.S. Eliot's "objective correlative." They in turn relate to (but are not the same as) Le Corbusier's "object types." All three writers in the early twenties were influenced by a form of behavioral psychology.

4) De'Seta also cannot understand why I mention the "mundane life, friendships, and even love life of the Swiss architect" since he was "bashful" and never "confound[ed] the sacred and profane." Is "private" life profane and "public" life sacred? The confusion on this point is doubled by the sentence which follows it: "This is also easily seen in his not moralistic but profoundly religious intransigence, which is best expressed by the scarcity of information regarding it." Oh, that scarce information is *so* expressive. "Religious intransigence"? It doesn't exist, and therefore for de'Seta it must be "easily seen"! This sounds like the medieval lawyer who argued that a crime must have been committed because a

defendant is in court. What I tried to link once again were simultaneous concerns of Le Corbusier: his concurrent interests in drawing women with exaggerated shoulders and hips, his new interest in biomorphic form (1928), and curvilinear buildings. And it was precisely my point, taken over by de'Seta and offered up as his own discovery, that Ronchamp was merely reusing these 1928 motifs and was not an expressionist work. What I actually wrote (p. 151) was that James Stirling, Nikolaus Pevsner, and others "took [it] to be an expressionist building" and that therefore it "probably did act as the catalyst for a neo-expressionism." Changing these careful qualifications into a statement that I term Ronchamp an Expressionist building is an act of willful distortion.

Further misrepresentations could be enumerated and opinions challenged. De'Seta warns the Italians not to translate my book as it will do a "great disservice to our knowledge of Le Corbusier." I'm glad in his tolerance he doesn't recommend book burning, but doesn't he mean "opinions" not "knowledge"? Even if all my facts were wrong it wouldn't do a "disservice" to the Italian *knowledge* of Le Corbusier, which is as developed as in any country. But my major quarrel with his review is that it completely overlooks the interpretation offered by my book, its main point underscored by the subtitle—"the tragic view of architecture." I would hope that even a damning review might mention the argument with which I have tried to deal, however inadequately. The paradox of Le Corbusier's life and work centers on his passionate dualism and his presentation of struggle, opposition, and on images of conflict in his architecture. These I take to be most characteristic and as a whole to define a "tragic view" which is most evident in the forms of La Tourette. No doubt other architecture—the Greek temple—presents this view in its dramatizing of the difference between raw nature and a built artifact, but in our century it is Le Corbusier who has come closest to this image.

Charles Jencks,
London, November 1979

Grave Complications

William Ellis

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1

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The *Oppositions* Forum reconvened after a long lapse to address the work of Michael Graves in the wake of his recent gallery exhibition and the publicity surrounding it. Alan Colquhoun was on hand to present a critical interpretation of Graves's work as a means of coming to grips with what he called "the recuperation of historical forms in modern architecture." We always expect of Colquhoun a graceful discourse, and he delivered a critique that was both self-effacing and characteristically well-balanced. But without his nimble touch it could have been heavy going, as it was not only charming but also very technical. Some of the terms he used were semantically overwrought, and they piled up quickly.

Colquhoun's basic speculation was that the present controversy between Modernism and revisionism actually constitutes two opposed interpretations of the historical process. Each side accuses the other of being historicist—that is, anti-historical. Tediously enough, the term historicism has two meanings, both of them pejorative, and they each attach themselves, in however negative a way, to one of these preferred views of history. The Modernist view Colquhoun calls diachronic. It maintains that change is the essence of history. It sees revisionist imagery as mere historicist fluff, dabbling onanistically in "historical forms," hardly rising above the level of socially capitulated private fantasy. Its architecture claims to be "objective," an architecture of public, collective, "absolute" meaning, the rational product of social, technological, and other forces . . . a kind of natural sign of its culture. The revisionist view of history he calls synchronic. It insists that the essence of history is tradition. It sees the Modern Movement and its strong identification with a *Zeitgeist* as little more than historicist sediment from a currently discredited Hegelian vapor. It encourages instead a subjective architecture of private, individual, relativistic meanings manifested in the eclectic selection of forms

1 Kenneth Frampton and Alan Colquhoun

2 The Forum

3 Ludwig Glaeser, Michael Graves, Suzanne Stephens, and Steven Peterson

4 Ada Louise Huxtable

5 Patrick L. Pinnell, Michael Graves, David Elwell, Jaquelin Taylor Robertson, and Kenneth Frampton

from various (and presumably all) periods. Colquhoun favors the revisionist side of the conflict, reasoning that private meaning is currently the only possible kind since an objective state must ultimately be guaranteed by a divinity.

The oppositions between these two views cannot be nearly so clear cut as Colquhoun presented them. No doubt he stressed their differences for the sake of clarity, but in doing so he came close to a straight-faced rendition of the insoluble argument between determinism and free will and he necessarily ignored the provisional, contingent predicament of both concepts in actual reality. We know at the level of common sense that both views of history are true at the same time; history involves change within the inertia of tradition. It would seem that an architecture acknowledging the simultaneous influence of both views is most reasonable and vital. In fact, Graves's recent work at its best seems to recognize just this dual influence.

It is a pity that Colquhoun chose not to distinguish consistently between the various kinds of atavistic architectural 'revolutions': not only the recuperation of historical forms as quotational fragments, but also limited or wholesale eclecticism, architectural revivalism, and overall renovation such as occurred in the Quattrocento. In this connection, however, he suggested convincingly that since the Renaissance, historical development has been discontinuous, largely a matter of freely constructed revaluations of the past on the part of certain individuals. Thus the past reappears from time to time, not as a replica, but each time in a different guise. Because of this, he suggested that we always need to ask what meaning the present confers on the past: are we in the presence of kitsch, parody, pastiche, or metaphor? In the case of Graves, he inferred that the attempt is to reconstitute the mythic substance of architecture out of the circumstance of history, but he ne-

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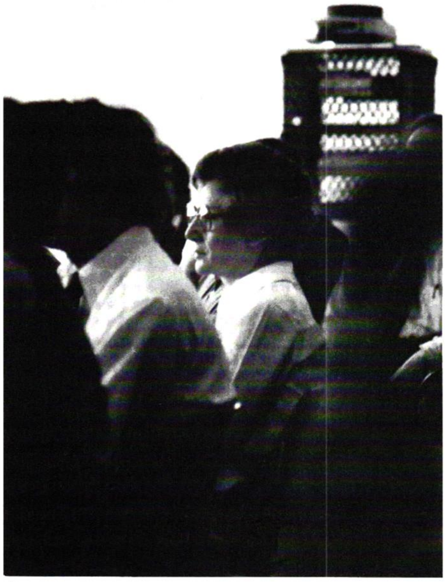

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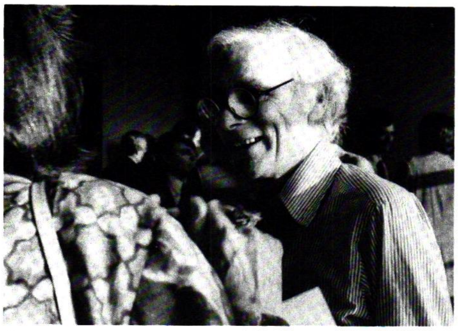

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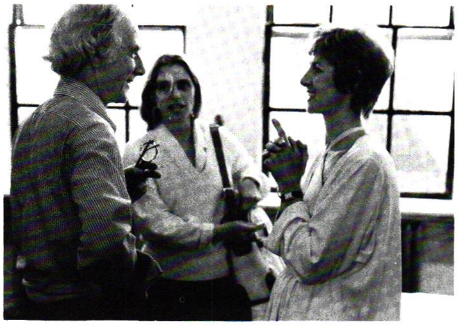

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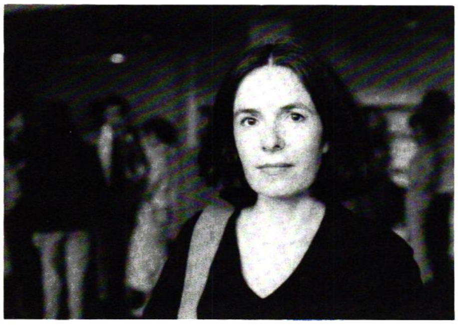

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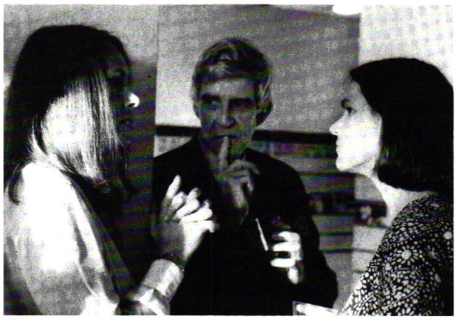

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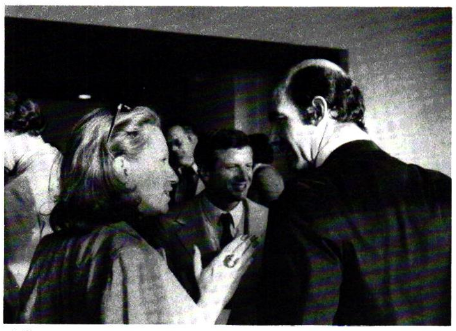

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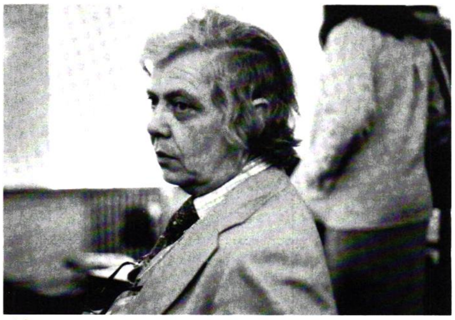

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glected any specific interpretations of that mythic content. Instead he concluded with some unanswered questions, the most striking of which concerned the *criteria* for eclectic choice in the recuperation of these "objects of memory." How are these devices to be selected?

There seems no doubt that a serious criticism of an architecture of historical reference must ultimately address this question, and that this question is strongly related to the notion of mythic content. For both bear on the ability of an architecture of reference to be persuasive in an era of non-figurative traditions, and thus they offer an avenue along which a tentative critique of Graves's recent work might take place. Only one aspect of this problem will be taken up in the remainder of this short piece.

To decide one day, as Graves seems to have done, to reinvent himself in architectural terms is a truly resolute decision. Such resolutions by individuals are in some ways the veritable life of architecture. Work produced after such a decision often represents a search in the truest sense for architectural possibilities beyond the status quo. The uneven quality of Graves's recent production—its brilliant moments and its less compelling interludes—might be explained by the radical character of his departure from his earlier work. But another equally plausible explanation might be ascribed to the vicissitudes of "mythic content" itself and the problem of how eclectic images are chosen. To invoke the mythic content of architecture through the figural images of history is a seductive alternative to a sterile modernist orthodoxy. But to do so is not, as might first be assumed, to make an architecture that speaks solely about architecture, for its eclecticism precludes a hermetic or self-referential discourse. Calling up images from different periods in history elicits not only architectural allusions, but also many of the open, general cultural associations those images have absorbed from their origins forward. This subjective quality of these images varies immensely, depending on the image and depending on the period. Thus there is always the danger that, for example, too weighty an ancient subject might be marshalled for too flimsy a present context. There should be some associational sympathy, within limits, between image and context. Graves's work offers a number of instructive examples of this sympathy. For instance, the "Art Deco" office that he attached to the existing Chem-Fleur Factory makes use of a set of images and devices reconstituted out of the fairly recent past, devices which furthermore, by having been filtered through the logic of a strictly architectural tradition, have already been amalgamated—made secular so to speak, indefinite, open—to a multitude of connotations that might allow their successful insertion into a number of different contexts. These devices include the integration of rusticated keystones, *voussoirs* and horizontal bands, circular windows, and trellised objects (here rendered in an industrial rather than in a pastoral vernacular). Many of these items have been with us at least since Serlio's time, but they have been part of a number of different architectures, including the more decorative branches of early twentieth century production, and their associations are not tightly bounded. The combination proves to be superb in Graves's hands—taking these previously amalgamated details one step further. We are compelled both to take it seriously for itself and also to recognize the excitement and energy emerging from its juxtaposition with the adjacent factory building

But in some other examples of Graves's work there is evidenced a limit to the emotional and associational distance between the images and certain contexts, beyond which this observer finds it difficult to remain convinced. For instance, references to such items as pagan deities present a number of real associational problems when set down inside commercial surroundings; witness the bust of the two-headed Janus in the Sunar drapery shop. This image emerges from architectural tradition with associations that are still peculiarly specific, intact, unamalgamated, of a certain tone, and having a relatively precise and limited applicability. The onlooker assumes to see either a pun or a displaced high seriousness. Myth becomes melodrama.

Observations of this kind in no way fail to recognize that it is these very juxtapositions, arranged in varying degrees of harshness, that constitute much of the verve and the excitement—the message, the newness—in this work, and no one would wish this away or foolishly pretend to pronounce rules for the subject. Yet if architectural collage such as this is in any way a twentieth century equivalent to nineteenth century eclecticism, then critical evaluations must begin to make assessments of the propriety of the images used; and suddenly old distinctions between sacred and profane, public and private, institutional and commercial, Mediterranean and Teutonic, special and vernacular, ancient and recent render themselves once again topical—precisely because the significance of their transformations, mergers, deformations, and juxtapositions resides in their honoring of these distinctions at the same time.

One might then formulate an objective for architecture of this persuasion, in which success would depend at least in part on the extent to which the collage suppresses undesirable or unintentional associations —as either too familiar and dreary, or too incongruous to be taken seriously—and promotes instead a condition of believable but delightfully shocking juxtaposition. Because of the difficulty of denaturing certain images from the past all at once, it is forgivable to make puns of them, but solemnity is a temptation absolutely to be avoided.

In the architecture of "figure" as opposed to that of "form," to use Colquhoun's terminology, the work of Michael Graves has provided alternately its most brilliant instances of architectural pulchritude and its most problematic episodes of semantic incongruity thus far. It is not too much to say that the body of criticism surrounding this work has made too little of the problems; for they are central to its vitality as well as its shortcomings and as such they point instructively toward whatever possibilities lie ahead for this particular variety of revisionism.

Figure Credit
Photographs by Dorothy Alexander

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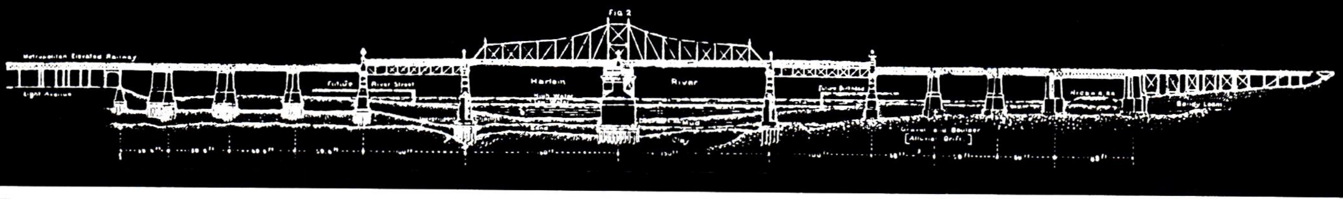

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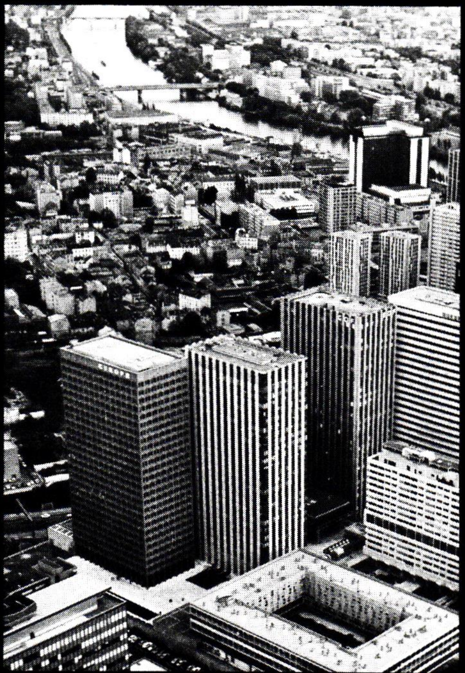

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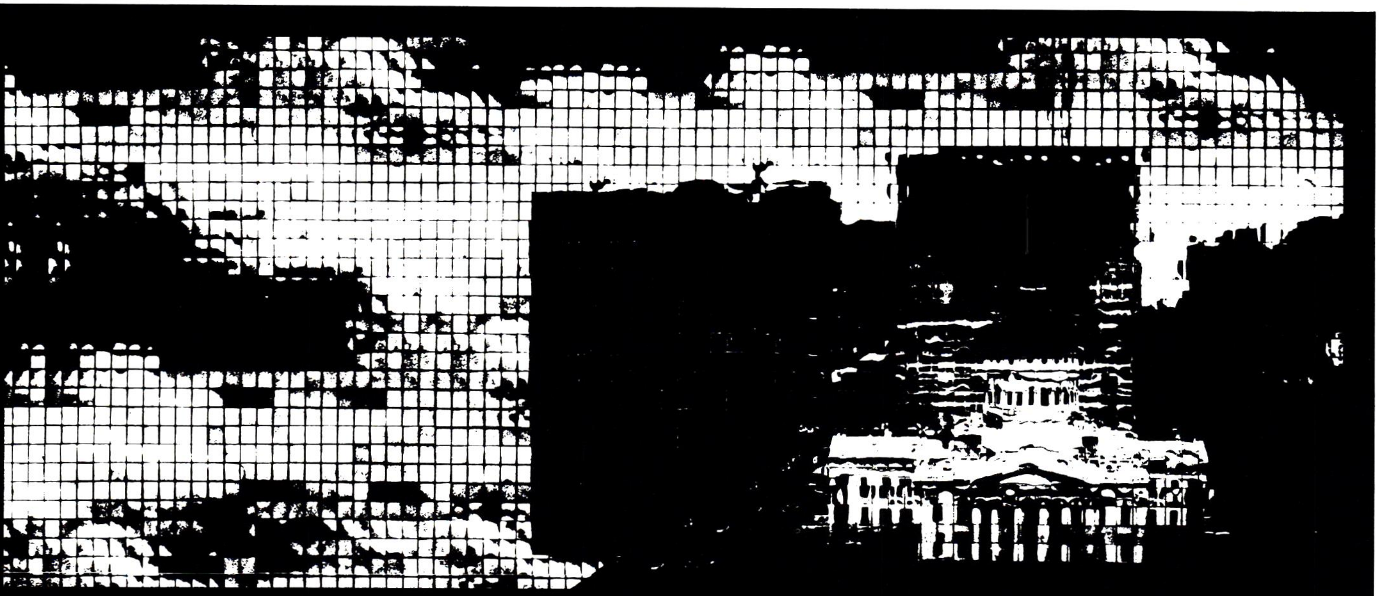

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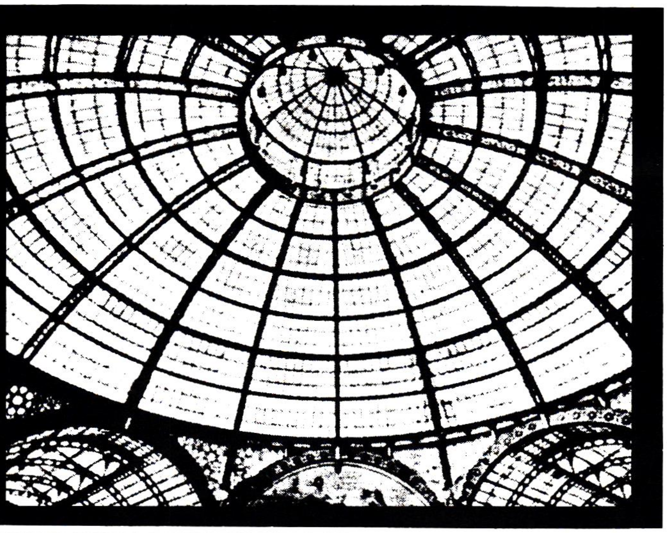

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